

THE FABULOUS NABOB: MISCEGENATIONS OF EMPIRE  
AND VOCATION IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY  
BRITISH LITERATURE

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Ahsan Habib Chowdhury

Certificate of Approval:

---

Donald R. Wehrs  
Associate Professor  
Department of English

---

Paula R. Backscheider, Chair  
Professor and Stevens  
Eminent Scholar  
Department of English

---

Christopher M. Keirstead  
Associate Professor  
Department of English

---

Stephen L. McFarland  
Dean  
Graduate School

THE FABULOUS NABOB: MISCEGENATIONS OF EMPIRE  
AND VOCATION IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY  
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Ahsan Habib Chowdhury

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT  
THE FABULOUS NABOB: MISCEGENATIONS OF EMPIRE AND VOCATION  
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

Ahsan H. Chowdhury

Doctor of Philosophy, August 7, 2006  
(M. A., Virginia Commonwealth University, 2000)  
(B.A., University of Chittagong, Bangladesh, 1997)

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This dissertation has grown out of my interest in literary representations of the Nabob, a British Returnee from India who appeared in the aftermath of the 1757 Battle of Plassey. Prior to 1757, the term “Nabob” had been used chiefly to describe the “Nawab,” an aristocratic military governor in the Mughal Empire. After Plassey, “Nabob” came to include British merchants returned from India with large fortunes and alien manners, in addition to its original meaning. The representations of the Nabob in popular drama, poetry, fiction, and historiography, which appeared between 1757 and 1789, constitute one of the important cultural sites in which concerns about the vocational integrity of the British East India merchant are interwoven with anxiety about the potentially harmful

associations between an assertive British imperial nation-state and the Mughal Empire. The Nabob of literary representation was frequently condemned in many eighteenth-century literary texts for imitating the manners and mores of the Nawab—chief among them being the exchange of extravagant gifts, a propensity toward a hedonistic lifestyle, and an inclination toward militarism and extortion—to the detriment of his idealized calling as a pacific merchant. Consequently, a substantial section of the literary representations of the Nabob from this period emphasizes his anti-British and unchristian militarism. Although many eighteenth-century authors were acutely aware of the uniqueness of the Nabob as a new social type, some twentieth and late twentieth-century social historians have tended to treat the Nabob as a minor phase in the on-going eighteenth-century project to recuperate the British mercantile classes in terms of social respectability. I argue, on the contrary, that the Nabob, far from being a minor colonial stereotype, was a major social type in his own right, and eighteenth-century literary investigations of the Nabob were central to the struggle over the control of mercantile representations.

This historical argument allows me to put forward two major theoretical arguments. First, the Nabob representations were not only born out of the fears and prejudices of the British, but they also reflected the real-life interactions between the British and Mughal Empires. Second, these representations are indicative of the capacity of the East to shape Western perceptions directly through material as well as conceptual means, a fact which reflects the radically different balance of power between the East and the West prevalent at this time.

This second theoretical argument allows me to read eighteenth-century British literature in ways that critique an influential paradigm in postcolonial historiography which projects an anachronistic power inequity between the West and the “rest” backwards into the eighteenth century, when, no matter how prejudiced they happened to be, British authors were aware of the potency of Eastern cultures and polities. This anachronistic model has been critiqued and largely revised in recent historical scholarship that take into account the material and conceptual realities, by no means exclusively Western, governing the power relations between the East and the West ; however, literary criticism is certainly lagging behind historical scholarship in this regard, although substantial advances have been made recently.

In order to contribute to the ongoing project of reenvisioning the existing paradigm for exploring the East-West contact in postcolonial literary criticism, I intend to read the Nabob as a Western representation wrought out of Eastern agency. In this particular case, Western representation does not respond directly to Eastern agency but to the presence in the cultural/historical scene of real-life Britons whose subjectivities have been substantially shaped by the material as well as conceptual agency of the East, namely the still-potent Mughal Empire and its subjects. With that goal in view, I explore representations of the Nabob in a number of eighteenth-century British texts that range from the popular and the ephemeral to the literary or the near-literary. In addition, I read a number of texts written by eighteenth-century Mughal Indians that reflect a peculiar cultural self-confidence and autonomy which allow the Indian protagonists to assimilate and accept the Britons who lived and worked among them on equal terms.

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CHAPTER ONE  
INTRODUCTION: ENTER THE NABOB

I

Mere Stereotype or a Profound Cultural Phenomenon?

During and in the immediate aftermath of the Seven Years War (1756-1763), profound political, military, and social upheavals in the British society helped popularize several cultural stereotypes in drama, poetry, and fiction, such as the West Indian planter, the unscrupulous war profiteer, the Irish booby squire, and, last but not least, the Nabob. Although the others had deep historical roots in the British culture, the Nabob was certainly a novelty among these stereotypes. The Nabob, a real-life British merchant returnee from India as well as his fictional representation in popular literature during the mid-to-late eighteenth century, is the protagonist of this dissertation. He descended on England in the latter half of the eighteenth century carrying in his wake a mixed baggage of monetary boon and moral bane.

The term “Nabob,” as J. M. Holzman has pointed out, was an Anglicization of “Nawab,” the title of the native military-cum-civil governors of the imperial provinces in Mughal India.<sup>1</sup> In the colorful politics of borough elections, the British Nabob strutted

and flaunted his seemingly inexhaustible wealth in order to buy a seat in the parliament. In satiric comedies, he appeared as a threatening figure casting an evil shadow on the innocent young lovers and the larger community of affective and traditional ties they represent. Periodical essays and newspapers accused the Nabob of gaining his wealth by corruption and violence in foreign lands, and of inflating the prices of staples by spreading his upstart wealth. Satirical poems and caricatures exposed his gross, questionable, alien habits and pretensions to “quality.” In contrast to the upstart and arrogant Nabob in popular literature, there was also a recurring figure of the honest, upstanding Returnee from the East whose wealth was gained by honest trade. The considerable number of honest Returnees appearing in popular literary and non-literary texts between 1757 and 1789 attests to the cultural need to counter the ravages of the villainous Nabob. It was as if the authors were trying to reassure themselves and their audience that despite all the evidence to the contrary, there were still plenty of honest Returnees from India who had gained their wealth by legitimate trade and not by plunder and graft.<sup>2</sup>

In the popular British imagination and in some literary representations that reflected such popular images, the Nabobs behaved like the stereotypical native Nawab. The British Nabobs arrogantly and casually sprinkled their discourse with such uncouth, alien economic and political terms as *Jahgirs*, *Parwanas*, and *Sunnuds* in order to flaunt their mysterious power and wealth, and to spread their alien corruption through bribery in the shape of exotic gifts and presents. By contrast, the honest Returnees in popular representations gave selflessly without resorting to such rhetoric. As such the Nabob and the honest Returnee could not be more unlike each other. The former had imbibed the un-

British despotic habits of giving gifts and bestowing privileges that could be withdrawn as unexpectedly and irrationally as they were distributed. The Nabob's gifts inevitably turned out to have some sinister purpose, ultimately depriving the unwitting recipient of autonomy.

Although both the Nabob and the Returnee are capable of bestowing and withholding favors, what ultimately set them apart in some popular literary representations was the threat of violence, often expressed in alien military terms and through martial posturing that accompanied the Nabob's rhetoric of giving or withdrawing favors. By contrast, the avuncular honest Returnee, despite his power to withhold a fortune if the recipient proved unworthy, retained the unambiguously pacific identity of the overseas British merchant. Popular literature as well as political and economic discourses about Nabobs and honest Returnees from India represented the Nabob as a grotesque offspring of a vocational miscegenation that had taken place in the East Indies in the aftermath of the 1757 Battle of Plassey, when merchants not only took up arms but also imbibed the despotic habits of the Nawab. In other words, the Nabob was a British merchant gone native who had taken up the manners and habits of an alien military aristocracy. In the process, he had betrayed the pacific calling of the noble, gentlemanly British overseas merchants, who (ideally speaking) spread wealth among nations by rational and peaceful means.

As a result, scrutinizing the figure of the Nabob, apparently one of the many colonial stereotypes yielded by intensifying British contact with both the East and the West Indies during this era, allows me to put forward a number of important arguments related to history, literary criticism, and postcolonial historiography and theory,

respectively. As I shall demonstrate, all these arguments are closely interwoven and an awareness of their interdependence allows one to correct the persistent misreading of the figure of the Nabob that characterizes some major works in all these disciplinary fields.

I begin by putting forward an historical argument that a substantial section of the existing mid to late twentieth-century social history about the growing importance of the mercantile classes in Britain during the eighteenth century understates the importance of the Nabob. These studies ignore the crucial role played by the East India merchant in general and the Nabob in particular in shaping the ways British society came to imagine overseas merchants by the end of the eighteenth century. Far from being an interesting but eccentric representation of the overseas British merchant, the East India Merchant as Nabob played an influential role in shaping mercantile representations at home, a fact often reflected in popular literary and non-literary writings produced during the heyday of the Nabob between 1757 and 1789. Unfortunately, many twentieth-century social historians have tended to ignore this fact and have treated the Nabob as a mere appendage to an exclusively British narrative of the merchant's progress from social obscurity to prominence. Second, I argue that many social historians have often ignored another historical fact, quite well known to the Nabob's contemporaries, that the Nabob was a merchant who had turned militarist by imbibing the mores of the Mughal military aristocracy.

Correcting the existing paradigm in social history about the East India merchant turned Nabob leads to a third historical argument: the culturally hybrid Nabob is reflective of a radically different material reality from that which prevailed in the late nineteenth-century Indian subcontinent. In the immediate aftermath of the 1757 Battle of

Plassey, the Mughal Empire and its rulers and subjects were able to carry on their cultural and political lives according to their traditional worldviews. The Mughal elite and their subjects, as well as many Britons who lived among them, never thought for a moment that the Mughal Empire was destined to be replaced by the parody of a Western nation-state to be midwived by the magnanimous British colonizer. Indeed, still so potent were the indigenous values governing Mughal society that the Mughals could not possibly perceive the Britons living and working among them as invaders and potential conquerors.

As a matter of fact, the same expatriate Britons who were frequently vilified as Nabobs by their own countrymen were often assimilated into the elite Indian culture as “Sahibs,” or aristocratic Indian males, through the conferral of symbolic gifts and titles by the Mughal aristocracy. The stereotypical Nabobs in popular literature from this era were lampooned for giving and receiving extravagant gifts/bribes. But this very characteristic of the Nabob in popular literature could be related to the frequent British misreading of the symbolic aspects of the Mughal Nawab’s dealings with the East India Company and its agents during the decade leading up to the 1757 Battle of Plassey and during the decade following it.<sup>3</sup> In general, eighteenth-century British historians who wrote about the Mughal Empire were aware of the continued potency of the Mughal Empire and its structures of power and legitimacy, whether or not they approved of this alien mode of governance. Authors of imaginative literature in the eighteenth century also adopted a similar attitude toward the Mughal Empire. Unfortunately, much of mid to late twentieth-century historiography about the Mughal Empire tends to downplay these material realities and accepts the often unstated premise that the Mughal Empire was

destined to be superseded by the modern nation-state after the Western European model introduced by the British colonizer.

The arguments outlined above suggest the need to correct the tendency of Western academic disciplines to project paradigms of East-West power inequity, certainly prevalent in the late nineteenth century, backwards into earlier eras of East-West contact. Radically underestimating the level of autonomy and independence enjoyed by most Eastern polities before the late nineteenth century, much postcolonial theory reconstructs the narrative of the East-West contact in terms of either ubiquitous Western domination and Eastern passivity or Western action and Eastern reaction.

For instance, the existing literary criticism, in spite of its admirable postcolonial agenda of demystifying and demythologizing the narrative of Western conquest and imperialism, has also read the Nabob as a transparent sign of the unquenchable British thirst for power and domination. Native “resistance” in this body of criticism appears almost exclusively in terms of reaction to Western agency. Thus, there is little willingness to consider the possibility that eighteenth-century Nabob literature could reflect and respond to native agency, and also that the Nabobs interested British writers and their readers because they demonstrated how powerfully a particular kind of British identity could be reshaped by a non-Western culture. As a matter of fact, so powerful were some of the native rulers and their underlings that the Britons living among them as merchants had no choice but to conform to the indigenous cultural norms. Many eighteenth-century poets, historians, and playwrights in whose works the Nabob figures prominently were actually conscious of this fact, whether or not they approved of the assertiveness of native values and manners to which the Nabobs often willingly

submitted. Unfortunately, such material realities shaping cross-cultural exchange are sometimes ignored by postcolonial literary criticism.

Consequently, the praiseworthy attempt by postcolonial historiography and theory to construct a vantage point beyond Western domination from which to reconstruct the narrative of East-West contact is sabotaged by anachronistic projections of late nineteenth-century power inequities back in time, as well as by a paradoxical reliance on Western forms of knowledge to the point of exclusivity. This school of postcolonial theory and historiography (indeed, they are mutually informative) insists upon retrieving Eastern agency in terms of “mimicry” and “subversion” of a putatively overwhelming and dominant Western presence, although such critical endeavors fly in the face of the material reality of the Indian subcontinent in the eighteenth century. In this context, I have in mind Homi K. Bhabha’s revision of the monolithic paradigm of East-West relationship originally posited by Edward W. Said in his *Orientalism* (1978). In spite of its usefulness when applied to nineteenth-century and later colonial texts, Bhabha’s strategy allows agency to the native only in terms of parodic reactions to ubiquitous yet internally fragmented Western agency. For Bhabha’s paradigm to be relevant, one must presuppose that a fully-fledged colonial discourse is already in place that constructs the native as an “almost the same, *but not quite*” Englishmen.<sup>4</sup> But the Bhabha-ian mimicman does not appear on the scene until well into the nineteenth century, by which time indigenous state formations and value systems had been almost obliterated by the utilitarian reforms carried out by the colonial state in India. I deal, however, with a historical period during which the autonomous Eastern cultural values and political/military actions still had concrete effects upon how the West perceived the East

as well as its own agents, the Nabobs, who resided in the East. In the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Plassey, the indigenous values of Mughal India continued to exert such a powerful influence on Indians as well as the Britons who lived among them that many Nabobs adopted Indian lifestyles and values, either willingly or out of necessity.

Thus, I finally argue that the postcolonial critic can successfully retrieve non-Western agency from the Nabob literature produced in the eighteenth century if and when he/she accepts that a ubiquitous Western domination was by no means a foregone conclusion at this time. Creative crosspollinations between the aristocratic Mughal manners and mores and the Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, mercantile ones originally borne by the merchant turned Nabob were still taking place. These crosspollinations were often viewed as unsettling in the Nabob literature precisely because eighteenth-century writers and readers did not assume what has become one of the underlying assumptions of a dominant paradigm of postcolonial historiography and theory: that the West was predestined to conquer the non-West and turn it into an apparently pacified yet unsettling parody of itself.

In the following sections of this introductory chapter, I shall illustrate my arguments outlined above with the help of concrete examples from existing social history, literary criticism, and postcolonial theory and historiography. Section two is specifically devoted to a critical overview of twentieth and late twentieth-century social history about the “gentrification” of the mercantile class that tends to treat the Nabob as a minor stereotype rather than as an important player in the on-going representational struggle in the eighteenth century. I end the section by making a transition into late

twentieth-century literary criticism of the postcolonial variety that also unintentionally replicates social history's lack of adequate attention to the figure of the Nabob as a very specific type of returnee from the East Indies, who appeared at a very specific point in the still on-going contact between the Mughal and the British Empires. In section three, I demonstrate how an intimate knowledge of the material realities prevalent in eighteenth-century Mughal India in particular and other traditional states like her in general, derived from certain twentieth and late twentieth-century western historical accounts, may be combined with an awareness of values indigenous to the Mughal Empire in order to rectify the inadequate treatment given to the Nabob in social history and literary criticism. In section four, I attempt to place my work in a critical conversation with twentieth and late-twentieth century postcolonial historiography and literary criticism, and I propose a methodology that combines Western historical and literary accounts of the Mughal-British contact with concurrent Eastern historical and literary accounts of the same. Such a combination can not only undercut the indubitable (overt or covert) Eurocentricity of most Western historical accounts but also question the chauvinistic nationalism many Eastern ones are prone to. Such a methodological approach is certainly not strikingly novel. Since the 1980s, many historians affiliated with the western academia have approached their material by using such a methodology. However, postcolonial theory and literary criticism have been rather less forthcoming than historiography to wake up to the challenge. As Donald R. Wehrs has pointed out, "Postcolonial theory remains wedded to ways of conceiving the relation of the non-West to the West, and of conceiving human motivations and political agency more generally, that emerged from a distinctively European mid-twentieth-century intellectual climate in

which non-Western peoples and societies were understood to be in principle incapable of historical emancipatory agency until “jump-started” by Western material and conceptual colonial violence.”<sup>5</sup> Consequently, my work joins the recent trend in postcolonial literary criticism that is attempting to incorporate non-Western historiography and value systems in order to challenge the hegemony of Western theoretical and critical paradigms.<sup>6</sup>

## II

### Reimagining the Nabob in Social History and Literary Criticism

The figure of the Nabob has been studied in literary and social histories as a part of the larger picture of the changing British attitudes toward mercantile wealth and influence. However, most of the existing studies do not treat the Nabob as a subject worthy of concentrated attention. John McVeagh’s *Tradeful Merchants: The Portrayal of the Capitalist in Literature* is the most ambitious among them, purporting to be a survey of the story of the “merchant dream” beginning in the middle ages and how it went sour after an initially enthusiastic reception in the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries. In McVeagh’s usage the “merchant dream” is an idealized perception of the overseas merchant’s activities: the merchant as the spreader of wealth across the globe, and a builder of bridges of friendship and peace through peaceful exchange of commodities. McVeagh points out that in the latter half of the eighteenth century:

Commerce was turning out a failed spell. That was one cause of disillusion. Another was the changing role of the merchant himself during the same years. A tendency described in the economic history of the

middle decades of the eighteenth century was for commercial companies to grow larger, and, as we saw reflected in the novels of Fielding, for merchants themselves to become figures more and more remote from daily experience and from shop or office contact, their business interests increasing in diversity and abstractedness.<sup>7</sup>

McVeagh correctly isolates the growing diversity of the merchant's activities as a major cause of the disillusionment with the "mercantile dream." The merchant was becoming more and more un-merchant like. McVeagh even goes as far as to point out the location where such un-merchant like behavior was manifesting itself most prominently: "Something had gone deeply wrong, writers found, with the merchant whom Defoe had idealized, had gone wrong more or less immediately after Defoe ceased writing, *and had gone wrong most of all in India* [italics added]" (99). McVeagh's valuable insight is chronologically premature and inaccurate. First, McVeagh stops short of pinpointing any one specific aspect of the merchant's professional transgression in India that caused such disillusionment, although it is strongly implied in his comments about the Nabobs: "Returning East Indian Nabobs, ostentatious, corrupt, as people judged, and casting by their huge sudden wealth a sinister light on how the East India Company's servants had carried out their employee's business in Asia, and what that business was, and whether all other business was of the same nature, provided a major cause of the growing disaffection with commerce at large" (83-84). McVeagh treats the Nabob and the "manner in which he carried out his business in Asia" as a significant cause of the disillusionment with the merchant dream. However, he does not look deeper into a particular aspect of the Nabob's character in contravention of his original pacific calling:

that of turning into an alien warrior. Second, the Nabob as the merchant turned militarist did not make his debut “immediately after Defoe ceased writing” as McVeagh claims. According to McVeagh’s chronology, the Nabob appeared in England during the late 1720s, although one has to wait at least thirty more years for the Nabob to appear on the scene.

James Raven in his *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England 1750-1800* basically agrees with McVeagh on the point that the latter half of the eighteenth century was especially marked by its vituperative portrayal of upstart mercantile wealth. However, Raven’s study is a considerable advance on McVeagh’s, because he emphasizes the existence of a powerful counter-discourse defending the merchants against such attacks, and traces its roots in the popular sermons and tracts of the seventeenth century that promoted the ideals of the Christian gentleman. Raven goes beyond the popular Whig propaganda in defense of mercantile wealth of the early eighteenth century, and traces the origins of the positive portrayals of the merchant in the latter half of the eighteenth century to a much older debate about the essence of gentlemanly conduct. Addison and Steele’s oft-quoted idealizations of the merchants are merely a latter day expression of this ancient debate. According to Raven, the continued presence of the positive portrayal of the overseas merchant relied on an emphasis on “gentlemanly calling” rather than on the practical advantages of commercial activities: “Throughout the period [the latter half of the eighteenth century] unblemished portrayals of the English overseas merchant continued, even though virtually every other trading profession was subject to attack.” Raven goes on to say, “approval for the overseas merchant, however, was measured in new terms. He was increasingly depicted not as the

representative of the sort of commercial values spelled out in early eighteenth century tracts, but as the worthy citizen and neighbor who used his wealth to the benefit of the local community.”<sup>8</sup> Raven traces such defenses of the merchant to popular conduct books, and sermons dating back to the sixteenth century: “From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century a distinctive respect for the merchant was upheld by the conduct book and reinforced by sermons and religious essays” (*Popular Publishing*, 91).

Commenting on Richard Allestree’s *The Gentleman’s Calling* (1660), one such influential conduct book that contributed to the extension of gentlemanly status to the merchant, Raven writes, “Such a ‘calling’ admitted not only the idea of occupation and livelihood, but also of an impulse, a summons from God, a direction towards particular duties and responsibilities. Its enactment led to that state of grace and obedience into which the Christian was truly called” (*Popular Publishing*, 102). Such an idealization of the merchant’s vocation had a direct impact on popular literature according to Raven: “Charity, benevolence, humility and service to the community became the leading qualities displayed by the mercantile heroes in plays, periodical essays, and imaginative prose and poetry” (*Popular Publishing*, 109-10).

Perry Gauci in *The Politics of Trade: The Overseas Merchant in Trade and Society 1660-1720* (2001) has further problematized the debate about the status of the merchant in society by examining the merchant’s claim to professionalism in seventeenth-century handbooks on trade and commerce. Although merchants were never fully allowed professional status as were physicians and lawyers in the eighteenth century, it was frequently demanded in writings about trade that especially the overseas merchant should be accorded some sort of professional status. Gauci extends Raven’s

recognition of a sense of religious calling in the pro-mercantile representations in the latter half of the eighteenth century to the seventeenth-century publications written by merchants, which purported to explain the practical functioning of trade and commerce. In such works the merchant not only projected himself in the image of a professional body of men with clearly defined methods of operation and codes of conduct to be taken on an equally serious footing with the physicians and lawyers, but also laid claim to the pursuit of a virtue encompassing yet transcending the profit motive, the common accusation hurled against merchants. Lewes Robert's *Merchant's Map of Commerce* (1638), one such influential handbook of commerce and trade written by a merchant, proudly and meticulously lists all the professional skills such as accounting, languages, navigation, etc., that a merchant needs to acquire in order to function profitably. Gauci points out that Roberts goes beyond a mere statement of professional competency and extrapolates from the merchants' practical abilities a wider virtue based on their collective and individual value to the state: "The merchant was seen as a prime candidate for magistracy, 'his wisdom, travel, and experience abroad' suiting him for the role of the governor and 'good patriot.' In Roberts' eyes, there was little that the merchants could not do, and such evident utility demanded the respect and thanks of the community."<sup>9</sup>

However, Roberts had in mind an unadulterated pacific role for the merchant despite his elevated and potentially multifaceted calling in life. In contrast, during the latter half of the eighteenth century when the so-perceived predatory Nabobs made their appearance on the social scene, eminent philosophers and economic thinkers like Adam Smith were cautioning against the merchant assuming a "sovereign" (becoming rulers and administrators) role in violation of their commercial identity in their overseas spheres

of activity.<sup>10</sup> Both the idealized portraits of the merchant promoted by the well-meaning gentleman authors like Joseph Addison, and the professional one aspired to by the wealthy and powerful overseas merchants would seem to disavow the assuming of a military character on the part of the merchant.

The above-mentioned works on the debate about the merchant's role in society concur on the point that the merchants aspired to a virtuous calling, and its violation was castigated in negative representations such as the East India Nabob. However, none of these sources manage to point out the exact cause of the violent reaction to the Nabob. It was precisely the fact that the East India Nabob, originally a pacific merchant, had transformed himself into an Oriental aristocratic warrior that led to such violent reactions.

In this respect J. M. Holzman's pioneering study of the social and political impact of the Nabobs in England, aptly entitled *The Nabobs in England: A Study of the Returned Anglo-Indian, 1760-1785* (1926), offers invaluable insights. Holzman confirms that despite the alien nature of their actual sphere of activities, the East India Company Nabobs were first and foremost merchants by training and vocation: "By the education which it demanded of its servants, and by the titles which it gave them, the Company seemed determined to proclaim that no matter how much government, diplomacy, and war might sometimes enlist their energies, commerce was still their main concern."<sup>11</sup> Holzman goes on to pinpoint the main reason behind the cultural anxiety triggered by the Nabobs: "Here was the real sin of the Nabobs. They were not of the *callings* [italics added] to which the prizes of war and politics rightfully belonged. That the conquerors and administrators of an empire should gather vast fortunes was, in the eighteenth century, natural and inevitable." He adds, "Such rewards were the recognized perquisites

of soldiers, sailors, and politicians. For them to be reaped by the subordinates of a commercial company was grotesque and intolerable violation of all the rules of the game” (21).

In an age when the military and naval heroes, as well as politicians, were acquiring vast fortunes through prizes taken from conquered and captured enemy territories and enemy trading vessels at sea or through windfalls from successful negotiations of treaties without any public outcry, the merchant turned Nabob became the target of much hostile criticism because he had presumed to take up the mantle of warrior, and had dared to keep the spoils of war and conquest for his personal aggrandizement. The result, according to Holzman, was that “the England whose Royal Navy was as avaricious of prize money as of glory taxed the Nabob’s rapacity, and the England whose House of Commons was merchantable commodity slurred their honour” (Ibid.). Although Holzman’s pioneering study of the Nabob is remarkable for its even-handedness in pointing out the fact that the Nabob was no more or no less corrupt than his age in general, it suffers from a serious flaw. It tends to be Eurocentric when it comes to comparing the morals and manners of England with those of India. Holzman superimposes British political and moral concerns on the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century without any second thought.

For instance, while, rationalizing the widespread accusation of corruption against Nabobs, he attempts to be fair and claims that neither India nor Britain at this period practiced financial disinterestedness in politics and places of power. Holzman implies that Britain at least preached such disinterestedness but India was unashamedly corrupt: “The Nabobs came from an England in which financial disinterestedness in politics was a

mere theory, to an India in which it was not even that. Exposed to such a combination of influences, they practiced the methods of both western and eastern jobbery” (9). Holzman applies the notion of widespread bribery and graft to all kinds of transactions between East India Company officials and the Nawabs, thereby ignoring the complex symbolic significances of the exchange of gifts and favors in the Mughal imperial power structure, not that there were not frequent and widespread abuses of such symbolic instruments, especially with the intensified British presence in the eighteenth century. In other words, Holzman’s study *does* point out two of the main contentions of my dissertation, that Nabobs were merchants turned warriors in violation of their calling, and also that they were associated with the rhetoric of giving and receiving favors and presents. However, because of his Eurocentric bias, Holzman interprets such rhetoric as a mere smokescreen for bribery and entirely misses the complex connections such rhetoric has with the Mughal imperial economy of prestation, which was based on the conferral of favors and honors upon the vassal by the lord in exchange for services rendered.

The above attempt to correct a tendency in existing social history to marginalize the Nabob as a minor colonial stereotype instead of treating him as a major player in the on-going struggle over the control of mercantile representations naturally leads one to correct a similar bias in literary criticism. The martial posturing of the Nabob as a clear sign of the violation of his original peaceful vocation has been hitherto unrecognized by recent postcolonial readings of the so-called Nabob literature. Recently the Nabob has come under valuable critical consideration as a site of cultural anxiety in the eighteenth-century. For instance, Nandini Bhattacharya has read what she calls “the nabob literature” as a space for the shaping of domestic gender ideology. Bhattacharya writes: “While

some literature on the nabob such as Samuel Foote's play *The Nabob* (1772) depicts the nabob as orientalized and corrupted, there is a concomitant sentimental literature on the nabob, and especially the female nabob, which depicts and celebrates the colonial heiress as a virtuous victor over oriental and female corruption."<sup>12</sup> In her reading of Foote's play and some other texts, Bhattacharya demonstrates that the virtuous bourgeois female gradually domesticated the Nabob and his wealth by acting as a register of Britishness.

More recently, Bridget Orr has argued that the figure of the colonial Returnee in Restoration and early eighteenth-century drama is one of the most obvious indicators of the contemporary concern about foreign policy and empire, despite the previous critical consensus about the predominantly domestic preoccupations of the drama in question.<sup>13</sup> Both Bhattacharya and Orr, however, are less accurate than one would expect about the representational baggage carried by the term Nabob in the periods they are respectively scrutinizing. Orr is, of course, focused on the Restoration and the Augustan era, and Bhattacharya begins with Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*, first produced in 1722, and ends her discussion with Frances Burney's play *A Busy Day* (1801). Orr, for instance, claims that late seventeenth-century plays like *Sir Courtly Nice* introduced such "emergent types" as the Nabob.<sup>14</sup> However, the term "Nabob" had not yet been deployed by British authors to describe English returnees from India. It still denoted the native military governors of India, with whom the colonial merchants had to deal. In other words, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, these stage-Englishmen returned from India were still recognizably merchants, despite their exotic connections and outlandish habits. It was only in the mid-eighteenth century and later that a small number of Englishmen returned from India began to be called Nabobs.

While Orr's effort to place the Restoration drama and stage emphatically on the growing critical project of retrieving the history of the complex interrelations between literature and imperialism is a highly useful one, her tracing of the Nabob as an "emergent type" in this drama is ahistorical as well as anachronistic. Bhattacharya also employs the term anachronistically in her discussion of an early eighteenth-century play like *The Conscious Lovers*. She refers to Indiana, the daughter of Mr. Sealand, an East India merchant, as a "nabobess," although we have to wait several more decades for the term to be employed in popular parlance to describe a certain kind of English men and women returning from India.<sup>15</sup> In section four of this chapter, I shall revisit such postcolonial literary criticism, especially Bridget Orr's critique of Restoration drama, in order to demonstrate its investment in a paradigm of East-West contact solely based on Western action and Eastern reaction, Western originality and Eastern parody.

Of course, this dissertation is not directed at mere hair splitting over a term. On the contrary, it aims to address the lack of critical attention allotted to the central space occupied by the Nabob in the conflicted history of the representation of the British merchant in the eighteenth century and, by extension, intends to correct a tendency in both postcolonial historiography and literary criticism to ignore the still autonomous and indigenous cultural values which not only governed the subjects of the Mughal Empire but also exerted a considerable influence upon the Nabobs, who resided among them. I shall hereafter consistently refer to the British returnee from India, whose wealth and habits were morally suspect, as the "Nabob" and to the honest British merchant returning from India with a modest fortune as the honest Returnee. In addition, I shall be employing the term "Nawab," a more accurate transcription of the Indo-Persian title of

the native civil-cum military governors of the Mughal Empire when referring to these aristocratic officials turned independent or semi-independent rulers of the imperial provinces in the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

### III

#### Material Realities and Indigenous Values to the Rescue

Existing postcolonial readings of the Nabob literature and the literary and social histories that record the British public's reactions to upstart wealth in general and the Nabob in particular are useful for reevaluating this body of popular literature as a site where multiple political as well as socio-cultural issues were being contested. However, none of these literary criticisms and historical studies adequately attempts to place the Nabob literature in the intense speculations engaged in by British historiographers, political and social thinkers, and authors of imaginative literature in the eighteenth century about the origins, the power structures, and the sources of legitimacy in the Mughal Empire, wherein the British Nabobs made their mark.

Anxiety about the British merchants going native and being infected by the peculiarly anti-British and unchristian martial characteristics of the Mughal despots has to be understood more specifically in terms of the disjunctions as well as continuities between an expanding British imperial nation-state, with its peculiar notions of liberty, and a "traditional state" or "composite empire" like the Mughal Empire, which held on to its belief in its own status as an eternal polity throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>17</sup> In this section I shall demonstrate that a combination of an empirical historical account of the

material circumstances under which many Britons resided in the Indian subcontinent in the eighteenth century, and an understanding of the indigenous value systems which regulated social relationships in the Mughal Empire allows the postcolonial critic to surmount the crippling difficulties faced by some varieties of social history as well as literary criticism, which have attempted to deal with the Nabob unsuccessfully.

During the mid-eighteenth century, at a time when the Mughal Empire was still very much alive albeit beleaguered, the East India Company in Mughal India had already become an independent “warlord” with a formidable military force at its disposal that allowed it to influence local politics and dictate terms to the Nawabs. The Company maintained small numbers of professional soldiers in its factories and trading posts in the East Asian littoral from the very inception of its trading activities in that part of the world in the early seventeenth century. However, in the early days these forces were designed to maintain law and order within the factories and residences and to crush pilfering and unauthorized trading. The factories and establishments themselves were isolated from the neighboring native communities, and the inmates led a sedentary life of their own, minding their own business and largely avoiding confrontations with the country powers as much as possible. During this period, the East India Company functionaries and their dependents in the East Indies were going through a particular phase in the evolution of the Company that T. G. Percival Spear has termed the “factory life.”

The factories were well-fortified trading stations built strategically along the seacoasts of India. According to the *OED*, a factory is “an establishment for traders carrying on business in a foreign country; a merchant company's trading station.” Among the earliest examples of the usage of “factory” in this sense, the *OED* lists the

following dated 1682, “*Lond. Gaz.* No. 1692/1 The total subversion of their Factory at Amoy.” The *London Gazette* entry could very well be reporting one of the many setbacks English East India Company suffered at the hands of European rivals and local potentates in the East during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The first factories in India were built in the seventeenth century. According to Spear, “At the opening of the [seventeenth] century English society was confined to the four main settlements of Madras (Fort St. George), Calcutta (Fort William), Surat and Bombay.”<sup>18</sup> Factory life was characterized by a lack of broad cultural and social contact between the English and the larger native population. The factors or the senior merchants were engaged in legal trade under the protection of the local representatives of the Mughal Emperor, or the independent ruler of a particular region, as the case might be. The young recruits were called the “writers.” According to the *OED*, one of the several meanings of “writer” was “a clerk in the service of the former East India Company.” There were also mercenary soldiers in the factories, whose job was mainly to enforce discipline inside the factories and guard the valuables.

In other words, there was a clear division of duties and responsibilities among the different groups in the factories. The merchants were supposed to devote themselves to the motto of maximum profit in minimum time, of course by legitimate trading, whereas the soldiers basically played the role of military police until 1746, when the first war against the French began in India, and the regular British Indian army came into existence (Spear, *The Nabobs*, 15). Watching over the young writers and the more experienced factors was the governor or the President of the factory, who carried out his office amid much pomp and ceremony. Spear observes, “The governor was usually no

exceptional man. He was the senior member of the council, the eldest of the few who had survived the strain of English habits in a tropical climate, and owed his position more to longevity and a tough constitution than to anything else.” Spear goes on to add that the Governor’s duties were first and foremost commercial: “He spent most of his time, when not in the consultation room, in the sorting godowns, inspecting and checking the country goods, preparing the annual cargoes, and receiving goods from Europe, and only as a secondary duty maintained order in the factory and negotiated with the country powers. He was not yet intoxicated by military success [sic] nor dazzled by dreams of empire” (6).

In many cases, these local potentates only nominally acknowledged the Mughal Emperor. However, the native rulers were very much in charge, and the English factors relied on their verbal as well as written assurances of protection and continuing trading privileges. As a matter of fact, the English were frequently competing with their Dutch rivals for local royal favor at this period. Although the prevailing mood seems to have been one of mutual profit between the native powers and the English, there were occasions when the factories felt the wrath of their native hosts for various treaty-related reasons.<sup>19</sup>

The English factor of this period (the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century) was a creature marked by the anxiety to improve his profits, to keep European rivals at bay, and to placate the local authorities. In the mercantile discourse of this period, one comes across native terms such as *Sunnuds* and *Parwanas*, which were various legal instruments on parchment frequently composed in ornamental calligraphy in native languages, ratifying the limits and extent of the English factors’ trading privileges.

Such legal instruments reflected the still mostly one-sided power relationship between the native profferer of favors and the English recipient. Most often written in Persian, the language of diplomacy in the Mughal Empire, these documents emphasize the submissive position of the English merchant and the supposedly disinterested magnanimity of the native granter of the privilege.

However, this picture underwent a rapid and dramatic change by the mid-eighteenth century when the Company became one of the “country powers” and an arbiter in the power struggle between various parties in the absence of a strong Mughal imperial center.<sup>20</sup> The Company began to raise substantially large forces with a core of European mercenaries and a large number of native soldiers. With similar military build up by the French factories and trading establishments in India, the East India Company had more incentive to build its own forces.<sup>21</sup>

The British public apparently never found the Company’s need to maintain a ready armed force in the sprawling Mughal Empire to be unbecoming of its commercial goals and vocation. After all, these were the realms of despotic Oriental monarchs where trade was supposedly under constant threat from the changing whims of local warlords and their overlords, not to mention the numerous armed bands of rebels and malcontents that abounded there. In addition, during the commencement of the Seven Years War (1756-63), the most important mercantile war on a global scale in the eighteenth century, the British military-fiscal state dispatched crown troops and Royal Navy warships to the Mughal Empire to back up the Company in its escalating conflict with the country powers and the rival French Company.<sup>22</sup>

Collectively the mercantile companies and corporations routinely raised armed forces and deployed them in combat in the eighteenth century, but there also existed the parallel popular discursive construct of the British merchants as peaceful spreaders of wealth and plenty on a global scale. The global mercantile wars fought over most of the eighteenth century were not always advantageous to British trade interests. However, the common people responded with enthusiasm to overseas military success in an age of frequent riots which were quelled by the military in the absence of an effective modern police force.<sup>23</sup> The public adored military and naval heroes, who frequently enriched themselves with the prizes taken in successful campaigns. In an age of the rise of a patriotic British national identity, the systematic use of military force overseas to defend and extend British mercantile interests was welcomed with warmth and approval, although a large standing army stationed at home was still regarded with suspicion.<sup>24</sup>

The military or naval hero returning home with the spoils of war was an object of adoration and approval because it was merely a perquisite of his calling. However, naval heroes were certainly more likely than military ones to make fortunes, ranging from modest to extravagant. Among eighteenth-century British naval officers, the life and fortunes of Admiral Sir Peter Warren (1703-1752) is illustrative of the way many could combine success in war with personal enrichment without incurring the kind of infamy that was heaped on the Nabobs. The amendment to the existing prize law in 1708 opened up opportunities for British Navy officers like Warren to make their fortunes by taking enemy vessels at sea. As Julian Gwyn has pointed out, “For an admiral actively engaged at sea the making of a modest fortune was almost a certainty from the war of 1739-48 onwards.”<sup>25</sup> Between 1739 and 1748 Admiral Warren earned a total of £127, 405 in prize

money, which did not prevent him from pursuing a successful political career or from achieving a moderate fame as a philanthropist. Had it not been for his sudden death at the age of forty eight, he would have certainly distinguished himself during the Seven Years War and added to his fortune in prize money.<sup>26</sup> Admiral Warren certainly paved the way for the officers who were to distinguish themselves in the Seven Years War, such as Admiral Edward Boscawen. Only rarely were military or Naval heroes vilified, except when they failed to show valor in the face of enormous odds. For instance, Admiral John Byng, in spite of a long, distinguished career, became a public enemy because of his supposed cowardice.<sup>27</sup>

Military and naval heroes could retain substantial fortunes gained in the theatre of war without incurring censure as long as they fought courageously and gave the British public occasions to celebrate spectacular victories. The Nabob, by contrast, was condemned for the fortune he frequently gained as direct or indirect result of successful warfare, although he could also be a successful and brave warrior. The military successes of Nabobs like Robert Clive were indisputable, yet they were castigated for the fortunes they had made by waging war, because they were merchants and, as such, had no rights to perquisites and prize money.

Although the use of military violence by a corporate body like the East India Company against the country powers and European rivals in trade during the Seven Years War was acceptable to the British public, they condemned the British Nabob for violating his calling as a merchant by adopting military means or a military posture along with his offensive rhetoric of giving. The evidently close relationship between the military-fiscal state and the mercantile establishment in the eighteenth century and the

popular view of the overseas British merchant as a professional gentleman engaged in his peaceful vocation were not necessarily mutually exclusive.<sup>28</sup> The merchant in his idealized representation was consistently a patriotic and pacific gentleman, but as a corporate body the East India Company could wage war as long as it served the general national interest. The British public could accept a mercantile company's need to defend its interests at a time when the nation was engaged in a global war against the French enemy, because the East India Company's armed activities in India could easily be subsumed under the global war effort. But how did the Company become a military and political force to be reckoned with in the Mughal Empire during the Seven Years War?

Anthony Giddens' notion of the traditional state with its essential internal heterogeneity and lack of effective administrative control and its far from perfect claim on the monopoly over the means of violence goes a long way to explain how a mercantile company came to hold the position of an independent warlord in eighteenth-century Mughal India.<sup>29</sup> However, it does not explain how a group of merchants, albeit a powerful European Company, elevated itself collectively to the status of an aristocratic warlord in a traditional state ruled by a warlike aristocracy. Obviously the Company's wealth and superior military organization played a vital role in its rise to eminence in local politics. However, a more precise explanation of the complex of cultural and economic factors that contributed to this radical transformation is obviously needed here.

Sudipta Sen's reading of the Company's initial conquests in India in terms of its struggle to control the access and passage of goods and people to the native marketplaces in eastern and northern India in the eighteenth century provides us with a plausible explanation. From the very beginning of its trading activities in Mughal India in the early

seventeenth century, the Company complained of what it perceived as irrational obstacles to free access to markets in the shape of countless tolls and tributes demanded by the local powers. The various *Farmans* or imperial deeds that the company obtained from the Mughal Emperors were, in the Company's eyes, designed to cut through these hindrances and help British trade flow unimpeded.<sup>30</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century, with the decline of central Mughal authority, the complex system of tolls and tributes multiplied alarmingly as provincial Nawabs became independent or semi-independent, and various other local warlords also asserted their own authority. According to Sen, it was a time of multiple and thriving marketplaces under the jurisdiction of multiple authorities, secular as well as sacred. The marketplaces often served as the symbolic spaces authenticating the rulers' claim to authority: "Precolonial rulers in India did not own their markets as private property. Neither were they interested in the upkeep of marketplaces merely to extract dues from commerce. Some of their exactions were quite inconsiderable in monetary terms. It was much more important for ruling houses to be able to display rights over people and goods and thus partake in the creation of affluence" (*Empire of Free Trade*, 15). What the Company saw as chaos and tyranny of the carnivalesque native marketplace had a logic of its own and served the needs of the natives adequately.

It is in this context of apparent anarchy that the Company came to have an escalating confrontation with the native powers in Bengal, namely the young Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula. The Company refused to recognize the Nawab's authority and pay the tolls demanded by his officials for the passage of Company goods to native marketplaces, and treated the *Farmans* bestowed on it by the previous Mughal Emperors as charters it had bought legally. Frequently, the Company's officials issued *Dastaks* or hand-notes,

supposedly based on the authorities of the original *Farmans*, and expected the Nawab's officials to respect them and allow free passage to their goods. Thus a fundamental schism appeared between the Company's interpretation of the *Farmans* and the native understanding of such imperial favors. As Sen points out, "Such a gift was not to be further distributed or sold. Symbols of imperial favor in this society, including grants and titles in land, articles of honor, and marks of royal insignia, had always been withdrawn from everyday use and preserved as family heirlooms in the households so favored"(63). In addition, the *Farmans* were a part of an elaborate court ritual that sealed the bonds between the ruling dynasty and their aristocratic retainers and military servants. Such occasions were marked by the symbolic exchange of elaborately crafted robes and turbans. The ruler tying a turban on the head of a servant or wrapping a shawl around his shoulders signified an inalienable gift that would remain in the recipient's family exclusively.

It is important to grasp how far removed these exchanges of gifts in the Mughal Empire were from a modern market exchange, because the failure of the official East India Company policy to accept and respect these differences led to the military conflict between the Company and the Nawab of Bengal that, in its turn, led to the Battle of Plassey in 1757. In addition, and perhaps not so paradoxically, the ability to accept and conform to such ritual exchanges in the aftermath of the Battle of Plassey allowed some Britons to assimilate themselves into the Mughal military aristocracy, when they accepted honors and titles bestowed on them by the Nawab. Were these gifts absolutely voluntary and free? Did they reflect indigenous values at work that were absolutely beyond Western notions of economic exchange? Marcel Mauss in his seminal work *The Gift:*

*Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1967) has pointed out that even in “archaic” or “primitive” societies such gifts are given and repaid under obligation.<sup>31</sup> However, there is a fundamental difference between a modern market exchange and a community based on prestation, as has been noted by John R. McLane: “[In such a community] the donor always anticipated a return, whether in the form of higher spiritual standing in this life, a better after-life, reciprocal presents and favors, or more appreciative and loyal members of the community. But the return was ideally disassociated temporally from the act of giving. This imbued the gift with an aura of generosity and moral character which the explicit contract and market exchange lacked.”<sup>32</sup> The “aura of generosity and moral character” in such rituals alluded to by McLane was much more than a superficial or cynical one. In Mughal India, both Hindu and Muslim traditions of piety concurred in emphasizing gift-giving and receiving as intrinsically conducive to spiritual welfare as well as to greater cohesion in temporal communities.<sup>33</sup> With the advent of commercialization of social relationships introduced by foreign influence and domestic complicity, such prestation had undoubtedly become tainted with mercenary and purely worldly motives in the declining years of the eighteenth century, but it is difficult to believe that the ritual elements had already come to stand for empty gestures hiding the naked mercenary motives in the eyes of the natives. As Sen has contended, “[Despite the commercialization] it is difficult to accept that there had emerged a pervasive commutation of tribute to money as there are no indigenous or contemporary criteria as such to draw a distinction between the politics of the gift and the politics of profit. Patronage of the *darbar* [courts of the native rulers] was always regarded above mere money” (*Empire of Free Trade*, 70).

The Mughal Empire was far from being a “state-less” or primitive society referred to by Mauss, although ritual exchange of gifts within the cultural and political framework of the Empire similar to “total prestation” (as defined by Mauss) probably did exist. According to Mauss “total prestation” is characterized by the following: a) exchange takes place between groups and tribes instead of individuals; b) exchange is not only exclusively of goods and personal property, but also of military assistance, entertainments, women, and children.<sup>34</sup> The Mughal Empire was, as John R. McLane has pointed out, “a segmented society with political communities fragmented at the higher levels” in the eighteenth century. As such the ritual aspects of the giving and receiving of gifts played a significant symbolic function in creating order and establishing hierarchy in the absence of any coherent notion of nationhood in the Mughal Empire.<sup>35</sup>

Significantly, although the Company had received the imperial *Farmans* from time to time, they did not come with the bestowal of the full ceremonial regalia that symbolized the bonding between aristocratic masters and servants. Sen points out, “A privilege to trade freely was certainly not among the most honorable grants given out by the Mughals, and it did not provide the English with the adequate regalia with which to disregard the presence of the Bengal Nawabs” (*Empire of Free Trade*, 63). The Company had been given trading privileges as a free and inalienable gift as a sign of the magnanimity of the Emperor that in no way changed the fact that the Company and its functionaries were lowly merchants in the eyes of the august Mughal Empire and its governors. Such ceremonies were exclusively reserved for the inner circles of the dominant class in a traditional state like the Mughal Empire.

In this respect Sen's reading of the conflict over the symbols of prestige and authority could be related to Giddens' notion that in the traditional state an overall ideological consensus was not necessary for effective rule; the commoners could go their own way as long as they did not challenge the center: "What matters is the ideological hegemony of the ruler and the higher circles of the state apparatus over the remainder of the dominant class and administrative officialdom."<sup>36</sup> The ceremonial regalia and the exchange of gifts was a symbolic way of cementing the hegemony of the dynast over his aristocratic retainers and military leaders. What was reserved exclusively for the chosen few, the Company attempted to turn into exchangeable commodity, thereby raising the ire of the native Nawab.

In addition to the abuse of exclusive imperial *Farmans*, the Company functionaries also began to dabble in the trade of such "honor goods" as salt, betel leaf, and saltpetre, which were also traditionally bestowed as favors on the loyal retainers of the realm. Sen points out, "These items were what might be described as the merchandise of honor, objects endowed with distinctive value and signs of the ruler's substantive authority. By making them available to merchants and agents (*gumashtas*), the Company was disrupting the hierarchy of goods in the marketplace which marked the relationships between subsistence and prestige and the order of things that related cultivator to agent, agent to trader, and trader to ruler" (*Empire of Free Trade*, 82). By turning the exclusive spirit of the *Farmans* into easily transferable currency and meddling in the trade of prestige goods, the Company had in the eyes of the native Nawab overstepped its legitimate limit as a trading community and behaved like upstart aristocrats. In order to uphold his hereditary privileges, the Nawab employed military force against the

Company and its trading establishments. The conflict escalated until on June 23, 1757, the Company forces led by Colonel Robert Clive defeated the Nawab of Bengal at the Battle of Plassey. However, in the aftermath of the Battle of Plassey, the Mughal Nawabs actively wooed the battle-tested Nabobs like Clive with gifts and titles in order to encourage them to assimilate themselves into the Mughal military aristocracy.

Consequently, the representations of the Nabob in popular literature of the period under discussion need to be read not only in view of a substantial section of the British public's failure to comprehend the symbolic nature of the ceremonial act of bestowing favors in a still pre-capitalist economy of prestation but also in the context of the acceptance of such rituals by some Britons in Mughal India. Without the aid of such a bifocal approach, one risks misconstruing the Nabob literature as the reflection of an invariably dominant colonial discourse and, as a result, completely missing the role of native agency in shaping the stereotype of the Nabob. In the popular literature appearing between 1757 and 1789, the British merchant turned Nabob takes up the stereotypical attributes of the Nawab, as he was imagined by the British public. He is also an arrogant flaunter of wealth and unsought-after gifts, which more often than not are designed to compromise the time honored virtues of "little" England. In addition, the merchant turned Nabob has violated the boundaries of a sacred vocation by adopting the martial posturing of the Nawab, a threatening member of an alien military aristocracy, who often inexplicably resorts to military violence to revoke and rescind the favors once bestowed on the peaceful British Merchant by his (the Mughal Nawab's) own imperial masters. The Nabob, moreover, carries the burden of an unholy association with the political, religious, sexual, ethnic, and linguistic plurality of the Mughal Empire. Although the

brief description of the stereotypical Nabob in eighteenth-century popular writing provided above is certainly Eurocentric, it should be evident that it was substantially shaped by Western reaction to Eastern agency in the shape of cultural autonomy and political self confidence.

#### IV

#### Rethinking the Postcolonial Paradigm of the East-West Contact

The Nabob literature has been read by social historians and literary critics as a passing expression of popular anxiety about arriviste wealth, and/or of the fear of gender and racial contamination. In addition, it has been read for its contribution to the formation of an idealized domestic sphere. In this section, I argue that the so-called Nabob literature appearing between 1757 and 1789 needs to be read in terms of moral and ethical questionings about the true vocation of the overseas British merchant under serious threat in the Mughal Empire, whose overwhelming plurality of mores and manners still remained alarmingly potent and, apparently, highly contagious.

Such a reading would add to the existing body of literary, economic, and cultural history which attempts to trace the gradual rise of the British Merchant as a class and an economic and political force to be reckoned with in the eighteenth century. However, my reading does not rely on the linear metanarrative of the British Merchant's growth as a political and economic class. On the contrary, it subscribes to a more disruptive history of British mercantilism, which had a cooperative as well as confrontational relationship with the aristocrat-dominated fiscal military state in the eighteenth century. By extension, my

reading will explore the often glossed-over cultural consequences and ethical questionings about merchants resorting to military violence in the overseas theaters of trade in the eighteenth century, which often erupted into warfare between rival European mercantile nations, or between “country powers” and the British mercantile Company.

I shall demonstrate that rather than taking such un-merchant like behavior for granted, the popular stage-plays and fiction critically commented on such perceived transgressions of the putatively peaceful vocation of the British merchant. My reading will further situate the Nabob in a crucial stage in the development of British popular attitudes and notions about acquiring and holding a traditional empire with its bewildering plurality of mores and manners still intact. As such, my discussion will serve as a explicatory and analytical bridge between the era of utilitarian reforms that were soon to be undertaken in the future management of the Mughal Empire in order to transform it into a part of the British Empire and the culturally and ideologically threatening moment of plurality of the Mughal Empire that still continued unabated for some time after the pivotal year of 1757.

Consequently, the literary and non-literary texts to be analyzed in my dissertation are going to be placed firmly within a unique moment of contact between the British Empire and her Mughal counterpart in the eighteenth century. This particular time period between the 1757 Battle of Plassey and the 1817 publication of James Mill’s *The History of British India* is characterized by the continued resurgence of the indigenous values that had sustained the Mughal Empire for ages and also by the readiness among some Britons residing in the empire to assimilate these values. My reading of such texts written by British as well as native authors during this brief period of cultural and ideological

indeterminacy about the nature of empire and domination and will propose a critical perspective that goes beyond the Said-eian “monolithic Western domination/ utter Eastern passivity” or the Bhabha-ian “unsettling mimicry” paradigms sometimes ahistorically employed in some recent full-length critical readings of literary texts from the eighteenth century and earlier.

The cultural and ideological indeterminacy of this particular period should not be confused with the transhistorical, indeed, ahistorical cultural indeterminacy Bhabha reads into all kinds of colonial encounters regardless of time and space: from the nineteenth-century attempts by the British colonial government in India to construct the native as the almost-but-not-quite Englishmen, to the experience of the postcolonial migrant subject in the late twentieth century. During the period I am concerned with, the values and forms of governance indigenous to the Mughal Empire were still so potent that instead of Indian subjects being constrained to mimic the model of civility offered by Englishmen among them, many Britons actually assimilated the native values and ways of life.

Prominent among recent full-length studies of eighteenth-century British literature from some variant of the Bhabha-ian perspective, as noted briefly above, are Balachandra Rajan’s *Under Western Eyes: From Milton to Macaulay* (1999) and Bridget Orr’s *Empire on the English Stage 1660-1740* (2001). Both studies rest on the underlying premise that Western dominance is ubiquitous yet always already fragmented, and resistance is built into its very fabric waiting to be unearthed by the postcolonial critic. In his reading of seventeenth-century “imperialist” texts in *Under Western Eyes*, Balachandra Rajan detects a certain defensiveness and a tendency to “avoid confronting itself” in the discourse of early British imperialism with the gory realities of conquest in the East

Indies, which, nevertheless, was a discourse of dominance.<sup>37</sup> Rajan further asserts, “Participations in discourses of dominance is not deficient in nuances, but the dominance should not be submerged in studying the nuances” (14).

Notwithstanding his fine attention to the said nuances in the gradual unfolding of an imperial discourse, Rajan turns British imperialism into an exclusively metropolitan affair: “The renaissance preliminaries to the decisive articulation of an imperial discourse on India are not merely preliminaries; they also carry into that discourse the structures, perplexities, and self-examinations of Reformation religious thought” (4). Rajan’s chronology is highly erratic. Right before he determines that the “Renaissance preliminaries” of British imperial discourse were much more than mere preliminaries, he informs his readers, “By the end of the Seventeenth century, it can almost be said that the *preliminary* draft of a discourse that would govern English construction of India is lying in wait for India’s acquisition” [italics added] (8). One is left to wonder how many “preliminaries” to the fully-fledged discourse of British imperialism there were and in what order they appeared in. In his commendable zeal in placing *The Lusiad* (1572), a Renaissance Portuguese epic, firmly in the unfolding discourse of European mercantile colonialism, Rajan undercuts the importance of the aristocratic ideology prevalent at this time that distanced itself from trade and profit, while advocating conquest for fame and honor (35-47).<sup>38</sup>

In a similar fashion, Bridget Orr, despite her critically cautious and historically conscious approach in her book-length study of the Restoration and early eighteenth-century theater, claims to find the Nabob in the works of such Restoration playwrights as John Crowne and goes on to find an unproblematic continuity in the production and

consumption of such fictional characters from the Restoration to the late eighteenth century.<sup>39</sup> Such an ahistorical identification implies that Orr treats such “emergent types” as an unambiguous symptom of a growing imperialist culture. Orr singles out comic drama of the Restoration as a site that contributed to “the establishment of a sense of a specifically English notion of genteel manners, against which foreigners, provincials, creoles and savages are measured and found lacking.”<sup>40</sup> Among these foreigners, she specifically identifies the Nabob. The problem is much more serious than mere anachronism, because the implication of such an anachronism is that the West constructed its identity in a one-sided manner by appropriating the East and the cultural baggage coming from it. However illuminating such readings are to a Western audience, long imprisoned in a Eurocentric canon, they end up by replicating the binary they set out to subvert in the first place. The West’s dominance or insidious plan for dominance are laid bare, but we hear only about “native resistance” in such metropolitan terms borrowed from Western psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, neo-Marxism, and so on as “sly civility” “unsettling mimicry,” or “memory traces,” and “hegemony.”

Native agency, far from being passively contained by a ubiquitous colonial discourse only to be retrieved by the late twentieth-century postcolonial critic through brilliantly executed readings based exclusively on Western theoretical paradigms, actually played a crucial role in shaping the ways in which the British society perceived the agents of its overseas expansion, namely the East India merchant turned Nabob. I employ the term agency to indicate the authority the Mughal Empire in particular and other Asian traditional states in general exerted and exercised upon the British overseas merchants through concrete means as well as through symbolic gestures. In addition, I

contend that the same agents of British presence, the Nabobs, were subjected to an entirely independent representational construction by the existing native cultural mechanisms, which allowed Mughal India to absorb and assimilate invaders and peaceful newcomers alike.

Postcolonial readings of eighteenth-century literature and culture such as those offered by Balachandra Rajan and Bridget Orr are either refinements or qualifications of an influential paradigm in postcolonial historiography as well as literary criticism. This particular paradigm ahistorically projects an almost monolithic Western agency—certainly prevalent in the nineteenth century—backwards to understand East-West relationships in the eighteenth century and even earlier. I have in mind Said's notion of "Orientalism" as a transhistorical, indeed an ahistorical, "discourse" (or "style of thought," as Said at times vaguely refers to it) that goes back to the European antiquity and comes back to haunt modern East-West relations in almost unchanged forms.<sup>41</sup> Such a paradigm of East-West contact based on pure dominance and total passivity is useful while reading texts from the late nineteenth century. However, Europe as a force of progress, prosperity, civilization (as collectively imagined by Europeans) as opposed to a monolithic, passive, and regressive Orient hardly existed in the form of a ubiquitous and overwhelming discourse prior to the nineteenth century, although isolated utterances could certainly be found. Aizaj Ahmad has succinctly summed up the irresolvable conflict between Said's notion of Orientalism and historicity: "In other words, one does not really know whether Orientalist discourse begins in the post-Enlightenment period or at the dawn of European civilization, whether in the Battle of Plassey or in the period of the Battle of Troy."<sup>42</sup>

As a result, I find the more “traditional” historiography—one that reads the story of the East-West contact in terms of economic, cultural, and social exchanges rather than as a monolithic discourse somehow transcending these forces—as well as historical anthropology to be more useful to my project than the “Colonial Discourse Analyses” school of postcolonial criticism engendered (both in reaction to as well as in emulation of Said) by Said’s notion of Orientalism.<sup>43</sup> As Nicholas B. Dirks has pointed out, “If colonial texts can be read to tell stories about the power of language to naturalize the structures of domination . . . , it is all too often the case that the historical experience of colonialism . . . gets lost in the elegant new textualism of colonial discourse studies. While our reading of colonial texts have been reanimated by the recent efflorescence of interest in colonialism, we must realize that the context for interpreting these texts are multiple, and necessarily, historical.”<sup>44</sup> Dirks goes on to demonstrate that the apparent imperviousness of colonialist self-representations in British colonial discourse about India was undercut by the often-ignored continuities and complicities between the traditional Indian notions of sovereignty and the superimposed British utilitarian land-ownership reform known as the Permanent Settlement.<sup>45</sup>

I am aware that my reliance on the socioeconomic and cultural history of colonial contact could lay my arguments open to an accusation of methodological essentialism. I could be accused of treating Western historical accounts of the East as a neutral and objective body of knowledge, which it certainly seldom was (or is). From Said onwards, postcolonial critics have constantly challenged the putatively factual Western historical and anthropological accounts of the East as being “white mythologies,” mere metropolitan constructs, which are also paradoxically powerful tools of control when

applied on the colonized by the colonizer. In other words, their efforts have been directed toward finding not only alternative forms of knowledge about the East, but also a vantage point for the postcolonial critic untainted by any association with Western forms of domination. However, as Robert J. C. Young has demonstrated, Said also fails to extricate himself from Western forms of knowledge and modes of thought even as he claims such a position for the postcolonial critic, which is, paradoxically enough, also a “humanist” one.<sup>46</sup> In his attempt to construct (or deconstruct) a grand narrative of Western modes of domination, Said leaves no room for “native” forms of knowledge. The critique of Western domination is thus reabsorbed into Western domination itself.

Following Said and refining him to a great extent, both Balachandra Rajan and Srinivas Aravamudan unfortunately arrive at similar impasses. Their extensive and exclusive use of such terms as “hybridity,” “mimicry,” “memory traces,” “hegemony,” and so on as tools to qualify Western pretensions to overwhelming dominance is certainly useful, but they leave no room for using indigenous cultural terms and concepts that could lead to a better understanding of such dominant modes of thought. Both Rajan and Aravamudan spend the bulk of their time exposing how Western forms of knowledge are inflicted on the natives by the colonizer as “epistemic violence,” to borrow a now well-worn phrase coined by Gayatri Spivak. But they allow little or no time to consider native concepts of sovereignty, empire, kingship, and so on and how these were frequently embedded in native forms of knowledge, sacred as well as profane.<sup>47</sup>

For instance, in his useful discussion of *The Lusiad* and Portuguese imperialism in South India, Rajan cursorily mentions the Empire of Vijayanagar and its conquest and destruction by a coalition of the neighboring Muslim Sultanates in 1565 in the decisive

Battle of Talikota, during which Camões, the author of *The Lusiad*, was present in nearby Goa.<sup>48</sup> Rajan profitably speculates as to how Camões' contemptuous allusion to the Hindu kingdom's notability for its "gold and precious stones than the valor of its people" must have been derived from the seeming vulnerability of this ill-fated polity. As a result, Rajan argues, Camões constructs the natives as a pusillanimous and easily conquerable people. Of the remarkably ferocious annihilation of the capital of the Vijayanagar Empire itself in 1565, Rajan cursorily observes: "Western Imperialism possesses no monopoly on the exercise of vindictiveness to otherness." But he does not pause to consider how the Zamorin [a Portuguese corruption of a Sanskrit title which literally means the "Lord of the Ocean"], the ruler of Vijayanagar during Vasco Da Gama's first landing on Indian soil in 1498, could have formed a naval coalition with Mahmud Begara, the Muslim Sultan of the Indian kingdom of Gujarat, and the Sultan of faraway Egypt, and also how they defeated the predatory Portuguese Navy in 1508.

This victory was reversed the following year when the coalition forces were annihilated by the Portuguese at the Battle of Diu in 1509, leading to Portuguese dominance over the region.<sup>49</sup> Also, Rajan does not consider the implications of a large native Muslim community of traders living in the Zamorin's realm with his apparent approval. What cultural mechanism allowed a Hindu king to tolerate a large body of Muslims in his territory? Conversely, through what complex cultural negotiations did this apparently powerful and influential Muslim community come to accept a Hindu King, an idolater, as their undisputed sovereign? More importantly, how did the growing influence of the Portuguese, the subjects of a European monotheistic nation-state with imperial ambitions known for their aggressive proselytizing, alter the complex cultural balance,

which had allowed South Indian Hindus and Muslims to coexist peacefully for centuries, to break up suddenly in the sixteenth century, leading to the particularly ferocious local Jihad of 1565 against Vijayanagar?

Srinivas Aravamudan in *The Tropicopolitans* similarly sidesteps the multiple historical and cultural contexts of colonial encounters. For instance, in his valuable discussion of “Levantanization,” a major form of “Tropicalization,” Aravamudan reads Edmund Burke’s impeachment of Warren Hastings as a representative example of how Orientalist discourse could have an in-built capacity to critique itself without necessarily repudiating its inherent will to dominate.<sup>50</sup> However, as useful such a retroactive reading is to the postcolonial reader, it could be all the more so had Aravamudan considered the Mughal customs of exchanging gifts and symbolic objects as means to establish sovereignty and hierarchy and also the complex ways many Britons became assimilated into such indigenous practices.

One can fruitfully reexamine the Nabob literature, which is also the product of such “multiple historical contexts,” as Nicholas B. Dirks refers to them, by reading them in terms of intersecting Eastern and Western value systems, instead of relying exclusively on Western critical and theoretical concepts. An awareness of such multiplicity of contexts allows one to considerably undermine the indubitable Eurocentricity of Western historical accounts by situating them in cross-cultural dialogues with reciprocal as well as contestatory native accounts. The following caveat from Holden Furber in his *Rival Empires of Trade* also illustrates the need for such an approach: “Although European entrepreneurs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries . . . , believed—at least most of them—in the superiority of their religion and civilization [as did most Asians of their

own], they by no means universally believed in the superiority of their economy. Our view of the west as ‘rich,’ and ‘developed,’ and most of Asia as ‘poor’ and ‘underdeveloped’ would have been incomprehensible to them.”<sup>51</sup> Such an historical awareness of socio-economic and cultural realities allows one to realize that the Kipling-esque “white man’s burden” brand of imperialism that posits a pan-European civilizing project with the European male, exiled to benighted outposts of the empire as its agent, is an ahistorical model when applied to the seventeenth or the eighteenth centuries. During this period Asia in general and the East Indies in particular remained an attractive destination for young, adventurous Europeans, whose lives at home often provided a contrast to the real or perceived opportunities offered by the East. The Nabobs in real life were exactly such young men who went to India and came home with a baggage of alien manners and mores in the aftermath of the Battle of Plassey.

As such, this dissertation is a study of the Nabob as a colonial representation similar in scale and scope to but radically different in theoretical approach from such recent postcolonial studies that share as a common theme “the figure of woman in colonial discourse.” One of the most recent among such studies is Betty Joseph’s *Reading the East India Company, 1720-1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* (2004), while Jenny Sharpe’s *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (1993) has become a classic. Not unlike Betty Joseph and Jenny Sharpe, who study the representations of British colonial women in India, I also study the Nabob, the representations of the British male expatriate in India in the eighteenth century. Both Joseph and Sharpe would concur that in spite of the many slippages and fissures in colonial discourse (whether in the form of raw official archives or domestic novels), the

figure of the virtuous middleclass British woman in the colonies inevitably triumphs over various native women of color and equally unpalatable creoles. In this respect both Joseph and Sharpe variously borrow from and refine on the notions of “naturalization” put forward by Edward W. Said; the concept of “ambivalence,” “hybridity,” and “mimicry” by Homi K. Bhabha; the “epistemic violence” of the metropolitan Anglo-American feminist criticism asserted by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; and the interlocking systems of oppression created in the eighteenth century by theories of civilization, climate, sexuality, and the representations of Other women pointed out by Felicity Nussbaum.<sup>52</sup>

Joseph’s study is especially pertinent to my own project because she claims that her work draws on “historical and literary documents that predate this historical moment [when the Western female subject consolidates her selfhood at the expense of the woman of color]” and “tries to avoid the pitfalls of a postcolonial feminist analyses that critiques gendered cultural supremacist rhetoric only to replace it with a nationalist-nativist one.”<sup>53</sup> I also deal with historical accounts and literary works that predate the consolidation of a putatively irreversible colonizer-colonized relationship between the British Empire and India. But unlike Joseph, I do not accept the premise that in order to avoid the pitfall of constructing an essentialist category of the native woman or man one must adapt the poststructuralist view that subjectivity is an always, already fragmented and fluid formation at the unstable intersections of discourses. On the contrary, as I shall demonstrate, the Nabob, or the British colonial male, actually emerged out of a prediscursive Mughal Empire, which contributed substantially to his creation.

Joseph teases out the figure of the native woman in early eighteenth-century East India Company archives to show how the official discourse of conquest and marginalization of the natives was undercut by the sexual and affective liaison between British men and native women. However, as she goes on to point out, these women were frequently not even mentioned by name in wills left by Englishmen who died in India and are casually referred to as housekeepers or servants.<sup>54</sup> This is where Betty Joseph's commendable aspiration not to substitute the unified bourgeois male historical subject with an identical female one and to construct the historical feminist subject as being provisional and fragmented falters, because she assumes that these anonymous native women also craved a monogamous married state after the fashion of their metropolitan sisters. For all her attention to the potential fragmentedness and plurality of the Western female subjectivity in the colonial archives, Betty Joseph ignores the most fundamental (as well as paradoxical) root of plurality among native men and women: the caste-based society in the Mughal Empire.<sup>55</sup> As a matter of fact, she seems to treat the official East India Company archives as a discursive field which from its very inception constructed India as an already conquered space and the natives as a people who desire conquest. It is as if the Mughal Empire had never existed in the eighteenth century, nor had the complex cultural and political ties between the British and Mughal Empires ever existed. In other words, Joseph actually replicates the "nativist-nationalist" quandary she sets out to avoid. She incorrectly implies that the Indian women, who slept with East India Company officials and bore their children, and the Indian merchants and agents, who served the East India Company "Sahibs," are the "natives" and not the subjects of a composite empire like the Mughal Empire.

By contrast, my study of the Nabob as a British colonial male shall demonstrate that he was far from being a convenient and pliant foil to the properly British, masculine, and rational subjecthood being constructed as part of the ambitious project of British nationhood. The Nabob occupied multiple positions which resisted a blanket hegemonic application of his representation in the service of a growing imperialist discourse. The multiple representations of the Nabob, available to mid-eighteenth century authors and the reading public, could be divided into two major kinds. On the one hand, the Nabob provided a satiric whipping post for those authors who found in him a disturbing specter of an English merchant turned Oriental warrior to the detriment not only of professional integrity, class equilibrium and gender stability but also of national identity. On the other, the Nabob, with his close association with the religious and cultural pluralities of Mughal India, offered historiographers and political thinkers with alternative models of governance, which questioned the increasing homogeneity of a British nation-state.

This dichotomous representation is most prominent in the domestic fiction published in the aftermath of the 1757 Battle of Plassey. While many authors, especially women, exploited the representations of the Nabob's violence and depredation (and conversely the violence and depredation caused by such representations) in the domestic space in order to consolidate the bourgeois household presided over by the domestic and domesticated heroine, there were as many who celebrated the plurality and liberality of mores and manners imbibed by the Nabob from his associations with the Mughal Empire.<sup>56</sup> Admittedly, a significant portion of the popular poetry, fiction, and historiography about India produced in Britain between 1757 and 1789 certainly had the effect of naturalizing the notion of India as always and already conquered and

conquerable, but an equally substantial portion of the same actually questioned and contested such notions. The slipperiness of the Nabob's representation in the said literature is further problematized by the fact that those representations of the overtly hegemonic kind had as yet no impact on Indians themselves, because the wholesale Anglicization of Indian educational system was still a thing of the future.<sup>57</sup> The systematic teaching of English literature as a way of indoctrinating the natives in the putative superiority of all things English was still in the distant future. In other words, the "slyly civil" and Anglicized "mimicman" of elite origins, much contested by some postcolonial critics, had yet to come into existence.

On the contrary, as I shall demonstrate, many Nabobs actually imbibed the traditional pre-discursive and surprisingly plural Indian cultural values and manners with enthusiasm. In addition, or in tandem, many native subjects of the Mughal Empire, from the elite ruling castes to the lowly serving ones, frequently developed close, affectionate ties with such Englishmen in various capacities such as warlords and vassals, patrons and entertainers, husbands/masters and concubines, and so on. The Indians knew these Englishmen by names radically different in connotation from the Nabob, the derogatory appellation foisted on him by the stay-at-home British writers. Among Mughal Indians the Nabobs were most frequently "Sahibs," honorary members of the Mughalized ruling elite of uncertain religious and ethnic affiliations, and occasionally even a "Jubdat-ul-Mulk" and a "Nasir-ud-Daula" (literally "the flower of the realm" and "the defender of the Empire"), as Colonel Robert Clive, the most notorious Nabob of them all, was styled by the newly invested Nawab Mir Jafar Ali Khan in the aftermath of Clive's victory at the Battle of Plassey.<sup>58</sup>

In contrast to the current postcolonial practice of projecting a resistant reading strategy retroactively in time such as that of Srinivas Aravamudan's, I propose to draw a decisive limit to the applicability of such reading practices, especially when it comes to reading texts from the period of the profound cultural indeterminacy, which existed between 1757 and 1817. We need to come to terms with the limits of postcolonial epistemology and accept the fact that most Indians did not think of themselves as being natives or proto-natives, overtly or covertly resisting a foreign invader, in order to establish a proto-nationalist utopia. They were the subjects of a sprawling composite empire, whose vaguely defined frontiers barely contained her internal plurality of castes, languages, and cultures. These pre-discursive peoples, not unlike Marshall D. Sahlins' Hawaiians and their first reception of Captain Cooke, initially greeted the Britons who came to live and work among them as being one more of those myriad communities which had been infiltrating India since time immemorial only to be assimilated into a vast, plural Indian identity.<sup>59</sup>

In addition, we must acknowledge that there existed a well-developed conceptual framework in Mughal India, albeit a pre-discursive one, which allowed the Indians to familiarize and gradually assimilate novel elements such as the British Nabobs. As I shall demonstrate in the following chapters, the stereotypically militaristic and despotic Nabob, who raised such a storm in Britain, is rarely, if ever, mentioned by the Indians in similar terms at this period. When he does make an appearance in contemporary Indian writing, he is usually still recognizable as a subject of the Mughal Empire. When one applies a postcolonial reading strategy based on dominance and/or resistance narrated in exclusively Western terms in order to unravel of the figure of the Nabob, one inevitably

produces a one-sided narrative of triumphant Western dominance and futile native resistance. In the following chapters, I intend to problematize such inadequately critical narratives of British imperialism in the eighteenth century.

In Chapter Two I shall delineate an alternative narrative of the intensified contact between the British and the Mughal Empires between 1757 and 1817. In opposition to many late twentieth-century historians of the eighteenth-century British presence in India, I shall espouse a position, which is no longer a minority one, to the effect that during this particular period it was by no means certain, either to the British or the Indians, that the Mughal Empire was doomed to extinction in order to make way for a modern state formation to be bestowed on the Indian subcontinent by the British invader. Eighteenth-century historians of the Mughal Empire such as Robert Orme and Alexander Dow, whose works will be briefly discussed, were acutely aware of the cultural plurality and potency of indigenous value systems in the Mughal Empire and hesitated to write her off as many historians in our time have tended to do. In addition, I shall demonstrate that the reading strategies put forward by postcolonial theoreticians such as Edward W. Said and literary critics such as Srinivas Aravamudan similarly do not prove to be efficacious when applied to this actual moment of cultural and political indeterminacy in the unfolding narrative of East-West contact. Emerging out of this problematic context, the figure of the Nabob urges us to reexamine the existing narratives of this still ongoing contact.

In Chapter Three I shall historicize the Nabob as an exclusively post-Battle-of-Plassey metropolitan representation of the East India merchant gone militarist. I shall do so by tracing two earlier representations of the British overseas merchant in a number of

popular stage plays and poetry about mercantile expansion appearing between 1682 and 1739: the late seventeenth-century timid and servile British subject, who submitted to the will of Oriental despots, and the early eighteenth-century overseas merchant as the courageous gentleman, capable of protecting personal as well as national interests at home and abroad. These two earlier representations of the overseas merchant serve to disprove an erroneous position held by some postcolonial critics of the so-called Nabob literature that the Nabob, as a carrier of colonial conquest and domination, existed transhistorically throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The literary texts analyzed in this chapter are too heavily fraught with the powerful traces of native agency to be considered as pure colonial discourse.

In Chapter Four I shall analyze a broad range of literary texts dealing with the figure of the Nabob, which appeared between 1757 and 1789. Far from being part of a hermetically sealed colonial discourse, these texts frequently betray a knowledge and understanding of the deep cultural crossovers between the Mughal Nawab and the British Nabob. A significant section of this chapter will be devoted to the so-called “domestic fiction,” which also preoccupied itself with the colonies, in order to demonstrate that the construction of a British proto-feminist heroine at the expense of native men and women and other marginalized characters was not as completely hegemonic as some postcolonial critics have claimed. An alternative postcolonial reading, which privileges indigenous values and knowledge over an exclusive reliance on Western critical discourse, can actually expose the disruptions and discontinuities in any such claim to ubiquitous hegemony made by some late twentieth-century postcolonial critics.

Chapter Five, the last chapter of this dissertation, is given to a discussion of literary texts by Indians written (or orally composed) during the eighteenth century. In it I offer as a contrast to the figure of the Nabob, a mostly British representation of Britons who went native in Mughal India, the figure of the Sahib, a peculiarly Indian way of representing the Britons, who not only lived among Indians but also tried to become one of them. The way of the Sahib, a very specific way of being an aristocratic male in Mughal India, was not only adapted by many Britons, but it was also attributed to them by the natives themselves, a fact which further undercuts the view held by some postcolonial critics that the Nabob literature should be read as irreversible and ubiquitous colonial discourse.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> James M. Holzman, *The Nabobs in England: A Study of the Returned Anglo-Indian, 1760-1785* (New York: n. p., 1926), 7-8. Holzman points out how in the immediate aftermath of the 1757 Battle Of Plassey, contemporary authors and commentators frequently felt obligated to define the term for the benefit of their audience, being perfectly aware of its novelty.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between popular publishing and the growing book trade and responses to *arriviste* wealth, see James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England 1750-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 1-18. Although Raven points out that publications defending the merchant were substantial in volume, they were in the minority compared to the overwhelming number of anti-mercantile publications: “Dissertations were issued in defense not in praise of business and industry. Essays which continued to champion the status of the merchant and manufacturer against the landed gentleman adopted the voice of a conscious minority” (4).

<sup>3</sup> The “traditional” histories of colonial expansion, in contrast, often paint a simplistic picture of the “feelers” of a worldwide market economy expanding from the European metropolitan center and inexorably drawing the colonial periphery into its fold. Immanuel Wallerstein’s work has been most influential in this “world systems” approach

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in the context of the colonial conquest of India. See Immanuel Wallerstein, “Incorporation of the Indian Subcontinent into Capitalist World-Economy,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 21 (1986): 28-39. Such an approach inevitably creates the impression that the native systems of credit and market networks were too fragile and were easily swept away by the outward expansion of the European global market forces. In this respect, my work will join the recent explorations of the connections between forms of colonial knowledge and power and the native marketplaces and their complex cultural meanings, as exemplified by Sudipta Sen’s *Empire of Free Trade: The East India Company and the Making of the Colonial Marketplace* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998). See esp. 19-59.

<sup>4</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 86.

<sup>5</sup> Donald R. Wehrs, “Sartre’s Legacy in Postcolonial Theory; or, Who’s Afraid of Non-Western Historiography and Cultural Studies?” in *New Literary History* 34. 3 (2003): 761-89.

<sup>6</sup> For examples representative of this paradigm shift in postcolonial studies, see Donald R. Wehrs, *African Feminist Fiction and Indigenous Values* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2001); Neela Bhattacharya Saxena, *In the beginning IS Desire: Tracing Kali's Footprints in Indian literature* (New Delhi: Indialog, 2004); Patrick Colm Hogan, *Colonialism and Cultural Identity Crises of Tradition in the Anglophone Literatures of India, Africa, and the Caribbean* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); and also by Patrick Colm Hogan, *Empire and Poetic Voice:*

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*Cognitive and Cultural Studies of Literary Tradition and Colonialism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> John McVeagh, *Tradeful Merchants: The Portrayal of the Capitalist in Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 92. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>8</sup> James Raven, *Judging New Wealth*, 256. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>9</sup> Perry Gauci, *The Politics of Trade: The Overseas Merchant in State and Society, 1660-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 170.

<sup>10</sup> See Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 2: 637-38, 749, 819.

<sup>11</sup> James M. Holzman, *The Nabobs in England*, 9. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>12</sup> Nandini Bhattacharya, *Reading the Splendid Body: Gender and Consumerism in Eighteenth-Century British Writing on India* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 80.

<sup>13</sup> Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage 1660-1714* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 212-250.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Bhattacharya, *Reading the Splendid Body*, 101.

<sup>16</sup> See T. G. Percival Spear, *Master of Bengal: Clive and His India* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 28, for a concise breakdown of the hierarchy of titled aristocratic officials in the Mughal Empire during the eighteenth century. Spear points

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out that the term “Nawab” is literally the plural form of “Naib” or “deputy” in Indo-Persian. The Nawab was also referred to as the “Nazim” in Mughal official discourse.

<sup>17</sup> For a definition of the traditional state and its characteristics, see Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, vol. 2, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 4, 36-41. For a definition of the composite empire, see Daniel Goffman and Christopher Stroop “Empire as Composite: The Ottoman Polity and the Typology of Dominion,” in *Imperialisms: Historical and Literary Investigations, 1500-1900*, ed. Balachandra Rajan and Elizabeth Sauer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 129-45. See especially 137 and 141.

<sup>18</sup> T. G. Percival Spear, *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India* (Gloucester, MA.: Peter Smith, 1971), 2. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>19</sup> William Foster, “The East India Company 1600-1740,” in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, vol. 4, ed. H. H. Dodwell (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), 4: 76-116. See especially 101-103. Sir Josiah Child (1681-1699), the most ambitious of the late seventeenth-century Company governors, caused a military conflict between the Company and the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, celebrated in Dryden’s eponymous play, by pursuing an aggressive policy of fortifying and arming the factories on the Indian coastline in order to make them sufficiently strong to repel all attacks and thus earn the respect of their neighboring native potentates, even the Mughal Emperor himself. A long siege of Bombay by the Mughal imperial forces began in 1688, which lasted until in 1690. The English surrendered under humiliating terms, which included the payment of considerable sums of money.

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<sup>20</sup> For a cogent discussion of the origins of the picturesque term “country powers” frequently employed in European diplomatic and trade-related discourse about the various kingdoms and empires in southern Asia, see Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600-1800*, in *Europe and the World in the Age of Expansion 2* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 310-314. Pointing out the absence of any notion of statehood or sovereignty comparable to that in contemporary European states, and the internal heterogeneity of south Asian societies as the chief reasons why such a term came into usage, Furber writes: “In southern Asia where boundaries were very fluid, it had not become necessary to define precisely what constituted a ‘state,’ to say nothing of a ‘sovereign state.’ Hence came the European tendency simply to use the word *power* and the appositeness of the English expression *country powers*” (310).

<sup>21</sup> For a comprehensive history of the Mughal imperial military’s strength and organization, and the East India Company’s dramatic rise as an “indigenous” military power in the eighteenth century that rapidly overcame the all local military powers, see Stephen Peter Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 104-196. See especially 138-140. Rosen’s analysis of the chronic failure of the Mughal Empire to generate any surplus military power that would have enabled it not only to pacify internal dissent but also to engage in wars of expansion concurs with Anthony Giddens’ notion of the internal diversity of traditional states as a primary cause of its lack of effective control over its subject populations. Rosen points out that the Mughal imperial military reflected the chaotic division of castes and sects

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characterizing the Empire, and as such it was never able to achieve the level of cohesion and organization required for any national military force to project its might abroad.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed history of military intervention by the state to defend British trade abroad, see Patrick Crowhurst, *The Defense of British Trade 1689-1815* (Kent, England: Dawson and Sons, 1977). See especially 206-248.

<sup>23</sup> For a comprehensive study of the uses and abuses of the military in order to control mob violence in the eighteenth century, see Tony Hayter, *The Army and the Crowd in Mid-Georgian England* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978).

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of the fluctuating public opinions about the British Army in the eighteenth century during a time of intensifying foreign wars, see H. C. B. Rogers, *British Army of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1977), 17-31.

<sup>25</sup> Julian Gwyn, *The Enterprising Admiral: The Personal Fortune of Sir Peter Warren* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974), 15.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-26.

<sup>27</sup> For examples of Admiral Byng's infamy broadcast in the popular literature of the day, see John M. Cardwell, *Arts and Arms: Literature, Politics and Patriotism During the Seven Years War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 52, 53-64, 73-9, 145-6.

<sup>28</sup> For an analysis of the cooperative relationship between the aristocrat-dominated fiscal-military state in the eighteenth century and the so-called "moneyed interest," see Patrick K. O'Brien, "Inseparable Connections: Trade, Economy, Fiscal State, and the Expansion of Empire, 1688-1815," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2,

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ed. P. J. Marshall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2: 53-77; Kenneth Morgan, "Mercantilism and the British Empire 1688-1815," in *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience 1688-1815*, ed. Donald Winch and Patrick K. O'Brien (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 165-191.

<sup>29</sup> See Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, 2: 4, 36-41.

<sup>30</sup> Sen, *Empire of Free Trade*, 62-63. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>31</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), 1-5.

<sup>32</sup> John R. McLane, *Land and Local Kingship in Eighteenth-Century Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 97.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-112. See also Nicholas B. Dirks, "From Little King to Landlord: Colonial Discourse and Colonial Rule," in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 175-208, for a historical anthropology of the British colonial attempt at land-ownership reform in Hindu-ruled South India, which could not prevent a continuation of gift-giving as a means of establishing sovereignty practiced under the old regime.

<sup>34</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 3

<sup>35</sup> McLane, *Land and Local Kingship*, 97. For a similar account of the significance of public display of wealth and consumption in the Mughal imperial power structure, see Andrea Hintze, *The Mughal Empire and Its Decline: An Interpretation of the Sources of Social Power* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1997), 50-57.

<sup>36</sup> Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique*, 2: 76.

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<sup>37</sup> Balachandra Rajan, *Under Western Eyes: From Milton to Macaulay* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 3, 6. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 157-161. Helgerson, in his reading of *The Lusiad*, avoids the pitfall of a monolithic East-West binary by distinguishing between an aristocratic ideology and a mercantile one at play in the sixteenth-century epic.

<sup>39</sup> Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage 1660-1715*, 4, 27.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>41</sup> See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 2-3, 56-57.

<sup>42</sup> Aizaj Ahmad, "Between Orientalism and Historicism: Anthropological Knowledge of India," in *Orientalism: A Reader*, ed. A. L. Macfie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 288.

<sup>43</sup> Much ink has been already shed in order to qualify and refine the Saidean notion of Orientalism as a monolithic discourse. Prominent among these attempts at revision is the psychoanalytic/semiotic postcolonial critique of Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha's work is attentive to the internal inconsistencies of colonial discourse. He argues that discursive and semiotic "resistance" is built into colonial discourse itself and uses such terms as "mimicry," "hybridity," and "sly civility" in order to illustrate the self-deconstructive propensity of colonial representations. See Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" in *The Location of Culture*, 85-92; "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of

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Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817,” in *The Location of Culture*, 102-122; “Sly Civility,” in *The Location of Culture*, 93-101. Gayatri C. Spivak has problematized the postcolonial critic’s own position by pointing out the figure of the silenced colonized subject as the subaltern woman, triply oppressed by native patriarchy, Western colonialism, and the “epistemic violence” of Western feminist criticism. The subaltern as sexed subject is offered by her as a corrective to Bhabha’s rather elitist notion of the mimicman. See Gayatri C. Spivak, “The Rani of Sirmur,” in *Europe and Its Others*, ed. Francis Barker et al. (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985) 1: 128-51; “Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), 271-313; “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,” *Critical Inquiry* 12, no.1 (1985): 243-61. Benita Perry, by contrast, is an advocate of resistance and agency by actual historical colonized subjects. She places much emphasis on the dialectical nature of colonial encounters. See Benita Perry, “Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse.” *Oxford Literary Review* 9 (1987): 27-58.

<sup>44</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, “From Little King to Landlord: Colonial Discourse and Colonial Rule,” 175.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 177-180.

<sup>46</sup> Robert J. C. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 132-36.

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<sup>47</sup> Wehrs has pointed out the general trend in postcolonial theory to colonize what is particular to non-West by what is general to Western Postmodernism. See Wehrs, *African Feminist Fiction and Indigenous Values*, 17-20.

<sup>48</sup> Rajan, *Under Western Eyes*, 40-41.

<sup>49</sup> For a chronological account of Indian historical events, see S. B. Bhattacharje, *Encyclopedia of Indian Events and Dates* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1986).

<sup>50</sup> Srinivas Aravamudan, *The Tropicopolitans* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 223-29.

<sup>51</sup> Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade*, 6.

<sup>52</sup> For an account of how colonialist representations in the late eighteenth-century British novel “naturalized” and “domesticated” colonial discourse, see Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 80-97. For an account of the hegemonic construction of the Other woman in the eighteenth century, see Felicity Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 7-14.

<sup>53</sup> Betty Joseph, *Reading the East India Company, 1720-1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>55</sup> For a recent revision of caste in historical anthropology, see Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

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<sup>56</sup> For an account of the disciplinary use of the violence of representation in the late eighteenth-century British novel in order to construct the aesthetic and moral superiority of the bourgeois heroine, see Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse eds., introduction to *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence* (New York : Routledge, 1989), 1-26. See especially 5-10.

<sup>57</sup> For an account of English literary studies in India as a means of colonial disciplining of the natives, see Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

<sup>58</sup> For a contemporary eighteenth-century literal translation of the title given to Clive, see William Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1775), 82.

<sup>59</sup> For an account of how the Hawaiians were initially able to accept a radically novel cultural element in the shape of Captain Cooke and his crew by using indigenous cultural mechanisms and conceptual framework, see Marshall D. Sahlins, *How “Natives” Think: About Captain Cooke for Example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). See especially 4-10, 21-26.

CHAPTER TWO  
A TALE OF TWO EMPIRES

I

When Empires Collide

One of the major goals of this dissertation is to rewrite the Nabob and his story by revising the ones available in existing social history and literary criticism. This historical goal logically leads to a theoretical one: that of rewriting the existing narrative of the contact between an Eastern empire and a Western one, as the mid-eighteenth century phenomenon of the British Nabob, frequently associated with eastern luxury, licentiousness, and despotism, was a returnee from the Mughal Empire. The Mughal Empire in the Indian subcontinent was roughly contemporaneous with the three other major Asian empires: the Turkish Ottoman Empire, the Persian Safavid Empire, and the Chinese Empire. All these Asian empires, with the exception of the Chinese, suffered substantial territorial and political dissolution beginning with the eighteenth century. They often ceded authority and territories to increasingly powerful European nation-states with avowed imperial missions. In this regard the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century shared a unique relationship with the British imperial nation-state. The relationship between the Mughal Empire and her British counterpart was certainly unique

in that it was still far removed from the one based on overwhelming Western domination and utter Eastern passivity that came to characterize much of the “West and the Rest” relationship from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

In the aftermath of the 1757 Battle of Plassey and the subsequent conferral of the Diwani of Bengal in 1765 on the East India Company by the Mughal Emperor, many Britons who resided in India and the Mughals themselves continued to believe in the sovereignty and integrity of the Mughal Empire. As far as they were concerned, the Company and its army were the retainers of a traditional empire. In this chapter I shall examine the unique material circumstances and the cultural mechanisms which allowed the Mughals and their subjects to treat the Britons among them as a powerful yet tractable and useful community, which in no way threatened to overturn the existing order of things. By exploring the indigenous values and concepts which regulated social relationships in the Mughal Empire during this time, I shall also demonstrate that the Mughal political, sexual, and military ethos had a direct impact on how the stay-at-home British represented the Nabob, the British merchant entrepreneur gone militarist in the Indian subcontinent.

Until the eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire was more often than not a distant, opulent allusion connoting fabulous wealth and colorful and barbaric customs in the collective imagination of the English. Thomas Coryate, a prolific traveler in Eastern lands in the early seventeenth century, wrote in *Greeting from the Court of the Great Mogul* (1616) that he had seen the fabled unicorn in the Mughal Crown Prince’s private menagerie among other familiar wild beasts: “whereof two I have seene [sic] at his Court,

the Strangest beasts of the world: they were brought hither out of the COUNTRY of Bengala.”<sup>1</sup> Unlike the Ottoman Empire, with its contiguity to Europe and the sustained military threat posed by it, which lasted well into the late seventeenth century, this distant Eastern empire never seemed to pose a tangible military or cultural threat.<sup>2</sup> Until the early eighteenth century, the British had encountered and interacted with the Mughal Empire in the capacity of foreign traders, carrying on their professional responsibilities peacefully (for the most part) with the approval of the imperial authorities. P. J. Marshall has summed up the history of the British encounter with Asia in general and Mughal India in particular rather succinctly: “The history of the British in Asia during the eighteenth century seems to fall into two clearly demarcated phases. A long period of stability ended in the mid-century when the British shifted from apparently peaceful trade to war and conquest in India. If the contrast between the peace in the first half and violence in the latter eighteenth century may be somewhat overdrawn, the change in the role of the British was still a spectacular one.”<sup>3</sup> Marshall has written more recently, “The East India Company was always a potential political power as well as a commercial body, but at least until the 1750s the growth of the East India Company’s trade took place largely in partnership with Indian commercial elites and involved relatively limited usurpation of the authority of the Indian rulers.”<sup>4</sup>

In the aftermath of the Battle of Plassey in 1757, which paved the way for the conquest of India by the East India Company, the British perceptions of the Mughal Empire became fraught with anxieties and ambiguities. British historians and authors of imaginative literature alike openly debated about the nature of the Mughal polity and its

sources of power and legitimacy. They were generally open-minded as to the continued autonomy of the Mughal Empire and of the potency and legitimacy of the indigenous values which still governed it, whether or not they approved of such a radically different mode of governance and way of life. The Nabobs were frequently associated by British authors with the alien political, sexual, and military ethos of the Mughals.

The harbinger of the radical change of the British role in Mughal India was the Nabob. The disturbing cultural baggage with which the Nabob returned from the Mughal Empire caused not a little stir in the metropolitan center of a rapidly expanding global British Empire. Territorial conquests and the concomitant assumption of political and administrative authority by the mercantile Company problematized the British people's perceptions about the East India Merchant and his legitimate spheres of activity. The disturbing specter of the British merchant turned warrior in the troubled Mughal Empire led to far more fundamental questioning of the growing notion of a British Empire founded on liberty. On what grounds could an empire based on liberty assimilate the illegitimate conquests made in an Oriental despotism by a group of lowly merchants? The loss of the American settler colonies, putatively peopled by free Anglo-Saxon and Protestant subjects of the British Empire, was added to the anxiety of acquiring the vast, culturally and linguistically plural Mughal Empire.

Consequently, this chapter is designed to address several interrelated concerns, which are organizational as well as theoretical in nature: first, an overview of some eighteenth-century historical accounts (by both Indian and British authors) of the Mughal Empire, which is contrasted with a certain section of twentieth-century historical

accounts of the causes of the supposedly rapid and almost predetermined decline of the Mughals; second, the Mughal Empire as a source of inspiration not only for authors who viewed her plurality of cultures and manners with suspicion and used them as convenient contrasts to an idealized and homogeneous notion of Great Britain as a nation-state, but also for those who wished to challenge such a notion; and third, the significance of the 1757 Battle of Plassey as a watershed year that inaugurated the period of the remarkable cultural exchanges between the Nabobs and the Nawabs.

Since the Nabob existed and operated in the unstable cultural space created by the intensified contact between the Mughal Empire and the British Empire in the mid-eighteenth century, I will rehearse an overview of the twentieth and late twentieth-century historical accounts that attempt to explain the apparently rapid decline of this once powerful empire in this time period. I argue that instead of a rapid, almost predestined decline of the Mughals, which, according to some of these theories, supposedly had to happen to make room for the modern British Empire, one needs to think in terms of continuities and crosspollinations between the two empires during the unsettled period between 1757, the year of the Battle of Plassey, and 1817, the year James Mill published his watershed *The History Of British India*.

I have chosen the publication of James Mill's *The History of British India* as the landmark year that marks the beginning of the end of the creative continuities between the two Empires, because Mill's work decisively introduced a utilitarian historiography about India, which regarded its traditional institutions, including the Mughal Empire, as obsolete and corrupt relics of the past. Mill's vision of an India in need of sweeping

reforms inevitably led to T. B. Macaulay's 1835 *Minute on Indian Education*, which practically swept away the more tolerant and flexible attitudes toward Indian traditions espoused by such Orientalists and educators as Sir William Jones. Gyan Prakash, a late twentieth-century historian, despite his insistence upon the "essentialism, distancing, and the centrality of the opposition between Europe and India deployed in the formative phase of Orientalism [specifically about India in the eighteenth century]," concedes that with the publication of *The History of British India* "the genuine respect and love for the Orient of William Jones gave way to the cold utilitarian scrutiny of James Mill."<sup>5</sup> Evidently, Prakash finds it hard to accommodate Orientalists such as Sir William Jones and their appreciation of the cultural plurality of Mughal India into the late nineteenth-century paradigm of radical power inequity between the Orient and the Occident he subscribes to.

Thus, I have deliberately declined to choose the landmark years associated with important Parliamentary Acts which gradually reduced the East India Company's authority and brought the Indian territories under direct Crown rule, such as the Regulatory Act of 1773 and Pitt's India Bill of 1784. These legislative landmarks certainly brought about substantial socio-economic and governmental changes in India. However, until the 1857 Mutiny, the Mughal Emperor and the Mughal Empire remained potent symbols of sovereignty as evinced by the spectacular punishments meted out to the last Mughal Emperor and his family by the British authorities in the aftermath of the failed uprising.<sup>6</sup> The Mughals themselves, including many Britons who resided among them, did not view the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century as a dysfunctional polity

doomed to extinction, nor did many eighteenth-century British historians, who wrote about the Mughal polity and its nature, hold similar reductive views concerning this land empire. It is only in the twentieth century that we find historians being overly anxious to write the Mughal Empire off as a relic of the past, almost as the direct result of a blind historical predeterminism, according to which older state formations must give way to the modern nation-state.

As I have already pointed out in the previous chapter, this Eurocentric error in twentieth-century historiography is paradoxically prevalent in postcolonial historiography as well as in literary criticism which attempt to read eighteenth-century accounts of the contact between the Mughal and the British Empires either in terms of absolute Western domination and utter Eastern passivity or in terms of mimicry and subversion of Western pretensions to dominance. The former negates any agency on the part of the “colonized native” and the latter allows him agency only in terms of reaction to Western action. Between 1757 and 1817 the Mughal Empire continued to be regulated according to time-tested indigenous values and conceptualities, and the symbolic as well as concrete actions carried out by the Mughals and their subjects actively shaped the ways the British perceived this exotic empire as well as the ways they came to represent the Nabobs, fellow Britons who imbibed the mores and manners of the Mughals.

Within this context, I shall establish why the 1757 Battle of Plassey is to be regarded as the pivotal event in the unfolding of the cultural narrative of the Nabob. The East India Company’s conquest of Bengal ushered in that very era of cultural indeterminacy that allowed for some remarkable crossovers between the Mughal and the

British Empires. Last but not least, even as I discuss and problematize the decline of the Mughals, I shall demonstrate that an increasingly homogeneous identity based on Britishness, liberty, and common Protestantism was frequently challenged as well as reaffirmed by eighteenth-century British authors, who frequently drew inspiration from the cultural plurality and diversity of the Mughal Empire to illustrate their points. Consequently, I shall question both Linda Colley and David Armitage's recent, but rather insular, examinations of the growth of the modern and streamlined British imperial nation-state.<sup>7</sup>

## II

### Defining the Terms and Setting the Limits

The two terms “empire” and “nation-state,” both of which are pivotal to my arguments pertaining to the nature of the Mughal and British polities, are not easily defined in black and white. As Daniel Goffman and Christopher Stroop have pointed out, “Neither ‘empire’ nor ‘nation-state’ is an easily defined concept. The first often is loosely conceived as any political formation that answers to no earthly authority and is neither a city-state nor a nation state; the second is rather sloppily imagined as a state and society that boasts a citizenry that is homogeneous in language and identity.”<sup>8</sup> In theoretical discussions in late twentieth-century historiography about empires and nation-states these two terms tend to come together because “many believe that the nation-state is a successor to, and consequently implicitly superior to, the empire as a way of organizing

society.” Goffman and Stroop go on to add, “The place where this transformation is said to have occurred is Western Europe; the time was the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries.”<sup>9</sup> For instance, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have recently asserted, “The concept of the nation in Europe developed on the terrain of the patrimonial and absolutist state.”<sup>10</sup> Although these two neo-Marxist critics are specifically referring to European empires and their successors the modern European nation-states, a similar assumption is often to be found in some twentieth-century historians who write about contacts between the British Empire and non-Western empires like the Ottoman or the Mughal Empires. As Daniel Goffman has pointed out, “English historians of the British empires, for example, tend to focus their attention on how the English ‘engendered’ those they encountered, over-powered and exploited.”<sup>11</sup> Such historiography erroneously assumes that non-Western empires were politically and culturally incapable of transforming themselves to meet the challenges arising out of the contact with Western nation-states, while Western European monarchies were rapidly transformed by political, economic, and cultural forces to become nation-states. By extension, such historiography implies that the non-Western polities can only be transformed into nation-states through the magic touch of European colonial intervention.

This view has been prevalent from Karl Marx to Benedict Anderson and beyond. Benedict Anderson also locates the birth of the modern nation in the Western collective imaginings through the availability of print culture, among other things, that was mostly introduced into the non-Western world through colonial intervention. While Anderson’s approach is certainly immensely more nuanced than Marx’s blunt assertion to the effect

that European colonialism jump-started the sluggish Eastern modes of production into modernity, he still concludes that the decline of the three “interlinked certainties” in pre-nation-state times, namely, “sacral cultures,” the “dynastic realm,” and the “simultaneity” of cosmology and history, happened “first in Western Europe, later elsewhere, under the impact of economic change, ‘discoveries’ (social and scientific), and the development of increasingly rapid communications” that drove “a harsh wedge between cosmology and history.”<sup>12</sup> Although Anderson does not use the term “colonialism” in the list of influences that brought about the revolutionary change, it is strongly implied in the example of a nineteenth century Philippino novel that he uses to illustrate how even non-Western cultures also eventually joined the privileged club of nation-states as imagined communities.

The excerpt from Jose Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) does amply demonstrate how even in a non-Western culture the concept of “homogeneous empty time” in which the modern nation imagines itself as a community can be reproduced through novelistic discourse. However, the unstated premise in the whole episode is that the Philippines could become a nation-state only after going through colonial rule under Spain that gave her a European language and a print culture through which to imagine herself into nationhood. Anderson takes no account of the potential presence in Rizal’s novel of the pre-colonial concepts and values and the narrative forms that had nurtured them. Because of this oversight, Anderson’s study, in spite of its careful and nuanced reading of the mechanics of the nation-state, adheres to the crude Marxian view that colonialism propels Eastern polities into modernity. Such unfortunate generalizations tend to sidestep the

autonomy and agency of Eastern empires and polities and their ability to shape their own destinies before the nineteenth century. However, many British writers in the eighteenth century who wrote about the Mughal Empire did not readily accept that the ancient empire was a cultural and political *cul de sac* waiting to be short-circuited into modernity by British colonial intervention. They acknowledged the autonomy and independence of the Mughal Empire, whether or not they approved of its cultural and religious plurality. The Mughals themselves were still quite secure in their traditional worldview. In this section, I shall examine how the Mughal model of a culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse polity influenced the British nation-state under construction in the eighteenth century, rather than being acted upon and shaped by British interventions one-sidedly.

Consequently, the nature of the British polity itself during the eighteenth century also falls within the purview of my terminological concerns. Did the British see themselves as a nation-state first and empire later, or was it the other way around? I shall refer to Britain in the eighteenth century as an imperial nation-state in order to distinguish its two mutually inclusive drives: toward creating a homogeneous British identity at home and toward maintaining and administering a growing global empire with Britain as the metropolitan center. As such, I attempt to qualify Linda Colley's influential paradigm of the rise of a rather inward-looking British identity in eighteenth-century Britain based on assimilating the inner diversity prevalent in the British Isles themselves. As Gauri Viswanathan has pointed out, "The importance of the colonies for diffusing, maintaining, and redefining British class conflicts makes it all the more urgent to consider English culture first and foremost in its imperial aspect as itself constitutive of 'national' culture."

Viswanathan goes on to add, “Such a project challenges the assumption that what makes an imperial culture possible is a fully formed national culture shaped by internal social developments.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, the British nation-state and its overseas imperial drive mutually informed each other. The tools for building and managing a nation-state were simultaneously exported abroad to the overseas territories. However, Viswanathan’s insight is mostly applicable to the nineteenth century when utilitarian reforms at home and in the colonies were the order of the day, and British political decisions at home played a pivotal role in shaping the future of the colonies. I argue that during the actual historical period of political and cultural indeterminacy between 1757 and 1817, the British Empire and its agents in the Mughal India took on the “composite” attributes of the host culture in opposition to the drive toward constructing a homogeneous nation-state, which certainly shaped the cultural and political lives of the British people at home, as Linda Colley has pointed out.

Consequently, the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century should not be defined or labeled through negatives alone. The Mughal Empire was not what the European transnational empires had been before the rise of the nation-state. Such a fallacious temporal analogy sidesteps the fact that there were as many overlaps as there were discontinuities between the putatively outmoded empires and the supposedly sleek and trim nation-state. While it is imperative that I avoid the pit fall of the “evolutionary” theory of empires and states, I must also begin by defining some key terms I shall be using throughout the rest of the dissertation in order to describe the Mughal Empire and its unique characteristics, which both repelled and fascinated many Britons in the

eighteenth century.

The Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century was a “traditional state” or a “composite monarchy.” Anthony Giddens has pointed out the radical differences in terms of the locations of power and means of control between the “traditional state” or the “class divided society [sic]” and the modern nation-state as a part of his critique of the teleological story of human progress typically told by historical materialism. According to Giddens, the radical differences between the two social organizations partly prove his claim that modernity is a much more radical and dramatic break with all previous world views than generally acknowledged by historians.<sup>14</sup> Giddens borrows S. N. Eisenstadt’s classification of the traditional state into premodern states and empires: the city states, the nomad or conquest empires, the patrimonial empires, and the centralized bureaucratic empires (2: 35). The Mughal Empire, in which the British Nabobs made their mark, began as a conquest empire and later came to combine the characteristics of the patrimonial as well as the bureaucratic empires.

Following are the characteristics of traditional states such as the Mughal Empire: centers of power often located in symbolically designed and fortified cities; a territory essentially segmental in nature, because of the lack of effective administrative control over the lives of the subjects dwelling in it; vaguely defined frontiers instead of the clearly demarcated borders that characterize modern nation-states; a reliance on the use of military violence as the means of effective control of its subject populations, because of the weak administrative reach of the center. By contrast, the modern nation-state has clear cartographically defined borders, is by and large internally pacified, and has other

more effective discursive and administrative means of controlling dissent than raw military force (Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, 2: 4, 36-41).

With respect to the lack of cartographic borders as a defining characteristic of the traditional state, Giddens' definition invites comparison with Benedict Anderson's notion of the "dynastic realm," which, according to him is one of the "imagined communities" predating nationalism. Anderson also points out the absence of well-defined borders as an aspect of the dynastic realm: "In the modern conception, state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimeter of a legally demarcated territory. But in older imaginings, where states were defined by centers, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another."<sup>15</sup> However, Anderson's model taps into the same teleological story of the progress of human societies told by historical materialism. He assumes that the older pre-national imagined communities must eventually make way for the nation-state and, by extension, that the non-Western polities could not have acquired nation-statehood had it not been for Western intervention.

In Giddens' analyses plurality and diversity of cultures and social formations within the porous bounds of the traditional state is one of the main distinguishing marks between the modern nation-state and the traditional state: "It is essential to emphasize how different, as 'social systems,' traditional ones are from modern ones. Because of their internal heterogeneity, a case can be made for regarding larger traditional states as 'composed of numerous societies'" (*A Contemporary Critique*, 2: 53). The myriads of

communities of peasants, artisans, and other castes which inhabited the sprawling territories of larger traditional empires such as the Mughal or the Ottoman Empires were usually left to follow their own ways of life regardless of whether these contradicted the belief systems of the ruling class in the center, as long as taxes and tributes kept flowing unimpeded toward it. Lacking the existence of a working class, such as exists in a modern nation-state, whose labor is a totally alienable commodity, the traditional state could not hope to control the autonomous lives led by the far-flung subject communities without the punitive threat of military violence (*A Contemporary Critique*, 2: 70-71). However, as Giddens points out, even the use of military force was not always a monopoly of the imperial center in a traditional state because of the existence of local warlords and other armed communities: “In larger traditional states, therefore, it is almost always the case that significant elements of actual or potential military power exists outside the control of the state apparatus. Such states typically show a fluctuating tension between centralized control of the means of violence and decentralized military power wielded by local warlords or various sorts of insurrectionary leaders” (2: 57).

While Giddens’ model of the traditional state is useful to establish the cultural plurality of the Mughal Empire and the centrality and significance of military violence as a tool of control to such a state, it fails to take into account the ability of such state formations to incorporate the symbols of power and legitimacy of not only those state formations it had conquered but also of the rival ones that coexisted with it. In spite of the absence of discursive tools of control, traditional empires were able to establish some form of consensus about the legitimacy of the ruling elite among its subject peoples

through the deployment of symbols as much as through naked military violence.

In this respect Daniel Goffman and Christopher Stroop's use of the term "composite empire" in order to distinguish the plural and diverse nature of the Ottoman Empire from the aggressive homogeneity of the contemporaneous Western European nation-states may help elucidate the plural nature of the Mughal polity. Goffman and Stroop point out two interrelated reasons why the Ottoman Empire should be considered a composite empire: its ruling class was as heterogeneous as its subject population, and the subjects did not have to conform to the religious affiliation of their rulers. They go on to state, "In a radical (and, for the English and others, confounding) departure from the European norm, then, the Ottoman realm was a *religiously* as well as a geographically, linguistically, and politically composite state."<sup>16</sup> In addition, Goffman and Stroop contend that the Ottoman Empire successfully established its legitimacy by bringing together the symbols of sovereignty it had inherited from a wide range of sources: the tribal traditions of the Turkic peoples of central Asia, the various forms of Islamic states of the past, and the Byzantine Empire it had conquered. According to Goffman and Stroop, "The ability of this society to organize itself so differently from the relatively homogeneous England derived in large part from its foundation. The Ottomans fashioned many of their institutions in the fourteenth-century frontier-zone of Western Anatolia, a middle ground if you will, in which they had to negotiate with the civilizations of Islam, Persia, Byzantium, and others."<sup>17</sup> As I shall demonstrate in the following section, the Mughal Empire was even more radically composite in terms of its tolerance of religious and ethnic diversity and its ability to combine a diverse range of symbols of legitimacy

and power.

### III

#### The Great Mughals

The Mughal Empire, although only little more than two hundred years old by the mid-eighteenth century according to strict chronology, claimed to be an eternal polity of virtue and peace. On the one hand, official Mughal historiographers frequently claimed a direct descent of the empire from the earliest Islamic Caliphates through the Turco-Mongol empire of Timurlane (1335-1405), and thus it was the *Dar-al- Islam* or the eternal polity of virtue and peace.<sup>18</sup> On the other, they liberally incorporated into their worldview the much older Hindu notion of the god-king and/or the philosopher-king, who enjoyed a special relationship with God that elevated him above the status of mortal beings and, thus, made him a fit ruler for all subjects, regardless of their religious affiliations and/or castes. Michael H. Fisher has pointed out the diverse origins of Mughal claim to sovereignty, “By incorporating symbols of sovereignty from its Mongol and Turkic roots, from the Persian and Islamic traditions it had adopted, and from the largely Hindu society it ruled, the Mughal [ruling] house concentrated charisma and authority on the person of the Emperor.”<sup>19</sup> Fisher goes on to add, “He [the Mughal Emperor during a public audience] stood, as would a Hindu deity, giving Darshan, or an auspicious sight of himself, to those who valued his high place in the cosmic order.”<sup>20</sup>

The British Empire also went through phases during which diverse yet related

notions of Protestantism, being the elect nation of God, and liberty contributed to the forging of a British imperial identity. However, at the moment of contact there were substantial differences between the two empires.<sup>21</sup> While the Mughal Empire saw itself in terms of an entrenched tradition, the British Empire reveled in its revolutionary novelty in terms of principles and practical organization.

In addition, unlike the British at this time, the Mughals lacked any hierarchical notion of a metropolitan center and colonial margin. In other words, a Mughal administrator, traveler, or merchant could not possibly return to a metropolitan center like London, which acted as a point of reference in the great game of “us versus them” that came to define the British Empire. As a matter of fact, the Mughal Emperors after Babur, the founder of the Empire, would sometimes express a nostalgic regret for their lost ancestral homeland in the fragrant valley of Ferghana in Central Asia, not only in the stylized poetry they themselves composed or patronized with such avidity but also in the imperial historiography they patronized with equal zest.<sup>22</sup> When in 1607 the Mughal Emperor Jahangir (1605-1627) wrote in his memoirs, “As I had made up my exalted mind to the conquest of Mawara’-a-n-nahr [the Transoxiana], which was the hereditary kingdom of my ancestors, I desired to free the face of Hindustan from the rubbish of the factious and the rebellious and ... to undertake the conquest of my ancestral dominions.”<sup>23</sup> However, the Emperor was simply repeating what was to become a romantic vision rather than a real imperial policy. The Mughals never took any practical steps to reconquer their homeland. In this respect the Mughals could be compared to the Norman conquerors whose descendants waxed nostalgic about the loss of their French

dominions many years after a military reconquest was a faded probability at best.

R. C. Varma suggests another interesting parallel between Mughal attitudes toward Transoxiana from the reign of Emperor Akbar onwards and the “white man’s burden” myth about the British Empire in the nineteenth century. Commenting on Akbar’s policy toward that region, he writes: “The ambition for conquest of Transoxiana was no longer the product of the lust for conquest. It became a noble duty, the object being to establish peace, freedom and tolerance in that land of chaos and uncertainty. Such a conception reminds us of the prevailing ideas of the ‘white man’s burden’ in England and ‘Kulture’ in Germany towards the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately, Varma does not elaborate on his interesting observation. The obvious flaw in this suggested parallel is that unlike the British or other Europeans, the Mughals were not thinking in terms of racial differences when they idealized their plans for the reconquest of Transoxiana as a mission to restore civilization. In addition, this idealistic fervor could not have lasted very long, because the Mughal pinnacle of military might and political organization lasted only during the reign of Akbar. After him the Mughal Empire never managed to reach the same levels of military or bureaucratic excellence, although it did not lack able generals and administrators.

The ever-widening gap between the desire for the reconquest of Central Asia and its fulfillment was dictated as much by the failure to generate and project adequate military power as by the growing realization among the Mughals that the Mughal Empire was an Indian polity and not a central Asian one.<sup>25</sup> Jahangir’s son and successor Shah Jahan (1628-1658) expended his immense wealth and organizational ability in building

the *Taj Mahal* (1631-53) instead of in foreign military ventures, although he was a successful general in his internal campaigns against the “factious and the rebellious,” as his father described the recalcitrant local powers rather colorfully.<sup>26</sup> In some ways the *Taj Mahal* was a nostalgic revival of the Central Asian homeland in the shape of a spectacular architectural feat. However, the *Taj* itself is a hybrid of diverse architectural traditions fostered by the Mughals.<sup>27</sup>

Although no such notion comparable to modern Indian nationalism of the nineteenth century was available to them, the Mughals and their descendants did come to accept an Indian identity in the broadest possible sense. Ghulam Husain Khan, a mid-eighteenth-century Mughal historian, observed with disapproval in his aptly titled work *Seir Mutaqherin, or View of Modern Times* (1789) how the British had “a custom of coming for a number of years, and then of going away to pay a visit to their native country, without any of them shewing an inclination to fix himself in this land.” That Khan was referring to the Nabobs is amply evident in his following observation about another peculiar custom of these British sojourners, “which every one of those emigrants holds to be of Divine obligation, I mean, that of scraping together as much money in this country as they can and carrying it in immense sums to the kingdom of England.” Khan does not seem to resent the British as foreign invaders; he and his generation were accustomed to foreign merchants and immigrants living peacefully with the natives. What evidently irked him was the arrogant refusal of some of these foreigners to treat India as their home land.<sup>28</sup> As a matter of fact, some of the Mughal elite bestowed imperial titles on notable British functionaries in the hope that they would assimilate themselves into

Mughal culture.<sup>29</sup>

The Mughal Empire was a successor to the Muslim Sultanates of Afghan and Turkish origin in India. Before the Mughal conquest began in earnest in the early sixteenth century, several dynasties of Afghan origins had ruled large parts of Northern India from the capital city of Delhi for several centuries. The Mughals themselves were a Muslim people of predominantly Turkish descent originally from Central Asia. The founder of the dynasty Babur (1526-1530), nicknamed the Tiger, claimed direct descent from Timurlane (1335-1405) on his father's side and was connected with Chingiz Khan (1167-1206), the founder of the Mongol Empire (better known as Genghis Khan in the West), through his mother.<sup>30</sup> Babur himself is reputed to have coined the term *Mughal* to proudly indicate his mixed lineage: Mongol and Turkish.<sup>31</sup>

Babur's pride in his Mongol ancestry, especially his claim to be descended from Genghis Khan, might strike a Western audience as a self-condemnatory association, given the fact that the Mongols were regarded as an existential threat by medieval Christendom like the Ottoman Turks of later times. Medieval Christendom's attitudes toward the Mongols were not uniformly negative, as Peter Jackson, among others, has recently pointed out in *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410* (2005). They were also temporarily and somewhat simpl-mindedly regarded as allies against the Islamic threat to Christendom. But the negative attitudes certainly outweighed the positive ones.<sup>32</sup> By contrast, peoples of the Far East and Central Asia have traditionally accorded great respect to Genghis Khan and his descendants not only as great military leaders and conquerors but also as just rulers and creators of a long-lasting civilization. Although the

Mongols in their early nomadic existence did pursue a devastating policy of slash-and-burn warfare against sedentary civilizations both in the West and the East, after their founder Genghis Khan's spectacular victories they settled down and assimilated themselves into such great civilizations as the Chinese Empire and the Islamic empires and kingdoms that stretched over Central Asia, Arabia, and Persia. Qubilai Khan (1260-94), the Chinese Emperor celebrated by Marco Polo as a fabulously wealthy and astute ruler (who is also Coleridge's Kublai Khan of *Xanadu* fame), was Genghis Khan's grandson. His brother Helegu Khan (d. 1265), also known as Halaku Khan, sacked Baghdad and executed the last Abbasid Caliph in 1258. However, Helegu Khan's descendants embraced Islam and the Perso-Arabian urban culture of their new subjects and led them to prosperity and stability. Similarly, Qubilai Khan fostered the Taoist-Confucian Chinese culture with avidity and took it to new heights.<sup>33</sup>

Babur was justifiably proud of such a lineage. Although he and his followers came to India as adventurers, they were far from being a band of warlike nomads. In spite of his nomadic ancestry, Babur had been raised in a highly complex, ancient, urban culture, which, nonetheless, tenaciously held on to the nomadic spirit of adventure. However, by the eighteenth century the term *Mughal* had ceased to denote any particular ethnic, religious, or linguistic group, as different ethnicities and religious communities were being assimilated into a broad cultural identity under the umbrella term of *Mughal*.

The Mughal rule in India began with Babur's defeat of Ibrahim Lodi, the last ruler of a Delhi Sultanate of Afghan origin on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1526 in the Battle of Panipat. Babur's able grandson Akbar (1556-1605) consolidated his grandfather's conquests and expanded

the frontiers of the Mughal Empire from Kabul in the North to the Deccan (the South Indian plateau) in the south. Ira Lapidus writes, “Akbar established the institutional as well as the geographical basis of the empire.”<sup>34</sup> Akbar’s reign was characterized by a syncretism of Muslim and Hindu religio-political traditions, as well as Indian, Turkic, and Persian cultures. Akbar initiated a policy of integrating the Hindu elites into Mughal nobility through intermarriage and grants of titles and honors. He also fostered Sufi orders and cults which actively promoted a synthesis of Islam and Hinduism. He even attempted to establish his own cult, which promoted the Emperor as a philosopher-King combining spiritual guidance with the worldly well-being of the subjects, regardless of their religious affiliations. John F. Richards has pointed out that the desire for some kind of synthesis of the oft-conflicting religious traditions in Mughal India was not only limited to the Emperor and his court, but also people from all walks of life engaged in a vivacious debate: “Many mystics, scholars, intellectuals, and more ordinary folks were actively seeking some form of synthesis.”<sup>35</sup>

In this respect the Mughal Empire was indeed unique, because at a time when Safavid Persia, and many contemporaneous European states were engaged in creating homogeneous cultures based on religion and ethnicity, the Mughals were actively fostering an ideal of unity based on tolerance of diversity. Although the Ottomans pursued a consistent policy of tolerance until well into the nineteenth century, during the long-protracted conflict between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires religion and ethnicity frequently became powerful rallying points for both polities.<sup>36</sup> The Ottomans and the Safavids identified themselves with Sunni and Shia Muslims respectively, with the Ottoman

Sultans claiming the Caliphate and the Safavid Shahs fostering Shiism as a state religion.<sup>37</sup> However, one must acknowledge that the Ottoman claim to the Sunni Caliphate was by no means pursued with anything resembling the persistent bigotry which characterized Safavid imperial policies. Safavid Persia was particularly aggressive in promoting Shiism as the state religion. Ira Lapidus writes, “‘Twelver [sic] Shiism was imposed [on the Persians] by a wave of persecution which has little or no parallel in other Muslim regions.’”<sup>38</sup>

Admittedly, the Mughal policy of tolerance was not a little warranted by the fact that the subject population of Mughal India was overwhelmingly Hindu, and also that the Indian Muslims were a minority, further divided among themselves between Shia and Sunni. It could be argued that the Ottomans also had sizeable non-Muslim populations in their territories which were treated with some degree of tolerance. However, the Ottomans could apply the Koranic concept of the “people of the book” to their Christian and Jewish subjects that allows for some degree of tolerance to these communities. The Mughals, by contrast, ruled over Hindus, who were frequently described as pagans and idolaters by European travelers to the Mughal Empire and were routinely condemned as heathens by conservative Muslim scholars and clerics. The following section is devoted to a discussion of how the Mughal Empire often offered the British political thinkers and commentators a model of a pluralist society which challenged the British polity’s drive toward creating a more or less homogeneous nation-state based on common religious, racial, and linguistic aspirations since at least the early seventeenth century.

## IV

### The Mughal Empire and Britishness

The Mughal Empire with all its internal diversity practically became an integral part of an expanding British Empire in the aftermath of the successful Seven Years War (1756-1763), although the Mughal Emperor continued to be regarded as a sovereign ruler by both Indians and Britons until the end of the century. The British notion of empire prior to the Seven Years War was based on such ideals and goals as liberty, Protestantism, and assertive mercantilism, and it was consistently contrasted with the authoritarian, despotic, continental and/or Oriental models provided by the Spanish, French, and Ottoman Empires. By 1763 Britain had acquired a global empire that was overwhelmingly comprised of Catholic (in Quebec) and, even more disturbingly, of non-Christian, non-white Asiatic peoples and their polities. This was an empire based on conquest and not on the peaceful pursuit of trade and commerce, unlike the soon-to-be lost North American colonies. A whole generation of British intellectuals explored the disturbing possibility that the British Empire could become infected by alien, authoritarian political as well as cultural practices.

The supposedly fast-declining Mughal Empire was a significant source of this new anxiety about empire and identity. According to Linda Colley, the British identity that had been gradually and painstakingly acquired in the aftermath of the 1707 Act of Union between Scotland and England seemed to be successful in assimilating (if not obliterating) the parochial identities based on ethnicity and regionalism.<sup>39</sup>

However, with the acquisition of a substantial empire both in the East (in India) and the West (in Canada), the Mughal Empire being the most outlandish of the whole, that hard-earned notion of Britishness that seemed to be able to bring together different ethnic and linguistic groups under one central umbrella of Protestantism and the profitable pursuit of personal liberty, came under intense pressure.

So far the struggle had been to accommodate as much plurality and diversity as possible within the framework of a unified and Protestant Great Britain in the face of the Continental Catholic powers, mainly France. Linda Colley has contended that by 1763 the British were beset with the need to come to terms with demands for the accommodation of various groups hitherto marginalized. Among such groups were the Scottish Highlanders and the Tories, whose loyalty could not be questioned any more after their active and enthusiastic support of the war effort. Concomitantly, the newly-acquired empire with its plurality in terms of racial, religious, and ethnic diversity also threatened a sanitized notion of Britishness (Colley, *Britons*, 103-105).

Perhaps because of the rather inward-looking nature of the Britishness she constructs, Colley does not extend her insights to the Nabob, who returned to Britain from the Mughal Empire after 1757 trailing a far more unsettling train of alien cultural practices, which threatened (for some Britons) to translate themselves into anti-British political practices. Although Colley discusses the Whig reactions to Scotsmen invading the Metropolis and goes on to point out the fact that Scotsmen were prominent in the British East India Company's "rape" of Bengal, she stops short of drawing a connection between Burke's anti-Nabob rhetoric and the Wilkite anti-Scot propaganda (Colley,

*Britons*, 110-132). Were the Nabobs any less or more British than the swarms of Scotsmen who, according to rabble-rousers like John Wilkes, descended on the metropolis in search of affluence absent in their rugged and inhospitable homeland? Could all these new demands be met without stretching the notion of Britishness too far, perhaps to the point of rupture? Colley's cogent analysis leads one to ask these useful questions, although she does not explore them.

The Scots and the Nabobs (as well as the West Indian planters) represent respectively the internal and external threats to a sense of narrowly defined Britishness. In some respects the Scotsmen and the Nabobs were actually one and the same. As a matter of fact, many Nabobs were also Scotsmen. The Scots were certainly disproportionately successful in both British and imperial politics. There were a large number of Scotsmen in the employ of the East India Company. Being deprived of fair treatment in jobs and offices in the metropolis, the educated and hard-working Scotsmen frequently traveled to the peripheries of the British Empire. A newly developed notion of British Empire made up of various cultures and races actually worked in favor of the Scotsmen who contributed to the making of that empire so profoundly, mostly because in such a diverse empire the English would no longer hold the central position and, consequently, would have to treat them as peers rather than inferiors (Colley, *Britons*, 130).

The radical libertarian Whig John Wilkes' antipathy toward the Scots as being alien, authoritarian, and treacherous could be easily related to Burke's antipathy to the Nabobs as being equally alien and threatening to a notion of homogeneous Britishness,

heavily redolent of Anglo-Saxon liberty and Protestant unity. As a matter fact, the Wilkite propaganda campaign against John Stuart, Earl of Bute, to expose his supposedly secret, sexual, and foreign influence over the English political system anticipated Burke's protracted campaign against Warren Hastings, one of the leading Nabobs. Both the campaigns are marked by a distrust of alien political and cultural influence. According to Kathleen Wilson, "By identifying the foreign, the feminine and the corrupt as imminent threats to the polity and insisting upon Scotland as a source of domestic pollution, Wilkes made explicit the boundaries of Englishness and citizenship."<sup>40</sup> The Nabob served a similar purpose for Edmund Burke.

However, the notion of a peculiarly British liberty, no less visceral than institutional in its imaginings, ultimately came to dominate the British national identity over Protestant unity and commercial success. The internal diversity within Protestantism, the Anglican establishment's failure to control dissent in the colonies, and the effective end to Britain's self-proclaimed championship of continental Protestantism in the aftermath of King Gustavus Adolphus' victories contributed to the gradual decline of the self-perception of the Britons as the chosen nation.<sup>41</sup> Jack P. Greene has more recently proposed that a warlike championship of Protestantism and mercantilism was not as powerful an ingredient in the heady brew of Britishness as Linda Colley would have it: "Indeed, contemporary opinion throughout the Empire fails to support recent suggestions that Britain was 'a land of liberty because founded on Protestantism and commerce' [as Colley argues], rather, the predominant view among eighteenth-century Britons, including colonists, seems to have been that Britain was Protestant and

commercial principally because founded on liberty” (229). As such, the white settlers of North America and the West Indies could be condemned for supporting slavery despite the fact that they were overwhelmingly the descendants of Protestant Britons and had inherited the institutional trapping of British liberty from the mother country. The popular literature about the West Indian planters and the East Indian Nabob of the 1760’s and later reflects this general disapproval of the despotic mores and manners the leading characters had imbibed from the peripheries of the Empire. Jack P. Greene writes, “The images preserved in these works [Samuel Foote’s *The Nabob* (1772) and Richard Cumberland’s *The West Indian* (1771)] and in the antislavery literature suggested that no people who consorted with the corrupt and despotic regimes of the east or held slaves in the American colonies could be true born Britons who, above all, loved liberty” (226).

Whether it was liberty before Protestantism or vice versa, these two elements certainly played a major role in creating a homogeneous notion of Britishness at a time when the same British identity began to confront the threateningly plural Mughal Empire in terms of its racial, religious and geographic constituency. The Mughal Empire became the site of both threatening and awe-inspiring plurality. On the one hand, closer contact with the Mughals prompted some mid to late eighteenth-century British authors to identify them as another manifestation of oriental despotism under which liberty and rule of law is extinguished forever; on the other, the Great Mughals were sometimes lauded as philosopher-kings, ruling a diverse polity with humane laws.

As a matter of fact, the British intellectuals’ preoccupation with Mughal Empire and its baffling plurality had begun long before the 1707 Act of Union, which according

to Linda Colley was the watershed year that ushered in the drive toward a homogeneous and cohesive British identity. Paul Stevens has demonstrated that the Jacobean courtier/ambassador Sir Thomas Roe's 1615-1619 embassy to the court of Emperor Jahangir actually set in motion a debate among English intellectuals and clerics about the comparative merits and demerits of the policy of tolerating religious diversity espoused by their magnanimous Mughal hosts.<sup>42</sup> Roe and his chaplain Edward Terry both published accounts of their impressions of the Mughal court culture, which, in spite of their frequent assertion of English cultural superiority, reveal many instances of unsettled and unsettling representations of Mughal tolerance of religious diversity. Terry wrote rather grudgingly, "But here everyman [sic] hath libertie to professe his own religion freely [sic], and for any restriction I ever observed, to dispute against theirs with impunity" (qtd. in Stevens, "England in Moghul India," 103). Paul Stevens points out that such accounts certainly had an impact on the pressing issue of conformity and religious tolerance in England "to an extent that has received surprisingly little attention, [although] there is some evidence to suggest that those glimpses of real knowledge of another culture did affect England's future" (106).

Although the Mughal polity had offered British thinkers with an alternative model as early as the Jacobean period, the 1757 Battle of Plassey certainly intensified the level of intellectual and material contact between the two empires at an unprecedented rate. Concurrent with the popular Nabob literature, mostly stage plays, poems, and novels about rich and arrogant British Nabobs from India with alien habits, authors, both professional and amateur, were writing histories and accounts of Mughal India in a bid to

comprehend the nature of the Mughal polity. On the one hand, the tolerance seemingly accorded by the Mughal polity to its myriads of religious and ethnic communities (and the castes within them) must have struck the British as being an example worthy of critical consideration, given that so much legislative and propagandistic effort had been expended to marginalize their own religious and ethnic minorities for such a long time. In addition, the co-existence and co-mingling of various linguistic, artistic, and literary traditions in Mughal India impressed many British scholars. On the other hand, some of them found the apparent Mughal combination of a luxurious/licentious lifestyle heavily invested in a culture of reciprocal gift giving (blatant bribery to British minds) and despotic policies in government profoundly disturbing.

## V

### Representations of the Mughal Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Historiography and Other Historical Writing

The Mughal Empire became a popular topic for professional historiographers and dilettantes alike in the decades following the 1757 Battle of Plassey. Speculations about the origins of the Mughal Empire, its sources of legitimacy, its internal diversity, its cultural and religious practices, its wealth and produce, and the reasons behind its supposed decline became the staple for many British authors in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. Popular literature of the time also reflects a preoccupation with similar themes. The wide variety of historical and ethnological writing about the Mughal Empire

certainly allowed the British to compare and contrast their growingly homogeneous nation-state with an alternative polity remarkable for its internal diversity.

Responses to the Mughal Empire varied widely in the works of individual eighteenth-century British authors. However, some of the common characteristics shared by them were a search for the origins of the Mughal Empire; admiration for individual Mughal Emperors for their personal accomplishments and humane policies, especially that of the toleration of religious and ethnic diversity; a general condemnation of the despotic form of government supposedly native to Asia; a mixture of revulsion at and admiration of the military ethos of the Mughal ruling elite; a puritanical condemnation of the luxurious life-style of the Mughals; and, speculations as to the possibility that the latest conquerors of India, the British, might imbibe those customs and become enervated as a consequence.<sup>43</sup> Although the majority certainly subscribed to a chauvinistic belief in the inherent superiorly and inevitable ascendancy of the British Empire at the expense of all other world empires, eighteenth-century British historiographers were in no haste to write off the Mughal Empire as a soon-to-be-extinct behemoth, as some twentieth-century historians tend to do. By contrast, they were open to treating the Mughal Empire as a work in progress, whose autonomous policies could still alter British ambitions in the Indian subcontinent. They might condemn Mughal customs and manners as being immoral and irrational, but they were under no illusion as to their supposed emptiness and impotency.

Alexander Dow (1735/6-1779), a Scottish Returnee from Mughal India, was certainly most prominent among eighteenth-century British historians in constructing a

romantic origin of the Mughal Empire. Dow's career matches that of a Nabob in terms of his crossover from a mercantile career to a military one in India. In addition, he learned Persian and Hindustani and was familiar and comfortable with the Mughal elite and their culture. According to the *ODNB*, Dow joined the East India Company Army as a cadet in 1660, although he was destined for a mercantile career and even underwent apprenticeship toward that goal at Eyemouth. He took part in the assault on the Chunar Fort during the 1664 Battle of Buxar, which led to the epoch-making conferral of the *Diwani* of Bengal on the East India Company by the reigning Mughal Emperor the following year. He returned to Britain in 1768. Although he did not manage to amass a large fortune out of his activities in India, he compensated amply by exploiting his considerable first-hand knowledge of Mughal India to write one of the most popular histories of the Mughal Empire.<sup>44</sup>

Dow found a rare copy of a history of Mughal Empire written in Persian by Muhammad Kasim Ferishta, a native. His English translation of the text entitled *The History of Hindostan*, the first two volumes of which was published in 1768, was highly popular and went through several editions by early nineteenth century. However, eighteenth-century scholars soon began to question the accuracy of Dow's translation. J. S. Grewal argues that Dow wished to be recognized as much more than a mere translator. His insights into the nature of the Mughal government recorded in the introductory essays prefixed to the first edition of his translation indicate that he wished to be recognized as a general historian of India.<sup>45</sup>

Dow is noteworthy among the contemporary writers about India for his

sympathetic treatment of the Mughal Empire and the Mughal dynasty. His version of the Mughal history was a defensive reaction to the general spirit of condemnation of the Mughals and their culture that typically pervades British Historiography about India at this time. In the Preface to *The History of Hindostan* Dow deeply appreciates the Mughals and their policies. He acknowledges that he owes his successful *History of Hindostan* to the hospitality and generosity of the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam at whose court he was cordially received as a guest: “He [Dow] found [at the Mughal court], with some degree of astonishment, the authentic history of a great empire [the Mughal Empire], . . . . Being at the same time, honoured with the particular friendship of the Emperor, at whose court he had for sometimes lived, he was induced to listen to that Prince’s solicitations, for giving the English some idea of his predecessors on the throne of India.”<sup>46</sup> Dow deliberately positions himself as a cultural intermediary between the two Empires and their peoples in his narrative.

Dow’s sympathetic treatment of the Mughal dynasty could be partially rooted in his personal experience in India where he was treated with great courtesy by Shah Alam, the reigning Mughal Emperor. He even sounds critical of the East India Company for treating the Emperor like a commoner in violation of his exalted lineage: “The Various revolution [sic] of fortune which has subjected several of the richest provinces of India to the Company’s servants, threw the undoubted heir of the Mogul Empire [Shah Alam] in to their hands. The governor [Colonel Clive, the arch British Nabob] availed himself of this circumstance. Other Nabobs had converted the unfortunate Prince into a tool; and it was now the turn of our Governor [Robert Clive] to do the same, for the benefit of his

constituents.”<sup>47</sup> Dow is referring to the years immediately after the Battle of Plassey during which the Mughal Emperor, beset and banished by domestic and foreign enemies from his capital Delhi, sued for military assistance from the British Company, which had just conquered Bengal and two other adjacent provinces by defeating the native Nawab. In exchange for British aid that would restore him to his throne, the Emperor granted the *Diwani* (civil administration) of the province of Bengal to the Company. Clive eagerly grabbed the opportunity and the historic *Farman* of 1765 granting the Diwani certainly escalated the era of the British Nabob, which saw many spectacular fortunes made by some Company functionaries in India.

Emperor Shah Alam became a figure of ridicule and pity for some British authors and thinkers about India at this time. J. S. Grewal points out, “The ‘mock king’ Shah Alam, whom Warren Hastings had already described as the King of ‘shreds and patches,’ remained nonetheless important. . . . The substance of his sovereignty existed no longer, but he was universally regarded as the symbol of Mughal sovereignty.”<sup>48</sup> Dow, in contrast to many of his contemporary authors, takes it upon himself to defend this unfortunate monarch, who was later blinded by one of his own ministers and was put under house arrest by the Marathas. The Emperor and, through him, the Mughal dynasty in India had become valuable symbols in the great game of conquest and empire building in India. All contending power blocks, the Marathas, the Afghans, the Mughal Nawabs, and, most importantly, the British were eager to exploit the aura of prestige still attached to the name of the Mughals. As such, through his sympathetic treatment of the Mughals, Dow critiques by anticipation a dominant strain in twentieth-century historiography about

the Mughal Empire, according to which the Mughal polity's decline in the eighteenth century was a foregone conclusion. The Mughal Emperor was certainly much more than a mere figurehead to his Indian subjects well into the nineteenth century, although some stay-at-home Britons evidently regarded him as such.

Dow is an exception among his contemporaries in that he openly celebrates the Mughal aura not only in his historical writings but also in his successful venture into the realm of fancy. His tragedy *Zingis* was first produced at the Drury Lane Theatre on December 17, 1768. The following year it was published for the first time. In *Zingis* Dow attempts to reinvest Mughal history with the garment of a glorious tradition and to rid it of the "shreds and patches" of decadence attributed to it by unsympathetic authors. The tragedy celebrates the courtesy and valor of the House of Timur he so elegantly praised in his *History*.

The central conflict in the tragedy takes place between Zingis, the usurper of the central Asian Empire, and his favorite son Timur, the tragic hero. Significantly, Dow turns the two legendary ancestors of the Mughal dynasty into a father-son duo. The historical Genghis Khan and Timur were not contemporaries, although they were related by blood. Genghis was a pagan Mongol chief who carved out the mighty Mongol Empire between 1206 and 1227.<sup>49</sup> Timur, although part-Mongol in ancestry, was a Muslim, and it was he who had historical ties with India proper. A brilliant military leader and politician, he conquered northern India in 1398.<sup>50</sup> Once again Dow is closer to the spirit of the myth embedded in Mughal history than to the facts which were more mundane. Both Genghis and Timur were claimed as direct ancestors by the first Mughal Emperor Babur.

Dow is obviously not so much interested in reconstructing the two ancestors of the Mughals as they were in real life as he is in remolding them into symbols. In *Zingis* Dow dramatizes the two conflicting ways of life that he believes to be the driving force behind the history of Muslim rule in India, which he simplifies in his *History* as the Afghan/Tartar tribal, desert militarism and the urban and urbane refinement and mildness of the House of Timur. In the see-saw movement of the history of Muslim rule in India, the uncouth yet energetic Afghans were superseded by the Great Mughals, who combined military prowess with the refinements of urban civilization, but as Dow demonstrates in his *History*, the Mughals were not uniformly humane and mild. Among the noble Mughal Emperors there have been a few who tyrannized their own people, and the good Mughal Princes had to strive hard to heal the ravages wrought by these evil individuals. Zingis, the usurper and father in Dow's play, represents the restless nomadic spirit of conquest and adventure of the Mongols, and his son Timur stands for the moral resoluteness and manly courage balanced with mildness that, according to Dow, characterizes the House of Timur, who later came to rule India. The father and the son together, then, represent the conflicted collective Mughal character as being torn between the urge to subdue and conquer at all costs and the nobler need to establish order and continuity and the rule of law.

In Dow's version of the ancestral drama of the Mughals, Zingis usurps the Tartar Empire in Central Asia by overthrowing Aunac, the old, infirm but legitimate Emperor. He is determined to put the deposed Emperor to death in order to establish his own claims to the throne. Zena, a chorus-like minor character, reports that Timur, Zingis' son and

heir, was entrusted with the responsibility to pursue and kill the fleeing Emperor and his retinue. But the generous prince allowed the old monarch to escape with his life out of his sense of chivalry and his new-found love for the Emperor's daughter, Princess Ovissa.<sup>51</sup> This act of disobedience contributes to the long-protracted conflict between the father and the son.

The theme of dualism between the thirst for conquest and the need to erect civilizations and the rule of law is, however, problematized by Dow. Zingis is far from being a war-mongering tribal chief. Even his initial act of usurpation is provoked by his enemies when they poison the old Emperor's mind against him, so that he is deprived of his deserved honors. The tremendous slight to his honor turns Zingis into a dangerous adversary. The chieftain is "inflexible, severe, tenacious of his power," reports Nevian, Zingis' faithful retainer, yet, he goes on to add, Zingis is "like a god" (1. 6). Zingis' vengeance transcends the petty vengefulness of ordinary human beings. Once he establishes himself on the throne, Zingis displays foresight and wisdom:

We mean to publish laws to rude mankind—  
To bind the nations in one general chain  
Of Policy to mark, with strict regard,  
The bounds of justice between man and man. (3. 35)

War and conquest are thus necessary if unpleasant means of achieving a higher goal. In addition to the rule of law, Zingis wishes to encourage trade and commerce among his subject peoples because commerce is the "means that civilize mankind" (3. 36). He also sends out ambassadors to neighboring kingdoms to give them the opportunity to accept

his overlordship peacefully without putting up armed resistance.

Timur, the young prince, agonizes over his duty to his father and his love for Ovissa, the daughter of the deposed Aunac. Faced with the dilemma of either being loyal to his implacable yet loving father or siding with his father's enemies to defend his love and the life of the abused Aunac, he contemplates a life of self-exile in the company of Ovissa:

This sword is my inheritance—the world  
Is wide enough for conquest: other thrones  
Will rise for her in Asia. (3. 44)

Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty, was also forced to flee his ancestral kingdom in Central Asia and set out with a band of faithful followers to conquer a new Empire for himself. The historical Babur was constrained by military and political reasons to choose a life of self-exile. However, the idealized Timur in Dow's play mulls over this alternative as a way to circumvent the moral dilemma: resistance to tyranny or open disobedience to a father.

The possibility of a peaceful resolution to the conflict raised in Act Four is shattered in Act Five when Timur at last joins the rebels and offers open battle to his mighty father. After an initial setback, Zingis overcomes the rebels and comes to apprehend his disobedient son only to find him breathing his last from a mortal wound. The grief-stricken father laments over his son's prone body:

I was to blame. —He ought to rule the East;  
For when my spirit should forsake the world,

His milder genius would have reconcil'd

The vanquish'd nations to the house of Zingis. (5. 82)

The play's ending raises some questions rather than bringing about a tidy closure. Why does Dow have to have Timur, the fountainhead so to speak of the "mildness" that will characterize the best of Mughal rule, killed in what amounts to a tribal brawl and not even an all out war? As Zingis tearfully says:

Hadst thou with fame, with honor cover'd o'er

Thy latter field, —In other wars expir'd,

These tears would flow from a more noble cause. (5. 82)

By bringing Timur's career to an abrupt end, is Dow trying to suggest that the "mild" and civilized element in Mughal nature is extremely fragile and is bound to be snuffed out by the spirit of tribal violence which comprises the darker side of their collective character, among other things? The play does end with a speech from Zingis which seems to suggest otherwise:

It was not well to arm our son against us.

But there's enough of blood. —Go—hence—away. —

And yet the generous passions of the soul,

Those homely virtues of a private life,

Suit not our great designs. —We sit aloft,

In thunder and in clouds, to awe the world,

And first must conquer, e're we bless mankind. (5. 84)

The distraught father openly abjures his aberrant rage and vows to carry on the task of

spreading the mildness and civilizational values so dear to his unfortunate son.

*Zingis* could be easily read as a convenient illustration of either “latent Orientalism” as pointed out by Edward Said or of “Levantanization” as defined by Srinivas Aravamudan.<sup>52</sup> Some aspects of the play does seem to fit Said’s description of an early phase of Orientalism which supposedly hid its agenda of dominance behind a façade of respectful and sympathetic understanding of ancient civilizations such as the Indian one the Mughal Empire was heir to. It also fits into the similar notion of “Levantanization,” which, according to Aravamudan, allowed colonial discourse to temporarily suspend its dominant mode in order to offer strategic critiques of its own will to dominate. Such a postcolonial critique would argue that a literary work like *Zingis* is predisposed to have a hegemonic effect on the audience by constructing the Mughal Empire as a once glorious civilization in steep decline, whose few accomplishments can be carried on and vastly improved upon only by the British nation-state as Empire, now poised to replace it. While the play could quite plausibly have had such an effect, it was by no means the only possible one. Dow’s play, in conjunction with his *History of Hindostan*, could also have provided the eighteenth-century readership with a utopian vision of a contemporary traditional state, which provided a contrast to the British obsession with achieving a homogeneous national identity by pitting a vision of plurality and tolerance against it.

Most of the eighteenth-century British historiographers and authors who treated the theme of the decline of the Mughal Empire in particular and empires in general were heavily influenced by the Enlightenment concept of the rise and fall of civilizations and

empires, which posited a likeness between the fate of human societies and the natural life cycles of living creatures. Regardless of their individual regard (or lack thereof) for the cultural achievements of traditional empires and polities such as the Mughal Empire, most British historiographers in the eighteenth century tended to accept the decline of the Mughals and the rise of the British Empire as a “natural” occurrence. However, even as they subscribed to a cyclic movement of human civilizations, these eighteenth-century historians readily conceded that the Mughal Empire was still a work in progress with its indigenous modes of governance still very much in place. Within that overarching framework of the natural cycles of civilizations, however, the British historiographers speculated about more particular causes of the decline. One such particular cause was the religious zealotry of Emperor Aurangzeb, which has preoccupied generations of historiographers (including South Asian ones in our time) since the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>53</sup>

For instance, Robert Orme, the author of the popular *Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire, of the Morattoes, And of the English Concern in Indostan; from the Year MDCLIX* (1782), found in Aurangzeb’s reign a plausible historical explanation of the circumstances that led the East India Company, first and foremost a mercantile body, to resort to drastic military measures against its avowed mission to pursue peaceful trade. Orme mainly argues that a diverse and plural polity like the Mughal Empire cannot survive if the time-honored policy of religious tolerance which had bound the empire together over the ages is suddenly reversed. His very thesis implies that he had a deep respect and understanding of the Mughal mode of governance, and believed that it was an

erroneous political decision on the part of an individual Emperor rather than any inherent racial flaw which lead to the decline of the Mughals.

Like Alexander Dow, Orme was a prominent member of a new breed of historians of India and its peoples. These men were themselves soldiers and/or East India Company functionaries, who had built their careers in India during the mid-eighteenth century, and even after returning to the Britain continued to capitalize on their Indian experience by writing popular histories. The life and works of Robert Orme, born in 1728 in India the son of an East India Company factor, are representative of the new historiography. Orme's life-story is inextricably intertwined with his historical writing. He reportedly always had an ambition to write a history of India and devoted much of his time to collecting manuscripts and other sources since his return to India in 1742 at the age of thirteen, after receiving an education that prepared him for the Company's service.<sup>54</sup> According to the anonymous author of the *Memoirs* in the 1805 reprint edition of Orme's *Historical Fragments*, Orme was sent back to England at the age of two to receive an education. He returned to India in 1742 after undergoing an education typical of a young writer in the service of the Company, consisting of penmanship, accounting, and a smattering of the classics ("Memoirs," xxii). He was appointed a writer in the Company's service in 1744. Orme rose in the Company's civil administration and took part in important decision making during the volatile period between 1750 and 1754, when the British Company was battling the rival French Company in South India (*Memoirs*, xiv-xv). After his final return to Britain in 1760, Orme became the Company's spokesman to the government and persuaded the appropriate authorities to allocate

adequate military resources to defend the Company's interests in India ("Memoirs," xiii).

His experience of the period led him to write the *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, the first volume of which was published in 1763. He completed and published the second and last volume of the *History of the Military Transactions* in 1778.<sup>55</sup> Although Orme in his *Military Transactions* celebrated the military exploits of Robert Clive, the victor of Plassey, he was concerned about the growing militarism of the East India Company, which he believed would hinder trade and commerce. SinhaRaja Tammita-Delgoda writes, "The *History [of the Military Transactions]* was never meant to be a celebration of either conquest or empire. Orme regarded the sweeping conquests which had been made since 1753 with deep dismay. He believed that trade and commerce should remain the East India Company's primary objective. Conquest and empire only brought corruption and decay, which threatened to ruin all the benefits of trade."<sup>56</sup> Orme's disapproval of the East India Company's military conquests and her meddling in Mughal politics foreshadows his consistently held view in *The Historical Fragments* (1782) to the effect that the Mughal Empire should be left alone to follow its own historical course according to the traditional values that had sustained it for ages.

In the opening chapter of the *Fragments*, Orme reminds the reader of the crisis of empire in India in 1758 when the heir to the Mughal throne himself was expelled from the imperial capital by ambitious ministers and foreign invaders and in the end sought military assistance from the British East India Company. Orme goes on to write, "The degradation to which the sovereignty of the Moguls was at this time reduced, in every

province of their dominion, proceeded from the evils which had been increasing ever since the death of Aurengzebe [sic], and cannot be developed without a general view of his reign, as well as the reign of his successors.”<sup>57</sup> He is clearly concerned about the reasons behind the Mughal Empire’s sudden decline and the dissolution of its central authority, which directly contributed to the British Company’s rise as a military power. However, Orme displays a concomitant awareness of the Mughal Empire as an autonomous agent governed by its own traditional values, no matter how wrong-headed they might appear to his precise British mind.

The story of the protracted conflict between Emperor Aurangzeb and his sworn enemy Shivaji serves as the backbone of *Historical Fragments*. In between are interwoven the concerns of the British East India Company and other European trading companies struggling to protect their interests amid the on-going imperial conflict, the narrative of Aurangzeb’s self-debilitating military campaigns against the traditionally friendly Rajput Kings, and that of the threatened Afghan invasion. But far from being a dry chronological list of battles and truces between the Emperor and his adversaries, it is enlivened by remarkable details that are designed to bring out the dominant humors of the principal characters in the unfolding imperial drama. For instance, Shivaji’s hair-raising escape from Aurangzeb’s imperial capital, accomplished by hiding himself in a trencher of food; his novel strategy of using a flying paper kite with a lighted fuse tied to its tail to set fire to the enemy’s gunpowder magazine; or that of reconnoitering enemy camps in disguise serve to establish him as a remarkably inventive and flexible leader of a national independence struggle (*Historical Fragments*, 11, 14-15). Such details help to explain and

dramatize one of Orme's major themes: the decline of the once mighty Mughal Empire.

According to Orme, such a diverse polity as the Mughal Empire cannot but begin to fall apart when the time-tested policies of tolerance are suspended by Emperor Aurangzeb. He attempts to convert the Hindus by force. The conversion plan fails drastically; however, not before the economy and the general tenor of life is thrown into disarray. Aurangzeb imposes a punitive poll tax on the Hindus (*Fragments*, 73-74). Orme is scathing about the Emperor's unprecedented policies, "[such policies are] so contrary to all the notions of sound policy, as well as the feeling of general humanity, that reflection seeks the motive with amazement" (*Fragments*, 73).

Despite its lack of insight into the complex nature of the centripetal and centrifugal forces gradually tearing the Mughal Empire apart, Orme's *Fragments* attempts to comprehend the manifold diversity of this polity. The main story-line of the conflict between the Mughals and the Marathas is interspersed with digressions about the other ethnic/racial groups that wielded considerable political and military clout. Orme waxes eloquent about the "Siddees," a powerful Muslim minority of African origin who commanded the Mughal Navy. These brave sailors and warriors evidently had a mind of their own, as they did not hesitate to defy their Mughal masters when the imperial policy went against the interest of their own community. They tended to marry within their own community and maintained their cultural distinctness from other Indian Muslims despite sharing the same religion (*Fragments*, 56-57).

The semi-autonomous Rajput Rajas are also singled out by Orme for detailed treatment in his history. Despite being Hindus, these proud, warlike Rajas of the desert

regions of the Empire are a nation apart from the “common” Hindus. They resist Aurangzeb’s tyrannical rule in open warfare and bleed the Emperor’s resources to such an extent that he is forced to sue for peace (*Fragments*, 74-86). The gallant Rana of Chitore spares the life of Aurangzeb’s favorite wife Udeperri in a gesture worthy of the chivalric Knights of Europe and asks only in return that the Emperor and his army “would refrain from destroying the sacred animal of their religions” (*Fragments*, 85-86). Aurangzeb, the Machiavellian prince, characteristically interprets this gesture as a sign of weakness and renews his offensive. According to Orme, the alienation of the Rajput Kings, who had been traditionally accorded an autonomous status by the previous Mughal Emperors and treated as equals rather than vassals, contributes substantially to the weakening of the Empire.

Orme is also aware of the diversity of religious thought in Mughal India and how it became an issue even in high imperial politics. In a remarkable endnote referenced to his explication of Aurangzeb’s policy of intolerance toward Hindus in the main body of the text, Orme discourses at length about the unfortunate Prince Dara Shikoh, Aurangzeb’s older brother and the Crown Prince whom Aurangzeb put to death for heresy after a successful civil war. In Orme’s narrative Dara appears as a philosopher-prince engaged in a scholarly project to synthesize Hinduism and Islam. Citing European sources, Orme points out that Dara even ordered a translation of the *Upanishads* into Persian (*Fragments*, 258). Despite his apparent appreciation of the different religious and cultural traditions of India, Orme did not wish to be thought a deist. Consequently, in *General idea of Government and People of Indostan* (1753), an ethnographical work that

preceded *Historical Fragments*, Orme drew a rather predictable Christian lesson: “How grateful, how noble are the reflections inspired by such a retrospect [of the manner of the Indians], in favour of the cause of Christianity, and favour of the cause of Liberty.”<sup>58</sup>

Orme, the official historiographer of the East India Company, also wrote an ethnological treatise on Mughal India in addition to his popular political and military histories. *General Idea of the Government and People of Indostan*, first published in 1753, is an attempt by Orme to formulate a general theory that would allow his readers to interpret the complex mixture of racial, political, religious, and cultural elements that was Mughal India at this time. Orme’s attempt at constructing a general theory of the peoples and manners of India, however, leads him to some conclusions that are blatantly racist and derogatory. Indeed, it is hard to believe that the same author could write with such appreciation about the complexities of recent Mughal history in *Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire*.

To be fair, Orme’s “theory” is based on a widely accepted premise among eighteenth-century historians that climate was a prime cause in the grand movement of human (and, needless to say, always already assumed to be Western) history.<sup>59</sup> Beginning with Herodotus, the climate theory later achieved a pseudo-scientific respectability from Hippocrates. J. W. Johnson writes, “Subsequent historiographers dutifully followed Herodotus and confirmed his opinions and those of Hippocrates as historically verifiable.”<sup>60</sup> Montesquieu was certainly the most authoritative source of the climatic causation of history for Orme and his generation. The French historian asserted the putative connection between liberty or lack thereof with the climate in any particular

region of the world. According to him, the colder, less productive northern climate is inhabited by freedom loving, hardworking races, while the warm, fecund southern countries support timid, unwarlike populations that easily exchange their liberty for security under despotic rule.<sup>61</sup> Montesquieu further observed that the despotic political institutions in India and the lack of martial valor among the Indians are the inexorable consequences of the enervating climate: “The Indians are naturally a pusillanimous people; even the Children of Europeans born in India, lose the courage peculiar to their own climate.”<sup>62</sup>

Orme’s ethnographical observations about India and Indians are based on these general premises, although he puts his own spin on them. According to him, the innate racial traits are either aggravated or refined according to the climate of the region inhabited by a particular racial group. Imperial conquests introduce new racial/ethnic groups into regions of the world previously uninhabited by them. As India has always been a land invaded and conquered by subsequent waves of different races, it is a perfect test case for Orme’s theory. By observing the Mughals, the descendants of the “Tartar” conquerors from central Asia, Orme comes to the conclusion that the enervating climate of India has aggravated their innate vices such as propensity toward greed, lust, luxury, and violence, while depriving them of their hardy desert constitution and simplicity of manners.

He claims that the original ancestors of the present day Mughals were “known . . . to be of honest and simple manners and if at times fierce and cruel, they cease to be so when they cease to be enemies of war.” He goes on to point out that the descendants of

the Mughals, however, are a different breed altogether: “Licentiousness and luxury peculiar to this enervating climate, have spread their corruption, and instead of meeting with obstacles [sic] from laws or opinions, is cherished as the supreme good [by the Mughals] to the utmost excesses.” The conclusion of this line of speculation is deceptively logical, “All these [innate luxury, etc. aggravated by the climate] will surely be deemed causes sufficient to have changed, in the present Moors of Indostan, the spirit which their ancestors brought with them into it: and from hence many and dreadful vices are naturalized amongst them.” Despite the gradual decay of their original racial spirit, the Mughal retain a martial spirit. Orme writes appreciatively that the military profession is regarded highly by the Moors: “the profession of a soldier” is “the nearest road not only to honours but to power” as well (*General Idea*, 423). Despite his detestation for the putative despotism of Mughal governors, Orme reserves his praise for able military commanders such as Alivardi Khan of Bengal (*General Idea*, 424).

It is obvious from his resoundingly succinct summary of the “character of the Indian Moor” that as far as he is concerned only Indians belonging to the ruling elite can be attributed with one, since the lower orders are mere mindless minions at the mercy of their superiors: “A domineering insolence towards all . . . , ungovernable willfulness, inhumanity, cruelty, murders and assassinations, . . . sensual excesses that revolt against nature, unbounded thirst of power, and an expaciousness of wealth equal to the extravagance of his propensities and vices—this is the character of the Indian Moor, who is of consequence sufficient to have any character at all” (*General Idea*, 423). Orme is clearly constructing a stereotype of the Mughal Nawab, a military aristocrat who has

supposedly lost the simple manners and hardihood of his ancestors and turned into a lustful, luxurious, and potentially violent and unpredictable ruler over a cowed subject population. Earlier, Orme traces the etymology of the term Nawab as being a derivative of the Indo-Persian word “Naib” signifying “deputy.” He goes on to point out the martial vocation of the Nawab: “Nabobs more particularly attach themselves to the command of the army, and leave the civil administration to the Duan [Diwan]” (*General Idea*, 400). Orme’s delineation of the Mughal Nawab’s character is remarkably similar to the character-traits given to the fictional British Nabob, to be discussed in detail in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

Orme’s use of the widely disseminated climatological theory raises some disturbing implications that were to be later exploited by the authors of the Nabob literature. The “Gentoos” or the Hindu subjects of the Mughals are climatologically and racially incapable of resisting foreign conquest by military means. Orme portrays them as doting parents, avaricious shopkeepers, deceitful merchants, and timid, superstitious pagans. Their ineptitude in military matters have rendered them vulnerable to foreign invasion (*General Idea*, 430-31). Now that the Mughals, who originally came down through the northern passes bringing their martial ardor with other cultural baggage, have degenerated into a race of impotent but vicious despots, the British are poised to be the next conquerors of India. However, are not the British by implication in danger of falling victim to the enervating climate and corrupt customs of India? Will their native northern hardihood and innate virtues be proof against the corroding forces of nature and manners? By raising such penetrating questions, Orme certainly concedes that the

indigenous cultural practices were still potent enough in Mughal India to have an impact on the Britons who resided in the Mughal Empire, rather than the British standards of civility shaping Indian subjectivity one sidedly. Such are some of the questions anticipated by Orme's work which the Nabob literature of the near future attempt to answer.

Going native in India could have negative implication for any hardy northern conqueror. However, Orme seems to detect some advantages deriving from the unfortunate yet inevitable process: "The Climate and habits of Indostan have enervated the strong fibers with which the Tartars conquered it; and the rude sense of that people is now refined in their descendants, in a great measure, to the sensibility of the Indians" (*General Idea*, 425). Is not Orme tacitly admitting that Indians are equipped with a refined sensibility despite their many shocking flaws of character? However, the increase in sensibility is accompanied by a corresponding increase in timidity: "In the northern parts of the Kingdom [Mughal Empire], firmer fibers produce a proportionable degree of resolution: in the southern all is sensibility; and fear must be predominant in such as are infinitely susceptible of the minutest impressions" (*General Idea*, 420). Sensibility is a double-edged sword in Orme's worldview; it refines yet makes human beings vulnerable. Another implication of the inventive sensibility hypotheses is that the Mughals, who began as foreign invaders, have become Indianized in at least one respect, the susceptibility to powerful feelings and emotions, albeit mostly destructive ones, and a propensity toward excessive ceremony in public life by which they mask their hypocrisy (*General Idea*, 426-29). Once again, Orme implies that the British in India could be

transformed by the same cultural/climatic processes.

In spite his often fanciful theories about the underpinnings of Mughal government and equally colorful speculations as to the collective character of the natives, Orme is remarkably open to the richness and diversity of the empire he was born in. The *Historical Fragments of Mogul Empire*, unlike the nineteenth and twentieth-century historiography about India, endows India and Indians with power and agency. Orme's Emperor Aurangzeb comes across as a ruthless yet restlessly energetic ruler, driven by the inner demon of inordinate ambition. Orme's India is also far from being a stagnant, static Oriental Empire. Even the title of his work speaks of his understanding of the complexity of this Empire and also of the fact that it could not be easily explained away, defined, and labeled as nineteenth-century historians, especially James Mill, attempted to do. The anonymous author of the biographical essay prefixed to the 1805 edition of *Fragments* writes: "To this work he gave the humble title of "Fragments" with the hope of obtaining further information respecting that important period in the history of the East" ("Memoirs," xli). To Orme the Mughal Empire was evidently a work in progress rather than an always already explained Eastern despotism.

In this respect, Robert Orme, to a certain extent, and, much more so, his contemporary Alexander Dow deserve to be included as lesser members of the company of great Orientalists such as Sir William Jones and William Robertson. By contrast, Thomas Maurice's *Modern History of Hindostan* (1802), despite having higher scholarly pretensions, is markedly hostile toward the Mughals and summarily dismisses them as being uncouth foreign invaders. J. S. Grewal has pointed out that the successful

scholarly efforts of Sir William Jones and William Robertson to retrieve the ancient Hindu literary and religious texts and make them available to the British readers had an unwitting impact on later historians of Mughal India. They developed an uncalled for (and certainly unintended by Jones and Robertson) bias against Muslim rule in general and the Mughal Empire in particular: “If they [the ancient Hindus and their latter day progenies] had been a great imperial people, enlightened by science and rendered happy and virtuous by a salutary system of polity, . . . , there was a strong presumption in favour of their fallen state being due to Muslim conquest. This view of Indian history was taken up and propagated above all by Thomas Maurice.”<sup>63</sup>

However, we do not have to wait till the early nineteenth century for the sweepingly negative view of the Mughals to be expressed routinely by British historians. Some eighteenth-century British historiographers and authors, who used historical material in their works, also espoused a radically dismissive view of Mughal India and its future. In this respect William Julius Mickle (1734/5–1788) was most prominent, and he anticipated much of late nineteenth and twentieth-century historiography about India which takes the Mughal Empire’s demise as a given. Mickle, an *assimilé* Scot who Anglicized his name and lived almost half of his life in London and Oxford, was a contemporary of such giants of the Scottish Enlightenment as Gibbon, Hume, and William Robertson. He undertook to translate the Portuguese epic *Os Lusíadas* (1572) by Luis de Camões, and the translation was published in 1776. It was popular and remained the major translation of the epic until the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup> Mickle was certainly among the eighteenth-century authors who contributed most spectacularly to the

hybridization of historiography, and his book-length introduction and the copious footnotes accompanying the text of his 1776 translation of the Portuguese epic reflect the creative tension between historiography and imaginative literature during this era.

*The Lusiad*, as Mickle styled his translation, certainly seems to fit in to the paradigmatic eighteenth-century poetry on public themes and issues which, according to Suvir Kaul, were engaged in singing the imperial British nation into existence at a time when the novel was retreating from often violent and uncontrollable colonial settings and margins popular in much of late seventeenth-century drama and fiction.<sup>65</sup> Kaul has pointed out how such poems of nation and empire deliberately set out to construct Britain and the British as a maritime empire based on the principles of liberty and assertive mercantilism: “They do so most often in a comparative mode, seeking solace and warning from nations and states in the past, and, more competitively, arguing Britain’s distinction from contemporary European powers and the overseas lands and peoples that one or other of the European states had colonized or were colonizing.”<sup>66</sup>

However, Kaul’s paradigm, based on Said’s notion of “latent” and “manifest” Orientalism, cannot be sweepingly applied to all of eighteenth-century poetry on such themes. As I shall demonstrate in the ensuing discussion, Mickle certainly intended his translation to be a poem of assertive Britishness at the expense of a decadent India, rather than be a mere retelling of an old story. However, Mickle’s shrill espousal of nationalism and imperialism certainly did not represent the dominant view at this time of what the intensifying contact between the Mughal and the British Empires should be based on. In addition, Mickle’s translation, which is tantamount to a radical rewriting of the original

poem, consciously attempts to contain the plurality and diversity of the Mughal polity, which he evidently found to be threatening, by resorting to blatant stereotypes about Mughal India and its peoples. As such, Mickle represents a glaring contrast to more understanding and sympathetic authors like Alexander Dow and Robert Orme.

The original poem by the Portuguese poet-adventurer Luis de Camões is a teleological narrative about the fulfillment of some ancient prophecies about Portugal's emergence and subsequent dominance as a great maritime empire straddling the entire globe. Mickle evidently appreciates the implication of re-translating in the late eighteenth century a Renaissance poem about the national and imperial quest of a fellow European nation-state. Just as the Portuguese, a mercantile nation like the British, made a dramatic transition from peaceful trade to military conquests in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the British nation is also poised to rediscover India in the capacity of conquerors and rulers after almost two centuries of quiet and peaceful mercantile transactions with the Indians.

Mickle's rendition of the Portuguese poem's title as *The Lusiad: or, the Discovery of India* is indicative of his intention to stress the need to reappraise the role of the British in India in the wake of the conquests carried out by the East India Company, beginning with the Battle of Plassey in 1757. The original title *Os Lusíadas* literally means "the children of Lusus," alluding to the mythical story that the Portuguese nation sprung from the loins of Lusus, a companion of the Greek god Bacchus. Richard Fenshawe, the Caroline courtier and poet, whose translation of the poem was published in 1655, actually rendered the title as *The Lusiad: or, Portugal's Historical Poem*. Mickle

claims that his translation of the Portuguese epic at this momentous era of imperial expansion is especially valuable to the British not only for practical reasons, but also for a historical/philosophical appreciation of the Portuguese experience in India. Mickle obviously regards the Portuguese poem as “history,” not only in the sense of a factual narrative but also as a narrative based on the truth of the imagination. He writes in the voluminous Introduction, “No lesson can be of greater national importance than the history of the rise and fall of a commercial empire. The view of . . . the means by which such empire might have been continued, and the error by which it was lost, [are] areas particularly conspicuous in the naval and commercial history of Portugal as if Providence had intended to give a lasting example to mankind; a chart, where, the courses of a safe voyage is pointed out.”<sup>67</sup>

He further discovers a mystic connection between the Portuguese poet’s vision of his own people’s future and the destiny of the British nation to be the rulers and conquerors of India : “This [the superiority of the civil and military arts of the British in India] . . . must fulfill the prophecy of Camoens [sic] and transfer to the British the high compliment he pays to this countrymen: ‘Beneath their sway majestic, wise and mild,/ Proud of her victors’ laws thrice happier India smiled’” (vii). Mickle subscribes to teleological notion of history as the unfolding of the inevitable triumph of British liberty and trade over all kinds of tyranny, whether domestic or foreign. His choice of a Portuguese epic as the vehicle to propagate his vision of history was certainly deliberate. For Mickle the lesson of history is that despite their great achievements the Portuguese ultimately failed to preserve their Indian Empire because of the militarism and despotism

that came to dominate Portuguese policy instead of the pursuit of peaceful trade and liberty. Mickle argues that the British can learn from their mistakes and amend their own ways before it is too late: “It is not the spirit of Gothic conquest; it is not the groveling arts of intrigue, which can give lasting security [to any imperial possession]. An essential decisive redominancy of the justice of laws like the British, can alone secure the prosperity of the most powerful commercial system, or render its existence ADVANTAGEOUS or even SAFE to the seat of Empire [Mickle’s own emphasis]” (cviii).

The hero of the poem, Don Vasco Da Gama, the navigator who discovered the sea route to India, also functions as a counterbalance to the uncomfortable fact that Mickle has chosen to Anglicize the national poem of a Catholic people, despite their sharing a common mercantile heritage with the British. Mickle is clearly negotiating the “space of multiple otherness” pointed out by Balachandra Rajan in which English imperialism had to assert itself since the Renaissance. While defining this concept, Rajan writes, “we have an imperial other in Spain and a theological other in Rome, linked in a formidable and unholy alliance. Perceptions of the New World are poised on an uneasy discrimination between settlement and occupation. Perceptions of the Old World are poised on an equally uneasy discrimination between commerce and empire.”<sup>68</sup> The Portuguese, despite their affinities with the British, such as the possession of a maritime empire acquired through trade, were tainted with theological otherness emanating from Rome, whose imperial host was Spain and, later, France.

Mickle circumvents these contradictions by portraying Vasco Da Gama as an

honorary “Protestant” merchant-navigator whose primary concern is peaceful trade and not conquest. This is a radical rewriting of the hero’s character from the one originally fashioned by Camões. Richard Helgerson, in his reading of the original poem, has emphasized the conscious attempt on the part of the poet to fashion his hero as an aristocratic crusader rather than as a mercantile hero: “If commercial gain is their [the Portuguese in Camões’s original poem] goal, neither they nor their poet ever say so. Instead they repeatedly and insistently proffer a set of quite different motives, motives more compatible with the crusading ethos of a Christian *Barao*. Da Gama and his companions voyage in search not of wealth but rather of honor, conquest, and the opportunity to spread the Christian faith.”<sup>69</sup>

By contrast, Mickle’s Da Gama offers a treaty of peaceful and mutually beneficial trade to the Indian monarch on behalf of the Portuguese sovereign: “My sovereign offers friendship’s bands sincere: / Mutual he asks them, naked of disguise.”<sup>70</sup> This Da Gama is a radically new hero; the mercantilist who does not resort to military violence unless no other option is feasible. As such, my reading of the relationship between the original poem and the Mickle translation builds on Helgerson’s reading of the original poem and disagrees with that of Balachandra Rajan, who conflates and elides the original poem’s aristocratic nationalist spirit with the mercantile one in the Mickle version and claims that that they are one and the same.<sup>71</sup>

In the Mickle version, the treachery of the natives forces Da Gama to take military measures which inevitably lead to the establishment of a Portuguese Empire in India, because the natives are naturally incapable of matching European standards of

military valor. It is the failure of Da Gama's successors to uphold the pioneer's strict observation of moral conduct in commercial and political transactions that eventually lead to the hampering of Portuguese interests in India. Mickle writes, "The unexampled misconduct of the Portuguese would render the most lucrative commerce of the world an heavy and at last insupportable expense on the treasury of Lisbon." He goes on to add that "the shameless villainy, the faithless piracies and rapine of their countrymen would bring down destruction upon their empire" (Introduction, ci).

Although Mickle does not discourse at any significant length about the Mughal Empire in particular or native Indian powers in general, in one respect his writing is similar to that of Orme. Both authors are engaged in analyzing the causes behind the decline of an empire which, in a manner of speaking, the British are in the process of succeeding to; for Orme it is the Mughal Empire and for Mickle it is the Portuguese maritime Empire. On the one hand, the British are poised to become the latest mercantile European nation after the Portuguese to conquer India and add her to their own mostly maritime Empire; on the other, they are in the process of replacing the Mughals as the masters of a sprawling land empire. The Portuguese never managed to extend their empire into the hinterlands of the Indian subcontinent, that feat was left for the Mughals and later the British to accomplish. The original Portuguese epic was published at a time when the Portuguese maritime empire was strictly limited to the coastline of India, and the Mughal Empire had just begun to consolidate itself through the conquests of Akbar the Great. Mickle also chose a time of imperial beginnings and closures to produce his translation. For him the Mughals had become mere nominal masters of a once mighty

empire, which the British were in the process of conquering.

Mickle also attempts to answer some of the disturbing questions raised by Orme's history and ethnography of India, especially whether the British were in danger of imbibing morally as well as physically debilitating customs from their newly-acquired empire in India. This is where Mickle combines the role of historiographer and polemicist and is obligated to refute a view popular among some "Theorists in political philosophy, who lament that either India was ever discovered, and [sic] who assert that the increase of Trade is only the parent of degeneracy, and the nurse of every vice" (Introduction, i). What follows is a more strident defense of conquest and imperialism than any one comes across in Orme. Mickle defends Western discoveries and subsequent expansions in the new world and the East by pointing out that the good outweighs the evil generated by such endeavors. Even the Spanish conquest of the new world, admittedly bloodier than anything attempted by the British, has at least eradicated the monstrous religious practices of the Amerindians, such as human sacrifice. How much more beneficial to humanity would the British conquest of India be, asks Mickle rhetorically (Introduction, vi-viii).

He summarily appropriates the Portuguese national epic toward the end of his discourse: "It is the Epic Poem of the Birth of Commerce. And in a particular manner the Epic Poem of whatever country has the controul [sic] and possession of the commerce of India" (Introduction, cxlvii). He would evidently concur with Orme that the Indian natives, whatever their ethnic and religious persuasion, are incapable of defending themselves and are fair game for hardy conquerors. He describes Indian history under

native rulers as an account of the “undistinguishing ravages of their Mohammedan and native Princes,” and expresses the belief that under British rule the “dispirited and passive gentoos [Hindu subjects of the Mughals]” will be “taught to see, and claim those rights of Nature [liberty and right to property]” (Introduction, ix-x).

Mickle’s translation subscribes to the prevalent eighteenth-century theory of translation mostly established by Dryden that disparaged literal translations in favor of ones that made texts from other times and cultures available to the current age in familiar and accessible terms. Even after accounting for Mickle’s adherence to dominant trends in translation, it is apparent that he interpolates ideas and imagery that do more than just make the material familiar to the audience. According to J. J. Caudle, “Mickle’s fluency in Portuguese has been questioned, and indeed his *Lusiad* was an adaptation of Camões’s epic in his own style, with ample poetic license.”<sup>72</sup> As for example, in Canto 6 he interpolates a long densely crafted passage not available in the Fenshaw version or in the nineteenth-century bilingual translation by J. J. Aubertin.

After his perilous journey around the Cape of Good Hope, Captain Da Gama reaches the south Indian port of Calicut belonging to a powerful Hindu King. In the midst of the hostilities offered him by Indian Moors, a native Muslim trading community who resented the encroachment on their territory by European adventurers, Da Gama finds a welcome respite as he comes across Monzaida, a friendly Arab proficient in European as well as Indian languages. The kindly Moor launches himself into a long speech describing the realm of Malabar, the Indian Kingdom Da Gama has landed in. In both the Fenshaw and the bilingual versions Monzaida’s speech is considerably briefer than in

Mickle's, and the moor limits his description to the coastal region and its political and social conditions.

In Mickle's translation Monzaida waxes eloquent about the "fierce Patan" who tend the flocks of sheep and the refined "Delhian." The religions practiced in India are so diverse in their conception of the deity. According to the Mickle version, there are the monotheistic Muslims, who "from heaven receives the Koran's lore" and the pagan tribes, who "the dread monsters of the wild adore." Most amazing are the devout Hindus who submit the corpses of their dear ones to the Ganges, because "if fondly placed on Ganges' holy wave" they foolishly think "the spirit wings her way to heaven." The description of the exotic beliefs of the Hindus corresponds almost exactly with Montesquieu's observations about the Indian people and their customs in *The Spirit of Laws*.<sup>73</sup> Mickle is at his topographical best when he goes on to add: "At the mouth of the Ganges, where she flows in to the mighty Bay of Bengal, / Bengala's beauteous Eden wide extends" (6. 286).

Mickle's version obviously reflects the more intimate and accurate geographical and ethnological knowledge of India and her peoples that the British had access to at this time. The long topographical/ethnological passage ends with a couplet about the natives that lays bare Mickle's project of constructing an imperial British nation at the expense of the Indians: "Alas, how vain! These gaudy sons of fear, / Trembling, bow down before each hostile spear" (6. 287). Admittedly, in the bi-lingual version also, Camões alludes to the wealthy but martially inept native monarch "Narsinga" whom the Portuguese succored militarily against his native foes. In Aubertin's bilingual translation, the allusion

to this Hindu King appears in stanza 21 in Canto 7: “Narsinga’s Kingdom, too, more powerful far / In gold and precious stones than valiant race.”<sup>74</sup> Camões, who, not unlike most of his countrymen in India at this time, knew very little about the interior of the subcontinent and the mighty Mughal Empire that was being carved out by Akbar the Great, was definitely commenting on a particular Kingdom on the South Indian coast. However, Mickle renders this observation about a particular kingdom in sixteenth-century South India into a devastating generalization about Indians of all ethnic and regional origins.

What is only implied through the symbol of the elaborately sculptured gateway in the capital city of the native king described in detail in canto 7 of the bilingual translation, is rendered explicit in Mickle’s translation. Da Gama is given a “guided tour” of this elaborate gateway by the King himself. Balachandra Rajan contends that the gateway on which are carved the mythical and historical stories of India’s conquest by successive waves of foreign invaders stands for India’s destiny as a conquered and conquerable nation: “A civilization that celebrates its defeats in this manner has earned the ennoblement of a Portuguese conquest.”<sup>75</sup> However, Rajan’s reading risks an anachronistic imposition of an immutable relationship between the Occident and the Orient based on one-sided dominance. Given the fact that Camões was writing at a time the Mughal Empire was on the ascendant (a fact which Camões was unaware of, as Portuguese interests in India were mostly restricted to the coastline), the gateway comes across as an imperialistic overstatement on the part of the Portuguese poet at best. In addition, the theme of religious conversion goes hand in hand with conquest in the sculptures on the gateway, a fact ignored by Rajan. The theme of a commercial and

colonial domination is absent in the original spirit of the poem until Mickle interpolates it in his translation. As has been already pointed out, Camões and his hero were interested in conquest and conversion and not in economic profit per se. It is in Mickle's time that Rajan's comment quoted above becomes relevant, with the British Empire supposedly poised (for some Britons like Mickle) to replace the Mughal Empire in India.

The imagery of overabundance and luxury that characterizes this particular passage in the Mickle version is informed by the same climatological notions we have traced in Orme's work. However, to be fair to Orme one must admit that he is candidly open to the diversity and plurality of the Mughal Empire and actually claims that the reversal of the traditional policy of tolerating religious plurality actually contributed to the decline of the Mughals. Mickle, by contrast, is relentless in his castigation of all things Mughal, not just of the supposedly debilitating climatic conditions. According to him, the timidity and effeminacy of the Indians stem from the Edenic climate they live in. Luxury and excessive refinement are mostly the results of a climate that abounds in commodities and does not require hard labor and inventiveness from its denizens. Lack of martial spirit and a propensity to subservience follow in the footsteps of luxury. Above all, Mickle attempts to contain the promiscuous and threatening plurality of India and the Indians by constructing a sweepingly negative stereotype, a ploy often resorted to by some of his contemporary poets, dramatists, and novelists.

However, Mickle's vision of Mughal India as always already conquered was by no means the dominant one available to the British reading public in the eighteenth century. They had at their disposal positively romantic versions such as the one

constructed by Dow, as well as critical yet discerning ones like that of Orme. Authors of imaginative literature also made use of this wide range of representations of the Mughal Empire. Some of them chose to represent the Mughal Empire as a diverse polity worthy of emulation by the British, while others condemned its plurality and impurity of mores and manners as a threat to a homogeneous notion of Britishness. Unfortunately, this openness to the potency and diversity of the Mughal Empire and her cultures in eighteenth-century British historical writing is frequently ignored by some twentieth-century historians.

## VI

### An Overview of Twentieth-Century Historiography about Mughal India

Twentieth-century historians have generally tended to search for monocausal explanations of the decline of the Mughal Empire. Following some eighteenth-century British historiographers, some twentieth-century historians tend to point the finger at Emperor Aurangzeb's reversal of the Mughal tradition of religious tolerance as the mother of all causes of the Mughal decline. While it would be an oversimplification to attribute the reversal of the time-tested policy of tolerance as the primary reason behind the decline of the Mughal Empire, it certainly had a serious impact.<sup>76</sup> Among other monocausal explanations of the decline of the Mughals put forward by historians in the twentieth century is the one that customarily emphasizes the personal decadence and lack

of ability of the later Mughal Emperors and the nobility.<sup>77</sup>

The military conquest of Deccan (the South Indian plateau) by Aurangzeb (1658-1707) was the last substantial territorial expansion of the frontiers of the Mughal Empire. According to some twentieth-century historians, this late imperial expansion led to stiffer competition among the enlarged nobility for revenues and taxes. The concomitant enlargement and decentralization of the imperial beauraucracy ranging from the cities to the villages resulted in oppressive exploitation of the peasantry, leading to peasant uprisings.<sup>78</sup> One major variant of the economic explanations of the decline, however, argues that the Mughal nobility had always lacked internal cohesion and did not have to wait for Aurangzeb's conquest to fall into decay, because the Mughal system of land tenure lacked any well-defined mechanism and the frequent transfer of *Jagirs* (or land grants) to the noblemen according to their loyalty and obedience prevented the development of a nobility with genuine and long-term interest in land development and, as a result, sparked devastating peasant rebellions.<sup>79</sup>

Historians such as Michael N. Pearson, by contrast, have argued that the decline in military success of the Empire in the late seventeenth century severely eroded the loyalty of the Mughal nobility to the person of the Emperor, whose military prowess above all acted as a cohesive force.<sup>80</sup> Some historians have also tended to read the story of the decline in terms of a general decline of global Islamic/ Muslim polities, namely the Ottoman Empire, the Persian Safavid Empire, and the Central Asian Uzbek Khanate, all of which were contemporaneous with the Mughal Empire.<sup>81</sup> By contrast, historians who emphasize economic causes point out that an influential urban commercial and merchant

class began to wield more influence in the eighteenth century.<sup>82</sup> Although Karen Leonard in her “Great Firm” theory of the decline of the Mughal Empire might have overemphasized the role of regional bankers and financiers in subverting the finances of the imperial center by making their resources available to the local successor states ruled by the Nawabs and later to their enemies the British East India Company, such interests certainly became a powerful deliberative body putting regional agenda ahead of imperial ones.<sup>83</sup>

Much of nineteenth and early twentieth-century historiography about the decline of the Mughal Empire employs what could be called the “chaos” theory of decline, which postulates that in the absence of a strong imperial center and the emergence of local potentates, who were inevitably corrupt and carried on the obsolete Mughal system by fits and starts, it was almost inevitable that the British should take over. Recent scholarship into the complex nature of the independent states that succeeded the Mughal Empire, such as the Maratha states, Bengal, and Mysore prove that these states were much more than mere miniature versions of the Mughal Empire, although they invariably pledged allegiance to the living Mughal Emperor. Andrea Hintz has pointed out, “Although these groups acknowledged the nominal supremacy of the Mughal Emperors (in fact they never formally challenged this supremacy by proclaiming a new dynasty or striking coins in their own name) and later on used certain Mughal administrative institutions and methods in their domains, the character of these new systems differed decisively from the dominant Mughal system.”<sup>84</sup> These successor states were often engaged in economic and military reforms that made them formidable competitors of the

British. More recently, P. J. Marshall has also contested the long-held view among some historians that eighteenth-century Mughal India was predisposed toward chaos and lack of order and thus ripe for conquest, “The failure of a central Mughal political order is of course beyond question, but in large parts of India relatively strong successor states were emerging, in some cases controlled by former Mughal governors, in others by leaders of those who had rebelled against the Mughals. These new rulers were capable of maintaining stable regimes and of sustaining flourishing economies. Eighteenth-century India had not relapsed into anarchy. Decline and disruption in some areas was matched by growth and prosperity in others.”<sup>85</sup>

The East India Company for most of the eighteenth century never thought for a moment that it was a “natural heir” to the Mughal Empire. Instead they considered themselves one of many “local powers” vying for supremacy in the old Empire. As P. J. Marshall has pointed out, “In 1765 no observer, either British or Indian, could have envisaged the possibility of British imperial supremacy over the Indian subcontinent. What few could have failed to recognize was that the East India Company had become a regional Indian power of some consequence. Outwardly, the British appeared to have become Indian rulers.”<sup>86</sup>

The overview of the existing accounts, from the late eighteenth century to the late twentieth, of the Mughal Empire’s decline reveal the underlying warrant held in common by all of them to different degrees. They seem to agree on the general principle that the decline of the Mughal Empire was inevitable because it was the dying-out time of the older state and imperial formations in order to usher in the fitter and leaner modern nation-state after the emerging Western European model. This view was certainly shared

by many eighteenth-century British authors and political commentators, who exploited the figure of the Nabob as a diseased body infected with the uncouth customs and despotic policies of the Mughal Empire against which to measure a modern, British imperial identity. However, the Mughals themselves and many real-life Nabobs or British subjects residing in the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century thought in terms of continuities and creative collaboration between the two empires and peoples rather than in terms of fixed and immutable temporal, spatial, as well as cultural boundaries. In other words, many Britons did not think of themselves as the force of modernity soon to supersede the old Mughal Empire, nor did the Mughals for a long time regard the British among them as alien invaders poised to sweep them off the grand stage of imperial power politics in the subcontinent. Michael H. Fisher asserts, “Instead of dismissing the Emperor [the Mughal Emperor who in his person represented the polity] as a factor in “real politics” [in eighteenth-century India], we can only truly understand the people of this period by assessing the continuing effects of Mughal sovereignty.”<sup>87</sup>

To accept unquestioningly the historical accounts which posit a rapid and inevitable decline of the Mughal Empire is to negate the possibility of reading the Nabob as a complex cultural phenomenon, who emerged out of and embodied in his person the unsettled and unsettling coexistence between the Mughal Empire and the British Empire in the aftermath of the 1757 Battle of Plassey. Some eighteenth-century metropolitan British authors certainly viewed the Nabob as a one-dimensional caricature compounded of the alien mores and manners of the Mughal Empire and the equally unpalatable aspirations of the upstart British merchant. But many Nabobs, who spent a lifetime in the

Mughal Empire in the pursuit of fortunes and adventures, viewed themselves as a special breed of Englishmen. They had willingly and enthusiastically immersed themselves in a heterogeneous cultural space where a composite empire and the subjects of a consciously modernizing Western European nation-state cohabited with each other creatively and fruitfully for a short period of time, until it was overwhelmed by the rhetoric of utilitarian reform and radical reorganization.

By the same token, many Indian subjects of the Mughal Empire saw these Englishmen among them as one of many castes and communities who had arrived in the Mughal Empire in successive waves and had been assimilated into the fabric of the eternal empire, herself a continuation and elaboration of older Indian polities. According to William Dalrymple, “So vast is India, and so uniquely resilient and deeply rooted are her intertwined social and religious institutions, that all foreign intruders are sooner or later either shaken off or absorbed.” The Mughals, once foreign invaders themselves, became Indians in one or two generations. Dalrymple goes on to add, “Until the 1830’s, there was every sign that India would have as dramatic a transforming effect on the Europeans who followed the Mughals.”<sup>88</sup> Consequently, during the era of the Nabobs between 1757 and 1817 (which continued in spite of utilitarian reforms well into the 1830’s, according to Dalrymple) it was still too early to speak of a British Raj, which consciously fashioned itself by distancing itself from all preceding Indian polities.

## VII

### The Battle of Plassey

The era of the Nabob dawned upon Britain in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Plassey. The battle, fought between the forces of the Nawab of Bengal Siraj-ud-Daula and the East India Company Army on June 23, 1757, was hardly a celebrated battle in its own time. It was easily overshadowed by such epoch-making events as the conquest of Quebec and the martyrdom of General James Wolfe. In journalistic writing and dispatches, it occasionally rated an honorable mention as one more example of the potency and invincibility of British arms across the globe against the French enemy during the Seven Years War (1756-1763). The battle took place under circumstances that were certainly less than glorious. The young ruler of Bengal Siraj-ud-Daula was mostly a victim of a palace coup involving one of his generals and members of his own family, who joined hands with East India Company stalwarts as well as some influential native Bankers to topple the ambitious but inexperienced Nawab. The battle was lost by the Nawab and won by the British commanding officer Colonel Robert Clive with precious few shots being actually fired. A heavy downpour, which dampened the Nawab's ill-covered magazines of gunpowder, coupled with the treachery of some of his generals, who simply refused to order their troops into action, sealed Siraj-ud-Daula's fate.<sup>89</sup>

Historians of the British conquest of India such as P. J. Marshall have correctly pointed out the long-term political and military repercussions of this less than glorious battle. P. J. Marshall has described the Battle of Plassey as providing the British with a

“bridgehead” to the subsequent conquest of North India.<sup>90</sup> Historians see it as a pivotal moment in the rapid decline of the Mughal Empire. It certainly led to Clive’s further victory at the Battle of Buxar in 1764 and the subsequent conferral of the Diwani of Bengal upon the Company by the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam in 1765. As a direct result of the path chosen by the Company at the Battle of Plassey, the East India Company became the de facto rulers of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa between 1757 and 1772, during which years the province of Bengal saw severe famines and large-scale displacement of native populations. The much-vilified Dual Government was introduced and fostered by the Company during this period, which lasted unabated until the Regulating Act of 1773.<sup>91</sup> These are also the years during which many Britons returned to their homeland with large fortunes putatively acquired by exploiting and oppressing the natives.<sup>92</sup>

Historians have traditionally tended to view the period between the Battle of Plassey and the first Regulating Act of 1773 and Pitt’s India Bill of 1784 as a painful yet necessary transitional stage during which two major movements took place. First, the Mughal Emperor became an impotent figurehead by relinquishing his real authority to the East India Company and thus sealed the fate of the ancient Indian polity he was the overlord of; second, the misrule of the Company was gradually brought under parliamentary scrutiny through several legislations until utilitarian reforms in the nineteenth century did away with all cumbersome and corrupt legacies of the Company rule.

Consequently, for the Eurocentric historian the Battle of Plassey often signifies the “natural” end of a dysfunctional Oriental Empire and the potential beginning of a

modern Indian state.<sup>93</sup> For nationalist historians, poets, playwrights, and novelists in the Indian subcontinent, it is often a place to hunt for origin narratives and national heroes. From the nineteenth century onwards and well in to the twentieth century, Bengali dramatists and poets have continued to celebrate Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula as an embattled patriotic hero.<sup>94</sup> By contrast, I view the Battle of Plassey as the beginning point of a short-lived window of time when the political and cultural lives of the two empires became deliciously and unpredictably intertwined, often leading to confusion as well as creativity.

Alternatively, Suresh Chandra Ghosh has insisted that the 1765 imperial conferral of the Diwani of Bengal upon the East India Company by Emperor Shah Alam should be considered the appropriate starting point of a closer social contact between Britons in India and the high Mughal Culture: “This contact [i.e., cultural contact between the British and the Mughal elite] begun at Murshidabad after the grant of the Diwani in 1765, was markedly increased after the appointments of supervisors to the districts in 1769 and then the collectors and assistants after 1772.”<sup>95</sup> Ghosh is certainly correct in pointing out that only after the *Diwani* was bestowed on the Company more and more Company officials and the so-called “residencies” began to be appointed in the Mughal imperial city centers such as Delhi, Lucknow, and Hyderabad. Ghosh is clearly treating the 1757 conquest of Bengal as an event not quite a part of the mainstream Mughal Empire, as the province was practically independent since 1740 when Alivardi Khan established his Shia ruling house. However, as Michael H. Fisher has demonstrated, even Awadh, the most politically and militarily independent among the provinces and states in Mughal India, continued to acknowledge the suzerainty and sovereignty of the Mughal Emperors

well into the nineteenth century.<sup>96</sup> Consequently, in spite of being virtually independent, Bengal and her rulers, the Nawabs, were very much integrated into the Mughal Imperial political culture. Sudipta Sen points out that the conflict between the Nawab of Bengal and the East India Company arose out of the Nawab's insistence on observing the true spirit of the Imperial Farmans bestowed on the Company by Mughal Emperors of the past.<sup>97</sup>

The Battle of Plassey ushered in an era during which the Britons residing in India came into closer contact with Indian ruling classes and castes compared to their past social contacts with the native elite. In addition to the political expediency and leverage provided by the Battle of Plassey, it also set in motion a struggle over the control of symbolic spaces and objects between the native ruling elite and the Britons. Sudipta Sen has demonstrated how the Mughal concept of the marketplace as a symbolic space associated with prestige and honor was gradually overwhelmed (but not without resistance) by a blatantly economic concept of the marketplace imposed on the natives by the British.<sup>98</sup> The Battle of Plassey also precipitated a substantial number of Britons, known as Nabobs to their stay-at-home countrymen, to travel in an opposite direction and to imbibe Mughal mores and manners, sometimes superficially but as often with deep understanding and appreciation.

The Battle of Plassey, then, opened the door to a unique era during which a composite Mughal Empire and the mercantile representatives of an increasingly centralized British imperial nation-state temporarily became strange bedfellows. Out of this short-lived liaison emerged the Nabobs, the Mughalized returnee from India, so-

called by their countrymen because of their imbibement of the mores and manners of the Mughal Nawabs, the military aristocrats who ruled the imperial provinces of the Empire. This brief era is marked more by crosspollinations and continuities between the entrenchedly traditional Mughal Empire and the consciously modern British nation-state rather than by abrupt and jarring disjunctions.

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Coryate, *Greetings from the Court of the Mogul*, 1616, *The English Experience* 30 (Amsterdam: Da Capo Press, 1968), 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> For literary accounts of the English anxieties about Ottoman ambitions, see Daniel J. Vitkus, ed., *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England: Selimus, A Christian Turned Turk, The Renegado* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Daniel J. Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> P. J. Marshall, "The British in Asia: Trade to Dominion, 1700-1765," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. P. J. Marshall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2: 491.

<sup>4</sup> P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4-5.

<sup>5</sup> Gyan Prakash, "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Indian Historiography is Good to Think," in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 356.

<sup>6</sup> See Michael H. Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, the British, and the Mughals* (Riverdale, MD: The Riverdale Company, 1987), 7-8, for an account of the symbolic humiliation of the last Mughal Emperor.

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<sup>7</sup> See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); David Armitage, *Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). The British Empire has been predominantly studied as a teleological outcome of the mostly western European drive toward modern nation-statehood away from older composite empires. The underlying warrant in such studies is that the older state formations are somehow undesirable and are merely cumbersome preludes to the modern nation-state. In addition, the model of imperialism frequently applied to study the origins of the British Empire is that of Rome, although, as Daniel Goffman and Christopher Stroop have demonstrated, multiple models of imperialism, among which the much-vaunted Roman model was prominent, were available not only to the Western European nation-states, but also to Oriental empires like the Ottoman Empire. As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, the Mughals as well as many Britons did not view the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century as a dysfunctional polity doomed to extinction. See Daniel Goffman and Christopher Stroop, "Empire as Composite: The Ottoman Polity and the Typology of Dominion," in *Imperialisms: Historical and Literary Investigations, 1500-1900*, ed. Balachandra Rajan and Elizabeth Sauer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 129-45.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 93.

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel Goffman, *Britons in the Ottoman Empire, 1642-1660* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1998), 212-13. Representative of historiography that tends to construct the East as shaped by Western agency are J. G. A. Pocock, "British History: A Plea For a New Subject," in *Journal of Modern History* 4 (1975): 601-24; and Bernard Bailyn and Phillip D. Morgan, eds., *Strangers Within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (1983; New York: Verso, 1991), 12-36. See especially 36.

<sup>13</sup> Gauri Viswanathan, "Raymond Williams and British Colonialism," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 4, no. 2 (1991): 47-61.

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, vol. 2, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 32-34. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Goffman and Stroop, 141.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>18</sup> Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *The Administration of the Mughal Empire* (Patna: N. V. Publications, n.d.), 28-9.

<sup>19</sup> Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures*, 10.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

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<sup>21</sup> Although the earliest contact between the Mughal and the English took place in the early seventeenth century, it is during the mid-eighteenth century that the British and Mughal Empires became inextricably enmeshed with each other economically, militarily, and politically.

<sup>22</sup> For a topographical/geographical account of the Transoxiana in general and Ferghana in particular, see R. C. Varma, *Foreign Policy of the Great Mughals 1526-1727* (Agra, India: Shiva Lal Agarwala & Company, 1967), 7-10. Varma has pointed out that the Transoxiana was roughly the country between the Caspian Sea on the west, the great Pamir-Tianshan mountain divide in the east, the Jaxartes on the north, and the Oxus on the south.

<sup>23</sup> Jahangir, *The Tuzuk-I-Jahangiri, or the Memoirs of Jahangir*, trans. Alexander Rogers (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1909), 89.

<sup>24</sup> Varma, *Foreign Policy of the Great Mughals 1526-1727*, 43.

<sup>25</sup> For an analysis of Mughal military might and its failure to project this power beyond the Indian subcontinent, see Stephen Peter Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 172-82.

<sup>26</sup> John F. Richards, *The New Cambridge History of India*, vol. 1, pt. 5, *The Mughal Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 119-50.

<sup>27</sup> For an account of the complex give and take between classical Hindu architecture and different Muslim traditions, see Martin S. Briggs, "Muslim Architecture in India," in *A Cultural History of India*, ed. A. L. Basham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 310-325.

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<sup>28</sup> Ghulam Husain Khan, *A Translation of the Seir Mutaqherin or View of Modern Times. Being an History of India from the Year 1118 to the Year 1194 of the Hedijrah*, trans. Nota-Manus [Hajee Mustapha] (Calcutta, 1789), 2: 590-91.

<sup>29</sup> See Abdul Majed Khan, *The Transition in Bengal, 1756-1775: A Study of Saiyid Muhammad Reza Khan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), xii-xiii.

<sup>30</sup> R. C. Majumdar, H. C. Raychaudhuri, and Kalikinkar Datta, *An Advanced History of India* (London: Macmillan, 1950), 425-427.

<sup>31</sup> For an account of Babur's life and his opinions about his colorful ancestry based on his own memoirs called the *Baburnama*, see Annemarie Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art and Culture*, trans. Corinne Attwood, ed. Burzine K. Waghmar (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 22-26.

<sup>32</sup> See Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410* (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2005), 136-153.

<sup>33</sup> For a recent overview of the legacy of the Mongol Empire in China and Iran, see George Lane, *Genghis Khan and Mongol Rule* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 83-98.

<sup>34</sup> Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 452.

<sup>35</sup> See Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 34.

<sup>36</sup> For an account of the Ottoman-Safavid wars, see Peter Jackson, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, *The Timurid and Safavid Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). See especially 219-227 and 634-655.

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<sup>37</sup> For a succinct analysis of the similarities and differences among the three Muslim empires, see Carter Vaughan Findley, *The Turks in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 121-129. For an account of the deployment of Shiism by the Safavids as a justification for their imperialist ambitions, see Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 61-68.

<sup>38</sup> Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 296.

<sup>39</sup> Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, 18. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>40</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 214.

<sup>41</sup> Jack P. Greene, "Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. P. J. Marshall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2: 213-14. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Stevens, "England in Moghul India: Historicizing Cultural Difference and its Discontents," in *Imperialisms: Historical and Literary Investigations, 1500-1900*, ed. Balachandra Rajan and Elizabeth Sauer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 93-110. See especially 102-7. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>43</sup> For a critical overview of eighteenth-century British historiography on Muslim rule in India, see J. S. Grewal, *Muslim Rule in India: The Assessments of British Historians* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1970). Grewal proposes a tripartite approach to assess the British historians' response to Muslim rule in India based on their philosophical affiliations, which are Enlightenment, Utilitarian, and Romantic. Three

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basic concepts shared in common by all three schools were the state, civilization, and national origin. However, the Enlightenment and Utilitarian historians emphasized the state and civilization as the worthy subjects of inquiry, while the Romantics made the search for national origins their major preoccupation (4). Grewal goes on to point out that the Romantic historians such as Alexander Dow, and, later, Mount Stuart Elphinstone tended to be more sympathetic toward the Indo-Muslim past than the Utilitarians (4-5).

<sup>44</sup> Willem G. J. Kuiters, "Dow, Alexander (1735/6–1779)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004),

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7957>, accessed May 26, 2006.

<sup>45</sup> Grewal, *Muslim Rule in India*, 7-10.

<sup>46</sup> Alexander Dow, preface to *The History of Hindostan. Translated from the Persian*, by Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Astarabadi Firishtah (1768; repr., London: J. Walker et al., 1812), 1: iv.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: cx.

<sup>48</sup> Grewal, *Muslim Rule in India*, 37.

<sup>49</sup> Carter V. Findley, 78.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>51</sup> Alexander Dow, *Zingis*, *English Verse Drama Full-Text Database* (1769; Cambridge Chadwyck-Healey, 1994), 1. 8. Subsequent references appear in text and refer to act and page number of this edition.

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<sup>52</sup> See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 201-25. See also Srinivas Aravamudan, *The Tropicopolitans* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 223-29.

<sup>53</sup> The policy of syncretism and tolerance was continued by Akbar's heirs Jahangir and Shah Jahan with a few exceptions. It was substantially reversed only during the reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707). Aurangzeb attempted to turn Mughal India into a homogeneously Islamic state which had traditionally been an Indian polity with Muslim rulers and a predominantly non-Muslim subject population. T. G. Percival Spear, a twentieth-century historian of British Empire, has commented, "His [Aurangzeb's] predecessors from Babur's time regarded themselves as professional kings whose business it was to rule whoever could be induced to obey them. Though they all except Akbar remained Muslims, they were not so much Muslim rulers as rulers of a plural society who happened to be Muslim." See T. G. Percival Spear, historical introduction to *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India* (Gloucester, MA: Peters Smith, 1971), xviii.

<sup>54</sup> See "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Author" in *Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire, of the Morattoes, And of the English Concern in Indostan; from the Year MDCLIX*, by Robert Orme (1782; repr., London, 1805), v-lxvii. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>55</sup> SinhaRaja Tammita-Delgoda, "Orme, Robert (1728–1801)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20833>, accessed May 26, 2006.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Orme, *Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire, of the Morattoes, And of the English Concern in Indostan; from the Year MDCLIX* (1782; repr., London, 1805) 3-4. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Orme, *General Idea of the Government and People of Indostan* (1753; repr., London, 1805), 430. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>59</sup> James W. Johnson, *The Formation of English Neo-Classical Thought*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 46-48.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>61</sup> Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws: The Complete Works of Mon. de Montesquieu, Translated from French* (London, 1777), 1: 292-95.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 1: 297-98.

<sup>63</sup> Grewal, *Muslim Rule in India*, 60.

<sup>64</sup> See J. J. Caudle, "Mickle, William Julius (1734/5–1788)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18661>, accessed 26 May 2006.

<sup>65</sup> Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlotte: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 1-11.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>67</sup> William J. Mickle, introduction in *The Lusiad: or, the Discovery of India, 1572*, by Luis de Camões, trans. William J. Mickle (1776; repr., New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1979), xix. Hereafter cited in text.

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<sup>68</sup> Balachandra Rajan, *Under Western Eyes: India from Milton to Macaulay* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 157.

<sup>70</sup> Luis de Camões, *The Lusiad: or, the Discovery of India*, 1572, trans. William J. Mickle (1776; repr., New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1979), 7: 308. Hereafter cited in text with references to canto and page number in this edition.

<sup>71</sup> See Rajan, *Under Western Eyes*, 65.

<sup>72</sup> Caudle, "Mickle, William Julius (1734/5–1788)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>73</sup> Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, 2: 171.

<sup>74</sup> Luis de Camões, *Os Lusíadas*, 1572, trans. J. J. Aubertin, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Kegan Paul, 1884), 2: 63.

<sup>75</sup> Balachandra Rajan, *Under Western Eyes*, 42.

<sup>76</sup> See Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb* (Calcutta, M.C. Sarkar, 1933), 3: 283-364. Sarkar was mainly responsible for reviving and amplifying the older theory of religious intolerance, subscribed to by certain British historians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as being the primary cause of the decline.

<sup>77</sup> See T. G. Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughuls: Studies in Late Mughul Delhi* (Delhi: South Asia Books, 1991). Spear, despite his perceptive analysis of the complex nature of the decline, emphasizes the personal degeneracy of such later

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Emperors as Muhammad Shah (1719-48), nicknamed *Rangilla* or the “pleasure loving one” by his own subjects.

<sup>78</sup> See M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966), 38-73, 106-11, 169-74.

<sup>79</sup> Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 317-351.

<sup>80</sup> Michael N. Pearson, “Shivaji and the Decline of the Mughal Empire,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 35, no. 2 (1976): 221-236.

<sup>81</sup> See M. Athar Ali, “The Passing of Empire: The Mughal Case,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 9, no. 3(1975): 385-96.

<sup>82</sup> Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 463-466.

<sup>83</sup> Karen Leonard, “‘The Great Firm’ Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 21, no. 2 (1979):151-67.

<sup>84</sup> Andrea Hintze, *The Mughal Empire and Its Decline: An Interpretation of the Sources of Social Power* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1997), 11.

<sup>85</sup> Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*, 121.

<sup>86</sup> Marshall, “The British in Asia,” 2: 505.

<sup>87</sup> Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures*, 5.

<sup>88</sup> William Dalrymple, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (New York: Viking, 2003), 7.

<sup>89</sup> For a revisionist and nativist account of the conspiracy that toppled Siraj, see Ram Gopal, *How the British Occupied Bengal: A Corrected Account of the 1756-1765*

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*Events* (Calcutta: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 183-215. For an early twentieth-century one told from a Western perspective, see H. H. Dodwell, "Clive in Bengal, 1756-60," in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, ed. H. H. Dodwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 4: 148-49.

<sup>90</sup> For an account of how the British used Bengal as a bridgehead for further conquest, see P. J. Marshall, *The New Cambridge History of India*, vol. 2, pt. 2, *Bengal, The British Bridgehead: Eastern India, 1740-1828* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 93-136.

<sup>91</sup> For an account of the notorious Dual Government, see Percival Spear, *A History of India* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), 2: 81-92.

<sup>92</sup> For an account of the fortunes made by the Nabobs, see P. J. Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes: The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

<sup>93</sup> For such an eccentric, nonetheless, representatively Eurocentric account, see Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Clive of India: A Political and Psychological Essay* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1975), 1-12.

<sup>94</sup> For a brief account of the Indian nationalist vernacular literature during the nineteenth-century and the native authors' resistance against British censorship, see Priya Joshi, *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 7-8.

<sup>95</sup> Suresh C. Ghosh, *The Social Condition of the British Community in Bengal 1757-1800* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 144.

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<sup>96</sup> See Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures*, 1-5.

<sup>97</sup> Sudipta Sen, *Empire of Free Trade: The East India Company and the Making of the Colonial Marketplace* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press, 1998), 11-14.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-9, 21-26.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESTORATIVE VIOLENCE AND REDEMPTIVE AFFLUENCE: FROM JOHN DRYDEN'S *AMBOYNA* (1673) TO GEORGE LILLO'S *BRITANNIA AND BATAVIA* (1740)

#### I

#### The British Overseas Merchant in War and in Peace

In 1682 Sultan Abulfatah Agung (1651-83), the hereditary ruler of Bantam, a small principality at the north-western tip of the island of Java (today part of the modern nation-state of Indonesia) in the Malaya archipelago fought a war against the Dutch and their native allies led by his own rebellious son. The old Sultan's popularity among his subjects proved inadequate in the face of the Dutch naval assault. His prosperous capital city on the Java Sea, also called Bantam, was quickly overrun. The mutinous prince ascended the throne with the full support of the Dutch East India Company. The battle of Bantam was one of the decisive engagements that allowed the Dutch East India Company to establish its monopoly over the lucrative spice trade in the so-called Spice Islands in particular and the Malayas in general. Among the casualties of this brief conflict were the various foreign trading communities and companies, both European and Asian, stationed in Bantam under the old Sultan's protection. Not least among them was the British East

India Company. The British factory in Bantam was summarily turned over to the Dutch and the British factors were disgracefully expelled, effectively ending British ambitions of gaining a fair share of the profitable spice trade in the East.<sup>1</sup>

The brief historical preamble above is designed to form one of the temporal margins of the present chapter in which I shall trace the emergence of the positive stereotype of the exemplary British overseas merchant in the early eighteenth-century drama and poetry in contrast to the caricatured figure of the pusillanimous yet treacherous merchant in Restoration drama. The other margin is formed by the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739) fought against the Spanish Empire. The two historical events provide a useful bracket to separate an important transitional period in the ongoing project to refashion the British merchant as a gentleman of wit, good taste, and valor. The Bantam fiasco was one of the historical events that helped to highlight the contentious issue of whether the merchant is capable of martial valor in times of national crisis, and by the commencement of the War of Jenkins' Ear it became more or less widely accepted that the British merchant was capable of gentlemanly valor in the defense of personal as well as national interests, and that he had to be so.

Existing socio-cultural history and literary criticism about the British overseas merchant in the early eighteenth century concur on the point that there was a well-orchestrated attempt to rehabilitate the merchant as a gentleman, who is endowed with wit, good taste, honor, and an enlightened self-interest. By dint of these qualities, the gentlemanly merchant not only enriched himself but also spread well-being throughout the world.<sup>2</sup> However, in addition to endowing the overseas merchant in general and the East India merchant in particular with the said qualities, many authors insisted on

portraying the early eighteenth-century merchant as being capable of demonstrating gentlemanly martial valor in the defense of national interest without violating the avowed pacifism of his vocation. The existing critical opinion about the representational refashioning of the merchant is almost exclusively focused on the merchant's trials and tribulations in the fashionable and aristocrat-dominated metropolitan society and explains the later discursive attempt to rehabilitate him in terms of class-ideas and concomitant notions of taste and fashion at home but fails to take into account the merchant's larger sphere of activity, the East Indies in particular, where he was constantly exposed to non-Western agency. Although this literature does make valuable distinctions between different kinds of merchants and traders and the different levels of respectability and importance they were accorded by the society, it largely fails to recognize the importance of the East Indies as an important site and the East India merchant as an important player in the on-going project to refashion the merchant as a gentleman.<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, the variously imagined East India merchant himself was soon afterwards to become a site of further representational struggle: this time between the honest, gentlemanly East India merchant and the vicious, militarist Nabob. Much of the satirical as well as sentimental literature on the Nabob, an obnoxious returnee from India in the aftermath of the 1757 Battle of Plassey, portrayed him as a militarist given to plunder, extortion, and bribery, having little or no traces left in his character of his mercantile origins. Whereas the honorable merchant's courage and ability to bear arms in defensive and just warfare did nothing to diminish his commitment to a peaceful calling, the Nabob was the caricature of an alien military aristocrat, who ruled over a cowed and subjugated population.

This distinction between the Nabob's rapacious militarism and the gentlemanly merchant's martial valor allows me to correct a tendency in current literary criticism to employ the term "Nabob" anachronistically to describe all rich East India merchants in the eighteenth century and even earlier.<sup>4</sup> Such anachronisms are symptomatic of the influential paradigm in postcolonial historiography as well as literary criticism that sometimes ahistorically posit an almost monolithic Western agency, certainly prevalent in the nineteenth century, backwards to understand East-West relationships in the eighteenth century and even earlier.<sup>5</sup>

Even when this paradigm is invoked in a revisionary form, emphasizing its inbuilt inconsistencies and ambivalences, the accounts of East-West contact produced by such critical readings still employ Western critical terminology to the exclusion of the forms of knowledge indigenous to the East in order to lay bare the narrative of Western domination and Eastern resistance.<sup>6</sup> As such, I find the more "traditional" empirical historiography—one that reads the story of the East-West contact in terms of economic, cultural, and social exchanges rather than as a monolithic discourse somehow transcending these forces—to be more useful to my project than the "Colonial Discourse Analyses" school of postcolonial criticism engendered by Said's notion of Orientalism.<sup>7</sup> Obviously, more nuanced readings of the "grand narrative" of East-West contact and the "gentrification" of the British merchant, which is an important chapter in that narrative, are called for when approaching literary texts from the eighteenth century and earlier.<sup>8</sup>

With the above caveat in mind, I argue in this chapter that the representation of the overseas British merchant underwent a radical transformation in popular literature in the early eighteenth century from a cowardly, conniving interloper in polite society, who

earns his living by currying favor with Eastern tyrants, to a gentlemanly citizen, who not only bestows monetary boons that frequently repair faltering aristocratic fortunes and allow young lovers of previously incompatible classes to marry but is also capable of wielding the sword abroad righteously to defend national interests against Catholic and/or Oriental tyranny.<sup>9</sup> In the ensuing discussion of literary texts that reflect this representational shift, it shall become amply clear that the East Indies and the East India merchant were the most important sites from which the impetus for the shift were largely derived. The War of Jenkins' Ear separates this new era of the qualified acceptance of the British merchant's right to the hitherto exclusively aristocratic military ethos from the era of the Nabob, the East India merchant turned conqueror and usurper of the post-Battle-of-Plassey infamy.

However, the assumption on the part of the British merchant of the right to bear arms honorably during the War of Jenkins' Ear, as celebrated in the pro-mercantile poetry, drama, and journalistic prose produced during the period, I argue, does not automatically constitute the "manifest" collusion of eighteenth-century British poetry with British imperialism, as Suvir Kaul has argued.<sup>10</sup> Kaul asserts, "The history of English poetry in the long eighteenth century is best written as a history of the poets' attempt to endow the nation with literary, cultural, and iconic capital adequate to its burgeoning status as a global power."<sup>11</sup> However, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the British nation's status as a "global power" was not uniformly supported by the material realities existing in the East India merchant's spheres of operation, particularly so in the Mughal Empire. In addition, I argue that the representations of the righteously militant merchant in popular poetry and drama

produced during the years leading up to the War of Jenkins' Ear is a direct reaction to the late seventeenth-century theatrical representation of the merchant as a cowardly interloper in polite society, which was not a little shaped by actual non-Western agency brought to bear upon real-life British merchants in the East. In other words, the on-going contact between the East and the West at this period was still too fluid and undecided in terms of any one-sided power imbalance, which characterizes East-West relationships in the late nineteenth century, for us to deem these early eighteenth-century mercantile representations as being irredeemably imperialistic. Consequently, my reading of *The Progress of Commerce* (1737) places the poem in the problematic history of the fluid and unstable mercantile representations and thus demonstrates the novelty of the strident mercantile militarism expressed in Glover's poem, which is contrasted by the vulnerability of the overseas merchant in late seventeenth-century texts such as John Crowne's *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685).

The cluster of literary and non-literary texts to be analyzed in this chapter has been chosen because they reflect all the subtle shifts in the representation of the British overseas/ India merchant delineated above: the cowardly interloper, the gentlemanly gift-giver and pacific yet morally resolute merchant, and the righteously-militant merchant, who still firmly holds on to his vocation of spreading peace and prosperity. These texts are John Caryl's comedy *Sir Salomon: or, the Cautious Coxcomb* (1671); Dryden's heroic play *Amboyna* (1673); *True Account of the Burning and sad condition of Bantam in the East Indies* (1682) and *A Short Account of the Siege of Bantam* (1683), both being anonymous journalistic pieces; John Crowne's *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685); Richard Steele's

*The Conscious Lovers* (1721); George Lillo's *The London Merchant* (1731) and *Britannia And Batavia* (1740); and Richard Glover's *The Progress of Commerce* (1737).

The cluster could be divided into three chronological and thematic groups. *Sir Salomon*, *Amoboyna*, *Sir Courtly Nice*, all three being Restoration plays, are held together by their clear deference to an aristocratic code of conduct that “naturally” deserves precedence over a servile, mercantile way of life. The two journalistic pieces in this group question the aristocratic-honor/ mercantile-cowardice binary dramatized in the plays by providing the merchant's eye view of the issue being played out in real time in the East Indies. Written by merchants residing in the East, these pieces of pamphlet literature contest the Royalist representation of East India merchants as cowards and argue that it is not any intrinsic lack of courage but the characteristic lack of martial preparedness of a group of honorable men devoted to a putatively pacific calling that has lead to the recent disaster in Bantam. The juxtaposition of such “low-brow” texts with “highbrow” ones help bring out the active participation of the merchants themselves in determining the way they were being represented. In addition, through such journalistic writings the agency of Eastern polities and their rulers reach the metropolitan center and intervene in the representational struggle in an indirect but, nonetheless, significant manner, emphasizing one of my claims in this chapter and, indeed, throughout this dissertation that the gentrification of the British merchant was not entirely a metropolitan affair, and that it was substantially wrought by non-Western agency.

To the second group belong *The Conscious Lovers* and *The London Merchant*, both admittedly significant milestones in the representational rehabilitation of the overseas merchant. These two texts are connected by the figure of the overseas/India

merchant as a giver of redemptive gifts and a staunch mouthpiece of commerce as an almost religious vocation. While the former claims these flattering qualities for the merchant in the domestic sphere, the latter claims them on a global scale. Although any open avowal of a martial ethos on behalf of the merchant is absent in the second group of texts, they are nonetheless remarkable for the merchant's resoluteness in the face of either patriarchal oppression at home or Spanish tyranny abroad. Such a resolve is easily translated into an open, at times propagandistically shrill, declaration of the need for the British merchant to take up arms in the defense of liberty wherever his activities are endangered by tyranny and despotism in both *The Progress of Commerce* (1737) and *Britannia and Batavia* (1740). The fact that the former, a propagandistic/journalistic poem, and the latter, a dignified court masque, were both written by authors having strong mercantile affiliations testifies to the urgency of the issue on the eve of the War of Jenkins' Ear, the first international war in the eighteenth century fought largely on mercantile issues. More than half a century after the Bantam fiasco, which was one of the lowest points in the British merchant's painstaking rise to a dignified status in literary representations, popular authors were engaged in reconstructing the merchant as a honorable gentleman, who was ready to take up arms in national interests and self defense without violating his peaceful vocation.

## II

### The Merchant at Bay: Amboyna, Bantam, and Bombay

The Restoration stage abounds in scenes in which aristocratic/gentlemanly characters fight duels to settle issues of honor and love. In the comedies, lowly “cits” and rustic squires watch in awe as their social betters cross the “swords” of wit. The martial metaphor dominates one of the most celebrated scenes in Restoration comedies in which the leading characters engage in duels of wit. “Hum, A hit, a hit, palpable hit, I confess it,” cries out Witwoud in Congreve’s *The Way of the World* (1700), employing a dueling metaphor in order to encapsulate Millamant’s superiority over all the other characters in terms of class, wit, and virility.<sup>12</sup>

The refusal of a court-dominated culture to allow the merchant any honorable martial spirit at home or abroad could have been influenced by two major factors. First, the traditional aristocratic claim to a martial ethos continued to exert enormous influence in domestic politics as well as in the exploration of the New World. Elizabethan and early Stuart explorers and navigators were firmly entrenched in court culture. Despite the growing importance of the mercantile class, England was led by a courtly culture that lay down the norms of taste as well as the values of government, unlike the Netherlands which became a republic in the early seventeenth century run by a citizen-merchant oligarchy. Holden Furber attributes the apparent ease with which the Dutch could combine the roles of soldier and merchant to the fact that Holland was a republic run mostly by merchants; by contrast, “England was not a republic, dominated by merchants and rentiers, but a kingdom ruled by sovereigns with whom nobility and gentry had great

influence.”<sup>13</sup> Second, the recent memories of the Commonwealth during which merchants, traders, and apprentices picked up pikes and bucklers and resisted the cavaliers could have in part prompted Restoration playwrights to construct the stereotype of the pusillanimous merchant. After all, what better way to neutralize a potentially threatening group than to emasculate it through negative representation? According to John C. Loftis:

The animosities surviving from the interregnum find expression in [the Restoration] comedy most frequently in portrayals of merchants of the city of London, many of whom had supported Parliament in opposition to Charles I. Remembering the execution of the reigning king’s father by Nonconformists who had derived strength from the financial community, dramatists provided an oversimplified and essentially inaccurate portrayal of businessmen, creating the long-lived type character of the “cit,” used indiscriminately in the depiction of overseas traders on a large scale and petty shopkeepers.<sup>14</sup>

The merchant-warrior driven to arms by blind zeal and naked self interest was a detestable figure in the eyes of Restoration court culture, which celebrated the putatively disinterested and honorable gentleman-warriors. The apparent lack of honor and proper martial valor among merchants seemed to be confirmed during the two Anglo-Dutch wars of the Restoration (1664-67, 1672-74). The mercantile interest allied with the anti-court group was largely resistant to the idea of a war against Holland.<sup>15</sup> Royalist authors accused them of hypocritically hiding their narrow self-interests behind the pretense of a

shared religious affiliation with the Dutch and thereby putting the profit motive above national interests.

Swift's rhetoric against Marlborough and the Whigs for demanding the continuation of the War of Spanish Succession during the early years of the eighteenth century is based on very similar arguments. His *Conduct of the Allies* criticizes the war as a ruinous enterprise profiting such dubious allies as the Dutch abroad and the corrupt moneyed interest at home.<sup>16</sup> The accusation that the merchant fights viciously only when his personal profit is concerned but refrains from fighting when national honor is at stake certainly originated from class-bias and proved to have a very long shelf-life as it was employed time and again by anti-mercantile discourse in the eighteenth century.

John Dryden's *Amboyna: or, the Cruelties of the Dutch to the English Merchants* (1673), written and produced during the third Anglo-Dutch war, contributed to the Royalist condemnation of the wretched state—moral as well as material—the British merchant had supposedly fallen into.<sup>17</sup> Dryden's play is a dramatic revisiting of the infamous Amboyna massacre of 1623 during which the Dutch East India Company put to death a number of English merchants after accusing them of plotting to attack the Dutch factory at Amboyna (or Amboina), an island in the Banda sea to the south of the famous spice islands of Ternate and Tidore, celebrated in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.<sup>18</sup> Colin Visser has pointed out that Dryden used as his source some popular pamphlets issued during the third Anglo-Dutch War during the Restoration, which commemorated the supposed atrocities.<sup>19</sup>

Produced during the third Anglo-Dutch war, avidly pursued by King Charles II contrary to the interests of an amorphous anti-court and anti-Stuart opposition that had a

substantial mercantile following, the play presents Gabriel Towerson, the leader of the English merchants at Amboyna as a resolute and honorable Englishman whose unwavering commitment to honor, duty, and love lead to his lamentable death at the hands of the cowardly Dutch. Towerson in Dryden's imagining is all that the British merchant at this time should and ought to be and is lamentably not. Dryden's apparently positive portrayal of a mercantile character does not undercut the contempt and ridicule reserved for the pusillanimous and self-interested British merchants in contemporary plays by other playwrights such as John Crowne. On the contrary, the towering figure of Towerson could provide a foil to the likes of Sir Calico in Crowne's *Sir Courtly Nice*, who puts profit above honor and duty. I argue that Gabriel Towerson has little in common with the overseas British merchant except his calling, and that he (Towerson), with his insistence on honor and duty, belongs in the company of the aristocratic heroes of pro-Stuart literary works, especially Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688).<sup>20</sup>

The Prologue introduces a topical political theme that concerned Dryden's audience in the 1670's: whether an appeal to co-religionism should be a basis for Britain's relationship with her continental neighbors. The speaker of the Prologue makes his sentiments pretty obvious: "The dotage of some Englishmen is such / To faun on those who ruin them; the Dutch. / They shall have all rather than make a War / With those who of the same Religion are." He goes on to remind his audience that the same insistence on a common ground of Protestantism led to a fratricidal war in England: "Religion wheedled you to Civil War, / Drew English Blood, and Dutchmens [sic] now wou'd spare."<sup>21</sup> The attempt to tar the homegrown enthusiast, their allies the anti-Stuart opposition, and their coreligionists the Dutch with the same brush is quite obvious. The

Civil War in England and the present recalcitrance of the anti-court group against King Charles' war effort against the Dutch are pieces of the same religio-political puzzle.

As a matter of fact, the Dutch merchants in the play could be regarded the surrogates of the much-despised British moneyed class, with its recent associations with rebellion and regicide. The Dutch merchants and their worldview are totally controlled by a narrow and shameless profit motive. Their piety is a mere outward display and hides their amoral greed. This is a common trait frequently attributed to mercantile characters in Restoration comedies. As the Dutch leadership plot in secret to assassinate the English merchant, Van Herring, a cowardly member of the Dutch factory, feigns moral qualms because the Dutch, after all, could not have won their independence from Spain without English military and diplomatic assistance. However, as soon as Van Herring weighs the great advantages of murdering the English and destroying their trade interests in Amboyna against his feigned scruples, he makes up his mind with ease: "Nay, Brother, I am not too obstinate for saving English-men; 'twas but a qualme of conscience, which profit will dispel."<sup>22</sup> The Dutch soul is ruled by profit alone; loyalty, gratitude, and love are alien to these people. In addition, the Dutch merchants are portrayed as rebels. Herman senior, the leader of the Dutch, gloats at the gullibility of the English: "They wou'd needs protect us Rebels, and see what comes to themselves" (1. 1. 12). The allusion is primarily to the English assistance that helped the Dutch to drive out the Spaniard from their lands in the sixteenth century.

However, Dryden's audience must have been aware of a more immediate allusion: the fanatical rebels in England who had recently committed a regicide and were supposedly regrouping once more in order to oppose the newly restored monarch.<sup>23</sup>

Stephen Pincus has pointed out that the Anglican Royalists imputed to the Dutch sinister ambitions of a new Universal Monarchy by linking their putatively natural proclivity to rebellion to their Presbyterianism. Royalist polemicists frequently found interesting, if far fetched, parallels between Popery and Dutch Presbyterianism on the grounds of disobedience to God and the King. Pincus comments, “In the context of Anglican royalist claims that all English Nonconformists were papists in disguise, Dutch Presbyterians must have been suspect indeed.”<sup>24</sup> No wonder that in *Amboyna* we come across Don Perez, a mercenary Spaniard who serves the Dutch. Perez is suborned by the Dutch governor to assassinate Towerson. The master-slave relationship is ironically reversed and the former Catholic master and aspirant to Universal monarchy now serves the Dutch, the new contenders on the scene.<sup>25</sup>

In Act One, the Dutch are unmistakably identified with the lower-class characters usually portrayed with contempt in many contemporary plays. Beamont, a witty but brave English merchant, describes the leading Dutch merchants to his fellow Englishmen with scathing humor. Among the Dutch singled out for satiric treatment is the lecherous and cowardly Fiscal who, according to Beamont, used to be “an ignorant Advocate in Rotterdam, such as in England we call a Petty-fogging Rogue; one that knows nothing but the worst part of the law, its tricks, and snares” (1. 1. 15).

Just as the Dutch merchants are surrogates for the rebellious, treacherous, and cowardly elements in England, so are the English merchants given courtly and chivalric values. Despite being merchants by profession, they eschew all thoughts of profit. Unlike the ideal merchants of Steele and Addison in the eighteenth century, they do not preach a gospel of profit that begets harmony. By contrast, Gabriel Towerson rebukes the Dutch

merchants for their aggressive, profit-driven policies which lead to conflict among nations. Instead he preaches contentment: “And, Sir why shou’d we not [be content with the present volume of trade], what mean these endless Jars of Trading Nations?,” and goes on to add, “those who can be pleas’d with moderate gain, may have the ends of Nature, not to want” (1. 1. 17). Such an altruistic statement goes against the very grain of British mercantilism at this time, which was fiercely competitive and protective of its interests.<sup>26</sup> One could plausibly argue that Towerson is being used as the mouthpiece of a moderate and morally correct mercantilism as contrasted by the rapacious and immoral mercantile policies represented by the Dutch. However, the actual terms in which the English merchants and their values are presented in the play emphasize a heroic and aristocratic worldview.

Towerson himself is given the attributes of a heroic martyr whose commitment to honor and duty is matched only by his love for Ysabinda, a native woman of high birth. Beamont sums up the charismatic leader’s character: “Daring he is, and thereto fortunate; yet soft and apt to pity the distress’d; and liberal to relieve ‘em: I have seen him not alone to pardon Foes, but by his bounty win ‘em to his love (1. 1. 14). These attributes could easily be transferred to Dryden’s hero Antony in *All for Love; or, The World Well Lost* (staged December 1677, printed 1678), whose excessive magnanimity to his enemies also makes him vulnerable. Towerson also acted with gallantry toward his rival and enemy Herman Jr., the son of the Dutch governor. He rescued the young man from certain death during an attack by pirates. He self-effacingly describes his heroic action as “a little courtesie” (1. 1. 15).<sup>27</sup>

Towerson's absolute commitment to honor and his martyrdom at the end indicate his affinity with other heroes in pro-Stuart literature, especially Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, the royal slave.<sup>28</sup> Laura Brown, among others, has pointed out that the affinities between *Oroonoko* and Charles I are not only generic [sharing the features of the epic heroes in classical epic poetry and the Restoration heroic play], but they also directly arise out of her personal allegiance to the Stuart monarchs.<sup>29</sup> Just as Behn pours the royalist values and themes of legitimacy, honor, and virility, into a romanticized racial space embodied by the African slave-prince, so does Dryden graft those same values on to a superficially mercantile identity in Gabriel Towerson. Even as Towerson slowly but resolutely succumbs to a terrible martyrdom inflicted on him by the gloating Dutch, he makes a blatantly royalist prophecy about King Charles II: "An Age is coming, when an English Monarch with Blood, shall pay that blood which you have shed: to save your Cities from victorious Arms, you shall invite the Waves to hide your Earth, and trembling to the tops of Houses fly, while Deluges invade your lower rooms: Then as with Waters you have swell'd our bodies, with damps of Waters shall your Heads be swoln"(5. 1. 76).

The parallels between *Oroonoko* (1688) and *Amboyna* are further reflected in the portrayal of the English planters and the Dutch merchants in both the texts as a cowardly mob, which overwhelm the courageous royal slave/ British merchant-king by stratagem rather than in fair battle. Thus, the clash between honor and duty, perfidy and cowardice in Dryden's play is not only taking place in the temporarily as well as spatially removed space of *Amboyna* but is also happening in a strife-torn England where a legitimate and honorable monarch, recently restored to the throne, is constantly being challenged by a treacherous and pusillanimous [to Royalist minds] opposition. As such, my reading of

Amboyna provides a contrast to some recent critiques of Dryden's work in particular and Restoration literature in general in that whereas they emphasize the presence of a colonial discourse that allows Dryden to define Englishness against the supposed difference of the exotic Other, I attempt to problematize the Self/Other binary by pointing out that the Self is in itself fractured into a quest for honor and a lust for profit.<sup>30</sup> I do not imply that such conflicts make Towerson less of an imperialist. However, he is an imperialist in an older tradition, one based on a supposedly disinterested and honorable quest for fame rather than profit.<sup>31</sup> The Epilogue to *Amboyna* reaffirms the Royalist identity of the play: "All loyal English will like him [the poet] conclude, / Let Caesar live, and Carthage be subdu'd."<sup>32</sup> As we shall see in the third section of this chapter, early eighteenth-century pro-mercantile poets like Richard Glover reversed Dryden's classical allusion by equating tyranny with Rome and Caesar and liberty and commerce with Carthage.

Although Dryden's play, compared with John Crowne's comedy *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685), is preoccupied with weighty issues of national politics, it does concur with the later play in its representation of the contemporary overseas British merchant as a degenerate, cowardly wretch, who has little or no sense of honor. Recently, Bridget Orr has read Crowne's *Sir Courtly Nice* as one more example of how effective colonial discourse was in the formation of an English identity on the Restoration stage. She traces the supposed marginalization of Sir Calico with his alien habits and manners in the play and argues that the play reasserts a homogenous English identity in the domestic sphere by marginalizing such characters.<sup>33</sup> Orr's reading fails to account for the presence of non-Western agency channeled through the fevered rhetoric of Sir Calico when confronted by his imaginary tormentors in Act Five.

Crack, a witty gallant and friend of the rakish hero Farewell, disguises himself as Sir Calico, a deranged but wealthy returnee from the East Indies (Bantam to be more precise) in order to dupe Belleguard, the tyrannical older brother of the heroine, who insists on sequestering the women in his household in a pseudo-Oriental fashion. Calico is followed everywhere by a retinue of Indian servants dressed in outlandish attire: “He will needs be attended like a great Indian mandarine, or lord, and had brought with him several Siamites and Bantammers, that serve him as his slaves, in the ridiculous dresses and modes of their own countries.”<sup>34</sup> Sir Calico is supposed to have been exposed to Eastern black magic that has turned him into a misogynist. His grossly exaggerated foreign foibles highlight Belleguard’s own brand of domestic despotism and his gross deviation from the acceptable model of English civility. When Belleguard, accompanied by armed servants, breaks into Calico’s room to carry out a search of the premises for hidden admirers of his sister, Calico behaves like the stereotypical East India merchant, servile yet zealous of the limited privileges granted by the Eastern tyrant in whose territory he carries out his trade related activities. In his fevered fantasy, Sir Calico imagines Belleguard as the violent and unpredictable native ruler, who grants favors as quickly as he withdraws them. Calico himself is the timid yet tenacious recipient of favors. At first he “mistakes” Belleguard as the King of Bantam: “What are you, sir, the King of Bantam?” Upon Belleguard’s attempt to reassure him that he is not, Sir Calico goes on to babble: “Oh! The Mogul” (5.1, 42-45, 412).

Calico’s allusion to the Mogul or the Mughal Emperor is much more than a casual acknowledgement of the exotic locales inhabited by the fictional merchant. The 1680’s saw an escalating standoff between the authorities of the East India Company’s Bombay

factory in the Mughal Empire and the reigning Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707), which culminated in the humiliating truce of Bombay in 1690. The Bombay factory was fortified under Gerald Aungier, a merchant administrator of great abilities. Aungier is reputed to have made the following famous exhortation to his fellow expatriate merchants: “The times now require you to manage your general commerce with your sword in your hands.”<sup>35</sup> Aungier’s assertion has to be read against the background of escalating military conflicts between the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and his Maratha enemy Maharaja Shivaji, and the growing power of the Dutch East India Company. Sir Josiah Child, the Director of the East India Company at this time followed up on Aungier’s advice and continued the fortification of the Bombay possessions and thus raised the ire of Aurangzeb. Despite demands by the Emperor to demilitarize the factory, the constructions went ahead. The imperial forces laid siege to Bombay in 1687 and the factory sued for peace in 1690 under humiliating terms. In addition to a stiff monetary penalty, Emperor Aurangzeb demanded in his *Farman* that the English “behave themselves for the future no more in such a shameful manner” and also that “Mr. Child, who did the disgrace, be turned out and expelled.” The Emperor was referring to Sir John Child, no relation to Josiah, the governor in residence of the Bombay factory under siege. The unfortunate Sir John died of a fever before the Emperor’s wish could be carried out.<sup>36</sup> The tone of the *Farman* clearly reflects contempt for the British. They are no more and no less than a group of foreign merchants accorded the privilege to live and trade in Mughal India at the express desire of the Emperor. Josiah Child’s efforts demonstrate that notwithstanding the negative literary representations prevalent at this time real-life

East-India Merchants were capable of military (mis)adventures in the East and engaged in them enthusiastically.

Although the real-life Restoration British merchants in the East Indies were far from servile toward the authority of the native rulers and did not shy away from armed conflicts, John Crowne's fictional merchant is abjectly servile. In the following scene Sir Calico's delusions reach alarming heights: "How? The high and glorious Emperor of Siam with all his guards? Thou most invincible paducco, farucco, —nelmocadin— bobbekin—bow—wow—wow—why dost thou seek to destroy us English, seated on thy dominions by thy own letters patents?" (5. 2. 16-20. 414). According to the theatrical directions, Calico "draws his dager [sic], and pretends to stab himself," as he utters the pathetic lines quoted above. Belleguard succeeds in calming him down. Sir Calico pretends to surrender: "Most great and glorious Emperour, I humbly thank, and do humbly implore thee, that thou would'st command thy invincible guards to lay down their arms and put us out of our frights" (5.2. 26-29. 414).

The allusion to Bantam as one of the sites of young Sir Calico's deceased father's business ventures can help us pinpoint this ridiculous character's identity. He is clearly an attempt on the part of the playwright to satirize the East India merchants at this time, who supposedly lacked the valor to defend his interest in the face of Dutch and native aggression. That Crowne decided to call his East India merchant "Sir Calico" is much more than a mere coincidence. In the late seventeenth century, calico, a variety of cloth from India, was fast replacing spice as the major import, in addition to other much-coveted items such as cotton, silk, and saltpetre.<sup>37</sup> It is indeed an odd choice for a name, as Sir Calico's late father made (at least part of) his fortune in Bantam, an important

center of the spice trade. However, the title seems most appropriate if one recalls that the Battle of Bantam was one of the turning points in the gradual demise of British interest in the spice trade. After the Bantam fiasco the British never regained their influence in the Malayas.<sup>38</sup> The long struggle against the Dutch over the control of the spice trade that began in the first decade of the seventeenth century effectively ended with Bantam, and the British Company fixed its sights on the Mughal Empire as a source of calico, cotton, silk, saltpetre and other valuable merchandize. According to Tripta Desai, “The trade with India increased by leaps, as the Dutch had monopolized the spice trade and the English Company had been expelled. In addition, the passage of the Navigation Acts led to a sharp decline in the importation of spices into England. Thus the demand for the Indian goods—calicoes, cotton, silk, indigo, saltpetre—was greatly increased in the English market.”<sup>39</sup>

Calico is a fiction within a fiction that is soon exposed, but the anxieties that he represents are exaggerated versions of the very much real ones experienced by the factors in the Indies, who frequently found themselves in the position of suppliants and receivers of favors, and as often in the difficult position of defending those privileges. The fictional Sir Calico’s fear of the wrath of the powerful native rulers was felt in real life by the factors at Bombay and Bantam. The very gibberish that he produces when confronted by the imaginary native ruler, could be read as a nonsensical version of the official jargon used in the correspondence between the Company servants and the native powers, which frequently posited a superior-subordinate relationship between them.

However, Calico represents the English merchant, still recognizable as British and merchant after his brush with alien cultures and manners. He might be timid and servile

in an un-English manner, but he is still engaged in the lawful activity of merchandizing. As a matter of fact, he tries to defend verbally, ineffectual though it may be, those privileges that are his by the “letters patents” bestowed upon him by the country powers to which a real life merchant-leader like John Child had to defer. Merchants, especially overseas merchants, themselves were, however, acutely aware of a very different kind of reality. The British East India Company was gaining more and more influence at home and abroad. Its possessions and transactions in the East expanded considerably during the Restoration. According to Tripta Desai, “During the reign of Charles II, the Company was able to obtain other privileges [in addition to acquiring Bombay from Charles II, which was part of his Portuguese dowry] too as the King was constantly in need of money.” Desai goes on to point out, “It was allowed to make laws for the government of its settlements. It was authorized to coin money £50,000 per voyage in London, and an unlimited amount in Asia.”<sup>40</sup> John Keay, citing K. N. Chaudhuri’s monumental 1978 study *The Trading World of Asia and the East India Company 1660-1760*, comments that the dramatic pattern of growth experienced by the Company in its fortunes during this period appears to be like “convulsive fits” and goes on to add, “and of these convulsions most dramatic is a dizzying climb which occurs between 1660 and 1683.”<sup>41</sup> Under such prosperous circumstances, the East India Company merchants in the late seventeenth-century certainly felt their growing importance in spite of their middle-class identity and the negative literary representations engendered in part by the failed spice trade.<sup>42</sup> Even as the Restoration playwrights and poets satirized the overseas merchant’s pusillanimity and greed, the merchants themselves were eagerly examining the causes behind the

British merchant's vulnerability as contrasted by Dutch belligerence and were putting forward solutions to the problem.

The Bantam affair of 1682 sparked a number of broadsides in the shape of open letters to the public that attempt to address these issues. Written mostly by factors residing in Bantam who had borne the brunt of the war between the Sultan and the Dutch-native axis, these letters have one common theme: the honor and dignity of the British merchant under siege. If the British merchant finally capitulates to the enemy, it is not for the lack of valor but for the lack of proper munitions and battle readiness. The dominant tone is one of injured pride and betrayal. However, the merchant-author clearly distances himself from offensive military action. Another common strand in these publications is the superior-subordinate relationship between the native ruler and the British merchant. The latter peacefully trades and prospers under the protection and with the approval of the former.

The anonymous author of the *True Account of the Burning and sad condition of Bantam in the East Indies* (1682) makes a gloomy prediction: "The place is ruined as to any Trade for Seven Years to come. Whoever wins the English factory will not fare very well."<sup>43</sup> He goes on to report that the city is under siege by the Dutch and their native allies, and the author and his fellow English factors are helplessly confined within the walls of their factory. The English merchants have armed themselves, but being outgunned by the approaching enemy, they can only hope for lenient treatment from the Dutch. Given the fact of the Dutch conspiracy against the generous old King, it seems unlikely. The Author expresses an aversion to soldiers who regard plunders a natural part of their profession. He writes, "Our factory is reported to be a rich place and therefore if

there be any design against us, it may easily be imagined what we must look for from soldiers when overcome.”<sup>44</sup>

By contrast, the author of *A Short Account of the Siege of Bantam* (1683) writes at a time when the Dutch and their allies have already taken the city, and the English are about to be forcibly expelled. Consequently, this particular broadside provides more background information to the recently ended war. The old Sultan figures more prominently in this version of the story. The author particularly mentions the Sultan's kindness toward the English. They were given preferential treatment by the Sultan and allowed to build their factory within the city walls whereas all other foreign merchants were assigned plots of land outside the city limits.<sup>45</sup> The Sultans of Bantam had a long tradition of resisting Dutch hegemony over the region. Holden Furber in his *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600-1800* points out that the reigning Sultan of Bantam in 1611 refused to allow the Dutch to build a fort in his territory.<sup>46</sup> Naturally, Sultan Abulfatah, who ruled the principality during the Bantam fiasco, had good reason to seek closer ties with the English, the principal European rivals of the Dutch in the archipelago. The author of *A Short Account* mentions a Bantamite embassy which visited the court of Charles II with a mission to establish closer trade relationships. He sounds despairing, “Great was our expectations,” and goes on to lament, “whilst we were big with these Joys [of closer ties with the Sultan and more preferential treatment], a sudden and unexpected Storm happen'd, which blasted all our hopes in an instant, and unmercifully expos'd us, not only to the fury of a Domestic Enemy, but the Spoil and Rapine of a Foreign Foe.”<sup>47</sup> The English factory has already fallen to the Dutch and their native allies. The reason the

British merchants could not prevent the disaster was not the lack of martial valor but “being so unprovided with Ammunition.”<sup>48</sup>

John Caryl’s comedy *Sir Salomon: Or, the Cautious Coxcomb* (1673), by contrast, has a merchant-returnee from India, called Mr. Barter who, despite the untold vicissitudes he suffered in order to earn his fortune in India, does not behave wretchedly. Mr. Barter is a rather unusual fictional East India merchant at this time, given the plays chronological situation between the second and third Anglo-Dutch wars. Mr. Barter appears at the end of the play with his story of sufferings and tribulations. He has returned to England from India with a large fortune which he wishes to bestow on his long-lost daughter Betty, so long believed to be an abandoned orphan who has been raised by the tyrannical Sir Salomon with a view to make her his bride. Mr. Barter’s fortuitous return from India sets in motion an economic *deus ex machina* that untangles the developing plot complications. Sir Salomon’s cruel intentions to disinherit his son Mr. Single and marry the beautiful orphan is no longer feasible, because the returned father wishes to bestow her in marriage to young Peregrine, Sir Salomon’s secret rival for Betty’s affections and the son of a fellow merchant. Sir Salomon is publicly shamed for acting against the law of nature by disinheriting his son Mr. Single, an ideal young man in the eyes of the society.<sup>49</sup>

This brief paraphrase of the comedy apparently contradicts my initial contention that the plays from the Restoration treat returnees from India with contempt and portrays them as cowardly supplicants in contrast to the early eighteenth-century representations of the merchant as a courageous and honest spreader of wealth and giver of redemptive gifts. However, a closer scrutiny shows that Caryl’s play is an exception to the rule. In

the first place, Barter's wealth does not resolve the conflict between the growing moneyed interest and the old, landed one, as it does in Steele's play *The Conscious Lovers* (1722). In other words, Barter's fortune does not help to endow the merchant as a class with some level of gentility, wit, taste, and courage, as similar transfusions of East Indian wealth accomplish in later works. On the contrary, the Indian fortune in Caryl's play saves the rash Sir Salomon from inadvertently marrying beneath him by taking Betty, the daughter of a merchant, as his bride.

In addition, Sir Salomon's landed-wealth returns to its "natural" inheritor, his only son Mr. Single. Moreover, the circumstances under which Barter makes his fortune appears to have been very difficult: "All my Friends, at that time, gave me for lost, in regards the Ship which transported me, foundred [sic] at sea; And the several accidents of my life have since have hindred me from giving them an account of my safety." He goes on to add, "But the bounty of Heaven having now at last restor'd me to my country, my Estate, and my child, I shall make you ample Compensation for the charge of her breeding" (5. 63). Mr. Barter shares an awareness of the precarious nature of Eastern life for the English expatriate merchant with Sir Calico, although it has not had the same impact on his sanity. In other words, Mr. Barter may not be a figure of ridicule like Sir Calico, but he is still a humble English merchant at the mercy of country powers as well as the hostile elements in the exotic realms where he plies his trade. *Sir Salomon: or, the Cautious Coxcomb* provides us with a noncommittal representation of the overseas merchants. He is neither the wretched, cowardly merchant hiding from the wrath of native rulers as well as from the incipient insanity that accompanies colonial encounters,

nor is he the idealized merchant-hero spewing lofty rhetoric such as the ones we come across on the early eighteenth-century British stage.

### III

#### The Merchant Vindicated: Redemptive Affluence and Restorative Violence

In this section I shall concentrate on popular stage-plays, fiction, and poetry from the early eighteenth century in which there was an attempt on the part of the authors to rehabilitate the overseas merchant long abused as a butt of cruel humor. The freshly imagined expatriate merchant is given a powerful voice representing the ideals and values of a growing moneyed-interest. The sweeping accusations against the merchant as to his supposed lack of good sense, taste, generosity, and above all, valor were challenged by such authors and playwrights as Joseph Addison, Sir Richard Steele, and John Lillo. In his latest literary reincarnation, the overseas British Merchant appears as a gentlemanly character, who readily bestows his hard-earned wealth on deserving individuals or spreads it among the larger human community in general. The newly constructed stage-merchant is no longer a cowardly expatriate Englishman begging and receiving favors from Eastern tyrants. On the contrary, he himself becomes a giver of boons that disentangle plot complications by relieving youthful lovers constrained by the lack of a suitable fortune, thus contributing to happy, companionate marriages. In the larger scheme of things, his magical gift of eastern wealth frequently facilitates the crosspollination of mercantile and landed interests. Even as the revamped overseas merchant staunchly avows a commitment to peace in the pursuit of his calling, a closer

scrutiny reveals a subtext of controlled violence underneath his gospel of pacific prosperity. The acceptance of the need for surgical violence in mercantile discourse in the popular literature of this era, however, stops short of territorial conquests and plunder for personal aggrandizement.

As such, my reading of these texts resituates them in terms of the recent literary criticisms that privilege early eighteenth-century British culture's engagement with a growing "imperial imagination" over the domestic and insular concerns traditionally read into them.<sup>50</sup> However, as I shall demonstrate toward the end of this section, the acceptance of military violence in the defense of Britain overseas trade and commerce reached jingoistic proportions in poetry and drama during the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739). This acceptance of violence legitimated by the need to defend British trade and liberty continued without significant abatement in literary representations throughout the rest of the eighteenth century and must be carefully distinguished from the strong disapproval of the putatively orientalized militarism of the Nabob beginning with the 1757 Battle of Plassey, which was practically an extension of the Seven Years War (1756-1763). Similarly, in popular literary representations British merchants from India continued to bring over redemptive fortunes, and these also need to be distinguished from the putatively obscene riches of the Nabob acquired by waging unjust war on the helpless natives.<sup>51</sup>

The above introduction apparently puts my work in the company of more "traditional" social and literary histories of the period that privilege domestic ideological debates over foreign concerns. However, my delineation of the late seventeenth-century representations of the merchant in the previous section has shown how powerful the

impact of non-Western agency was in determining the ways the overseas merchant was imagined at home. The presence of Eastern agency in Restoration plays help one to realize that the appearance of the staunchly patriotic, gentlemanly, and dignified merchant in the works of Addison, Steele, and Lillo was partly a reaction to the older stereotype. The negative representation lurks as a subtext under the surface of these idealized ones. In other words, far from joining an older body of criticism that privileges domestic issues, I depart from them to engage Britain's growing concern with the non-European world in a more problematized manner.

The early decades of the eighteenth century saw an attempt to recuperate the merchant class and its representations on the stage and other kinds of public discourse. An essay in *The Universal Journal* dated July 4, 1724, reflects the need felt by the sympathetic section of the society to revamp the representations of the merchant on the stage: "But of all the Characters generally drawn in our modern Comedies, we find none more falsely represented than that of the Citizens. People that know nothing more of 'em than what they see in Plays, think that of Course an alderman must be an old, lecherous, griping Usurer, or a doting Cuckold."<sup>52</sup> The anonymous author of the essay succinctly captures the effeminate, feminized nature of such stereotypes. The ongoing clash between an older model of masculinity represented by the private landed gentleman and the newly emergent moneyed man was forging new ideals of honorable behavior.<sup>53</sup> Although the anonymous author of the essay in *The Universal Journal* is defending the "cits" or the city merchants, the overseas merchant was also included in such defenses. For instance, John C. Loftis, in his seminal *Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding* (1959), has traced a positive shift in the representations of merchants, both overseas and city

merchants, in early eighteenth-century comedies: “It was becoming unnecessary to cease being a merchant in order to become a gentleman.”<sup>54</sup> Sir Richard Steele, a soldier and a dedicated Whig, wrote and produced *The Conscious Lovers* in 1722, which presented his audience with the character of Mr. Sealand, the gentlemanly overseas merchant.

*The Conscious Lovers* has been traditionally read as an example of the newly popular genre of the sentimental comedy with its putatively incongruous mingling of the comic and the pathetic.<sup>55</sup> Recently, a renewed critical interest in this play as part of the expansionist British national identity has appeared. Among others, Felicity Nussbaum, in her *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives*, initiated the project of resituating eighteenth-century literature in the intersections of female sexuality, reproduction, and imperialist ideology. Following Felicity Nussbaum’s work, laying bare the collusion between the figure of the virtuous domestic English woman and the nascent empire, Nandini Bhattacharya has more recently read the Nabob literature from the dual perspective of “domestic gender ideology and colonial discourse.”<sup>56</sup> Pointing out that while both “domestic and colonialist woman participated in the practice of virtuous behavior,” Bhattacharya contends that “the definition of virtue remained essentially British,” and goes on to add, “While literature on the nabob such as Samuel Foote’s play *The Nabob* (1772) depicts the nabob as orientalized and corrupted, there is a concomitant sentimental literature on the nabob, and especially the female nabob, which depicts and celebrates the colonial heiress as a virtuous victor over oriental and female corruption.”<sup>57</sup> As an example of the British “nabobess” whose influence purges a colonial fortune of potentially unsavory and alien associations, Bhattacharya cites Indiana, the heroine of *The Conscious Lovers*: “Richard

Steele represents the early eighteenth-century female nabob in his enormously popular sentimental comedy *The Conscious Lovers* (1723) as pure, English, and virtuous,” thus implying that Indiana’s father Mr. Sealand is a Nabob.<sup>58</sup>

However, Bhattacharya is careful enough to distinguish between early examples of the Nabob literature and later ones: “Ambivalence regarding foreign luxury products, foreign life-style, or foreign persons is a significant element of nabob literature. This ambivalence is later sought to be erased by a greater straining in literary representations toward projecting the nabob as sincere moderate, and honorable. The role of the female in stabilizing this fiction is a great one.”<sup>59</sup> In other words, early nabob literature like *The Conscious Lovers* can be read as colonial discourse internally fractured by ambiguities, while a later text such as *The Nabob* can be read as a strident expression of the same. Furthermore, Bhattacharya’s anachronistic use of the term “Nabob” to denote a rich overseas merchant returned from India in the pre-Battle of Plassey England adds to the confusion. As has been pointed out already, the term nabob was used before the Battle of Plassey specifically to describe a military governor in the Mughal Empire. It was not used to describe British returnees from India. Only after the Battle of Plassey did “Nabob” come to include the militant East India merchant returned from India in its original baggage of meaning.

While Bhattacharya reads early eighteenth-century texts such *The Conscious Lovers* and others through the figure of the “woman of empire” in order to expose the latent complicity of these texts with colonial discourse, I take a more problematic path and argue that instead of colluding with a colonial discourse about India whether qualified by ambiguities or not, *The Conscious Lovers* represents the East India merchant

not only as a pacific bestower of gifts but also as a moral agent who can withhold his gifts for corrective and punitive purposes. In addition, when juxtaposed against the pusillanimity of the mercantile representations in earlier texts like *Amboyna*, in which the cowardly and treacherous Dutch merchants are the surrogates for a whole range of unsavory English elements including the English mercantile classes, and *Sir Courtly Nice*, in which the East India merchant is a submissive underling, the positive representation of the merchant in *The Conscious Lovers* appears to be an ideological reaction to such earlier representations, substantially wrought by non-Western agency. In this respect *The Conscious Lovers* anticipates the plays and poems from the 1730s which overtly espouse the right to resort to corrective or punitive military violence in defense of British trade against Spanish or Oriental tyranny. Consequently, my reading of *The Conscious Lovers* is also informed by the violent history of British overseas expansion in the eighteenth century, although in a manner which rules out any possibility of reading it as being a chip off the supposedly timeless colonial-discourse block.

A lot of commonplace observations could be made about the virtuous East India merchant Mr. Sealand's affinities with Addison's Sir Andrew Freeport, the gentlemanly overseas merchant, who rises in the world by dint of hard work and a bit of push from fortune.<sup>60</sup> Earlier in Steele's play Bevil Junior describes one Denvers, the supposed father of his beloved Indiana as "a younger brother of an ancient family, and originally an eminent merchant of Bristol, who upon repeated misfortunes, was reduced to go privately to the Indies. In this retreat Providence again grew favorable to his industry, and, in six years time restored him to his former fortunes."<sup>61</sup> We could compare young Bevil's admiring endorsement with Mr. Spectator's eloquent introduction of Sir Andrew

Freeport, the mercantile member of the Club: “A merchant of great eminence in the city of London. A person of indefatigable industry, strong reason and great experience.” The self-effacing narrator adds, “A general trader of good sense is pleasanter company than a general scholar; and Sir Andrew having a natural unaffected eloquence, the perspicuity of his discourse gives the same pleasure that wit would in another man.”<sup>62</sup>

However, it is not in terms of the metropolitan values such as good taste, refinement, generosity, intelligent conversation, and a certain air of cosmopolitanism that we can reevaluate Mr. Sealand, when he spiritedly rebuts Sir Bevil’s arrogant claim that gentlemen are subject to a different set of rules: “And give me leave to say that we merchants are a species of gentry that have grown into the world this last century, and are as honorable, and almost as useful, as you landed folks.” He not only appropriates the gentlemanly values so long denied the merchant of his caliber, but also implies that he possesses a steely resolve to withhold punitively his gift of a hard-earned fortune to Bevil Jr. should he prove to be a gentlemanly libertine with the same arrogant anti-mercantile views of his father (4.2.47-50.75). John C. Loftis attributes Mr. Sealand’s assertiveness to the growing social acceptance of the gentlemanly status of overseas merchant: “Moneyed men had no compelling reason to convert themselves into ‘landed’ men. This fact probably had something to do with the merchant’s insistence, depicted in the drama [*The Conscious Lovers*], that they be regarded as ‘a species of gentry.’”<sup>63</sup>

However, Loftis’s reading fails to capture the confrontational nature of Mr. Sealand’s utterance. It is a challenge, even a threat, and not a mere statement of acceptance. Not only is Mr. Sealand not the servile supplicant Sir Calico in Crowne’s play, but he is also in the position to bestow an honestly acquired fortune on those who

morally deserve it. His initial objection to Bevil Junior is based on the young man's supposed intrigues involving a secret mistress. Mr. Sealand's wealth helps to bring about the companionate marriage between Bevil Junior and Indiana but not before dealing a crushing defeat to the shabby aristocratic patriarchy of Sir Bevil.

Steele's powerful pen certainly succeeds in representing the overseas merchant as the perfect gentleman, soberly witty, reasonably sagacious, and having the courage of his convictions. The qualified right to gentlemanly valor that we have seen briefly raised in the late seventeenth century by real-life East India merchants is internalized in Mr. Sealand. His bearing and sense of dignity thinly veils the steely resolve that would allow a man like him to defend his own interests and that of his country with "sword in his hands" like a gentleman. But for all that Mr. Sealand remains a pacific merchant. His source of wealth the East Indies does not seem to figure very prominently in the play except as a likely place where honest merchants, who have suffered setbacks, can travel to and possibly recuperate their ailing fortunes by dint of hard work. There is hardly any hint of the actual circumstances of the factory life full of uncertainties that we briefly get a glimpse of in *Sir Courtly Nice*. The real-life colonial space in which people like Mr. Sealand operated was one fraught with a multiplicity of perils: killer diseases, hostile and powerful native rulers, armed-to-the-teeth European competitors, devastating sea storms, to name but a few. The anxieties about cultural alienation, even insanity concomitant with colonial adventuring, so prominently displayed in an earlier play like *Sir Courtly Nice*, is glossed over in *The Conscious Lovers*.

In Eliza Haywood's novella *Cleomelia, or, the Generous Mistress* (1727) we find a strikingly problematic representation of the East Indian setting in which merchants like

Mr. Sealand earned their fortunes in the early eighteenth century. Not unlike Steele's hero with a bourgeois-sounding name, Haywood's romantically named merchant patriarch Malaventure decides to settle in "Bengall" both to cut down his expenses and slowly recover his losses incurred elsewhere: "An English merchant, to be known by the name of Malaventure, having been by great Losses at sea, and imprudent Management at Home, reduc'd to very great straits, resolv'd to seek in foreign Climates that Repose which the daily Insults of the more Prosperous deny'd him here. Bengall [sic] was presented to him as a Place which might be advantageous to him, and having formerly had some Dealings with the Factory there, was that which he made choice of."<sup>64</sup> In this instance the Eastern setting becomes a space where it is possible for the protagonists to escape from all false pretensions and cultivate their virtues through honest trade activities, complimented by equally honorable behavior in all social and domestic transactions. Malaventure, as his name suggests, is not a highly successful merchant even in the East Indies. As a matter of fact, only Heartlove, whose son officially courts Malaventure's daughter Cleomelia, is financially successful among his acquaintances. Even Favonius, the greedy father of Gasper, Cleomelia's clandestine lover, is in straitened financial circumstances.

Factory life in the early eighteenth century was not necessarily always conducive to wealth and well being. Several characters die of diseases and accidents in *Cleomelia*. Both old Heartlove and Malaventure die of sudden fevers. Young Heartlove contracts an infection after recovering from a dueling wound. The sea-captain Conrade, who becomes Cleomelia's latest lover, drowns in a terrible storm. Sudden deaths from exotic diseases or infections were a part of factory life in India. Percival Spear points out that one of the

few activities of the factory chaplains in India was to officiate over the funerals of the merchants, who fell prey to tropical diseases every year. The number of funerals was extraordinarily high during the hot and humid summers, keeping the chaplains unusually busy. Every year the already small number of the English in the factories was further depleted by deaths caused by tropical diseases.<sup>65</sup> One, however, needs to keep in mind that the English who took such risks in the East in the early eighteenth century did not as yet think of themselves as being sacrifices to the mother country's civilizing mission as they would in the late nineteenth century. The actual material standards of living were hardly better in Britain and were in some cases worse.<sup>66</sup>

The factory was generally an isolated community regulated by its own rules with little contact with the larger Indian society. *Cleomelia* reflects the isolated nature of factory life quite accurately. As a result, there are few secrets in this small ingrown community. The scandals involving Cleomelia and Gasper spread quickly, despite their attempt to conceal the fact of her pregnancy: "Having once got Air [the scandal], it soon spread through the whole Factory, and *Malaventure* being a Person generally esteemed among them, was soon in a friendly Manner made acquainted with the Report" (28-29).

In addition, what little contact there is with the natives outside the factory is carried out peacefully. In spite of the stormy passion which runs rife inside the walls of the factory, *Cleomelia* gives us the impression that a friendly, although not too deep, working relationship exists between the English and the natives beyond the factory: "He [Malaventure] was treated both by Natives and those of other Countries, who resided there, with a Civility beyond what he could have expected from Strangers, or had found in England since his misfortunes" (2). The denizens of the self-contained world of the

factory are not plagued by anxieties and apprehensions about the arbitrary authority of the native Nawabs, unlike Sir Calico in Crown's play. However, they have their domestic and sexual conflicts and fatal diseases to contend with.

The fictional merchants like Malaventure, Favonius, and Heartlove in *Cleomelia* are part of a mercantile community without any expansionist ambitions beyond the walls of the Factory. Despite their shortcomings as merchants or parents, they are ultimately good merchants doing what they are supposed to do: following an honorable profession that generates wealth and well-being for nations. As such, Haywood's novel or Steele's comedy are both part of a concerted effort to recuperate the merchant as a rational and honorable member of the society despite his rootedness in a money economy.

However, Haywood's representation of merchants and mercantile life in the colonies is fraught with ambiguities. Consumed by their strong passions and desires which are often in contradiction with their supposedly rational calling, all these powerful males die off one by one. Significantly, it is the young heroine who finally inherits the substantial fortune left by Heartlove and returns in triumph to England to join her lover Gasper and the illegitimate son fathered by him. The narrator describes without any apparent disapproval, "Now was the Fair subject of this History again at Liberty to pursue her unchanging inclinations, and be just to her first Vows. She made all Possible Speed to dispose of her Effects and having turn'd all into Cash and Bills, embark'd for England, where in due time she safely arriv'd" (78). What her "first Vows" are in this context is profoundly ambiguous. It could be either her avowed commitment to her first lover Gasper who also fathered her illegitimate child, or it could also be her thirst for exciting picaresque adventures.

Evidently, Cleomelia does not fit into the formulaic story-line used by Steele's play according to which the merchant hero returns with an East Indian fortune and expends it to revitalize the moral and affective economy of the domestic space. When contrasted by Steele's staid bourgeois hero, Haywood's heroine is a flamboyant consumer who, by all early indications, will spend her fortune for personal aggrandizement rather than for the benefit of the community. She could thus be read as a subversive rewriting of the supposedly unstable and unpredictable new "economic" man as contrasted by the virtuous and putatively rock-stable landed gentleman.<sup>67</sup> In this respect, Cleomelia has more in common with the extravagant and unrestrained Millwood, the she-villain in George Lillo's popular play *The London Merchant* (1731) than the idealized merchant-hero of the play, Mr. Thorowgood, who insists on promoting his money-making activities as an altruistic calling.

The revitalizing gift of Indian/overseas mercantile wealth that is transfused by the merchant into the ailing body of the aristocratic family in Steele's play is extended to the human society in general by Mr. Thorowgood in *The London Merchant or, the History of George Barnwell* (1731). The play is a landmark text in the on-going recuperation of the representation of the merchant class. Its place in the articulation of a nascent imperialist ideology has been commented on recently by literary critics.<sup>68</sup> However, read in the context of the long-protracted struggle over the control of the overseas merchant's representation in popular literature, the imperialistic designs in *The London Merchant*, which are indubitably present in the play, are problematized by other issues, which deserve equal attention.

First, *The London Merchant* is a remarkable example of a consciously wrought representation of the British overseas merchant by a pro-mercantile playwright as a rational and moderate subject, as contrasted by the negative representations of the mercantile classes in late seventeenth-century drama dominated by an aristocratic worldview. Second, the play is used to project a peculiarly British model of contact between the West and the non-West that is based on the rejection of the model supposedly invented and implemented by the Spanish Empire in the New World. However, this supposedly morally superior British model of contact does not necessarily succeed in containing both the slash-and-burn imperialism of the Spanish variety and the rapacious sexual economy pursued by Millwood, the seducer of innocent, virginal apprentices. According to James Cruise, Millwood is shown as betraying her nation by admiring Britain's imperial Other.<sup>69</sup> However, the ideological marginalization of Millwood as Spanish Imperialism does not automatically constitute a triumphant and confident assertion of a Protestant and libertarian British imperial ideology in the play. The play is thematically and temporally too close to the late seventeenth-century plays like *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685) to be stridently imperialistic, because the timid and harassed overseas merchant of such fevered dramatic representation of the Restoration often threatened to turn into reality on the eve of the War of Jenkins' Ear, when the play was produced. I argue that the putatively superior British model of mercantile imperialism constructed in the play can not be entirely hegemonic, because it is undercut by the recognition of non-Western agency on the one hand, and, on the other, by the riveting performance by Millwood. In addition, *The London Merchant*, through its construction of the merchant's vocation as pacific and non-violent and its eschewing of militarism and

conquest, anticipates the Nabob literature of the post-Battle of Plassey era, which also critiques the East India merchant turned Nabob for his militarism in very similar terms. In other words, although Lillo's play is preoccupied with the Spanish Empire as Britain's Other in terms of foreign policy and trade, it foreshadows the way some sections of the Nabob literature, to be discussed in Chapter Four, uses representations of Mughal Empire and the Nabobs as foils to honest and pacific British merchants.

The honorable London merchant Thorowgood's sphere of activity is global, and he creates a vision of a global polity based on mutual love and benefit for both the English merchant and the natives. Commerce for him is a calling, a profession, not only to be studied, but also to be pursued with dedication. He instructs his "disciple," the young apprentice Trueman to study "the method of merchandize" not only as a "Means of Getting Wealth," but also as a "science." Thorowgood clearly intends "science" to mean much more than mere empirical/rational quest for knowledge and profit, because he goes on to emphasize peace and love as part of the practice of this "science:" "See how it is founded in Reason, and the Nature of Things.—How it promotes Humanity, as it has opened and yet keeps up an intercourse between nations, far remote from one another in Situation, Customs and Religion; promoting Arts, Industry, Peace and Plenty; by mutual benefits diffusing mutual love from Pole to Pole."<sup>70</sup> Trueman chimes in promptly, "I have observed that in those Countries where Trade is promoted and encouraged, do not make Discoveries to destroy, but to improve Mankind" (3.1. 9-11.178). "Those countries" that "do not make Discoveries to destroy" are Britain and her republican, Protestant sister the Netherlands, and those that do are represented by the Spaniards in *The London Merchant*. Trueman continues his paean of peaceful commerce and exploration: "By Love and

Friendship to tame the fierce and polish the most savage, —to teach them the Advantages of honest Traffic, —by taking from them, with their own Consent their useless superfluities, and giving them in Return, what, from their ignorance in manual Arts, their situation, or some other Accident, they stand in need of” (3.1. 11-15.178).

The rhetoric of “giving and taking” is most prominent in this expository speech. The ideal merchant carefully eschews all claims to territorial colonialism and the ensuing destruction of native cultures often imputed to the Spanish Empire. As a matter of fact, the predatory jilt Millwood, who brings about the honest apprentice George Barnwell’s downfall, describes her own amorous economy in terms that associate her with the rapacious and aggressive colonial policies of the Spanish: “I would have my Conquests complete, like those of the *Spaniards* in the New World: who first plunder’d the natives of all the Wealth they had and then condemn’d the Wretches to the Mines for Life to work for more” (1.3. 20-22. 161). The construction Spain as an aspirant to world domination reminds one of Dryden’s concern with Dutch ambitions of universal monarchy. Although Thorowgood’s gospel of commerce apparently eschews all violence and coercion in contrast to the policies of Britain’s imperial other Spain, one could argue that it actually represents a far more insidious and longer-lasting variety of colonialism, one that constructs the native as a subject spontaneously desiring things British rather than being forced to accept them.<sup>71</sup> However, the immediate context of the play’s production is significantly situated between the era of the negative mercantile representations substantially wrought by non-Western agency in seventeenth-century drama and the coming conflict with Spain during the era of Jenkins’ Ear. As a result, the discourse between Thorowgood and Truman delineated above could be read as a moral

argument that is trying to put the best face on a material reality in which British overseas merchants were frequently threatened not only by native military and political agency in the East but also by Spanish depredations in the New World.

Barnwell, the young and impetuous apprentice-hero of the play, comes to a tragic end because he has chosen to turn down the invaluable “gift” offered him by his good master Thorowgood: the discipline and vocation of commerce that would have endowed him with the almost “miraculous” power of bestowing material affluence as well as spiritual harmony upon the larger community of men. The strong religious overtones in the mercantile rhetoric of the play, especially in Thorowgood’s speeches, help to construct commerce not only as a financially rewarding profession but also as a sacred calling.<sup>72</sup> Maria, Thorowgood’s daughter and Barnwell’s beloved, laments about his “fall” from the state of mercantile grace in religious terms: “Providence opposes all Attempts to save him.—Poor ruin’d *Barnwell!*—Wretched lost *Maria!*—”(4.3.10-12. 188).

For all its commitment to a pacific and almost puritanical pursuit of commerce as a calling, there is an undercurrent of self-righteous violence in *The London Merchant*, not unlike Steele’s *The Conscious Lovers*, where also we have seen a steely resolve to punish (or, at least punitively deprive of redemptive boons) the recalcitrant elements. The supposed marginalization of Millwood, the villainous female who is persistently identified with Spanish slash-and-burn imperialism, is an indication of this sub-textual punitive violence. Tejumola Olaniyan has pointed out that the absolutist ethic espoused by the play imposes an irreversible sentence on Milwood: she loses this world and the next, whereas the erring but repentant hero can look forward to salvation in the

hereafter.<sup>73</sup> In addition, Lillo deliberately identifies her with Spanish atrocities in the New World colonies and thus associates her with an aristocratic military ethos of conquest and plunder at a time when Anglo-Spanish relations were at an all time low.

However, the ideological marginalization of Millwood as Spanish imperialism does not automatically constitute a triumphant and confident assertion of a Protestant and libertarian British imperial ideology in the play. As I have already pointed out, the rhetoric against Spain could be read as an attempt by the playwright to put a utopian face on the material reality in which the British merchant was frequently threatened by military violence abroad. In addition, Millwood's powerful performance in the play also undercuts any claim to the effect that an imperialist and patriarchal discourse overwhelms all alternatives. When Thorowgood addresses her as the "devil," Millwood defiantly asserts, "That imaginary Being is an Emblem of thy cursed Sex. A Mirrour, wherein each particular Man may see his own Likeness, and that of all Mankind" (4. 18. 4-6. 196). She goes on heap more infamy on a patriarchy supposedly sanctioned by religion, "Whatever religion is in itself, as practis'd by Mankind, it has caused the Evils you say it was design'd to cure. War, Plague, and Famine, has not destroy'd so many of the human Race, as this pretended Piety has done" (4. 18. 40-43. 197). Thorowgood's immediate response in the same scene contradicts the triumph of an "absolutist ethic" traced by Olaniyan: "Truth is Truth, tho' from an Enemy, and spoke in Malice." Moreover, the play is thematically and temporally too close to the late seventeenth-century plays like *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685) to be unrestrainedly imperialistic, because the timid and harassed overseas merchant of such fevered dramatic representation of the Restoration often threatened to turn into reality on the eve of the War of Jenkins' Ear.

Perhaps one reason why Lillo's tragedy was so highly popular during the 1730s, a decade of growing war-hysteria and jingoistic patriotism among the British public, was because it rose to the occasion by offering a flattering fictional antidote to the disturbing images of the mutilated bodies of helpless overseas merchants. According to William McBurney, "Although set in Elizabethan times, the play makes topical references to England's current hostilities with Spain as well as oblique criticism of Walpole's foreign policy, which would have drawn the applause of certain Court factions as well as of the City."<sup>74</sup> Colin Palmer points out, "Certainly the reported incidents of [Spanish] piracy increased in the 1730s, and the patriotic fervor aroused by such attacks would contribute to the War of Jenkins' Ear."<sup>75</sup> During the 1731-32 London season alone the play had seventeen performances.<sup>76</sup> The play was acted thirty three times during the six seasons between 1732 and 1737, an average of 6.6 performances per season.<sup>77</sup> During this period a large section of the people came to believe that the real and supposed depredations on British trade by the Spaniards in the New World called for an all out war against the inveterate Catholic enemy. In the early years of the decade, Walpole's refusal to get British arms embroiled in the War of Polish Succession against Spain angered a large section of the mercantile interest, in addition to his traditional enemies the Tories.<sup>78</sup> George Lillo, with his part Dutch ancestry and nonconformist upbringing, hated and detested the Spanish Empire as a scourge of liberty and Protestantism around the world. Consequently, *The London Merchant* would not only have been effective as a tool for keeping the riotous apprentices in check, but it would also have been a useful propaganda instrument for war against Spain. Even after war had been declared against Spain, the play was frequently mentioned in pro-mercantile essays that also made a case for war

against Spain. According to Lincoln B. Faller, “In the decade following the first appearance of Lillo’s play, we find frequent articles on merchants, trade, and commerce in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* and the *Monthly Review*; the preponderance of these make a case for war against Spanish interference with British trade to America, on the grounds that the merchant contributes so much to the national welfare that his interests demand vigorous protection.”<sup>79</sup>

The subtle anti-Spanish rhetoric that we have seen in *The London Merchant* becomes a clarion call to righteous war in *Britannia and Batavia* (1740), a masque by Lillo, which was written earlier but had never been performed, partly because of its sensitive political message.<sup>80</sup> *Britannia and Batavia* is as much a pro-Mercantile and pro-Hanoverian work as Dryden’s *Amboyna* was a pro-Stuart and pro-landed interest one. The latter turns its English mercantile characters into honorary gentlemen fighting the cowardly and treacherous Dutch enemy honorably without resorting to guile. As I have already demonstrated, Dryden makes his overseas merchant palatable by erasing the profit motive and by attributing it to the obnoxious Dutch merchant. In *Britannia and Batavia*, by contrast, Lillo attempts to establish that despite his pursuit of profit the overseas merchant is capable of and has the right to resort to violence in righteous defense of British trade. The violence, however, is directed surgically, i.e., with moral precision, against the Spaniard, the religious as well as imperial foe of the British. The Dutch, the coreligionist and fellow mercantile nation, become the natural allies of the beleaguered British in Lillo’s imagination. In addition to their detestable religious practices, loathingly allegorized as giant Superstition, the Spaniards are also represented

as the carriers of a decadent aristocratic way of life that must give way to the Protestant, middleclass and righteously war-like ethos of the British merchant-sailor.<sup>81</sup>

Although lavishly endowed with emblematic characters, spectacular pageants, processions, and music and dancing as befits a masque designed to celebrate a royal wedding, there runs a strong argumentative vein in the piece.<sup>82</sup> The central debate to be resolved in the masque is whether it is in Britain's interest to go to war against Spain to succor its continental Protestant sister Batavia, i. e., Holland. Eliphas, the guardian angel of Batavia, appears in the first scene as an ambassador to seek military aid from Britannia, guarded by the rather timid and unwarlike angel Ithuriel, unlike his decidedly warlike namesake in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The ineffectual guardian angel of Britannia discourages Batavia's suit: "Must Britain endless Wars maintain / For Causes not her own?"<sup>83</sup> Earlier in the scene, Ithuriel sings to the sleeping Britannia: "Rest is the Recompence of Toil, / The noblest Fruit of Conquest, Peace; / Learn but Content, high-favor'd Isle" (1.1.4-6). Ithuriel's position parallels that of Walpole who was reluctant to embroil Britain in further wars against continental powers after the long protracted War of Spanish Succession (1702-1713) and other lesser conflicts that followed in its wake.

A similar point of view was expressed earlier by one Thomas Merchant, esq. in *Peace and Trade, War and Taxes or, The Irreparable Damage of our Trade in case of a War* (1729). The publication of this tract coincided with Walpole's signing of the Treaty of Seville with Spain by which England accepted Spanish claims to several Italian duchies belonging to the Holy Roman Empire. The opposition saw this as another instance of Walpole selling off British interests to Spain.<sup>84</sup> In the tract the author employs a homely analogy to make his case against a commercial nation like Great Britain

pursuing a warlike foreign policy: “For to a peaceable, trading Nation, War, like a Law-suit, leaves the Recoverer Loser.” He goes on to admonish: “‘tis none of our business, nor is it, or can it be at any time, our Interest; Commerce, advantages, and urgent necessities excepted.”<sup>85</sup> War for the sake of religion, glory, or for building up a reputation of war-likeness is not to be condoned.

Lillo’s masque, by contrast, promotes a Protestant alliance by overriding concerns with the long-term economic impact of a new war. Britannia awakes from her exhausted slumber despite Ithuriel’s attempts to bar Batavia and her guardian angel from awakening her. As she promises succor to her Protestant sister, she asserts, “Let Tyranny devour, / And build in Blood her Throne; / Britannia holds her Power / For righteous Ends alone” (Scene 1, Air 4, 50-53, 469). Britannia would agree with the abovementioned pamphleteer to the extent that British arms should be employed discriminatingly in contrast to the rampant militarism that is apparently the driving force behind the Spanish Empire. However, Britannia insists on a common ground of Protestantism and liberty as additional incentives to go to war, above and beyond the “natural” right to safeguard one’s possessions and interests.

Scene Two of the masque could be read as a flash-back to the Glorious Revolution of 1688 when the endangered Protestant succession in Britain was saved in the nick of time by a Dutch Prince, the ruler of a fellow trading nation. Liberto/the Prince of Orange appears on Britannia’s shore with a powerful fleet and a band of brave sailors. They vanquish Tyranny and Superstition, representing the Jacobite conspiracy (and their miscellaneous Catholic allies), and the Roman faith respectively. According to the theatrical directions for this scene: “Enter Ithuriel, Eliphaz, and Batavia, ushering in

Liberto, richly habited and attended. At whose Appearance, Tyranny, Superstition, and their followers run off in confusion” (471). Since one good Protestant turn deserves another, it is now Britannia’s turn to succor her oppressed Dutch sister. George Lillo’s stance in the masque is a good example of the heady brew of trade, war, liberty and Protestantism that according to Linda Colley contributed largely to the formation of a British identity in the eighteenth century.<sup>86</sup> Similar sentiments are expressed in James Thomson’s poetry, especially, “*Rule Britannia!*”(1740), which practically became the British national anthem after the naval victories of Admiral Vernon in 1739 during the War of Jenkins’ Ear.<sup>87</sup>

Although *Britannia and Batavia* was never performed on stage, the popularity of its predecessor *The London Merchant* during the years leading up to the War of Jenkins’ Ear should point to an acceptance of the notion of a peace-loving mercantile nation going to war, not because it wanted glory and conquest, but because it strove to safeguard those very conditions that contribute to peace, profit, and freedom. Although the acceptable motives for waging war—Protestantism, profit, liberty—were given various levels of priority by different authors, there was a consensus of opinion as to the mercantile nation’s rights to wage a just war. However, the qualified acceptance of the right to resort to justified and controlled military force by British mercantile interest was painstakingly distanced from a supposedly Hobbesian, all-encompassing state of war and plunder pursued and propagated by the likes of the Spanish and French Empires. Within little more than a decade of the conclusion of the War of Jenkins’ ear, this distinction between a characteristically British and sanitized violence and an alien propensity toward

plunder and territorial aggrandizement would be brought home by the Nabob, the British merchant irremediably tainted by Mughal militarism.

The rational attempt to build a case for redemptive/defensive war was almost overwhelmed by the dramatic events leading to the declaration of war against Spain in 1739. In a gruesome display of patriotic fervor, Captain Robert Jenkins presented his severed ear (reputedly pickled in brine) to the House of Commons in 1738 as a proof of Spanish atrocities against British trade in the New World, arousing a passionate outburst in favor of immediate war.<sup>88</sup> The pacific and patriotic British Mercantile body thus literally bore the inscription of Spanish military violence, which could only be erased by making that mutilated body whole by a precise, surgical application of restorative violence. *London: Or, the Progress of Commerce* (1737) by Richard Glover, published during this turbulent time, brings together the jarring strands of ideas as to whether Britain, fated in all manners of ways—geographically, racially, religiously, politically—to be the preeminent commercial nation in the world, should also wage wars.

Apparently, *The Progress of Commerce*, composed in the tradition of “progress poems” such as the popular “progress of poesy” poems, was evidently quite popular as it went through a second edition in 1739. Richard Glover, the poet, employs a mythical machinery to embellish what is actually unabashed propaganda in support of war against Spain. The speaker declares at the end of the poem in a shrill, even xenophobic tone that in order to safeguard British Commerce from Spanish/ Jacobite/ Catholic depredation as well as from the international Jewish conspiracy, Britain must abandon her “Calm repose” and arm herself for war. Only then the enemies of Britain, the global Catholic/ Jacobite/ Jewish conspiracy, “That exil’d race, in superstition nurs’d, / The servile pupils

of Tyrannic Rome, / With distant gaze despairing shall behold / The guarded splendors of Britannia's crown." The "exil'd race" in question could be a double-layered allusion to the Jews and the Jacobite court in exile supposedly in league with the Roman church. Although the poem ends with a celebration of the British vengeance soon to be unleashed upon her enemies, there is a conscious attempt to emphasize the restorative nature of this "uncustomary" violence on the part of the mercantile and peaceful British people. The speaker exclaims that "other shores," meaning Catholic Europe, Asia, and the New World, "Shall bear the hideous waste of ruthless war," so that "liberty, security, and fame / Shall dwell for ever on our chosen plains."<sup>89</sup> Ultimately the benefactors of this purgative militarism would be the entire human civilization, because the controlled release of violence will ensure that the wandering goddess of Commerce will finally deign to make Britain her permanent abode.

The extended allegory in the poem about the miraculous birth and the tragic wanderings of the goddess Commerce is loosely based on Greek mythology and classical history. Glover attempts to exploit this part-allegorical, part-historical machinery in order to illustrate one of the central themes of the poem: how does one account for the apparently unpredictable rise and fall of human civilizations, which, according to the poet, is synonymous with commercial activities. Glover states, "And upon this occasion [of composing the poem about the progress of Commerce from mythical times to modern historical times] an enquiry is made, how it has come to pass, that, notwithstanding the great wealth and power attending Commerce, the course of trade should so often have shifted its seat."<sup>90</sup> The answer to this all important question is provided in the allegory of the birth of Commerce.

Born of Neptune and a nymph called Phoenicia—as her name should suggest, her daughter Commerce will eventually establish the Phoenician civilization—Commerce is given a variety of boons by the Olympian gods and goddesses: wisdom, industry, and skill in the arts and the crafts. Apollo’s gift to her is said to be the most precious, the gift of writing that facilitates intercourse among the nations of the world and spreads the refinements of learning and civilization (10-11). For some unexplained reason Mars, the god of war, does not come to bless Commerce. Hence is the traditional aversion of Commerce and commercial nations to war and tyranny. Commerce flees from land to land whenever her latest abode is overrun with war and strife (14). Although she finds many opulent abodes as time progresses, none is dearer to her than Carthage, vanquished by the militarist Rome: “Her head commercial Carthage bow’d at last / To Military Rome” (27). In modern times the Dutch have been blessed by the presence of Commerce among them. The poet, not unlike George Lillo in his masque or in *The London Merchant*, equates commerce and liberty with Protestantism. He extols the Dutch “The bold Batavian in his glorious toil / For liberty, or death,” and condemns the Spanish for their rapine of the New World, the wealth from which has allowed them to “waste / the smiling fields of Europe, and extend / Thy bloody shekels [sic] o’er these happy seats / of liberty” (18).

It is the lack of a well-balanced relationship between the arts and the arms that actually causes Commerce to feel so insecure among her host nations. Time and again mercantile nations, who excelled in the arts and the industries, have fallen victim to militarism because they never cultivated martial valor: “Thy sons relinquish’d arms, on other arts / Intent, and still to mercenary hands / The sword entrusting” (26). One is

clearly reminded here of the accusation of cowardice leveled against the overseas merchants in the late seventeenth-century drama examined earlier in the chapter. The shameful reliance on mercenaries and professional soldiers had proven to be the downfall of many a mercantile nation in the past. Glover proposes to mend the disrupting cleavage in the merchant psyche between his commitment to peace and the need to take up arms when justly necessary: “Thou, Goddess, animate our breasts / To cast inglorious indolence aside” (27). Bolstered by the valiant band of merchant-sailors, Commerce will prosper and make Britain her last retreat: “Ye mariners of Britain, chosen train / Of Liberty and Commerce, now no more / Secrete [sic] your gen’rous valour” (29).

The apparently seamless application of surgical violence to heal an ideological contradiction does not succeed in the long run, because as Suvir Kaul has pointed out, the very birth of Commerce is indebted to an act of sexual aggression.: “There is no doubt about the polemical force of Commerce’s remarks [concerning her peaceful nature], and yet a figural irony surfaces, as the Spanish are denounced for the same acts of violence and rapine that Glover imagined at the birth of Commerce.”<sup>91</sup> Neptune raped the virgin nymph who gave birth to Commerce as a result. Her lament for her lost innocence and her prayer to Neptune to grant her death undercuts Glover’s assertion that Commerce was originally peaceful: “To thee, perfidious God, I come,” cries she and goes on to beg, “Bid thy devouring waves inwrap my head, / And to the bottom whelm my cares and shame” (5).

Suvir Kaul’s assertion that Glover’s polemic in the allegory of Commerce’s birth is undercut by an unwitting “irony” is certainly cogent. However, the allegory which falls apart because of the internal contradiction is in itself an indication of the vulnerability of

the poem as an articulation of Britain's imperialistic designs as Kaul insists it is. Glover is more concerned with reconciling the merchant's pacifism with the necessity to bear arms in a world full of armed-to-the-teeth European rivals as well as powerful non-Western rulers. *The Progress of Commerce* loses much of the imperialistic ambition Kaul reads into it, when one reads it as being part of an on-going struggle over the overseas merchant's representation. The servile and cowardly merchant overawed by Eastern tyrants in the Restoration plays was not too distant a figure for Richard Glover, and the mutilation suffered by Captain Jenkins certainly prompted him to write a poem to erase the disturbing image with the help of a utopian vision of pacific yet righteously militant commerce. The irresolvable contradiction in the constructed vision only serves to emphasize the poem's failure to be a strident articulation of expansion and conquest.

The transformation of the fear-ravaged body of the British overseas merchant evidently went through a long and arduous process. It was by no means a linear metanarrative of progress, being full of disruptions and contradictions. The stereotype of the servile and intimidated British merchant slowly but surely gave way in the early eighteenth century to the gentlemanlike yet resolute merchant, bearing financial redemption in one hand and the potential of restorative and corrective violence in the other. However, as we have observed, the assumption of the right to mete out punitive as well as recuperative violence apparently did not seem contradictory to a mercantile discourse committed to peaceful expansion. This delicate balancing of avowed pacifism, on the one hand, and controlled militarism, on the other, was facilitated by the acceptance of a developing British identity based on Protestantism, liberty, and righteous warfare. However, it would be anachronistic to read the representations of the honest-yet-

righteously-militant merchant in popular poetry and drama as being a unqualified and “manifest” expression of the British will to empire, because all such representations are crisscrossed by domestic ideological debates over the merchant’s calling and the actual menace of rival European as well as Eastern military and political power. The rest of the century continued to celebrate in all manners of popular writing the manly and courageous overseas merchant returned home with an honestly earned fortune that contributes to social harmony. However, on the horizon was a previously unknown returnee: the Nabob, who belied his mercantile origins by adopting an alien, martial/despotic demeanor and by bearing gifts disruptive of the community.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the Battle of Bantam and the political and economic factors contributing to it, see Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600-1800, Europe and the World in the Age of Expansion 2* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 31-78. See especially 48-49.

<sup>2</sup> For critical accounts of the “gentrification” of the British merchant see, John C. Loftis, *Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1959; New York: AMS Press, 1979), 49-64; John McVeagh, *Tradeful Merchants: Portrayals of the Capitalist in Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 83-84, 92; James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 91-110; Perry Gauci, *The Politics of Trade: The Overseas Merchant in Trade and Society 1660-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 170. Loftis’ *Comedy and Society* is the seminal work tracing the gentrification of the merchant class in the early eighteenth century. However, Loftis limits his work to popular comedies produced during the era and does not extend his socio-cultural insights to the East Indian theatre of operation of the overseas merchant. Despite his carefully drawn distinctions between the overseas merchant and the small-scale traders and merchants of the metropolis, and his recognition of the overseas merchant as being at the forefront of the representational makeover of the mercantile class, Loftis fails to appreciate the East India Merchant as a particularly important site in the on-going battle of representations.

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McVeagh's *Tradeful Merchants* engages in much the same project as Loftis', albeit on a more ambitious scale, tracing the evolution of mercantile representations from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century. However, the grand scope of the book does not allow McVeagh to develop his insight that the overseas merchant came under such vitriolic attack in the mid to late eighteenth century after a brief spell of literary adulation because of the diversification of his activities, which called into question his vocation as a peaceful generator and spreader of national wealth. McVeagh almost stumbles on one of these new roles that caused such aversion in some circles, the warrior and conqueror, but fails to draw any useful conclusions. More recently, James Raven, in his *Judging New Wealth*, and Perry Gauci, in his *The Politics of Trade*, have established that the merchants themselves were actively involved in trying to control who represented them and how. The merchants attempted to do so by writing tracts and conduct books that constructed the merchant as a professional gentleman and promoted his activities as an almost religious calling. However, both Raven and Gauci ignore the merchant's attempt to claim gentlemanly valor as a part of his own refashioning.

<sup>3</sup> See Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, 6, for his nuanced reading of the shifting attitudes toward the different categories of the merchants and traders. Loftis points out that the term "cit" was used sweepingly during the Restoration to denote a broad range of mercantile characters from the rich overseas merchants to the petty traders of the city. But by the early decades of the eighteenth century, the term came to be used specifically to describe petty London traders rather than important overseas merchants.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Nandini Bhattacharya, *Reading the Splendid Body: Gender*

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*and Consumerism in Eighteenth-Century British Writing on India* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 80; Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage 1660-1714* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4; John McVeagh, *Tradeful Merchants*, 84. Among recent critics to resort to this anachronistic usage are Nandini Bhattacharya and Bridget Orr. Bhattacharya, in her *Reading the Splendid Body*, alludes to Indiana, the daughter of Mr. Sealand, the honorable East India merchant in Steel's *The Conscious Lovers* (1721), as a "nabobess," implying that her father is a Nabob. Similarly, Bridget Orr in her *Empire on the English Stage* claims to have found the Nabob in late-Restoration comedies such as Crowne's *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685). Such anachronisms crop up (less unexpectedly) in earlier criticism on the subject. For instance, McVeagh, in his *Tradeful Merchants*, is quite mistaken when he asserts that Caleb D'Anvers, the author of the anti-Walpolean journal *The Craftsman* was alluding to Nabobs when he criticized "several persons" returned from India in the employment of the East India Company who "discover the same governing Spirit here, which they exercis'd abroad" (qtd. in *Tradeful Merchants*, 84). McVeagh goes on to add, "As early as 1726 Caleb D' Anvers' anti-Walpolean journal 'The Craftsman' had complained that nabobs were becoming socially insufferable" (*Tradeful Merchants*, 84). On the contrary, nowhere does D'Anvers employ the term Nabob, and the "governing spirit" alluded to in this context is used to indicate the putative abuses of authority by the leading merchants inside the English trading factories in India, which did not extend at this stage to the natives by any means. D'Anvers is concerned with the unbecoming behavior of a small number of high-ranking East India Company factors who have been flaunting their wealth. They, according to

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Caleb D'Anvers, disturb the social fabric by “affecting the Port and Grandeur of British Noble men; and cultivating alliances with the most powerful Families in the Kingdom” (*The Craftsman* 11 (1726): 98).

<sup>5</sup> For the most influential articulation of this paradigm, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 2-3, 56-57.

<sup>6</sup> For accounts representative of such well-intentioned yet one-sided critique of Western imperialism, see Balachandra Rajan, *Under Western Eyes: From Milton to Macaulay* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999). See also Srinivas Aravamudan, *The Tropicopolitans* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> For an example of the empirical approach to colonial historiography, see Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600-1800*. For examples of recent postcolonial criticism that acknowledge an irreversible East-West binary in spite of their sensitivity to disruptive nuances in the fabric of colonial discourse, see Balachandra Rajan, *Under Western Eyes: From Milton to Macaulay*; Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage 1660-1715*. For examples of economic histories of British expansion which are receptive of the nuances of the gentry-merchant ideological competitions and cooperation, see Kenneth R. Andrewes, *Trade Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 6; Theodore K. Rabb, *Enterprise and Empire: Merchants and Gentry Investment in the Expansion of England, 1575-1630* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 35-39. For examples of literary criticism that benefit from the insights of such traditional historiography of colonial expansion, see Laura Stevenson,

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*Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsman in Elizabethan Popular Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 6; Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 149-187.

<sup>8</sup> The lack of any significant attention to the issue of martial ethos in the existing literature on the gentrification of the British merchant certainly needs to be redressed. The clash of ideas as to whether merchants should be capable of exerting martial valor in times of need at least partly originated from the fact that British overseas ventures and explorations had been long overshadowed by the figure of the gentleman-warrior explorer, Sir Walter Raleigh being representative of the type. See Kenneth R. Andrewes, *Trade Plunder and Settlement*, 6. Andrewes has pointed out, “For the most part the expansion across the Atlantic was a conquering and colonizing process, which naturally attracted adventurers with a mind to loot, tribute, and land. Whereas the eastward expansion was essentially a trading enterprise [sic].” During the Elizabethan age influential authors and propagandists who wrote about exploration and expansion consciously distinguished the merchant from the gentlemanly explorer: the former being committed to peaceful trade in exotic and highly desirable commodities, and the latter to fame, conquest, conversion, and settlement. See Theodore K. Rabb, *Enterprise and Empire*, 35-39. Rabb points out, “There was no doubt in the minds of contemporaries that two quite different social groups were combining in overseas enterprises.” Rabb goes on to quote from Sir George Peckham’s *True Report on the Newfoundland* (1583) to illustrate this point. Peckam stated that he found it “convenient” to divide the

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“adventurers” into two distinct categories: the gentlemen and the merchants. Displaying admirable acumen as an advertiser, Sir George stressed the fine climate, conditions hospitable to landowners and gentlemanly hunters for his aristocratic audience, while he listed many profitable commodities for the merchants, among which he unabashedly included leopards and silk (35). Rabb singles out “glory and missionary work” as being two of the major motivations behind aristocratic voyages of exploration, although profit was always a desired end even in such genteel ventures (36). The merchant, on the contrary, was driven by the less complicated motive of profit and more profit. Despite the frequent overlap between mercantile and gentlemanly investments (both ideological and economic), the aristocratic insistence on glory and conversion of the heathen proved to be so powerful that Elizabethan authors who wrote positively about merchants, traders, and mechanics employed aristocratic terms to praise them. As such, an aristocratic, Christian, crusading ethos juxtaposed to a supposedly inferior mercantile worldview driven by profit and personal gain prevailed in early modern writing that attempted to imagine the English as a triumphant and expanding nation, although in actuality there were many instances when the militant, aristocratic explorer crossed over into mercantile ventures and the supposedly martially inept merchant invested heavily in quests for fame and conquest. For an analysis of the aristocratic, crusading ethos that drove early European expansion into the New World, see Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, 156-161.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Steel’s comedy *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), to be discussed in this chapter, provides us with an example of how the fortune brought home by Mr. Sealand,

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an honest merchant Returnee from India, repairs the ailing fortunes of a titled family and allows the beleaguered young lovers to marry. Richard Glovers 's poem *The Progress of Commerce* (1737) and George Lillo's Masque *Britannia and Batavia* (1740), both to be discussed in this chapter, promote mercantile militancy for just causes.

<sup>10</sup> Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlotte: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 1-43. Kaul's reading of eighteenth-century poetry about nation and empire relies on Said's notions of "latent" versus "manifest" Orientalism, both terms and the accompanying concepts created by Said to surmount the fundamental methodological flaw in his argument to the effect that Orientalism is both a Western fiction and the reality which constructs that very fiction. Kaul argues that while the eighteenth-century novel, unlike its late seventeenth-century predecessors, tends to be broodingly silent about the colonial margins by feigning an exclusive interest in the domestic (thus fitting into the "latent" mode of Said's Orientalist discourse), the poetry celebrating nation and empire is manifestly invested in overseas expansion of British interests through warfare. I, however, question such a reading by pointing out in this chapter that the martial posturing of the British merchant during the War of Jenkins' Ear is more concerned with the ongoing domestic debate about the right to gentility of the British overseas merchant than with any sweeping drive to imperialistic nation building. For an account of Said's methodological inconsistencies, see Robert J. C. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 132-36.

<sup>11</sup> Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire*, 18.

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<sup>12</sup> William Congreve, *The Way of the World*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (1700; Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), act 2, line 325, p.122.

<sup>13</sup> Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade*, 39.

<sup>14</sup> John C. Loftis, "Political and Social Thought in the Drama," in *The London Theatre World 1660-1800*, ed. Robert D. Hume (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 253-85. See especially 258.

<sup>15</sup> See Stephen A. Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of British Foreign Policy, 1650-1668* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 243-252 and 257-68, for an analysis of the second and third Anglo-Dutch wars of the seventeenth century that took place during the restored Stuart reign. Pincus argues that the ideological causes were more important in fuelling the conflict than the economic ones traditionally valorized by historians. The Anglican Royalists were wary of the supposed Dutch ambitions of replacing Spain as the aspirant of the mantle of Universal Monarchy. In their eyes trade and a feigned Protestantism of the Dutch had replaced the Iberian-militarism-and-Popery nexus of the Spaniard in the previous century. The large sections of the mercantile class at home who opposed the Stuart absolutism were naturally regarded as allies of the Dutch. The East India Company in particular was resistant to the idea of war out of principles that were both economic and ideological.

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Conduct of the Allies*, in *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, vol. 6, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1951), 7-46. See especially 41. Swift condemns "the Monied Men . . . whose perpetual harvest is war." Although the "Monied Men" in this context are the speculative financiers who raised vast sums by trading in

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stocks and funds, and not merchants in general, Swift was never very well-disposed toward the entire class.

<sup>17</sup> See J. A. Van Der Welle, *Dryden and Holland* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1962); Colin Visser, "John Dryden's *Amboyna* at Lincoln's Inn Field, 1673," *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theater Research* 15, no. 1 (1976): 1-11, for a chronology of the productions and publication of the play. Visser points out that the play was acted for the first time in May 1673. According to Van Der Welle, the third Anglo Dutch war had already been going on for more than a year when the play was first published in June 1673.

<sup>18</sup> See Van Der Welle, *Dryden and Holland*, 48-56, for a brief outline of the *Amboyna* massacre and its frequent revival in anti-Dutch propaganda in England.

<sup>19</sup> Visser, "John Dryden's *Amboyna* at Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1673," 1-11. See especially 5-6. See also Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, 263.

<sup>20</sup> In this respect my reading of the play disagrees with such recent postcolonial or politically engaged critiques of Dryden's corpus in particular and the Restoration drama in general. See, for example, Laura Brown, "Dryden and the Imperial Imagination," in *Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, ed. Steven Zwicker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 59-74; Orr, *Empire on the English Stage 1660-1714*; David B. Kramer, *The Imperial Dryden: The Poetics of Appropriation in Seventeenth Century England* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, 1994). Consequently, my reading might seem to be a throwback to earlier critiques of Restoration drama that posit an insular connection between local political issues and popular theater, as exemplified by Nancy

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Kline Maguire, *Regicide and Restoration English Tragicomedy 1660-1671* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1-12. Although I agree with Maguire in that *Amboyna* reenacts the traumatic drama of regicide, I differ from her in insisting that the play also joins the contemporary cultural and material interest in the colonies by participating in the ongoing debate about the moral health of the overseas British merchant. In this respect my work also acknowledges the presence of an “imperial imagination” in Dryden, as Laura Brown has shown it in the above mentioned article, albeit in a more problematic manner.

<sup>21</sup> John Dryden, prologue in *Amboyna: or, the Cruelties of the Dutch to the English Merchants*, 1673, in *The Works of John Dryden*, vol. 12., ed. Vinton A. Dearing (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press 1994), 7.

<sup>22</sup> John Dryden, *Amboyna: or, the Cruelties of the Dutch to the English Merchants*, 1673, in *The Works of John Dryden*, vol. 12., ed. Vinton A. Dearing (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press 1994), 1. 1. 12-13. Hereafter cited in text, and references are to act, scene, page number in this edition.

<sup>23</sup> See Maguire, *Regicide and Restoration*, 1-12, for a discussion of how the thought of regicide was never far from the audience’s mind as they watched the numerous plays produced between 1660 and 1671. Maguire compares these plays to a cultural “Rorschach test” that brought out the barely repressed trauma of the regicide and the Restoration, two events almost diametrically opposed to each other in ideological terms.

<sup>24</sup> Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*, 266.

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<sup>25</sup> The Dutch-Spanish connection in terms of ideology I insist on in *Amboyna* is supported by Colin Visser's finding that Dryden recycled the torture scenes and sets from Davenant's earlier play, *The Cruelty of the Spanish in Peru*. The Dutch in *Amboyna* actually employ the same scenes from Davenant's masque to torture the English, thus strengthening my claim that in *Amboyna* the Dutch parallel the Spanish, and the English resemble the heroic Peruvian natives. Visser also notes the strong similarities between the very titles of the two pieces; both share "The Cruelty of," almost as if Dryden was repeating a successful formula. See Visser, "John Dryden's *Amboyna*," 1-2.

<sup>26</sup> See Visser, 10, for a different reading of Towerson's character. Visser reads Towerson as a bourgeois by focusing on his dying speech in which he speaks of "sealing" his service to the Company with blood. However, the operative term here is "service" which carries connotations of an older relationship: that of the vassal and the lord rather than the purely mercenary one supposedly encouraged by the new mercantilist system.

<sup>27</sup> Colin Visser has demonstrated that the content and form of *Amboyna* was deeply influenced by the demands of theatrical economy. Being constrained to recycle the scenes and sets from Davenant's masques such as *Voyages of Sir Francis Drake* and *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, Dryden must have been forced to compromise between the form and content of *Amboyna*, which combines a heroic mode with lowly characters. However, the scenes which accompanied Drake's rhetoric about fame and honor also accompanies those in which Towerson rebukes the Dutch for their monetary greed and espouses an altruistic, honorable policy of expansion, thus strengthening the

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connection between an older heroic ideology and the apparent mercantile identity of *Amboyna* I posit in my reading.

<sup>28</sup> See Maguire, *Regicide and Restoration*, 138-63, for a discussion of the two supposedly antithetical modes of Kingship that were recurrent tropes in early Restoration plays: the ideal, martyred King exemplified by Charles I and the more worldly, verging-on-the libertine-but-pragmatic one sometimes embodied in Charles II, at least in his morally lucid moments.

<sup>29</sup> See Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 54-58.

<sup>30</sup> See Rajan, *From Milton to Macaulay*, 73-77, for his reading of Dryden's *Aureng-zebe* (1675). Rajan insists that the positive stereotype of India and its ruler created by Dryden in the play only serves to highlight the "feminization" of India, which is the ideological subtext of Dryden's play.

<sup>31</sup> See Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, 155-61. Helgerson traces the uneasy coexistence of a martial, aristocratic ethos of exploration and conquest and a pacific mercantile ethos in the formation of Portuguese nationhood. Dryden's *Amboyna* also reflects a similar conflict between an aristocratic quest for honor and fame and a blatant profit motive. However, one should be cautious about conflating sixteenth-century Portuguese experience, which grew out of a protracted crusade against her Moorish neighbors and a long struggle for independence against her Iberian master Spain, with seventeenth-century English ideas of nationhood. However, the equation of the Dutch

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with the Spaniards in terms of cruelty and rapacity and the English quest for self determination in *Amboyna* do attest to the plausibility of such a parallel.

<sup>32</sup> John Dryden, epilogue in *Amboyna: or, the Cruelties of the Dutch to the English Merchants*, 1673, in *The Works of John Dryden*, vol. 12., ed. Vinton A. Dearing (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press 1994), 77.

<sup>33</sup> Orr, *Empire on the English Stage*, 226-28.

<sup>34</sup> John Crowne, *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685), in *The Comedies of John Crowne: A Critical Edition*, ed. B. J. McMullin, *The Renaissance Imagination* 4, (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1984), 3. 3, 225-228, 391. Hereafter cited in text, and references are to act, scene, line, and page numbers in this edition.

<sup>35</sup> Qtd. in W. W. Hunter, *A History of British India* (London, 1899), 2: 227, n.1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 265-266.

<sup>37</sup> Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade*, 79.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>39</sup> Tripta Desai, *The East India Company: A Brief Survey From 1599 to 1857* (New Delhi: Kanak Publications, 1984), 112.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (New York: Macmillan, 1994), 171. Keay quotes Chaudhuri as stating, “Imports expanded by £25,430 per year according to the linear model and by 14.4 percent according to the exponential. The expansion of exports was at a similar rate, though at a slightly lower level.”

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<sup>42</sup> See Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade*, 69-70. Unlike the ventures to the New World, the East India Company remained a middleclass concern, although “interlopers” favored by the Stuart court did attempt to take control at one point of its development in the seventeenth century. Sir William Courteen, a favorite with the Stuart court, had attempted to undermine the Company’s monopoly with Royal backing since the early 1620’s.

<sup>43</sup> *True Account of the Burning and Sad Condition of Bantam in the East Indies*, (London, 1682), 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *A Short Account of the Siege of Bantam* (London, 1683), 1

<sup>46</sup> Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade*, 35.

<sup>47</sup> *A Short Account of the Siege*, 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>49</sup> John Caryll, *Sir Salomon: Or, the Cautious Coxcomb* (London, 1671).

Hereafter cited in text. References are to act and page number in this edition.

<sup>50</sup> I use the term “imperial imagination” as Laura Brown has used it in her recent assessment of early eighteenth-century literature in the context of her reevaluation of Dryden’s corpus. According to Brown, such an imagination constitutes an imaginative appropriation of the non-European world for a resurgent and strident British imperialism. See Brown, “Dryden and the Imperial imagination,” 70-73. She goes on to point out that a similar attempt to appropriate the non-European world in the service of a resurgent and expansionist Britain is found in George Lillo’s *The London Merchant*. While such an

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imaginative appropriation of the non-European world had certainly existed with different degrees of intensity throughout the history of Western contact with the East, I insist on a closer scrutiny of the allusion to the New World or the East Indies in these works in order to construct a more problematic narrative of appropriation in which Eastern agency sometimes directly shapes the ways British culture imagined the overseas merchant, the agent of that very expansion. More recently, Laura Brown has read the literature of the period between 1660-1731 (which I also deal with in the present chapter) in terms of what she calls “fables of oceans and torrents,” a cultural obsession with trade and exploration by sea that characterizes a long range of English literature from Dryden’s *Annus Mirabilis* to Lillo’s *The London Merchant*. For an account of *The London Merchant* as a “fable,” see Laura Brown, *Fables of Modernity, Literature and Culture in the English Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 66-80. Brown’s use of the notion of the “fable,” despite its highly nuanced application, is hampered by the vision of a progressively and unremittingly powerful metropolitan Britain that projects its authority on the non-European world; thus Brown’s concept fails to account for the complex intersections of domestic ideological issues and non-Western agency.

<sup>51</sup> Post-Battle-of-Plassey prose fiction, poetry, and polemical writing abound in representations of the Nabob as a merchant turned warrior who plunders helpless natives. I engage in a discussion of a selection of such texts in Chapter Four. Among them most representative are such texts as Samuel Foote’s *The Nabob* (1772), Agnes Maria Bennett’s *Anna: or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress. Interspersed with the Anecdotes of a Nabob* (1786), and Richard Clarke’s *The Nabob: or, Asiatic Plunderers* (1773).

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<sup>52</sup> John C. Loftis, ed., *Essays on the Theatre from Eighteenth-Century Periodicals*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), 12.

<sup>53</sup> For an analysis of the eighteenth-century debate over locations of virtue and civility see J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, And History* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985). See especially 109 and 114. The civic humanist position in the eighteenth-century debate was that the classical subject is a landed gentleman with ample leisure in his hands to engage in the pursuit of the greater good of the republic/commonwealth. See also J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, (Princeton and London: Princeton University Press, 1975). See especially 464 and 486. The eighteenth-century republican ideology has been summed up succinctly by Pocock: “What may be termed the ideology of the Country was founded on a presumption of real property and an ethos of the civic life, in which the ego knew and loved itself in its relation to a patria, res publica or common good, organized as a polity, but was perpetually threatened by corruption operating through private appetites and false consciousnesses.”

<sup>54</sup> Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, 5.

<sup>55</sup> See Ashley H. Thorndike, *English Comedy* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 343; Ernest Bernbaum, *The Drama of Sensibility: A Sketch of the History of English Sentimental Comedy and Domestic Tragedy 1696-1780* (Gloucester, MA.: Peter Smith, 1958), 132-40; Maximillian E. Novak, “The Sentimentality of *The Conscious Lovers* Revisited and Reasserted,” *Modern Language Studies* 9 (1979): 48-59; Frank H. Ellis,

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*Sentimental Comedy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 43-54.

<sup>56</sup> Bhattacharya, *Reading the Splendid Body*, 83.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-01.

<sup>60</sup> Defoe and Addison were foremost in rehabilitating the merchant in this laudatory fashion. For instance, Defoe wrote in *The Review* in 1711, "Is not trade the Nurse of Land? And is not Land the nourishment of Trade?" See Daniel Defoe, *The Review* 8, no.16 (1711), repr., ed. Stephen Copley, *Literature and Social Order in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 59-61. Addison wrote in his *The Spectator* number 69, "There are not more useful Members in a Commonwealth than Merchants." See Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* 69 (1711), repr., ed. Stephen Copley, *Literature and Social Order in Eighteenth Century England*, 64.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Steele, *The Conscious Lovers*, ed. Shirley Strum Kenny (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), 1.2.156-161. 28-29. Hereafter cited in text. References are to act, scene, line, and page of this edition.

<sup>62</sup> Joseph Addison, *The Coverley Papers from The Spectator*, ed. O. M. Myers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 7-8.

<sup>63</sup> Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, 6.

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<sup>64</sup> Eliza Haywood, *Cleomelia: or, the Generous Mistress. Being the Secret History of a Lady Lately Arriv'd From Bengall, a Kingdom in the East-Indies* (London, 1727), 1. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>65</sup> T. G. Percival Spear, *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India* (Gloucester, MA.: Peter Smith, 1971), 10. Spear cites an astounding figure mentioned by Alexander Hamilton in his journals: there were 460 funerals in one hot season in Calcutta, out of 1,200 English in four months.

<sup>66</sup> For a comparison between the actual economic circumstances in European countries from which the various early eighteenth-century East India merchants came and those in their host countries in Asia, see Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade*, 6-7.

<sup>67</sup> For an account of the assumption of consumerism and speculative finance as strategies of subversion by an early eighteenth-century proto-feminist discourse in the novels of Eliza Haywood, see Catherine Ingrassia, *Authorship, Commerce, and Gender in Early Eighteenth-Century England: A Culture of Paper Credit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3-4. See also Ahsan H. Chowdhury, "Narratives of Improvement: Subalternity in Eliza Haywood's Novels" (master's thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2000), 5-14.

<sup>68</sup> See Brown, *Ends of Empire*, 86-88. Brown reads *The London Merchant* as a "she tragedy" that characteristically fetishizes the heroine. The commodification of woman served the purpose of scapegoating for male imperial desire and violence in the eighteenth century. Brown has more recently read *The London Merchant* as a "Fable of torrents and Ocean" that is a complex of eighteenth-century desire for modernity,

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scientific progress, empire, and domination. See Brown, *Fables of Modernity*, 12-13. For another example of a critical reading that is acutely aware of the play's complicity in Britain's imperial ambitions, see J. Douglas Canfield, "Shifting Tropes of Ideology in English Serious Drama, Late Stuart to Early Georgian," in *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth Century English Theater*, ed. J. Douglas Canfield and Deborah C. Payne (Athens: University of Georgia, 1995), 195-227. See especially 212. Canfield notes *The London Merchant's* "justification for European, specifically British, imperialism."

<sup>69</sup> See James Cruise, "Dispensing Nationhood and the Consuming Nation in *The London Merchant*," *The Age of Johnson* 10 (1999): 231-57.

<sup>70</sup> George Lillo, *The London Merchant*, in *The Dramatic Works of George Lillo*, ed. James L. Steffenson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3.1., 1-7, 178. Hereafter cited in text, and references are to act, scene, line, and page in this edition.

<sup>71</sup> See Brown, *Fables of Modernity*, 80. Brown argues that in *The London Merchant* in particular and other "fables of the ocean" in general, the solid space of the land-based dominance is superseded by the "unsolid non-space" of the ocean, which is apparently pacific and non-coercive.

<sup>72</sup> See Tejumola Olaniyan, "The Ethics and Politics of a Civilizing Mission: Some Notes on Lillo's *The London Merchant*," *English Language Notes* 29, no.4 (1992): 33-47. See especially 37. Olaniyan traces a "supernaturalist" and "transhistorical" ethics in Lillo's play which combines patriotism and nationalism with professional honesty and filial obedience. Also, see Richard E. Brown, "Rival Socio-Economic Theories in Two

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Plays by George Lillo,” *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 24 (1979): 94-110. See especially 108. Brown explores the rival Christian-mercantilist and Hobbesian theories in the play.

<sup>73</sup> Olaniyan, “Ethics and Politics of a Civilizing Mission,” 39.

<sup>74</sup> William McBurney, introduction in *The London Merchant*, by George Lillo, ed. William McBurney (Lincoln: Nebraska, 1965), xvi.

<sup>75</sup> Colin Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 133.

<sup>76</sup> For a concise stage history of the play, see A. L. Carson and H. L. Carson, *Domestic Tragedy in English: Brief Survey*, Salzburg Studies in English Literature 67 (Salzburg, Austria: Institut Für Anglistic Und Amerikanistik Universität Salzburg, 1982), 1: 127-131.

<sup>77</sup> See Arthur H. Scouten ed., *The London Stage 1729-1747* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), pt. 3, vol. 1: 231-595 and pt. 3, vol. 2: 599-678.

<sup>78</sup> See Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 141-43.

<sup>79</sup> Lincoln B. Faller, *The Popularity of Addison’s “Cato” and Lillo’s “The London Merchant,” 1700-1776* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1988), 91.

<sup>80</sup> For a brief history of the composition and performance of the masque, see James L. Steffenson, Introduction to *Britannia and Batavia* (1740), in *The Dramatic*

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*Works of George Lillo*, ed. James L. Steffenson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 457-60. See especially 459-60.

<sup>81</sup> In this respect my reading of Lillo's works is contrasted by Dominick M. Grace's reading of *The London Merchant* and *The Fatal Curiosity* as texts that reflect Lillo's problematic ties with imperialism. Grace argues that the strident approval of colonial expansion in *The London Merchant* is given a more problematized treatment by Lillo in *The Fatal Curiosity*. Lillo condemns tyranny at home and abroad and identifies the hero young Wilmot with the colonized native. The brutal murder of Wilmot at the hands of his own father, the greedy and grasping Sir Wilmot, according to Grace, is Lillo's way of demonstrating the heavy price the British society has to pay for its foreign colonial ventures. See Dominick M. Grace, "Fatal Curiosity and Fatal Colonialism," *English Studies in Canada* 28, no. 3 (2002): 385-411. See especially 400-406. Grace's reading, in spite of its usefulness in opening up Lillo's work for a postcolonial revision, fails to take into account the fact that old Wilmot is identified with Sir Walter Raleigh, the quintessentially *aristocratic* imperialist. Lillo condemns the slash-and-burn, conquer-and-convert imperialism of the Spanish variety, but he remains steadfast in his acceptance of the merchant's right to resort to righteous violence. In other words, one does not have to read *The London Merchant* as a fully-fledged imperialistic text and *Fatal Curiosity* as an anti-imperialistic statement in order to exonerate Lillo of complicity in a growing British colonial discourse. The overseas merchant's actual vulnerability to military violence abroad, inflicted on him by European rival nations as well as by native

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rulers, undercuts any supposed postcolonial obligation to conflate *The London Merchant* with colonial discourse.

<sup>82</sup> Following Thomas Davies, the prolific observer of the eighteenth-century theatre, A. L. Carson and H. L. Carson have pointed out, “It was, however, for the marriage of the Prince of Orange (later William IV) to the Princess Royal of England that Lillo wrote this celebratory piece.” See Carson and Carson, *Domestic Tragedy in English*, 188.

<sup>83</sup> George Lillo, *Britannia and Batavia* (1740), in *The Dramatic Works of George Lillo*, ed. James L. Steffenson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 1.2.31-32. Hereafter cited in text, and references are to scene, air, and line number in this edition.

<sup>84</sup> See Frank O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832* (London: Arnold, 1997), 82-84.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Merchant, *Peace and Trade, War and Taxes: or, The Irreparable Damage of Our Trade in Case of a War* (London, 1729), 5.

<sup>86</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 5-9.

<sup>87</sup> Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, 164-65.

<sup>88</sup> For an account of the incident see William B. Willcox and Walter L. Arnstein, *The Age of Aristocracy: 1688-1830*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Lexington, MA.: D. C. Heath, 1988), 109-10. According to Willcox the atrocity against Captain Jenkins took place in 1731.

<sup>89</sup> Richard Glover, *London: Or, the Progress of Commerce* (1737; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1739), 32. Hereafter cited in text, and references are to page number in this edition.

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<sup>90</sup> Glover, the argument, in *London: Or, the Progress of Commerce* (1737; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1739), 2.

<sup>91</sup> Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire*, 216.

CHAPTER FOUR  
THE FABULOUS AND NOTORIOUS NABOB IN BRITISH DRAMA, POETRY,  
AND FICTION 1757—1789

The British Nabob made his debut in popular literature in the aftermath of the 1757 Battle of Plassey. The existing literary criticism and social history which directly or tangentially deal with this colorful figure have mostly failed to point out the complex interactions between the theme of vocational transgression and the concomitant theme of the adulteration of imperial ideals in the so-called Nabob literature appearing between 1757 and 1789.<sup>1</sup> In addition, social historians tend to treat the Nabob as an exclusively British phenomenon, whereas the postcolonial critics read him as an unmistakable sign of the takeover of literary discourse by a ever-dominant British colonial discourse. As such, postcolonial criticism about the Nabob literature in particular and eighteenth-century literature about India in general frequently replicates the Western domination it set out to dismantle in the first place by applying Western critical concepts exclusively. An understanding of Indian concepts of sovereignty and hierarchy, often based on the complex interrelationships between private virtue and public display of wealth and consumption, allows the postcolonial critic to unearth collusions and collaborations between the British Nabob and the Mughal Nawab, which question the validity of treating the so-called Nabob literature as pure colonial discourse.

In the first section of this chapter, I shall read some poems specifically about the Seven Years War, which attempt to distinguish the patriotic deployment of military violence and true military heroes from the upstart and alien militarism of the Nabob. The age of the Nabob coincided with or, rather, was born out of an era of global military conflict between France and Britain and their miscellaneous allies.<sup>2</sup> The poets who celebrated the British war effort showed an awareness of the truly global scale of the Seven Years War in which both the despised Nabobs and the celebrated military heroes were participants, a fact sometimes missed by some literary critics in our time.<sup>3</sup> Among the texts I shall analyze in the first section are *War: An Heroic Poem* (1765), *The Conquest of Canada: or, the Siege of Quebeck* (1766), *The Nabob: or, Asiatic Plunderers, A Satyrical Poem* (1773), and *East India Culprits. A Poem. In Imitation of Swift's "Legion Club"* (1773). These, poems, contrary to a recent major postcolonial reading of eighteenth-century English verse, are not exclusively representative of a seamless, all pervasive, and "manifest" colonial discourse.<sup>4</sup> They are too defensive in tone and content of the British merchant's hitherto supposedly uncharacteristic foray into military action and too uncomfortably conscious of the Nabob's collaborations with the Nawab to be regarded as unalloyedly imperialistic.

In section two of the chapter, I shall demonstrate how the theme of abused and misplaced military violence and militarism figured prominently in the satiric drama of Samuel Foote, especially in *The Commissary* (1765) and *The Nabob* (1772). The theme of the abuse of professional prerogatives traced in *The Commissary* joins hands with the theme of the adulteration of imperial ideals in *The Nabob*. The latter, especially, displays a surprising understanding of the depth of the British Nabob's assimilation of Mughal

concepts of sovereignty and authority, which precludes any attempt to read the play in terms of the concurrently available debased understanding of the Mughal polity as a stereotypical Oriental despotism.

In section three I shall bring together a number of novels written by female authors in which the recurring figure of the Nabob apparently contributes to the construction of a patriotic, British domestic space presided over by the virtuous middleclass heroine. In these novels the Nabob provides a convenient moral and affective contrast to the unadulteratedly British morals and manners of the heroine, a peculiarly modern subject endowed with superior sensibility and moral interiority. Among these texts are Frances Brooke's *History of Emily Montague* (1769) and *The Excursion* (1777), Anna Maria Bennett's *Anna: or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress. Interspersed with Anecdotes of a Nabob* (1785), and Phoebe Gibbes' *Hartly House, Calcutta* (1789). However, I argue that the construction of a bourgeois female subjectivity in these novels is not as hegemonic as it is claimed to be by some twentieth and late twentieth-century feminist critics, because the figure of the Nabob allows us to explore the presence of radically different, non-Western concepts of marriage, sexuality, and gender behavior, which were prevalent in the Mughal Empire at the time, and which evidently escape the reconstructive surveillance of the British heroine.

In section four I shall read Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) and Robert Bage's *Mount Henneth* (1782) with a view to demonstrating how a sentimental self-identification with the suffering Other allowed some Eighteenth-century novels not only to break out of a hegemonic construction of India as the always-conquered-and-conquerable colonial space but also to celebrate the plurality of mores and manners of the

Mughal Empire as a critical contrast to the homogenizing tendencies of an emergent British nation-state.

## I

### The Nabob in an Age of Global Militarism

Popular verse about war and British military exploits which appeared during the Seven Years War (1756-1763) is generally characterized by a shrill patriotism bordering frequently on jingoism. These poems, often ambitious epics and odes, celebrate the forging of a British identity in the crucible of righteous war against the French tyrant and her global ambitions. In addition, they celebrate military and naval heroes like Major General James Wolfe and Admirals George Anson, Edward Boscawen, and Edward Hawke, whose names were becoming household charms through their reiteration in newspapers and dispatches. The earliest poetic responses to the British public's thirst to celebrate a distinctly British brand of heroism often conflated British conquests in India with the global sweep of the Seven Years War. As a result, the military exploits of the East India Company functionaries, who were frequently merchants turned military men, were painted over with the same exuberant patriotism usually reserved for heroes like James Wolfe, who fought the same enemy in Canada and elsewhere. In other words, the patriotic fervor in such poems produced during the Seven Years War frequently elided the unpalatable fact (for some contemporary British authors) that the Nabobs were not only fighting the French in India but were also engaged in activities subversive of their original mercantile vocation and their claim to a British identity by imbibing the Mughal

mores and manners. Among such texts are George Cockings' *War. An Heroic Poem* (1765) and *The Conquest of Canada: or, The Siege of Quebeck* (1766). It was too early and, at any rate, the patriotic fervor aroused by the Seven Years War was still too overwhelming for poets like Cockings to distinguish between the peculiarly British military valor displayed by a Wolfe and the putatively rapacious Oriental militarism of the British Nabobs. By contrast, poems which appeared a decade or more after the Battle of Plassey resort to a polemical insistence on this very distinction. Among such poems most prominent are the *East India Culprits* (1773) and *The Nabob: or, Asiatic Plunderers* (1773). However, even as these poems insist on such a distinction, they also betray an awareness of the subversive depth of the Nabob's understanding and acceptance of Mughal customs.

Consequently, my reading of these poems about the British involvement in Global warfare and overseas expansion during the eighteenth century differs from those offered by Suvir Kaul and Laura Brown. Laura Brown has read the literature of the period between 1660 and 1731 in terms of what she calls "fables of oceans and torrents," a cultural obsession with trade and expansion by sea that characterizes a long range of English literature from Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis* to Lillo's *The London Merchant*. Brown's use of the notion of the "fable," despite its highly nuanced application, is hampered by the vision of a progressively and unremittingly powerful metropolitan Britain that projects its authority on the non-European world and thus fails to account for the complex intersections of domestic ideological issues and non-Western agency.<sup>5</sup> Kaul's work is similar but more sweeping in scope in that he detects a "manifest" will to conquest and dominance in eighteenth-century British verse about nationhood and

overseas expansion, as opposed to a “latent” one in the British novel from the same era. Consequently, Kaul detects a fully-fledged imperial ambition, anticipating the one prevalent in the nineteenth century, in eighteenth-century poetry about nation building. Kaul asserts, “For readers today, these poems can also offer evidence from the eighteenth century for so many of the rhetorical and psychological features that came to define nineteenth-century British Imperialism, and indeed imperialism itself: the development of codes of hyper masculinity; of the image of modern man as the servant of the expanding nation, working at the behest of the state; the insistence on racial, cultural, and religious hierarchy; the development of philosophical and historical justification for inhumanity.”<sup>6</sup> By contrast, I propose to problematize any such attempt to read an unqualified British will to dominate into the poetry engendered by the Seven Years War, because, as I shall demonstrate next, any such will to imperial dominance is always already qualified by domestic concerns such as the putative threat against the East India merchant’s peaceful vocation created by his own newly acquired militarism in Mughal India. In addition, some of these poems display too acute an awareness of the depth of the British Nabob’s assimilation of Mughal customs and manners to be unqualified celebrations of imperialism.

George Cockings’ *War. An Heroic Poem. From the Taking of Minorca by the French, to the Reduction of Manilla* went through four editions by 1765. It was first published in 1760. The title itself attests to the awareness on the poet’s part of the global sweep of the ongoing conflict between France and Britain. In addition, the poet’s comments in the “Preface” to the fourth edition also reflects the contagious patriotism that swept the nation during the momentous last few years of the 1750’s: “But in the great

and ever memorable year of fifty-nine, so repeated., and rapid, were our conquests, both by sea, and land, in Europe, Africa, and America; so often came news of our success from every part, (like gunpowder, when touched by the match,) my fancy took fire.”<sup>7</sup> The resultant poem is *War. An Heroic Poem*. The poet goes on to point out that the poem was not born out of party-spiritedness. Rather, it is a celebration of the united efforts of the British people—from the King to the lowliest tar, from the great generals to the common soldier—that brought about a series of spectacular victories against the expansionist ambitions of the French. It is indeed a poem for “all those, who draw the sword in Britannia’s quarrel, whether Englishmen, Caledonian, or Hibernian, who carry their patriot [sic] schemes, (dreadfully,) into a wasting execution [of British vengeance].” Cockings goes on to add “All such as these, demand duty, allegiance, and a generous acknowledgement of every heart, sensibly touch’d with a due sense of their Kingly care” (vii-viii).

The global sweep of the British war effort and the inclusiveness of the definition of heroic militarism are also apparent in the Preface. The poet writes: “I thought [therefore] proper to throw in together, the attacks, and reductions of Guadaloup [sic], Senegal, Granada, St. Martin’s, Marigalante, Surat, Chandernagore, Calcutta, and the Nabob twice defeated.” All these glorious exploits have been carried out under the command of such British heroes as “Watson, Pocock, Moore, Clive, Coote, Draper, Marsh, Keppel, Mason, Barrington, Sayer, &c. &c. &c,” not to mention the real stars like General James Wolfe, the conqueror of Quebec (x). When considered in the context of the global struggle against French expansionist ambitions, Clive, the soon-to-be vilified British Nabob, also becomes a hero. Whether deliberately or not, ignoring Clive’s

unsavory flirtation with Mughal militarism, which took place to the detriment of a pacific, mercantile calling, allows Cockings to the construct a patriotic and homogeneous British identity through righteous warfare.<sup>8</sup>

The invocation attests to the projected global span of Cockings' muse: "I trace grim death, and our triumphant bands, / Through Indian, African, and Gallic lands."<sup>9</sup> The epic poet goes on to claim that the armed struggle spanning the globe has allowed the three nations united under the British umbrella to forge a stronger bond of blood and courage. The whole world is the theater of war "Where Englishmen, at martial glory's call / Where Caledonians, with a warlike flame / Hibernians brave, with emulating glow" are fighting shoulder to shoulder (2). The poet takes this opportunity to celebrate the union that is Great Britain: "Fame, honour, liberty, each bosom warms; / In Union dreadful! great in Feats of arms!" (2). The success of British arms derives ultimately from the successful union of the three nations: "Where English, Scotch, and bold Hibernians storm, / (A formidable, triple union form!)" (8). The list of heroes to be sung is also equally generous and inclusive: "Boscawen, Amherst, Hawke, (our bulwark strong,) / Clive, Monckton, Saunders, grace the martial song" (3). Never mind that Clive is soon to be condemned as the archetypal Nabob, a plundering militarist of an Oriental ilk. The patriotic fervor of the moment demands that he also be included in the mass celebration of successful militarism. Accordingly, Clive is singled out for praise, although he is given only a few lines compared to the epic proportions of the praise lavished on Wolfe and Amherst: "Calcutta trembled whilst Clive's thunders roar"/ Clive! By whose might Chandernagore was raz'd." The footnote pertaining to Clive in this line points out, "The people in that country gave him a name, which in their language signifies, The never to

be conquer'd" (26).<sup>10</sup> It is ironic that the poet does not realize the disturbing implications of the conferred title. As far as he is concerned, it is literally and unambiguously an affirmation of Clive's valor. It is all the more so, because it comes from the natives themselves.

But influential British authors and politicians like Edmund Burke were soon to contend that such imperial honors bestowed on British subjects by the Mughals were a disturbing sign that they (Company officials like Clive) had imbibed an alien military culture. In *An Enquiry into the Policy of Making Conquests for the Mahometans in India, by the British Arms* (1779), a tract he co-authored with his cousin William Burke, a virtuous Returnee from India, Edmund Burke wrote: "They [Company officials in India] never inquired into them [the true motives of the Nawab's military ventures]; they took the whole on the nabob's bare narration, and they executed his orders as if they had been a Moorish Divan [viceroy], . . . and [not] of the English nation."<sup>11</sup> Although, Burke is alluding to Warren Hastings's policy of aiding Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan of Karnatak in his quarrels with neighboring princes, such military alliances between the reigning Nawab and the Company army were also very common in Bengal. As a matter of fact, the title of "Jubdat-ul-Mulk Nasser-ud-Daulah" (literally "the flower of the kingdom, the defender of the realm") was conferred on the victorious British colonel by the new Nawab Mir Jaffar Ali Khan, who replaced Siraj-ud-Daulah on the Nawabi throne of Bengal with British military assistance.<sup>12</sup> The newly installed Nawab lavished the victorious Clive with titles and gifts in the belief that the English military prodigy could be assimilated into the Mughal military system heavily based on the exchange of honors, favors, and symbolic gifts. In a letter written by Mir Jafar on the eve of Clive's

triumphant return to England in 1760, the Nawab addressed Clive as “The light of my eyes, dearer yn my life, the Nabob Zobdot ool Mulk . . . Sabut Jang Bahadr [sic].”<sup>13</sup>

According to Abdul Majed Khan, “The wording of the Nawab’s letter also serves as a reminder that to Mir Jafar and his contemporary Indians (except perhaps a few merchants of Calcutta, Madras or Bombay) Clive was no Englishman as we might understand the term, but Nawab Sabut Jang Bahadur. Clive had been inducted into the Mughal system under this title by the Nawab of Arcot, as the Armenian Khojah Gregory had been transformed into Gurghin Khan by the Nawab of Bengal.”<sup>14</sup>

Being either oblivious or deliberately resistant not only to the negative implications of native titles and gifts (for the construction of a seamless British national identity) but also to the radically different meanings the same honors held for the Mughals, Cockings can go on to heap more unqualified praise on Clive for his military actions against the deposed Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah: “Before whom twice the Nabob fled amaz’d” and also “Clive who made Nabob’s! Nabobs could depose!” (26). The allusion is to Clive’s decisive intervention in the native political system through which he became a king maker. But what the poet as yet does not realize (nor does he find it necessary to) is that Clive himself not only became a Nabob in the eyes of a substantial number of the British people, who condemned him and the likes of him for making fortunes out of war booty and bribes thinly disguised as gifts, but he also became a honorary Mughal warrior to many Indians.

The Patriotic fervor, however, which temporarily glossed over the distinctions between an unmistakably British military heroism and a supposedly un-British, anti-Christian, and Oriental brand of militarism, did not go unchallenged. In poems such as

*East India Culprits* and *The Nabob: or, Asiatic Plunderers* one comes across strident condemnations of the alien militarism of the Nabob. In both poems, the putatively Oriental slash-and-burn militarism of the Mughals infects the British Nabobs in India, which leads them to oppress the natives and amass huge fortunes. In addition, both poems condemn the breach of vocational integrity among the British merchants in India, who do not hesitate to resort to opportunistic militarism in order to satisfy their hunger for power and wealth. However, before one engages in a close reading of condemnatory and satiric poems about the Nabob, one needs to acknowledge that there were also other kinds of literary responses to the Nabob phenomenon, which ranged from the unqualifiedly adulatory to the argumentatively defensive.

As a matter of fact, contrary to the popular misconception that the Battle of Plassey was the making of Robert Clive as the merchant warrior, he had been engaged in a long military career in the course of which he led the English not only against the native Nawabs but also against the powerful French presence in India. In later discourse surrounding Nabobs like Clive and Hastings the emphasis is on their corruption and violation of privileges while in power. However, what is often overlooked is the parallel discourse of praise and appreciation strongly laced with patriotism that initially greeted these remarkable men.

Clive landed in Portsmouth on July 9, 1760, and got a hero's welcome. Clive's victory became well known even before his homecoming. In a letter to his son written on June 13 1758, Lord Chesterfield remarked, "Captain Clive has long since settled Asia to our satisfaction, so that three parts of the world look favourable to us."<sup>15</sup> Upon Clive's arrival *The Gentleman's Magazine* published a poem apparently designed to celebrate his

victory. The poet hails Clive as a new “Cortez.” According to the anonymous poet, Clive “look’d superior down” “on loftiest Nabob” and “made fierce Mogul with conscious fear startle.”<sup>16</sup> However, the poem begins with a couple of epic similes which seem to undercut the apparent sincerity of the encomium: “Great, as from Porus’s conquest, Phillip’s son, / Glorious as Cortez from new Indies won” (103).

Poets who directly indicted the British Nabobs for their alien militarism frequently employed similar comparisons. The root-and-branch imperialism of the formerly dominant Spanish Empire could be easily transferred to the Mughal-esque militarism of the East India Company stalwarts like Clive. In addition, the allusion to Clive as a “second Nadir” (103) contradicts the apparently unabashed praise at the end of the poem to the effect that Clive deserves “an unenvied fortune, and unspotted fame” (104). The allusion is to the Persian Emperor Nadir Shah who invaded the Mughal Empire in 1738-39 and plundered the imperial capital, an event which some contemporary as well as twentieth-century historians of the Mughal Empire contend drove another nail into the coffin being prepared for the beleaguered Empire by historical forces.<sup>17</sup> Such glaring contradictions within the poem’s rhetorical fabric could lead one to conclude that either it is a hack production which falls apart at the seams, or it is a deliberately ironic piece aimed against the homecoming “hero.”

However, there was no dearth of poems unabashedly adulatory of such Nabobs as Hastings and Clive. For instance, the *County Magazine* in its April 1787 issue published a Horatian ode entitled “To Warren Hastings, Esq.” by one W. J. Egham. The poet begins by applauding Warren Hastings’ articulate self-defense against the accusations hurled at him by Edmund Burke and his cohorts: “Oh! Injur’d Hastings! brave and just! / True to

Your King and country's trust, / Despite these machinations; / Firm in yourself superior stand / To persecutions armed band."<sup>18</sup> The poet goes on to exhort Hastings to remind himself that great British heroes before him had suffered similar fates: "Thus Marlborough for realms o'er-run, / Thus Clive for laurel nobly won, / Were by their country treated; / Who now exalted to the skies, / Ungrateful Britain's sons despise" (242).

The ode written by Joseph Champion, entitled *Envy. A Poem to General Smith* (1776) is intended to refute the most common accusations leveled against the Nabobs that their fortunes are acquired under suspicious circumstances and their manners are alien and luxurious. The poet dedicates his work in no uncertain terms: "In defence of many gentlemen who have made ample fortunes in India, I will venture to assert that they have not deviated from the strictest Honour and Humanity."<sup>19</sup> After the elaborate invocation to the allegorical figures of Envy, Glory, and Fame, the poet rhetorically asks those who only see the fortunes made by Nabobs but conveniently ignore the life-sapping climate in which they toil to earn their bread and frequently perish in the effort: "When did compassion weep with gen'rous eye, / For those who fall beneath yon burning sky."<sup>20</sup> Those much vilified fortunes supposedly made by Nabobs are rare and are usually well deserved. The poet provides a representative example of how one such fortune was made. Once a "gen'rous Indian Prince" heard how a brave "British soldier dy'd, / On well-fought plains," apparently fighting for the Nawab's cause. According to the poet, "The gallant Nabob "sigh'd" and gave "enough to dry the widows tears, / And chase pale want forever from her fears" (10). Although the story of the sentimental Indian prince is obviously rather quaint and fanciful, it does contain an embedded truth: the collaborative

as well as oppositional military associations between native Nawabs and the East India Company Army.

Champion goes on to defend the adoption of luxurious native manners by the Nabobs. They are frequently forced by pragmatic considerations to accept the “pomp that sustains an empire in the East” because “To divest, / A long prevailing habit from the breast—/ No easy task—if rooted in the mind—/ Imbib’d from customs, and with pleasure join’d.” In addition, most of the fortunes made by Nabobs in India are, thus, the natural outcome of living in a land whose rulers are “Profuse of wealth, and gen’rous to excess” (11). In a rare display of critical and moral lucidity, the poet concedes that the ground reality in the Mughal Empire required the Nabobs to accept the Mughal custom of public display of wealth and gift-giving as a means to establish political legitimacy. However, he soon humbly concedes the superiority of conventional British morality by conceding that there are renegades who are an exception that prove the rule rather than overturning it: “True, there were some in guilty vices bold, / Who trod the paths of cruelty for gold” (12). The poem concludes with a barely veiled allusion to Samuel Foote and his satiric comedy *The Nabob* (1771): “By nature form’d with every comic art, / With ribald wit, and mirth inspiring heart, / With mimicry’s curst pow’rs, / Foote leads the van, / Nor censures vice, yet dare expose the man” (14).

Such panegyrics or defenses of the Nabob coexisted with unmitigated satiric attacks, ranging from mild to vituperative. A brief satiric epitaph on Colonel Clive’s death in verse entitled “On the Death of Lord Clive” is representative of the shockingly low regard in which Clive was held by some. The poem takes a drastically derogatory view of the recently deceased Nabob’s prospects for postmortem fame: “Life’s a surface

slippery, glassy, / Whereon tumbled Clive of Plassey.”<sup>21</sup> The doggerel rhyme achieves the desired effect of extreme irreverence for the recently demised arch-Nabob Robert Clive. Fortunately (for the Nabob turning in his grave), there were poets who took a more nuanced approach in their condemnation of alien militarism of the British merchant abroad.

One such poet was Richard Clarke. In the “Preface” to his poem *The Nabob: or, Asiatic Plunderers*, Clarke condemns such vocational transgressions and darkly hints at a powerful man who set an example for lesser East India Company functionaries to follow: “The services of one Man have proved like Ajax’s shield in Homer, a refuge for those who have done great disservice, and have stained the very name and annals of our Country with Crimes scarce inferior to . . . conquerors of Mexico and Peru.”<sup>22</sup> The allusion applies to both Robert Clive and Warren Hastings, because both were preeminent Nabobs in terms of the conquests they made and the wealth they amassed out of those military ventures. The others “shielded” by their example are the lesser Nabobs, who emulated the examples set by their superiors. The comparison with the conquistadores certainly emphasized the alien un-British militarism of these Nabobs as contrasted by the justifiable military actions carried out by true British heroes like James Wolfe.

Clarke resorts to irony in order to castigate the British Nabobs. He slowly builds up the ironic indictment in the form of a dialogue between the poet and a cynical, worldly friend. The man of the world questions the poet’s naïve faith in the essential goodness of human nature and laughs at his conviction that his poetical utterance can awaken the feeling hearts of the supposedly good natured but morally complacent Britons against the

misdeeds of the Nabobs in India. The friend finds the poet's vicarious suffering for Indian natives to be a ridiculous indulgence in unmanly and futile overflow of feelings: "Nor could the sufferers find the least relief / Dids't thou embosom all their stores of grief."<sup>23</sup> The poet strongly believes that it is possible to reawaken the finer feelings in all human hearts, which are frequently encrusted over by overwhelming pride.

Taking a un-Shaftsbury-like route the Poet insists that these finer feelings are stamped in the human soul by the Christian God, which have been stifled by pride. A large dose of Christian humility and surrender to God's will instead of the vile skepticism of a Hume is needed by Britons to come to terms with the depredations caused by the Nabobs. *The Asiatic Plunderers* thus belongs to a large number of texts from this period which rely on a copious display of empathy for the suffering humanity whether it is an Indian native being oppressed by a Nabob, or a chimney sweep, or an African slave being treated inhumanly by their masters. The poet celebrates this orgy of empathy streaming out toward the oppressed and the exploited all over the world: "I can feel, all o'er, / Feel for the widow, orphan, stranger, Poor" (4).

How could the universal tide of empathy that vibrates through all kindred human souls be not felt by all Britons, who are after all the scions of liberty and freedom, asks the poet rhetorically. If there are a few who do not feel it, they are certainly monsters and prodigies, exceptions that prove the rule: "Monsters there may be, but yet rare to find." The poet goes on to identify these monsters as the Nabobs in India plundering the meek heathen: "Who by vile practice lose the feeling mind, / Who with judicial hardness sear'd in guilt / Can't sigh for crimes, or blood of Pagan's spilt / Who rob the Indian and not call it theft." After identifying the monstrosities who are impervious to human feelings,

Clarke goes on to serve another generous helping of irony: “The crime in such (if crime it be) is light, / Christian against Pagan heretics claim right / By war to plunder, or by famine kill, / Wretches like those, were only born for ill.” The monstrous race of Nabobs had always been thankfully very insignificant in numbers and, in addition, “I grant few such, perhaps, are now alive / How different they from generous Sykes or Clive!”(30) The remaining few are mere shadows of real Nabobs like Clive, whose “generosity” in doling out misery and distress to the natives became the matter of popular folklore in Britain.

The surprisingly sympathetic view of the natives’ suffering at the hands of the Nabobs is undercut by the poem’s ending. The poet’s friend sarcastically remarks that he is laboring in vain to seek moral rectification of “a Country [which] is willing to be slaves” (37). The country in questions is Britain whose subjects have imbibed the slavish habits of Indian natives. Stung and indignant the poet counters, “All are not slaves; nor had curs’d thirst of gold / Our liberty, our lives, our children sold: / In Asia’s realm let slavery be bound, / Let not her foot defile this sacred ground.” While it is commendable to feel the pain of the Indian natives, one must resolutely hold on to a British identity uncontaminated by typical Asiatic submission to tyranny and oppression. The Nabobs are the ones who threaten Britain with the contagion of the alien habits they have imbibed from the natives they associate with and oppress. The poem concludes by resoundingly reaffirming Britain as the seat of liberty and freedom and proper martial valor: “Where Freedom, Science, Valour fix’d their Seat, / And taught all Nations how they should be great.” The strident note of patriotism is unabashed in spite of the poet’s confession that at least temporarily those British values are threatened by Nabobs: “Now [some quarters

of British nation are] sunk in vice, indignant thought I own! / A hireling group in this realm, is grown / High Lords o'er millions whose worn hands supply/ Their pride, their pomp, and feast of luxury" (38).

The poet concludes the poem with the parable of the dying father and the ambitious son, who wishes to go to India: "Where grow gems and gold / in Asia's clime." The poor father admonishes his son: "Wealth is necessary but Gain that importance, if thou can'st, with Fame / If not it must be gained thro loss of name" (40). The moral appears to be that wealth in itself is not the source of evil. Evil is to be found in the illegitimate means employed to amass it. Consequently, when the poet apostrophizes: "Low-thoughted commerce! Heart corrupting trade," he is not so much condemning commerce and trade in general as he is condemning the dubious commercial practices of the East India Nabobs, who cross over into forbidden militarism with such facility (41).

The anonymous poet of *East India Culprits: a Poem in Imitation of Swift's "Legion Club"* (1773) condemns the vocational transgressions of the British Nabobs with trenchant irony: "What that commerce was thy mother, / Will it depredation smother / When, like an ungrateful varlet, / You thus treat her like a harlot."<sup>24</sup> The indignation sounds all the more compelling when one takes into account that the poem, according to the title page, is "By an Officer, who was present at the Battle of Plassey." It allows the reader to appreciate the poem not only as a competent piece of satire but also as the voice of a conscientious objector. The speaker in the poem is inspired and guided by the Muse of satire to visit the Leaden Hall Street, the seat of the East India Company Board of Directors, at the dead of night. He is "entertained" with a tableau of variously posed British Nabobs, whose names are thinly veiled with convenient dashes. Among these

illustrious personages are, “Deluded man! Ambitious P\_\_\_\_g,” and “I—p—y, S—th, or H—ges” (7). The Nabobs keep a band of hack writers in their pay, who “yelp, at honour, justice, truth” (9).

However, the most excoriating satire is reserved for Clive. He appears as a grotesque, caricatured statuary, almost a gargoyle, frozen in a grimace: “Near yon spiral pillar plac’d, / By his vulgar visage trac’d, / Where rage and avr’ce jointly strove, / Sit the Nabob plund’ring C—e” (10). The last line is wonderfully balanced between two possible readings, both devastating in their satiric effect: Clive is both the Nabob who plunders the natives and also the British-merchant-turned Nabob, who plunders the native Nawabs when he is not fighting their campaigns for them. The poet is indignant at the undeserved honors that have been heaped on the renegade Clive by “gracious G—,” almost certainly an allusion to the King, “for all his [Clive’s] pains / In knocking out poor Indians [sic] brains” (11). The poet is most repelled by the figure of Clive and prays to the Muse of Satire not to allow the grotesque apparition to come any closer: “Prythee, satire, keep him further, / Still his ranc’rous looks breathe murder; / Sure with such a scowling yawn, / ‘Twas he butcher’d *Alli Cawn*” (11). “Alli Cawn” is a heavily distorted and anglicized version of “Ali Khan,” an unspecified native Nawab’s name. Perhaps the poet deliberately wished to employ it in such a manner in order to make a general indictment of Clive’s role as a king-maker as well as deposer of Nawabs. As a matter of fact, Clive directly or indirectly determined the fates of three Nawabs of Bengal: Siraj-ud-Daulah, Mir Jafar Ali Khan, and Mir Kasim Ali Khan, respectively. The first was defeated at the Battle of Plassey and was later assassinated under mysterious circumstances in prison. The second was placed on the throne by Clive in exchange for

his magnanimous “gifts” to himself and lucrative trade concessions to the Company, and the third in the line of succession (now determined by the British) was defeated in the 1764 Battle of Buxar and later disappeared inexplicably and, according to some reports, died as a pauper.<sup>25</sup>

## II

### Commissaries and Nabobs: the Satiric Comedy of Samuel Foote

Samuel Foote, the prominent wit, playwright, manager, and comic actor of the era of the Nabobs, wrote and produced several plays in which military characters play significant roles. Among such texts are *The Commissary* and *The Nabob*. In this section I shall read these two plays in terms of Foote’s satiric treatment of the abuse of military valor in general and the abuse of the British military infrastructure in particular during a national emergency like the Seven Years War. I argue that the trenchant satire deployed by Foote in *The Commissary* to ridicule the abuses rampant in the military profession during the Seven Years War is strategically exploited in *The Nabob* to expose that monstrous hybrid born of professional miscegenation: the Nabob or the East India merchant turned warrior. However, the condemnation of his vocational transgressions in the play fails to contain the often close cultural and political collaborations between the Nabob and the Nawab.

Foote’s comedy is usually appreciated in the context of his contribution to the “laughing comedy” introduced by giants like Goldsmith and Sheridan in an age when the sentimental was still supposedly a powerful reactionary force on the stage.<sup>26</sup> More

specifically, such plays by Foote as *The Commissary* and *The Nabob* have been read as social satire against “war profiteers,” which “is applicable to any dull-witted *nouveau riche*.”<sup>27</sup> I insist upon refining such generalized critical reception of Foote’s work as social commentary on the evils of upstart wealth by scrutinizing Foote’s persistent interest in the discrepancies between the vaunted ideals of such important professionals as the soldier and East India merchant and their actual conduct. Evidently, Foote was acutely aware of the moral pitfalls of the ease with which some people were apparently crossing over from one profession to the other.

In recent years, *The Nabob* in particular has been fruitfully exposed to postcolonial criticism. Such critiques sometimes read the play as a rather unproblematic instance of the expansionism of British imperialism in the eighteenth century or apply a more nuanced analysis to unravel the text as a part of the cultural space in which the British “woman of empire” carve out a space for themselves through their clash with and eventual victory over the alien manners of the Nabob.<sup>28</sup> However, such readings, as I shall demonstrate in the ensuing discussion, are inadequate on at least two counts. First, they tend to treat the term “Nabob” as an ahistorical, indeed, transhistorical category indicative of the unquestioned dominance of British imperial discourse throughout the eighteenth century. Second, these readings tend to overlook the treatment in *The Nabob* of the theme of undesirable vocational transgressions against the backdrop of the global Seven Years War.

It is not the military connection alone that led to negative representations of the Nabob in Foote’s play. The mid-eighteenth century was a time of large-scale military conflicts between Great Britain and France, and more conflict was in store for Britannia

in the near future in the North American colonies. It was a time when jolly old tars and redcoats were frequently portrayed positively. Being an officer on half pay could actually make a character on the stage or in a novel more attractive. Major O'Flaherty in Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian* (1771) was by far the most popular character in the play. Reviewers had few kind words for young Bellcour, the hero returned from the West Indies with a huge fortune. In the January 1771 issue of *The Critical Review*, the anonymous reviewer of Cumberland's play dismisses the attempt to portray the West Indian hero sympathetically: "Had we undertaken to draw the portrait, we should not have paid so great a compliment to the West Indies, a place by no means famous for giving birth to extraordinary abilities or uncommon virtue." In this particular context, the reviewer is questioning the propriety of the positive manner in which Cumberland has chosen to represent the West Indian returnee, supposedly in violation of the material reality. But when the reviewer goes on to heap praises on Major Dennis O'Flaherty "who for this past month has filled the theatre with repeated convulsions of laughter," he is probably alluding to the actor who played the role.<sup>29</sup> Although the actor's personal skills certainly influenced the reviewer's response, in this particular instance the recuperation of the traditionally reviled Irish takes place at the expense of constructing the West Indian planter as a morally irretrievable type. Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775) has the accomplished and witty captain Jack Absolute disguising himself as a poor ensign on half pay because the heroine would not fall for him otherwise. The Nabob, however, is a military man of a totally different ilk. He has repudiated his original calling of a merchant and transformed himself into an Oriental military figure, lacking the self discipline and love of liberty of the British military man.

In *The Commissary* Foote sets out to expose Zachary Fungus, the upstart man of wealth, who apparently amassed his fortune by abusing his position as a commissary in the army during wartime. His name is wonderfully descriptive of his ambiguous identity: an upstart growth of uncertain origin. As such, Zachary Fungus belongs to the august company of upstart fictional Nabobs like Sir Mushroom in Henry Mackenzie's periodical *The Lounger*.<sup>30</sup> Both characters share names suggestive of unhealthy, even poisonous vegetative growth, which unerringly identify them as social upstarts bent on subverting the established hierarchy. Fungus' peacetime occupation is not quite clearly identified in the play. However, it is certain that he belonged to the lower middleclass as evinced by his uncouth and boorish tallow-chandler of a brother Issac [sic] Fungus. Zach Fungus identifies himself as being a member of the mercantile class in his absurdly pompous and malapropish rhetorical wooing of Dolly Mechlin: "Madam, or May it please your ladyship when I preponderate the grander [sic] of your high ginnyalogy [sic], and the mercantyle [sic] meanness of my dingy descent."<sup>31</sup> Fungus' true station in life could very well have been a lot humbler than he claims, if we take Mrs. Mechlin's words for it: "This Mr. Fungus . . . went there [to the Seven Years War] from very little better than a driver of carts" (1.13). Whatever Fungus' true origins are, his absurd pretensions to quality are exposed as the effect of a disturbingly fluid socio-economic condition which had apparently softened up the existing boundaries between the professions and classes. Of Mr. Gruel the rhetorician, who is engaged to teach him elocution, Fungus admiringly states, "Why, he [Gruel] can make me speak in any manner he pleases; as a lawyer, a merchant, a country gentleman; whatever the subject requires" (2.36). Although Fungus' rhetorical skills are virtually nonexistent even after all the expensive lessons, the flimsy

tissue of rhetoric is designed to highlight a disturbing situation: the apparent ease with which professional integrity is being penetrated by time-serving opportunists like Fungus. At various stages Fungus is identified as a monstrous offspring of vocational miscegenation. One moment he apostrophizes commerce as a goddess as if he had been a dedicated merchant before he joined the army: "Hail commerce! Daughter of Industry. Comfort to credit; parent of opulence, full sister to liberty, and great grandmother to the art of navigation" (2. 38). On another occasion, he boasts of his imperturbability to violence acquired in a military career: "These bourgeois are so frightful," the "bourgeois" in question being his brother Issac Fungus, who is afraid to touch a foil offered him by his brother to join him in a mock duel (2. 29).

The unsettlingly fluid nature of professional and class identity in a war-time society is tellingly exposed through the machinations of Mrs. Mechlin, the lady at whose house Commissary Fungus rents rooms. The play begins with two servants in Mrs. Mechlin's establishment engaging in a witty repartee behind their mistress's back, the theme of which is the nature of Mrs. Mechlin's profession: "I don't suppose, in the whole Bills of Mortality, there is a so general and extensive a dealer as my friend Mrs. Mechlin." Jenny, the witty servant of a wily mistress adds, "Why, to be sure, we have plenty of customers; and for various kinds of commodities" (1. 2). Mrs. Mechlin does indeed cater to a wide range of clients: from a jaded rich old widow like Mrs. Loveit, who wishes to marry a needy young gentleman, to Zachary Fungus, who wishes to marry into quality. The fluid use of such terms as "trade" and "commodity" to allude to Mrs. Mechlin's role as a bawd and a marriage broker serves to expose the widespread lack of professional integrity plaguing this society in which attorneys like Mr. Harpy work in

tandem with the likes of Mrs. Mechlin to lure young, ambitious but temporarily improvident young gentlemen like Mr. Loveit. Fungus may be a pompous windbag, but his enormous fortune does make him a real threat to social hierarchy. Although in the play's imaginary space his nefarious ambitions are foiled by the wily Mrs. Mechlin, real-life Funguses did manage to bribe their way into the parliament. According to Mrs. Mechlin, "You must know his [Fungus'] first ambition is to have a seat in a certain assembly" (1. 14).

Mrs. Mechlin is given a significant role in the play. She is a latter-day female reincarnation of Ben Jonson's Volpone by virtue of her devotion to her "trade" for its own sake rather than the monetary reward it sometimes brings in the end. Although her plot to marry Fungus to her own niece Dolly disguised as a Scottish heiress is exposed, she defiantly insists: "And why so, my good master Fungus [should I be damned]; is it because I have practis'd that trade by retail which you have carry'd on in the gross?" By comparing herself as a small scale retail trader with Fungus as a large-scale "merchant," Mrs. Mechlin scathingly reminds the audience of widespread occurrence of vocational transgression in British society. She goes on to employ a mixed metaphor, a substantial part of which consists of the abuse of military violence: "What injustice do I do the world? I feed on their follies, 'tis true; and the game, the plunder, is fair; but the fangs of you, and your tribe, / A whole people have felt; and the ages will feel" (3. 67). Both the bawd and the commissary are connected by their voracious appetite to feed on their victims and to plunder them. At least, Mrs. Mechlin can claim that her victims are far from innocent: a rapacious commissary and a rich widow puffed up with vanity. The national scale of the commissary's crime should be sufficient to point out that his is the

greater evil. He has plundered the British people in order to amass his wealth. The allusion is to the abuse of the commissary's professed responsibility to provide the army with vital supplies. Having abused his position at a time when the nation is threatened by a formidable foreign enemy, Fungus has indeed victimized the entire nation. The national dimensions of the commissary's crime certainly ally him with the British Nabob who was frequently accused of plundering entire nations (the Indians in his case). Mrs. Mechlin actually compares the commissary with the Nabobs in terms of the size of his fortune as well as its questionable origins: "I say, you know the great Commissar [sic], that is come to lodge in my house. Now they say this Mr. Fungus is as rich as an Indian governor; heaven knows how he came by it" (1. 8). The use of the term "Indian governor" is suggestively ambiguous in this particular context. It could be alluding to either the British Nabobs, some of whom rose to be East India Company governors in India, or the Nawabs. Consequently, the commissary is being simultaneously associated with the questionable wealth and militarism of the British Nabob and with the despotism of the Mughal Nawab.

It is in terms of this kind of disturbing vocational ambiguity that we need to reexamine the so-called Nabob literature of this period, of which Samuel Foote's *The Nabob* is the one most frequently analyzed or alluded to by literary critics. Most commentators and critics agree that Sir Matthew Mite, the Nabob in Foote's play is so disturbing because he indiscriminately throws his financial weight around to disrupt the traditional rhythms and hierarchies of the British society. The son of obscure parents and packed off to the East Indies for showing early signs of delinquency, Sir Matthew Mite is a grotesque combination of class as well as racial aberration. However, he is only that, an

aberration, and as such helps to reaffirm the existing social order. According to Nandini Bhattacharya, “With his inherent disregard for law and propriety and the rules of civil society, Mite has therefore been a socially destabilizing force from the onset, rather than essentially altering the status quo, is merely validating existing class divisions.”<sup>32</sup> Mite’s obnoxious behavior certainly calls attention to a need to return to honorable and well defined traditional economic activities, as Thomas Oldham, the honest British merchant in the play, explains: “Your [Mite’s] riches (which perhaps too are only ideal) by introducing a general Spirit of dissipation, have extinguished labour and industry, the slow, but sure source of national wealth.”<sup>33</sup> In a society that cherishes clearly defined identities in terms of gender, race, class as well as professions, where do the likes of Mite fit in, if at all? Bhattacharya is alive to the fuzziness of the vocational categories Mite could occupy in the play. She borrows the title of Richard Clarke’s poem published in 1773 to describe Mite as an “Asiatic Plunderer,” and, further along, as representing harmful speculative economic behavior in society.<sup>34</sup>

But there is an overabundance of clues in the play which helps one to establish that Mite is being represented as the merchant turned warrior, that new-fangled hybrid minority who came into existence in the aftermath of the Battle of Plassey. Lady Oldham describes Sir Matthew Mite’s spectacular entrance into the hitherto peaceful and genteel rural neighborhood, “At this crisis, preceded by all the pomp of Asia, Sir Matthew Mite, from the Indies, came thundering amongst us; and, profusely scattering the spoils of ruined provinces, corrupted the virtue and alienated the affections of all the old friends to the family” (1. 3-4).

One could be tempted to deploy Srinivas Aravamudan's retroactive reading strategy called "Levantanization" in order to retrieve anticolonial agency in Samuel Foote's *The Nabob*. "Levantanization," a kind of "Tropicalization," is both the body of colonialist representation of Eastern cultures and the sometimes consciously articulated and at times unconsciously present critique of conquest in such British colonial representations produced during the mid-eighteenth century and after.<sup>35</sup> Aravamudan argues that "Levantanization" allowed some British authors to condemn British military conquests in India carried out by the Nabobs by associating them with a specifically Islamic, Orientalist despotism and violence, a move which allowed them to condemn imperial expansion without necessarily repudiating the will to dominate, which is inherent in colonial discourse.<sup>36</sup>

Foote's *The Nabob* does indeed offer an overt critique of conquest and plunder carried out in India by the Nabob. However, the play need not be read as being irredeemably the part of an already consolidated colonial discourse about Mughal India and other parts of the Orient, which hegemonically constructs this space as always already conquered and conquerable. It is too early in the still unfolding contact between the Mughal and the British Empires to insist upon such seamless and one-sided dominance. It is certainly rewarding to deploy such Western critical and theoretical terms such as "cosmopolitanism," "agency," "memory traces of resistance," and "hegemony" gleaned from diverse critical theories, as does Aravamudan, in order to retroactively infuse eighteenth-century "colonialist texts" with "tropicopolitan" agency. However, to rely exclusively on such a critical approach is to replicate the dominance of the West and Western forms of knowledge over the East. On the contrary, one needs to take into

account the prevalent practices of symbolic gift-giving and punishment in the political culture of the Mughal Empire and how these were understood or misunderstood by Foote's audience.<sup>37</sup> In other words, without an attempt to retrieve the indigenous customs and practices of Mughal elite culture in which the Nabob became deeply invested one would simply replicate the problematic paradigm of ubiquitous Western dominance and an equally widespread Eastern failure to resist it. The rhetorically absurd letter written by Nabob Mite to Sir John Oldham offers us the perfect example of the need to be aware of the impingement of Mughal elite political culture on what appears to be a seamless articulation of British colonial discourse.

The absurd letter written by Mite to Sir John turns out to be not so absurd after all if we allow it a closer scrutiny. It is no mere letter written by a suitor to the guardian of a gentlewoman. On the contrary, it is a "treaty," or a veritable "monarchical address," as Lady Oldham sarcastically remarks, offering the cessation of "all hostilities and contentions," if and when the marriage between Sir Mathew and Miss Oldham takes place. The treaty goes on to express Mite's ambitions of "a large territorial acquisition in England" which includes buying off Sir Oldham's estate and settling a "jagghire" on the parents, and shipping off the younger children to the East Indies to be married off or brought up as Company servants (1. 7-9). The curious document is a finely balanced rhetorical exercise that combines judiciously applied threats with promises of reward. The rhetorical situation is strikingly like that of a Nawab imperiously communicating his desire to receive a less powerful neighbor as a vassal. The use of the Indo-Persian term "Jagghire" (alternatively spelled as "Jagir") is highly significant. In the Mughal Empire a

“Jagir” was a considerable parcel of land in the provinces set apart as crown land, the entire revenue from which went to finance the military forces of the Emperor in Delhi.<sup>38</sup>

Thomas Oldham’s interpretation of term is also significant: “The term is Indian, and means an annual income” (1. 9). The original audience would have been aware of the irony involved in the domestication of an exotic military term. They knew that the “Jagir” was a token of favor in the Mughal Empire whereby loyal retainers of the Empire were rewarded and a system of military service was perpetuated. The East India Company’s correspondence with the native Nawabs were made available to the public by publications such as *Letters to and from the East India Company’s Servants, at Bengal, Fort St. George, and Bombay relative to the treaties and Grants from the Country Powers, from the Year 1756 to 1766* (1772). In it a letter (dated May 4 1764), from the Nawab of Arcot, a province in South India, is also included. The Nawab bestows a “Jagir” on the Company in grateful acknowledgement of the Company’s recent military assistance that decisively wiped out one of the Nawab’s rivals: “I have determined to grant the Company complete *sunnuds* for the whole *Jaghire*, which is a very considerable addition to what I granted in the time of Mr. Pigot.”<sup>39</sup> The Company is now the provider of military service, and the native power acknowledges its military and political influence by presenting her with the *Jagir*. More specifically, Foote’s audience would have made the connection between Mite’s letter and the “Sunnud” bestowing a real Jagir on Colonel Clive by Nawab Mir Jafar Ali Khan. The exchange between Thomas Oldham and Lady Oldham illustrates this point:

Thomas: His [Mite’s] stile is a little Oriental, I must own; but most exceedingly clear.

L. Old. Yes, to Cossim Ali-Khan, or Mier Jaffair. I hope you are near the conclusion. (1.9)

Thus taking into account the Asiatic, martial connotations of the “Jagir” and Foote’s original audiences’ ability to grasp its complex connotations could help to alter the modern readers’ perceptions of the representation of Sir Matthew Mite.

He hardly seems recognizable as a merchant. The elaborate treaty that represents him in this scene turns him into an exotic and ridiculous body. The context could lead one to speculate whether the “letter” was physically represented on the stage as an ornamental parchment document with ostentatious color schemes and spectacular seals, as the actual treaties between Indian potentates and the Company frequently were. It is also interesting to speculate that the audience would have expected Foote, who was one of the best mimics of the age, to bring to life the nabob and his alien military gestures and body language, curiously un-English in its mixture of effeminacy and rapacity. Foote had played successful military roles like Zachary Fungus in *The Commissary* before he played the Nabob. The physical body of the Nabob and the discursive body of the treaty thus compliment each other in a grotesque symphony. The treaty places Sir John Oldham, a gentleman, in the position of the recipient of despotic favors, and Sir Mathew Mite in that of the Nawab, the putatively capricious giver. This is a total reversal of the power relationship between the English merchant and the native ruler in John Crowne’s *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685), which has been already explored in Chapter Three.

The postcolonial critic can thus unearth the surprisingly close Nawab-Nabob relationship in *The Nabob* by refusing to read it as being an irreversibly hegemonic colonial text. Consequently, the English merchant’s self-assertion in all his moral

uprightness in Thomas Oldham's spirited defense of his class, whether the metropolitan type or the colonial one, also appears less hegemonic: "But there are men from the Indies, and many too, with whom I have the honor to live, who dispense nobly and with hospitality here, what they have acquired with honour and credit elsewhere; and, at the same time they have increased the dominion and wealth, and have added virtues too to their country" (1.13). The ilk of Sir Matthew, by contrast, have traveled beyond the pale of an honest profession and ventured into an alien martial identity. The arrogant pseudo-military character is also a giver of often unsought and inappropriate favors. Sir Matthew's largesse in giving the supposedly valuable artifacts to the Society of Antiquarians is symptomatic of the absurdity and moral impropriety of what he has to offer. The servile acceptance of the antiquarians sets the standard for the Nabob of the recipient's proper reaction to his gifts. However, the frequent allusions to real life Mughal custom of prestation, which sealed close ties between the Nawabs and the Nabobs in India, prevents the caricatured relationship between Mite and the antiquarians from containing the threatening plurality of the Mughal Empire.

As a result, when the plain-speaking Thomas Oldham tells him bluntly that he has no hope of marrying Miss Oldham, Sir Matthew dismisses him laughingly. It is as if he is condescending by agreeing to marry Sir John's daughter. He expresses his disbelief, "But I confess the extraordinary answer I received from the mouth of this worthy citizen, to a message conveyed by my secretary, and induced me to question its authenticity" (3.64). The Nabob's reaction is identical to that of a Mughal aristocrat who also would have regarded marriage with a non-aristocratic mercantile family an exceptional favor. Upon Sir John confirming his brother's message as being his own, Sir Matthew demands that

the sum owed to him be paid immediately and instructs his lawyer Rapine, “You will explain this affair to Sir John: I am a military man, and quite a stranger to your legal maneuvers.” The Nabob disavows his own mercantile identity completely and joins the ranks of an alien aristocracy. Not surprisingly, the fortune that provides the magical solution to the crisis comes from a mercantile source. Thomas Oldham pays the debts and thereby forestalls Sir Matthew’s ambitions. Thomas Oldham’s son marries Sophy, signifying the union of mercantile and landed interest, a theme I have traced in Steele’s *The Conscious Lovers* in Chapter Three. Sir Matthew Mite’s wealth is inadmissible not because it is from India, but because it is the fruit of illegitimate militarism and of an even more disturbing cultural cross-over. But as I have demonstrated, the apparently neat ending involving the marriage and transfer of legitimate mercantile wealth to revive an equally legitimate British aristocracy is always already undercut by the presence of disturbingly deep cultural ties between the Nabob and the Nawab.

### III

#### The Nabob’s Progress in the Domestic Fiction, 1757-89

The flamboyant Nabob appeared not only in the hard-hitting satire of Foote, but also in the “domestic fiction” of the period.<sup>40</sup> In the present section, I shall analyze several novels in which the Nabob appears as an important character. A substantial number of these novels are either written by women or, at least, narrated from the point of view of a female protagonist whose life and fortunes are shaped by the unsuccessful predations of a Nabob. Among such texts are Francis Brooke’s *The Excursion* and

*History of Emily Montague*, Anna Maria Bennett's *Anna, or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress*. Interspersed with *Anecdotes of a Nabob*, and Phoebe Gibbe's *Hartly House, Calcutta*.

In my reading of these novels by or about women, which exist at the intersections of colonial experience and the construction of a morally interiorized feminine and middleclass domestic space, I shall borrow Felicity Nussbaum's term "woman of empire" to denote both the authors who wrote some of these novels as well as the female protagonists who, in one way or other, are affected by the ongoing contact with Mughal India, either through travel to the newly emergent margins of the British Empire in Mughal India or through the influx of colonial fortunes and gifts.<sup>41</sup> Nussbaum's insistence on reading the eighteenth-century novel as being complicit in the construction of a feminine domestic space that grew up hand in hand with Britain's imperial ambitions abroad is certainly a useful shift from the traditional way of reading these novels in terms of insular metropolitan themes. As such, Nussbaum's reading builds on Nancy Armstrong's reading of the so-called "domestic novels" as being engaged in a hegemonic project to construct the bourgeois, rational female subjectivity at the expense of aristocratic women as well as men and women of the working classes.<sup>42</sup> Nussbaum's rereading of Armstrong's "domestic woman," a potent means of ideological control and reform at home, as the "woman of empire," who displays similar authority over Other women, has been more recently extensively studied in the figure of the so-called "colonial woman" by postcolonial critics. Among them Jenny Sharpe's *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (1993) has already attained the status of a classic. Among more recent works are Nandini Bhattacharya's *Reading the Splendid*

*Body: Gender and Consumerism in Eighteenth-Century British Writing on India* (1998) and Betty Joseph's *Reading the East India Company: Colonial Currencies of Gender 1720-1840* (2004). The last two studies usefully broaden Nussbaum's insights to question the hegemonic construction of a Western female subjectivity and agency, a project mostly carried out by marginalizing the doubly oppressed native woman.

Both Bhattacharya and Joseph have made useful contributions in constructing an oppositional narrative of the growth of a hegemonic female subjectivity and the potential for subverting such a metanarrative by marginalized women. For instance, Joseph reads resistance and agency retroactively into the apparently hegemonic representation of Other women in colonial discourse as it manifested itself in both the domestic fiction and the colonial archives of the East India Company. However, she relies exclusively on Western critical terminology and value systems in order to retrieve agency on behalf of the silenced native woman. She points out the useful fact that these women are referred to as servants and housekeepers but are never addressed as wives or daughters of Englishmen residing in India, as many of them really were.<sup>43</sup> Joseph's championing of these silenced native women is unfortunately hampered by her uncritical assumption that these women were oppressed precisely because they were deprived of the status of wives in a monogamous marriage. The wholesale application of Western values and standards by feminist literary criticism in our times in order to retrieve the agency of the subaltern native women in eighteenth-century texts written by British women ironically erases the non-Western agency critics like Joseph set out to retrieve in the first place.

Such an erroneous but well-intentioned practice places the postcolonial critic, who wishes to overcome such critical shortcomings, in a theoretical and critical double

bind. First, s/he must explicitly point out the general propensity among these eighteenth-century female authors to resort to stereotypes—certainly borrowed from some of their contemporary historiographers—while representing Mughal India and its cultures in violation of the complex historical realities experienced by both the Indians and the Nabobs. At this time, social relationships and gender behavior in the Mughal Empire were still being regulated by indigenous values to which the Nabobs often readily submitted. While many eighteenth-century British historiographers—some of whose works have been discussed in Chapter Two—were acutely aware of the cultural complexity and political autonomy of Mughal India, a substantial number of their fellow historians took the easy way out and resorted to constructing damaging stereotypes about the Mughal Empire and its subjects.

Second, the conscientious postcolonial critic must also point out the unfortunate and certainly unintentional tendency among some late twentieth-century postcolonial feminist critics to adopt, indeed, aggravate the lack of historical accuracy of the eighteenth-century female novelists under discussion. These critics attempt to retrieve the agency of the silenced native woman in these texts in exclusively Western terms by ignoring the indigenous values that regulated the lives of the actual native women. As a result, the existing postcolonial criticism, bolstered by feminist insights, reaffirms the very stereotypes it intends to undo. I propose that in dealing with fiction about the “colonies” written by eighteenth-century British women, one must introduce such specific Indian gender categories based on caste and religious affiliations such as *Tawaif* (Muslim courtesan), *Devadasi* (Hindu temple dancer), *Bibi* (concubine), which were some of the gender roles available to many such women in the Mughal Empire, who

frequently developed sexual relationships with the British Nabobs. These models of femininity were radically different from the model of the “domestic woman” with her alarming capacity for corrective “surveillance,” as pointed out by Nancy Armstrong.

In addition, these novels, mostly authored by women, which are apparently hegemonic in terms of their construction of a British domestic space free from the taint of Other women and presided over by a virtuous British heroine, could not have been so central or dominant in forming attitudes about empire and the Other, because there were many contemporary novels, which openly celebrated the cultures and values of Mughal India in order to question any unqualified British assumption of cultural and racial superiority. In other words, the wide availability of rival fictional accounts of the contact between the Mughal and the British Empires, which liberally acknowledged the validity of indigenous cultural values of Mughal India, certainly undercut whatever hegemonic impact the equally widespread racist and colonialist accounts of the same encounter had. The Nabob is sometimes represented in these texts by female authors as a threatening male with ambiguous cultural, professional, class, and racial associations, whose moral defeat at the hands of the virtuous British heroine does occasionally usher in the morally and racially homogeneous and unmistakably middleclass British domestic space. The authors’ attempt to construct an unambiguously national as well as imperial domestic space in these novels, however, is problematized by the British protagonist’s fascination with the baggage of alien sexuality and luxurious manners carried by the Nabob. In addition, I argue that the often sensational representation of alien sexual practices and social manners of the British Nabob must be read against the Mughal understanding of symbolic prestation and consumption, which cemented hierarchical relationship between

the ruler and the ruled in this composite empire. Otherwise, one risks replicating the unintentionally Eurocentric readings arrived at by some postcolonial feminist critiques of these texts, which are directly traceable to the Eurocentric bias present in some eighteenth-century domestic fictions by women.

As for example, in both *The Excursion* and *History of Emily Montague*, Frances Brooke juxtaposes an ideal vision of the retired yet hospitable way of life of the British rural gentry with the extravagant wealth and ostentatious wasteful lifestyle represented by the Nabob and some dissipated members of the British aristocracy. In *The Excursion* Frances Brooke pits her spirited yet virtuous British heroine Maria Villers against Miss Harding, the Nabobess, in order to expose the unethical and undesirable nature of the proposed union between Lord Claremont and the Nabob Mr. Harding. The extravagant and prodigal Lord Claremont has frittered away the enormous fortune left him by his deceased Lady in addition to the one destined to be inherited by his son. He hits upon a convenient solution: marry his son to the Nabob's only daughter in order to repair the ailing Claremont fortunes.

The narrator makes it amply clear that Lord Claremont is an admirer of the amoral and superficial precepts of Lord Chesterfield (whom she despises) and has brought up his son accordingly to be a polished and unscrupulous libertine. Consequently, he regards the projected marriage between Harding's only daughter and his son young Melvile to be a mutually profitable transaction: the Nabob would not only count himself privileged to be matrimonially associated with the aristocratic family, but the Claremont fortune would also receive the much needed transfusion of hard cash to forestall imminent bankruptcy. According to Lord Claremont, "The Fellow [Nabob Harding], to be sure, is a scoundrel;

but no matter. He has offered us eighty thousand pounds down; a handsome sum, for which we have great present occasion.”<sup>44</sup>

The ill-gotten Indian fortune in this novel is channeled into a profligate aristocracy with the implication that it will not last long, given Lord Claremont’s insatiable knack for running successive fortunes through his finely shaped fingers. Brooke thus associates the Nabob’s wealth and alien, decadent way of life with the improvident British aristocracy. The reader is encouraged to compare the dense description of Miss Harding’s lavish and extravagant household with the ostentation verging on bankruptcy in the household of Lord Claremont: “The house [of Nabob Harding] was noble, and furnished with all the splendour of Eastern magnificence” (2.109). Of Miss Harding, the Nabobess, the narrator is even more eloquent: “Her dress, her blaze of diamonds, her apartment, her attendants, all spoke rather an Asiatic queen than the daughter of an English private-gentleman.” Miss Harding is further alluded to as “this star of the East” (2.111) and her table is said to be groaning under the magnificent burden of “a profusion of blended French and Oriental luxury” (2.110). Miss Harding could certainly be read as Frances Brooke’s sensationally Anglicized version of the *Tawaifs* or the highly accomplished courtesans in the Mughal Empire, who entertained both the Indian elite and the Nabobs alike with their elaborate dances and poetry recitals during extravagant public feasts.

Nabobs like Clive eagerly adopted the elaborate Mughal style of hospitality and entertainment on important occasions. In 1765 Clive lavishly celebrated the conferring of the *Diwani* of Bengal upon the East India Company by the Mughal Emperor with vastly expensive and exotic entertainments such as animal fights involving wild buffaloes and

tigers.<sup>45</sup> Such elaborate hospitality was an integral part of the symbolism of Mughal sovereignty, and apparently real-life Nabobs like Clive had a better understanding of the significance of such ritual entertainments than the rather austere and didactic narrator of *The Excursion*, who objects to such extravagance as being excessive and typically unchristian and anti-British.<sup>46</sup>

Young Melville is soon overwhelmed by Miss Harding's potent combination of exotic, un-British charms and her status as bride-designate for him. In Miss Harding, Lord Melville finds the enticing mistress and the lawful wife coming together, while the witty, beautiful but indigent Maria now appears to be an insipid specimen of British womanhood. In terms of his marital preferences, Lord Melville becomes a surprisingly accurate transposition of a Mughal aristocrat in a British setting, who repudiates the new model bourgeois marriage, which constructed itself as a putatively apolitical yet strictly regulated moral space under a peculiarly feminine surveillance. In eighteenth-century Mughal India, the ruling elite of all castes and creeds distinguished between marriage as a political as well as social space for cementing power relationships and producing heirs and marriage as a space for fulfilling sexual desires and satisfying aesthetic cravings in the context of male bonding among equals.<sup>47</sup> Many real-life British Nabobs actually adapted these customs in Mughal India. James Achilles Kirkpatrick (1729-1818), an officer in the East India Company Army who also served as a diplomat in various Nawabi courts, fathered a son on his Indian *Bibi*, with whom he cohabited affectionately for many years.<sup>48</sup>

Maria Villers, the virtuous middleclass heroine, is soon weaned of her fascination with everything represented by Lord Melville, and she is united in matrimony with the

frugal and sober Mr. Herbert. The copious rhetoric of a Steele or an Addison which advocates a harmonious union of landed and moneyed interests is conspicuously absent in *The Excursion*. Brooke's wealthy returnee from India is unmistakably a Nabob, the sources of whose wealth are suspect and whose manners are hardly recognizable as British. The novel ends on a note celebratory of Britishness recently expurgated of the contamination of alien wealth and manners. The happy couple will build their life in "A land unspoil'd by barbarous wealth. And inhabited by our old race of English gentlemen" (vol. 2. p.266) The allusion is specifically to Belfont, the rural retreat still untouched by the rapacity of Nabobs and by the profligacy of a morally degenerate British aristocracy.

The deliberate marginalization of the profligate aristocracy, which has been pointed out by Nancy Armstrong as being one of the ideological functions of the domestic novel, is thus amply borne out in *The Excursion*. However, even as the aristocracy and the Nabobs are marginalized by the discourse of moral domesticity, one also detects the presence of a competing discourse about the plurality of manners and customs in the Mughal Empire, which were understood in a totally different context not only by the natives but also by some Britons who lived and worked among them.

The unambiguously alien and undesirable Nabob in *The Excursion* provides an interesting contrast to the ambiguous figure of Colonel Wilmot, the Nabob, in Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague*, first published in 1769. However, Colonel Wilmot is not the only character associated with a military career in this novel. The distinction between unambiguously heroic British militarism and an alien militarism represented by the Nabob I have already traced in some war poems from the era of the Seven Years War is also one of the major themes in the *History of Emily Montague*.

Colonel Wilmot, the Nabob who fought and acquired his fortune in India, is used as a convenient foil by Brooke to highlight not only Edward Rivers' unmistakably British heroism displayed in the British conquest of Quebec but also to emphasize his love of a retired, unostentatious, yet generous and gentlemanly way of life. However, the construction of the well-regulated British domestic space built by Edward Rivers and eventually presided over by Emily Montague, the domestic heroine, is problematized by the presence of the Nabob. Although he does not play a pivotal role in the novel, he certainly reminds one of the on-going cultural liaison between the Nabob and the Nawab in Mughal India, the presence of which is more prominent in the works of other contemporary novelists. Frances Brooke was evidently interested to contain the disturbing cultural associations borne by the Nabob.

Edward Rivers is an officer in the victorious British army of General James Wolfe. An officer on half pay, Rivers considers settling down in Canada with a parcel of land and turning a colonial-gentleman farmer. However, the turn of events necessitates Rivers' return to England where he must accept the reduced circumstances of a gentleman officer on half pay. With his beloved Emily Montague by his side, whose identity as the long-lost daughter of an East Indian Nabob called Colonel Wilmot is yet to be disclosed, he happily reconciles himself to the retired life of a country gentleman. The happy lovers envision a future of domestic stability bolstered by the prudent management of limited income. However, economy in the Rivers estate does not necessarily mean lack of generosity. In the true tradition of the landed gentleman, he hopes to spread goodwill and stability through the small community he would become a part of: "I believe we country gentleman, whilst we have spirit to keep ourselves independent are the best

citizens and subjects in the world. Happy ourselves, we wish not to destroy the tranquility of others, intent on cares equally profitable and pleasing, with no views but to improve our fortunes by means equally profitable to ourselves and to our country.” Rivers is a foil to the inhospitable and miserly Sir Matthew Mite in Foote’s *The Nabob*. However, the author’s attempt to distance the British military hero from tainted colonial projects is undercut by Rivers’ future plans for his estate: “I, on my side, am selecting spots for the plantations of trees; and mean like a good citizen, to serve at once myself and the public, by raising oaks, which hereafter may bear the British thunder to distant lands.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, the rural retreat of the English gentleman becomes implicated in the imperial project.

The imminent arrival of Colonel Wilmot, the Indian Nabob, into the tranquil world about to be created by Rivers causes some concerns. Apparently, the Nabob was given a good start in life by Rivers’ grandfather, and the grateful man wants to repay the debt by giving his daughter in marriage to Rivers and by settling his substantial fortune on the couple. The true English gentleman Rivers is loath to be beholden to any Nabob, no matter how rich or powerful. Naturally, he hastens the marriage. Later on, when it becomes apparent that Emily is actually the daughter the Nabob wanted to bestow on the heir of his benefactors, it does not really change the domestic economy of virtue and frugality that has been already established. Rivers states, “Colonel Wilmot has made me just as rich as I wish to be.” He goes on to muse, “Whilst I thought a fortune and Emily incompatible, I had infinite contempt for the former, and fancied that it would rather take from, than add to, my happiness; but, now I can possess it with her, I allow it all its value” (402). However, he refuses to follow Colonel Wilmot’s advice to move to a

palatial house. The substantial addition to his small fortune and income is certainly welcome but not essential to his happiness.

It could be argued that the generous nabob Wilmot undercuts my contention that the Nabob at this time was an arrogant giver of favors. Although it is true that Brooke's portrayal of the nabob is apparently positive compared to that of Foote, Colonel Wilmot and his fortune are not essential to the resolution of conflicts. Rivers and Emily are already married when he arrives in England. Their happiness does not depend on his gift of a fortune or the rapine of one, unlike that of young Thomas and Sophy Oldham in *The Nabob*. Had it not been for Mr. Thomas Oldham's generous intervention, Sir Matthew Mite would have blighted all hopes of happiness for the young couple. In addition, Colonel Wilmot's sun-burnt and prematurely aged appearance is emphasized in the novel, setting him apart from the true British manhood exemplified by Rivers: "He is very brown, and, what will please Bell, has an aquiline nose: he looks about fifty, but is not so much; change of climate has almost always the disagreeable effect of adding some years to the look" (385). Although Brooke's Nabob is not arrogant or obnoxious, he is still a military man with a fortune made in India, and furthermore he is an ineffectual presence and does not alter the gentlemanly economy established at the end of the novel in any significant way. It is also useful to consider the contrasting parallels between *The Conscious Lovers* and *Emily Montague*. The East-India merchant who brings magical ending to the conflicts, both social and familial in Steele's play, has now become an exotic military man content to be on the margins of the moral economy of the narrative, which is represented by the small but well-managed Rivers estate with its oaken acres. Although Frances Brooke had to struggle to contain the baggage of cultural plurality

borne by Nabob in *The Excursion*, she managed to contain it the *History of Emily Montague*, by turning the Nabob into an ineffectual figure.

By contrast, Colonel Gorget, the Nabob in Anna Maria Bennett's *Anna: or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress Interspersed with Anecdotes of a Nabob*, first published in 1785, plays a major role in the highly popular novel.<sup>50</sup> Colonel Gorget is endowed with a depth of psychological motivation lacking in the literary representations of the Nabob I have traced so far. The Colonel Wilmots and Mr. Hardings of Frances Brooke are almost allegorical by dint of their associations with alien manners and questionably earned fortunes. They serve as sources of transient temptation that the young protagonists must face and overcome before assuming their identity as virtuous British subjects. Colonel Gorget, on the contrary, is given the attributes of a Machiavellian villain's almost abstract love of intrigue for its own sake, in addition to the stereotypical militarism and alien cultural habits associated with the Nabob. I argue that Anna Maria Bennett memorably revives the theme of union (both literally and metaphorically) between the landed aristocracy and honest, mercantile wealth we have already traced in Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*. She accomplishes the feat through her orphan heroine Anna, who miraculously turns out to be the only daughter of a Welsh aristocrat and a mercantile heiress. Anna's mother was the daughter of an immensely rich but scrupulously honest overseas British merchant named Mr. Mordant. Gorget, the East India Nabob, not only provides the much needed contrast to the ideal union of mercantile wealth and landed aristocracy by the extravagant, even obnoxious display of his tainted wealth and un-British habits, but he also pushes the plot forward by weaving endless webs of conspiracy to entrap the beautiful and helpless heroine.

Gorget relentlessly torments and pursues the beautiful orphan Anna, whose true identity as a Welsh heiress is not disclosed until the very end of the novel. Although Anna is doubly fortified by dint of her innate virtue as well as the moral education inculcated in her by her mentor Mrs. Barwell, there are moments in the novel when the Nabob comes alarmingly close to bringing about her "ruin." With each encounter the Nabob seems to grow in the depth and complexity of his evil. Fortunately, the heroine also grows in moral stature and proves to be more than a match for the evil East Indian. It is useful to read the novel as a "Nabob's Progress:" from his beginning as the arrogant and tyrannical Colonel Gorget of the East India Company, through his reincarnation as the politically ambitious and Machiavellian Lord Sutton, to his rapid decline and death as the socially ostracized, disease-ridden old lunatic, who converts to Catholicism in his death-bed and bequeaths his ill-gotten fortune upon the Catholic Church in a final act of unpatriotic treachery.

The first time Colonel Gorget's path crosses with Anna's, he is a fifty-year-old retired East India Company servant, who has just returned from India after twenty-six years with an enormous fortune and a monstrous ego to match. The narrator slyly points out that Gorget belongs to the first generation of Nabobs who made the largest fortunes but escaped the brunt of the censure, which came too late and in too little doses to be effective: "At length, it being whispered that now, there being very little wealth more [sic] in those hapless regions, in proportion to the rapacity of its various claimants, and that, the country being very near depopulated, some inquiry might possibly be made into the merits of the Asiatic plunderers by those who were excluded from any share in the golden fleece."<sup>51</sup> Not only does the narrator condemn the Nabobs like Gorget by

describing them as “Asiatic plunderers” (in tune with the satiric poetry from the era of the Seven Years War I have already examined in section one), but she also implicates the vocal critics of the Nabobs by hinting that their zeal is born out of missed opportunities. In the twenty-six long years of his residence in India, Colonel Gorget has not only amassed a fabulous fortune, but he has also acquired the tyrannical manners of his host culture, which have aggravated his native disposition naturally prone to cruelty and perfidy: “There [in India], uninfluenced by the example of humanity in others, a stranger to the practice of it himself, unrestrained by the laws of a Christian people, and unawed by the fear of detection, he gave loose to the excesses of his nature, and adding avarice to the black catalogue of his vices, became the horror of the inhabitants of the East.” Apparently, Gorget’s military exploits in the East were taking place at the same time Colonel Clive was earning his spurs of fame, as the narrator goes on to add: “His [Gorget’s] fame as a commander reached the country he had disgraced [even before he returned home], and his coffers filled beyond his hopes” (1. 89).

Perhaps not fortuitously, Clive’s reputation as a successful military commander had also preceded his arrival in Britain, as I have already pointed out. Bennett is implying that in a time starved of military heroes, people eagerly grabbed at strawmen like Colonel Clive or his fictional counterparts like Gorget without distinguishing between justifiable military violence and the alien militarism of the “Asiatic plunderers.” The narrator, with a clear, satiric hindsight, exposes the Nabob as a “little man with a sallow complexion” (1. 68), which miserably fails to hide the unmentionable diseases and vices he has contracted from his host culture. Hence, most fitting it is that “He [Nabob Gorget] purchased a magnificent house, which was adorned with all the trappings of the East, and

furnished quite in the Nabob style; and Bath being recommended as salutary to the disorders he had contracted in India, another was bought there” (1.94). He also maintains two mistresses in London and Bath respectively. The one in Bath is far superior in youth and beauty, and he alternates between the insipid wife-like attentions of his London mistress and “the society of his divine Sultana” in Bath (1.97). British Nabobs in India were also known to establish harems in imitation of Mughal aristocratic males.<sup>52</sup> Having established his harem, Gorget the Nabob proceeds to infiltrate the quality, especially those who are in reduced circumstances because of mismanagement and extravagance. His purse is always open to “the claims of indigent quality, as voluntarily closed against the pleas of calamity” (1. 94). The narrator’s damning representations of the Nabob’s sexual excesses as well of his ostentatious display and consumption of wealth should be read as gross misinterpretations of the public displays of wealth and largesse practiced by the Mughals to establish political legitimacy and continuity.<sup>53</sup> Evidently, some eighteenth-century British authors such as Bennett were engaged in an attempt to contain the cultural plurality of the Mughal Empire by constructing the Nabob as a monstrosity, soon to be marginalized by the virtuous characters.

In contrast to the Nabob, the respective moral worth of the recognizably British characters is measured by two mutually informative concepts: the “oeconomy” which should manage and preserve estates and fortunes, and hospitality and generosity which would make the estate available to those in need. Accordingly, Lady Edwin, the daughter of an ancient Welsh aristocratic family, is singled out for praise for her restrained yet generous hospitality in spite of her sometimes unjustifiable preoccupation with genealogy. Similarly, Mr. Bentley, the immensely rich but eccentric London merchant, is

celebrated for his readiness to come to the aid of the destitute and the helpless, Anna being the most prominent target of his self-effacing charity.

Consequently, the Melmoths, who are notorious for their wasteful way of life, become the Nabob's natural prey. Gorget lavishes the Melmoths with expensive presents and tempts them with a vague promise that he would make their daughter his only heir in order to gain access to Anna, who is a dependant in the Melmoth estate. The narrator ironically points out the Nabob's frustration with the elaborate and time-consuming methods he must employ in order to attain a goal which could have been accomplished in India either through bribery or through violence. Gorget wishes that "he could venture at the same means of quieting her [Mrs. Barlow, Anna's ever watchful protectress]. Which in India, would have excited no inquiry. But the law (rude, inconvenient, English law) was the dread and hatred of his soul" (1.109). Gorget, at last overcome by his evil passion, throws caution to the wind and attempts to rape Anna: "But, lost now to every idea except that of gratifying his hideous passion, he recollected not how far he was removed from that country where rape and murders are tolerated acts" (1.144).

After his initial rebuff, the Nabob recuperates his composure and bribes his way into the peerage. He becomes Lord Sutton and in this new capacity gains access to some of the best circles in London. The narrator describes the Colonel on the eve of his transformation as a Machiavellian villain with Shakespearean trimmings, "But the Colonel could smile, and turn, and smile again," and goes on to add, "he had the art of making his features speak what with great honour, his tongue might deny" (1.159). He next encounters Anna in London as the companion of Lady Edwin. Once again failing to seduce Anna, the Nabob casts aspersions on Anna's character, which leads to the loss of

her position. So relentless is the Nabob in his persecution that Anna is not even allowed to earn a living as a humble seamstress in London, and she has to escape his clutches once more.

With the magical discovery of her real parentage, Anna is abruptly transferred into a world of affectionate and restorative familial and economic ties. She leaves behind the Machiavellian/Hobbesian world dominated by the likes of Nabob Gorget and his associate, the canting hypocrite Dalton, a Methodist preacher. It is proven beyond the slightest doubt that Anna is the last of the Trevannions, a Welsh aristocratic family of the bluest blood. Her father had married the daughter of the rich overseas merchant Mr. Mordant and was promptly disowned by his father. Both Anna's parents died in poverty and obscurity. She not only inherits the exalted family name of Trevannion but also the enormous fortune of her maternal grandfather Mr. Mordant, the ideal British merchant. The author devotes an entire chapter to catalogue Mr. Mordant's many virtues and qualities. Together with the generous and sentimental old Bentley, Mr. Mordant serves as the representative of the truly patriotic and scrupulously honest British merchant, whose virtues qualify him to be allied to the equally virtuous section of the aristocracy. Mr. Mordant waxes eloquent in praise of his own class: "Although not a Trevannion, I am a proud Briton; Lady Cecilia Edwin can not be more anxious to preserve the honour of her noble blood, more tenacious of its dignity, or value it higher, than I do the title of the British merchant. Inflexible integrity, industry without parsimony, hospitality without extravagance, a noble confidence in the spirit of commerce, and above all, rectitude of heart and probity in dealings, are the marks which always should, and in general do, distinguish our respectable body" (4. 49-50).

Mordant's pro-mercantile rhetoric, however, falls short of the comparatively more egalitarian note struck in a similar situation by Mr. Sealand, the East India Merchant in Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*. Mr. Sealand sounds indignant and self-righteous in his defense of the merchant class against Sir Bevill's condescending view of the moneyed interest: "And give me leave to say that we merchants are a species of gentry that have grown into the world this last century, and are as honorable, and almost as useful, as you landed folks."<sup>54</sup> By contrast, Mr. Mordant adopts a submissive tone as he endeavors to persuade his granddaughter to marry quality: "It is necessary; for the good of the commonweal, that subordination should be kept up; there may be some exceptions; but there is in general that in noble blood which commands respect, and those marriages are most happy that are nearest equality" (4. 54). The implication is that Anna must do the right thing to rectify the mistake made by her impulsive parents, who had broken the norm by mingling aristocratic and mercantile blood. She can do so by marrying true aristocracy, thus further diluting the thin stream of mercantile blood introduced accidentally in her veins. Evidently, *Anna: or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress* is ideologically much more conservative than *The Conscious Lovers* in terms of its treatment of the acceptability of intermarriage between landed wealth and the moneyed interest. In addition, its marginalization of the Nabob is surprisingly thorough, as if to make the triumph of the British heroine more emphatic.

In Phoebe Gibbes' *Hartly House, Calcutta* (1789) the confrontation between the "Nabob" and the spirited British heroine takes place in Mughal India. The "Nabob" in question is actually a "Nawab," perhaps based closely on the real-life Nawab of Bengal Mubarak-ud-Daula.<sup>55</sup> Felicity Nussbaum has pointed out that the heroine Sophia

Goldborne, who confronts the Nawab during a public parade, is a complex, multilayered representation of the English woman abroad: “*Hartly House* is in part a light satire against the vain Sophia, and thus an attack on the frivolity of an Englishwoman abroad. Yet her Indian adventure also inspires her with an independence that she must relinquish to the inevitable tediousness of English domesticity as she plays out her sexual hybridity against the colonized Other.”<sup>56</sup> Sophia’s identity as an articulate and independent-minded woman is constructed at the expense of the Englishmen and women who have gone native, as well as of the native men and women she comes across, only to be subsumed under the greater demands of a morally regulated English domestic space and the emergent empire. Nussbaum has pointed out Sophia’s problematic relationship with native women, “The Title of Chapter 7, ‘An Affectionate and Voluntary Sacrifice,’ is the phrase the heroine uses to characterize *Sati* in Phebe [sic] Gibbes’ *Hartley House, Calcutta* (1789), and this construction parallels other descriptions of that cultural practice in travel narratives of India the end of the eighteenth-century. *Sati*, the practice by widows of self-immolation, is likened [by Sophia] to the English woman’s sacrifice of herself to marriage and domesticity, thus negating the Indian woman’s actual pain and death in the interest of female community and sorority.”<sup>57</sup>

Of course, the community that is imagined by Sophia excludes Indian women on the basis of race. According to Nussbaum, “In *Hartley House* colonial India serves as a mirror for the display of the Englishwoman’s sexual desire and command of love’s “empire” abroad. Love’s empire and the power it brings are most easily flaunted in romance, in the past, or in the empire aboard, since its exercise at home is severely restricted by convention and civility.”<sup>58</sup> In addition, Felicity Nussbaum has read Sophia’s

flirtation with the Nawab and her subsequent allusion to the rape of a native woman by a British military officer as constituting a turning point in her otherwise subversive career as a proto-feminist: “These two concluding passages interrupt Sophia’s infatuation with India and nail her into the coffin of English domesticity.”<sup>59</sup> However, Nussbaum’s useful reading of the public flirtation as a moment of containment of the subversive subjectivity of the Englishwoman abroad in the dual coffin of British patriarchy and colonialism assumes that *Hartly House, Calcutta* is irremediably a part of a seamless and all-encompassing colonial discourse.

The novel does appear to contain both the subversive subjectivity of the heroine and the plurality of the colonized space in which she momentarily experiences that subjectivity. The eighteenth-century author of the novel evidently wished her heroine to repudiate both her subversive subjectivity and her fascination with the cultural liberties offered by India. However, the postcolonial critic’s task remains unfinished if s/he, as does Nussbaum, reads against the grain of the text and points out those subversive moments whose potentials lamentably remain unfulfilled in the text. In addition, s/he must insist upon laying bare a more radical layer of subversion that manages to elude the conservative agenda of the novelist. When one applies a radically different reading strategy based on an awareness of indigenous values and customs to the novel, especially to the episodes dealing with heroine’s encounters with the Muslim Nawab and the Hindu Brahman respectively, one inevitably discovers that the subversive plurality of mores and manners of the Mughal Empire, far from being contained in the dual coffin of a ubiquitous colonial discourse and a hegemonic Western discourse of feminine domesticity, are very much alive and present in the novel.

Phoebe Gibbes' heroine in *Hartley House, Calcutta* is more in the tradition of a travel narrative than a typical Nabob story in which an Indian fortune functions as a magic solution to plot complications. As a matter of fact, the vivacious Sophia compares herself to Lady Mary Wortly Montague, the celebrated enlightenment traveler: "I thought of Lady Wortly Montague's account of her being noticed by the Grand Seigneur, when [she had been the] spectator of a Turkish procession, on the Nabob's observation of me."<sup>60</sup> However, the Indian Nawab, who accidentally catches a glimpse of Sophia during a ceremonial procession, is read by Nussbaum as being militarily impotent in spite of his rumored sexual potency and immense wealth. The colorful procession, which is described in great details by Sophia at the end of the novel, does indeed take place under the watchful eyes of the British army. She light-heartedly allays the jealous fears of her suitor Doyle: "An Englishwoman was not born to fear giant knights, or enchanted castles; and the more especially, where an army would stand forth in her protection and defence" (286-87). Sophia is deliberately borrowing from the language of courtly romances with a wonderful lack of reverence. However, the implied comparison between the Nawab and pagan knights and giants in such courtly romances as Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590), which are also early expressions of a modern English national identity, is highly appropriate because *Hartly House, Calcutta* is also about, among other things, the celebration of triumphant Britishness.<sup>61</sup>

In the land of the native Nawab, now apparently under the firm control of the British, Sophia can wander freely and sample the best and the worst this fabulous new world has in store for her. India simply "mirrors" the desires and the appetites of the English heroine. Applying such a well-intentioned but rather unproblematic postcolonial

reading to *Hartly House, Calcutta* actually falsifies the immensely complex ground reality in Mughal India. It also anachronistically imposes a monolithic and absolute British colonial discourse on a historical space, which was still marked by creative crosspollinations between the symbolic expressions of Mughal authority and the radically new goals and ambitions of a militant East India Company. An exclusive reliance on Western critical terminology has led Nussbaum to sidestep the indigenous value systems at work in the novel. Her reading misses the point that the Nawab himself and his subjects would not have considered themselves a conquered people at the disposal of the British. On the contrary, they would have regarded the East India Company soldiers to be the Nawab's retainers.

In a composite empire like the Mughal Empire the notion of ethnic, religious, and cultural homogeneity meant very little, and the presence of a large army organized by the East India Company would not have challenged the complacent faith in the continuity of the Empire, which certainly persisted among Indians throughout the eighteenth century. Such an assumption would have been not a little aided by the fact that the troops giving the guard of honor to the Nawab were mostly made up of Indian subjects of the Mughal Empire, although they were certainly commanded by an elite corps of British or European officers. In addition, as has been already pointed out, the high-ranking officers of the East India Company Army like Colonel Clive were frequently assimilated into the Mughal Imperial system of military honors by the bestowal of titles and gifts.

Moreover, Nussbaum's reading of the heroine's encounters with the Nawab and the Hindu priest, which does not take into account the values attributed by the Indians themselves to the respective ways of life represented by these two prominent personages,

could turn India into a convenient but reductive binary opposition: the ultimately debilitating yet fascinating luxury and sensuousness represented by the Nawab and the equally absurd and impractical asceticism and austerity of the young “Bramin,” a Hindu priest, befriended by Sophia. Nussbaum claims, “Indian men are the feminized binary against which English women can experiment with unorthodox femininity.”<sup>62</sup> While a plausible case can certainly be made for Sophia’s assertion of a rebellious subjectivity at the expense of both the Nawab and the Brahman, it should not prevent us from acknowledging that the two male figures also exist in a framework of indigenous values that cannot be contained by the narrative.

The anti-sentimental Sophia apparently reduces the overwhelming plurality of India into a convenient binary opposition: asceticism vs. luxury, and/or body vs. soul.<sup>63</sup> Nussbaum writes, “The entire colonial world—from the admiring entourage of Englishmen to the Brahmin and the nabob—serve as a mirror enhancing the coquette’s beauty.” But Mughal India in *Hartley House, Calcutta* asserts itself as much more than a passive “mirror” through the very figures of the Nawab and the Brahman that Nussbaum refers to above. The young Nawab of Bengal, both in person and in the stories Sophia have heard about him, represent the extreme of Oriental luxury and hedonism, while the young Brahman represents an equally extreme asceticism. Regarding the Brahman, Nussbaum writes, “The Brahmin, never given a name, remains a representative of high caste Otherness. But because *Hartley house, Calcutta* defines his life as one of voluntary celibacy and withdrawal from social pleasures, he is never a serious contender for her [Sophia’s] hand.”<sup>64</sup> (180). About the Nawab, Nusbaum writes, “Sophia, having overcome her amorous desires for the Brahmin, nearly succumbs to the nabob’s riches and

sexuality, which tempt her more profoundly than the ascetic Brahmin.”<sup>65</sup> Nussbaum’s reading suggests that Sophia contemplates and tastes both ways of life and rejects them with a light-hearted assurance in favor of a never-clearly-defined British golden mean. As the Nawab’s ceremonial procession marches past the elevated stand reserved for the British, she exclaims: “I would have given the world on the instant to have been a Nabobess, and entitled to so magnificent a train.”<sup>66</sup> In her imagination, at least, the Nawab is smitten with her beauty as soon as he locks eyes with her: “And judge, Arabella, if you can, of the ambitious throbs my heart experienced, when I saw the Nabob’s eyes, sparkling with admiration, fixed on my face.”<sup>67</sup> At the pivotal moment when she is precariously suspended between a mindless surrender to the sensuality and luxury represented by the Nawab, she recollects the exemplary restraint of her recently deceased “Bramin”: “I recollect my Bramin, and [am] myself again.”<sup>68</sup> The Brahman, a young Hindu priest, became a companion-cum-tutor to Sophia and developed an Indian version of a “Platonic” relationship with her, which he overcame by acknowledging “the racial and religious gulf that divided them.”<sup>69</sup> Sophia evidently treated the Brahman and his impossibly ascetic way of life with tolerance mixed with amusement. True to his devotion to the *Parmatma* (the universal soul) at the expense of the *Sarira* (corporeal existence), the Brahman contracts a sudden illness which conveniently carries him away to the eternal realms within hours.

The representation India and the Indians in the novel are certainly amenable to a binary interpretation implied in Nussbaum’s reading of it. Such an interpretation apparently exposes the machinations of colonial discourse, which attempts to reduce the diversity of Indian culture into two polar opposites. However, such a reading would be

seriously constrained by its lack of awareness that to most Indians in the eighteenth-century Mughal Empire the “Brahman” (Sophia’s “Bramin”) and the “Prince” (the Nawab in this case) constituted the two inseparable pillars of a political as well as cosmological edifice, representing spiritual authority and worldly power respectively. In Mughal India both the Hindu and Islamic concepts of kingship and sovereignty informed each other and, as Andrea Hintze has pointed out, shared the basic contradiction in the relationship between the Prince and the Priest. Hintze writes, “On the one hand, there was a mutual interdependence between king and brahmin [sic]: the legitimacy of the king and the authority to exercise his power depended on priestly sanction as the ultimate source of authority, while the priest depended for his subsistence on the donations of the king. On the other hand, the brahmin had to preserve his transcendent position above the secular domain by keeping himself separate from politics.”<sup>70</sup> Hintze goes on to point out that neither the Islamic nor the Hindu traditions offered a way to overcome this contradiction between secular power and sacral authority entirely, but “as long as the king, whether Hindu Raja or Muslim Sultan, accepted the given principles of the religious and social order, he could to a certain though limited degree legitimately gain power and win the allegiance of the subjects.”<sup>71</sup>

Engaging in a postcolonial reading of Sophia’s relationship with the Nawab and the Brahman without the aid of such an awareness of Indian concepts of power and kingship endows colonial discourse with a sweeping authority hardly deserved by it at this stage of the encounter between the Mughal Empire and the British imperial nation-state. Far from being instances of stereotypical Oriental despotism, the young Nawab and his apparently ostentatious public display of wealth and power is in accordance with the

notions of kingship and sovereignty prevalent in India at the time. By the same token, the Brahman's apparently impossible idealism and asceticism complements and legitimizes the Nawab's display of worldly power with spiritual authority through renunciation.

#### IV

#### Sentiment as an Antidote to Imperialism

The refined and exclusive sensibility of the bourgeois heroines and their concomitant lack of sentimentality we have traced in domestic/colonial novels like *Anna: or, The Memoirs of a Welch Heiress* and *Hartly House, Calcutta*, which apparently defeats the callous and desensitized Nabob, are contrasted by the torrential display of sensibility marked by a concern for the oppressed Other in some novels from the same period.<sup>72</sup> Prominent among them are Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) and Robert Bage's *Mount Henneth* (1782).

Whereas the works by women I have examined so far tend to exploit the Nabob's lack of true sensibility and outright boorishness as a convenient contrast to the authentic community of affection and sensibility the heroine must represent, the texts by men to be analyzed next are preoccupied with constructing the honest Returnee from India as a man of sensibility. Not only do his copious tears of empathy wash away the blood of the natives shed by the militarist Nabob, but his hard-earned fortune also rids the domestic space of patriarchal tyranny. Although the military Nabob and his antics are not the staple of these works, unlike Samuel Foote's *The Nabob* or Anna Maria Bennet's *Memoirs of a Welch Heiress*, they serve as narrative antidotes to the ravages, both military and

emotional, wrought by the Nabob upon the body politic as well as familial. In these sentimental novels, the honest Returnee/ the man of feeling, by dint of his insistence upon pacifism and celebration of universal empathy, proves that the Nabob, his foil, is characterized, among other things, by his militarism and lack of empathy for human suffering. In addition, the protagonist as the man of feeling often expresses a sympathetic understanding of the plurality of custom and manners in Mughal India, something certainly lacking in the novels by and about the British “woman of empire.”

Julie Ellison argues that Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771) is conducive to two opposed readings: “First, as pure ideology: trade and conquest are distinguished from each other in order to give a moral patina to their actual connivance.” She goes on to add, “Or, second, as knowledge of ideology: an epistemological moment in which the link between violence and material gain is understood through the figure of the victim.”<sup>73</sup> The first way of reading the novel, which opens up colonial discourse for critique and condemnation only to contain such a subversive moment by conveniently distancing British trade from militarism, is applicable to Harley, the man of feeling, who condemns the unholy alliance between the native Nawabs and the British Nabob: “They [the British Nabobs] have drained the treasuries of the Nabobs [the native Nawabs], who must fill them by oppressing the industry of their subjects. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we consider the motive upon which those gentlemen do not deny their going to India.”<sup>74</sup> Harley’s sensibility is overwhelmed by the tale of oppression suffered by innocent natives at the hands of the British Nabobs. The mark of alien militarism is glibly transferred to the Nabobs from their occasional allies of convenience, the native Nawabs.

In the process, the honest Returnee from India is vindicated as a pacific merchant devoted to his calling.

However, I find the second way of reading pointed out by Ellison, which raises the novelistic discourse to a transcendental level of awareness of colonial discourse as colonial discourse, to be the one that triumphs in the end. As Ellison herself has pointed out, the novel was published between two important dates: the 1765 conferral of the Diwani of Bengal on the East India Company and the Regulating Act of 1773.<sup>75</sup> During this period the disastrous Dual Government introduced in Bengal by the East India Company and the land enclosure movement in England coincided, creating two parallel oppressed communities, one at home and one abroad. Ellison insightfully points out, “Mackenzie’s narrative links the economy of the British countryside to colonial relationships through the dynamics of sympathy.”<sup>76</sup>

Edwards, a dispossessed tenant farmer who goes to India as a soldier in the East India Company Army, represents the English lower classes oppressed by the land enclosure movement. The anonymous Indian merchant he rescues from the depredations of his own superiors represents the various castes and communities displaced and oppressed by the Dual Government. During this period the balance between legitimate tributes and taxation and naked extortion, which existed during the reign of the independent Nawabs prior to the Battle of Plassey in 1757, broke down completely.<sup>77</sup> The grateful Indian merchant says to Edwards, his savior, “You are an Englishman, . . . but the Great Spirit has given you an Indian heart.”<sup>78</sup> One could argue that the native is being represented as a timid and helpless man and that such a stereotypical representation only serves to swell the body of similar representations which constructed India as easily

conquerable. Kathleen Wilson has argued along similar lines: “The discourse of effeminacy . . . thus privileged the claims of the white, trading and commercial classes to political status while excluding a range of ‘effeminate’ others who threatened their supposedly distinctive goals.”<sup>79</sup>

While acknowledging the potential of such representations to exclude the colonial subject from any claim to agency, one also needs to point out that in this particular instance the Indian merchant is actually much more than an instance of one-dimensional colonial representation. Although done in broad strokes, he is nonetheless a historically accurate fictional representation of a member of the pacifist Hindu “Jain” community who, not unlike the Quakers in the North American colonies, repudiated all violence. Members of this particular community were valuable subjects of the Mughal Empire and enjoyed the protection and patronage of the Nawabs, but during the chaotic period of the Dual Government, they became easy targets of extortion by the British and their Indian agents alike.<sup>80</sup>

Mr. Foston, the man of feeling and an honest Returnee from India in Robert Bage’s *Mount Henneth*, first published in 1782, is a memorable character who combines the firsthand experiences of misguided British militarism in India of an Edwards with the universal empathy of a Harley. The circumstances under which Mr. Foston worked and prospered in India are precariously close to the ones which frequently labeled East India Company functionaries as Nabobs. He follows a trajectory surprisingly close to the ones followed by real-life Nabobs like Colonel Clive or fictional ones like Colonel Gorget. Major Foston begins as a humble writer trained in “merchant accounts” at the academy in Tower street, London, and ends up as a soldier during the tumultuous years of 1756-57

when, according to him, “Even the peaceable factors of the Company, whose sole business it is to buy and sell, find in the warring tumults such inviting opportunities of oppression, such alluring monopolies, such betel-nut bargains that not to grow rich is beyond the power of human virtue.”<sup>81</sup> A combination of an innate good nature, the instruction imparted by a wise Hindu priest, and some lucky turn of events during the Battle of Plassey preserve Foston from becoming a plundering Nabob. Nevertheless, he manages to return from India with an immense fortune. Although he joins the East India Company, it is not out of any desire for personal gain. On the contrary, he truly wished to serve his country by destroying the tyrannical Nawab, whose policies threatened to destroy peaceful trade: “I am not a soldier by profession; I took arms only, because I thought it [befitting] for the honour and interest of my country to take a speedy revenge on [the] late treacherous and relentless Nabob” (1. 218). Bage clearly wishes to distance his protagonist from the alien and extortionate militarism of the true Nabobs. In addition, the fortune he suddenly finds himself the master of was bestowed on him as a free gift by a rich native, whose life was threatened by marauding soldiers of the defeated Nawab.

The native merchant’s tale embedded within Mr. Foston’s narrative is surprisingly elaborate. Duverda, as the magnanimous native calls himself, is attributed with a diverse cultural and religious background, which, in a rather simplistic manner, reflects the actual cultural plurality of the Mughal Empire. He came to the Empire from Persia and became an influential merchant in Murshidabad, the Nawab of Bengal’s capital. Although a Muslim himself, he married the daughter of an Armenian merchant residing in Bengal, who practiced Judaism. As a matter of historical fact, many gifted Persians and

Armenians immigrated to the Mughal Empire to seek employment and fortunes, but unlike the British East India Merchants they eagerly assimilated themselves into the dominant Mughal culture and accepted its hegemony.<sup>82</sup> Duverda professes a universalistic faith that transcends the barriers of caste and creed: “Thus I came at length to bound my own religion within the narrow (though to me all comprehensive) bounds of the silent meditations of a contrite heart, lifting up its humble aspirations to the author and preserver of all being, by what name soever called throughout the universe” (1. 240). As the ultimate gesture of his religious and cultural universalism, he willingly bestows his only daughter Caralia on Foston, since it is clear to him that they are in love with each other.

The elaborate narrative scheme to extricate his protagonist from any damning associations with the militarist Nabob also allows the author to lead Foston through the darkness at the heart of the unprincipled militarism resorted to by the Nabobs in India and to bring him back to tell his tale with compassion. In addition, being exposed to the religious and cultural pluralism of the Mughal Empire evidently rids Foston’s mind of Protestant zealotry. As a young and inexperienced writer in Bengal, he once barged into a Hindu temple and spat on the statue of the god to express his disgust at the irrational (to him) native penchant for idolatry. The scandalized Hindus threw him into the river Ganges apparently to wash away this act of blasphemy. A kind Hindu priest saved him from certain death by drowning and uttered some of the most memorable lines in the novel: “I am equally sorry, Young man, says he, for you and my countryman; both of you must have had an erroneous idea of the Supreme Power, when you assumed his right to punish” (1.197). Bage’s lifelong interest in a moderate egalitarianism in politics and

ecumenicalism in religion is reflected in the Brahman's exhortation. Robert Bage was a member of the Derby Philosophical Society. According to Gary Kelly, "The society was founded in 1784 by Erasmus Darwin; it had links to the Lunar Society of Birmingham and the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, to the continental and Scottish Enlightenments, and to the English dissenting academies. It met regularly and united scientific research with commercial application. Some members' scientific interests appear in Bage's novels; more important, Bage fictionalizes ideas and values promoted by the society's members and others like them throughout Britain and Europe."<sup>83</sup>

Mount Henneth, a noble estate in the Welsh coast purchased by Mr. Foston with the fortune bestowed on him by his Indian father-in-law, becomes the perfect setting from which to disseminate not only his narrative fraught with human suffering but also to spread his generosity and largesse among the deserving and the unfortunate. His greatest good in life is aptly summed up by his daughter: "My father is enjoying his own benevolent feelings in silence" (2. 224). The primary targets of Major Foston's benevolence are the poor soldiers crippled in the Seven Years War: "In short, Julia [Foston's daughter by his Indian wife], I have been squandering the wealth upon a score of relicts, thanks to this all prolific war, who have become so, by French, and Spanish cannons, or French or Spanish jails" (2. 288). The orgy of benevolent tears which the rest of the novel becomes is only made bearable by Major Foston's Indian experiences, which constructs him as a Returnee who has managed to assimilate the religious tolerance and cultural pluralism of the Mughal Empire at her best, while keeping at bay her perceived militarism and luxury. In this regard, Major Foston is a sentimentalized fictional version of such eminent Orientalists of the era as Sir William Jones and William Robertson, who

labored intellectually to make the cultural plurality of Mughal India available to the British public before the eventual triumph of utilitarian reforms and missionary zeal.

The figure of the Nabob in popular literature in the aftermath of the Battle of Plassey certainly served many ideological purposes. In the verse celebrating the Seven Years War he was momentarily conflated with the “true” military heroes of the moment, only to be vilified in the satiric verse as an Oriental despot. In the satiric drama of Samuel Foote the Nabob continued to be castigated not only for his perceived violations of professional ideals but also for his imbibement of alien manners. Although such representations certainly contributed to the formation of a homogeneous British national identity based on a uniquely British love of liberty, they are too fraught with an awareness of the Nabob’s close cultural and political ties with the Mughal Nawab to be considered as seamless colonial discourse. By the same token, the so-called domestic fiction from this time period fails to contain the plurality of the Mughal Empire and turn it into an always already colonized space. The presence of indigenous values and conceptions in operation in these texts is still too strong to be overwhelmed by the moral surveillance of the British heroine.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Representative social histories which deal with the Nabob as a socio-cultural phenomenon are James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Perry Gauci, *The Politics of Trade: The Overseas Merchant in Trade and Society, 1660-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For literary criticism representative of such a divided approach to Nabob literature, see Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage 1660-1714* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Nandini Bhattacharya, *Reading the Splendid Body* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998); John McVeagh, *Tradeful Merchants* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981); John C. Loftis, *Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding* (New York: AMS Press, 1979).

<sup>2</sup> For an account of the Seven Years War and its global implications, see H. V. Bowen, *War and British Society 1688-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 22, 34-38, 73-75.

<sup>3</sup> See Renu Juneja, "The Native and the Nabob: Representations of the Indian Experience in Eighteenth-Century English Literature," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 27 (1992): 183-98.

<sup>4</sup> For an account of eighteenth-century English verse about overseas expansion as a "manifest" expression of colonial discourse as opposed to the "latent" one in the contemporaneous novel, see Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English*

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*Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlotte: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 1-43.

<sup>5</sup> See Laura Brown, *Fables of Modernity, Literature and Culture in the English Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 66-80.

<sup>6</sup> Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire*, 42.

<sup>7</sup> George Cockings, "Preface" to *War. An Heroic Poem. From the Taking of Minorca by the French, to the Reduction of Manilla*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1765), iii-xi. See especially iii-iv. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>8</sup> Cockings' poem appears to illustrate Linda Colley's thesis that a pan-British identity was being forged in the eighteenth century largely through successful warfare waged against common continental enemies. See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). See esp. 5-9.

<sup>9</sup> George Cockings, *War. An Heroic Poem*, 2. Hereafter cited in text and, references are to page number in this edition.

<sup>10</sup> Cockings' could be alluding to the title of "Sabid Jang" (or "Sabut Jung" in the corrupt English form current in the eighteenth century) conferred on Clive by the Nawab of Arcot in South India for his martial prowess against the French. Clive was frequently addressed by Mughal aristocrats as "Sabid Jang" in formal letters and treaties. The title literally means "Firm/Proven in Battle." See J. Malcolm, *The Life of Robert, Lord Clive*, (London: n. p., 1836), 1: 402-3.

<sup>11</sup> William Burke, *An Enquiry into the Policy of Making Conquests for the Mahometans in India, by the British Arms* (London, 1779), 109.

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<sup>12</sup> For a literal translation of the Imperial *Sunnud* conferring the title on Clive in addition to the *Jagheer* (a grant of imperial land as a reward for faithful service), see Charles Caraccioli, *The Life of Robert Lord Clive, Baron Plassey*, vol. 1 (London, 1775-77), 364. See also, William Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1775), 82.

<sup>13</sup> The letter in Warren Hastings' translation is quoted in Abdul Majed Khan, *The Transition in Bengal, 1756-1775: A Study of Saiyid Muhammad Reza Khan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 11. The translator has used “yn” a standard abbreviation of “than” at this time period. Also, he has used “Bahadr,” apparently a mistranscription of the Hindi word “Bahadur,” meaning “brave.”

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Qtd. in Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Clive of India: A Political and Psychological Essay* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1975), 274.

<sup>16</sup> John Duncombe, *To Colonel Clive, On His Arrival in England* (1660), reprinted in *Bell's Classical Arrangement of Fugitive Poetry*, vol. 6 (London, 1789), 103-04. Hereafter cited in text, and references are to page number in this edition.

<sup>17</sup> See James Fraser, *History of Nadir Shah* (London, 1742), 227-234, for an example of the British fascination with the military campaigns of this reigning monarch, who had been the last Asian invader to raid the Mughal Empire before its final demise at the hands of the British in the nineteenth century.

<sup>18</sup> W. J. Egham “To Warren Hastings, Esq.” *County Magazine* April (1787): 242-43. Hereafter cited in text, and references are to page number in this edition.

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph Champion, Dedication to *Envy. A Poem to General Smith* (London, 1776).

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Champion, *Envy. A Poem to General Smith* (London, 1776), 8.

Hereafter cited in text, and references are to page numbers.

<sup>21</sup> “On the Death of Lord Clive,” *The New Foundling Hospital of Wit* (London, 1784), 22.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Clarke, Preface, to *The Nabob: or, Asiatic Plunderers* (London, 1773), iii-vi: iii.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Clarke, *The Nabob: or, Asiatic Plunderers* (London, 1773), 3.

Hereafter cited in text, and references are to page numbers.

<sup>24</sup> *East India Culprits: a Poem in Imitation of Swift’s “Legion Club”* (London, 1773), 7-8. All subsequent references to this text will appear in parenthetical citations.

<sup>25</sup> For accounts of the fates of these three Nawabs, see See P. J. Marshall, *The New Cambridge History of India* vol. 2, pt. 2 *Bengal, The British Bridgehead, Eastern India 1740-1828* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 70-92; Ram Gopal, *How the British Occupied Bengal* (Calcutta: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 183-334; H. H. Dodwell, “Clive in Bengal, 1756-60,” in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, ed. H. H. Dodwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 4: 148-49. See also H. H. Dodwell, “Bengal, 1760-72,” in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, 4: 166-173.

<sup>26</sup> See Robert D. Hume, “Goldsmith and Sheridan and the Supposed Revolution of ‘Laughing’ Against ‘Sentimental’ Comedy,” *Studies in Change and Revolution*, ed. Paul

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Korshin (Menton: Scholar, 1972), 237-76, for a problematized reading of the “laughing comedy revolution” hypothesis. Hume points out that Goldsmith and Sheridan were not so much “revolutionaries” who believed in going it alone as liberal borrowers from the thriving anti-sentimental theatre around them to which supposedly minor playwrights like Foote and Garrick were considerable contributors. See especially 255-56.

<sup>27</sup> See Elizabeth Chatten, *Samuel Foote* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980), 84-86, 102-05. See also Paula R. Bakscheider, introduction to *The Plays of Samuel Foote*, ed. Paula R. Bakscheider and Douglas Howard (New York: Garland, 1983), 1: vii-xxii.

<sup>28</sup> For an example of the former, see Renu Juneja’s “The Native and the Nabob.” The latter kind is represented by Bhattacharya’s *Reading the Splendid Body*.

<sup>29</sup> *The Critical Review* 1 (Jan 1771) (repr., Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1951), 112-13.

<sup>30</sup> See Henry Mackenzie, *The Lounger* 44 (1785), repr., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., vol. 2 (London, 1787), 74-85. Mr. Homespun, Mackenzie’s plainspoken mouthpiece points out, “You must know that since he [Sir Mushroom, the Nabob] came home, by presents of shawls and muslins to my lady, and, as some folks say, by lending some of his spare rupees to my Lord, he is become a great favourite at \_\_\_ Lodge.”

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Foote, *The Commissary* in *The Plays of Samuel Foote*, vol. 2. ed. Paula R. Bakscheider and Douglas Howard (New York: Garland, 1983), 3. 58. Hereafter cited in text, and references are to act and page number in this edition.

<sup>32</sup> Bhattacharya, *Reading the Splendid Body*, 109.

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<sup>33</sup> Samuel Foote, *The Nabob*, in *The Plays of Samuel Foote*, vol. 3, ed. Paula R. Backscheider and Douglas Howard (New York: Garland, 1983), 3.66. Hereafter cited in text, and references are to act and page number.

<sup>34</sup> Bhattacharya, 107-108.

<sup>35</sup> Srinivas Aravamudan, *The Tropicopolitans* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 21.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>37</sup> For account of the symbolic punishments meted out to subjects who rebelled against Imperial authority in the Mughal Empire, see Satya Prakash Sangar, *Crime and Punishment In Mughal India* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers Ltd., 1967), 189-216. Sir Mite's reaction to the Oldham family's disregard for his "gracious" offer of matrimony could be read as a caricatured version of "theatrical" displays of the Mughal aristocrats displeasure at slights offered to symbolic gestures/gifts bestowed upon the subjects of the Mughal Empire.

<sup>38</sup> John F. Richards, *The New Cambridge History of India*, vol.1 pt. 5, *The Mughal Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 60.

<sup>39</sup> *Letters to and from the East India Company's Servants, at Bengal, Fort St. George, and Bombay relative to the treaties and Grants from the Country Powers, from the Year 1756 to 1766* (London, 1772), 64-65.

<sup>40</sup> See Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 59-60I. I use the term in the sense it is used by Nancy Armstrong in this important work.

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<sup>41</sup> Felicity Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1995), 2-3.

<sup>42</sup> Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, eds., introduction to *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 3-26.

<sup>43</sup> Betty Joseph, *Reading the East India Company, 1720-1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 7-8.

<sup>44</sup> Frances Brooke, *The Excursion* (London, 1777), 1: 138. Hereafter cited in text, and references are to volume and page number in this edition

<sup>45</sup> See Suresh C. Ghosh, *The Social Condition of the British in Bengal 1757-1800* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 147.

<sup>46</sup> *The Excursion* is in the tradition of the female Bildungsroman popular at this time and as such belongs in the company of such better known texts authored by women as *History of Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), *Evelina* (1778), and *The Female Quixote* (1752). The young, fatherless heroine is exposed to the glitter and glitz of London quality before she learns to appreciate the intrinsic value of a retired yet decently prosperous life of the rural gentry. The narrator combines didacticism with entertainment as she addresses the parents directly: “Let your children, ye careful parents, see this world of which they entertain such fallacious ideas. Let their own experience, for they will never grow wise from you, break the gay bubble which fond imagination had formed” (1.144). The episode about the Nabobess and her ostentatious lifestyle certainly serves as an important phase in Maria’s reeducation. It is one of the several experientially ambiguous spaces that

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make up the London part of the novel: the theatre houses with their motley crowd, the questionable company at Lady Hardy's card table being prominent, among others.

<sup>47</sup> For an account of the aristocratic view of marriage in the Mughal Empire, see Annemarie Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art, and Culture*, trans. Corinne Attwood, ed. Burzine K. Waghmar (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 143-224. See also Andrea Hintze, *The Mughal Empire and Its Decline: An Interpretation of the Sources of Social Power* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1997), 55-57.

<sup>48</sup> See William Dalrymple, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (New York: Viking, 2003), 60-61. For Kirkpatrick's predilection for other Indian customs, see also 90-91, 98-99, and 100.

<sup>49</sup> Frances Brooke, *History of Emily Montague* (1769; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), 338-39. Hereafter cited in text, and references are to page number in this edition.

<sup>50</sup> According to Jennett Humphreys, the whole impression of the work was sold out on the very day of publication and by 1805 there were four editions. See Jennett Humphreys, "Bennett, Anna Maria (d. 1808)", rev. Rebecca Mills, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2117>, accessed 18 June 2006.

<sup>51</sup> Anna Maria Bennett, *Anna: or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress. Interspersed with Anecdotes of a Nabob*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1785; London, 1786), 1: 89. Hereafter cited in text, and references are to volume and page number in this edition.

<sup>52</sup> See Ghosh, *The Social Condition of the British*, 147.

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<sup>53</sup> For an account of the significance of public display of wealth and consumption in the Mughal Imperial power structure, see Hintze, *The Mughal Empire and Its Decline*, 50-55.

<sup>54</sup> See Richard Steele, *The Conscious Lovers*, ed. Shirley Strum Kenny (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), 4. 2. 47-50, 75.

<sup>55</sup> Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones*, 188.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>60</sup> Phoebe Gibbes, *Hartly House, Calcutta* (Dublin, 1789), 285. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>61</sup> See Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>62</sup> Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones*, 176.

<sup>63</sup> One does not encounter the moral sentimentalism in *Hartly House, Calcutta* one comes across in representations of India and Indians in such texts as *The Man of Feeling* and *Mount Henneth* to be discussed in the following section. Phoebe Gibbes' India is not about acutely sensitive and suffering natives and the rare Englishmen who vicariously suffer with them. Her heroine Sophia Goldborne summarily dismisses any such fruitless indulgence: "Be it always remembered by you, that Indostan is the land of vivacity, rather than that of sentiment" (62). She herself is a remarkably unsentimental

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heroine compared to Caroline Selwyn in *Mount Henneth* or the much older Indiana in Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*. Unlike Indiana, who is a tearful orphan during the majority of the play until the discovery of her true identity as the daughter of an East India merchant, Sophia has a loving father who dotes on her. Unlike Caroline, she is under no obligation to marry a rich, odious Nabob. As a matter of fact, her sojourn in India is not about marriage at all. She pronounces half jocularly: "I have entered into [a private vow with myself] never to marry in Indostan" and goes on to add "A vow, take notice, Arabella, I will not violate to be a Nabobess" (6). She immerses herself in an endless series of diversions, which involves pleasure boats, dancing girls, and richly decorated palanquins. Her unsentimental or, rather, anti-sentimental character is nowhere more conspicuous than in her response to an all-male production of Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* on the Calcutta stage run by the dramatically inclined members of the British community: "*The Conscious Lovers* is a piece I read with displeasure (at least some scenes of it) and behold [it] represented with disgust" (237). Significantly, the man who played young Beville in the Calcutta production of Steele's sentimental play briefly courts Sophia with little success. She is quite evidently unwilling to play the part of the lachrymose Indiana in real life.

<sup>64</sup> Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones*, 180.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 188

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>70</sup> Hintze, *The Mughal Empire and Its Decline*, 40

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> See Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6. See also Julie Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 6. Jerome McGann argues that “sensibility” is more “primitive” and belongs more to the early decades of the eighteenth century than “sentimentality,” which according to him is a “sophisticated acquirement” gained through “conscious attention and reflection.” Julie Ellison, by contrast, argues that instead of thinking in terms of a shift in the degrees of complexity in sensibility/sentiment in the eighteenth century, it is more profitable to think of it in terms of a shift away from exclusive transactions between social equals toward “scenarios of inequality.”

<sup>73</sup> Ellison, *Cato's Tears*, 15.

<sup>74</sup> Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, ed. Brian Vickers (1771; London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 103.

<sup>75</sup> Ellison, *Cato's Tears*, 12-13

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>77</sup> For an account of the break down of the traditional Nawabi economy of pre-emption during the Dual Government, see Sudipta Sen, *Empire of Free Trade: East India Company and Making of the Colonial Marketplace* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 14-15. For an account of the collaborative extortion of the

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Indian peasants and traders by East India Company officials and their native agents, see Siraj Ahmed, "The Theatre of the Civilized Self: Edmund Burke and the East India Trials," *Representations* 78 (2002): 28-55. See especially 36-37.

<sup>78</sup> Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, 94.

<sup>79</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 202.

<sup>80</sup> For account of the Jain concepts of Kingship and their influence on both Hindu and Muslim rulers of India before European intrusion began in earnest in the eighteenth century, see John E. Cort, "Who is a King? Jain Narratives of Kingship in Medieval Western India," in *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History*, ed. John E. Cort (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 85-110. See especially 105-106, for an account of the Jain influence on the Mughal Emperors and their policies.

<sup>81</sup> Robert Bage, *Mount Henneth*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1782; London, 1788), 1: 168, 191.

Hereafter cited in text, and references are to volume and page number.

<sup>82</sup> Saiyid Muhammad Reza Khan (1717?-1791) is decidedly one of the last great examples of such successful immigration from neighboring Asian empires and kingdoms to Mughal India. Khan, a Persian of aristocratic lineage, actually became an intermediary between the East India Company and the native Nawabs of Bengal in the aftermath of the Battle of Plassey, during the so-called "Anglo-Mughal" era. See Abdul Majed Khan, *The Transition in Bengal*, 1-31.

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<sup>83</sup> Gary Kelly, “Bage, Robert (1728?–1801),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1028>, accessed 18 June 2006.

CHAPTER FIVE  
TOWARD A CONCLUSION: NABOBS AND SAHIBS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY  
INDIAN PROSE NARRATIVES

I

The Native and the Nabob

In the preceding chapters I have traced how the representations of the British East India merchant underwent a series of transformations between the late seventeenth century and the mid-eighteenth century. The pusillanimous and servile overseas merchant in late seventeenth-century popular drama gave rise to the early eighteenth-century virtuous Returnee from the East Indies as a corrective foil. The virtuous Returnee was further embellished with righteous martial valor during the decade leading up to the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739). In the aftermath of the 1757 Battle of Plassey, the East India merchant turned Nabob began to appear in popular drama, poetry, and fiction. The flamboyant Nabob attests to the cultural anxiety over the invasion of the British mercantile body by manners and customs alien to a rapidly growing British identity forged by a common Protestantism and righteous war against overseas enemies.<sup>1</sup> In addition to or, rather, in tandem with his unpatriotic cultural baggage, the Nabob also disconcerted a substantial number of British poets, novelists, and political commentators with his vocational transgressions. The Nabob elicited so much critical attention from

some eighteenth-century British literary writers not only because he flaunted his wealth and tried to buy his way into quality, but more importantly because he had supposedly violated his pacific calling and had imbibed an alien military-aristocratic culture. The British public loved and adored war heroes like General James Wolfe and considered prize money and other spoils of war to be the professional perquisites of such martial heroes, but they could not condone East India merchants enriching themselves by waging wars of attrition.<sup>2</sup>

The Nabob in some popular literary representations, then, was generally an East India merchant hardly recognizable as such any more, because he waged war against helpless natives to extort their wealth, flaunted his ill-gotten fortune in order to bribe his way into the society of his betters, and attempted to seduce or forcibly marry virtuous British women. Samuel Foote's play *The Nabob* (1772), Anna Maria Bennett's novel *Anna: or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress* (1786), and Phoebe Gibbes' *Hartley House, Calcutta* (1789), already discussed in the previous chapter, contain examples of such Nabobs. By calling these individuals "Nabobs," which, as has been already explained, was a corruption of the Indo-Persian term "Nawab," popular British authors implied that these wayward British merchant/ adventurers had gone "native" in a peculiar way.

In contrast to real-life marooned sailors such as Alexander Selkirk and his fictional counterpart Robinson Crusoe, who temporarily revert to a state of nature like the New World savages, the Nabobs deliberately identified themselves with the Nawabs, the bejeweled and turbaned warlords of a decadent Oriental Empire. Such an association further implies that some armchair Indologists or the stay-at-home British authors, who used Indian material in their writings, tended to oversimplify the often complex

relationship between the British merchant and the native Nawabs, and, by extension, they traced the origin of the corruption to the Indian society and people. According to A. Yusuf Ali, “Such generalized pictures, painted with thick colours, must necessarily be caricatures. But behind these pictures lies the assumption that the faults caricatured were but the faults of the people of India, caught like an infection.”<sup>3</sup> In popular drama, poetry, fiction, and parliamentary speeches the Nabobs and, by extension, their originals the native Nawabs are vicious military rulers, who hold absolute sway over cowed populations of natives. Such a reified representation certainly paved the way for the frame of mind which ultimately triumphed in British imperial policy toward India: to treat the natives as a helpless homogeneous mass waiting to be rescued by humane and moral British governance from the clutches of both the British Nabobs and their partners in crime, the Mughal Nawabs. Edmund Burke’s dramatic parliamentary speeches during the long protracted impeachment trials of Warren Hastings (1786-1794) are illustrative of how not only authors of popular fiction, drama, and poetry but also shrewd politicians were engaged in constructing the Indian native as a homogeneous, oppressed, mutilated body. Such caricatured representations frequently glossed over the fact that the tortures and mutilations were sometimes carried out by corrupt Indian agents employed by the East India Company.<sup>4</sup>

Even as such writings attempt to speak for the native or, rather, to make the native speak like a shabby ventriloquist’s dummy, they unwittingly establish a binary power relationship between the oppressed and wretched natives and their foreign oppressors the Nabob, which in turn allows a putatively reformed and ethically sound imperial policy to replace it. According to Siraj Ahmed, “This stirring vision of a reformed, national empire

[as envisioned by Edmund Burke in his speeches] looked forward to the nineteenth-century liberal apology for empire, which claimed that when parliament eliminated the East India Company's monopoly in 1813, empire transcended the merchant's private interest and joined the nation-state's progressive history as the necessary agent of its propagation."<sup>5</sup> Some twentieth and late twentieth-century postcolonial criticism has tended to espouse a similar binary approach when it comes to the issue of "native" versus the colonizer.<sup>6</sup>

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the colonizer/colonized conqueror/conquered, or the oppressor/resistance binaries are not always useful in opening up the Nabob literature from this era of unsettled imperial encounters. Instead, one needs to read such texts provisionally in terms of a complex and tangled web of caste loyalty, filial bonding, and mutual favors, which was as often sealed by symbolic gifts and honors as their betrayal was punished in spectacular manner in the Mughal Empire. The priceless Indian muslin shawl and the Jagirs or grants of land flaunted by the caricatured British Nabobs and the seemingly wasteful manners and customs imbibed from the Mughal Nawabs by him frequently occupied a diametrically opposed system of meaning in the Mughal imperial culture of the time. For example, employing the paradigmatic studies of centers of core cultural values and their peripheries in pre-modern societies such as that of Clifford Geertz and Edward Shil, Michael H. Fisher has pointed out the sacral significance of the gifts and favors exchanged between the Mughal Emperors and his vassals: "He [the Emperor] symbolically exchanged powerful substances with his officials; they submissively offered him *nazr*, or gold coins and

precious gifts, and he bestowed on them *Khil'at*, or robes of honor—putatively worn by the Emperor himself and therefore imbued with his sacred essence (11).”<sup>7</sup>

With the above-mentioned contextual differences in view, I shall briefly examine the other side of the coin, so to speak, without which the saga of the Nabob could not be brought to a provisional conclusion. How did the natives perceive the British merchants who traded and fought in their midst as the opportunity arose or the occasion demanded? To rephrase the question: did the rulers and subjects of the Mughal Empire use any such term with a host of negative associations as “Nabob” when they referred to these sojourners among them? I use the phrase “rulers and subjects of the Mughal Empire” deliberately in order to avoid the controversial term “native,” a highly contested term in postcolonial theory.

The British merchant turned warrior in Mughal India came into close contact with powerful Nawabs as well as courtiers, poets, merchants, soldiers, servants, dancing girls, singers, musicians, and concubines in the course of his business affairs and social life. He concluded treaties with the Nawabs when he was not fighting for or against them, was invited to join the Nawabs’ hunting expeditions and dance performances. In his own household he employed Indian servants, smoked Indian pipes, ate Indian dishes, dressed in Indian finery, employed Indian dancing girls and musicians, and slept with Indian concubines whenever marriageable British women were not available.<sup>8</sup> In the East India Company Army, he frequently commanded large numbers of Indian soldiers whom he led into battle against hostile armies made up largely of professional Indian soldiers or groups of armed, disgruntled peasants and tribesmen.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the British merchant/soldier in Mughal India encountered the “native” in a fascinatingly plural sense.

The Indian native, as he/she was known to the Nabob, came in a myriad of castes and ethnicities, each endowed with their distinct cultural and economic function pertaining to British trade in Mughal India. The day of the homogeneous “native” living under the blanket colonial rule of the British was still a thing of the future.

In these pre-modern days Indians did not imagine themselves as Indians in terms of a specific geopolitical description bound by solid cartographic borders. As the subjects of a traditional empire, they put their first allegiance in their immediate ethnic, linguistic, and caste-based community and accepted the Mughal Emperor’s suzerainty only to the extent that the imperial center was capable of exerting its monopoly over military violence, although they were not averse to accepting Mughal customs and manners in their political as well as social practices.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, I shall limit my discussion to the castes and communities which served the ruling castes of the Empire as intellectuals and warriors, or as servants and entertainers. I shall demonstrate that the Englishman who was vilified as the Nabob by his own stay-at-home countrymen was a “Sahib” to many Indians who came into contact with him. According to the *OED*, “Sahib” is a “respectful title used by the natives of India in addressing an Englishman or other European (= ‘Sir’); in native use, an Englishman, a European. Also affixed as a title (equivalent to ‘Mr.’ prefixed) to the name or office of a European and to Indian and Bangladeshi titles and names. The *OED* lists the first usage of the term in 1696 in John Ovington’s travel narrative entitled *A Voyage to Suratt*.

“Sahib” was a term used originally by Indians to describe a refined, cultured Indian male of upper caste. I argue that during the 1757-1857 period when the Mughal Emperor was still a figurehead of great value and prestige, the British merchant/warrior

in India was temporarily given the honorary status of Sahib by many Indians he came into contact with in the course of his professional as well as leisure activities. This Sahib was frequently a brave warrior and boon companion, an aficionado of good wine and poetry, a courteous admirer of feminine beauty, a connoisseur of Indian dance and music, and a generous-to-a fault master/patron. These were exactly the attributes of an ideal Indian Sahib in the Mughal Empire, and some Indians evidently found them in many British Sahibs of this era, because they (the British expatriates) had assimilated these characteristics successfully.

The Sahib was certainly a dilution of the older “Mirza” or Mughal aristocrat, whose attributes were laid down in a seventeenth-century conduct manual called the *Mirzanama*. The original Mirza was a rather exclusive concept, because in the early days of the Mughal Empire only males of aristocratic Turco-Mongol descent were allowed to use the appellation. However, by the eighteenth century, belonging to a certain ethnicity was no longer a prerequisite for being a Mirza or a Sahib. As a matter of fact, the two titles were frequently used together. According to the *Mirzanama*, a Mirza Sahib’s life is characterized not by the pursuit of wealth and power but by living a life governed by exemplary generosity and good taste. The wine he drinks must be scented so as not to give offense to the company. He must study poetry and patronize music but must refrain from singing himself lest he give offense to his guests. The Mirza should recite the *Qur’an* and have some knowledge of the *Shari’a* but should refrain from engaging his company in weighty discussions about freewill and predestination.<sup>11</sup> In the eighteenth century, many Britons adapted themselves to some form of the good life outlined in the *Mirzanama*. They did not have to read and learn the text by heart in order to do so. The

urban culture of eighteenth-century Mughal India had long been steeped in the gentility and good manners demanded by the *Mirzanama* and other similar conduct manuals. As a result, in the eighteenth century many Britons could fluently adapt the manners of the Sahib, to the delight of the Indians who associated with them in various capacities. The dreaded and hated white “Sahib” of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was still very much an apparition of the future.<sup>12</sup>

In this chapter, the last one in this dissertation, I shall critically examine two Indian texts from the era of the good British Sahibs: *Travels of Dean Mahomet: An Eighteenth-Century Journey Through India* (1796) and *The Dancing Girl* (1787). The former is an autobiography/travel narrative written by Dean Mahomet who served as a noncommissioned officer in the East India Company Army between 1769 and 1784. The *Travels* is particularly useful to my project because Dean Mahomet’s travels throughout northern and eastern India was undertaken as a subaltern attached to Baker Sahib, a young British Quartermaster, who ended his military career as a Captain. The relationship between Baker and Mahomet is one marked by mutual filial affection and deep loyalty. Similarly, *The Dancing Girl* by Hasan Shah, another autobiographical narrative originally written in Indo-Persian, depicts an affectionate bond between Syed Hasan, an upper-caste clerk/accountant, and his employer Ming Sahib, an officer in the East India Company Army. But before I engage in a critical analysis of these two texts, I shall briefly attempt to reconstruct the bizarrely bifurcated cultural and social milieu in Mughal India inhabited by the British Sahib.

On the one hand, the ruling castes and cliques in the largely imperial or Nawabi cities like Delhi, Lucknow, and Hyderabad still attempted to maintain a lifestyle marked

by refined manners and culture in the face of successive foreign invasions and civil wars.<sup>13</sup> On the other, civil strife and foreign invasions and the incompetence of weak Emperors and Nawabs brought about a rapid decline in the traditional patron-vassal relationship based on mutual favors and service that had sustained the imperial culture for ages. The British Sahibs attended lavish entertainments and banquets in these still opulent cities as guests of the Emperor or the Nawabs, went out on hunting expeditions during which harems full of courtesans, eunuchs, and musicians followed the fun-loving, princely host. This opulent yet quickly disintegrating world is admirably preserved in the poetry of Mir Hasan Suda (1713-1780) and Mir Taqi Mir (1724-1810), the two greatest Mughal poets of the eighteenth century. An examination of some of their poetry is pertinent to my project because the loss of the traditional lord-vassal, patron-client relationships based on loyalty and mutual affection, which they lament over, is crucial to understanding the relationship between British Sahibs and Indians in the two autobiographical narratives I have chosen to analyze.

## II

### The Divided World of the Imperial City

The so-called *Shehr ashob* (literally lamentation for the city) poetry written by both Mir and Suda speak of, among other things, the rapid decline of an urban and urbane civilization. The Persian word *Shehr* (which has been adopted by many Indian languages such as Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and Marathi) literally means “City,” although it carries a cultural baggage peculiar to the age in which Mir and Suda wrote or, rather,

orally composed their poetry.<sup>14</sup> For these poets and their contemporaries, the *Shehr* was much more than a fortified and walled city in the Mughal fashion consisting of magnificent palaces, triumphal arches, opulent gardens, filthy yet carnivalesquely thriving market places, and of colorful processions and pageants on important state occasions. In addition, it was to them a unique, civilized way of life as opposed to the uncouth existence of the countryside inhabited by the peasants or the even ruder lives of the distant mountain and desert tribes. While the notion of the *Shehr* was certainly an elitist one, it combined for its adherents material comforts and amenities with spiritual certainties. An endless range of castes and communities—from the exalted intellectuals like poets, courtiers, scholars, physicians, astrologers, and historiographers to the less exalted retainers, servants, and suppliers of amenities such as merchants, soldiers, musicians, dancers, courtesans, and cooks—found employment and patronage when the city was presided over by an able Emperor and a competent nobility. Loyalty, gratitude, hospitality, and magnanimity, all the values that cemented the diverse castes and communities together in the ancient empire, flourished in such an imperial city. In such an ideal state of affairs, the lord rewarded his loyal retainers amply for their services, and the patron lavished the poet for his craftsmanship with generous gifts. The prosperous and well-protected peasant gladly paid the revenues that were the lord's by right, and the weaver happily wove the intricate and expensive apparel he knew was sure to find an appreciative clientele among the discerning nobility. In their poetry of lamentation, both Mir and Sauda nostalgically evoke such a bygone era of material as well as spiritual well-being embodied by the imperial city of Delhi.<sup>15</sup> One could reasonably call this poetic

version of Delhi an Indian Camelot forever beyond the horizon of the tortured present inhabited by the poets.

The relative stability and security of the pre-1707 Mughal Empire quite naturally held a strong appeal in the imagination of sensitive men of letters like Mir and Sauda. Beginning with 1707, the year the Great Mughal Aurangzeb (1658-1707) breathed his last, the Empire saw a succession of weak-willed Emperors, who allowed themselves to be manipulated by powerful nobles and failed to resist foreign invasions and internal enemies. Bankrupt nobles with empty coffers, who could not pay their retainers and soldiers, let alone their tradesmen who supplied them with luxuries as well as necessities, became a common sight. In such uncertain times poets suffered more than most, because in the absence of a mass print culture they were absolutely dependent on powerful patrons, literally for the bread on their tables. Both Mir and Sauda struggled to make both ends meet in Delhi during the major foreign invasions—the Persian invasion led by Nadir Shah in 1739, the successive Afghan invasions led by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1749, 1757, and 1760—and also during the repeated Maratha and Jat incursions into Delhi and her outskirts between 1757 and 1775. Commenting on the prevalent note of despair in eighteenth-century Urdu poetry, A. Yusuf Ali writes: “A settled melancholy, a feeling of despair came over their [of Sauda, Mir, and other lesser Urdu poets at this time] thoughts. The convulsion in Delhi swept away many of their landmarks. They became spiritually and intellectually homeless. A feeling of despair is the key-note of the swan-song of the older Urdu poetry.”<sup>16</sup> In one of his poems of lamentation Mir writes:

There was a city, famed throughout the world,  
Where dwelt the chosen spirits of the age;

Delhi its name, fairest among the fair.

Fate looted it and laid it desolate,

And to that ravaged city I belong.<sup>17</sup>

It is not merely the destruction of the physical city that pains Mir, but he is also saddened by the irretrievable loss of the values Delhi, this once magnificent city, stood for. For Mir the pre-invasion Delhi was synonymous with an ideal state where the lord-vassal, patron-servant relationships flourished in their utmost perfection: “Here in this city where the dust drifts in deserted lanes / A man might come and fill his lap with gold in days gone by” (*Three Mughal Poets*, 247). The man who filled up his lap with gold is the quintessential man of talent and merit like Mir, who once found generous gift-bestowing patrons in the city. Mir laments the irretrievable loss of the traditional ties that once held the society together in a harmonious existence: “Ours is a dark age; men have lost all trace of love and loyalty,” and goes on to add, “The cult of human decency has vanished from the world” (*Three Mughal Poets*, 248-49). Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam have aptly translated the Urdu phrase in the original “Rasm maraw-wat ki” as “the cult of human decency.” Mir encapsulates a whole range of actions and attitudes in this brief phrase. It is the hospitality shown by the householder to the wayfarer, the largesse shown by the patron to the subordinate, the cheerfulness and spontaneous loyalty offered by the retainer to the master, the unrequited devotion of the lover to the seemingly indifferent lady, the honesty and integrity shown by the *Kadi* (the judge) in his verdict, and so on.

Sauda also ridicules such lack of “human decency” in his satiric poems. One of them, about a nobleman who violates the rules of hospitality by treating a guest rudely, Sauda concludes with an invective: “On such a perfect nobleman, I say, / May God send

down his curses night and day.”<sup>18</sup> It is indeed remarkable that unlike some of their contemporaries, such as the great religious scholar Shah Wali Ullah, Sauda and Mir refused to accept any convenient theological explanation for the decline of the Mughal Empire. As far as they were concerned, it was not any deviation from Orthodox Islamic practices such as the tolerance of pagan peoples and their rituals and the encouragement of singing and dancing that had brought about the malaise. Shah Wali Ullah (1703-1763), an influential eighteenth-century Islamic scholar and polemicist, waged a protracted war against what he believed to be the paganization of Indian Muslims. He frequently condemned the Mughal ruling elite for tolerating and even encouraging pagan practices in public and private life. His followers even welcomed Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Afghan invader, as a renewer of Islamic government in India and as a scourge of God who had come to punish un-Islamic practices.<sup>19</sup> For Mir and Sauda, it was, on the contrary, the loss of the basic human decency and the concomitant erosion of the sense of one’s caste identity and duties that had brought about this cultural decay. Sauda did not balk at ridiculing a man of the stature of Shah Wali Ullah, because the scholar had blinded himself with bigotry and intellectual pride: “The angels rub his beard with sandal-wood oil; / Troops of Houries come and scatter roses before him.”<sup>20</sup> According to Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam, “Sauda was never overawed by anyone. Men with a countrywide reputation were attacked by name in his satires. The great religious leader Shah Wali [Wali] Ullah is the subject of one of them” (*Three Mughal Poets*, 61). Mir and Sauda both reflect a surprisingly secular and cosmopolitan ethos that allows them to conceive of a common humanity beyond religious and ethnic identity, which, however, they insist should be realized within the bounds of the caste and calling one was born

into. As Russell and Islam points out, “He [Sauda] attributed the decay of the Empire to the selfish neglect by men of all classes of the duties to society appropriate to their station” (*ThreeMughal Poets*, 59). In other words, one would be disappointed if one searched for a modern egalitarian sensibility in their poetry.

Expressing similar views about the need to uphold the traditional hierarchy, Mir had only scathing contempt in reserve for the upstart (according to Mir) Afghan chief Ahmad Shah Abdali, who invaded Mughal India three times in the eighteenth century and was hailed by some sections of the Islamic clergy and scholars as a defender of the true faith. Ralph Russell points out, “Where it was a common Muslim attitude to the Afghan Abdali to welcome him as the main hope for the restoration of pure Islamic government, Mir hated him as the invader and despoiler of his country.”<sup>21</sup> In *Zikr-i-Mir*, his fragmentary autobiography, Mir describes the wholesale plunder by Afghan soldiers during the last and final invasion of Delhi by Abdali in 1760: “The cry of the oppressed rose to heaven, but the King [Abdali], who considered himself a pillar of true religion, was quite unmoved.”<sup>22</sup> Evidently, Mir, not unlike many contemporary Mughal subjects, was able to rise above narrow religious and sectarian identities in the interest of a cosmopolitan (albeit an Indian version of it) one based on basic human decency and courtesy. According to A. Yusuf Ali, “As we learn from *Zikr-i-Mir*, the relations of the two communities [Hindu and Muslim] to each other were based on other considerations than religion.”<sup>23</sup> Although there were no lack of agitators and polemicists, who incited their respective communities to put a homogeneous religious identity before every other consideration, “the old standards of social friendliness continued to hold sway,” as

Maulvi Abdul Haq, the editor of the only twentieth-century edition of Mir's autobiography, has observed.<sup>24</sup>

The invader and the despoiler for both Mir and Sauda was any individual or group of individuals who threatened the traditional caste-based hierarchy by raising the standard of rebellion and aggression against the eternal Mughal Empire. Thus, powerful cliques and communities like the Afghans, the Persians, the Marathas, and the Sikhs were rebels and invaders in different contexts, just as the rebellious nobleman, the wandering rogue soldier, and the upstart servant were equally so. They disrupted the civilized way of life of the city, and by doing so they disrupted the complex web of caste and creed that held the Empire together by putting their selfish agenda before those of the polity. Not surprisingly, Mir and Sauda do not include the British merchant/ soldier in their catalogue of recalcitrant elements.

There is only one brief allusion to the British in Mir's autobiography. He was describing the grand reception at Lucknow given to Warren Hastings by the Nawab of Awadh in 1784. A. Yusuf Ali thinks that Mir was being reticent about the visiting British dignitary because he did not consider it good form to criticize his patron the Nawab's honored guest: "He [Mir] describes minutely the magnificence of the reception, the splendor of the fireworks and the opulence of the feasts, but is significantly reticent about the moral impression which the Englishman left on his mind."<sup>25</sup> Ali incorrectly assumes that Mir and his generation treated the British as an alien and morally debilitating presence in the Mughal Empire. On the contrary, as far as these two Mughal poets and their contemporaries were concerned, the British were one among a myriad of castes and communities that lived in the empire with the Emperor's consent and as such were hardly

worth commenting on, while issues of much greater import such as the Persian or Afghan invasions or rebellions by the Emperor's underlings demanded their attention. According to Rajat Kanti Ray, "What they [the Mughal poets and historiographers] were obliged to try and make sense of was a close, ambiguous encounter between two civilizations."<sup>26</sup> He goes on to add, "The political culture of the country expressed itself through the idea that the Emperor of Delhi was the Lord of the Universe (*Dillishvaro wa Jagadishvaro wa*). When the universal dominion of the Mughals passed, the idea of that dominion persisted in the minds of men [like Mir and Sauda], and usurpations were sought to be legitimized within the framework imposed by that persistent idea."<sup>27</sup>

But the British merchant had already left the security of the well-fortified factory and made his incursion into the complex world of Indian power politics and social life beginning with the 1757 Battle of Plassey.<sup>28</sup> He negotiated treaties with Nawabs and Emperors, often in equal terms and increasingly from a position of strength. He also partook of the fast disappearing but still enticing urban imperial culture characterized by indulgence in poetry, music, dancing, hunting, gastronomic adventures, and amorous intrigues. In the eyes of his Indian associates, servants, and underlings, the British merchant/warrior sometimes became a Sahib. In the last section of this chapter I shall examine the representations of two such Sahibs in Dean Mahomets' *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* and Syed Hasan Shah's *The Dancing Girl*, respectively.

### III

#### The Sahib Among the Indians

*The Travels of Dean Mahomet: An Eighteenth-Century Journey through India* (1796) written by Dean Mahomet recounts his travels and the military campaigns he undertook with his commanding officer Captain Godfrey Evan Baker, a Protestant Anglo-Irish, throughout eastern and northern India between 1769 and 1784. Mahomet was only twenty-four years old when in 1784 he decided to accompany Baker, only a few years older than he, to Ireland at the end of an eventful military career. He eventually established himself as a masseur and herbalist at Brighton and pursued this career until his death in 1851.<sup>29</sup>

In the Preface to his pioneering twentieth-century edition of *Travels of Dean Mahomet*, Michael H. Fisher writes, “Dean Mahomet grew up during the tumultuous late eighteenth century, as the largely Muslim rulers of North India—whom his family had served for generations—succumbed to the expanding English East India Company” (xiv). Mahomet’s family had traditionally served as professional soldiers in the armies of the Nawabs. Beginning with Mahomet’s father and older brother, they began to serve the East India Company army. Mahomet points out in his *Travels* that his father “was descended from the same race as the Nabobs of Moorshadabad” and also that he [Mahomet’s father] was “appointed Subadar [noncommissioned officer] in a Battalion of Seapoys [native infantry] commanded by Captain Adams.”<sup>30</sup> The decision on the part of many Indian soldiers and professionals like Mahomet’s father to serve the Company was not always “a potentially dangerous and difficult” ideological choice as Fisher claims

(Preface xiv). On the contrary, such choices were prompted mostly by pragmatic considerations, which did not generally impinge on the religious and communal allegiances of such Indian individuals belonging to different caste-based professions. In the troubled Mughal Empire, there were many mercenary/professional armies as well as armed communities of peasants and tribesmen. Such armed groups hardly ever thought of themselves as being “national” armies. They served powerful and prestigious warlords in exchange for favors and privileges often sealed by symbolic gifts and presents. As Stephen P. Rosen has pointed out, the Mughal Empire never had a national standing army, unlike some European nation-states beginning in the Renaissance. It was served by a loosely constructed army whose caste and ethnic allegiances were cumbersomely diverse and complex at the best of times. The English East India Company Army was certainly the first army to be organized and run in the modern European style in the Mughal Empire.<sup>31</sup>

Many Indians of the warrior castes found the Company to be a reliable patron/employer at a time when the traditional patrons, the Indian Princes, were in military and financial disarray and were frequently incapable of rewarding their services generously.<sup>32</sup> Soldiers like Dean Mahomet or his father did not necessarily consider themselves as breaking a tradition by serving the Company, because as far as they were concerned the Company Army and the British “Sahib” officers they fought under were not foreigners. They certainly found service under the Company all the more congenial to their world-view because the Company frequently fought as allies of the Mughal Emperor and the independent Nawabs whenever the occasion called for such strategic alliances.

No such clear cut boundaries between “native resistance” and “foreign conquerors’ had yet come into existence among Indians as Fisher implies in his assessment of the historical milieu inhabited by Dean Mahomet: “Through Travels, he presented his personal account of the multitude of peoples and customs he encountered while marching across north India as part of the English East India Company’s military conquest of his homeland” (xiii). Fisher adds, “During these years with the Company Army, Dean Mahomet’s relationship with other Indians remained ambivalent. While his Muslim relatives accepted him as an honored guest at their domestic rituals, he nevertheless stood as an outsider to their world by virtue of his attachment to the British” (xiv). Fisher implies that there already existed a homogeneous native resistance to British occupation, whereas the material socio-political circumstances of the times were radically more complex. Fisher further claims that Mahomet often held “complex and alienating attitudes . . . toward the British conquest” (xvi), but he does not provide any evidence of such alienation from Mahomet’s own writing. Fisher’s attempt at offering a postcolonial reading of Dean Mahomet’s life and literary endeavors is handicapped by his acceptance of the fallacious premise that a conqueror/conquered or colonizer/colonized binary had already come into existence in the relationship between the British and the subjects of the Mughal Empire during the mid to late Eighteenth century.

Mahomet’s travels can be better appreciated if one recognizes the pre-modern vassal-lord and/or patron-servant relationship based on mutual affection and loyalty that existed between Dean Mahomet and Captain Baker, instead of applying an ahistorical and ambivalent colonizing master/colonized mimicman relationship. Nor does the postcolonial reading strategy of “Nationalization” as being a kind of “Tropicalization,”

more recently put forward by Srinivas Aravamudan, help us to interpret Dean Mahomet's writings and his relationship with his master. Such a strategy certainly allows us to read a broad range of colonial and postcolonial texts fruitfully, including Equiano's *Interesting Narrative of Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789) and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980).<sup>33</sup> However, the Dean Mahomet of the travels is not an uprooted migrant, nor is he a manumitted slave who has had to reconstruct his worldview radically in order to fit into a metropolitan society. Mahomet and his master Baker are both subjects in a traditional empire which was still regulated by indigenous values in the eighteenth century. In order to be truly informative, any postcolonial reading of his autobiography must not limit itself to a binary approach based on colonial domination and native resistance. Dean Mahomet's narrative is not irretrievably a part of a dominant colonial discourse, as Michael Fisher seems to think. However, I do not intend to imply by making this claim that Dean Mahomet and his generation of Indians mindlessly accepted British domination. Resistance certainly there was, but it only took place provisionally, and only in the very complex context of caste, communal, and tribal allegiances. A sufficiently homogenous nationalistic Indian identity had not yet emerged in order to confront an equally homogeneous British colonizer.

In his epistolary travel narrative, Dean Mahomet frequently describes his relationship with young Mr. Baker in filial terms. The young, impressionable boy Mahomet falls in love with the life of adventure and heroism represented by the vivacious, young Baker dressed in the colorful uniform of a East India Company officer during a lavish entertainment hosted by an Indian prince: "I was highly pleased with the appearance of the military [British] gentlemen, among whom I first beheld Mr. Baker

who particularly drew my attention” (38). It was not poverty or lack of affection at home that drew Mahomet to the Company service. He had a doting mother and a relatively prosperous home. On the contrary, it was certainly a filial/fraternal bond between the two young men which actually triumphed over the mother’s doting love: “My mother observing some alteration in my conduct, since I saw Mr. Baker, naturally supposed that I was meditating a separation from her” (39). Mahomet reminisces, “I am obliged to acknowledge that I never found myself so happy as with Mr. Baker: insensible of the authority of a superior, I experience the indulgence of a friend; and the want of a tender parent was entirely forgotten in the humanity and affection of a benevolent stranger” (41). One fails to detect any irony or ambivalence in Mahomet’s open avowal of affection for Baker.

It could be argued that Dean Mahomet was complicit in the Company’s conquest of Indian provinces, and as such he must have felt alienated, even if in secret, from his master who led him into battle against his fellow countrymen. He describes a punitive expedition against a mountain tribe, which carried out guerrilla attacks against the Company Army’s baggage train and plundered it. The culprits are pursued and captured by the Company Army of which Mahomet and his master are members. Some of the tribal warriors are executed and “suspended on a kind of gibbets, ignominiously exposed along the mountain’s conspicuous brow, in order to strike terrors into the hearts of their accomplices” (54). Mahomet does not betray any ambiguity in his reaction to the brutal, symbolic punishment meted out to the defeated resistance. On the contrary, he expresses his pride, if not boastfulness, in a mission well accomplished by a valiant and disciplined army: “The refractory were awed into submission by the terror of our arms” (123). The

Mughals had been employing similar punitive methods in dealing with such recalcitrant elements in their empire for centuries. In addition, the spectacular punishment would have been familiar to both Captain Baker and Dean Mahomet, because it had been carried out in conformity to both the traditional Mughal and English manner of dealing with traitors.

Mahomet evidently does not regard these military campaigns as a concerted effort to conquer the Mughal Empire. By the same token, British commanding officers like Captain Baker are not foreign invaders to Mahomet. As far as Mahomet is concerned, he is fulfilling his destiny as a member of a war-like clan by serving under a brave warrior and a generous master. His first allegiance is to his kind master and his army unit. Nor does this allegiance clash with his larger allegiance to the ancient Mughal Empire, because most of the campaigns he takes part in are actually fought by the Company Army on behalf of Mughal Nawabs or Hindu Rajas, all of whom at least nominally acknowledged the Mughal Emperor as the overlord. For instance, they are engaged by “Nabob Aspa-doulah” or Asaph-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Awadh, to fight against his rebellious generals (86-87).

Although Dean Mahomet does point out the reigning Mughal Emperor’s military and political impotence in his detailed description of Delhi, the imperial capital, he still evidently thinks of the Emperor’s office as being eternal and inviolable. Whenever he describes the rich imperial cities and trading centers he always concludes by pointing out that they inalienably belong to the Mughal Emperor. For instance, while describing the fate of Mahboub, the rebellious general of Nawab Asaph-ud-Daula, defeated and put under arrest by the Company Army at the behest of the Nawab, Mahomet

writes: “ Lecknow [Lucknow], the town to which Maboub [Mahboub, the rebel] was sent, is a place of considerable trade, and one of the principal factories in the Mogul’s dominions” (88). Although the city Mahomet is referring to here was at this time the capital of a virtually independent Nawab, it acknowledged the suzerainty of the Great Mughal. Since the Nawab was legally still a vassal of the Emperor, the Company army which fought as the Nawab’s retainers, were also the Emperor’s servants by extension. Ironically, Michael H. Fisher in his cultural history of Mughal India during the period Dean Mahomet served as a soldier has pointed out how powerful a symbol of political authority the Mughal Emperor remained until the 1857 “Mutiny.”<sup>34</sup> Apparently, when Fisher, the cultural and social historian, put on the hat of the literary critic in his Preface to his pioneering twentieth-century edition of Dean Mahomet’s travels, he neglected to apply his own historiographical insights.

In addition, Mahomet frequently describes how the Company Army has inherited the military architecture, fortifications, and the bureaucracy as well as the enemies of the Mughal Nawabs: “The old palace of Cossim Aly cawn [the recently ousted Nawab Mir Kasim Ali Khan], inside the ramparts, still uninjured by the wayste [sic] of time, was put in order for the residence of Colonel Grant” (51). At Murshidabad, the capital of the Nawab of Bengal, Mahomet admiringly describes a ceremonial procession attended by the reigning Nawab Mubarak-ud-Daula, the same “Nabob” the spirited heroine of Phoebe Gibbes’ *Hartly House, Calcutta* flirted precariously with: “Soon after my arrival here, I was dazzled with the glittering appearance of the Nabob, and all his train, amounting to about three thousand attendants proceeding in solemn state from his palace to the

temple” (60). As far as Mahomet is concerned, the traditional Mughal Empire with its symbolic trapping and rituals went on uninterrupted in spite of the presence of the formidable East India Company Army. While, from the clearer and scientific hindsight of the modern historian, this phase of early-modern Indian history is one of insidious conquest by the British, to Dean Mahomet and many of his contemporaries it was nothing of the sort. On the contrary, for Mahomet and his ilk the Company Army was actually policing the frontiers of the Mughal Empire by pacifying “barbaric” mountain tribes, whom the Mughal themselves had fought generation after generation. For instance, after they complete their mission to subdue the already-mentioned mountain tribe, Mahomet observes, “Hence as we proceeded on our march, we beheld the lifeless bodies of these nefarious wretches elevated along the way for a considerable distance, about half a mile from each other; and having passed through the lofty arches and gateways . . . planted with canons, and erected by former Nabobs, as a kind of battery against the hostile invasions of these mountaineers, we reached Rajamoul [Rajmahal]” (54).

In other words, Mahomet could not have felt alienated in an Army which was carrying [at least temporarily] on the military traditions of the Mughal Empire, nor could he feel like a stranger in the company of men like Captain Baker, who had willingly adopted the customs and rituals of the Mughal military elite. No such clearly demarcated lines are to be found between “natives” and the British in the victory celebrations attended by Mahomet and his master and their hosts the Indian Nawabs and Rajas. Raja Shitab Roy, a Hindu prince, regaled his British allies with native dancing girls, fire works and the finest Indian cuisine. Mahomet was allowed to take part in it as a protégé of Baker (37-38). Similarly, Nawab Asaph-ud-Daula honored his British allies by staging a

spectacular animal fight involving wild buffaloes fighting tigers and elephants fighting other elephants (93). Young Baker and other British officers evidently developed a taste for such entertainments patronized by the Mughals.

In addition, Dean Mahomet devotes an entire letter to the beautiful and accomplished Indian courtesans whose company was much sought after by British Sahibs. At one stage, Mahomet sounds as if he were attempting to defend his masters' partiality for Indian mistresses: "They [Indian courtesans] avoid every degree of affectation in their manners, and copy nature, as their grand original, in the imitation and refinement of which, their art chiefly consists. Besides they have nothing of that gross impudence which characterized the European prostitutes" (72). Mahomet, who had already spent a decade in Britain by the time *The Travels* was published, is implying that the likes of young Baker, who spend their fortunes on these Indian ladies of pleasure with surprisingly "neoclassical" aesthetic tastes, are better off than their stay-at-home counterparts, who consort with uncouth prostitutes.

The *Tawaifs* and *Devadasis* in the Mughal Empire were certainly the members of despised castes, but they at least occupied a well-defined position in the complex web of castes and communities and sometimes attained fortunes and social prominence by excelling in their traditional arts. Dean Mahomet tells the story of one such rich and generous courtesan who bailed out her lover, a merchant who had become bankrupt, with her own considerable fortune (71-72).<sup>35</sup> Just as the Mughal Nawabs and other aristocrats had patronized these custodians and performers of traditional music, dance, and poetry, so did the British Sahibs eagerly sought their services and often rewarded them

generously, at least until the Memsahibs (British women) became ubiquitous in the Empire, and sexual liaisons with Indian women became a taboo for British males.<sup>36</sup>

Whereas Dean Mahomet's filial relationship with Captain Baker develops against a backdrop crisscrossed by restless warfare and periods of celebration, that between Syed Hasan and Ming Sahib in *The Dancing Girl* would not be complete without the beautiful and accomplished Indian courtesan Khanum Jan. Instead of being a straightforward narrative of bonding between males in the course of masculine adventures, it is about a triangular relationship among a generous and temperamental master, a devoted but strong-willed servant, and a beautiful woman loved by both. Ming, the Sahib in this narrative, is a military officer who patronizes Indian courtesans and musicians in peacetime and leads a life of leisure and refined hedonism. He employs Khanum Jan and her troupe at a time when they are hard pressed to find generous patrons. Hasan, who combines the offices of steward, secretary, accountant, and confidant of Ming, secretly loves Khanum Jan. He wrestles against the dual obstacle of caste incompatibility between his beloved and himself and his loyalty to his generous master, who is also in love with her. In the end, Ming generously relinquishes his claim on Jan, and she and her troupe are relieved of their services in view of Ming's growing financial difficulties, giving her the opportunity to unite with Hasan without violating the master's rights. But the loyal Hasan refuses to abandon his master in his time of need and works conscientiously to settle his accounts, while Jan pines away for him in a distant city. By the time Hasan completes his tasks and embarks on a journey to join her, she is carried away by a wasting disease.

I have provided the above plot summary of this still little known eighteenth-century tale, originally written in Indo-Persian, in order to demonstrate how deceptively

open it might seem to be to twentieth-century Western critical concepts. For instance, *The Dancing Girl* could be situated in a teleological narrative of the birth and growth of the Indian novel by applying the Bakhtinian notion of the “zone of immediate contact” with reality. Indeed, the tale does seem to exist in the interstices of a pre-modern preoccupation with magic and an engagement with the hard-edged reality comprised of caste conflict, trade, and account keeping. As such, *The Dancing Girl* is certainly a proto-novel that predated the modern Indian novel. That Qurratulain Hyder, the pioneering English translator of *The Dancing Girl*, subscribes to such a view is amply illustrated by her evaluation of the Indian characters in the narrative: “Like most Indians they [Khanum Jan and the members of her troupe] believe that they are only fulfilling their destiny! It had been ordained that they be born as procurers and courtesans. Khanum Jan thinks differently and tries desperately to get out of that particular kind of caste system” (Afterword 104). Hyder implies that these characters are caught between a modern worldview and one that is inflexibly based on traditional values and conceptual frameworks. Khanum Jan alone stands out from the rest of the courtesans and entertainers, because she aspires to a subjectivity divorced from oppressive cultural traditions.

On the contrary, there is an overabundance of evidence in the text to suggest that all the characters in the narrative, regardless of their caste identity, find fulfillment in the pluralistic conceptual framework based on a fusion of Sufi Islam and unorthodox Hinduism that governs their lives. This pluralistic worldview allows Hasan to fulfill several different roles without experiencing any self-contradiction and crippling ambivalence. He is at once a more than competent secretary-accountant to a rich and

powerful Sahib, a man of high caste believed to be endowed with supernatural powers, and a connoisseur of Persian poetry and classical Indian dance. The narrative begins with Hasan providing an elaborate genealogy of his family that claims direct descent from the Prophet of Islam: “My illustrious ancestor Syed Abdullah was a direct descendant of the Lord Prophet.”<sup>37</sup> Jan’s troupe celebrates the *Urs* or birthday of a Sufi saint and sends one of their members to plead with Hasan to consecrate the feast with his gracious presence: “Your honor being Syed, and a descendant of the saints yourself, kindly consecrate the food, and bless us with your holy presence” (14). Hasan himself believes in the efficacy of talismans and incantations and employs them to solve empirical problems. At one stage of the narrative, when it appears that Jan’s troupe is about to leave, Hasan resorts to magic to delay their departure: “The very first book I lay my hands on turned out to be my father’s tattered diary. I carried it gingerly to my bed and began turning its pages. Then I noticed a number of mystical charts, occult prayers, and talismans. One of the special prayers could prevent Azamji’s [the manager of Jan’s troupe] departure from Chunargarh” (22).

In view of the above, instead of measuring *The Dancing Girl* against the eighteenth-century English novel and its conventions, it would be more fruitful to place it in the tradition of the *Dastan* and the *Qissa*, the two most prominent types of fictional prose narratives popular in India during the eighteenth century. *The Dancing Girl* clearly shares formal and thematic features with these traditional narratives. For instance, it borrows from the *Dastan* the treatment of love as a mental as well as physical illness. After his first sight of Khanum Jan, Hasan falls in love and immediately loses his peace of mind. People begin to notice his uncharacteristic gloom and lack of activity: “My

illness had become known. Mr. Ming himself came to see me. I repeated the story about my migraine. After he left, my condition became worse” (14). In one of her letters to Hasan, Jan warns him: “To remain enmeshed in this love business would be utter insanity on your part and would become a lifelong problem for you” (42). It also shares the preoccupation of the *Dastan* with magic and divination. As has been stated already, Hasan, being a descendant of the Prophet, is believed to be endowed with miraculous powers. Similarly, Ming could be read as a transmuted version of the benevolent but temperamental king of the Djinnns, who frequently appeared in such traditional narratives.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the conventions of traditional Indian prose narratives, *The Dancing Girl* shares with the *ghazal*, traditional love poetry in Persian and Urdu, the mystical treatment of love.<sup>39</sup> According to this tradition, love ignited by transient human passions on a mortal plane is part of divine love. One night, when after a bout of restlessness, Hasan finally falls asleep, his dead father appears to him in a dream and recites a Persian *ghazal*:

Love is freedom from bondage.

Love is to run to and fro on the path of the Quest.

In our search for Truth why do we worry about tomorrow?

My friend, Love is life. (22)

In addition to the Persian *ghazal* with its roots in Islamic religious tradition, a love song from the Hindu tradition called the *Holi*, celebrating the union of Lord Krishna and Radhika, is also used in the narrative to illustrate the ease with which human love crosses over to the realm of the divine:

The Month of Phagun has come, my love.  
I will mix colors in the water and drench you  
I will hit you with marigolds and bubbles,  
I will tease you no end and when you are angry  
I will pacify you again. (65)

The lovers' quarrel between Krishna and his consort has been traditionally used as a metaphor to illustrate the sometimes topsy-turvy relationship between the *Parmatma* and the *Jivatma*, the eternal and the transient. Just as human lovers tease and test each other's fidelity and devotion endlessly, so does God put his human creatures through an endless series of trials and tribulations. Hasan and Jan's love affair also passes through the phase of *Lila* or playfulness, when they tease and quarrel with each other incessantly, with Hasan being the loser most of the time. Khanum Jan mocks Hasan mercilessly: "Your [Ming's] snooty Munshi [secretary] may like it or not, I am going to pluck some of his flowers." Khanum Jan picks some flowers from Hasan's garden without asking his permission and gives a marigold to Ming and gives Hasan a tulip after crushing it with her fingers. Hasan is mortified by this slight and writes, "I had another restless night" (38).

The relationship between the two lovers is wonderfully balanced between outbursts of passion and ecstasy and rational discourse about the nature of their relationship and its social implications. In this regard, Khanum Jan is not a parody of the subversive and rebellious heroine in many eighteenth-century British novels by woman authors. She actually arranges a marriage for Hasan with a beautiful girl of his own caste and writes to him, "You belong to a sacred lineage. Your elders and relatives would

never like this match [between Hasan and Jan] and would compel you to marry in your own society. Therefore, do not delay your marriage. You may even consider this girl I have just shown you. She is high-born like you and will get an ample dowry” (41-42). Although this letter could be regarded as one of the many tests Jan puts Hasan through to test the strength of his devotion to her, she maintains a rational tone in her later letters as well: “We must clear any misunderstandings immediately and not wait for the other to apologize first. Always consult each other for everything. Never be secretive. Never tell lies,” and goes on to conclude, “To become content with the state of feeling one has at present is not wise” (53). Love as a work in progress that requires constant effort would have been a familiar part of both the Sufi Islamic and Hindu concepts of the relationship between God and man. In addition, the careful balancing of ecstatic and passionate love-quarrels with rational discourse would also have been familiar to the Indian reader constantly exposed to Sufi Islam.<sup>40</sup>

Khanum Jan’s death, reported by a minor character, reflects the fortitude and submission of a true believer rather than the all-consuming passion of a rebellious woman: “She waited desperately for you [Hasan] on Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday she got some water heated and had a sponge bath. She had made herself ritually clean for prayer, changed her dress and ordered that nobody should come to her room for awhile” (89). Her last letter to Hasan, written before she dies, also reflects her pious resignation to the will of God: “You must bear the loss with fortitude, and not make a spectacle of yourself with lamentations, etc. I think for an honorable woman to die early is a boon from On High. It means that just as she remained aloof in her dignity when alive, she was taken away from this world early so that she could go behind the Veil of

Eternity for evermore” (90). The metaphor of the veil is also an allusion to the fact that as a public entertainer Jan was not fated to wear the veil of respectability and piety in this life, a privilege reserved for high-born Muslim women. Only in death she attains that high status.

Consequently, instead of interpreting Jan’s death as an indictment of the existing social hierarchy, the Indian reader in eighteenth-century Mughal India would have read the narrative as a confirmation of the self-restraint and moral discipline regulating personal desires and appetites demanded by both Hindu and Muslim traditions of piety. It is precisely the still unmitigated presence of an indigenous pluralistic value system in *The Dancing Girl* that endows the Indian characters in the *The Dancing Girl* with agency and precludes any possible postcolonial reading that would construct them as colonized subjects engaged in mimicry and parody of the colonizer’s norms of civility being superimposed on them. On the contrary, Ming the Briton willingly submits to the indigenous values and norms of behavior and becomes a Sahib. Even Ming, the foreigner among the Indians, is easily assimilated into this worldview because of his successful assimilation of the attributes of the Sahib.

We are told by Hasan, the first person narrator, that Ming is an officer in a Company regiment: “One day Ming said to Mirzai that he was going with his regiment to Calcutta” (67). Although having a harem of Indian courtesans was not uncommon among British officers, Ming is reluctant to flaunt his own. He refuses to have his *bibikhana* or harem built in the ground in front of his house because “it faces the public thoroughfare and [his] colonel passes by on this road” (29). Qurratulain Hyder has correctly pointed out that “the life of luxury lived by Ming and his colleagues portrayed in *Nashtar* [the

Persian title of *The Dancing Girl*] was one side of the coin” (Afterword 98). We have seen the articulations of the other side in the poetry of Mir and Sauda marked by dysfunction in and destructive invasions of the traditional state and society. Ming is content to let Hasan oversee his business interests. Hasan proudly states; “He put me solely in charge of his business and trusted me implicitly” (7). Mithoo, a procurer, is not actually exaggerating when he tries to flatter Ming: “Besides, Saheb [Sahib], among all the Europeans posted [stationed in cantonments] out here, you are known to be the most fun loving” (25).

Ming is thus the perfect candidate for both the titles of Nabob and Sahib. His stay-at-home countrymen would damn him as a Nabob for “wasting” the large fortune he is master of on Indian courtesans and entertainers. Hasan himself points out, “Because of his reckless expenditure Ming was heavily indebted to Indian bankers and wanted to leave Cawnpore as soon as he could” (67). However, Ming’s often excessive hospitality and generosity is viewed with affection by the Indians, who associate with him in the capacity of servants and subordinates. Hasan warmly states: “Ming was a generous, noble, and kindly Englishman. He treated me with and respect and courtesy, and also gave me valuable presents” (7). Once Ming rebukes Hasan for cautioning him for his extravagance: “Why do you go on harping on expenses? I am not stingy” (26). This is indeed a very different breed of Sahib from the prim and precise Sahib of the nineteenth century. The Urdu translator points out in the marginal gloss: “This was an Englishman of those times [eighteenth century and earlier]. Today they call us native, blackman, barbarians” (7).<sup>41</sup> Ming certainly demonstrates that he has assimilated the dictum of a

good life outlined in aristocratic conduct books like the *Mirzanama*, which left a deep imprint on the Mughal culture of the eighteenth century.

Ming's predilection for entertainments and pastimes popular among Indians of the ruling castes actually goes much deeper than a mere indulgence. He employs Khanum Jan and her troupe of classical dancers and musicians because they had unfortunately lost the patronage of Sahibs, both Indian and British (26-27). Ming behaves like a true Sahib when Khanum Jan refuses to sleep with him, although according to accepted customs at the time the Sahib was entitled to take the leading courtesan of a dance troupe as his concubine: "Take her [Khanum Jan] away, lest she kill herself. I do not need to take women forcibly" (33). In spite of Khanum Jan's unconventional behavior, Ming generously bestows an honorarium of one hundred rupees per month on Khanum Jan on the condition that she would entertain him with her dance and witty conversation (34-35). Ming is a sentimental master who cannot tolerate the sufferings of his servants. He explains why he rewarded Jan with a monthly stipend in spite of her failure to fulfill the contract: "She [Khanum Jan, after her own troupe members upbraided her for not sleeping with the patron] was crying her eyes out, I didn't like to see her sob so bitterly" (35). Ming's favorite pastime is to have Khanum Jan recite Persian poetry in his garden and have debates about the meanings of the exquisitely turned out verses with her: "The discussion went on. Khanum Jan as usual had the upper hand!" (37). Ming has obviously acquired some Persian and Urdu which were the languages of power and prestige in the Mughal Empire and were spoken by the ruling castes regardless of their religious and ethnic affiliations (7-8).<sup>42</sup> Ming's complex relationship with Khanum Jan in particular and the Indian entertainers in general is certainly a continuation of the traditional custom

of patronage practiced by Nawabs, Rajas, and lesser princes to encourage artists and performers of traditional arts.

Ming's boundless capacity to bestow generous gifts on friends and dependants reaches its culmination when he astutely figures out Hasan's secret love for Khanum Jan and says: "I hereby handover Khanum Jan to our grumpy Hasan Shah" (32). Hasan's jealous fears about his master bedding his beloved should have been instantly erased. Unfortunately, he is now confronted by an insurmountable dilemma, whether to devote his attention to the lady or take care of his master's pressing affairs. Khanum Jan pines away even as Hasan frantically tries to balance Ming's account before he can resign his charges and join his beloved. Khanum Jan herself piously accepts Hasan's absence: "Take it as the will of God" (90). Earlier she excuses Hasan's failure to honor her summons: "He could not come because he is so loyal and dutiful to Ming" (88). The traditional hierarchal world-view prevalent in the Mughal Empire ultimately triumphs over socially unacceptable love, and the passionate and fallible human love is transmuted to divine love. The upper-caste Hasan is prevented from marrying Khanum Jan, the daughter of a lowly dancing woman, by her sudden death, and the far more important (to the Mughal Indians at the time) patron-servant relationship is vindicated in *The Dancing Girl*. One could argue that even Ming, the British merchant/warrior, temporarily becomes a part of this complex caste system. He becomes the ideal Sahib: a generous patron, a courteous lover, a lavish host, a connoisseur of classical poetry and dance, and, above all, a selfless friend. And to all intents and purposes, he fulfills these caste roles to the letter.

The rich and conflicted cultural saga of the Sahib and the Nabob is inextricably intertwined and is still waiting to be brought under the light of critical attention. Unlike

the Englishman turned Turk or Moor during the Elizabethan age and later, the Englishman as Sahib has not been extensively or rigorously studied.<sup>43</sup> Neither the Sahib nor the Nabob can be studied in deliberate isolation. They are the inseparable components of the Janus-faced history of the early encounter between the British and the Mughal Empires in the eighteenth century. One needs to recognize the crossovers and crosspollinations between indigenous values and ways of life and the ones borne by the British Nabobs in order to appreciate literary texts produced at this time from both sides of the divide. The postcolonial rhetoric of unmitigated resistance frequently falters when it confronts such texts. As William Dalrymple, a direct descendant of the eighteenth-century Sahibs and a Scot, has pointed out, “[The Sahibs] inhabited a world that was far more hybrid, and with far less clearly defined ethnic, national, and religious borders, than we have been conditioned to expect, either by the conventional history books . . . , or by the nationalistic historiography of post-independence India, or for that matter by the postcolonial work coming from new generations of scholars, many of whom tend to follow the path opened by Edward Said in 1978 with his pioneering *Orientalism*.”<sup>44</sup>

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 5-9. See also, Jack. P. Greene, "Empire and Identity: From the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution," in *The Oxford History of The British Empire*, ed. P. J. Marshall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2: 213-14.

<sup>2</sup> James M. Holzman, *The Nabobs in England: A Study of the Returned Anglo-Indian, 1760-1785* (New York: n. p., 1926), 21.

<sup>3</sup> A. Yusuf Ali, *A Cultural History of India During the British Period* (1940; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1976), 16.

<sup>4</sup> See Siraj Ahmed, "The Theatre of the Civilized Self: Edmund Burke and the East India Trials," *Representations* 78 (2002), 28-55. See especially 36-37.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>6</sup> The "native" question has led to many revisions and refinements in postcolonial theory. From the early articulations of a passively conquered and always unambiguously recognizable 'native,' we have progressed to more nuanced versions of the native such as the subtly resistant "mimicman" and the hybrid subject, the broodingly ever-silent subaltern, and the subaltern as the sexed subject triply silenced by the "epistemic violence" of Western feminism as well as imperial and native masculinism. For the passive and inscrutable native as the Oriental, see Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). For account of the native as the "mimicman," an

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unsettling parody of the colonizer, see Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 85-92; "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817," in *The Location of Culture*, 102-122; and "Sly Civility," in *The Location of Culture*, 93-101. For the native as the subaltern, forever silent and beyond the ministrations of both the colonizer and the elite mimicman, see Jenny Sharpe's *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 127-135. The subaltern as sexed subject has been offered by Gayatri C. Spivak as a corrective to Bhabha's elitist notion of the mimicman. See Gayatri C. Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur," in *Europe and Its Others*, ed. Frances Baker et al. (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985), 1: 128-51; "Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), 271-313; and "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no.1 (1985): 243-61.

<sup>7</sup> See Michael H. Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, the British, and the Mughals* (Riverdale, MD: The Riverdale Company, 1987), 10-14.

<sup>8</sup> For accounts of the social and cultural contacts between the British Nabob and Indians in the eighteenth century, see Michael Edwardes, *The Sahibs and the Lotus: The British in India* (London: Constable, 1988). See also Suresh C. Ghosh, *The Social Condition of the British in Bengal 1757-1800* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970).

<sup>9</sup> See Stephen Peter Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 172-80.

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<sup>10</sup> See Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures*, 13-15. Fisher, relying on Edward Shil's study of core cultures and how such centers of values lose all material control over the peripheries except symbolic ties, points out that the further one traveled from the imperial center the more autonomous the outlying regions and communities became, which, nevertheless, acknowledged the symbolic dominance of the Mughals.

<sup>11</sup> For a summary of the *Mirzanama*, see Annemarie Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art and Culture*, trans. Corinne Attwood, ed. Burzine K. Waghmar (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 225-27.

<sup>12</sup> Indian vernacular literatures and drama, which developed in the nineteenth century with the decline of the Indian classical languages, abound in caricatured figures of such obnoxious Sahibs. Dinabandhu Mitra's *Neel Darpan* [*A Mirror for the Indigo Planters*] (1860), a Bengali play, gained such notoriety among the British censors of Indian writings and publications that its performance was prohibited. See Dinabandhu Mitra, *Neel Darpan*, ed. Qamrul Ahsan (Dhaka: Afsar Brothers, 1996). The British ire was raised by the character of a British Sahib who resorted to violence and intimidation to force the poor peasants to cultivate indigo instead of rice paddies. The aptly named Sahib P. P. Rogue gloatingly tells a native housewife (in a state of advanced pregnancy) he is about to ravish, "It is futile to plead for mercy with the likes of us. We are planter Sahibs. We are on first-name basis with *Yama* [the Hindu god of death], and we watch with glee as the villages burn at our command. We have seen mothers burn to death even as their babes suckled at their breasts and have not batted an eyelid" (act 3. scene3. p. 33). For an account of the oppressive British Sahibs in the nineteenth century, see

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Mrinalini Sinha, "Manliness: A Victorian Ideal and Colonial Policy in Late Nineteenth-Century Bengal" (PhD diss., State University of New York, Stony Brook, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures*, 1-16, for a more nuanced reading of the rather simplistic rapid-decline theory of Mughal culture in the eighteenth century. See especially 2-3. Fisher demonstrates that regional Nawabi courts, especially that of Lucknow, actually attempted to take over the Mughal cultural heritage now fallen into decay in Delhi and to build a new, flourishing culture based on it. As a matter of fact, between 1775 and 1857 Lucknow became an independent cultural center which continued the best of the Mughal tradition in poetry, music, dance, and historiography.

<sup>14</sup> Urdu poetry at this time was composed orally during public performances and later written down by calligraphers at the behest of patrons. See Marion Molteno, "Approaching Urdu Literature," in *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History*, by Ralph Russell (New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992.), 5-17. See especially 5-7.

<sup>15</sup> For an account of the hierarchical worldview of the Mughal Empire and how it was reflected in both the form and content of Urdu poetry of the time, see Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam, *Three Mughal Poets* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 1-7.

<sup>16</sup> A. Yusuf Ali, *A Cultural History of India*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Qtd. in *Three Mughal Poets*, 260. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>18</sup> Qtd. in *Three Mughal Poets*, 47.

<sup>19</sup> For the influence of Shah Wali Ullah on later Islamic revivals and fundamentalist movements in India, see M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (Montreal:

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McGill University Press, 1967), 277-282; Richard M. Eaton, ed. *India's Islamic Traditions, 711-1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 213-14; Shahida Lateef, "Modernization in India and the Status of Muslim Women," in *Modernization and Social Change Among Muslims in India*, ed. Imtiaz Ahmad (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1983), 157.

<sup>20</sup> Qtd. and trans. by A. Yusuf Ali, in *A Cultural History of India*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Ralph Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History* (New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992), 60.

<sup>22</sup> Qtd. and trans. by Russell and Islam, in *Three Mughal Poets*, 33.

<sup>23</sup> See A. Yusuf Ali, *A Cultural History of India*, 25.

<sup>24</sup> Qtd. in Ali, *A Cultural History*, 25.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Rajat Kanti Ray, "Indian Society and the Establishment of British Supremacy, 1765-1818," in *The Oxford History of British Empire*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2: 510.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> For a succinct but vivid account of the British merchant's gradual but irreversible incursion into Indian society and politics in the aftermath of the Battle of Plassey, see Edwardes, *The Sahibs and the Lotus*, 24-35.

<sup>29</sup> Michael H. Fisher, "Preface: A Text and a Life," in *The Travels of Dean Mahomet: An Eighteenth-Century Journey Through India*, by Dean Mahomet, ed.

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Michael H. Fisher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), xiii-xxiii. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>30</sup> Dean Mahomet, *The Travels of Dean Mahomet: An Eighteenth-Century Journey Through India*, ed. Michael H. Fisher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 35. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>31</sup> Rosen, *Societies and Military Power*, 104-61. See especially 138-40.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 169-72.

<sup>33</sup> Srinivas Aravamudan, *The Tropicopolitans* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 21-22.

<sup>34</sup> Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures*, 10-14.

<sup>35</sup> For a brief account of the Indian courtesans in the Mughal Empire, see Qurratulain Hyder, afterword to *The Dancing Girl*, by Syed Hasan Shah, trans. Qurratulain Hyder (New York: New Direction, 1993), 95-97. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>36</sup> See Edwardes, *The Sahibs and the Lotus*, 33-35, 46-47. For most of early to mid eighteenth century, keeping Indian mistresses and fathering children by them was an acceptable although never-flaunted custom among the British in India. However, as Edwardes points out, “Many of the new men who came to India at the end of the eighteenth century considered marriage with any but European women out of question”(47). For a discussion of how sexuality among British colonial males began to be legislated and controlled by the nineteenth century, see Philippa Levine, “Sexuality, Gender, and Empire,” in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 134-55.

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<sup>37</sup> Syed Hasan Shah, *The Dancing Girl*, trans. Qurratulain Hyder (New York: New Direction, 1993), 5. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>38</sup> For an introduction to the traditional Indian prose narratives, see Frances W. Pritchett, *Marvelous Encounters: Prose Romance in Urdu and Hindi* (Riverdale, MD: Riverdale Company, 1985), 1-9.

<sup>39</sup> For an introduction to the Urdu *ghazal* and its treatment of love, both secular and divine, see Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature*, 26-39.

<sup>40</sup> For an account of the mystic's rhapsodic love of God that courts social and spiritual anarchy by exalting the state of intoxication over sobriety, see Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari, *Sufism and Sharī'ah: A Study of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's Effort to Reform Sufism* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1986), 50-52.

<sup>41</sup> The edition used in my dissertation was translated into English from a nineteenth-century Urdu translation which in turn was based on the original written in Indo-Persian in the eighteenth century. For a brief history of translations and publications of the text, see Qurratulain Hyder, foreword to *The Dancing Girl*, by Syed Hasan Shah, ix-xv.

<sup>42</sup> See A. Yusuf Ali, *A Cultural History of India*, 28-29. Ali compares the decline of Indo-Persian as the lingua franca in Mughal India to the "dethronement" of Latin in Europe.

<sup>43</sup> Among the few book-length works that study the Sahib as a cultural and political phenomenon, are Michael Edwardes' *The Sahibs and the Lotus* and William

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Dalrymple's *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (New York: Viking, 2003).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., xiv.

## CONCLUSION

Britons seemed to have had a knack for taking up non-Western titles in different parts of the world, especially in Asia and Africa. Wherever they lived and worked among native populations as merchants and/or mercenaries for long periods of time, they either appropriated such titles themselves or had them bestowed on them by the natives. Among such outlandish titles were “Bwana” in the Swahili belt of Africa; “Effendi” and “Sidi” in the “Moorish” part of Africa; “Tuan” and “Rajah” in the Malayas, like Joseph Conrad’s Tuan Jim, a merchant mariner turned native warlord in *Lord Jim* (1900); and “Sahibs” in Mughal India. But all these terms, in comparison to the “Nabob,” are mostly positive, supposedly exuding a paternalistic benevolence acknowledged by the stereotypical simple-minded natives, according to a still dominant school of postcolonial criticism in the Western academia which, in spite of its avowed mission to lay bare colonial and neo-colonial exploitation of native cultures by the West, unwittingly replicates the crushing dominance of colonial discourse by relying exclusively on Western critical concepts.<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation is intended as a preliminary corrective to such unintentional “Orientalism” resorted to by the mainstream postcolonial criticism. As such, I have proposed a reading of the so-called Nabob literature which takes into account the multiple historical contexts of the encounter between the Mughal and the British Empires from which the figure of the Nabob emerged. A critical awareness and willingness to

engage the multiple historical contexts from which the Nabob emerged allows the postcolonial critic to read popular drama, poetry, and fiction dealing with this flamboyant character as being more than a body of always already hegemonic colonial discourse, which supposedly constructs India and its peoples as conquered and conquerable.

Existing postcolonial criticism of the Nabob literature has unfortunately sidestepped the multiple contexts from which the Nabob drew his identity. As a result, the available postcolonial reading usefully but limitingly demonstrates how the Nabob became a tool of social satire and correction at a time when cultural anxieties were triggered by his alien manners and associations. Emerging out of this context, the so-called Nabob literature serves a purgative as well as reconstructive purpose by erasing or at least marginalizing the alien Nabob and reaffirming a homogenous British national identity.<sup>2</sup>

However, such readings ignore the fact that not only is the metropolitan context of the Nabob already fragmented, but the colonial one is also problematized by the fact that the Indian subjects of the Mughal Empire called the same Britons, vilified as the Nabob by their own countrymen, “Sahibs.” On the one hand, the Nabob, in addition to being a colonial representation, is also an important stage in the development of the mercantile representations in the long eighteenth century. The representation of the overseas merchant in popular culture was an issue contested from multiple quarters: the authors and intellectuals affiliated with the landed interest and the court, those sympathetic to the moneyed interest, and the overseas merchants themselves. Contrary to the erroneous assumption on the part of some postcolonial critics, the Nabob is not a transhistorical Typhoid Mary of colonial domination throughout the eighteenth century. He must be

understood as a post-Battle-of-Plassey development who came into being when the British mercantile discourse, long preoccupied with the debated issue of whether to extend membership of the genteel and rational public sphere to the overseas merchant, intersected with the radically new and challenging issue of mercantile militarism in India. The British merchant went through at least two major phases before the figure of the Nabob as a merchant turned warrior arrives on the scene: the pusillanimous merchant overawed by native rulers, and the honest Returnee from India, who combines his devotion to a pacific calling with a righteous claim to corrective and or punitive military violence. The latter continued to coexist with the Nabob from the mid to late eighteenth century.

One comes across such satiric representations of the Nabob, whose alien manners and excesses are contrasted either by the moderation and rationality of the honest mercantile character or by the virtue and self-restraint of the domestic heroine, especially in novels, poetry, and drama appearing between 1757 and 1789. Some postcolonial critiques of the Nabob literature have argued that such representations served the dual purpose of carefully distancing the British domestic sphere from the Nabob's contagion and of domesticating the subversive female protagonist.<sup>3</sup> However, such a moral distancing is not necessarily an overwhelmingly hegemonic move that allows these representations and the texts in which they appear to add a moral patina to British mercantile expansion and to create a gendered domestic space at the expense of the Nabob and the native woman as the subaltern. Although such an intention can be read into some texts from the period, especially the "domestic fiction" by women, the unmistakable presence (sometimes unintended) of a counter-discourse constituted by the

Mughal concepts of kingship, sovereignty, conspicuous consumption, marriage, sexuality, entertainment, and so on, in which many Britons called Nabobs were active participants, undercuts the hegemonic potential of such texts.

The ultimate failure of the existing postcolonial criticism of Nabob literature in particular or literature about India in general lies in its refusal to look at the reverse side of the Nabob coin, which is occupied by the Sahib, as many Nabobs were so called in Mughal India in the eighteenth century. Various postcolonial reading strategies offered recently by critics purport to retrieve retroactively some form of native resistance and/or agency in the face of an ubiquitous colonial discourse by relying on such colonial figures as the mimicman, the migrant, the tropicopolitan, and the subaltern.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the exclusive reliance on Western terminologies and critical concepts prevents such reading strategies from retrieving any meaningful agency. On the contrary, they tend to replicate Western domination of Eastern cultures by their one-sided use of Western critical knowledge.

Challenging the apparently irreversible binary pair of the Nabob and the Sahib with a reading informed by values and concepts indigenous to the Mughal Empire actually helps to overcome this dilemma confronting postcolonial criticism today. Instead of trying to retrieve resistance from a postcolonial space applying Western critical tools to the exclusion of non-Western knowledge and values, a postcolonial critic can be of much greater use if she/he acknowledges that the Nabob literature is the result of the crosspollination of the values and ideals of two contemporaneous empires: the Mughal and the British. As far as cultural values were concerned, the decline of the Mughal Empire was not a foregone conclusion in the eighteenth century. It exercised a powerful

influence not only on its Indian subjects in terms of the notions of sovereignty, kingship, community, civility, and so on, but these ideas evidently had a significant impact on how many Britons chose to conduct their lives in Mughal India. Such Englishmen chose the way of the Sahib, itself a further dilution of an older model of Mughal masculinity called the “Mirza.”<sup>5</sup> The good life according to the Sahib consisted not only of refined tastes in food, wine, women, and poetry, but it also demanded an awareness of the moral responsibilities and duties one owed to one’s social inferiors as a member of the elite in a traditional society.

Such a critical awareness of the multiple contexts in which the Nabob existed in the eighteenth century, allows the postcolonial critic to construct an alternative narrative of British imperialism, one which provides a refreshing and promising contrast to the skeletal specter of an always already dominant British colonial discourse many postcolonial critics tend to read retroactively into the long eighteenth century. The encounter between the Mughal and the British Empires was not so barren, nor invariably productive of such hegemonic results as some recent postcolonial accounts have maintained. The Nabob-Sahib existed in an age when the surprising and delicious fruits of the ongoing miscegenation of the two empires were still waiting to be picked.

Although this era of creative uncertainty began to wind down with the implementation of utilitarian reforms in the early nineteenth century and finally ended with the Great Mutiny of 1857, the overbrimming plurality of this period of cultural crossovers between the Mughals and the British among them is worth exploring in the Nabob Literature, because it helps to remind us that Eastern traditional states and polities were not fated by some terrible historical determinism to be superseded by pathetic

parodies of Western imperial nation-states.<sup>6</sup> There were certainly moments when it appeared that the Britons would permanently become subjects of the Indian polity called the Mughal Empire, as many foreign invaders had done in the past. The Mughal Empire, one of the most prominent non-Western polities in the eighteenth century, not only exercised a tremendous cultural influence on the small number of Britons who lived among her diverse subject peoples but also provided the increasingly homogeneous British nation-state with the example of a contrasting way of life characterized by cultural plurality and religious tolerance. This dissertation does not pretend to be more than a competent preamble to the Herculean task of unearthing the continuities and complicities between the Mughal Empire and the British imperial nation-state since their first encounter in the early seventeenth century.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a critical account of Said's often self-contradictory deployment of Foucault's discourse theory, see Aizaj Ahmad, "Between Orientalism and Historicism: Anthropological Knowledge of India," in *Orientalism: A Reader*, ed. A. L. Macfie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 285-97. For an account of Said's insistence on endowing the postcolonial critic with a "humanist" vantage point even as he repudiates Western intellectual constructs of the East, see Robert J. C. Young, *White Mythologies* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 132-36. For an account of Western feminist criticisms' unintentional propensity to sidestep indigenous forms of knowledge even as they attempt to retrieve the native woman's voice, see Donald R. Wehrs, *African Feminist Fiction and Indigenous Values* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2001), 17-20.

<sup>2</sup> See Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage 1660-1714* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 212-250; Nandini Bhattacharya, *Reading the Splendid Body: Gender and Consumerism in Eighteenth-Century British Writing on India* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 100-101.

<sup>3</sup> For examples of such critiques, see Felicity Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1995), 181-82; and Bhattacharya, *Reading the Splendid Body*, 101-102.

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<sup>4</sup> See Srinivas Aravamudan's *The Tropicopolitans* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999) for the various "tropicopolitan" reading strategies, which are refinements of the "mimicman," "migrant," and "subaltern" models put forward by Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, respectively. The subaltern as the rebellious subject who resists colonial rule in spite of the apparently overwhelming dominance claimed by official records of the colonial mission to "pacify" has been studied by the scholars of the Subaltern Studies Collective. See Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri C. Spivak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 45-86.

<sup>5</sup> For a summary of the *Mirzanama*, see Annemarie Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art and Culture*, trans. Corinne Attwood, ed. Burzine K. Waghmar (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 225-27.

<sup>6</sup> For an account of the Ottoman Turkish Empire as a coeval of the European nation-states rather than an always already fossilized presence of the European medieval past, see Daniel Goffman and Christopher Stoop, "Empire as Composite: The Ottoman Polity and the Typology of Dominion," in *Imperialisms: Historical and Literary Investigations, 1500-1900*, ed. Balachandra Rajan and Elizabeth Sauer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 129-45. See also Paul Stevens, "England in Moghul India: Historicizing Cultural Difference and its Discontents," in *Imperialisms: Historical and Literary Investigations, 1500-1900*, 93-110, for a similar account of the Mughal Empire.

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