THE COMPANY MAN:
COLONIAL AGENTS AND THE IDEA OF THE VIRTUOUS EMPIRE, 1786-1901

by

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ABSTRACT

*The Company Man* argues that corporate ways of organising communities permeated British imperial culture. My point of departure is the obsession shared between Anglo-Indian writers and imperial policymakers with the threat of unmanageable agency, the employee who will not follow orders. By taking up Giambattista Vico’s claim that human subjects and human institutions condition each other reciprocally, I argue that Anglo-Indian literature is properly understood as one of a series of disciplinary apparatuses which were developed in response to that persistent logistical problem: how best to convince plenipotentiary agents to work in the interest of a mercantile employer, the East India Company.

*The Company Man* reconsiders the way we think and write about Victorian imperial culture by taking this institutional approach. For one thing, the dominant position of the Company highlights the limitation of our continuing dependence on the nation as a critical hermeneutic. Additionally, I show how the prevalence of ideas like duty, service, and sacrifice in colonial literature is more than simply the natural output of a nation looking to sacralise everyday practice in the wake of their famous “Victorian loss of faith.” Rather, I place these ideas among a structure of feeling, which I call aristocratic virtue, that was developed by imperial policymakers looking to militate against the threat of rogue agents.

The subject material under consideration includes novels, short stories, poems, essays, memoirs, personal correspondence, and parliamentary speeches. These texts span a century but are clustered around four nodal points, which illustrate moments of innovation in the technologies of regulation and control. My opening chapter examines
how the idea of an overseas empire first acquired virtue in the minds of the British public. The second explores how the Company grafted this virtue onto its corporate structure in its training colleges and competition exams. The third shows how Anglo-Indian literature continued to disseminate the rhetoric of self-sacrifice and noble suffering long after the Company ceded control to the Crown. The final chapter shows how this corporate culture reflects in that most canonical of imperial novels, Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901).
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All the intellectual shortcomings and poverties in this thesis are mine alone. Any worth that is to be found in them is, on the contrary, the result of the many intellectual associations and friendships I have been blessed with in these past five years. The blessings are too many to name and are certainly too difficult to place in any order of importance but there are several who deserve special mention. Primarily, of course, there is my supervisor Jonathan Wisenthal whose consistent support has been the pole star in my wanderings through the elysian fields of the virtuous empire. I am also grateful to my thesis committee members, Alex Dick, Nicholas Hudson, and Jisha Menon, whose advice and suggestions have served as triangulation points in this journey. My good friends Daniel O’Leary and Tyson Stolte have provided me with the timely encouragement necessary to see the project to its end, and I am grateful indeed to all my colleagues in the English Department who will surely see traces of our shared conversations in these pages.

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Finally there is Terri Tomsky, who will never admit how much she has influenced all that is good in this project and in myself.
A NOTE ON THE TEXTS

My references to Kipling’s correspondence are taken from Thomas Pinney’s *Letters* (6 vols., 1990-2004). Given the absence of a definitive critical edition of Rudyard Kipling’s writings, I have chosen to refer to the “Outward Bound” edition of *The Writings in Prose and Verse of Rudyard Kipling*, published by Charles Scribner’s Sons between 1897 and 1936. I have selected this American version over its British counterpart (by Macmillan’s) simply because Scribner’s set is more widely held. All parenthetical references will cite volume and page number. My only deviations from this practice are my choice for *Kim*, which was expertly edited and annotated by Zoreh T. Sullivan for Norton in 2002, and for Kipling’s autobiography *Something of Myself* (1937), which is Macmillan’s first edition.

For William Arnold’s *Oakfield* (1853), I have used the more readily available 1854 second edition, published in two volumes by Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans. Copies of either the first or the second Victorian editions are very rare but fortunately, the Humanities Press reprinted the second edition in facsimile with an introduction by Kenneth Allott in 1973.
## AN ANGLO-INDIAN TIMELINE

<table>
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<td>North’s <em>Regulating Act</em> establishes the Board of Control, subjecting the EIC’s Indian government to Parliamentary supervision</td>
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Burke, “Speech on Fox’s India Bill” (1783)  
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| **1800** | College at Fort William (Calcutta) established  
Wellesley, “Notes” (1800) |
| **1807** | East India College (Haileybury) established, Malthus appointed to the chair in political economy. |
| **1813** | EIC’s Charter is renewed for twenty years—monopoly privileges revoked excepting tea and the Chinese trade; India opened to missionaries.  
Malthus, *Letter to Grenville* (1813) |
| **1833** | EIC’s Charter is renewed for another twenty years—all commercial operations suspended  
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Macaulay, “Minute on Indian Education” (1835) |
| **1853** | EIC’s Charter is renewed for another twenty years; Competition examination replaces patronage  
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INTRODUCTION

Imperialism is a rummy business.
—Rudyard Kipling, 1900

The problem with managing an empire, according to one recent United States Secretary of Defence, is to be found in the spatial and temporal gaps between the administrative centre and the agents in the field. In a televised interview with an American cable news station, Donald Rumsfeld was asked whether he felt responsible for the abuses carried out by American soldiers in Abu Ghraib, the notorious Baghdad prison. His response was characteristically defiant: “What was going on during the midnight shift in Abu Ghraib prison halfway across the world is something that someone in Washington D.C. clearly can’t manage or deal with. And so I have no regrets” (19). Putting Mr Rumsfeld’s cavalier disregard for human rights to one side, his statement shows how little has changed in the “rummy business” of imperialism since Great Britain absent-mindedly acquired its empire two hundred and fifty years ago. Now as then the primary challenge to imperial ambition is of a logistical nature; Rumsfeldian excuses are made because, quite simply, empires must trust their employees to behave. Even in this age of satellite communication networks and instant messaging, the most technologically-advanced empire in the world remains incapable of either supervising or controlling the actions of its representatives in the field.²

More than one hundred and fifty years earlier, Great Britain faced a similar difficulty with respect to its imperial occupation of India. In 1852, amidst worries that

¹ “To the Duchess of Sutherland” 10 October 1900. (*Letters* III: 35)
² It is equally worth noting the obverse of this imperial fiction: what the American-installed proconsul Paul Bremer called the fantasy of “micromanaging with an eight-thousand mile long screwdriver.” This of course was the implicit expectation demanded by the American public (via its mainstream newsmedia), who had invested so heavily in the idea that the world can be traversed instantly and beamed back into their living rooms.
London could not effectively manage those agents running the empire in their name, a Parliamentary Select Committee was struck to investigate whether improvements might be made to the current system. One of the main witnesses was John Stuart Mill, who was at this point not only a famous political theorist but also the most senior bureaucrat in the London headquarters of the Indian Administration. On the whole, his two-day interview with the committee reads as a confident defence of his employers and of the status quo. But when he was pressed to describe how the colonial agents might be controlled, Mill conceded the perpetual *ex post facto* nature of the London correspondence:

> There are very few acts of the Government of India which it is possible for the authorities here [in London] to set aside when they are once done...[We] have, however, a great power of making useful comments, which may serve as instructions for future cases of the same kind; and it seems to me the greatest good that the home authorities can do is to comment freely on the proceedings of the local authorities, to criticise them well, and lay down general principles for the guidance of Government on subsequent occasions. ("The East India Company Charter" 69-70)

Mill was well-qualified to speak on this subject since for more than twenty years he was the “home authority” doing the commenting and the criticising via his position in the East India Company’s Examiner’s Office. His testimony also illuminates Mr Rumsfeld’s equivocation, since both men claim that direct intervention is impossible. Whereas Rumsfeld argued that this meant nothing could be done and so absolved himself from
responsibility, Mill concluded that an imperial power could still establish general principles and develop some system for their dissemination and, to use the term favoured by genre-theorists, uptake.³

*The Company Man* seeks to elaborate Mill's confidence in this loose yet apparently effective disciplinary system, by examining the variety of ways in which a group of Britons responded to imperial agency. Like any large-scale operation, the British Empire divested power to its agents and expected them to act in the national interest, to do their duty. The image of stoic commitment to service at meagre pay and little recognition by men who might otherwise have fulfilled their desires in the opulent Oriental landscape is one of the more enduring in nineteenth-century imperial mythology. Rudyard Kipling's short story "On the City Wall" (1888) is an excellent example of this mythmaking. Though the narrative object is the allegory between two types of rebellious natives (the belligerent Sikh warrior versus the Anglicized Muslim), Kipling's narrator illuminates both the difficulty of administering power and the idea of the virtuous empire in an editorialising aside that is worth quoting at length:

[I]t is necessary to explain something about the Supreme Government which is above all and below all and behind all. Gentlemen come from England, spend a few weeks in India, walk round this great Sphinx of the Plains, and write books upon its ways and its works, denouncing or praising it as their own ignorance prompts. Consequently all the world knows how the Supreme Government

³ Despite the similarities in their arguments, the contexts for these two interviews (the first a television studio, the second a parliamentary inquiry) highlight the differing attitudes towards public accountability between mid-Victorian Britain and early-twenty-first century America. To date, neither Mr Rumsfeld nor any member of the senior defence staff has had to answer questions about the prisoner-abuse scandal in any publicly-accountable forum.
conducts itself. But no one, not even the Supreme Government, knows everything about the administration of the Empire. Year by year England sends out fresh drafts for the first fighting-line, which is officially called the Indian Civil Service. These die, or kill themselves by overwork, or are worried to death, or broken in health and hope in order that the land may be protected from death and sickness, famine and war, and may eventually become capable of standing alone. It will never stand alone, but the idea is a pretty one, and men are willing to die for it, and yearly the work of pushing and coaxing and scolding and petting the country into good living goes forward. If an advance be made all credit is given to the native, while the Englishmen stand back and wipe their foreheads. If a failure occurs the Englishmen step forward and take the blame. (4: 305-6)

Kipling here has identified the three distinct branches of the imperial governing apparatus: the (ignorant) political overseers, the (nominally) superintending central power, and the (silently heroic) field agents. As he makes clear, the colonial government is entirely contingent on the voluntary subscription by those agents to an idea.

In this study I will be calling this volunteerism the idea of the virtuous empire and to be sure that we do not attribute its hagiography to Kipling’s peculiar worldview, I want to open the study by considering the opinion of Thomas Babington Macaulay, a man whose politics arguably comprise Kipling’s polar opposite.4 Like Kipling and Mill, Macaulay recognised that the empire was contingent on the actions of employees over

4 “On the City Wall” provides as good a place as any to register the antipathy Kipling felt towards Anglicization, the educational policy synonymous with Macaulay and best articulated in his “Minute on Indian Education” (1835). One of the main characters in Kipling’s story is Wali Dad, “a young Mohammedan who was suffering acutely from education of the English variety and knew it” (4: 303).
whom London had little if any control. His 1833 “Speech on the Government of India,” reveals a man most impressed by the universal propriety of colonial field agents, men heroic to the point of self-sacrifice:

I contemplate with reverence and delight the honourable poverty which is the evidence of rectitude firmly maintained amidst strong temptations. I rejoice to see my countrymen, after ruling millions of subjects, after commanding victorious armies, after dictating terms of peace at the gates of hostile capitals, after administering the revenues of great provinces, after judging the causes of wealthy Zemindars, after residing at the courts of tributary Kings, return to their native land with no more than a decent competence. (151)

Putting Kipling and Macaulay into relation with each other shows how the postcolonial critic Benita Parry is only partly right to insist that “Kipling is the coarse figure who virtually invented the Anglo-Indian rhetoric of fortitude and self-sacrifice” (18). Indeed a central proposition of this study is that we can properly understand the fin-de-siècle imperialism of an Anglo-Indian writer like Kipling only when we overcome our tendency to read him as radically original or to see his era as phenomenologically discrete.\(^5\) The idea of the virtuous empire predates Kipling’s articulation just as British imperialism predates its jingoistic formation in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In both cases, to assume otherwise risks misapprehending the imperialism of the 1880s and 90s

\(^5\) To my knowledge, no study other than Sara Suleri’s *The Rhetoric of English India* (1992) gives sustained consideration to Kipling’s historical antecedents. But even here the attention to Anglo-Indian culture is too brief, for while Suleri begins with a study of the eighteenth-century antagonism between Edmund Burke and Warren Hastings in her first two chapters, she then skips past one hundred (dynamic) years of colonialism and positions Kipling as an author seemingly writing in direct response to these ancestors.
for imperialism as such—an error which, according to Edward Said, can allow other forms of imperial discourse from other periods to escape without criticism.\(^6\)

Macaulay's speech not only helps us situate Kipling within a larger tradition of imperial debates on power, agency, duty, and self-sacrifice but it also provides an opportunity for me to justify my materialist approach to this topic. Repeatedly in his writings on India, in the famous essays on Robert Clive and Warren Hastings as well as those parliamentary speeches, Macaulay concluded that the apparently virtuous and self-denying behaviour of colonial administrators could only be explained as peculiar aspect of the British character (154).\(^7\) And a term like character is the equivalent to a red flag in this bullish age of intersubjectively negotiated identities. Macaulay, of course, invoked character at a historical juncture when prevailing cultural and scientific discourses maintained the separability of races and nations; today, working in the wake of postcolonial theory and cultural studies, we are less inclined to think of identity in such essentialist terms. However, the question of whether we should read this part of Macaulay's speech as an act of cultural, racial, or national chauvinism, spoken in order to buttress the moral argument for the possession of an overseas empire, remains to be answered.

To begin with, it is tempting to venture an "empirical" refutation since in 1833 the British Indian Empire was less than a century old and even within that relatively short period the "character" of "British" agents had been inconsistent. We need only recall the

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\(^6\) This is why Said insists that we read Kipling's *Kim* as well as Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* both as novels of empire (*Culture and Imperialism* 100-101). Despite Said's otherwise immense influence on the field of colonial discourse studies, few scholars to date seem interested in adopting his longer view of imperialism. The outstanding exception that proves this rule is Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness* (1988).

\(^7\) Although Macaulay uses the term "English," in his speech, it is clearly meant to be interchangeable with "British." (See footnote 10 below).
notoriety of the “nabob,” a vulgar and avaricious stock character in eighteenth-century literature whose ill-gotten foreign fortunes are often represented as a threat to the domestic body politic, to recognise that wherever Macaulay praises the virtue of the British Indian administrators his historical horizon is the Impeachment of Warren Hastings. For him, like many other Victorian commentators, the trial was seen as the ritual break from the age of the corrupt nabobs, the robber-barons who plundered personal fortunes from Indian states while ostensibly serving their London controllers. For those earlier generations of agents, the men whose actions introduced the Sanskrit word “loot” into the English lexicon, British or English character was seemingly held in abeyance.

However, it would be wrong to dismiss Macaulay’s invocation of “British character” since, as any good materialist knows, merely identifying a thing as artificial and fabricated is not sufficient reason to dismiss its practical influence. A term like “British character” may or may not be essential or historically deep-rooted, but it was palpable in Macaulay’s cultural situation, something deeply felt across the diversity of the Victorian British nation.\(^8\) In its operation, it comprises one of those ineffable cultural temperaments that Welsh Marxist critic Raymond Williams calls a “structure of feeling.” As I understand the term, a structure of feeling differs from other materialist accounts of ideology in its emphasis on both affective excess and local rootedness. On one level, like

\(^8\) The palpable effects of such immaterial structures are perhaps best shown in the famous joke told by Kwame Anthony Appiah: “The fact that I have shown race to be discursively constructed does little to help me when I try and hail a cab at 11.30pm.” For discussions of national character coeval with Macaulay’s speech, see Chapter 3 of Katie Trumpener’s *Bardic Nationalism* (1997). In particular, Trumpener’s reading of Charles Maturin’s *The Milesian Chief* (1812) shows how the broad acceptance and understanding of a cultural category such as “national character” meant that romantic national tales had to become “increasingly sophisticated in representing the link between cultural/character formation and a complex historical temporality” (147). For a broader discussion of the Victorian faith in the existence of national character, see Georgios Varouxakis’s *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French* (2002), especially pp. 105-116.
Antonio Gramsci’s hegemony or Pierre Bourdieu’s habitus, a structure of feeling describes how ideology becomes common sense. At the same time Williams’s category is more sensitive to specific times and places and, by emphasising organic development, shows how this common sense can change over time.⁹ From the perspective of literary studies, structures of feeling explain how ideology is reinforced rather than expressed in texts. According to Edward Said, Williams’s insight enables a move “beyond the ideological capture of the text and into the life of communities” (“Narrative” 82).

Williams’s insistence that ideology is something that is not only disseminated but also lived and felt provides the key to understanding Macaulay’s claim. In other words, I think Macaulay was right to argue that something peculiar was compelling overseas agents to behave. He was only wrong to attach that behaviour to the cumulative effect of a particular series (which we could call “English” or “British”¹⁰) of historical progress. If British character is understood as a disposition cultivated slowly over a long period of time—and surely this how Macaulay uses it—then, following Williams, we can clearly apprehend how inappropriate it is in the colonial context. Macaulay’s error, if we can call it such, occurs when he extends the virtues of British character to the novelties of imperial power, alien geographies, and diverse new sets of cultural practices.

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⁹ Varouxakis makes precisely this point in his discussion of Mill’s understanding of character. According to him, Mill thought of national characters as stable units which changed slowly over time. The direction of that change could, nevertheless be managed and thus there was great value in undertaking comparative studies of different cultures. It is within the context of the relative virtues and vices of national characters that Mill makes his famous pronouncement that representative democracy should only be granted to nations of a particular character. The implication was that the natives of India were not quite yet ready for that form of government, although Mill was confident that under British influence, they eventually would be (35-42).

¹⁰ The interchange of British and English is deliberate here precisely in order to emphasise the cultural assimilation of middle-class Irish, Welsh, and (especially) Scots into the English hegemony, an absorption clearly if controversially delineated by Linda Colley in Britons (1992). Colonial writers certainly interchanged the terms often enough to suggest that they thought there was little difference between them.
To be clear, I am not disagreeing with the historical fact that following the trial of Hastings fewer British agents abused their power. Nor am I denying that there existed among those agents a structure of feeling which could arguably be called (since it was certainly understood as) “British character.” Rather, I am suggesting that the source of the British character in the colonial context, the ethic which regulated behaviour, is not as immemorial as Macaulay encourages us to infer. A similar point made by Sara Suleri, in The Rhetoric of English India (1992), when she suggests that the extreme novelty of empire outstripped the existing metaphorical registry of eighteenth-century English. To speak in ways that not only made that new experience sensible but also made it easier to control and regulate, imperial commentators, Suleri contends, had to craft a new language. Her conclusions suggest that we no longer attempt to understand imperialism as a natural outgrowth or extension of English culture, but instead attend to the specific institutions and cultural formations which coincided with the British Empire. For all the recent work on the cultures of imperialism in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, little seeks to explain how the virtuous colonial agent of Macaulay’s short memory is substituted for the corrupt nabob.

In elaborating the social, economic, and political factors active in the construction of this imperial ethos, the task remains to identify and examine the novel series of administrative practices, organisations, and techniques developed specifically for that purpose. My overall aim is to trace the relationships between different understandings of imperial agency by looking at the language and arguments of those who described it. In some ways, then, this project is an elaboration of Marlowe’s cryptic remark that “all Europe had contributed to the making of Kurtz” (117), the institutional man at the centre
of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1900). To begin, the problem of imperial agency should be separated from the general issue of imperial morality—of whether it was or could be good that liberty-loving Britain subjected other nations and peoples to its authority. Agency refers only to how that power was administered and is therefore concerned not with the colonised subject but with the colonial administrator, the man Edmund Burke calls a “subject-in-power.” My interest in this figure stems from my hypothesis that he is *ambivalent*, in both the etymological and psychological aspects, because he is always suspended between power and service. As someone who wields plenipotentiary power in the colonial space but is concomitantly obliged to serve another master, his dilemma is summarised in one of Rudyard Kipling’s short stories “A Sahibs’ War” (1904). There, a Sikh trooper, by way of explaining why he is fighting in South Africa, offers the imperial equivalent of the paradox of Schrödinger’s cat: “Ye cannot in one place rule and in another bear service. Either ye must everywhere rule or everywhere obey” (22: 90).

But as another of Kipling’s characters asserts, there is no quantum theory for human identity. Hurree Mookerjee, the Bengali agent of the British Secret Service in *Kim* (1901), clarifies the other difficulty of wielding imperial power when he tells his protégé, “One cannot be in two places at once. Thatt is axiomatic” (209). Mookerjee’s axiom, offered to Kim as a consolation for the fact that neither of them can experience the full pleasure of their successful mission, reveals the simplicity of the Sikh’s proverb: total, unrestricted, even feudal power is an impossible fantasy in a modern imperial world. Yet colonial agents were expected to fulfil this fantasy when colonial logistics dictated that a solitary individual must *represent* and *embody* imperial authority. At the same time, these
agents knew that they would never be able to take full credit for any successes, and so it is not unreasonable to anticipate that their actions were riven by deep psychological anxiety.

The ambivalence is harrowingly described in George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" (1936), an essay which relates an episode of the author's time as a colonial police officer in Burma. At its centre is the ethical dilemma entailed to his encounter with angry elephant and an expectant group of colonial subjects. Orwell's narrator is conscious both of his official duty (to shoot the riotous elephant) and of the theatrical space (an audience waiting for him to perform), yet before he can enact imperial power, his private conscience intervenes:

All this was perplexing and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically—and secretly, of course—I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear...But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East...With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in saecula saeculorum, upon the will of prostrate people; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-
products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off
duty. ("Shooting" 3-4)

Orwell’s account of his indecision, his personal repulsion towards his official obligation
to destroy a valuable asset (the elephant), has since become a favourite for both
postcolonial and psychoanalytical analyses of imperial discourse. For my purposes, it
introduces the key themes of the agency crisis. Here we have a young man—an
unfinished product, a raw subject—operating in a foreign territory thousands of miles
away from both his home and his head office, a young man full of power yet without
consul, a young man with no recourse for his deliberation other than solitary
introspection.

Orwell makes it clear that a colonial agent is never fully in possession of himself;
rather he “becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy” (8). Even though he intuitively
knows what he should do—“As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty
that I ought not to shoot him”—and admits that “I thought then and I think now that his
attack of ‘must’ [i.e., rage or madness] was already passing off” Orwell also realises that,
as a representative of imperial authority, there is no alternative but to kill the elephant (7).
His struggle whether to obey his conscience or to play his role can hardly be described as
decisive: though he eventually shoots the elephant, he does not immediately kill it. In
case we missed the point that the elephant’s condition as a rebellious beast of burden
symbolises the narrator’s internally split subjectivity, Orwell commits a full two of the
essay’s ten pages to the bloody description of how he emptied two rifles into the
elephant’s head and heart. The point is that even this disproportionate violence fails to
accomplish the task; the narrator finally gives up and walks away, leaving the mangled animal to die from its wounds. The elephant’s struggle, its wheezing presence haunts the narrator because it is so like his own: suspended between life and death, struggling to maintain the illusion of agency when faced with its inevitable dissolution, the un-dead elephant symbolises the impossible position occupied by the colonial official, the subject-in-power.

Agency and Institutions

It might be argued that the colonial context is only a particular form of a problem inherent in any complex social organism, or that the dilemmas faced by men like Orwell’s protagonist can best be understood via the way British culture sacralised tropes of duty following the famous Victorian loss of religious faith. But what distinguishes the imperial agency crisis is neither its extremity (an effectively unbridgeable distance) nor its scale (the amount of power vested in single agents) but rather its novelty and its centrality. As I will show in the following chapters, the eighteenth-century debates about imperial morality were eclipsed in the nineteenth century by debates over the form and the style of the imperial administration. After the putative virtue of imperialism had been established, the threat of the deviant employee became the energising principle behind nearly all discussions of reform or improvement. And because, according to historian C. A. Bayly, Britain basically improvised its approach to governance in India, this energising principle had a great effect on colonial policy and colonial culture.11

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This study uses the term “agency” in relation to its two popular understandings.\(^\text{12}\)

On the one hand, I am interested in British citizens as agents; that is, as contracted employees acting in the interest of another party. This part of the thesis enters the territory of ethics, and it is very easy to imagine a plenitude of Orwellian conflicts of interest—where official obligation contradicts one’s individual sense of what ought to be done. But since conscience is not always the thing preventing an order from being carried out, and since not all colonial officials were as “theoretically and secretly” moral as Eric Arthur Blair, my investigation will also account for other types of personal interests. For example, in most of the empire, and certainly in British India, there was always the risk that agents would abuse their unsupervised official positions for personal gratification. Anglo-Indian history is replete with men who set themselves up as kings; the most famous is Robert Clive, the company clerk who took charge of an army and won the battle which established Britain’s territorial sovereignty in India. Yet Clive’s is not simply a tale of boy’s own heroism since the man was arguably more famous among his contemporaries for the immense personal fortune he extracted from those battles, via the private “pensions” he negotiated with the Indian princes whose thrones he had won.\(^\text{13}\) It is salutary to note that Clive’s notorious pursuit of private profit set off a wave of speculative greed in London that nearly bankrupted his mercantile employers.\(^\text{14}\)

\(^\text{12}\) The word agency also has a particular historical connotation within the discourse of early British-Indian relations, as it refers to the English East India Company’s appointed representatives, men who acted on its behalf in various maritime centres. In addition to 17 domestic ports, the Company retained the services of individuals or business houses acting on their behalf in Aleppo, Basra, Rio de Janeiro, Venice, and (landlocked!) Vienna. For a more detailed account, see James H. Thomas’s “East India Company Agency Work in the British Isles, 1700-1800” (2002).

\(^\text{13}\) For accounts of Clive’s behaviour, see not only Macaulay’s famous essay “Lord Clive” (1840), but also P. J. Marshall’s \textit{Trade and Conquest} (1993) and Philip Lawson’s \textit{The East India Company} (1993).

\(^\text{14}\) After the Battle of Plassey, the stockholders of the East India Company demanded an exponential increase in the annual dividend while, at the same time, the British Crown extracted greater tributes (Lawson 35-7).
Taking together the threats posed to those London-based principals by both moral objectors and political-economic opportunists, I consider their various attempts to manage the response of their agents, to precondition employees to see official duties as coterminous with personal satisfaction. To do this, I need to clarify the other sense with which I use the word agency: as an institution. For there can hardly be any accounting of the way individual agency was managed in colonial India without addressing the institutional character of the Indian Civil Service. In this aspect I intend partly to answer cultural theorist Mary Poovey’s recent call for more specialised research into the influence of institutions on human subjectivity. Poovey argues that to complement the vast array of theories of representation, humanities scholars should now work to “describe the active roles [institutions] play in subject-formation, geopolitical relations, and imaginative productivity.” Doing so, “we might be able to begin developing new theories about abstractions like nationalism or globalization” (431). Her critical intervention is timely since “imperialism” is certainly another of those abstractions which requires further explication.\(^{15}\) If we agree that imperialism is an ideology whose principles are meditated and reflected in various institutions (literary, religious, educational, economic, etc.), then if we are to understand it as social, we must consider

\(^{15}\) Though Poovey never explicitly names them, it seems to me that her critique applies especially well to postcolonial and Marxist scholarship. Certainly these critical approaches have yielded impressive and valuable contributions to our understanding of imperial culture, yet at the same time each is in the final analysis limited by their chosen points of departure. For example, the best postcolonial studies of imperial subjectivities, such as Suleri’s *The Rhetoric of English India* or Anne McClintock’s *Imperial Leather* (1995), persist in conceptualising empire as a product of chauvinist nationalism. The correlative for Marxist critiques like Victor Kiernan’s *The Lords of Human Kind* (1968) and Benita Parry’s *Delusions and Discoveries* (1998) is class interest. Now it goes without saying that the British Empire was spurred and shaped by both nationalism and bourgeois ideology. But then again the same could be said for nearly any major Victorian social phenomenon (certainly both Chartism and the Corn Laws come to mind) and so we have not relieved ourselves of the burden of investigating the institutions that mediated those discourses.
not only intra-institutional variations (say, between Kipling and Orwell) but also inter-institutional relationships.

To understand the importance of critical attention to institutions, we might usefully compare Poovey’s call with Louis Althusser’s theory of the function of ideological state apparatuses (ISAs). In “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” Althusser discusses the ideological function of schools, courts, churches, the media, and literature. His purpose is to understand the way human beings are transformed, or interpellated, into subjects. In contrast to the policing function of repressive state apparatuses like the military, ISAs interpellate by “calling” to humans in terms that prescribe and enforce particular ways of thinking about their position in the world (“Ideology” 173). In this way, they provide the means for humans to assume and internalise the central values of an ideology as their putatively freely-determined self-definitions. While Althusser emphasises that ISAs do not always function in the service of state ideology (a school might teach arithmetic or a court might convict a murderer), he shows how at the same time it is impossible to think how ideology might be disseminated without them.

Althusser and Poovey are making the same point: that institutions are not ideological per se, but that nevertheless they have the power to shape the way humans understand and interact in the world. The difference is that Althusser politicises his analysis, seeing institutions as reservoirs of potentiality which may at times be dominated by the (bourgeois) hegemony but also simultaneously comprise the site for all emancipatory struggles. (We can see that this is precisely the argument made by a postcolonial theorist like Homi Bhabha who, taking language as an institution,
emphasises discursive ambivalence in order to show that colonial discourse speaks in a “tongue that is forked, not false.”

By making Althusser’s point in less political terms, Poovey’s intervention enables us to make an unexpected connection between the French Marxist and the work of Giambattista Vico. Though Althusser, a self-declared antihumanist, would probably reject this characterisation, it is hard to discern between his concept of ISAs and Vico’s *New Science*, which effectively rescued Western humanism from its impoverishment by Enlightenment rationalism. Vico’s point, made to contradict Rousseau’s romantic privileging of rationality and self-consciousness, is that nothing in the world, including even humanity, is given. To trace the developments and declinations in human progress, he suggests that we examine institutions, because institutions are not the tangible products of an exercise of will but rather independent forces which enjoy a reciprocal relationship with humans: not only do we cultivate and sustain them but they also cultivate and sustain the category of “the human.” Surely this is Althusser’s object when he posits that ISAs materialise the spiritual big Other of ideology.

**The Corporation**

The British-Indian experience is an excellent place to examine how institutions fashion subjectivity because of the overwhelming influence of a single one: the English East India Company, a joint-stock corporation that for over three hundred years operated a monopolistic trade between Great Britain and all ports east of the Cape of Good Hope. Yet however interesting the internal sociology of this early modern corporation may be, it is the radical shift in purpose that makes it particularly fertile ground. When in the 1760s
the Company began to assume territorial control of India, the consensus among both its stockholders and its external critics was that this mercantile association was constitutionally and organisationally ill-suited to administer power or deliver justice to a subject people. At the same time, few could imagine a viable alternative for that overseas administration. After all, the Company had been operating in India since the early seventeenth century. In that time, it had established political relations with local powers, maintained a militia, and, most importantly, knew more than any other British entity something about the local customs. Despite being in effect the best of a bad bunch, the corporate structure of the Company and its associated culture were hardly geared to administer an empire. When the Company accepted the diwan of Bengal, it inaugurated “a unique experiment in private sector stateship” (Brown 78). The institution which for one hundred and fifty years developed a specialised set of routines and practices to manage the actions of their overseas employees found itself compelled to develop an entirely new set to respond to the new threats accompanying its new responsibility.

In the beginning the Company was little more than a replica of the various Dutch Companies which had been trading with the Spice Islands of the Indonesian archipelago

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16 Macaulay, for example, argued that:

I will not, therefore, in a case in which I have neither principles nor precedents to guide me, pull down the existing system on account of its theoretical defects. For I know that any system which I could put in its place would be equally condemned by theory, while it would not be equally sanctioned by experience. (“Speech on the Government of India” 153)

17 Over a period of one hundred and fifty years, the English East India Company had become increasingly specialised in its operations. This organisational evolution was spurred through competition with other European East India Companies (notably the Dutch and the French) as well as domestic politicking against groups of British traders jealous of their monopoly privilege. By the 1750s the Company “was the best run of the large monopolies set up in Europe for the control of the East India trade” (Furber 201). But this profitable organisation strained to the point of collapse after Clive’s exploits, primarily because it was not well-suited to the administration of territorial power.
since the Compagnie van Verre was founded in 1594.\textsuperscript{18} Late in 1599, a collective of London merchants hastily assembled to decide whether they too could take advantage of the enormous return on capital associated with the Dutch trading missions. One year later, Queen Elizabeth I gifted these merchants a royal charter, which granted them a monopoly on the condition that they work to increase “the honour of our nation, [and] the wealth of our people” through “the increase of our navigation, and advancement of trade in merchandize” (“Charter” 2). The inclusion of honour means that Elizabeth’s charter reads curiously against recent explanations of how modern corporations operate. Invoking it also corrects those historians of the East India Company who overemphasise its “modern” attributes and align its operational and organisational strategy with twentieth-century corporations.\textsuperscript{19} This is because a general premise in the area of corporation theory is that corporations are constitutionally compelled to maximise shareholder profits and to “externalise” the costs of doing business.\textsuperscript{20} Even if we take into account the very recent scramble by modern multinationals to publicise their commitment to “corporate social responsibility,” the East India Company was bound to the national interest in a way more similar to the Bank of England than to, say, Royal Dutch Shell or Halliburton. Thus while it will serve my purposes at points to observe the similarities between past and present

\textsuperscript{18} In 1602 the several Dutch voorcompagnieën merged into the great “united” Dutch East India Company. See Chapter One of Holden Furber’s Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800 (1976) for a colourful rendering of the early days of the English and Dutch Indian enterprises.

\textsuperscript{19} Some historians of the East India Company have noted its ‘modern’ attributes, and align its operational and organisational strategy with twentieth-century corporations K. N. Chaudhuri makes this case most forcefully in “The English East India Company in the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} Centuries: A Pre-Modern Multinational Organization” (1981), but the resemblance has also been observed by Geoffrey Jones in Merchants to Multinationals: British Trading Companies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (2000), as well as A.M. Carlos and S. Nicholas, “‘Giants of an Earlier Capitalism’: The Chartered Trading Companies as Modern Multinationals” (1988).

\textsuperscript{20} One of the best and most accessible studies into the nature of modern corporations is Joel Bakan’s The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power (2005), which provocatively (if problematically) invites readers to consider the full implication of our modern conception of corporations as legal persons. Based on his analysis of numerous morally dubious corporate actions, Bakan suggests that corporations are constitutionally compelled to behave as “institutional psychopaths” (85).
corporate forms, it should also be clear that there is no homology between this renaissance corporation and today’s multinationals.

As I have suggested, my focus is on what happened after this mercantile company assumed territorial hegemony in parts of India in the mid-eighteenth century. As previously well-regulated employees became mercenary fortune-hunters, there were deleterious consequences not only for the Company’s trading interest but also for the domestic British economy.21 By the 1770s, both company stockholders and a large portion of the British public agreed that the second condition of the Elizabethan charter was not being upheld and that if the national honour was to be salvaged then serious structural reform was necessary for the East India Company.

The way this institution refashioned itself proves Jurgen Habermas’s theory of social systems.22 In critiquing the now banal metaphor of a “body politic” Habermas usefully reminds us that social systems, unlike actual organisms, can change their goals and alter constitutional elements. That flexibility gives the lie to the mythology that corporations are “bodies,” no matter how often East India Company employees speak of esprit du corps. Unlike individuals, corporations can assert themselves, and therefore possess agency, in hyper-complex environments, masquerading as bodies in order to maintain themselves at a new kind of control (Legitimation 3). With both an agency and its agents undergoing significant interruption to an established practice of everyday life, being forced mutually to adapt to a new state of affairs, we are well placed to test Vico’s

21 One of the great fears in the 1760s and early 1770s was that these returning employees (pejoratively called “nabobs”) would undermine the domestic economy as their foreign capital exerted inflationary pressure on British goods.
22 See The Legitimation Crisis (1975), 2-16.
theory that human subjectivity and morality are co-produced by agents and their institutional agencies.

_Tönnies and Group Theory_

What I am suggesting is that we must think about the social system bounded by the Indian Civil Service as a group, and of the Anglo-Indian administrators as a sociological unit separate from the general British polity. But since groups and institutions take many forms, each with their own internal logics, I want to introduce a distinction made by the nineteenth-century sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies between the two dominant forms of modern groups. In _Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft_ (1884), Tönnies claimed that human associations could be characterized by two normative types. On the one hand there is an “organic” Community (_Gemeinschaft_), bound together by ties of kinship, fellowship, custom, history and communal ownership of primary goods. On the other hand, a “mechanical” Civil Society (_Gesellschaft_), where free-standing individuals interacted with each other through self-interest, contracts, and the external constraints of formally enacted laws.

This theory provides a framework for understanding the administrative culture of the East India Company. Clearly, as a mercantile organisation, the Company initially carried the aspect of _Gesellschaft_, an artificial society of free-individuals brought together by the pursuit of profit through trade and who undertook to be regulated by a set of rational, manufactured rules of conduct.²³ This worked well enough so long as the

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²³ Tönnies speaks of “the joint-stock-company—which is liable only for itself, and limited almost exclusively to making a profit—[as] the perfect type of all possible social and legal constructions based on rationality. This is precisely because, even in its origins (which can sometime be misleading about the real
Company's interests were limited to the economic sphere. Yet when it became a political power, and when employees could enrich themselves economically through the corrupt exercise of their political power, London was at a loss. It is a measure of their desperation in the face of ongoing corruption that in 1765 the Directors agreed to send none other than Robert Clive back to India to handle the problem!

In order to discipline their agents, the challenge for the East India Company was to invent a form of social capital and to associate its accrual with the successful discharge of administrative tasks. Yet for social capital to acquire value and currency, the civil society of merchant-traders would have to become a community of administrators. Recalling John Stuart Mill’s admission that the Company could exercise no direct control over its agents once they had been sent to India and adding to this the fact that the agents themselves often worked in isolation from each other, we recognise that the transformation can only take place at the level of the cultural. In short, to return to Tönnies’s model, the East India Company militated against corruption by transforming their Gesellschaft into a Gemeinschaft, inaugurating one of the first deliberate attempts to fashion a corporate culture.

In describing that corporate culture, I want to link the culture of British imperialism to the structure of its administration through their shared concern with ethical dilemmas. My work is prompted by the fact that imperial necessity often asked colonial civil servants and readers to abandon personal scruples in favour of an ostensibly national interest. However, I argue that the object of imperial hegemony is not merely to convince people to suspend their moral code; it is equally important to ensure that agents or readers

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nature of things), it is a Gesellschaft association without any admixture of the elements of Community” (209).
do not go too far, indulging in their newfound radical subjectivity by taking excess material, psychological, or affective pleasure from their imperial experience.

Because this is a study of how texts contributed to the management of individuals in the employ of a corporate body, I focus on those responsible for authoring and administering imperial policy: the clerks, officers, and merchants acting directly or indirectly as agents of the Crown. As a body, this small group certainly should not be confused as a metonym for British society nor can it even be thought to encompass the total number of British subjects living and working in India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For the most part, I have very little to say about the enlisted soldiers, missionaries, or private merchants who began to arrive in increasing numbers as the Company gradually ceded its monopoly on Indian trade and immigration. Indeed, as administrators, my collection of company men does not even comprise a distinct class in the proper Marxist sense of the word.

To this end, one of the goals in this study is to locate the dissonance between them and the larger pool (i.e. the British middle class) from which they were drawn. It is commonly held that one of the great benefits of Empire was its provision of a useful occupation for the second sons of Britain’s landed families. Work in the colonies sated the zeal of many who might otherwise be motivated to social agitation by their arbitrary exclusion from the established domestic political economy. As Raymond Williams wrote in his reflection on George Orwell, “Only part of the [ruling] class was quite wholly in command: able to live on its property and investments, or to move directly into central metropolitan institutions. A much larger part had a harder and humbler function” (Orwell 14). An overwhelming mass of archival records testifies that the company men professed
a different, or at least heavily inflected, creed of values when compared to their contemporary mainstream British middle-class ideology. As I will demonstrate in my third chapter, this divergence is palpable in the early literature of Anglo-India.

In the employ of the East India Company, an individual could wield nearly despotic power over a massive foreign territory and population; yet he was obliged contractually at a meagre wage to follow the directives of a small court of proprietors located several months’ correspondence away. That these proprietors often displayed total ignorance of the conditions in any given agent’s territory only exacerbated the situation. The resulting effect of anxious frustration became a recurrent theme in the writings of company men. However, despite the tension between corporate headquarters and its field agents, the company men somehow cohered enough to perpetuate British overseas hegemony for nearly two centuries.

Throughout this study I will refer to “aristocratic virtue” as the vehicle for that social stability. Briefly defined, aristocratic virtue denotes the psychosocial process whereby a British citizen (employee or reader) was reduced to the level of instrumentality precisely at the moment he believed himself entrusted as the agent of noble reform. The term originates from the sentiment expressed by Governor-General Richard Wellesley in his address to the Company Directors on the matter of employee training. Wellesley’s “Notes with Respect to the Foundation of a College at Fort William” (1800) argues that colonial agents would be easy to manage if they could be brought to think of themselves as “statesmen...properly qualified to conduct the ordinary movements of the great machine of Government” (731). This hoped-for combination of liberally-educated gentlemen who would be capable of ruling but satisfied to serve soon became not only
the object of corporate pedagogy but also an ideal in Anglo-Indian literature. We can find
the supreme literary representation of aristocratic virtue near the conclusion of Kim in the
famous scene where the young hero collapses into aphasia because, for the first time in
his life, this otherwise omnipotent teenager feels himself “a cog-wheel unconnected with
any machinery” (Kim 234).

As a new “good,” aristocratic virtue facilitated the transformation of Anglo-India
from a civil society to a community, because it enabled both pleasure and social merit to
be acquired through the act rather than the result of work. This change accords with
Tönnies’s distinction: in a community work is a vocation and something not separable
from life, whereas in a civil society work is like a business organised for the attainment of
some hypothetical happy end (such as a salary, pension, or a parade when one retires
home to England). This explains why so little of Anglo-Indian corporate culture
emphasises the practical achievements of British imperialism—the bridges built, the
hospitals founded, the famines averted—and instead celebrates the virtuous toil and self-
sacrifice of the colonial servants in service to the idea of practical achievements. Like all
cultural topoi, aristocratic virtue became progressively more complex as it circulated. The
rudimentary encouragement of a fraternal esprit du corps at Haileybury College
anticipates the circles of proficient technocrats who populate Kipling’s short stories.
Likewise Wellesley’s promise that noble sacrifice would lead to honourable distinction
upon retirement is critiqued by Anglo-Indian writers who maintain that work and
achievements mean little to those outside the community of administrators. As such,
aristocratic virtue is the affective economy where the pleasures of imperialism are
granted to colonial agents on the condition that they can only enjoy those pleasures secretly among themselves.

*Corporate Culture: Writing, Reading, and the Manufacture of Consent*

By emphasising the continuity of aristocratic virtue across various iterations of British Indian imperialism in the long nineteenth century, *The Company Man* analyses the influence of colonial texts both as desiring objects, directed towards some goal (real or imagined), and as practical contributions to the definition and structure of that goal. The subject material under consideration includes novels, short stories, poems, essays, memoirs, personal correspondence, and parliamentary speeches related to the East India Company and its bureaucratic after-image, the Indian Civil Service. Before undertaking this task, however, a concession: it is foolhardy to make positivist-materialist judgements about literature and even the most unreconstructed Marxist would not propose that literature is merely ideological. While I am keen to emphasise the relation between Anglo-Indian literature and the government of India, I do not mean to suggest that Anglo-Indian writers wrote in the service of the East India Company or the Indian Government; in fact, many of the best Anglo-Indian writers did not strictly belong to the official class represented in their fiction. (Both Rudyard Kipling and Sara Jeanette Duncan, for example, were journalists by trade, not administrators.) Neither do I intend to show a causal link between this literature and the ethical composition of its readers. What I am more concerned with are the beliefs, feelings, values, and dispositions to act certain ways that are prevalent in a society at a particular historical and cultural conjuncture, including not only states of mind that are explicitly acknowledged but others that are unarticulated
or regarded as fixed or natural. And it is here that literature becomes a viable site of inquiry since literature, if Matthew Arnold has taught us anything, remains one of the deepest and abundant archives for the best of which has been thought and said by Anglo-Indians.

On the matter of historical accuracy, I want to invoke a letter written by Oscar Wilde to The Times in 1891, which responded to a complaint about his recent review of Kipling’s Plain Tales from the Hills. In the review Wilde had praised Kipling as a master of vulgarity, a compliment which one reader took to be a pernicious slur on the character of Anglo-Indians. In his letter, Wilde begs not to be misunderstood, declaring “How far Mr. Kipling’s stories really mirror Anglo-Indian society I have no idea at all, nor, indeed, am I much interested in any correspondence between art and nature” (105). The retort is classic Wilde: the voice of a world-weary artist who has shrugged off his interest in reality to focus his energies on l’art pour l’art. But it is also a timely reminder that no piece of fiction, whatever its ideological claims or intentions, can ever represent the world as it was.

Accordingly, this study follows Wilde insofar as it is careful not to assume that textual or fictional life reflects real social life in any way; the speeches, memoranda, short stories and novels under discussion here are not “representative” texts that tell us how things really were. Like all other characters in fiction, a company man cannot be said to point to a “real” Anglo-India; instead he comprises a mixture of the writer’s social knowledge, social wishes, favoured literary conventions, and in some cases, autobiography. This fact holds whether he is the figure constructed by Edmund Burke in parliamentary speeches or the figure constructed by Rudyard Kipling in the Civil and
Military Gazette. In reading my selections as social texts—that is, as reflective commentaries on social conditions intended to challenge, explore and reframe the associated debates—the conclusions I draw are not meant to illuminate history but culture.

Yet there can be no doubt that “real” history informs this study of corporate culture and by bringing history and fiction into close relation, my work is in sympathy with what Pierre Bourdieu has called “constructivist structuralism.” Like Bourdieu, I am confident that in addition to symbolic systems such as language and myths, social worlds contain “objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents, which are capable of guiding and constraining their practices or their representations” (14). Just as we are now inclined (thanks to Tom Nairn, Katie Trumpener, and Linda Colley) to agree that there was nothing “natural” in the eighteenth-century notion of “Britishness,” we should also realise that there was nothing natural about the genus Anglo-Indian.

To apprehend how the company man is structurally constructed, it is helpful to turn to Marx’s notion of a social class. Marx, as everybody knows, argued that human communities can be divided into a hierarchy of classes determined by the degree to which they have access to the economic means of production. However the point that many overlook is that these classes are neither natural, fixed, nor even economically-determined, but are made through political work.24 This is Bourdieu’s point when he comes to consider how it is that human subjects (even those belonging to a non-dominant class) come to accept their position in society:

No doubt agents do have an active apprehension of the world. No doubt they do construct their vision of the world. But this construction is carried out under structural constraints. (18)

In those cases when agents do perceive their social world as evident, Bourdieu continues, it is only because they have internalized the structures of that world. Bourdieu here closely approximates what Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci would call a hegemonic order: the vision of the social world which makes a given state of affairs seem natural and its moral code seem like “common sense” to everyone, not just the dominant class. Whether we use Gramsci’s hegemony or Bourdieu’s preferred “habitus,” the point for both is that consent is not something produced through propaganda or imposed by symbolic systems but is, instead, something manufactured by networks of social structures and institutions.

It is my feeling that the colonial administrators of India—through the standard of aristocratic virtue established to purify mercantile imperialism, through the disciplinary apparatuses of the training colleges and the competition examination founded to train men who found that virtue through exile and sacrifice, and through the literary culture which continued to disseminate this doxic modality long after the decline of Company power in India—provide an exemplary case of manufactured consent. Although I concentrate on social arguments in connection with four distinct stages of imperial discourse, I do assume some familiarity with broader historical context out of which these moments emerge. While my focus is on the development of an Anglo-Indian corporate culture, it will be apparent to many readers that the problems associated with the
management and discipline of imperial agents were not confronted in isolation from other, general, debates. Where I have found it pertinent to my argument, I gesture towards some of these more prominent connections, such as the relationship between the Company's competition exam and the mid-Victorian reform of the domestic civil service. On other points, such as the relationship between Wellesley's cult of personal credit and the contemporary debates over the paper-currency economy, I remain silent for the sake of argumentative concision and continuity, leaving my reader to make the connections.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter One, "Corruption and the Purification of the Corporation," examines how the idea of empire became virtuous in the first place by developing Edmund Burke's conception of the Parliament as a public stage where state-level crises could be resolved symbolically. My argument turns on the distinction between the public and the private spheres, in order to suggest that the Impeachment of Warren Hastings is the first modern corporate corruption trial. The manager's corrupt character, Burke argued, threatened to undermine the institutional integrity of the East India Company and thereby compromised Britain's ability to justify its occupation of India. While later chapters will document Burke's influence on future generations of Anglo-Indian policymakers and cultural critics, this first chapter examines how Burke cultivated the customary language, rituals, and values of eighteenth-century Britain to create new associations which made territorial imperialism palatable.

Chapter Two, "How the Civil Service Got Its Name: India as a Noble Profession," examines how the company began to produce its social capital and pushes past the simple
observation that the language of British imperial discourse in the nineteenth century
demotes the aspect of commodity trade in favour of Burkean ideas of “duty” and
“honour.” Instead I examine two specific attempts by the East India Company to cultivate
feelings of aristocratic virtue among its recruits. My starting point is that when it comes
to analysing the ethics of a nineteenth-century British colonial administrator, to describe
either the empire or its hegemonic persuasiveness in terms of “duty” or “honour” is
difficult because it is so clearly tautological: in India one “acts” ethically by “acting”
British. The thesis of this chapter is that imperial ethics were, indeed, informed by British
identity, but that this British identity was brought into being by the practical demands of
controlling one’s distant agents. I examine texts written by Wellesley, Thomas Malthus,
and Thomas Babington Macaulay in relation to the establishment of the Company’s
training college in Haileybury and of the later competition exam. Doing so, I demonstrate
that the British identity which informed an agent’s ethical choices was explicitly
corporate in nature, not based on traditional or essential forms (whether British, English,
Christian, European, etc.) but manufactured by a series of novel disciplinary apparatuses.

Chapter Three, “Corporate Culture: The Fiction of Anglo-India,” explores how
literature enabled social cohesion in the decline of those explicit training apparatuses.
More than the others, this chapter examines the institutional character of Anglo-Indian
literature and theorises its relationship with the corporate administrative structure. I begin
by identifying Anglo-Indian literature as its own genre and, using recent work in the areas
of postcolonial theory, ask whether it is possible to speak of it as a “national” literature.
The only way this can be done, I submit, is by exploring that literature’s relation with the
other social institutions of Anglo-India and I argue that the preponderance of work and
professionalism confirms the enduring influence of the Company’s ethos, even after the
Crown assumed direct control in 1858. By focussing on the shared themes of social
transparency and unheralded toil in the works of William Arnold, George Otto Trevelyan,
Rudyard Kipling, and Sara Jeannette Duncan I illuminate both the growing hegemony of
and the critical resistance to the corporate ideology.

The final chapter, “The Unmaking of a Company Man in Rudyard Kipling’s
Kim,” considers Kipling’s great novel as the apotheosis of that corporate culture, both in
its representation of unproblematically distributed power and in its description of the
importance of social bonds among the thinly spread administrators. In Kipling’s novel,
the subjects of my previous chapters are worked out in fiction. There the colonial
bureaucracy is perfectly legitimate, an institution whose dominion over India has no end;
there the school of St. Xavier in Lucknow presents a glimpse of the training methods of
the junior class of company men; there Creighton and Lurgan communicate the mores of
professional behaviour; and there the central drama culminates with the protagonist
suffering an ethical crisis when Kim O’Hara breaks down at the successful conclusion of
his secret mission. Recent interpretations of the novel have suggested that Kim’s
breakdown stems from his sense of conflicted identity and his inability to choose between
loyalty to his Indian comrades and his British compatriots. However, the ubiquity of
terms such as British and Indian in these critiques reveals nationhood as the spectre
which continues to haunt our reading of colonial texts. In this chapter, I argue that it is
better to view Kim’s collapse as precipitated by the unbearable pressure of being a
company man, at once an individual moral being and also a representative, a physical
manifestation, of a complex corporate body.
Chapter One

Corruption and the Purification of the Corporation:
Edmund Burke and the Hastings Impeachment

If Britain acquired its empire, in the famous words of one Victorian historian living in the age of jingoism, in a fit of absence of mind then one of the more intriguing moments of forgetfulness is how a mercantile corporation became the legitimate administrative agent of British power on the Indian subcontinent. The rise of the East India Company as a political and administrative body stands out even more because it so clearly contradicts popularly understood British attitudes to both commercial and foreign affairs. From Bernard Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees* (1714) to Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* (1776), early modern British commercial discourse is characterised by its advocacy of industry, free trade, and the mutual benefits accrued by those parties who transact without ulterior interest. At the same time, it is worth recalling that Britain’s two major wars of the mid-eighteenth century, namely the War of Jenkins’ Ear and the Seven Years War, mobilized domestic opinion in part by positioning Britain as the scourge of Spanish, Portuguese, and French tyranny. We do well to remember that the iconic militaristic poem of the period, James Thomson’s patriotic ditty “Rule Britannia” (1740), not only asserted that Britons never will be slaves but also their “cities shall with commerce shine” (23).

In this atmosphere, where liberty and commerce were diametrically opposed to empire, how then does one reconcile the position occupied by the East India Company? By the 1770s not only had Britain’s pre-eminent overseas trading company assumed territorial and judicial control of a foreign country, but it also stood accused of exercising
that sovereignty in a despotic manner. In this case, what was bad for business was also damaging the national character. While the exploits of Company employees like Robert Clive scandalised London in the 1760s and 70s and introduced the figure known as the “nabob” to popular culture, the controversy over Britain’s position in India did not culminate until 1787, when Edmund Burke initiated impeachment proceedings against the Company’s recently-returned Governor-General, Warren Hastings. While Burke’s interest in India was long-standing and although he frequently brought the plight of Company India to the attention of Parliament—most notably in support of Charles Fox’s India Bill of 1783, whose failure toppled the Fox-North coalition and raised Pitt the Younger into his first ministry—his protests went largely unheeded because few British politicians in the era of the American Revolution were prepared to expend political capital pursuing the questionable morality of men employed by a company operating under the licence of a sixteenth-century charter.

As it happens, it is still not fully understood how or why the Hastings Impeachment went so far as it did. Burke, after all, was a member of the opposition when he introduced the motion, and it was popularly conceded that however unscrupulous Warren Hastings might have been he was no Robert Clive. It was only the last-minute (and unexpected) support of Pitt that secured the parliamentary censure. But whatever the historical coincidences, Burke made the most of his opportunity and related the charges against Hastings in such a way as to guarantee their notoriety. The initial twenty-seven charges enumerated offences ranging from extortion to condoning torture and in his effort to halt the corruption of the nascent British Empire, Burke charged Hastings

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25 Even Pitt’s biographers are at a loss to explain why he threw his support behind Burke. For example, the Victorian biographer Philip Stanhope can only guess that something in Pitt’s “lofty mind” stirred when he finally reflected on the Hastings case (1: 241-44).
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with High Crimes and Misdemeanours, "by each and all of which Practices the Welfare
of the East India Company has materially suffered, the Happiness of the Native
Inhabitants of India been deeply affected, their Confidence in English Faith and Lenity
shaken and impaired, and the Honour of the Crown and the Character of this Nation
wantonly and wickedly degraded ("Articles of Impeachment" 135, emphasis added).

At this stage in my argument, I want to observe that in Burke’s estimation the
disreputable conduct of an employee affected three parties: East India Company
stockholders, Indian subjects, and British citizens. What I would like to suggest is that the
intersection of these three previously separable interests reveals the importance of the
corporation in the first coherent articulation of Britain’s empire. By aggregating the
interests of Company, the colonised, and the coloniser, Burke obliged the British public
to confront serially the responsibility it bore to another nation. Were Hastings merely a
rogue employee, he could have been disciplined internally; were he merely an aspiring
despot, he might be left to share the fate of Daniel Dravot in Rudyard Kipling’s short
story “The Man Who Would Be King” (1888); were he merely a domestic criminal, he
could be left to the municipal courts. But because Burke argued that Hastings belonged at
once to all three categories simultaneously, he meant to establish that only one body, the
British Parliament, could exercise suzerainty over the alleged crimes. Accordingly, in his
“Speech on the Opening of the Impeachment,” Burke makes it clear that “It is by this
tribunal that Statesmen who abuse their power are tried before Statesmen and by
Statesmen, upon solid principles of State morality... It is here that no subject in any part
of the Empire can be refused justice” ("Speech on Opening" 272).
However, in applying “the oldest process known to the Constitution of this country...[and] the individuating principle that makes England what England is,” to the subject of the very new and very nebulous British Empire, Burke’s prosecution had long-lasting and arguably unintended consequences (272). While Burke aimed to legitimise British authority in India by holding it to the same moral standard that justified British domestic power, he necessarily had to establish the moral standard for the organisation acting on behalf of the British Crown. This meant arguing that the East India Company was a virtuous organisation as such. Only once the Company’s virtue had been established could Burke argue that Hastings had violated the sanctity of the Governor-General’s office by using publicly entrusted powers to further his private pecuniary interest. In other words, during the Impeachment of Warren Hastings, a commercial organisation accessed for the first time the institutional authority previously reserved for apparatuses of the State.

The Impeachment is important in the field of imperial studies since, before we can begin to examine the civilising mission of nineteenth-century imperialism, we must reconcile how mercantile imperialism itself became civilised in the late eighteenth century. I see Burke’s Indian speeches as key texts in that transformation, not only for the effect they would have on the future shape of imperial government but also for their immediate contribution to the sedimentation of the idea of empire within the British polity. In her study of imperial discourse, Sara Suleri rightly observes that the novelty of colonial hegemony meant that Burke and his contemporaries lacked the proper linguistic register to discuss the issue coherently (49-53). But neither Suleri nor any other of the scholars of empire, have addressed in sufficient detail the work done by the East India
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Company, either as the proxy agent of British power or as a corporate body which managed its employees in very specific ways. It is my belief that the insertion of a mercantile corporation into the offices of the imperial state opens a rich seam for colonial scholarship, not only because it demonstrates the interdependence of capitalism and imperialism but also because it reminds us that the historical artefact we call the British Empire was always unplanned, unregulated, and unstable. What became the culture of imperialism had a great deal to do with the improvisational responses to dynamic situations by particular individuals.

To purify the acts of Britons overseas, Edmund Burke necessarily confronted the impure amalgamation of merchant and sovereign famously criticised by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). The problem, as Smith saw it, involved the separation of interests. As traders, company employees were obliged to maximise price of goods exported from Britain (in order to purchase more Indian commodities); as sovereigns, the employees were obliged to maximise the price of Indian commodities (to create the surplus value which would enable the local economy’s development). Smith argues that “As sovereigns, their interest is exactly the same with that of the country which they govern. As merchants their interest is directly opposite to that interest” (2: 480). Yet as Smith continues his economic analysis of colonies in Book Four, he realises that the corporate structure of the East India Company presents an even greater problem. That is to say, even if the Janus-faced interests of the merchant-sovereign could be reconciled, the company would still be forced to consider the fact that their employees, as servants of the Company, had no interest in the welfare of the people they governed:
The country belongs to their masters [the stock-holders], who cannot avoid having some regard for the interest of what belongs to them. But it does not belong to the servants. The real interest of their masters, if they were capable of understanding it, is the same with that of the country, and it is from ignorance chiefly, and the meanness of mercantile prejudice, that they ever oppress it. But the real interest of the servants is by no means the same with that of the country, and the most perfect information would not necessarily put an end to their oppressions. (2: 483)

Most of Smith’s economic analysis is based on the moral argument put forward by William Bolts in Considerations of Indian Affairs (1772). Bolts, an expelled Company employee, explained that the “different interests of the Company as sovereigns of Bengal and at the same time monopolizers of all the trade and commerce of those countries, operate in direct opposition, and are mutually destructive of each other” (x).

Both Smith and Bolts influenced Burke; nowhere is this clearer than in Burke’s argument that the East India Company had become “that thing which was supposed by the Roman Law so unsuitable, the same power was a Trader, the same power was a Lord ... a State in disguise of a Merchant, a great public office in disguise of a Countinghouse” (“Opening” 283). Like Smith and Bolts, Burke realised that the mission to eliminate corruption was two-fold. On the one hand, the stockholders of the East India Company qua the political agent of the British public had to be enlightened or supplied with sufficient information to realise that India’s political and economic interests were not

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26 According to James Bonar’s Catalogue of the Library of Adam Smith, Smith owned a copy of Bolts’ essay (15). Burke too had read the Considerations, and remarked that “it certainly has the merit of being the first that turned the national attention to the state of our affairs in the East Indies” (Correspondence 5: 263-4)
opposed to but rather consonant with their own. At the same time, this enlightenment
would be worthless if the interests and actions of the company’s servants could not be
regulated. So, on the other hand, the employees of the company—a group of men who
literally had no stock or share in the economic development of India or the spread of
justice—would have to be subject to new forms of surveillance and discipline, forms that
took into account the immense geographical distance between London and India. This
chapter examines how Burke cultivated the customary language, rituals, and values of
eighteenth-century mercantilism to create new associations which not only made
territorial imperialism palatable for the domestic population, but also established a plan
for managing the interests of employees.

The first part of my argument turns on the distinction between the public and the
private spheres, by reading the Impeachment of Warren Hastings as the first modern
corporate corruption trial. I will focus on Burke’s insistence that the corrupt character of a
corporate manager threatened to undermine the institutional integrity of the East India
Company and thereby compromised Britain’s ability to justify its occupation of India.\(^{27}\)

Of course, “corruption” will have a particular connotation to period scholars who,
following J. G. A. Pocock’s argument in *Virtue, Commerce, History*, understand it as an
epithet for those monied interests which threatened to upset the natural stability
maintained by Britain’s landed gentry (115).\(^{28}\) Burke’s own position in this debate is well
known. An aristocratic Whig, Burke consistently rails against the potentially corruptive
forces of new philosophies and technologies. Opposed to radical changes, he espouses

\(^{27}\) Burke’s performance never questioned the virtue of the Company’s mission and obscured the
consolidation the interests of an emerging social group: the increasingly wealthy stockholders of the East
India Company, a group which included Burke himself among its membership.

\(^{28}\) Elsewhere, Pocock describes the debate more poetically as a controversy “between *homo politicus* and
*homo mercator*” (*Machiavellian Moment* 550).
instead a policy of cautious cultivation, the philosophical forerunner of what Matthew Arnold would two generations later call “Culture.” Yet however prevalent the trope of corruption is in Burke's other writings, it deserves special and close attention in the context of a trial involving a commercial organisation on the brink of moral and financial collapse. To this end, I submit that the interpretive lenses of Pocockean virtue and Burkean cultivation might productively be refocussed by the work being done in the recently flourishing field of corruption theory. This subset of social theory is concerned with organisations in crisis and considers the role of individual agents in bringing about institutional decline. It builds from the generally accepted principle that a corrupt individual is one who has transgressed the putative division of interests and has utilised the powers of his or her public office in order to procure some private gain. Joseph Nye provides the standard definition of corruption as:

behavior which deviates from the normal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (family, close private clique), pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence. This includes behavior such as bribery (use of rewards to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of ascriptive relationship rather than merit) and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private-regarding uses) (966).

As shorthand, we might say that actions are deemed corrupt when an element belonging to the private sphere makes itself visible in the public sphere. Upon this transgression of
boundaries, the restoration of public purity, the illusion upon which our notions of equitable democracy is founded, can only be effected through the public trial and punishment of offending individuals.

This interpretative model appears applicable to the Hastings Impeachment since instead of attacking the Company, its modus vivendi, or even its Board of Directors, Burke focused overwhelmingly on its chief executive officer. While Burke reveals his antipathy towards mercantile imperialism, equally clear is his conviction that the available institutions of the British state were constitutionally incompatible with the responsibilities of administering a foreign empire and therefore liable to be corrupted.29 Of politicians, he declared,

Ministers must wholly be removed from the management of the affairs of India, or they will have influence in its patronage... It works both ways; it influences the delinquent, and it may corrupt the minister. ("Fox’s India Bill” 443)

Burke’s solution involved the substantial reform of the East India Company, a purge of malign forces that finds its modern echo in American President George W. Bush’s “bad apples” defence, used to explain abuses in the cells of Abu Ghraib and the finance departments of Enron and Tyco. In such ritualised processes, systemic critique is avoided through a process of scapegoating; Hastings the man became the vehicle for the purification of the East India Company’s hegemony in India.

29 Incidentally, this fact jeopardises Siraj Ahmed’s recent claim that instead “of a corporation of private citizens, [Burke] wanted the British state to govern India” (30).
Burke’s Indian speeches support Paul Ricouer’s argument that ideology and rhetoric are inextricable. That is to say, in order to appreciate why imperial ideology took this or that particular form in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we must begin with the rhetoric used by Burke in his excoriation of Warren Hastings. By pitching his accusations against Hastings in terms of peculation and tyranny, Burke simultaneously implanted an expectation that their antitheses—duty and self-sacrifice—should form the model for the future practice of company men in India. Likewise, by focusing his prosecution on the corrupt practices of an individual, Burke ritually cleansed the corporate entity. Amidst those rhetorical flourishes of oriental despotism, avarice, and grave threats to the national character were ideological movements of real substance as Burke established for the first time a set of moral preconditions for a just empire and a code of conduct for its future employees.

_Credible Empires_

We can better comprehend Burke’s contribution to imperial discourse by way of a small detour through another of the so-called patriarchs of modern conservative thought, Benjamin Disraeli. In particular, I want to reflect on a scene early in _Tancred_ (1847) where an idealistic son rejects the seat in Parliament offered by his father:

You have proposed to me to-day ... to enter public life. I do not shrink from its duties ... But I cannot find that it is part of my duty to maintain the order of things, for I will not call it a system, which at present prevails in our country. It

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30 Ricoeur defines ideology as “the whole set of symbols, beliefs, and representations which, by way of acknowledged ideas, ensures the identity of a group (nation, people, party, etc.). In this sense, ideology is the discourse itself of the imaginary constitution of society” (63).
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seems to me that it cannot last, as nothing can endure, or ought to endure, that is not founded on principle; and its principle I have not discovered. (38)

Britain, Tancred feels, has become a victim of its own successes; filthy lucre has obscured the “first principles” made that material prosperity possible. So long as this remains the case, people supposedly working in the public interest by holding public office can only continue in “contributing to this quick corruption which surrounds us” (40). In this scene, Disraeli presents an archetype of conservative rhetoric: a great nation threatens to disintegrate because, tempted by a new philosophy or way of being, it has forgotten the ancient virtues which have made it great in the first instance; and that only through a redoubled effort to recover those lost virtues can the nation save itself and guarantee future prosperity. Tancred’s lament might have been equally resonant in Burke’s Britain, when waves of new wealth and exotic goods were pouring into the country from foreign territories and Britons grappled with the meaning of their newly acquired status as a colonial power. Amidst this flux, claiming “antiquity has lost all its effect and reverence on the minds of men,” Burke called for a serious reformation of British imperial policy, warning “whatever does not stand with credit does not stand for long” (272).

Considering these jeremiads together, one could certainly locate the dissonance between Tancred’s “principles” and Burke’s “credit” as evidence of the powerful influence of the market economy in the eighteenth century. Following Pocock’s argument, it shows how commercial terminology begins to function ideologically and serves to consolidate bourgeois interests by transcending its material connection with the marketplace and saturating British culture down to the level of language (Virtue,
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Commerce, History 108-116). To be sure, in the discourse of the eighteenth-century British public sphere, “credit” was as likely to refer to character or reputation as to fiscal solvency. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine that Burke was unconscious of the metaphor’s ambivalence when used in the specific context of the East India Company. Whatever resonance “credit” had within the moral vocabulary of his audience, its use could not fail to evoke images of the material, financial credibility of the Company as well. In this case we are furnished with a robust example of the translative character of metaphor, evidence that the bearing across involved in metaphoric meaning making is not a unidirectional movement. In his “Speech on the Opening of the Hastings Impeachment” Burke forces the metaphor of credit to refer simultaneously to its material and its moral index, to operate, that is to say, at once on its literal and sedimented levels. This catachresis that signals a change in the way Britons conceived their emerging empire. By imposing the moral obligations of a just sovereign onto the vanguard corporation at the heart of Britain’s imperial identity, Burke shattered one of the nation’s self-fashioned images: that theirs was an empire of trade alone.

By drawing attention to the multiple valences of credit or credibility in the speeches against Warren Hastings, I do not mean to imply that Burke's speeches in themselves altered the way Empire was conceived in British public discourse. The historical record reveals manifold voices ranging across the political spectrum, aligned momentarily in their opposition to the powers exercised by the Company in India. By the late 1780s, as P. J. Marshall observes, “nearly every section of British political opinion was prepared to accept that serious crimes had been committed in India” (Impeachment viii). The Company had acquired, through successive military campaigns, territorial
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control of several regions in India, using the plunder from one to finance the conquest of the next. Putting the crimes in foreign climes to one side, the Company’s transactions in England appeared equally insalubrious as its precarious financial position had necessitated several government bailouts. Some commentators, reminded of the havoc caused by the burst South Seas Bubble, warned that the Company could fail at any moment. One pamphleteer wrote in 1768 that the collapse of the Company would affect “the whole publick credit of the kingdom, and almost renew the disasters of the South-Sea year” (State of the East India Company’s Affairs 2). Another popular concern was the behaviour of Company employees who had been, since the time of Robert Clive, acquiring massive personal fortunes in India through morally questionable actions and returning to spend them in Britain, driving up the cost of property, rotten boroughs, and other commodities.

These robber-barons had been an object of public derision at least since Samuel Foote’s popular drama The Nabob (1778), but because their money granted them access to public offices normally reserved for members of the aristocracy and their appointees they also engendered fears of a “Bengal interest” consolidating within the House of Commons and hijacking domestic politics. Lord Chatham, for one, remarked:

The riches of Asia have been poured in upon us, and have brought with them not only Asiatic Luxury, but, I fear, Asiatic principles of government. Without connections, without any natural interest in the soil, the importers of foreign gold
have forced their way into Parliament by such a torrent of private corruption as no hereditary fortune could resist. (qtd. in Lawson 120)\textsuperscript{31}

Aside from the matter of domestic stability, thornier existential questions were asked of the emerging empire by writers like the Tory sentimentalist Henry Mackenzie whose “Man of Feeling” momentarily descends from his cultivation of pure affect to pass judgement on more worldly matters:

I cannot … rejoice at our conquests in India. You tell me of immense territories subject to the English: I cannot think of their possessions, without being led to enquire, by what right they possess them. They came as traders … and however great their profits were, they were then equitable [to Indians]. But what title have the subjects of another kingdom to establish an empire in India? to give laws to a country where the inhabitants received them on the terms of friendly commerce?

(102)

William Wilberforce likened the injustices in India to the African slave trade (65). Others still, including Adam Smith, saw it as a Janus-faced organisation structurally unable to guarantee civil order in India, “necessarily composed of a council of merchants, a profession no doubt extremely respectable, but which in no country in the world carries

\textsuperscript{31} Burke himself would reiterate the sentiment in the \textit{Reflections} when he compared Britain’s House of Commons to the French National Assembly. Its greatness had been tried and proven by its ability to “keep the breakers of the law in India from becoming the makers of the law for England” (96).
along with it that sort of authority which naturally over-awes the people, and without force commands their willing obedience” (2: 480).\textsuperscript{32}

Thus, this mercantile organisation, compelled by its constitution to maximise trading profit, was seen by many for various reasons to be a corrosive influence on both British and Indian societies and its radical potential was only increased by its uncertain tenure of power.\textsuperscript{33} The anxiety over the Company’s destabilising influence was heightened by the reality that the notion of “Britain” was itself a contested site in the eighteenth century. According to Linda Colley, victory in the Seven Years’ War initiated a period of “collective agoraphobia” that unsettled traditional constructs of British national identities (101). When Burke told the audience at the Hastings Impeachment that “whatever does not stand with credit does not stand for long,” the imminent demise of the nascent British Empire—to say nothing of the shaky British nation—was a very real possibility.

Despite this robust chorus of critics, chroniclers of eighteenth-century Anglo-Indian relations often choose to represent Burke in terms not dissimilar with his legacy in other areas; that is to say, as a solitary figure who made an impassioned stance against the swirling revolutionary forces of his age.\textsuperscript{34} Among all the voices of his age, Burke’s

\textsuperscript{32} Thus it is truly baffling when modern scholars such as Don Habibi assert that, “In the minds of most Englishmen, particularly those in positions of power and importance, their right to dominate and rule was taken for granted. Thus, finding plausible moral justifications for the British Empire was not an issue in domestic political debates of the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries” (132).

\textsuperscript{33} David Spadafora has elaborated on this “consumptive” view of history, held by many in the eighteenth-century, as a perspective that perceived prosperity as both a desirable social aim and, as the satisfaction of needs yielded to the manufacture of luxury and indolence, the agent of social decay (23-36).

\textsuperscript{34} Too often the entire imperial debate of the period is conflated into an adversarial struggle between two men, Burke and Hastings. The BBC Radio 4 programme “Burke v. Hastings: Imperial Misdemeanour?” is a recent example. I should at this point clarify my own reasons for eliding the other Managers of the prosecution and perhaps giving the impression that the trial involved only two men. The effort to impeach Hastings was completed by a sizeable group, among them Charles Fox, Charles Grey, and Richard Sheridan. Indeed, Sheridan’s speech outlining the case against Hastings in reference to the Begums of Oudh stands on its own as one of the great Parliamentary orations of all time. By focusing my attention on
survives as the most important critique of the new imperialism. Among the panoply of available options, the choices he made, the affiliations he disclosed, and the rhetorical gestures he favoured became the principal attributes of a long and powerful tradition of imperial critique. By turning a legal impeachment into an allegorical battleground between imperial worldviews, Burke ensured that the events of 1786-95 would reverberate throughout subsequent imperial discourse. Whatever the British Empire would become—and this is not to say that Burke or Hastings somehow determined the future shape of imperial institutions—it would always trace its origins to the debates over the Hastings case, the first sustained public discussion on the moral consequences of Britain’s imperial acquisitions.

Later I will explore some of the reasons behind and the consequences of this outcome but any analysis of Burke’s textual afterlife must first build on an understanding of his Indian speeches that considers them as texts authored by one particular man and delivered at one particular historical moment. This analysis begins, then, in the cultural space situated somewhere between the constitutional gravitas of a parliamentary impeachment and the popular scandal of a British agent charged with acquiring, in the words of Elizabeth Ryves’ mock heroic *The Hastiniad*: “The mighty plunder dearly bought,/ By deeds beyond the reach of thought” (Book I, Canto XIII). In this space, the East India Company shed its mercantile skin and emerged as a legitimate apparatus of British authority.

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Burke, my intention is to highlight his role as the intellectual marshal of the group. Charles Fox himself acknowledged at the end of his indicting speech that “by the exertions of ONE MAN, these clouds had been dissipated” (qtd. in Hastings 17).
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Part of this metamorphosis can be attributed to the particular structure of feeling that informed Burke’s avocations. While admitting the dangers of isolating a single strand of Burke’s complex thought or of attributing to his writings an ideology which may have never entered his mind, it is possible nonetheless to identify a theme which illustrates Burke’s approach to the question of British rule in India. However unappetizing the prospect of a commercial organisation exercising sovereignty in Britain's name, it was already a matter of fact that the East India Company had bound itself to the people of India when Robert Clive assumed the diwani of Bengal in 1765. According to Burke,

When Great Britain assented to that grant virtually, and afterwards took advantage of it, Great Britain made a virtual act of union with that country, by which they bound themselves as securities for their subjects, to preserve all people in all rights, laws and liberties, which their natural original Sovereign was bound to enforce. (281-82)

During the “Speech on Opening” Burke presented a pragmatic plan for Empire that might be classified as humanist in scope, contractual in articulation, and conservative in implementation. For example, no one who reads Burke’s parliamentary speeches can deny his consistent call for a single, universal code of conduct that would give Britain’s newfound Indian subjects access to the same rights enjoyed by their British counterparts. Neither can one overlook his conviction that British power in India was predicated on an obligation to increase the general well-being of its subjects. Finally, whatever gross acts of epistemic violence he may have committed in presuming to speak for the subaltern, Burke cannot be accused of treating the subject lightly. For fourteen years and the tenure
of several parliamentary select committees, Burke took great pains to familiarise himself with Indian history and culture, a familiarity that distinguished him from his colleagues and that, moreover, informed his insistence on a cautious approach to Indian reform.

In the end, Burke did not suggest a wholesale withdrawal from India, nor did he propose the equally radical step that involved Parliament assuming direct control of India. Burke’s speeches reveal a man who saw in the East India Company a potentially effective institution crippled by its inability to recognise the degree of responsibility it bore towards both Britain and India. Structurally, it remained “perhaps the best contrivance that has ever been thought of by the wit of men for the government of a remote, large, disjointed empire” (298). Made by humans, it had been neglected by humans and fallen into a corrupt state; only human action could bring about its rehabilitation. Reading Burke’s Indian speeches as examples of curative reform illuminates how he cultivated the mercantile organisation into a public institution.

Casting a glance over his political career, Burke declared that the efforts expended on the Hastings trial were “those on which I value myself the most; most for the importance; most for the labour; most for the judgement; most for the constancy and perseverance in the pursuit” (“Letter to a Noble Lord” 159). This valuation seems rather high given that the judgement went against Burke and Hastings was acquitted. To find the proper register for Burke’s valuation of his efforts, we must extend the scope of inquiry beyond constitutional law and into a space where legal terminology and the rituals of jurisprudence intersect with discourses of morality, humanism, and natural law. During the Hastings trial the question of whether Britain should govern India turned into one of
what type of imperium Britain should exercise. Within the first few minutes of his speech, Burke established the solemnity of the occasion:

My Lords, it cannot be conceived, God forbid that it should be conceived, that the business today is the business of the men. The question is, not solely whether the prisoner at the Bar shall be found innocent or guilty, but whether millions of mankind shall be miserable or happy. You do not decide the Case only; you fix the rule. ... It is according to the Judgement that you shall pronounce on the past transactions of India ... that the whole rule, tenure, tendency, and character of our future government in India is to be finally decided. (270-71)

If Burke’s case can be said to have failed for not securing a guilty verdict, it might just as easily be considered a success for cultivating a sense among the British public that the welfare of the Indian people was, for the time being, to be administered under trust by the British government.

**Setting the Stage**

As part of his critique of the accusations made against Louis XVI, Burke insisted that the “punishment of real tyrants is a noble and awful act of justice” (*Reflections* 134). For the reader searching for a link between Burke’s aesthetic and political theories, this statement neatly brings the romantic sentiment expressed in his *Essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful* to bear on the subject of the French Revolution. Although many commentators content themselves with engaging Burke as an aesthetic or political philosopher, it is
clear from his own writings that Burke knew the value of praxis.35 Burke is nothing if not the harrower of abstract theoretical connections and the statement might be better read in the context of Burke's other great project of 1790: the sublime machinations of justice unfolding before the British Parliament in the form of the Warren Hastings Impeachment. Burke was not alone in taking this sublime view of the proceedings, as Hastings himself confirmed on the opening day, insisting in his defence, "My Lords, I appear before this great and awful tribunal, equally impressed with a consciousness of my own integrity, and the strict and impartial justice of this great Court."36

The invocation of the sublime is less a rhetorical gesture than it is a testament to the rare and awesome nature of this event. Fanny Burney, who attended the impeachment as a spectator in the gallery, attests to the effectiveness of Burke's theatrics:

I shuddered and drew involuntarily back when, as the doors flung open, I saw Mr Burke, as Head of the Committee, make his solemn entry. He held a scroll in his hand, and walked alone, his brow knit with corroding care and deep labouring thought ... I trembled ... and hardly could keep my place when I found Mr Hastings was being brought to the bar ... What an awful moment this for such a man! — a man fallen from such height of power to a situation so humiliating — from the almost unlimited command of so large a part of the Eastern World to be cast at the feet of his enemies ... Could even his Prosecutors at that moment look on — and not shudder at least, if they did not blush? (4: 56-59)

35 As proof, one need look no further than Frans de Bruyn's *The Literary Genres of Edmund Burke* (1996) which promises in its subtitle to investigate "the political uses of literary form" and yet which fails to mention—even once—either the name of Warren Hastings or the state of affairs in India.
36 *Morning Chronicle* 13 February 1788, emphasis added.
Burney’s diary entry, punctuated by awful, involuntary shuddering and trembling reveals sentimentality as rationality’s partner in the fashioning of imperial identities.

To Burke’s prosecutorial team, such emotional responses were neither unexpected nor undesired. Instead, and suitably for a group that included Richard Sheridan, they were explicitly sought not only to convict Hastings in the court of public opinion (although playing to the gallery was certainly one consideration) but also to establish the solemnity of the event. Hastings’s prosecutors knew the general fact that, as constitutional tools, impeachments function as a final check on power. But precisely because they lay claim to a higher authority than that of the monarch, impeachments are difficult processes to initiate and manage. While claiming to base its authority in such abstract notions as state morality, an impeachment can select only a limited number of citizens to operate as arbiters. Therefore, like the municipal court writ large, impeachments are as much about reification and spectacle as they are about dispensing justice.

In the case of the Hastings Impeachment steps were taken to ensure that the “grandeur and sublimity of the Court, when seated in judgement, could only be equalled by the immensity of the subject which engaged its attention; the fate of empires, kingdoms, and millions of their inhabitants, depending on the issue.”\(^{37}\) To achieve this effect, Westminster Hall was specially renovated and its gallery expanded to accommodate 1,100 spectators, not including the special seating areas for the Lords and the Commons. The furniture was reupholstered in crimson and drapes of the same colour were hung throughout the Hall. Sir Peter Burrell, the official in charge of the preparations, is reported to have “ordered the gallery on the west side to be continued or

\(^{37}\) Morning Chronicle 16 February 1788.
extended farther than he believed had been usual, in order to give more accommodation, as well as to add to the symmetry and beauty of the Court.” Such a renovation, the explicit fabrication of a putatively traditional space, is one of British history’s more patent examples of what Eric Hobsbawm has called “the invention of tradition” (“Introduction” 2-3). In his examination of persistent yet often arbitrary and useless cultural signifiers in social spaces, Hobsbawm suggests that periods of significant upheaval often inspire groups to “invent” a tradition. For instance, the powdered wigs donned by judicial officers in modern courthouses are now undoubtedly part of the legal profession’s tradition and certainly add gravitas to the dispensation of justice. Yet equally indisputable is the fact that such wigs only entered the British courts in the eighteenth century. Thus the aristocratic pretension of courtroom wigs emerges in response to the increasing embourgeoisement of the court itself via the increasing number of civil suits and contractual squabbles launched by middle-class traders and small-property holders.

The Impeachment of Warren Hastings, amidst an era of very conflicting views on empire, is such an invented tradition. For though Burke and his fellow prosecutors held that Impeachments were customary procedures enshrined in the constitution, they also knew that they had precious few historical precedents. Only once the stage had been set, the pageantry could commence. As Macaulay would later describe it, the opening of the Impeachment was the social event of the year (“Warren Hastings” 249-52). The Morning Chronicle, the most comprehensive and impartial of London’s newspapers which reported Parliamentary proceedings in the 1780s, published an account of the opening day in a format not dissimilar from its theatre reviews:

38 Morning Chronicle 7 February 1788.
The Lords were then called over by the Clerk, and arranged by Sir Isaac Heard, Principal King at Arms, when upwards of two hundred proceeded in order to Westminster Hall. The Peers were preceded by

The Lord Chancellor's attendants, two and two.
  The Clerks of the House of Lords.
  The Masters in Chancery, two and two.
  The Judges.
  Serjeants Adair and Hill.
  The Yeoman Usher of the Black Rod
  Two Heralds.
  The Lords Baron, two and two.
  The Lords Bishops, two and two.
  The Lords Viscounts, two and two.
  The Lords Marquisses, two and two.
  The Lords Dukes, two and two.
  The Mace Bearer.
  The Lord Chancellor with his train borne.

(All in their Parliamentary Robes)

The Lords Spiritual seated themselves on their Bench, which was on the side on which they entered; as they passed the throne, they bowed to it, as if the King was seated in it. The Temporal Lords crossed over the house, and each made a respectful bow to the seat of Majesty.39

The presence of the King-in-Majesty, emphasised by the obeisant lords, declares that this subject (i.e. the good government of India) falls under the jurisdiction of the British nation just as the absence of the king-in-body ensures that no attention is directed away from the central figure of this drama, the accused tyrant.

At least two things are achieved by this configuration. First, it would have harmonised with Burke's stated valuation of Parliament as a theatrical space where the problems of the nation could be worked through symbolically.40 The customary authority

39 Morning Chronicle, 13 February 1788.
40 Similarly, the Hastings-friendly compendium The History of the Trial of Warren Hastings (1796) emphasises this dramatic element, prefacing its the account of the trial with, “An Order of the Procession
embedded in such rituals, he wrote, allows us to overcome the limitations imposed by our fallen state; they are the illusions “necessary to cover the defects of our naked, shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity” (Reflections 128). Second, as the attached figure (Figure 1) shows, the elliptical court takes Hastings and the Lord Chancellor as its foci. That it is the Lord Chancellor and not the King would have concentrated the spectators’ attention on the accused. The prosecutors, divorced from the axial relationship between the King-in-Majesty and the accused, stand as dispassionate intermediaries, advocates of a public, rather than royal or private, interest. Hastings’s symbolic status is emphasised by the content of Burke’s speech. Before elaborating Hastings’s crimes, Burke proposed “to give your Lordships such an explanation of any thing in the laws, customs, opinions and manners of the people concerned,” in order to “remove all doubt and ambiguity from the minds of your Lordships on these subjects” (269). Thus Hastings stood in court for several days, the subject of public scrutiny, as Burke explained the constitution of the

from the House of Lords to the High Court of Parliament in Westminster Hall,” published in the same format as the dramatis personae of contemporary playtexts.

Regarding the dramatic effects achieved by the prosecutors, we can turn to Richard Broome’s Letters of Simpkin the Second Upon the Trial of Warren Hastings:

Whilst Edmund these cruelties horribly painted,
Some ladies took salts, others wept, and one fainted.
And indeed, my dear brother, I’m free to confess,
As Edmund described it, they could do no less.
Some people, however, who perfectly knew
That the state of the case, said ‘twas mostly untrue;
On this subject farther, I’ve only to add,
The surprising effect which his eloquence had,
Not only on those, who ne’er heart it before,
But on Burke, who had read it a hundred times o’er.
In the annals of painting, ‘tis certainly new,
For the artist to faint, at the picture he drew;
But Burke was so touch’d that he fainted away,
Like Siddons, the Tragedy Queen in a play.
Some think ‘twas his conscience that gave him a stroke,
But those who best knew him, treat that as a joke:
‘Tis a trick that stage orators have at their need,
The passions to rouse, and the judgement mislead;
And Dick*, who is skill’d in theatrical painting,
Has given his leader some lessons on fainting.

* Richard Sheridan

(Letter II, 62-81)

56
Figure 1: from Warren Hastings, *Memoirs Relative to the State of India* (1789).

(Hastings is in Box S; Prosecutors are in Box U)
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East India Company, detailed the natures of Hindic and Islamic law, and summarised the history of Anglo-Indian relations.

As the silenced subject at the centre of the spectacle of the new, Hastings became the symbol of British power in India. Having focussed attention on this solitary figure, whom he depicted as a tyrannical example of an empire governed poorly, Burke could more easily attribute all criminal practices in India to his wicked personal character. This strategy required an ambivalent portrayal of Warren Hastings, one that hearkened back to the most famous impeachment in British history. To succeed, Burke appealed to the medieval legal construction that Ernst Kantorowicz has called the king’s two bodies, a “man-made irreality” uniting the body politic to the body corporeal (5). Burke announced that here in Parliament was “one in whom all the frauds, all the peculations, all the violence, all the tyranny in India are embodied, disciplined and arrayed” (“Opening” 275 emphasis added). Like Charles I before him, Hastings stood accused of ignoring the responsibilities of his office; a man on trial for failing to realise the expectations society had invested into his metonymic status.

Amid this spectacle, the previously separable and real figures of Warren Hastings and Edmund Burke transformed into antagonistic characters in a drama performed on the grandest stage in the kingdom, characters that in future would exist only in dialectical tension with one another.41 In this theatrical space, we begin to see limits drawn around a previously sprawling colonial subject, a discourse whose language became bounded by

41 It is useful to note that as imperial discourse undulated through the course of the British Empire we can chart a similar oscillation in the fortunes of Burke and Hastings. How one particular generation regarded the trial serves roughly as a litmus test for its dominant imperial attitudes. For example, Hastings is viewed almost universally in the eyes of pro-imperial commentators of the late-nineteenth century such as Fitzjames Stephen and John Strachey. Alternatively, Macaulay, the paragon of mid-nineteenth-century liberalism and erstwhile reformer of the Indian Penal Code, sided with Burke.
the extremes of Hastings's pragmatism on the one hand and Burke's idealism on the other. In some ways, this delimiting was unavoidable, since the degree, scale, and alien nature of territorial power was unprecedented in British history. It makes sense that a new language was required; the only thing left for us is to remark on the shape of that new language. In what terms henceforth would the British conceive of their ascendancy in India? A quick survey of later imperial debates reveals Orientalists vs. Anglicists, Globetrotters vs. Anglo-Indians, and Fieldings vs. Burtons. Yet while all these antagonisms engage the mode of imperial governance, none, not even E. M. Forster's 1924 liberal critique of imperialism, *A Passage to India*, can confront the possibility that Empire is not an immediate necessity.

When we recognise this central assumption, we can see how later British imperial discourse assumes its hegemonic aspect, how the virtuous empire becomes a matter of common sense. The aspect I am thinking of builds on Raymond Williams's idea that the functional antagonisms presented by a social order are not true expressions of class or group interests. Williams explains that while it may appear that a given social order tolerates a wide range of opinion or positions, the existence of a hegemony implies that each and every antagonism is *incorporated*, that is, overdetermined by the hegemony. Incorporated, or co-opted, antagonisms are "recognizable by the fact that whatever the degree of internal variation, they do not in practice go beyond the limits of the central effective and dominant definitions" ("Base and Superstructure" 10). In this, Williams completes a bold move of reverse Hegelianism; for Williams, the synthesis or sublation (*Aufhebung*) in a hegemonic articulation is not the apparent product of actual historically produced antagonisms but rather the actual determinant of apparent antagonism.
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To explain this hegemonic aspect by way of example, let me return to the context of late-eighteenth century Britain, and take up P. J. Marshall’s assertion that following the Impeachment, the imperial question never received the same level of public interest or scrutiny in Britain (Impeachment 189). To be sure, Marshall is not saying that debates on the necessity, viability, or sustainability of Empire were suspended for the duration of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; rather, his point is that when these debates took place, they asked questions of a different order. What Williams’s insight allows us to perceive, is how the problem of imperial morality slipped out of the public sphere as an object of scrutiny and into ontological neutrality. In other words, following the Hastings trial, British imperial debates no longer asked should but rather (how) could the empire be virtuous. Never again would the British public countenance the defence made by Warren Hastings, that morality is geographically relative and that tyranny is the “natural” form of government in Oriental civilizations. If we read the Impeachment less as a punitive exercise of Parliamentary justice than as a normative event that made territorial imperialism comprehensible and palatable to the British public, then we come closer to seeing its textual afterlife. Understood this way, the Impeachment becomes a foundational “text” of the Empire, situated somewhere between a Platonic dialogue on statecraft and a dramatic spectacle of, in Burke’s words, the British Parliament delivering “the Imperial justice which you owe to the people that call to you from all parts of a great and disjointed empire” (“Opening” 277).
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Corruption

A key component in Burke’s case was establishing Hastings’s criminality in terms of corruption. If accusing Hastings of tyranny allowed Burke to marshal support from a public still invested in the idea of Britain as the scourge of imperial tyrants, then convicting him of corruption would amount to a tacit admission by the public that Empire could be virtuous. Before attending to the specifics of the Hastings Impeachment, it is worth discussing the ambivalent position of the term “corruption” in eighteenth-century discourse. While we tend now to think of political corruption as the abuse of publicly entrusted powers in the interest of private gain, corruption has a history that predates this logic’s assumptions of distinct public and private spheres. From the Latin corrumpo (to destroy, to spoil, to waste), corruption implies deviation from a normal state. Thus, we can casually observe that the mutability of political society means that political corruption is contingent on specific localities. Political theorist Marc Philp notes that the closest analogue in Ancient Greece is the concept of diaphtheirein, which implies the destruction or severe restriction of a person’s ability to perceive virtue or act virtuously (441). In the realm of jurisprudence, the Romans used corrumpo synonymously, as a marker of diminished capacity. For example, the Verrine Orations, Cicero’s famous prosecution of the proconsul Verres, begins with a rhetorical gesture which trades heavily in corruption in order to insinuate that the only virtuous outcome would be a conviction. Against Verres, he imputes,

\[\text{in spe corrumpendi iudicii perspicua sua consilia contatusque omnibus fecit.}\]

he has revealed quite clearly to everybody the plans and schemes by which he aims at corrupting his judges (Book I, Chapter II, Paragraph 5).
When Cicero speaks of corruption here, he refers only to the retardation of a public official's ability to behave virtuously in a particular situation. For instance, though part of the case against Verres involved his acceptance of bribes and gifts in exchange for political favours, Cicero nowhere calls Verres corrupt. For the Romans, whose culture knew of no division between public and private spheres, the act of accepting the bribe was irrelevant; only the perversion of justice signalled corruption.

H. V. Canter noted in 1914 that Burke took the *Verrine Orationes* as a template for his prosecution of Hastings, and Burke certainly echoes Cicero when he states, “it is no derogation to us to suppose the possibility of being corrupted by that which by great Empires have been corrupted, and by which assemblies almost as great as your Lordships’ have been known to be indirectly shaken” (277). But Burke’s imitation of Cicero is homologous rather than identical, a strategy that adapted classical form to the contingencies of his present. In itself, this practice would be unremarkable since emulation of the Greeks and Romans had been popular practice in British culture (and especially in Parliamentary orations) since the Augustan Age of Pope and Addison. However, it turns out that the mid- to late-eighteenth century represents a pivotal period in the history of corruption as the emergence of separate public and private spheres turned the rhetoric of corruption away from diagnosis and towards proscription. The real source of Burke’s agitation was not whether Hastings had or had not acted tyrannically, but that in doing so Hastings had violated the sanctity of his office, rupturing Britain’s proud tradition of governing by rule of law:
[Warren Hastings] is staining not only the nature and character of office, but that which is the particular glory of the official and judicial character of this Country; and therefore in this house, which is eminently the guardian of the purity of all the offices of this Kingdom, he ought to be called eminently and peculiarly to account. There are many things undoubtedly in crimes which make them frightful and odious, but bribery, peculation, filthy hands, and a Chief Governor of a great empire receiving bribes from poor, miserable, indignant people; that is the thing that makes Government base, contemptible and odious, in the eyes of mankind. (376)

With filthy hands staining the purity of British offices, Hastings demonstrated “a pollution in the touch” (376).

In *Purity and Danger*, anthropologist Mary Douglas argues that our notions of filth are deeply contextual; a hair on the head does not evoke the same revulsion as a hair in one's sandwich. The modern understanding of political corruption follows a similar logic; a governmental advertising campaign to promote national unity is in itself benign. However, when an advertising agency with partisan allegiance is contracted to act as a middleman, and consequently siphons millions of dollars in bogus commissions from the campaign's budget, we have an instance of corruption. If we grant that political corruption depends on these contextual spatial relations, and if we seek to understand the Hastings Impeachment as a corruption trial, then we must also consider the rules and expectations attached to the developing notion of the “public sphere,” in eighteenth-century culture. Much of our modern understanding of the public sphere derives from the work of Hannah Arendt on what she called the rise of the social. For Arendt, society “is
the form in which the fact of mutual dependence for the sake of life and nothing else assumes public significance” (Human Condition 46). Jurgen Habermas has taken up Arendt’s idea in his work on modern cultures of communication, and associated the civil discourse of this mutual dependency with an emerging new class, the bourgeois professionals, who occupied “a commanding status in the new sphere of civil society” (Structural 23). Moreover, as Pocock has shown, the language of this sphere is inextricable from the new economic relations of commercial society. For Habermas, modern consciousness depends on a perceived faith in a manageable division between public (oeconomos) and private (oikos) spheres. To retain any political legitimacy, the public sphere has to appear as an impartial space where ideas can be exchanged and consensual decisions made. The visible influence of private interest threatens that perceived impartiality and therefore must be managed.

But threat management is not simply a matter of discipline and punish and the boundary between the sacred and the profane is one in constant if subtle flux. The Hastings Impeachment shows how corruption trials can function productively in the consolidation of hegemonic interest, depicting the transgressive in order to create new normalities. If political corruption is one term to describe the transgression between public and private interest, then a corruption trial presupposes the existence of a public interest. Yet, as we have seen, in the build-up to the Impeachment, though they may have been curious and though they may have been concerned, it was not at all clear that British people had any direct interest in the East India Company or in Indian affairs. Thus, for the student of empire, Burke’s first great achievement was to turn Hastings’s conduct into a matter of public concern. Unlike Verres, Hastings was charged not only
with peculation and tyranny, but also with defeating the "excellent institution" that was the East India Company's Indian administration, and of perpetrating "the most shameful enormities that have ever disgraced a nation or can ever vex a people" (298-99). In Burke's view, Hastings's corrupt practices plagued both the Indian and the British nations and Burke chose to introduce the case to Parliament in terms of national prestige, warning that not only were other European nations observing the outcome but that also "the credit and honour of the British nation will itself be decided by this decision" (271). In the opening lines of the speech, Burke makes it very clear that Hastings is on trial as a representative man, one whose plenipotentiary powers have placed the national character in jeopardy:

We are to decide by the case of this gentleman whether the crimes of individuals are to be turned into public guilt and national ignominy, or whether the nation will convert these offences, which have thrown a transient shade on its glory, into a judgement that will reflect a permanent lustre on the honour, justice, and humanity of this Kingdom. (271)

For Cicero, corruption was a lamentable thing; for Burke, it threatened civic order. Within the "Speech on Opening" Burke's description of corruption contains a metastatic aspect that is absent from Cicero's orations. When Burke declares that Hastings's crimes are rooted in "a heart blackened to the very blackest, a heart dyed deep in blackness, a heart corrupted, vitiated, and gangrened to the very core," the litany of diseased images suggests that the classical understanding of corruption-as-impairment has now been alloyed to the notion of corruption-as-contagion (277, 275). The distinction is important.
given Burke’s Whiggish faith in the organic nature of civic institutions. His synthetic view of institutional development is expressed in the *Reflections*:

> By a slow but well-sustained progress, the effect of each step is watched; the good or ill success of the first gives light to us in the second; and so, from light to light, we are conducted safely through the whole series ... One advantage is as little as possible sacrificed to another. We compensate, we reconcile, we balance. (217)

In this dialectical tension between past and present, the progressive future can only be assured through the vigilant policy of cultivated reform detailed in his “Letter to a Noble Lord”: “Reform is not a change in the substance or in the primary modification of the object, but a direct application of a remedy to the grievance complained of” (155). A failure to attend to such grievances gives rise to institutional decay and, earlier in his career, Burke railed against “corrupt influence which is itself the perennial spring of all prodigality and of all disorder” (“American Taxation” 410). In that “Speech on American Taxation,” Burke warned that corruption spreads naturally through systems and that the “only method which has ever been found effectual to preserve any man against the corruption of nature and example is an habit of life and communication of councils with the most virtuous and public-spirited men of the age you live in” (423).

Taken together in the context of the Hastings trial, these positions shed light on Burke’s prosecutorial strategy. Institutions such as the East India Company may be founded on principles “so great, so excellent, so perfect that...human wisdom has never exceeded [them],” but their present virtue is determined by those who occupy their offices (296). Throughout his opening speech he emphasises the corporeality of the
corporation, stating that the merchants and employees of the East India Company constitute a "public body...responsible, their body as a corporate body, themselves as individuals...to the high justice of this kingdom" (281). A sense of collective identity and collective responsibility is enhanced because no Briton "can go there [to India] that does not go in its service... [and so] the Esprit du corps is strong in it—the spirit of the body by which they consider themselves as having a common interest" (285-86). The conditions of the British in India therefore gave rise to a society unique in human history, a community where one's profession became the condition of membership. As a consequence,

the English Nation in India is nothing but a seminary for the succession of Officers. They are a Nation of placemen. They are a Republic, a Commonwealth without a people. They are a State made up wholly of magistrates. The consequence of which is that there is no people to control, to watch, to balance against the power of office. (285-86)

Presented with the potential for a Platonic utopia Burke wonders, in quintessential Whiggish style, *quis custodiet custodies* when the affiliative bonds of society were overdetermined by the organisational structure of the administration. Because employment in the Company overdetermined communal relations and because that community had until now lacked the proper checks against power, Company employees were susceptible to corrupt influences. In Warren Hastings, Burke suggests

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42 I say overdetermined in the same spirit of Althusser in *For Marx*, who borrowed it from Freud in order to describe the way in which major contradictions in society never emerge in pure form; instead, they act by condensing subsidiary conflicts into complex unity.
We have not chosen to bring before you a poor, puny, trembling delinquent, misled perhaps by the example of those who ought to have kept him in awe...No, my Lords, we have brought before your Lordships the first man in rank, authority and station; we have brought before you the head, the chief, the captain-general in iniquity; ... if you strike at him you will not have need of a great many more examples. (275-76)

Burke accused the Governor-General not only of personal avarice and tyranny, but of setting the example for his subordinates to imitate. Hastings, the vicious man, was perverting the *esprit du corps* into a confederacy of equally implicated criminals.

The consequence is that he who has taken but one penny of unlawful emolument (and all have taken many pennies of unlawful emolument), that he dare not complain of the most abandoned extortion and cruel oppression; and he who has taken a penny to do a good act is obliged to be silent when he sees whole nations desolated about him ... The great criminal has the laws in his hand ... He has such a hold of corruption that he has linked it, got it bound above, below, and on all sides about him, by one common participation and connivance. And accordingly he has had no complaint from the Service against him ... because, as nobody is free from small offences, the great offender can always crush the small one. (290)
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The crime was particularly egregious since the office of Governor-General demanded precisely the opposite; as one who enjoyed a “great superintending trust,” Hastings was “responsible for the acts and conduct” of his subordinates (380).

The approach Burke took in the Hastings Impeachment registers the lesson he learned from his unsuccessful defence of Fox’s India Bill. Then Burke appealed to the humanity of his fellow parliamentarians, urging them to act to alleviate the suffering of a people to whom they owed no specific political allegiance. His famous apocalyptic vision of Company rule depicts the pillaging of India by untutored and ungoverned swarms of greedy youths:

The natives scarcely know what it is to see the grey head of an Englishman. Young men (boys almost) govern there, without society, and without sympathy with the natives. They have no more social habits with the people, than if they still resided in England; nor indeed any species of intercourse but that which is necessary to making a sudden fortune, with a view to a remote settlement. Animated with all the avarice of age, and all the impetuosity of youth, they roll in one after another; wave after wave; and there is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless, hopeless prospect of new flights of birds of prey and passage, with appetites continually renewing for a food that is continually wasting. (“Fox’s India Bill” 402)

Having seen Fox’s India Bill defeated, an incident which led to the collapse of the North coalition and Burke’s brief reprieve from the opposition benches, Burke turned away from the individual act and focussed instead on the system of governance in order to
encourage parliamentarians to see the problem in terms of an institution corrupted by an individual who had co-opted a public body to serve his private interest. Having “subverted,” and “defeated this excellent institution,” by overriding its constitution in favour of a private “system of corruption” (“Opening” 290), Hastings was therefore not only overseeing the criminal despoilment of India but also diminishing the authority of other British institutions. In the “Speech on Opening”, Burke makes it very clear that all public institutions are potentially vulnerable to decay, that the corruption of the East India Company was not a unique case, somehow endemic to Indian geography or morality. The corruption, Burke reminded his audience was a contagion could spread back to the metropolis as well: “For though at the first view bribery and peculation do not seem to be so horrid a matter, but may seem to be only transferring a little money out of one pocket into another, I shall show that by such a system of bribery, the Country is undone” (373). The decline of the East India Company is “only the beginning of a great, notorious, system of corruption” (385). Without a direct and swift corrective from Parliament the plague would spread to England “with most grievous and terrible consequences” (386).

The Ideal Company Man

The East India Company, now properly understood as the arm of the British Government responsible for governing its Indian empire, could begin to be spoken of in terms of a State and Hastings in terms of a tyrant. Burke’s implication, condensed in his declaration that “you strike at the whole corps if you strike at the head,” is that virtue could be restored by a simple matter of regime change (276). Having established the idea of the East India Company as a virtuous institution, Burke turned his attention to its future
officers. Consistent with his faith that a corporation, once properly entrusted with sacred rights and responsibilities by a sovereign power, functions as an immortal institution, Burke arrived at two standards by which a company official could be measured: the standards of God and the standards of man. Because the empire had come into being "by the providence of God," Burke insisted its offices should be measured by divine standards, not least of which would be the ability to dispense "Imperial justice" (277). However, he admitted that its officers could only be held to the standard of men:

The Commons are too liberal not to allow for the difficulties of a great and arduous public situation. They know too well that domineering necessities will frequently occur in all great affairs. They know that the exigencies of a great occasion, in its precipitate career, do not give time to have recourse to fixed principles, but that they oblige men frequently to decide in a manner that calmer reason would certainly have rejected. We know that, as we are to be served by men, the persons who serve us must be tried as men, and that there is a very large allowance indeed for human infirmity and human error. (274-75)

Burke’s allowance does not absolve a company man but rather exposes his ambivalent position, his split allegiance between those who govern him and those whom he governs. Burke reconciles the paradox of the subject-sovereign by uniting the two allegiances under the principles of natural law, a universal order which he refers to as the “Law of Nations” (367).  

[43] Burke elaborates this concept, declaring that “we are all born in subjection ... to one great, immutable, pre-existent law, prior to all our devices, and prior to all our contrivances, paramount to our very being
Rather than name Burke an international jurist *avant la lettre*, it suffices to note that he perceived the company man as obliged to pursue the good of the [Indian] people as much as possible in the spirit of the Laws of this Country [i.e. Britain], which intend in all respects their conservation, their happiness, and their prosperity. ...We call for that spirit of equity, that spirit of justice, that spirit of safety, that spirit of protection, that spirit of lenity, which ought to characterise every British subject in power. (345-46)

In that final noun phrase, “British subject in power,” Burke clarifies the imperial hierarchy, but his vision turns on the word “ought.” Throughout his speeches Burke relies on “ought,” strengthening his rhetorical appeals by his luridly juxtaposing the colonial present and the principled imperial future. Yet “ought” invokes a higher order or legislation and is a word particularly well embedded in the language and thought of Judeo-Christian societies. In describing what ought to be, Burke evokes his contemporary David Hume, who observed that the journey from “is” to “ought” cannot be made without passing through human nature (*Human Nature* 469-70). Burke believed in a common human nature created by God as the supreme norm but he also knew that human nature realises itself only partially in history through conventional forms, customs, and traditions, which constitute what he called the second nature of a particular people. Thus, although Burke’s principled demand would later mutate into the moral imperative energising the so-called “civilising mission” of late-nineteenth-century imperialism,
Burke himself nowhere ascribes a monopoly of virtue to the British nation.\textsuperscript{44} Faults in Indian society may have, but he stated that it would be haphazard for Company employees to tinker with the natural institutions of a people “who formed their Laws and Institutions prior to our insect origins of yesterday” (304). Therefore, “if we must govern such a Country, we must govern them upon their own principles and maxims and not upon ours, that we must not think to force them to our narrow ideas, but extend ours to take in theirs; because to say that that people shall change their maxims, lives, and opinions, is what cannot be (302).\textsuperscript{45}

In the final analysis, Burke can be called an imperialist only insofar as he believes that the possession and judicious application of Britain’s cultivated principles legitimate its presence in India; to lapse into cultural relativism is to surrender the right to rule. In this sense Burke’s excoriation of Hastings resembles Hume’s critique of Thomas Hobbes’s moral philosophy. Hobbes put forward the case that humans are essentially amoral and what morality they do possess is determined by a combination of self-interest and social specificity (31-33).\textsuperscript{46} Hume rejected this explanation, arguing that \textit{a priori}

\textsuperscript{44} Beginning roughly with the ascension of the evangelical Charles Grant to the chairmanship of the East India Company and fuelled by James Mill’s chauvinist \textit{History of British India} (1817), the rhetoric of the nineteenth-century civilising mission presupposes the incontrovertible superiority of British culture and Christian thought and denigrates Indian culture as irredeemably backwards. By depicting India as an easily corruptible state, Burke’s rhetoric inadvertently prepared the ground for later utilitarians and evangelicals. Likewise Burke’s insistence on a single natural law of men became a supporting pillar for those liberals who presumed that all humans were basically equal and could therefore benefit equally through the application of rational administrative reform. I discuss this idea in more detail in the next chapter. For the connections between utilitarians and evangelicals in Indian policymaking, see Francis Hutchins’s \textit{The Illusion of Permanence} (1967).

\textsuperscript{45} Burke’s respect for native institutions (which, incidentally, Hastings shared) had, by the time of James Mill’s \textit{History}, fallen out of favour as more people realised that in order to sustain British sovereignty in India, British values, customs, and institutions would have to be seen as superior to their native counterparts. Edward Said’s withering assessment of the symbiotic relationship between culture and the imperial endeavour remains the best study of this phenomenon. See both \textit{Orientalism} (1978) and \textit{Culture and Imperialism} (1994).

\textsuperscript{46} Hobbes argues that all putatively moral terms have meaning only “with relation to the person that useth them: there being nothing simply and absolutely [good or evil]; nor any common rule of good and evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves” (32)
there are “particular original principles of human nature,” shared by all humans that remain unalterable over time and space (Human Nature 590, emphasis in original). In the Impeachment, Hastings took the part of Hobbes, arguing that the laws and customs of India obliged him to utilise autocratic power at times. Burke rejected this “geographical morality” out of hand, insisting that “the laws of morality are the same every where, and that there is no action which would pass for an action of extortion, of peculation, of bribery and of oppression in England, that is not an act of extortion, of peculation, of bribery and of oppression in Europe, Asia, Africa, and all the world over” (346).

In Burke’s assessment, company men cannot remain just rulers if they “unbaptize themselves of all that they learned in Europe and commence a new order and system of things” (346). The baptismal metaphor evokes not only those traditions of ritual cleansing which Burke is attempting to replicate through the Impeachment spectacle but also the irrevocable commitment made by an initiate to a particular religious confession. The image is both apt for and recurring in Burke’s conception of company officials. To emphasise how the Company’s organisational structure could reduce the agency of its employees, Burke trumped baptism—which a casuist might argue is a commitment made on behalf of rather than by an individual—with confirmation:

It is needless to push our researches so far as to ask why we have humanity, or fellow-feeling with others. It is sufficient that this is experienced to be a principle in human nature. We must stop somewhere in our examination of causes; and there are, in every science, some general principles, beyond which we cannot hope to find any principles more general (Enquiries 219-220n).

For more on the relationship between Burke’s political thought and the moral philosophy of Hume, see Robert E. Watkins’s dissertation “Politics in medias res: Burke, Hume, and Deleuze on Empiricism’s Secrets for Political Theory” (University of Pennsylvania, 1994).
CHAPTER ONE

For the Servants of the company are obliged, when they enter into the Service, to enter into it not only with the general duty which attaches upon all servants, but they enter into a specific covenant with their Masters to perform all the duties described in that Covenant under heavy penalties. They are bound by them ... [and] they are bound to renew these covenants by something (I speak without offence) which may be said to resemble confirmation in the Church (289-90).

These sacramental motifs illuminate Burke’s vision for the future governance of India by suggesting that a company man’s character should already be formed, founded in solid unalterable British principles, before he undertakes an Indian appointment.48

Such expressions disclose Burke’s debt to Aristotelian ethics as he speculatively answers his own question: “what should a British Governor in such a situation do, or forbear to do?” (345). Normally, ethics derive from a familiarity with custom; one’s understanding of a community’s laws or traditions fosters a sense of obligation that influences choice. The two major streams of post-Enlightenment moral philosophy measure ethics in these terms. Both utilitarian and deontological ethics theorise duty and obligation in terms of discrete actions in relation to an abstract set of ideal or divine rules, be it the greatest good, rationalism, or the Word of God. Such theories presume that the agent exists in and understands the norms of a community. But the unique conditions of imperial rule placed men of British character in positively un-British surroundings; in India, company men could have no recourse to the familiar. Therefore, argues Burke, ethical choices must be contingent on a preconfigured, essentially unalterable set of humanistic principles, that is to say the character of the covenanted company man.

48 Those who had heard Burke’s speech on Fox’s India Bill would have recalled how far Burke thought Britain had failed to maintain this standard.
While literature scholars most often read Burke as a forerunner of the romantic movement, in the context of Empire it is equally important to recognise his affiliations with the neoclassicism of the early century. His imitation of Cicero’s *Verrine Orations* in the Hastings Impeachment only partly discloses this affinity. More significant for the future of company men are the invocations of an Aristotelian humanism in those parts of his speeches where he discusses the ideal imperial administrator. When Burke invokes character, he invokes a type of Aristotelian virtue ethics.\(^{49}\) In *The Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle suggests that the measure of an action will not be found in examining the act in isolation but by examining the actor: “Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just and temperate person would do” (Book II, Chapter IV). So virtue is as the virtuous person does. In Aristotelian terms, the virtuous person becomes the model for other community members when they themselves must deliberate over a course of action; in Burkean terms, “I do then declare, and wish it may stand recorded for posterity that there never was a *bad man* that had the ability for *good service*. It is not in the nature of such men” (403 emphasis in original).

Deprived of the advantages deriving from customary familiarity, the British could best serve India by being British. A British governor “ought to govern upon British principles, not by British forms.” Such a virtuous service would bring “order, peace, happiness and security to the Natives,” but it would also benefit the home countries:

> It would have been glorious to us too, that in an enlightened state of the world, possessing a religion, an improved part of the religion of the World—I mean the

\(^{49}\) Virtue ethics, though anticipated by Schopenhauer’s *On the Basis of Morality* (1841), is understood to have come into being with the publication of Elizabeth Anscombe’s “Modern Moral Philosophy” (1958).
reformed religion—that we had done honor to Europe, to our Cause, to our religion, done honor to all the circumstances of which we boast and pride ourselves.

Thus far, “it has happened otherwise; it is now for us to think how we are to repair it” (315).

**Conclusion**

With the corrupt influence purged and the example set for future governors of India, one final obstacle needed to be removed to preserve British India from future tyranny. No matter how virtuous the reformed company men might be,

the emoluments that belong to them are so weak, so inadequate to the dignity of the character that it is impossible (I may say of that service absolutely impossible) for the subordinate parts of it to exist, to hope to exist, as Englishmen who look at their home as their ultimate resource, to exist in a state of incorruption. (286-87)

Inadequate pay alienates an agent from his principal, leading to a divergence of interests. To understand such situations, economist Jacob van Klaveren puts forward a market-oriented interpretation of corruption where

a civil servant regards his public office as a business, the income of which he will, in the extreme case, seek to maximize. [...] The size of his income then does not depend on an ethical evaluation of his usefulness for the common good but
precisely upon the market situation and his talents for finding the point of maximal gain on the public's demand curve. (39)

The prospect of the merchant-administrator is precisely what animates Burke's Indian speeches. However, van Klaveren's neo-liberal nightmare scenario is, as he says, "an extreme case," and any measurement of political corruption in such exclusively economic terms can only take place in a worldview that subordinates the political to the economic. Perhaps only the most diehard of classical Marxists would today insist that economics overdetermine all human relations. Antonio Gramsci and, later, John Guillory have demonstrated that ideology can function to create social and cultural forms of capital as well. Burke too pointed towards such alternative forms of capital when he reminded the Lords that "often the greatest situations are attended with little emoluments because glory, family reputation, the love, the tears of joy, the honest applause, of their Country, pay those great and mighty labours which in great situations are sometimes required from the Commonwealth" (287). Such a statement corrects any extreme interpretations of Pocock's thesis in *Virtue, Commerce, History*, that the new discourse of commerce, exchange, and neo-Harringtonian thought redefined the principles of classical republicanism in the eighteenth century. As Burke reminds us here, the Whig commercial regime may have redefined but it did not replace republican virtues. Whatever influence market forces had in articulating the public sphere, they could not affix a determinate value to acts of public service. Those perennial socioethical benefits outlined by Burke would continue to be accrued by public officials, mitigating their temptation to treat their offices as private businesses.
By declaring the welfare of India to be a part of the British public good, Burke intended to establish the conditions to prevent the further exploitation of its Indian subjects and to halt the decay of British institutions. This strategy calcified an imperial relationship and so the British Empire, a concept reviled only a generation before, became a matter of fact. In prosecuting Hastings and in highlighting the structural deficiencies in the present constitution of the East India Company, Burke passes over the ignoble details of British conquest, arguing that history cannot be undone. All governments, he submits, have their origin “in some matters that had as good be covered by obscurity.” The Impeachment of Warren Hastings was, then, one of those “secret veil[s] to be drawn over the beginnings of all governments,” an illusory ceremony declaring the end of corrupt mercantile imperialism and enunciating a new and purified formation, an empire based on virtue, duty, and service (316-17).
Chapter Two

How the Civil Service Got its Name: India as a Noble Profession

A calling is not produced naturally, nor by high or low wages but by a long and arduous process of education.

—Max Weber

Whether to create the just empire of Edmund Burke's vision or to sustain the interests of the Court of Directors, it was clear that servants of the East India Company needed to be inoculated against the temptations in India which might inspire them to act irregularly. This was because the administrative system established by the Company put them in charge of large, populous and prosperous districts, and simultaneously demanded that they govern in extreme isolation from either the London or Calcutta headquarters. In *Vanity Fair*, William Makepeace Thackeray (himself Calcutta-born) gives a likely picture of district life in the early nineteenth century by describing Jos Sedley's collectorship, Boggley Wallah:

Ramgunge, where there is a magistrate, is only forty miles off, and there is a cavalry station about thirty miles father; so Joseph wrote home to his parents, when he took possession of his collectorship. He had lived for about eight years of his life, quite alone, at this charming place, scarcely seeing a Christian face except twice a year, when the detachment arrived to carry off the revenues he had collected. (28)
Easily, one can appreciate how a real or fictional agent might seek to exploit this isolation for personal profit and, as a matter of historical fact, such a system of delegated authority ruined the Dutch East India Company. It would seem strange, then, that amidst all the satirical invective in Thackeray’s novel, the reader is never encouraged to think that Jos Sedley, who is so despicable, avaricious, and cowardly in everything else, takes advantage of his official status. This insalubrious character ironically testifies to Burke’s victory over corruption. By the late 1840s the popular opinion of empire, if the immensely popular Thackeray is any guide, is no longer troubled by rogue agents. Sedley’s incorruptability registers the first phase of the virtuous empire’s hegemonic aspect: if Jos can be thought beyond graft then, post-Hastings, corruption can hardly be a matter of concern in the imperial mentality of Thackeray’s Britain.

Yet suggesting that the threat of corruption disappeared from public scrutiny does not mean that it did not exist. One cannot adduce that Burke’s rhetoric, however brilliant, eliminated the possibility of peculation. Whatever reforms he called for, the basic agency relationship which caused problems for the East India Company in the eighteenth century remained intact throughout the nineteenth. Imperial agents still exercised plenipotentiary powers and continued to do so at an unbridgeable distance from the imperial centre. Recall that only four years before Vanity Fair, Sir Charles Napier is said to have sent his famous one-word message to London, reporting on the military campaign in Sindh: Peccavi [“I have sinned”].

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50 Napier’s message is, admittedly, one of the best of Victorian urban legends. There is no record in the India Office archives of such a despatch. Its origins are popularly attributed to a Punch cartoon of 1843, although again no such cartoon was ever published. Of course, I am less interested in the putative wit of the general—who pocketed £70,000 during the conquest (Mehra 496-97)—than with his the public reception of his guilty admission, an admission that he had openly violated his employer’s orders.
Napier's is not an isolated case, for these are also the years in which Thomas Babington Macaulay wrote his rehabilitative historical essays on Robert Clive and Warren Hastings. Macaulay’s notorious Whig historiography recast Clive and Hastings as likeable villains, men who were not without flaws, to be sure, but whose flaws could generally be overlooked in deference to their contributions in securing the first pieces of what was now Britain’s progressive and noble empire. To Macaulay’s picture of Clive and Hastings, one could easily apply the gentle self-admonition cast by Napier over his disobedience: “We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, and humane piece of rascality it will be” (qtd. in Sorley 183). This transition, from the rapacious tyranny of Burke’s rhetoric to the noble rascality of the 1840s, forms the subject of this chapter, where I will examine how it was that India became a noble profession.

Emile Durkheim, who never applied his sociology to imperialism, imagined a hypothetical society uncannily familiar to Anglo-India in his theory of civic morals. “Imagine a population scattered over a vast area,” he writes, “without the different elements of being able to communicate easily; each man would live for himself alone and public opinion would develop only in rare cases entailing a laborious calling together of these scattered sections” (8). In such a case, when individuals are deprived of the traditional immediate and frequent solidarity with other members of the group, Durkheim argues that collective consciousness can only be produced within stable and organized corporate structures, like those offered by the liberal professions which grant their members an ethical code through which they imaginatively and positively identify with each other. The great puzzle of modernity, he continues, is how this structure might
emerge in the economic sphere, where “the ideas current on what the relations should be of the employee with his chief of the workman with the manager, of the rival manufacturers with each other and with the public...are so slight that they might as well not be” (9-10).

Napier diagnosed this absence of ethics as the condition of Company India, a “shopocracy” which cared little for the welfare of the people under its charge (22). More recently, economists have theorized the implications of this amoral capitalist logic, stating that individuals in a competitive market can always choose between competing offers for their services. They speak of the gap between the most lucrative choice and the next-best option as the “reservation utility” (Gintis and Ishikawa 196). In the case of the East India Company, when merchant-agents began to assume the function of political and judicial administrators, the opportunities to augment their personal wealth increased. Therefore, to maintain loyalty, the Company had to account for a decline in its reservation utility by increasing either its incentives or its monitoring. Factually, we know that salaries did not increase significantly; practically, monitoring could not be increased since India lacked efficient communication and transportation networks.

By reading the Company as an organization unable to regulate the actions of men in the field and finding their authority confined to the rhetoric of praise and blame, I will show how the Company initiated a process whereby the isolated agents would govern themselves. In this sense, Edmund Burke’s most significant contribution to the stability of the British Empire in India was his insistence that if the Company could be seen as an honourable institution then its employees could be obliged through the pursuit of impecunious emoluments. That is to say, men like Jos Sedley did not consider corruption
because, following Burke’s advice, the Company rewrote the conditions of employment, introducing as compensation forms of social capital, expressed in terms of honour, duty, and national service. By the time of Vanity Fair, Thackeray’s reflection on the England during the Napoleonic wars from the perspective of the 1840s, the title of collector—even in a backwater like the district of Boggley Wallah—has added nobility to its mercantilism; according to Thackeray’s narrator it is “an honourable and a lucrative post, as everybody knows” (28).

Any analysis of social capital must take place in the realm of ideology and accordingly previous studies of the nineteenth-century imperial administrator have explained the effect of this new psychology in terms of evangelicalism and utilitarianism, philosophies which might be united under broad liberalism.\textsuperscript{51} Granting that any discussion of nineteenth-century English liberalism must acknowledge Richard Bellamy’s caveat that it remains a “notoriously elusive notion” (1) which evolved over a period of tremendous social upheaval, the colonial setting provides a suitably limited space in which to perceive the function of these otherwise sprawling ideologies.\textsuperscript{52} Thomas Metcalf suggests that, in India, “liberalism, as a programme for reform, developed a coherence it rarely possessed at home” (29). As Eric Stokes has shown, India provided a laboratory for the experimental social engineering of the English utilitarians.\textsuperscript{53} If the liberal spirit of early nineteenth-century England presumed that all humans are intrinsically equal and that human happiness could be improved by judiciously applying

\textsuperscript{51} The best example of this practice is Hutchins’s The Illusion of Permanence.
\textsuperscript{52} In the early nineteenth century, one could use the word liberal to name groups as diverse as utilitarians, evangelicals, dissenters, aristocratic Whigs, Peelite Tories committed to economic reform, radicals, and classical political economists.
\textsuperscript{53} Jeremy Bentham, the great radical philosopher, once boasted that “[James] Mill will be the living executive—I shall be the dead legislative of British India” (qtd. in Morris 86).
rational thought to administrative problems, then India provided the opportunity to test new models of governance. The historical record bears this out as social programmes as diverse as universal state-sponsored education and competitive entry into the civil service, authored by the leading figures of the liberal movement such as J. S. Mill and Macaulay, were tested and perfected in India before making their way back to Britain. Under this liberal order, the imperial administrator does his duty by working to create the conditions wherein Britain’s colonised subjects could realize their potential. We could argue that, under the programme of liberalism and its adjuncts (evangelicalism and utilitarianism), British administrators committed themselves to improving the productivity of the land and the happiness of the people.

However, what this proposition fails to account for is why men of Jos Sedley’s character voluntarily relinquished the opportunity to profit personally in exchange for some noble idea of human advancement. To be clear, I am not dismissing the influence of either evangelicalism or utilitarianism on the shape of the administrator’s character as much as I am suggesting that neither generated it. The profligacy of the eighteenth-century nabobs demonstrates that the “English character” contained no essential or traditional internal prohibitions against vice. It is equally haphazard to presume a spontaneous and universal level of voluntarism. Instead, if one considers company employees as individual agents it becomes clear that obedience was encouraged through the creation of a corporate identity which rose not out of a response to new social theories but out of a crisis of control. According to Durkheim, “ethics will be the more developed and the more advanced in their operation, the greater the stability and the better the organisation of the professional groups themselves” (8).
We are now in a position to consider the Company as an agency and its employees as members of a professional service. A letter from the Court of Directors to the Board of Control in 1803 shows that the Company was well aware that systematic efforts would have to be made in order to regulate the behaviour of its civil servants. In that letter, the Directors admit that India’s government could only proceed by combining “the voluntary exertions of some and the stimulated exertions of others” (404). In tracing the way this discipline of “stimulation” evolved in the first half of the nineteenth century, we encounter a familiar narrative of state evolution in a slightly altered corporate form. From explicit and cloddy ideological apparatuses such as the Colleges at Fort William and Haileybury to the more subtle hegemonic articulation of the competition exam, the history of the East India Company’s training regime reveals progressively more sophisticated and diffused technologies of control emerging in response to an ever more complicated imperial relationship.

In examining those systems established to co-opt the interests of Company employees and subordinate them within the corporate order, I draw on Antonio Gramsci’s illumination in *Prison Notebooks* that a rise to power can only be made and sustained by the consent of the governed. The discourse of that consent, Gramsci called hegemony. In the case of the East India Company, its employees consented to relinquish the chance to become nabobs in the style of Robert Clive or the avaricious protagonists of Kipling’s short story “The Man Who Would Be King.” Instead they chose a life of relative anonymity full of bureaucratic toil in an unfamiliar country, a condition they themselves often describe as exile. As one twentieth-century Anglo-Indian civil servant remembers it, British citizens willingly joined a collective of “homeless vagrant governing-
machines” (Beames 103). As I have argued in the first chapter, the path to that submission was blazed by Edmund Burke who facilitated the transformation of a mercantile operation with shaky credit into an honourable enterprise. The public spectacle of the Impeachment powerfully symbolised Britain’s intention to govern India justly. It asserted a public interest which Burke felt would act as a check against corruption. Indeed, he argued in his *Reflections* that the “degree of estimation in which any profession is held becomes the standard of the estimation in which the professors hold themselves” (93).

What remains to be answered is how this newly acquired honour was translated into feelings of duty, loyalty, and public integrity and then imposed upon company employees. To do this, we must go beyond the observation that the language of British imperial discourse in the nineteenth century bulges with a figural repertoire which demotes the aspect of commodity trade and geopolitical manoeuvrings in favour of “duty,” and “honour.” These words are little more than cliché since nearly every commentator appeals to them. When analysing the ethics of the imperial administrator, to describe either the empire or its hegemonic persuasiveness in such terms is difficult because it is so clearly tautological: one “acts” ethically by “acting” British. To puncture this loop, I want to suggest that imperial ethics were, indeed, informed by British identity, but that this “British” identity was brought into being by the practical demands of controlling one’s distant agents. In other words, the Britishness that formed the basis for ethical action was an explicitly *corporate* identity, not grounded on traditional or essential forms (whether British, English, European, etc.) but manufactured by a series of novel processes and disseminated among would-be Indian civil servants. This chapter
CHAPTER TWO

considers two of these disciplinary apparatuses, the training college and the competition examination, built by the Company to socialise recruits into its corporate culture.

To understand the intention behind the design of these institutions, we can look at the contributions of three men prominent in their development. Richard Wellesley, Thomas Robert Malthus, and Thomas Babington Macaulay, are all successors of Edmund Burke in their belief that the control crisis could only be resolved by preparing employees to accept the idea of the virtuous empire before they undertook their official positions. All recognised that because the Company recruited such a small number annually, it would be possible for the entire body of future administrators to be selected, educated, and trained with great scrutiny. Of the three, Malthus expresses the view most concisely: “In India there is only one line of employment, and that is the Company’s service” (Statements 38). None of these men, despite their connections to the Company, are themselves members of the administrative class subject to their proposed apparatuses. Yet their writings remain important not only because they address the control crisis but also since their recommendations had a direct impact on the early education of a great majority of Anglo-Indians.

My concern is not to evaluate their writings aesthetically but, through a comparative analysis, to use them to illuminate how the idea of the virtuous empire became the corporate ethos in the first half of the nineteenth century. It needs no sophisticated argument to show that all modern political projects, especially of the imperial variety, appeal to virtue when defending their actions. Yet it remains the particular characteristic of the British Empire that it so often measured its virtue through its ability to spread stable political institutions throughout the world. The apotheosis of
the empire, claimed men like Macaulay and Mill, would be the moment of its dissolution. Britain proposed to give the world good government. Its representative agents were thus charged not with bringing the \textit{pax} or the \textit{prosperitas} Britannica but with securing the place of institutions, including the rule of law and private property rights, which would then, presumably, produce peace and prosperity of their own accord. This necessitated a new type of functionary: the imperial agent as bureaucrat.

A certain amount of engineering was necessary to create this figure and Wellesley, Malthus, and Macaulay influenced this process. Each of these writers engages the problem of the disobedient servant and each proposes a systematic solution. The consequences of their various suggestions would become matters of fixation for servants of the British Empire. Concerns over an individual's relation to society, the absence of privacy, the scale and degree of work allotted to each official, the saturation of a public morality, and the eradication of individual agency would come to dominate Anglo-Indian fiction and memoirs in the closing years of the century. These issues will be taken up in later chapters. For now, the narrative of the virtuous empire begins with formal training colleges established in England and in India, which taught its students not, as in the other great public schools or in the Universities, to be public citizens but instruments of a regulated system. It culminates with the introduction of the competition exam, Macaulay's great plan to open the Indian service to any citizen of the empire who could prove himself a liberal gentleman.
CHAPTER TWO

"For their Guidance, Improvement, and Restraint"

In detailing the case against Warren Hastings, Edmund Burke lamented the deficient education of the Company's disgraced Governor-General:

He quitted Westminster School almost a boy. We have every reason to regret that he did not finish his education in that seminary which has given so many lights to the Church and ornaments to the State. Greatly we lament that he did not go to one of the Universities...instead of studying in the School of Cossim Ally Cawn. If he had lived with us, he would have quoted the example of Cicero in his Government, he would have quoted several of the sacred and holy prophets, and made them his example. ("Speech on Opening" 367)

This critique was used to support Burke's claim that only fully-formed British characters could govern India justly. The problem of how to train Company employees remained unresolved until an Old Etonian, Richard Wellesley, became Governor-General. Unsurprisingly, considering his younger brother's views on the virtues of the Eton playing fields, Wellesley felt that the foundations of character were best laid in formal educational institutions. Insofar as the only qualification for an Indian career in the early nineteenth century was a patronage appointment from a Director, Wellesley argued that the East India Company was risking a repetition of the Hastings affair and jeopardising the stability of its commercial interest in India.

On 10 July 1800, Wellesley's despatch to the London Directors contained his "Notes with Respect to the Foundation of a College at Fort William" which proposed a solution. The despatch is remarkable for two reasons. First, because it simultaneously

54 Hereafter "Notes."
introduced the idea of a college to the Directors as it announced the Fort William College as a *fait accompli*, "Notes" documents an audacious act of insubordination. In it, Wellesley reveals what has been learned since the Hastings scandal. Knowing that the document would become part of the public record and could, like Hastings's self-incriminating diaries, be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny, Wellesley aligns his proposition with the general public interest: "If the good Government of this empire be the primary duty of its sovereign, it must ever be a leading branch of that duty to facilitate to the public officers and ministers the means of qualifying themselves for their respective functions" (730). In contrast, the current cohort of Company writers "are unequal to their prescribed duties" and consequently "the principles of public integrity are endangered, and the successful administration of the whole Government exposed to hazard" (725).

Wellesley proposes to "facilitate" the means of qualification through the establishment of a comprehensive training college, where private individuals would learn the characteristics and sentiments of statesmen. Anticipating dissent for such an expansive and expensive reform, he characterises any putative opponents as motivated by less than noble interests, arguing that "objections of a private nature might be stated against this plan; but those which are founded on public considerations appear to be absolutely insurmountable" (733-34). Fusing Hastings and Burke, Wellesley explains the "reasons which induced [him] to found the College without any previous reference to England," as a combination of his local expertise and his awareness of the superintending responsibility the East India Company bears to its Indian subjects (740). His masterful exploitation of the Company's structural weakness—the distance between the principal
and the agent in the field—established the speaker's unique authority to judge what is appropriate, and Wellesley's rhetoric provided a template for future generations of civil servants seeking to defend their actions in through their memoirs.

Second, "Notes" is the first imperial text to suggest the need for a systematic production of a corporate identity and is the also the first to confront the implications of introducing social capital as a form of compensation. According to Burke, graft could be reduced if employees could be made to see their stations as equivalent to those of statesmen. Following on, Wellesley insists that "the views of the servants of the Company should terminate in the prospect of returning to England, there to enjoy the emoluments arising from a due course of active and honourable service in India" (734). But the Governor-General realises that one cannot produce statesmen without a State:

Duty, policy, and honour require that [India] should not be administered as a temporary and precarious acquisition...[It] must be considered as a sacred trust, and a permanent possession (731).

The "sacred trust" discloses Wellesley's Burkean inheritance, but the concept of India as a permanent possession is altogether novel. Here, Wellesley is one of the first British statesmen to speak in the vocabulary of our modern notion of imperialism, a prepositional sleight of hand which makes it possible to speak not of the British in India but of British India.55

55 Wellesley's vision of a permanent empire was quickly taken up, unsurprisingly, by members of his staff. George Barlow, speaking at the public disputation for the first class of Fort William College's graduates, estimated that the students could now "enjoy the grateful and animating prospect of being eminently useful to their country...by aiding it in fulfilling the high moral obligations attendant on the possession of its
Beyond its novelty, the idea historian Francis Hutchins calls “the illusion of permanence” is also demonstrably necessary once one begins to trade in social capital, a commodity which demands as a condition of its production stable social institutions. For a heuristic we can turn to the liberal professions, whose rise only slightly predates that of the Company’s civil service. Two prominent Victorian essays show how well Victorian intellectuals themselves understood the function of social capital. In “The Roots of Honour” (1860), John Ruskin argued that a profession is honourable inasmuch as it requires its members to sacrifice on occasion for the welfare of the State or of their charges (145-46). Similarly, John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism* identifies such this willingness to sacrifice as evidence of the superiority of the anticipated pleasure. More recent social theorists, including Penelope Corfield, have theorized this in more detail, observing that professionals differentiated themselves from merchants and labourers by deriving their social status from more than mere money. According to Corfield, since “a proportion of individual remuneration was paid in the form of unquantifiable social respect,” professionals depended on “public endorsement” within a stable political entity (177). Thus each of the three liberal professions—clergy, lawyers, and doctors—derived social capital through the performance of some “public” service.

This concept of service led to the fetishization and even, in the Lukacsian sense, a reification of abstractions, such as the rule of law, around which a professional ethos

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*Indian Empire, on the discharge of which the prosperity and permanency of that Empire equally depend* (xii-xiii). The theme of service in aid of a permanent empire became a continuing theme at end-of-term speeches at the East India College. Member of Parliament James Weir Hogg warned that the Indian Empire “will pass away with a rapidity equal to that with which it was acquired, if not sustained and rendered permanent by the pure but firm administration of justice and appropriate laws. … These are the means alone whereby that mighty empire can be rendered permanent; and you, my young friends, have the proud consciousness of being the instruments whereby we hope to accomplish an end so beneficial to your country, and so honourable to yourselves” (24).
developed. A comprehensive code of professional ethics enabled individual members of the profession to pursue their practice efficiently without frequent or direct monitoring from a centralised body, thereby preserving the "liberal" character that enabled a gentleman to acquire income through work without compromising his honour. In India, Wellesley saw that "the stability of our own interests" (719) could be assured if company employees began to conceive of their employment as constituting a similar "public service" (740) and "Notes" enunciates the imperial ideology of virtuous sacrifice. The organising principle of its professional ethics would not be, for instance, the salvation of heathen souls or the codification of Indian laws. These elements, associated as they are with evangelicalism and utilitarianism, were seen by Wellesley as effects of good government. Rather, the ethos of the company employee would be the spread of good government, "the extension of this beneficial system" (719, emphasis added). Thus the civilian employees of the East India Company were to be transformed into a body of men "properly qualified to conduct the ordinary movements of the great machine of Government" (731). The company man steps down from the heroic pedestal of nabobs who won Britain an empire and were motivated by "glory, wealth and power" (730). Instead, like a vicar, barrister, or doctor, he becomes a repository of "useful knowledge, cultivated talents, and well ordered and disciplined morals" (732); in other words a professional in Britain's first comprehensive Civil Service.

Of course for the Company Directors, it was not at all apparent that such costly organizational changes were necessary. Relatively speaking, Company operations during

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56 In "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," (1923), Georg Lukacs argues that reification "requires that a society should learn to satisfy all its needs in terms of commodity exchange (91, emphasis added). In this sense, abstractions like the (recognition of and/or adherence to) rule of law are reconceived as commodities. The degree to which one possesses these commodities determines the degree of prestige one has within the community.
Wellesley's tenure were running smoothly and, thanks to the land reforms of Lord Cornwallis, their administration of Bengal was now being funded on a solid tax-base. Wellesley pre-empted this objection by declaring this very prosperity to be the spur for reform: "The British possessions in India now constitute one of the most extensive and populous empires in the world...in which property, life, civil order, and religious liberty are more secure, and the people enjoy a larger portion of the benefits of good government, than any country in this quarter of the globe" (718-19). Now that the company possessions had assumed an imperial character, it was incumbent on the Company to act rather as a Government than a mercantile corporation. But since the Company lacked established political institutions, "the general happiness and prosperity of the country must essentially depend on the conduct of the commercial servants" in its employ (721). In this, Wellesley saw a problem, for while the East India Company had always been a quasi-public institution by virtue of its Royal Charter, its employees were contracted to serve the private interests of a mercantile corporation. As such, they operate, "without rule or system to direct their duties; without any prescribed object of useful pursuit connected with future reward, emolument, or distinction; without any guide to regulate, or authority to control their conduct, or to form, improve, or preserve their morals" (728). This condition was not a problem until the Company acquired sovereignty over Indian territory. Until then, the agency relationship was purely material and it was sufficient to furnish one's agent with a "commercial education" (721). However, the assumption of political and judicial powers entailed responsibilities exceeding the limits of commercial education and as a result, "some succeed, in the ordinary progress of the service, to employments in which their incapacity or misconduct becomes conspicuous to
the natives, disgraceful to themselves and to the British name, and injurious to the State” (727). To remove these threats to Company and imperial interests, Wellesley presented the Directors with a plan to regulate their employees through a process of professionalisation. He acknowledged that while “extraordinary efforts of individual diligence” (729) had won Britain an Indian Empire, “the Company’s investment [can never] be conducted with the greatest possible advantage and honour to themselves, or with adequate justice to their subjects, unless their commercial agents shall possess the qualities of statesmen” (721 emphasis added). Looking back on Wellesley’s proposition from our position in an age where universities and loftily-intentioned institutes concoct programmes with this expressed purpose, it is difficult to recognise how innovative this proposal was. Wellesley is adamant that a mere liberal education of the sort deemed sufficient to prepare a gentleman for public life in Britain was insufficient for the demands of the profession. To “those branches of literature and science which form the basis of the education of persons destined to similar occupations in Europe,” an Indian civil servant required “an intimate acquaintance with the history, languages, customs and manners of the people of India, with the Mahommedan and Hindoo codes of law and religion, and with the political and commercial interests of Great Britain in Asia” (722).

To be clear, no country anywhere in the world offered professional training in statesmanship. Given that his task is to persuade the Directors to accept an expensive

57 Traditionally, one of the supplementary sources of income available to agents of the company was what was euphemistically called “private trade.” The practice of engaging the services of local mercenaries to force commodity producers to sell their goods at an artificially low price and of then reselling those goods to the Company was frowned upon once the Company became the political and judicial authority in the district.

58 Compare Wellesley’s assessment with Burke’s complaint about the current quality of Company employees.

We know too that, in the habits of civilized life, in cultivated society, there is imbibed by men a good deal of solid practice of government, of the true maxims of the State, and every thing that enables a
addition to their mercantile operations, Wellesley makes no effort to prove its uniqueness, deeming it "unnecessary to enter into any examination of the facts to prove, that no system of education, study, or discipline, now exists, either in Europe or in India founded on [these] principles" (723).

Content that he has established necessity, Wellesley begins to enumerate the means by which to guarantee "a sufficient supply of men qualified to fill the high offices of the State with credit to themselves and with advantage to the public" (723). One of the easier ways to impress upon employees the gravity of their situations, Wellesley suggests, is to evacuate the nominal remnants of the commercial character of the administration. He asks the Court of Directors to recognise that "the denominations of writer, factor, and merchant...are now utterly inapplicable to the nature and extent of the duties discharged" (719):

The Civil servants of the English East India Company, therefore, can no longer be considered as the agents of a commercial concern. They are, in fact, the ministers and officers of a powerful sovereign; they must now be viewed in that capacity. (722)

By openly declaring the responsibilities of company employees to be matters of public concern, the East India Company would be able to police the behaviour of its agents more effectively. Made conscious of obligations not only to their employer but also to a "high man to serve his country. But these men are sent over to exercise functions at which a Statesman here would tremble, without any study, without any of that sort of experience which forms men gradually and insensibly to great affairs. These men are sent over to India without maturity, without experience, without knowledge, or habits of cultivated life, to perform such functions as I will venture to say the greatest statesmen are hardly equal to. (“Opening” 301)
public trust,” those who would otherwise be mired in “despondency and sloth” would be energised and those tempted to corruption chastened (725).

But though titular reform might make employees more conscious of their behaviour and to a certain extent create a culture of self-regulation, it hardly equipped them with the skills necessary to undertake “the complicated and extensive relations of those sacred trusts and exalted stations” (722). Wellesley argued that only a systematic form of education could “establish a just conformity between their personal consideration, and the dignity and importance of their public stations” (722). Because of the unique demands of these stations, the education of civil servants “must therefore be of a mixed nature, its foundation must be judiciously laid in England and the superstructure systematically completed in India” (733). Like Burke, Wellesley hopes that properly trained civil servants will “be enabled to discriminate the characteristic differences of the several codes of law administered within the British Empire in India, and practically to combine the spirit of each in the dispensation of justice” (723).

However, when Wellesley speaks of foundations and superstructure he is using a spatial metaphor, an architectural topography that would influence the development of imperial ideology. Like every metaphor its purpose is to make something visible. The effect in this case is to make the foundation the most important, that which is necessary in the last instance. Taking the foundation as that part of one’s education which took place in Britain, British character thus becomes the sine qua non of the Indian civil servant, a declaration which signals a move away from the previous policy of cultural appreciation, sympathy, and mutual understanding exemplified by the Orientalist project, led by William Jones, Charles Hamilton, and Nathaniel Halhed. Wellesley proposes to build on
the English foundation by establishing a specialist college at Fort William in the Bengal Presidency where all company recruits would be required to spend three years building their Indian superstructure. Wellesley’s metaphor shows further how the superstructure is related to the foundation as he argues that the principal function of the college would not be, for example, to teach Indian languages or history but rather “to fix and establish sound and correct principles of religion and government in their minds at an early period of life” (737). Through the College, “the Government of India...will be enabled...to bring the general character of the servants of the Company to such a standard of perfection as the public interest require[s]” (740).

Standards were desirable since imperial policy, Wellesley admitted, had thus far been improvised. British agents like Clive found themselves in unfamiliar situations and made spontaneous decisions. Wellesley’s chief insight, from the perspective of the British Empire, is to have realised that this improvisational aspect could never be removed. This is, on reflection, a profoundly anti-Orientalist sentiment, one which perhaps explains why a figure as influential as Wellesley is so rarely considered in postcolonial studies of Anglo-India. I say anti-Orientalist because it amounts to an admission that knowledge of Indian culture and society either is impossible to calculate and commodify in academic collegiate discourse or, if it were, is of little practical use to its future administrators.

All political situations are necessarily contingent, and Wellesley recognised that it would be impossible to create specific procedures for every possible contingency in a country whose diverse customs were alien to its administrators. Wellesley instead sought to limit the range of that improvisation by establishing a standardised ethic. Arguing that behaviour is a product of habit and exercise he therefore urges that
their early habits should be so formed, as to establish in their minds such solid foundations of industry, prudence, integrity, and religion, as should effectually guard them against those temptations and corruptions with which the nature of this climate, and the particular depravity of the people of India, will surround and assail them in every station...The early discipline of the service should...form a natural barrier against habitual indolence, dissipation, and licentious indulgence (723).

His rhetoric of safeguards and barriers would come to distinguish the British Empire from its predecessors. Whereas the Romans, the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the Mughals enacted policies of assimilation with their colonial subjects, British administrators took great care to play the part of disinterested Platonic guardians in India. In a way, this attitude is one of the perverse side-effects of liberalism which, in presuming that all human beings are essentially equal, carries with it the corollary that all humans will benefit equally from the application of rational systems of governance. Armed with this principle, British administrators saw no need to stoop to the level of the colonised or to compromise the integrity of their administration through sympathetic contact with their subjects. This particular strain of liberalism would culminate finally in Macaulay’s oft-quoted “Minute on Indian Education” (1835) which proposed the creation of a buffer, “a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern” (249).

For his part, Wellesley suggests that the moral character of company employees would be greatly improved if, rather than spending their first years in India as clerks in
close association with native writers, they associated freely in a collegiate atmosphere
where they could lay “the foundations of private character and public reputation” (739):

It cannot be supposed that many will be so insensible to their own honour and
interests, and so destitute of every liberal feeling and sentiment, as not to prefer
the proposed course of studies in the College to the menial labour imposed upon
them of transcribing papers in an office where, in the nature of their duty, they are
levelled with the native and Portuguese clerks, although infinitely inferior in its
execution. (739)

Described in this fashion, the College promises to educate an elite, to appeal to the liberal
(read: aristocratic) sentiment of recruits by offering them the opportunity to separate
themselves from the menial labour of clerks. The immediate effect of Wellesley’s policy
is apparent in the prize-winning essay from the first cohort of the College’s graduates. In
his disputation “On the Advantages to be Expected from an Academical Institution in
India,” W. B. Martin defends,

the necessity, then of an enlightened and unremitting attention to those subjects of
study, which are calculated to impress a virtuous and manly bias on our thoughts,
to mould our character to a consistence with the principles of honor and liberality,
and to render us valuable and ornamental members of society. […] But the
importance of our character in India is such, our intercourse with society, and our
influence on its general spirit and habits are so extensive, as to display the
necessity of a more enlarged knowledge, and plainly demonstrate the propriety of adopting every method of instruction, which tends to open the mind, and sow the seeds of manly thought and dignified conduct. (6)

Martin’s essay demonstrates the extent to which Wellesley’s objectives have been internalized by the student. It does not matter so much whether any consonance exists between these statements and the student’s personal opinions. Instead, it demonstrates the successful transference of imperial obligation. Martin, the institutionally-sanctioned (because prize-winning) voice of the new generation of civil servants, speaks in overtly aristocratic tones. As “ornamental members” of Indian society, the chief purpose of the company men in India is to provide “dignified” models of “character” and “conduct” which could then be emulated by their Indian subjects. Running an empire, in other words, had become a matter of playing British. The deep irony, as we shall see, was that “acting” British affected the administrators as much as those they administered.

**Imperious Necessity and Habits of Industrious Exertion**

The Court of Directors, while upset by Wellesley’s impudence, approved his plan in principle and agreed to fund a training college. Perhaps the most appealing aspect of the college was the opportunity to establish an *esprit de corps* among its initiates. The Directors decided however that the purpose would be most efficiently achieved if the college were in England, closer to East India House and therefore (unlike their overseas employees) easy to supervise. In 1806 East India College, commonly called Haileybury after the town where it was built, admitted its first cohort of trainee civil servants.
CHAPTER TWO

Haileybury was not without its detractors. Perhaps this was inevitable given the sheer novelty of a privately funded training institution purposely built to prepare young men for the task of statecraft in overseas territories. From its establishment until the early 1820s many newspapers, notably The Times, regularly ran pieces relating scenes of anarchy, riot, and general irregularity.\(^{59}\) In 1812, Lord Grenville gave a speech in the House of Lords calling for its closure. In 1817, a group of Company stockholders, who were aggrieved at the expense of maintaining the College, united with local squires, who were aggrieved by the unwelcome influx of hundreds of rowdy boys into their sleepy corner of England, for the same purpose. These commotions were such that they animated Thomas Robert Malthus, Haileybury’s Professor of History and Political Economy, to write a tract in reply. Published first as A Letter to the Rt. Hon. Lord Grenville (1813), the general argument was slightly modified and reissued in 1817 as Statements Respecting the East-India College with an Appeal to Facts.

Little scholarly attention has been paid to Malthus’s time at East India College, a strange fact given that Malthus is the first in a series of British political economists, from the Mills to John Maynard Keynes, whose speculative thought remains indebted to the patronage of the Company. As Keynes reminds us, Malthus’s chair in political economy at Haileybury was the first of its kind to be established in England, predating Oxford and Cambridge by nearly twenty years (108). Nor do I think it an accident that a company

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\(^{59}\) These complaints, however embellished, were grounded in fact and attributable largely to the Court of Director’s bizarre choice the college’s first Principal. Samuel Henley was a one-time professor of moral philosophy at William and Mary College in Virginia but is better known as the notorious translator of William’s Beckford’s Vathek (1787) (notorious because Henley’s English translation was published a full year before Beckford’s French “original”). At the outbreak of the American revolution, Henley returned to England and taught at Harrow; when appointed to the East India College, he was sixty-six years old. According to H. Morse Stephens’s definitive history of the East India College, “How he obtained his appointment is nowhere stated...but it may be asserted with confidence that he was not the right man for the place” (272). In Stephens’s judgement, Henley’s inept and irregular system of discipline directly inspired two great student rebellions in 1813 and 1816.
charged with managing the affairs of an overseas colony should be so progressive in this field. But this is not a study in political economy or economic history; I am more interested in Malthus as an employee and the unique position this afforded him to comment on the East India College. As he asserts to Lord Grenville, “My situation, as one of the professors in the East India College, has given me the best opportunities of observing its effects on the young men who have been educated there” (Letter 1-2). In Malthus’s pamphlets, we receive a clear picture of the structure, intent, and function of this institution, how it disciplined middle-class British boys into company men. Through Malthus’s defence we see that the East India College was deliberately built to fashion industrious and obedient agents. In other words, it facilitated the transition from eighteenth-century nabob to nineteenth-century sahib.

Malthus’s arguments need to be read as both a reflection of and a contribution to the structure of feeling that determined British attitudes to its empire. His arguments are based on the foundation of aristocratic virtue laid by figures like Burke and Wellesley. Consider, for example, how an emphasis on individual interest inflects his parse of Adam Smith’s famous objection against Company rule in India: “One of the great objections urged by Adam Smith against the government of an exclusive Company is, that their interests, as a sovereign, are generally considered as subordinate to their interests as individuals, or as a body of merchants (Statements 31). However, there is an important

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60 The study has yet to be written that considers the relation between Malthus’s official position and his economic theory. In particular, there would seem to be much left unsaid about Malthus’s “discovery” of rent and its relation to the contemporary debate in India between Lord Cornwallis and Sir Thomas Munro over how best to implement a “settlement” of the land with a view to maximising tax revenue and political stability. The economic historian seeking to justify such an inquiry need look no further than the Preface to The Nature and Progress of Rent (1815) which opens, “The following Tract contains the substance of some Notes on Rent which...I have collected in the course of my professional duties at the East India College” (i). Likewise, I suspect that much remains to be said on Malthus’s views on population and his belief that emigration could never be more than a temporary relief to the problem of redundant population.
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discrepancy between Malthus’ parse and Smith’s actual words. Though Malthus intimates otherwise, Smith never in *The Wealth of Nations* referred to the interests of individuals in his analysis of the East India Company. The threat of the rogue agent acting in private interest is instead part of the legacy of the Hastings corruption trial. As Malthus continues, it is that threat of individual agency which the structure of the East India College sought to nullify.

In order to lend moral authority to his argument, Malthus employs the same strategy used by both Burke during the Hastings impeachment and Wellesley in “Notes,” namely, accusing one’s opponents of private interest. In the preface to the *Statements*, Malthus pledges his name and character:

[Those who] continue their attacks upon the college in the public prints, should adopt the same candid and manly mode of proceeding. If they do not, the inference will be pretty strong, that they cannot reveal their names without discovering to the public some probable motives for their attacks, different from a desire to promote the welfare and good government of India. (vii)

Rather than capitulate to those motivated by “feelings of temporary disappointment and irritation” (1), Malthus argues that “the great object...must be kept in view by the legislature and the public” (2). His appeal indicates how deeply the idea of empire had sedimented in the British consciousness within a generation of the Hastings Impeachment. To place in the British public sphere the interests of either India or the private company acting as its governor, Malthus need not make Burkean appeals to
grandiloquent ideas of national honour or the Law of Nations. Instead, Malthus simply
picks up where Wellesley left off, claiming Empire as a fact which, in turn, obliged
Britain to render certain services to India.

While the structure of his argument implies a progression from the general need
for a college to the specific case of the college at Haileybury, all is predicated on the
imperial fact; justification is made on the basis of that which is, in Malthus's wonderfully
euphemistic phrase, "imperiously necessary" (Letter 19). Imperious necessity means that
stockholders of the Company must bear the expense of preparing a class of properly
trained administrators; and imperious necessity means that a patch of English domesticity
and tranquillity must be sacrificed to the service of the empire. Having dismissed his
opponents summarily, Malthus turns to describe what type of administrator was
"imperiously necessary" and what type of institution was most able to produce him.

Although the great public schools and the two Universities were thought to
provide excellent preparation for a young man intending to enter public life in the early
nineteenth century, Malthus notes that Haileybury is the first educational establishment
exclusively dedicated to the training of civil servants. Its ideological intentions were so
blunt that we need employ neither the Althusserian nor the even more refined Gramscian
modes of analysis. Malthus himself cheerfully discloses that Haileybury is in the business
of manufacturing character:

[In] the judgement of the most competent and distinguished authorities, the
students at East-India college are formed in their morals, prepared in their
caracter, and qualified in their education, for the most important stations they
are likely to fill, and that the Hertford college, instead of being the disgrace of
England, has been rendering, and is rendering, most essential service to India
(Statements 84, emphasis in original).

If we focus only on Malthus’s emphasised words, we discover nothing outside the usual
claim of any schoolmaster. However, the subsequent phrase, “for the most important
stations they are likely to fill,” reminds us that this college exists for a very particular
reason: the students at Haileybury were not being trained to spread Britannia’s fame but
to manage its acquisitions as quietly and effectively as possible. Malthus defends this
purpose by making the Wellesleyan appeal that the nature of the British Empire has
changed. First he refers to the past as a period of expansion and acquisition when it was
enough to rely on “military and political power.” Thus,

circumstances rarely fail to generate the qualifications necessary. All ages and
countries have produced warriors and statesmen. A few great and illustrious
individuals...might be sufficient so as to animate the whole body of their
countrymen. But it is a very different thing when the question is no longer about
the acquisition and the maintenance of an empire, but the administration of justice
and of a good internal government to sixty millions of subjects. (19-20)

In Malthus’s estimation, what was acquired by accident could only be maintained through
a “system of discipline” (25). Burke and Wellesley made similar appeals for the reform of
the body of imperial agents, but Malthus’s writing reveals a great deal more
sophistication. Whereas Burke called for British character and Wellesley called for liberal
gentlemen, Malthus takes a more pragmatic approach. By 1813, the concern for the
Company and even for enlightened thinkers like Malthus is not to produce a cohort of
Clives or even Wellesleys but to establish an infrastructure capable of consolidating
power.

The difference in what was needed is the difference measured by the subtitles of
India had been won by “The Founders;” it was to be administered by “The Guardians.”
But whereas Mason argues that the change in attitude coincided with the Indian Mutiny
of 1857 and the Crown’s assumption of power in 1858, Malthus’s writings show that this
cultural adjustment was well underway in the early years of the nineteenth century. And it
would be equally remiss to presume that Malthus was a visionary in this regard. On the
contrary, the religious instruction at East India College regularly imparted the same
message in their end-of-term sermons. Symbolically the last opportunity to impress moral
teaching on company men like Jos Sedley who would in Thackeray’s words, “scarcely
[see] a Christian face except twice a year, when the detachment arrived to carry off the
revenues he had collected,” these sermons often focused on the Biblical Joseph who, like
the graduates, was sent from his kindred to be a ruler in a foreign land. For instance, in
1827 Reverend Henry Walter advised the students, “You are summoned to be the
instruments of a government, which must seek for strength by deserving the approbation
of its subjects; and which, therefore expects its officers to save the weak from
oppression...In the hour of temptation, like Joseph, view with abhorrence, any proposal to violate a trust which has been generously and fully reposed” (9-10).

Malthus concedes that great men will continue to emerge but, now that the purpose of empire has changed, such men will be comparatively without power:

They cannot act without instruments. These instruments must necessarily be a considerable body of civil servants, not only possessing the means of easy communication with the natives, but of improved understandings, of acquired knowledge, and of habits of steady application and industry. (Statements 20)

The instrumental metaphor alludes to an idealised agency relationship, where the human subject is stripped of his individual will and made a tool in the service of his principal’s interest. As evidence of the progress already being made in pursuit of this ideal, Malthus refers to a despatch sent in 1810 from Governor-General Minto to the Court of Directors which praised the college students “for regular attendance; for obedience to the statutes and discipline of the college; for orderly and decorous demeanour; for moderation in expense, and consequently in the amount of their debt; and, in a word, for those decencies

61 The cultural challenge faced by Reverends Malthus and Walter is not dissimilar than the one faced by Tennyson’s Ulysses, the heroic king who resigns his throne to Telemachus, the methodical son who is discerning to fulfil This labour, by slow prudence to make mild A rugged people, and through soft degrees Subdue them to the useful and the good. Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere Of common duties ("Ulysses" 35-40)

62 Malthus continues, arguing that among the annual crop sent out to India, a few great men will always emerge, persons “fit to command in the field or advise in the cabinet; yet that such a body, so collected, should furnish a sufficient number of persons competent to conduct ably and efficiently the whole internal administration of so great and populous a country, seems to be next to an impossibility” (20-21). Therefore, “it is abundantly evident that an improved education for the civil service of the Company was not an imaginary and theoretical, but a real and practical want—a want which, in some way or other required unquestionably to be supplied” (23).
of conduct which denote men well born and characters well trained” (qtd. in Statements 53).

Minto makes no mention of intelligence, ingenuity, adaptability, creativity, eloquence, or any other trait normally expected of men who are nominally trained to hold the offices of statesmen. I would argue that he makes no mention because statesmanship was not the true object of the collegiate education but rather the veil thrown over the eyes of Company recruits and the British public in general. One might sum the Haileybury project as the process by which a British citizen was reduced to the level of instrumentality even as he believed he was elevated to the aristocracy. Malthus, at least, confirms that “the feelings of the sovereign conspicuously predominated” at East India College (Statements 31). 63 Yet Haileybury was in the business of producing instruments, not sovereigns. The “feelings” then must be understood as structured, set in place and cultivated for an ulterior motive or, if you prefer, ideological. The reason for this structure is clear: an employee who conceives himself a sovereign will affiliate more

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To appreciate how “conspicuously” predominant the feelings of an imperial sovereign were at the College, consider that the following was listed as “the most popular and enduring” college song:

The Romans were a knowing race,
Vivat Haileyburia!
They made a road down to this place,
Vivat Haileyburia!
Romans came and passed away;
Normans followed; where are they?
But we are here, and here to stay!
Vivat Haileyburia

Then close your ranks and lift your song,
Vivat Haileyburia!
That life is short, but love is long;
Vivat Haileyburia!
And all through life, where’er we be,
School of our hearts, we’ll think of thee,
And drink the toast with three times three,
Vivat Haileyburia!

(Wright 4)
positively with the pleasures derived from immaterial civic virtues as compensation for his work. The success of this structure of feeling is measured not only in the reduction of corruption but also in the universal faith expressed by Anglo-Indian writers and memoirists in the anticipated pleasures derivable from one’s retirement to the proverbial gabled villa in Surrey.

Malthus goes so far to suggest that the collegiate mode of education itself contributes to the formation of this character. He submits that, “the strict discipline and constant superintendence of a school would be but a bad preparation for the entire independence, and complete freedom from all restraint, which would await them on their arrival in Calcutta” (27). The task of administering an empire requires an institution where a more liberal system of discipline might be introduced; and where, instead of being kept to their studies solely by the fear of immediate observation and punishment, they might learn to be influenced by the higher motives of the love of distinction and the fear of disgrace, and to depend for success upon their own diligence and self-control; upon the power of regulating their own time and attention; and on habits of systematic and persevering application, when out of the presence of their teachers. Nothing but an institution approaching in some degree

64 Of course, in both fact and fiction, this hope is nearly always thwarted. John Lang’s *Wetherbys: Father and Son* (1853) is representative here. Consider the scene where young Wetherby describes his pensioned father: “In India he was a tremendous talker, and usually spoke in a loud sonorous voice; but in England he was silent, reserved, and seemingly timid. If they could have got him upon...any of the various questions on which he was accustomed to write and converse, he would have astounded his hearers with the mass of facts which he had in his memory, and the vigour with which he gave utterance to his thoughts: but his sympathies were now but rarely or never aroused, and he must have felt that he was regarded, if not as a stupid person, anything but a very clever fellow” (24).

The degree to which Anglo-Indian writers knew their hope would be thwarted is evident in the literature from the beginning. However, whereas young Wetherby writes in tones of bitter disappointment, later Anglo-Indian characters will take pleasure from knowing their toils should but inevitably would not be recognised. As I hope to show, this has less to do with the collegiate training model than with the type of character cultivated by the competition examination.
to a college, and possessing some degree of college liberty, could either generate such habits, or properly develop the characters of the young persons educated in it. (28)

The phrase "college liberty" neatly captures the type of discipline the Company attempted to develop in response to the logistical contingencies of their agency relationships. "College liberty" is, after all, liberty within a system, an illusory freedom that masquerades as true liberation only insofar as a member has internalised the fundamental rules, the hegemony, of the ideological apparatus.

The work underway at the East India College as described by Malthus is very close to what social theorist Herbert Marcuse calls "desublimation." In One-Dimensional Man (1964) Marcuse proposed the term in contradistinction to the Freudian notion of sublimation. Sublimation, according to Marcuse's Freud, is the process by which instinct is directed away from its natural expression and appears, instead, in some other form of (socially acceptable) expression. Desublimation explains how a social system itself manages and sanctions the release and pursuit of primal instincts with the object of maintaining a higher discipline over its membership. Marcuse uses the example of the man who can lech at the cover of a Playboy on sale at a magazine store. The East India Company offered men the chance to be kings, to wield absolute power over a human population. However the human individual can only pursue the respective primal drive (sexual possession; tyranny) when he has tacitly agreed to do so under the rubric of the overarching social order (as consumer; as Company employee). The function of

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65 Marcuse developed the term in his attempt to explain how it was that even freedom and agency had seemingly been co-opted in the advanced capitalist economy of the United States.
desublimation, then, is both connected to and more powerful than sublimation itself, for whereas sublimation offers a surrogate object, desublimation offers the initial object itself. Yet that object is at the same time not coincident with itself. There is no naked woman on the store shelf, just as there is no kingdom to rule.\textsuperscript{66} Hence Marcuse’s concept of “the one-dimensional man,” the individual who is no longer an individual, who has been overdetermined by one social system.

This new mode can only be understood if we contrast it against literal interpretations of freedom. In the case of the Malthusian college, “college liberty” properly understood would mean freedom \textit{from} college—from the academic regulations, from the rules of conduct, from the coursework, from the traditions, from the propriety. The unrealistic sound of these propositions is indicative, not of their utopian character, but of the strength of the forces which prevent their realization. As one Haileybury alum, W. S. Seton-Carr, recalled,

\begin{quote}
It was there [at Haileybury] that we first became cognizant of the fact that we were members of the Civil Service … [I]t was there that we first became firmly impressed with a conviction that, as members of such a body, there were certain traditions to be kept up and handed over to our successors, a political faith to be cherished, and a code of public and private honour to be rigidly maintained. (qtd. in Monier-Williams 94)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{66} We see the same operation in the phenomenon of the “sport-utility vehicle,” a class of automobile marketed as the tool through which individuals can access and conquer nature at its most wild, rugged, and impenetrable. Yet overwhelmingly, the SUV collects most of its mileage in cities (viz. “the urban jungle”) and suburbs while being operated by middle-class businessmen (viz. “road-warriors”) or the group of women who used to be classed as homemakers while they shuttle their children to and from their daily activities. The purchase of the commodity has replaced its use.
In the Malthusian system, one of the clearest indications of the institutional strength was that way it created an atmosphere of complete surveillance, the structural antithesis to “college liberty.” Malthus explains, for example, how the professors published examination results along two indices, the first being the bands of first-, second-, or third-class results familiar in the Oxbridge system and the second being a relative ladder ranking each individual in relation to his peers. Haileybury was unique among English educational institutions in that not only were the men being measured against some abstract standard; they were also being measured, constantly, against each other. Moreover, Malthus boasts, “These means of exciting emulation and industry have been attended with great success...a more than usual proportion seem to be animated by a strong desire, accompanied by corresponding efforts, to make progress in the various studies proposed to them” (Statements 49). By the time the students had graduated, they were quite used to the idea that constant surveillance was taking place even as they lived and worked in the remotest outposts of the empire. The idea of publicity would become a defining feature of nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian society. Helen Mackenzie, for one, recalls of her six years in India that, “One learns to know people in India most thoroughly. Everybody lives, as it were, in a glass case—one knows the income, style of living, debts, and position, of every one else” (118). The noticeboard of the quadrangle would be succeeded by the Gazette and its lists of promotions, salaries, and achievements of every member of every Anglo-Indian civil and military administrator which was, recall, tantamount to the entirety of “respectable” Anglo-Indian society.
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It would be insufficient to argue, however, that simply by a stricter or more detailed publication of student grades, the East India College transformed the superego of company recruits. Fortunately, Malthus himself considers publicity but one component of the disciplinary process. Another, equally important, innovation of the Haileybury system was its remarkably diverse curriculum, wherein a student would study simultaneously the classical literature and languages, two Oriental languages (Persian and Sanskrit), the elements of mathematics, natural philosophy, the laws of England, general history, and political economy. For many of the college’s critics, this breadth invariably prevented the acquisition of any tangible skills. To Malthus, these critics are missing the point since the purpose of the curriculum is not to teach anything of use but “to encourage most effectually habits of industry and application” (47). The barrage of courses and assignments has, he argues, “been useful to them in rendering a methodical arrangement of their hours of study” (47), thereby preparing them for the diverse tasks associated with their impending administrative posts. H. Morse Stephens, a Victorian chronicler of the East India College, drew a similar conclusion by observing, “the chief advantage of such a college as Haileybury lay not so much in the actual instruction afforded, as in the association together of young men intended for a career in common, in which they especially needed the traditions of a noble service, while labouring side by side for the promotion of the welfare of the peoples of the East” (346).

In such a configuration, we can see how imagination is subordinated to methodology, and how independent thought is swamped by the pressure to complete the work at hand. Similarly, an anxiety runs through Anglo-Indian literature, especially but not exclusively in Kipling’s fiction, that much work needs to be completed before the
British can begin to spare the time necessary for metaphysical considerations.\textsuperscript{67} Recall that Lord Minto's approbation was based on orderly and obedient graduates rather than incisive or talented ones. Malthus goes further, boldly stating,

All the offices in India may not require talents; but all must require a certain degree of industry, good conduct, and inclination to the service. And beyond all question, [that is] one of the most important uses that the college can answer.

\textit{(Statements 80)}

The best defence of the College that Malthus can find is that it answers Burke's imperative, delivered on the opening of the Hastings Impeachment, "My Lords, to obtain empire has been a common thing—to govern it well more rare" ("Opening" 314). The establishment of a college which combined universal publicity with a rigorous curriculum and college liberty tempered the characters of prospective company men. No longer, Malthus argued, could an Indian appointment be an opportunity for second sons "whose conduct and attainments do not promise a very fortunate career at home" (34). It was now the training ground for the servants of Britain's just empire.

\textit{Competition and Naked Ambition}

Macaulay shared with Malthus a concern that the separate interests of the East India Company, its Indian subjects, and the British Crown would be best served if company men could be turned into well-regulated instruments of administrative machinery. But

\textsuperscript{67} Especially appropriate here is Hanuman's observation, in Kipling's "The Bridge Builders" (1898) that the Anglo-Indians are "the men who believe their God is toil" (13: 42).
unlike Malthus, he was not confident that a college could create a *Gemeinschaft* in and of itself. For Macaulay, it was equally important to attend to the natural disposition of the recruits before they ever entered a collegiate environment. In particular he saw the existing system of patronage, where recruits entered the civil service on the basis of a personal recommendation by one of the Company Directors, as a terribly inefficient way of selecting men who would be asked to work as disinterested administrators. In response, he suggested that entry to the Company’s service be opened on the basis of intellectual competition. His plan for a competitive examination, first made in his 1833 “Speech on the Government of India,” would quickly become one of the rallying calls for Victorian liberalism. Since the reform of the Indian Civil Service served as the foundation for the abolition of patronage on the domestic front, Macaulay’s campaign has been generally understood as an attack on one of the last vestiges of feudal arbitrariness, and the inauguration of meritocracy into the public service.

To get a quick thumbnail of the *status quo* in the era of patronage, we could do worse than turn to Charles Dickens’s excoriation of the Barnacle family in *Little Dorrit* (1857). According to the narrator, Barnacles have infiltrated not only the Circumlocution Office but, through viral nepotism, had “dispersed themselves all over the public offices...Either the nation was under a load of obligation to the Barnacles, or the Barnacles were under a load of obligation to the nation” (107). Now over and against those who thought it proper to leave appointments to the discretion of gentlemen, mandarins, or the Barnacles of the world, men like Mill, Macaulay, and Charles

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68 Macaulay’s success in that speech contributed greatly to his appointment as the first Law Member of the Supreme Council in India.
Trevelyan championed open competition. To be clear though, the advocates of both patronage and competition shared the belief that the best man was needed for the job. Where they differed was in how to determine who that best man is. Generally speaking, liberal reformers agreed with the ideal for public service outlined in Mill’s *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) as the state of affairs “in which the interest of the functionary is entirely coincident with his duty” (194-5). If we combine this with the old liberal canard that Britain held its empire reluctantly and only for so long as it would benefit its colonised peoples, then we quickly apprehend what the reformers really wanted: a group of disinterested men with a worldly appreciation of and a willingness to represent Indian interests.

Between 1833 and 1853, Macaulay committed a great deal of his intellectual energy to achieving this goal, but today his contribution to imperial pedagogy is more often characterised by his “Minute on Indian Education,” which has become the standard bearer for the canon of colonial discourse. Its suggestion that England endeavour to create a class of colonial administrators Indian in blood and English in character is now understood by postcolonial critics as one of the most egregious excesses of the Eurocentric chauvinism which dominated the imperial age. By introducing the Minute at this point, my intention is not to offer a defence of Macaulay’s Anglicist policy or to deny that it “enabl[ed] the humanistic ideals of enlightenment to coexist with and indeed even support education for social and political control” (Viswanathan 5). Rather, I want

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69 It’s worth mentioning that, aside from the extension of the franchise, few topics animated these liberals so much as administrative reform. Mill, for instance, confessed in a letter to his wife, Harriet, that “The mere attempt to make patronage go by merit and not by favour seems to me to be a revolution in English society and likely to produce greater effects than any reforms in the laws” (148).

70 Having said that, the Minute is not, as some have construed, a plan for the universal Anglicization of Indians through the general dissemination of English literature. As Macaulay makes clear, the plan would affect only a small number. “[I]t is impossible for us,” he argues, “with our limited means, to attempt to
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to draw attention to its contemporaneousness with his plans to reform the colonial civil service in total.

In both cases, the problem Macaulay confronted was no different than that by Wellesley or Malthus: how best to create instruments for the machine of Government. In each, the flaws in his argument were manifold and based on a combination of inexperience and specious logic. Even Mill, always broadly sympathetic to Macaulay’s politics, disagreed with the Minute on Indian Education, calling it impractical and, in a letter to the Company’s Board of Directors, “chimerical.” However, dismissing the Minute on the grounds of essentialism, racism, or hypocrisy is to mistake its rhetoric with its purpose, which is to create a new class of people. In Macaulay’s day, the Company was expanding, continually drafting native clerks into its service. At Governor-General

educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern” (249).

We should also address the charge of cultural chauvinism and notice that Macaulay seems to have conceived “English” not as a national language, but an international one. Consider his assertion that “It may be safely said that the literature now extant in that language [English] is of far greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together” (242). Such a statement understands modern English as a superior not only to all ancient Indian but also all pre-modern European languages as well. This idea of English seems only to speak of its archival aspect, and perhaps it is not too bold to suggest that Macaulay had a point when he asserts that the English of the 1830s was in fact a dominant archive of, to use the motto of today’s British Library, “the world’s knowledge.” For Macaulay, English is simply the most practical language for the administration of empire and the conduct of its international business. He reasons that

[English] is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seat of Government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East. It is the language of two great European communities which are rising, the one in the south of Africa, the other in Australasia; communities which are every year becoming more important and more connected with our Indian empire (242).

It further bears mentioning that here, in 1835, Macaulay, the putative voice of little England, apprehends the British empire as a network with nodes able to communicate directly with each other without necessarily having to pass through a central hub. Emphatically, he asserts the separation of the English language from the English nation; one hundred and fifty years before the advent of postcolonial and globalisation theories, Macaulay recognised that, through Empire, English has become a deterritorialised linguistic register. The “value” of the English language was not in its connection to English culture, but a combination of its popularity and the vast body of foreign material it had already assimilated into its diction and, via translation, its archive.

\(^7\) India Office Records: Revenue, Judicial and Legislative Committee Miscellaneous Papers: PC 1828, L/P&J/1/92.
Bentinck's request, and functioning in his capacity as Legal Member of Council in India, Macaulay was charged with advising the best means for the education of these future employees. Macaulay was concerned with English as the vernacular of administrative power, and with English-ness as its character.

The concept of English-ness as a transmissible code is behind the best postcolonial critiques, but those same critiques miss some of the point when they limit their analyses to the colonised subject. If we contextualise the Minute, we realise that Macaulay also intended to use the idea of Englishness to regulate the behaviour of English men. My contention here is that Macaulay was no chauvinist but rather one who held all men equally to a standard that was as unnatural to an Englishman as to an Indian. This view is not possible if we limit ourselves to his Minute but if we engage his writings and speeches on the matter of domestic reform, we approach a fuller picture of his liberal intentions. Before he ever turned to the subject of Indian education, Macaulay sought to reform the method of selecting and training of Company civil servants. In his "Speech on the Government of India," delivered amidst the debate over the renewal of the Company's Charter, Macaulay opposed the system of patronage through which writers were appointed to attend East India College on the grounds that imperial duty "entitled" India to "the best talents which England can spare" (155). To ensure that condition was met, he advocated the establishment of an open competition for these positions, through

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72 I have in mind Homi Bhabha's chapter on mimicry in The Location of Culture (1994), which reads the Minute as a symptom of fetishes for fixity, stability, and transparency; yet simultaneously as the document which annihilates the possibility that these fetishes will ever materialise. When narcissistic desire strives to reproduce its image on the colonial subject, colonial discourse confronts the reality that there are no essential identities, no "presence[s] Africaine[s]" (88). The anxiety engendered by such an acknowledgement, Bhabha concludes, undermines the monologic aspirations of colonial discourse and explains the high frequency of repeated stereotypes and truth statements within it.
the process of a set examination. The principle of competition, he asserted, rather than the content of the exam, would be the best way to secure such candidates.

Whatever be the languages, whatever be the sciences, which it is, in any age or country, the fashion to teach, the persons who become the greatest proficients...will generally be the flower of the youth, *the most acute, the most industrious, the most ambitious of honourable distinctions*...If, instead of learning Greek, we learned the Cherokee, the man who understood the Cherokee best, who made the most correct and melodious Cherokee verses, who comprehended most accurately the effect of the Cherokee particles, would generally be a superior man to him who was destitute of these accomplishments. (156)

On the one hand, Macaulay’s speech is a simple defence of the value of a liberal education to a young man preparing for public life. On the other hand, he reveals that the measure of that value is not made in the *content* of such subjects, but in their *rigour*. Those inclined towards success in competition, that is to say those who combine natural talent with ambition and industry, would become the best servants of the public good.

It would be twenty years before the competition examination was introduced, but in its founding document, Macaulay indicates that the basic elements of his philosophy have not altered. Macaulay’s *The Indian Civil Service: A Report* (1853) contains the practical framework which later scholars including Terry Eagleton and D. J. Palmer would link to the establishment of English Literature as a discipline in British schools and
As a piece of Liberal political philosophy, its advocacy of meritocracy over arbitrary promotion makes it a worthy companion text to the tracts of the Administrative Reform Association and Mill’s *Considerations on Representative Government*. However, whatever work this document did towards the institutionalisation of certain academic subjects or to the broad reform of the domestic civil service, the *Report* also articulates a psychological profile of what Macaulay thought was the ideal company employee. A civil service appointment should not be “a matter of favour, but a matter of right” and he who obtains the appointment should “owe it solely to his own abilities and industry” (*Report* 18). As in the 1833 “Speech,” the 1853 report insists that the subjects examined are not as important as the principle of competition:

> Skill in Greek and Latin versification has, indeed, no direct tendency to form a judge, a financier, or a diplomatist. But the youth who does best what all the ablest and most ambitious youths about him are trying to do well will generally prove a superior man. (*Report* 13)

Quite opposed to Malthus and the Haileybury philosophy, Macaulay urges that the best civil servants will be those committed to distinction rather than those capable of managing multiple subjects simultaneously. “Nothing can be further,” he insists, “from our wish to hold our premiums for knowledge of wide surface and of small depth” (12). A candidate’s commitment will also be tested in exams designed to belie “the delusive show of knowledge which is the effect of the process popularly called ‘cramming’” (14). Throughout, the exam should be so designed as to indicate those candidates who possess

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the "qualities which are securities against vice—industry, self-denial, a taste for pleasures not sensual, a laudable desire of honourable distinction, a still more laudable desire to obtain the approbation of friends and relations" (21). Because the exam offered papers in many subjects and because deep knowledge of a subject was demanded, Macaulay wrote that "It seems to us probable that of the 6,875 marks, which are the maximum, no candidate will ever obtain half" (11). As one of the examination’s early critics noted, the limits of the papers were "almost co-extensive with human knowledge itself" (Griffin 529).

As we have already seen, these are the perennial qualities demanded by Company reformers from Burke to Wellesley and Malthus. Yet each figure has offered different proposals and the characteristic features of Macaulay’s plan highlight his more sophisticated grasp of managing individual agents. Both the college and Macaulay’s competition system disciplined on the basis of publicity. But whereas the collegiate construction of an esprit du corps regulated through an economy of shame underwritten by a fear of the public exposure of one’s inadequacy, the competition exam presumed inadequacy and promoted the discovery of virtue through struggle. In this way, Macaulay’s competition exam was designed to overcome not only the gap between London and India but also the gaps between among the thinly-spread Indian officials themselves. Competitioners, or competition wallahs as they became known as in India, were to be made conscious of their incomplete ability long before they reached positions of responsibility in India. Already, they would be prepared to fail in the equally onerous task of administering an empire.
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The best civil servant, Macaulay seems to be arguing here, is the idealist: the man who holds the idea of the virtuous empire and its notional civil servant in the highest esteem; the man who realises how far he is from incarnating that notion; and the man who is most driven to reduce that gap. If this is the case then the competition examination should be understood as the inaugural point for a system of self-generating subjectivity. This is quite unlike the collegiate system, whose disciplinary capacity was circumscribed by acts of remembrance after graduation. Whether or not civil servants would retain the feelings cultivated within the quadrangle once they had assumed positions of power—whether they would, in other words, remain attached to the idea of the virtuous empire—could not entirely be assured. Macaulay reasons that “the servant of the Company is often stationed, during a large part of his life, at a great distance from libraries and from European society, and will therefore find it peculiarly difficult to supply by study in his mature years the deficiencies of his early training” (Report 3-4). Alternatively, Macaulay’s plan is self-generating, requiring neither library nor society, because it internalised the inadequacy, placing alienation at the centre of the individual agents’ subjectivity.

Such a plan eliminates the necessity for panoptic discipline and brings Macaulay’s form of imperial character into line with the work of Hegel. It was Hegel, after all, who argued that gaps and alienation do not interrupt identity and do not impede truth. Rather, in both The Science of Logic and Phenomenology of Spirit, he argues that the gaps are the identity and the truth; there is no Subject without the gap separating the

74 The productive capacity of these gaps marks one of Hegel’s great philosophical contributions. For most Marxists, Hegel’s flaw is that he did not articulate the notion of totality, a condition beyond partial knowledge, individualism, class conflict, alienation—i.e. Communism. Actually, Hegel’s refusal to theorize the total, his conviction that alienation constitutes all identity, should be seen by Marxists as his greatest achievement.
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Object from its Notion.\textsuperscript{75} Though a Hegelian lens alienation is the condition of identity, something Macaulay appears to be aware of when he imagines an exam which takes intellectual accomplishment as its index and yet is designed so that even the best will never pass. More recently, Slavoj \v{Z}ižek has supplemented Hegel’s theory of subjectivity by insisting that the gap is the “ontological condition of the Subject’s emergence” (131). The subject, in \v{Z}ižek’s Lacanian rereading of Hegel, is \textit{nothing but} the gap in the substance. In this sense, subscription to a notion constitutes membership in a particular community, but the inevitable failure of individuals to meet the standards of that notion creates the identity.

The full psychosocial effect of the competition examination now comes into focus, since we realise that it manipulates pure desire. Like the collegiate system, the competition examination takes the idea of the virtuous empire, that ethos which putatively transformed self-interested British subjects into dutiful colonial agents, as an impossible ideal. It is a concept which is \textit{originally lost}, lost at the moment of its enunciation, named as something which will never come into being. So far, however, we remain in the field of “normal” idealism. It is how one approaches that loss which is significant. And here lies the difference between the Haileybury graduates and Macaulay’s candidates (who would soon become known, aptly, as “competitioners”), a difference which is analogous to Lacan’s understanding of the difference between a desire and a drive. Properly configured, the Competitioners represent a collective who will have shifted away from desire and turned towards drive. For them, identity is not

\textsuperscript{75} In “The Essentialities or Determinations of Reflection,” Hegel discusses the importance of “internal repulsion” in identity formation, leading him to conclude that “Identity…is in its own self absolute non-identity” (\textit{Science} 413). Also see the discussion of the “world of self-alienated spirit” in \textit{Phenomenology of the Spirit} (298-360).
based on their shared ambition to recover or rebuild the lost idea of the virtuous empire, even if this is the declared, stated goal. Instead, their identity is based on loss itself.

Recalling once more Macaulay’s impossible expectations, I want to insist that Competitioners were made conscious of their incomplete ability long before they reached positions of responsibility in India. Already, they would be prepared to fail in the equally onerous task of administering an empire. Under the regime of the competition exam, the best civil servant is the man who holds the notional civil servant in the highest esteem, who realises how far he is from incarnating that notion, and who is driven not to reduce but to enact and embody that gap. Self-worth is a product of the pursuit, not the attainment of a goal. In fact, achievement only indicates that one has not desired enough. That is to say the most masochistic would be the best administrators; those most conscious of their inability to succeed in full would be most likely not to fail in total. In imperial discourse the notional English civil servant is as universally acknowledged as his material incarnation is nonexistent. The most ostensibly admirable characters in imperial fiction are those who exhibit masochistic commitments, rendered noble, of course, through the lexicon of duty and sacrifice. The publication of a document like Macaulay’s Report on the Civil Service represents a point in the evolution of imperial discourse which realised that ethics were most efficiently (financially or pedagogically) instilled not through explicit ideological apparatuses like the East India College but instead through the construction of impossible goals.
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Corporate Culture in the Fiction of Anglo-India

The Martiniquais poet Aimé Césaire stands out as one of the first commentators to theorise the effects of imperialism on the coloniser. His *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950) argues that colonialism “inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it,” through something he calls a “boomerang effect” (20). Césaire conceives of empire as an historical anomaly where men educated in the best tenets of the European Enlightenment found themselves asked to occupy decidedly un-Enlightened positions of imperial sovereignty. The contrast between enlightenment theory and imperial practice becomes all the more stark if we accept the view proposed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer on the opening page of their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947): “In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty” (3). Published three years later, Césaire’s *Discourse* considers the paradoxical position thus occupied by the coloniser, a figure who by definition stood against liberty and native sovereignty. Césaire’s boomerang explains how the violence projected against the colonised rebounds back to wreak psychological havoc on the coloniser, dehumanising the very man who set out ostensibly to improve the humanity of those he conquered.\(^7\)

The obvious limit of Césaire’s study is its emphasis on clear and present corporeal violence. This is unsurprising given that Césaire was primarily interested in the actions of

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76 Even if we were not familiar with Nick Nesbitt’s intriguing chapter on how Césaire “cannibalized” Hegel, the echoes of the master-slave struggles are so loud as to make one wonder why Césaire did not call his work the *Dialectics of Colonialism*. See Chapter 4, “Cannibalizing Hegel: Decolonization and European Theory in *La tragédie du roi Christophe*.”
the French in North Africa during the twentieth century, a colonial encounter where, in
the words of Frantz Fanon, "the official legitimate agent, the spokesperson for the
colonizer and the regime of oppression is the police officer or the soldier" (4). However,
in the case of British India, the legitimate agents of power were officers neither of the
policia nor the military, but rather the civilian variety. This is not to suggest that the
British Empire was without fault—one needs only read Mike Davis’s *Victorian
Holocausts* (2001) to know otherwise—77—but it is to say that the imperialisms in French
North Africa and in British India were of different orders. Fortunately, one of the best
cultural analyses of the French and British empires, Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978),
suggests how to extend Césaire’s theory of a boomerang effect beyond its basic
connection to material violence. It does so by bringing the work of Italian Marxist
Antonio Gramsci to bear on Césaire’s French socialism. Via Gramsci, Said argues that
Césaire had read Hegel’s narrative of the struggle between the master and the slave too
literally; that mortal peril (what Hegel calls the limit and the original point of liberated
subjectivity) is brought about only by physical antagonism; that military and police
apparatuses are the only way power can be established. The cardinal point of *Orientalism*,
and what is arguably Said’s greatest contribution to colonial studies, is its identification
of other types of peril, which for the human subject can be brought about in the cultural,
social, and psychological work of non-violent institutions. Comparing the French and the
British empires, Said shows how each augmented direct violence by a complex array of
other institutions—including banks, schools, universities, encyclopaedias, literature—in
order to develop and sustain what Gramsci calls hegemony, the state of affairs where the

77 Davis excoriates, among other things, Lord Lytton’s culpable role in the famine of 1876-9 in which
nearly six million Indians perished.
ideology of a class has become accepted as common sense. *Orientalism* demonstrates that the machinations of state and imperial power function more subtly than brute force. To say this in a register more relevant to our times, successful imperialists realise that tactics of “shock and awe” are relatively ineffective if one cannot win the battle for “hearts and minds.”

Accepting that the military and police are but two species of the genus *institution*, we realise that what is really at stake in the imperial project is how institutional discourse attempts to incorporate human subjects into a social order. Said shows us the direct and productive role literature played in shaping the attitudes held by both the governing and the governed classes. Because of his work (and that of others, notably Patrick Brantlinger) nearly every schoolchild now knows that the fact of Empire lurks in the shadows of British fiction.78 We readily apprehend how Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, and William Makepeace Thackeray all used it to reinforce their domestic visions. We are also now more attuned to the numerous travelogues and memoirs that disclosed and mediated the facts of quotidian life in the colonies to Britain’s metropolitan citizens, thus building the political consensus for Empire’s existence.

Helping the domestic reader-as-citizen to think of Empire as a potentially virtuous enterprise is one thing; it is far more difficult to encourage that reader to make great personal sacrifices on its behalf, and in particular to eschew opportunities for personal sacrifices.

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78 Brantlinger’s *Rule of Darkness* remains the indispensable study of the relations between British culture (both high and low) and imperialism. Writing against those who thought imperialism to be a political phenomenon associated with the last decades of the nineteenth-century, with the scramble for Africa and the age of jingoism, Brantlinger was among the first to take a decidedly long view of Empire (although not long enough in my opinion since his choice of bracketing dates seems designed to coincide with the arbitrary bands which designate academic Victorian and Edwardian studies).
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enrichment. George Orwell once cannily remarked that “Civilised men do not readily move away from the centres of civilization” (“Rudyard Kipling” 83) and so, in addition to the powerful tradition of what we might call domestic imperial discourse, there exists a genre of colonial literature concerned neither with life in Britain nor with explaining the colonial landscape to fellow Britons. This genre was more concerned with producing and sustaining the consent and obedience of the governing classes, incorporating new colonial administrators into a way of living that Pierre Bourdieu would call the colonial habitus, that is, into the unspoken habits, bodily skills, styles, tastes, and other non-discursive knowledges that might be said to “go without saying” in a community.

In the case of Anglo-India, an administrative society where nearly every utterance was written, recorded and archived, the strongest traces of the habitus can be found in the body of official and semi-official colonial writing, especially when around the second half of the nineteenth century, the small community of British administrators began exercises in self-representation. Written in India, printed at Indian presses, and published

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79 In William Arnold’s Oakfield, Stanton tells Oakfield “Well, old fellow, you know best why you came out. I tell you candidly I can’t comprehend it. I can understand a boy of sixteen being glad to get away from school and rush to the gorgeous East to wear a red coat; but why you, at one and twenty, should have voluntarily abandoned a respectable university career to come to this wretched country, I cannot conceive” (1:2).

80 As Ambreen Hai has argued, even a writer as confident as Kipling readily acknowledged his inability to communicate what was “real” or “true” about the Indian Empire to his English readers. Hai cites the way Kipling hedges the “truths” contained in the short stories of Life’s Handicap (1891) with a preface which “admits” that these stories were not written but collected from a native informant. In fact, the confessional preface continues, “not one in twenty could be printed in an English book, because the English do not think as natives do” (LH 26). “Kipling,” Hai argues, “frequently calls attention to missing stories, or parts of stories that are inaccessible because of his own limitations of class, gender or race, or that must necessarily be ‘mangled’ and censored in anticipation of the limitations of his British audience who could not understand the complexities of Anglo-Indian life” (608).

81 Much of Bourdieu’s research utilises habitus as a way to describe the non-ideological, non-discursive aspects of culture which bind individuals to collective groups. For his clearest exposition see Outline of a Theory of Practice (1977), especially pp. 17-20. There Bourdieu describes habitus as a way of conceiving the cultural structures that exist in bodies and minds. Bourdieu here builds on the work of French sociologist Marcel Mauss, who in “Les Techniques du Corps” (1934), discussed the term in relation to the totality of learned habits, bodily skills, styles, tastes, and other non-discursive knowledges that might be said to ‘go without saying’ for a specific group.
or serialised in Indian periodicals, a growing number of poems, short stories, and novels testified to the presence of a new, independent, Anglo-Indian voice.\(^{82}\) The work of my previous chapters has shown how the virtuous empire, a place where British men could and should complete honourable duties, was not a natural but a cultivated idea which required multiple institutions—including parliamentary speeches, pamphlets, colleges, and examinations—for its sustenance. Moreover, I have stressed that this idea is inextricable from a corporate sociology. Now I will demonstrate how the fiction of Anglo-India contributed to the corporate imperial ethic professed by the administrators of British India.

Specifically, I am interested in the coincident rise of Anglo-Indian literature in the years following the decline of the collegiate training system. My primary argument is that despite Macaulay’s confidence that the competition examination would prevent all but the most incorruptible candidates from gaining a place, the closure of the colleges renewed the imperial control crisis. For not only did the competition exam open the possibility of an Indian career to any British citizen (whereas once it was limited to the social circles surrounding the Directors who controlled the patronage) but it also eliminated any opportunity to create the esprit de corps which men like Wellesley and Malthus took as the core of panoptic governance. What is worse, Macaulay’s competition examination never fulfilled its original intent or even its design.\(^{83}\)

Yet it is also true that after these changes Anglo-India did not relapse into corruption and Anglo-Indians somehow managed to continue thinking of themselves as a

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\(^{83}\) For a detailed account of the changes made to the competition process within the first twenty years of its existence, see J. M. Compton’s “Open Competition and the Indian Civil Service, 1854-1876” (1968)
united community. Fifty years on from the change, Sara Jeannette Duncan could still write a short story which unproblematically endorses this view. In “A Mother in India” (1903), Duncan’s protagonist describes the scene as she boards a ship bound for Bombay following her husband’s furlough:

I looked up and down the long saloon tables with a sense of relief and of solace; I was again among my own people. They belonged to Bengal and to Burma, to Madras and to the Punjab, but they were all my people. I could pick out a score that I knew in fact, and there were none that in imagination I didn’t know (63, my emphasis).

By now, nearly every student of modern literature is familiar with Benedict Anderson’s thesis on the relationship between literature and imagined communities, and Duncan’s short story suggests that literary texts would be a good place to search for the afterimages of the preparatory colleges and the consolidation of the corporate ethic.

This chapter considers how the Gemeinschaft of the Company’s corporate culture finds its key features repeated, re-stated, and reiterated in the fictional works of Duncan and those of her predecessors, William Arnold, George Otto Trevelyan, and Rudyard Kipling. All of these writers intended their texts as social commentaries, sometimes critical and often satiric, until they eventually comprise the habitus of the culture we now associate with British India. Since that corporate ethic was preoccupied with managing the agency of its employees, this chapter also examines the role of literature in providing and conditioning the ideals that human agents assume when they make ethical choices.
The Anglo-Indian Archive

This chapter explores "corporate culture" as an imperial mentality by connecting the discernable corporate ethic of the early-nineteenth century to the literary culture of the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Louis Althusser provides a useful framework for this discussion in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1969). For Althusser, apparatuses are institutions, like schools, courts, the media, and literature, through which human beings are transformed—Althusser's term is "interpellated"—into subjects. According to Althusser, such apparatuses do not function in the service of one particular ideology but should be thought of as reservoirs of potentiality, as sites where multiple ideologies compete simultaneously. Out of that ideological struggle, a dominant ideology will emerge—by definition rather than prescription we call this the "state" ideology—and we perceive the state of affairs, the hegemony, in society at any given time by examining the "ideal" subjects being produced by state apparatuses. In this sense, the preponderance of work and professionalism, of duty and sacrifice in Anglo-Indian fiction confirms that the Company's administrative ethos, the culture developed in its colleges, continued to influence Anglo-Indian society long after the Company itself became irrelevant. In the fiction of Anglo-India, we can trace how colonial authors reinforced and responded critically to the hegemony of that corporate culture.

Firstly it is important to separate Anglo-Indian literature from the broader and longer tradition of British writing about India. Anglo-Indian literature refers to those works written by Britons living in India and so excludes from its canon writers like
Elizabeth Hamilton, Wilkie Collins, or G. A. Henty. Additionally, Anglo-Indian literature is usually, but not always, less interested in native Indians than with the community of administrators themselves. Even with these conditions, Anglo-Indian literature was so prolific that the editors of *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature* (1907-21) rank it second among the regional types of English literature (ahead of English-Canadian and behind Anglo-Irish literature). Inevitably, this editorial typology raises a familiar question regarding such bodies of text, namely the degree to which we might classify them as “national” literatures, nascent or otherwise. Nor is this question unimportant since the category of “national literature” implies we take a particular sociological approach to the relationship between authors and their audiences. Since thus far I have suggested that Anglo-Indian literature be read in terms of corporations and corporate ethos, while at the same time have made recourse to Benedict Anderson’s work on literature and the origins of nationalism, I must first explain how Anglo-Indian literature is not quite national.

The conditions under which Anglo-Indian literature can be called national are different than those for literatures from the settler colonies (like Australia, Canada and New Zealand) or the planter colonies (like Jamaica and Ireland), if only because British India lacked a regular system of immigration, either voluntary or involuntary. Yet

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84 For studies of British writing about India, see Kate Teltscher’s *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India 1600-1800* (1996); Balachandra Rajan’s *Under Western Eyes: India from Milton to Macaulay* (1999); and for a more concentrated focus on the relationship between the Romantic poets and India see Nigel Leask’s *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (1992).

85 Singh’s *Survey of Anglo-Indian Literature* (1934) lists over a thousand works on India published prior to 1933.

86 Until it transferred power in 1858, the East India Company strictly regulated access to the subcontinent. The propriety of the Company’s effective monopoly over immigration was regularly debated. Most famous, of course, is their prohibition of non-Anglican missionaries in the early 1800s, a ban which was only lifted when Charles Grant, a member of the Clapham Sect, became Chairman of the Board. There were also, in
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despite the limited routes to India, communities of Europeans did gradually cohere and by the 1870s Victorian literary critics began to notice that something new and distinct from mainstream English culture was being produced in the Indian colonial space. Edwin Arnold, translator of *The Bhagavad Gita*, was one of the earliest to identify this movement. Writing a preface to Phil Robinson's collection of short essays *In My Indian Garden* (1871), Arnold cites Robinson's portrayal of the intimate connection existing between Anglo-Indians and the territory and people they administer as a thing so original as to constitute "the beginnings of a new field of Anglo-Indian literature" (ix). Robinson is a member of what might be called the "first wave" of Anglo-Indian authors, along with Alexander Allardyce (*The City of Sunshine* [1877]) and Iltudus Prichard (*The Chronicles of Budgepore* [1871]). Each of these authors published their work in India (in Allahabad at the Pioneer Press) before Britain, suggesting that Anglo-Indian writers of the 1870s were becoming more concerned with representing themselves within their community rather than with their reception in the metropolis. What differentiated this group from earlier Anglo-Indian writers, such as Philip Meadows Taylor (*Confessions of a Thug* [1839]; *Seeta* [1873]) or William Hockley (*Tales of the Zenana* [1827]), is that writers like Robinson seemed genuinely unconcerned with English audiences; his narrator is addressing not the London but rather the Simla and Calcutta set.

Anglo-Indians themselves were soon asserting the character of their distinct society, including among them the young Rudyard Kipling. In one of his earliest contributions to *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Kipling goes further than Arnold, claiming much more than a field for Anglo-Indian literature. He argues that the 1850s, vigorous debates as to whether India could follow the path taken in New Zealand. See, for example, George Campbell's *A Scheme for the Government of India* (1853), especially pp. 123-4.
consequence of the growing difference between Anglo-India and the "effete civilization" of England will be a "poesy...national and unfettered" ("Music" 44-45). This claim becomes ever more precocious when we recall that it was made in 1884; that is, before Kipling became Kipling and broadened the scope of Anglo-Indian literature, not only personally but through his legion of imitators. Taken in conjunction with his habitual claim to be speaking on behalf of "mine own people," Kipling's youthful vision seemingly answers the question of Anglo-Indian nationality in the affirmative. At the very least, if it is not already there, then Anglo-Indian literature soon hopes to be national.

The word national, however, and Kipling's use of it, should be unpacked and placed in the context of its use in the late-Victorian period. Although literary scholars are now inclined to understand the relationship between literature and nationhood through the critical lens provided by Benedict Anderson in his groundbreaking *Imagined Communities* (1983), to the Victorians of Kipling's era nationality had other implications. Nation assumes its modern aspect in post-Westphalian Europe and as a philosophical category its primary source is found in Johann Gottfried von Herder's romantic notion of a volk. In 1784, Herder theorised nation-ness in reaction to the homogenising threat posed by French rationalism, especially by the conception of nation offered by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. 87 Whereas Rousseau suggested that nations can develop when a group of people share a socio-political goal, Herder saw a globe populated by manifold nations

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87 Rousseau's political theory of nationalism is articulated in his famous *Social Contract* but also in two lesser-known essays, *Considerations on the Government of Poland* and *Constitutional Project for Corsica*, neither of which was published in his lifetime. These essays are important because in them Rousseau applies the abstract theoretical principles developed in the *Social Contract* to the solution of concrete political problems. This forced him to deal, far more fully than in the *Social Contract* itself, with the practical implications of his political theory. Indeed, the Polish essay was commissioned by Polish republicans who were at the time in the midst of resisting their absorption into Russia. All three documents are collected in Frederick Watson's translation of *Rousseau's Political Writings* (1953).
uniquely determined by an essential geist. In British discussions of nation-ness, it is Herder’s romantic rather than Rousseau’s rationalist definition which was most often taken up. Eric Hobsbawm confirms the ascendancy of Herder over Rousseau when he argues that, although the terms “race” and “nation” have since acquired a plurality of complicated denotations, in the period 1870-1918 they were used “as virtual synonyms” in discussions about the character or traits of a given community (Nations 108).

Given the high value Kipling places on a single drop of “white” blood (as in the short story “His Chance in Life”), it is hard to believe that he thought the community “Anglo-Indian” would ever be a nation racially distinct from the Anglo-Saxons. One way to understand how Kipling meant “national” is to scrutinise his choice of complement, the word “unfettered,” which evokes the strings by which a parent keeps a developing child in order. From this interpretation, the sort of poesy the young Kipling had in mind can be affiliated with that Victorian discourse which argued for the rise of a network called “Greater Britain,” with Mother England (or Britain/Britannia depending on your ideological preference) holding together a large and diverse family, united but relating to each other through inflections of the broader, shared, semiotics and traditions. At the fin de siècle, many influential Victorians—politicians like Charles Dilke, Joseph Chamberlain, and Alfred Milner; historians like James Froude and John Seeley; romance writers like H. Rider Haggard, G. A. Henty, and (to an extent) Robert Louis Stevenson—were in the process of imagining, to use Dilke’s phrase, a “Greater Britain.”

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88 As Herder argued in Materials for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind (1784), “The most natural state therefore is also one people, with a national character of its own” (8).

89 It will be unsurprising that Herder’s romanticism appealed to British conservatives like Edmund Burke and William Wordsworth. Burke, for example, roused “a Spirit (I mean a National Spirit)” to head off the threat of Revolutionary France and Wordsworth spoke of “the solemn fraternity which a great Nation composes — gathered together...under the shade of ancestral feeling” (qtd. in Cobban 99, 147). Less expected is the respect accorded by liberal thinkers such as John Stuart Mill, who clearly alludes to the Herderian volk when he comes to consider how nationalism affects representative democracy. In Considerations on Representative Government, Mill cites class interests as the primary obstacle to effective representation but warns that class antagonism can be further problematised by “strong antipathies...of nationality” (255). Thus he concludes that, ideally, States should be mononational since “[f]ree institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities” (361).

90 At the fin de siècle, many influential Victorians—politicians like Charles Dilke, Joseph Chamberlain, and Alfred Milner; historians like James Froude and John Seeley; romance writers like H. Rider Haggard, G. A. Henty, and (to an extent) Robert Louis Stevenson—were in the process of imagining, to use Dilke’s phrase, a “Greater Britain.”
This picture of an organic, developing Anglo-Indian nation evokes the developmental model for decolonisation outlined in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), a seminal text in the area of postcolonial studies. While I am uncomfortable with the whiggish progressiveness of this study, I think that Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin have nonetheless provided the best description of the factors behind the emergence of a “national or regional consciousness” when they say that linguistic and cultural difference is produced either by “physical and geographical conditions, or the cultural practices [the colonial people] have developed in a new land” (5, 10). These postcolonial theorists would likely approve of the connection to Kipling since they themselves use one of his poems to illuminate their discussion of the point in history when colonial English speakers assert their “difference from the imperial centre” (5). In the case of Anglo-India, however, it should be apparent that geophysical conditions are of little use since while India’s “exotic” geography would (and did, if one considers the first ten pages of any Anglo-Indian memoir) alienate any colonial civil servant from the imperial centre, it is also true that the Indian subcontinent was geographically diverse and the colonial agents spread thinly across it, making it very unlikely that a coherent consciousness could develop.

Following Ashcroft et al., Anglo-Indian nationality, if it exists, will be found in the second condition, “the cultural practices...developed in the new land;” and in this

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91 By Whiggish, I refer to Herbert Butterfield’s notion of the whig interpretation of history. According to Butterfield, there is a “progressive” teleology behind of a certain form of historicism, made famous by Thomas Babington Macaulay, which perceives the past as a series of events which happened only to ensure that our present exists as it does. By reading nineteenth-century colonial literature as the necessary (flawed or incomplete) precursor to today’s literature, I would argue that Ashcroft et al. betray their whiggish prejudice. Consider, for example, how their condemnation of the literature and culture of colonial administrators, a body of work that remains forever compromised by the idea of Home; it “can never form the basis for an indigenous culture nor can [it] be integrated in any way with the cultures that already exist in the countries invaded” (5). The authors consider this type of writing to be only the first in a series of steps towards a liberated, decolonized and (presumably) authentic postcolonial voice.
case, even a quick glance will confirm that what distinguishes Anglo-Indian writers from their British contemporaries is the emphasis they place on work and professionalism. Certainly Victorian fiction ignores neither the working professional nor the effect of that work on an individual’s identity. Rather, what divides Anglo-Indian fiction from, say, Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1850), Anthony Trollope’s *The Three Clerks* (1858), or George Gissing’s *New Grub Street* (1891) is the singular, uniform, and powerful impression work has on the entire structure of society. The Victorian novel may be populated by lawyers, clerks, soldiers, and merchants but very rarely are these characters portrayed actually doing any of their work. Anglo-Indian writers, on the other hand, seemingly revel in describing the quotidian affairs of civilian administrators. A. Claude Browne, an editor of the Calcutta-based newspaper *The Empress*, summarised this effect by way of explicating “ordinary” Anglo-India to a London audience in the early twentieth-century. “One’s occupation,” he writes, “not one’s birth, breeding, education, or even financial standing, determines one’s place in the Indian scheme of things” (23). No doubt it is this fascination which led the late-Victorian critic Andrew Lang, in his review of Kipling’s early fiction, to call all previous Anglo-Indian fiction profoundly dull and boring.

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92 For a comprehensive discussion of the place of work in Victorian fiction, see Rob Breton’s *Gospels and Grit: Work and Labour in Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell* (2005) and Carolyn Lesjak’s *Working Fictions: A Genealogy of the Victorian Novel* (2006) both of which theorise the aesthetic of work and its shadowy, unromantic double, labour. The former achieves this through a close attention to the way work appears in fiction of various classes in the nineteenth century; the latter through a sustained engagement with those Marxist Arnoldians, the thinkers of the Frankfurt school. For an account of work as it relates specifically to the intellectual labour of the professions, see Jennifer Ruth’s *Novel Professions: Interested Disinterest and the Making of the Professional in the Victorian Novel* (2006).

93 In 1891, Lang wrote that “the wind of literary inspiration has rarely shaken the bungalows of India... With a world of romance and of character at their doors, Englishmen in India have seen as if they saw it not. They have been busy in governing, in making war, making peace, building bridges, laying down roads, and writing official reports. Our literature from that continent of conquest has been sparse indeed, except in the way of biographies, of histories, and of rather local and unintelligible facetiae... we might almost say that India has contributed nothing to our finer literature” (198-99).
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On the basis that work significantly informed the way this colonial community lived and thought, and accepting that employment in British India was overwhelmingly regulated by a single employee, I would submit that it is reasonable to pay close attention to the corporate structure of the British Indian administration. This enables a move away from those understandings of consciousness that take racial nationalism or geographical regionalism as the marker of community. If it is work that determines one’s standing in the Indian scheme of things, then by extension it is one’s relationship to and within the corporation, not the nation, which should demand our attention when we come to examine their cultural artefacts. Taking a corporate view to Anglo-Indian culture, we can understand why so many of its writers emphasise the inescapability of surveillance; the desire for recognition and the accompanying fatalism that one’s toil is unappreciated; and the virtue of fraternity with kindred spirits.

While the 1850s marked the decline of the Company’s monopoly and hegemony in India and though the competition exams destroyed the familiarity bred by the patronage system, the establishment of Indian newspapers, the improved transportation infrastructure, and the rise of Anglo-Indian novels fostered a different sense of belonging, one that increasingly revolved around one’s commitment to one’s profession. Another way of thinking about this change is to say that fraternity among people who were once related (in pre-competition, culturally homogenous Company India) would now (in post-patronage, relatively diverse British India) be cultivated. What could once be stated without doubt in early Anglo-Indian memoirs had now become so fragile that it required new forms of institutional support, including especially in the form of literature. The efficacy of these new institutions can be seen in the fact that for both stages—i.e., for
both Company and British India—the coherence of Anglo-India is a fact universally presumed by its membership. Here we are furnished with a robust example of what Edward Said has called, in relation to his work on the persuasiveness of imperial discourse, the move from filiated to affiliated communities.

*Vivat Haileyburia!*

Before I engage with my selected texts in depth, I want to show just how literature sustains one of those Haileyburian objectives, perpetual publicity. We will recall that at Malthus’s Haileybury, the detailed publication of a student’s results relative to his peers was one of the primary “means of exciting emulation and industry” (*Statements* 49). Through publicity, the Company sought to precondition the ethical behaviour of its field agents by making them think (a) that they were always being observed and (b) that public opinion was the barrier to promotion. In this feature of the corporate ethic, the Company enjoyed great success since, despite the fact that imperial administrators were spread thinly across a subcontinent, Anglo-Indian diarists and memoirists regularly and unproblematically state that everyone in India knows everything about everyone else. This confidence is quite remarkable given the geographical range of these administrators and the nearly non-existent communication network.

But because feelings of transparency were initiated at East India College, their continuance was jeopardised in 1853 when the competition examination broke Haileybury’s monopoly on training the company men. How then might the panoptic effect, where community members policed and disciplined themselves under a state of permanent suspicion, be preserved? There is no doubt of its continuing necessity since
the barriers to the direct management of employee behaviour were not reduced when the
Crown substituted for the Company in 1858. Policy was still devised in London and
Calcutta, and the progress of communication networks in the latter half of the nineteenth
century was not as effective as one might have thought. As Kipling makes clear in one of
his earliest stories, even the mighty telegraph, with its promise of instant communication,
still in the 1880s failed to overcome the distance between headquarters and field agents.
In “His Chance in Life” we see how the responsibility for a riot falls an individual (and
isolated) clerk in Tibasu, “a forgotten little place” on the east coast telegraph line (1: 88).
Despite the presence of that communication network, moreover, this clerk receives no
orders from his superiors or colleagues and so must respond instinctively. While the story
is often read today for Kipling’s racialised representation of that instinctual response—
the native clerk has “a drop of white blood” (1: 89) in his veins and so is able briefly to
assume command and quell the riot—it also discloses the fragility of imperial power in
British India. Confronted by a rebellion the imperium conflates on this one agent and
“until the Assistant Collector came, the Telegraph Signaller was the Government of India
in Tibasu” (1: 90-1).

Yet even in the absence of an effective replacement for college discipline and
despite the continuing isolation of agents from the imperial centre, a great deal of late-
nineteenth century Anglo-Indian literature continues to insist that India is a transparent
social space. Here is the famous opening to Kipling’s “The Phantom Rickshaw” (1888):

94 More specifically, critics have focussed on the racial hybridity of the clerk, a Eurasian whose tenuous
European lineage suffices to maintain authority until the Assistant Collector arrives. At that point, “in the
presence of this young Englishman,” the drop of white blood in the clerk’s veins dies out and “Michele
[feels] himself slipping back more and more into the native” (1: 91). From here, the critique of Kipling’s
equation of white blood with courage can commence. For examples of this type of critique, see Stephen
Arata’s Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle (1996), 161-62.; John McBratney’s Imperial
Subjects, Imperial Space (2002), 26-27; and Glenn D’Cruz’s “My Two Left Feet: The Problem of Anglo-
One of the few advantages that India has over England is a great Knowability. After five years' service, a man is directly or indirectly acquainted with the two or three hundred Civilians in his Province, all the Messes of ten or twelve Regiments and Batteries, and some fifteen hundred other people of the non-official caste. In ten years his knowledge should be doubled, and at the end of twenty he knows, or knows something about, every Englishman in the Empire. (5: 1)

Nor is this the only Kipling story that develops the idea of Anglo-India as a panoptic space. Even if we limit ourselves to his first collection, *Plain Tales from the Hills*, we gather overwhelming evidence that nothing ever stays private in Anglo-India, especially in that most private of spheres: courtship. “Three and—an Extra” tells of a community’s quick divination of a flirtatious relationship between a newly-arrived woman and a married man. In “False Dawn,” everyone knows Saumarez is romantically interested in one of the Miss Copleighs, even if they mistakenly presume Maud, the elder, to be the object of his affection. “Bitter’s Neat” goes even further, almost to the point of caricature, when describing how everyone knows about one woman’s desires except for the intended himself. In “Kidnapped,” we are told that *affairs de coeur* coterminate with *affairs d’état* since “marriage in India does not concern the individual but the Government he serves” (1: 146).

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95 Moving away from romance, the humiliation of the titular hero of “The Arrest of Lt. Golightly” shows how other things are subject to the same immediate publicity. When the vain subaltern trudges home after being caught in a rainstorm that has ruined his raiment, Kipling’s narrator gleefully indulges in sartorial mockery, describing how “the tale leaked into the regimental Canteen, and thence ran about the Province” (1: 158).
To understand how literature assumed the mantle of the college in socialising Anglo-Indians into a specific set of habits, it is first beneficial to note that, in Anglo-Indian literature, community is not described in political terms. For instance, in "The Education of Otis Yeere," (1888) Kipling’s recurrent character, the redoubtable Mrs. Hauksbee, discusses the prospect of a salon in Simla with a Mrs. Mallowe. If we follow the work of Jurgen Habermas, we will recognise this as a monumental development, since it would be proof of a political society. However, Mrs. Hauksbees’s companion warns her off:

you can’t focus anything in India; and a salon, to be any good at all, must be permanent. In two seasons your roomful would be scattered all over Asia. We are only little bits of dirt on the hillsides—here one day and blown down the khud the next. We have lost the art of talking—at least our men have. We have no cohesion—. (6: 9-10)

If a salon is to provide a space where opinions may be exchanged and debated en route to the foundation of a rational consensus, and if it is construed as the necessary condition for the emergence of a public sphere, then it is clearly irrelevant in the India of Kipling’s stories. As the very public romances conducted in the other stories of this collection attest, the problem is not the creation of a public sphere but the preservation of individuality through the maintenance of a private sphere.

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96 As Jurgen Habermas has shown in his work on the transformation of the public sphere in eighteenth-century Western Europe, "salons...were centres of criticism," providing a neutral space where “sons of princes and counts associated with sons of watchmakers and shopkeepers,” engaged in “economic and political disputes” with the guarantee “that such discussions would be inconsequential, at least in the immediate context” (Structural 32, 33).
Yet Mrs. Mallowe is only half-right in asserting that Anglo-Indians lack cohesion, for their literature demonstrably retains a sense of cohesion long after the closure of the civil and military colleges. The difference, I would argue, is that this society coheres around a corporate, rather than a political, national, or regional culture. To explain, let me consider the aptly-named civilian, Orde, who is the Deputy Commissioner of Amara in Kipling’s “The Enlightenments of Pagett, M.P.” (1888). Like Mrs. Mallowe, Orde admits the absence of a political community. As he explains to a visiting friend, the eponymous member of parliament, “the Anglo-Indian is a political orphan,” meaning that the Anglo-Indian is an Englishman without a constituency, deprived of representation in the (British) Parliament responsible for developing the imperial policy that affects his livelihood (4: 343). Orde’s chief task is to disabuse his old school chum of the foolish theories of imperial governance circulating among metropolitan politicians. The topic of their discussion is the newly-founded Indian National Congress, which Pagett celebrates and Orde dismisses. Orde begins by explaining that it is “hopeless to give you any just idea of any Indian question without the documents before you, and in this case the documents you want are the country and the people” (4: 344). When Pagett counters that “the official Anglo-Indian” might be “naturally jealous of any external influence that might move the masses,” Orde delivers the first of his enlightenments: that there is nothing “natural” about an Anglo-Indian at all (4: 345). As he makes clear to his erstwhile schoolmate, Anglo-Indians are still affiliated, nationally with England:

You and I were brought up together; taught by the same tutors, read the same books, lived the same life, and thought, as you remember, in parallel lines. I come
out here, learn new languages, and work among new races; while you, more fortunate, remain at home. Why should I change my mind—our mind—because I change my sky?” (4: 345)

Yet, in another sense, Orde changed more than his sky when he took up an Indian career. He also entered into a professional community unconsciously committed to maintaining their particular (corporate) rituals. This explains why, for instance, Orde does not mourn the absence of political society and why he agrees heartily when another character states that “There are no politics, in a manner of speaking, in India. It’s all work” (4: 350).

Kipling is not the only author to emphasise publicity or transparency in his fiction but my purpose is not to enumerate the many Anglo-Indian writers concerned with publicity but to illuminate the connection between Anglo-Indian literature and the professional ethic of the East India Company. Previous attempts to chronicle literature of the Raj have often presumed the spontaneous generation of an independent, (post)colonial voice. While recognising an existing tradition of writing by Britons about India, both traditional studies such as Bhupal Singh’s *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Literature* (1934) and more postcolonially-informed analyses like Shyamal Bagchee’s “Writing Self/ Writing Colony in situ” (1992) agree that in the second half of the nineteenth century Anglo-Indian literature asserts its independence from the metropolitan centre.97 A line from Sara Jeannette Duncan’s *Set in Authority* (1906) describes this

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97 Though it is not material to my argument, it is worth noting that Anglocentrism, if it is to be found, is better located in earlier representations of British life in India. Consider India as it appears in Thackeray’s fiction. Thackeray was born in Calcutta, though he never returned to India after being sent to school in England following the death of his father. Nor did he return in fiction. The Indian setting for his burlesque novel *The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan* (1838) is arbitrary and could easily be interchanged with any other hot and dusty Eastern clime where English adventurers repair to make their fortunes and, in Kipling’s estimation, “run ahead of the cars of Decency and Propriety” (“Georgie Porgie” 4: 233).
development more simply. Huddled in a club, a group of Anglo-Indians are discussing the controversial re-trial of a soldier accused of murdering a native. The case has becomes the scandal in London but, according to Duncan’s narrator, “What they thought in London was a matter of great indifference in India. There they were thinking for themselves” (212). To take Duncan’s line as a point of departure, the remainder of this chapter constitutes an investigation of what it was that these people thought when they thought “for themselves.” The object, to return to the model proposed by the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, is to uncover the source of those cultural practices which underpin the nascent Anglo-Indian national literature.

**William Arnold’s *Oakfield; or Fellowship in the East***

William Arnold’s *Oakfield* is not Anglo-Indian, as I have been describing the term. Though Arnold based much of the novel on his own experience in the Company’s military and civilian services, *Oakfield* was written in Britain and published for a British readership. So, like a biography or a history, it is primarily a mediating text, purposing to

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Thackeray’s other novels are interspersed with Anglo-Indian characters but even the most prominent—the vain and craven Jos Sedley, of *Vanity Fair* (1848) and the unscrupulous brigand “Colonel” Jack Altamont of *Pendennis* (1850)—are little more than popular types.

A case might be made for Philip Meadows Taylor as the inaugurator of an Anglo-Indian tradition based on the finely detailed Orientalist descriptions of India and its denizens in his series of novels. However, his preoccupations are contiguous with conventional British romance and his most enduring work, *Confessions of a Thug* (1839), imitates the style of Walter Scott with its mixture of the real—the cult of thugee discovered and wiped out by the Company in the 1830s—with the ideal human type amidst a romantic background. Taylor’s content may be Indian but, like Elizabeth Hamilton’s *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796) before it, the form remains English and within the genre of what Gary Kelly has called a “footnote novel,” that is, a novel which uses extensive glosses to make foreign cultures sensible to English audiences (133). None of these texts articulate a distinct voice that could be called “Anglo-Indian” nor are they intended for consumption in India. Their white protagonists have the voices of Englishmen (and women) in a foreign country.
explain a foreign object to a domestic audience.\textsuperscript{98} However Oakfield is an important component of my study because its “foreign object” is Anglo-Indian society, rather than Indian society. Indeed, to my knowledge, Oakfield is the first sustained literary representation of Anglo-Indian life. Moreover, since Arnold’s purpose was to critique the unscrupulous behaviour of Anglo-Indians who were putatively serving Britain’s national and moral interest, it is an excellent point of departure for my discussion of the distinguishing characteristics of Anglo-Indian corporate culture.

There is strong evidence that neither Arnold nor the novel’s eponymous protagonist liked their Indian experiences very well.\textsuperscript{99} Both saw a want of moral strength in the average Anglo-Indian, a fault that, in their minds, was compounded by an esprit de corps, which encouraged every individual to behave according to the standard of the lowest common denominator. The fate of Oakfield’s first regimental friend, a young cadet named Arthur Vernon, demonstrates the coercive effects of that corporate spirit. Vernon, an essentially good adolescent, lacks the courage to insist that his regimental colleagues behave properly and so instead he tolerates, before ultimately participating in, their debauchery.\textsuperscript{100} The demise of this cherubic character represents, in Arnold’s mind at

\textsuperscript{98} In fact, because of the recent Afghan War (Britain’s first major overseas campaign since the end of the Napoleonic Wars), Anglo-Indian histories and biographies were particularly popular in the late 1840s and early 1850s.

\textsuperscript{99} The connection between author and protagonist deserves elaboration because Oakfield not only mirrors Arnold’s Indian experience but also uncannily predicts his demise. Like Oakfield, Arnold went up to Oxford (although the author never completed his degree) before obtaining through patronage a cadetship in the Company Army; like Oakfield, Arnold was generally appalled by the moral quality of his regimental fellows in India; like Oakfield, Arnold found solace in a small fellowship of kindred spirits; like Oakfield, Arnold switched to the civil service and became less dissatisfied; and like Oakfield, Arnold died shortly after taking sick leave from India. Oakfield was written in India and published shortly upon the return of Arnold to England in 1853. Arnold continued to live and work there until 1855 when he was invited to become the Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab territory. He lived through the Mutiny of 1857-58 but became ill in 1859. Unlike Oakfield, William Arnold never reached home and instead died in Gibraltar on 7 April 1859, on his thirty-first birthday.

\textsuperscript{100} Here is Arnold’s description of Arthur Vernon’s demise, whose tones again recall Edmund Burke’s Indian speeches:
least, the greatest tragedy of Anglo-Indian society, namely that *esprit de corps* snuffed out all moral sparks, preventing the emergence of true Christian gentlemen and turning the administrative classes of Company India into little more than a confederacy of rogues.

In short, Arnold in 1853 saw the same faults with Anglo-Indian society as were perceived by Edmund Burke in 1786. For both men, the employees of the East India Company were failing to uphold the honour of their station and were discrediting not only the good name of Britain but also, in Arnold’s view, of Christianity as well. Because it argues that very little has changed since the days of Hastings, *Oakfield* can be read as a serious indictment of the collegiate training system. Of course, such a reading could not be pursued without qualification; one would have to note that Arnold is more concerned with debauchery among military regiments than among the covenanted civil service; likewise, we might note that once Oakfield secures his transfer from the military to the civilian branch, he begins to enjoy his Indian experiences more, and finds less obnoxious behaviour among his colleagues.\(^{101}\) Despite these qualifications I think that the general critique still holds for, outside his small circle of kindred spirits (which contains more military than civilian officers), Oakfield never finds personal satisfaction in Anglo-Indian society. From the beginning, the novel’s epigraph alludes to the pleasure Oakfield finds

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Alas for those who come year by year come from home to India without even the experience of school or college life to assist them, are thrown into society, to the evil and low-principled tone of which no college or school furnishes a parallel; and, borne down, not only by weight of superior age, but of military seniority, force back all ebullitions of tender feeling, learn to be ashamed of affection, ashamed of industry, ashamed of common honesty in money matters, ashamed even of professional duty, ashamed of all that is softening, strengthening, humanising, till all that is noble in them shrinks and withers before the overbearing, coarse, animal, worldly existence which they obey;—which they obey till it enslaves them; and the boy of seventeen who suppressed love’s workings, becomes the man of five and twenty who has no such workings to suppress. (1: 69-70)

\(^{101}\) The state of the Company’s military had always been less progressive than its civilian service, largely because the need to restrict corrupt behaviour was less pressing. Soldiering was already an established profession in Britain with its own code of conduct enforced by a pre-existing chain of command. Thus it was that whereas all civilians attended Haileybury before commencing their Indian careers, comparatively few officers passed through Addiscombe.
in solitary introspection. Taken from Mycerinus, it tells the reader know that “He within/
Took measure of his soul, and knew its strength,/ And by that silent knowledge, day by
day/ Was calmed, enabled, comforted, sustained.” Even the “success” of his civilian
career exists in proportion to the isolation granted by his solitary employment as a district
collector in the tradition of Vanity Fair’s Jos Sedley.

There are only two significant deviations between the life of the author and his
protagonist and these are the moments of dramatic conflict around which the plot is
organised: Oakfield’s court martial and his battlefield heroism during the Second Afghan
War of 1848. Since these scenes, which combine elements of fantasy, melodrama, and
moral exposition, are little more than set pieces deployed to “prove” the truth and the
merit of Oakfield’s position, they are of little interest other than to illuminate the
continuing relevance of romantic conventions in the mid-century Victorian novel. The
worldview expressed by Oakfield, on the other hand, is very significant since it emanates
from a member of one of the most influential families in the period. By most accounts
William was, even more than his brothers, morally akin to Dr Arnold and by his own
admission it was out of deference to the Arnold fame that he published the first edition of
Oakfield pseudonymously. It is only in the preface to the second edition, responding to
accusations that anonymity is the refuge of cowards, that “Punjabee” reveals his true
identity. There Arnold explains that he chose the disguise “because I did not wish that a

102 William Arnold was the fourth son of the Rugby headmaster who reformed the English public school
system. Matthew, the eldest, could easily be thought of as the patrilineal heir to the father’s moral legacy,
applying as he did Dr Arnold’s pedagogical emphasis on character and individual responsibility in Culture
and Anarchy (1869). Even the second son, itinerant Tom, made more of an Arnoldian impression on the
Victorian period, through his participation in the Canterbury Association’s settlements in New Zealand and
his lengthy correspondence with Arthur Hugh Clough.
name, for the sake of which I have so frequently met with kindness, should in any degree be compromised by any performance of mine” (x).  

From their common vantage point, the author and the protagonist undertake a critique of Anglo-Indian society. E. M. Forster, an author who was very familiar with Anglo-Indian culture, rescued the novel from obscurity not because he thought William Arnold “an artist,” but because, for him, *Oakfield* exemplifies the “Arnold integrity” (411). Until recently Forster’s was the only appeal to extend Arnold’s readership beyond the small group of Anglo-Indian specialists. Allott’s modern edition is thus very Forsterian when it suggests that *Oakfield* should be read now as “a spiritual autobiography” since it is “hardly more than accidentally an Anglo-Indian novel” (30).  

Making the case for *Oakfield*’s modern relevance, both Forster and Allott celebrate not its originality but its perspective: for them, William Arnold describes how what I have been calling the virtuous empire held up under a stern application of the Arnold family morals.  

More recently *Oakfield* has received renewed if less concentrated attention as a novel of empire.  

After all, this novel is basically a critique of British India by a young...
man who feels that Britons are not completing what he feels to be their duty towards the natives. With India providing the exotic setting and Indians providing the silent subjects for Arnold’s disquisitions on Britain’s imperial duty, it is almost as if Oakfield was written especially to provide top-quality grist for the postcolonial mill. Certainly it would be easy to apply Gayatri Spivak’s argument that even the best-intentioned critiques of empire from within inevitably perpetuate the epistemic violence of colonial discourse by continuing to represent the subaltern as a silent mass unable to speak for themselves. Like Forster and Allott, this postcolonial position holds that Oakfield fails as an Anglo-Indian novel because it cannot or will not account for an Indian voice, authentic or otherwise.

One could counter that this omission is quite reasonable since Oakfield asks, “what does, what can a subaltern in a native infantry regiment see or know of the people?” (1: 244). This is not to say that Oakfield does not subscribe to the Burkean conditions for a virtuous empire; on the contrary, Oakfield shows himself to have been, prior to his departure for India, convinced of the imperium both privately—he wonders, “was not every European in India engaged in the grand work of civilising Asia?” (1: 16)—and publicly—he writes home that, “the obvious work of every European in India seems to me to be to justify his position in a country not his own, by helping to civilise it” representation and renovate them in order to justify the newer, more vicious form. Putting to one side Chakravarty’s assumption that the events of 1857-8 initiated an epochal change in British India, his thesis requires a very selective reading of pre-Mutiny literature. For Chakravarty’s reading of Oakfield, the object is to show how Arnold establishes a literary tradition wherein English virtues overcome Indian crises, a tradition which would be more fully deployed by British writers writing about the Indian Mutiny. However, one wonders what led Chakravarty to think that William Arnold’s unique moral priggishness could be extrapolated to represent English imperial idealism. As I think I have made clear, William Arnold was just as unusual in England as he was in India: the Arnold were far from a typical English family.

106 D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke makes this point when he suggests that, along with William Knighton, author of Forest Life in Ceylon (1854), “in mid-Victorian times no Englishmen thought and felt as creatively about ‘undeveloped’ countries in their own right as they did” (14).
To his friends he confides that “I came out to this country with vague general notions of a great work of civilisation and reform, calling for labourers and so on; but I find this notion fade entirely away before the stupid realities of daily life” (1: 171).

Given Oakfield’s confidence that the empire could be made virtuous, if only the colonial soldiers and administrators would behave as Christian gentlemen, it is better to read the novel as a critique of imperial manners and psychology, in sympathy with Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1900). *Oakfield* will never be anything more than a minor, even derivative, Victorian novel so long as we ignore its Anglo-Indian specificity.

Granting that the precise points on which Oakfield corrects the behaviour of scoundrels like Cade and Stafford will be of interest to Arnold family scholars, and acknowledging that Arnold does indeed objectify India’s native subjects, the only points to my mind where *Oakfield* becomes really interesting occur in Arnold’s description of the fellowship, especially in those scenes when Arnold tests his protagonist’s morality against those of his comrades. Like Edward Oakfield, Hugh Stanton and Henry Middleton are “men of character,” unafraid to expatiate on moral subjects, and each has experienced disappointment in India which has led to their social isolation. Each feels he has been forced to live among heathen people, charged with completing never-ending and never-appreciated toil—except in this case the barbarous heathens who are in want of reform are the officers of the British military.

It would be incorrect to assume that Arnold thinks Anglo-India beyond redemption since through Stanton and Middleton, he presents ideals of the *vir bonum* for,

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108 If we are searching for a spiritual autobiography cataloguing the conflict between Arnoldian earnestness and an “overbearing[ly] coarse animal worldly existence” then, *pace* Allott, we could just as well read Matthew’s *Culture and Anarchy*, Tom’s letters to Clough, or even Dr. Arnold’s *Sermons*—all tackle more directly the moral problem of how a good man should behave as an example to his peers.
respectively, the military and civil branches of the Company's service. Oakfield takes refuge among those friends, telling Middleton after their first conversation that it is "a great help to hear any one talk of this country as one thinks an Englishman should do" (1: 162). But the fellowship is more than a refugee camp for the like-minded and at several points provides the means for Arnold to illuminate the distinct characteristics of Anglo-Indian culture. Among these cultural practices is the way different characters mediate the affect of alienation. When Oakfield first meets Stanton, for example, the two men bond over Stanton's bitter observation about "how little people at home know or care, what a quantity of unhappiness is shipped off to this country every month":

They talk of an Anglo-Indian Empire, and the fortunate young lads who get into that glorious service, but they forget that a life of exile is still a life of exile, and as such, to all but the most insensible, more or less a life of pain. (1: 101)

Stanton's assurance, that pain is felt by all who serve in India, becomes the litmus test for a character's membership in the Anglo-Indian community. Stanton, the *bona fide* graduate of Addiscombe, is much more than a Stoic; he masochistically invites the pain and the narrator explains that he "felt, perhaps, a gloomy sort of satisfaction in returning to his duty, and in the very consciousness of his dislike for it he found comfort" (1: 4). Oakfield, in contrast, shares Stanton's belief in doing one's duty but at the same time neither seeks nor derives any satisfaction from his gloom. For Oakfield, living and working in India is a spiritual calling; he left Oxford to escape the metaphysical hairsplitting that predominated following the Tractarians and went out to India for his
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personal salvation (1: 7). And while there is no doubt that Oakfield encounters his fair share of pain and disappointment during that trial, he endures not because he has become accustomed to take pleasure from it but rather because he thinks himself to be acquiring immortal credit. Stanton’s masochistic attitude, alternatively, indicates how effective the corporate apparatuses have been in convincing agents that virtue can be found in the pursuit of an arbitrary and unpleasant task.

Arnold’s description of Henry Middleton reflects more generously on the effectiveness of those apparatuses, even if the author and narrator themselves fail to perceive the corporation and its culture as the source. Middleton, who enters the narrative while Oakfield is travelling upriver to meet his new regiment, becomes Oakfield’s truest Anglo-Indian friend on the basis of their first conversation, a conversation in which each alludes to and evidently approves of Edmund Burke’s critique of empire. Middleton is a man who “had been in India ten years, was fond of his profession, and hard work had greatly raised and improved him” (1: 155). Oakfield’s narrator then seizes upon this remarkable man and uses his anomalous virtue to deliver a general exculpation of the one class of “decent” Anglo-Indians:

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109 As Oakfield explains to Stanton, “My whole resolution about India was so sudden, and so negative; to get rid of the present was so much more my object than to arrange a future, that now I find myself actually started on a new reach of life with not even a shadow of an impression, I do not say as to its pains and pleasures, but its dangers and duties” (1: 7).
110 Middleton lays down the Burkean gauntlet by suggesting that the physical development of India is paramount: “A few thousand miles more of Grand Trunk Road, ditto of Canals, and people will no longer be able to say, that if the English were swept off the face of Hindostan to-morrow, the only trace they would leave behind would be the broken tobacco-pipes of their soldiers” (1: 157). Oakfield in reply worries whether “the English message to India is civil engineering simply,” and confesses that he has “been disgusted to find how many speak of [India] as though it were no more to them, than that carcase floating along there is to the vultures feeding on it” (1: 162).
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It must be allowed, indeed, to the Bengal civilians, that they are for the most part a hard-working set, and it is wonderful proof of the influence work has upon a man, that the young fop of eighteen or nineteen, with no better training than the hybrid half-school, half-college system of Haileybury can give him, is developed mostly into the persevering and sensible, often the zealous and able man of thirty. (1: 155)

The narrator assumes that Middleton, like all other Anglo-Indian civilians, has succeeded despite the hindrance of a Haileybury education, but in having Middleton argue that “[m]uch silent toil” is required “to keep the actual machine of government going” (1: 159), Arnold has reiterated the desire expressed by Governor-General Richard Wellesley fifty years earlier in his “Notes.” Middleton reflects the Haileybury culture when he represents himself to Oakfield as a man who willingly participates in the “silent, unheeded, unthanked toil” of administering power. He realises that “a good officer...has great power” in a district but nonetheless willingly foregoes the opportunity to “join in a triumphant advance,” preferring to liken his task to those who “die in the trench before the successful stormers pass over their dead bodies to the breach” (1: 158-9).

With Stanton the product of Addiscombe and Middleton of Haileybury, Oakfield is the only properly ex-centric member of the fellowship and the reason he does not fit is because he has been produced by other institutions.111 Like the late-nineteenth century stereotype of the “globetrotter,” Edward Oakfield appears in India as a domestic observer

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111 And in this, Edward Oakfield anticipates E. M. Forster’s character, Cyril Fielding, who also stands outside the colonialist bureaucracy not only in his profession but also in the sense that he arrived in India when he had already passed forty years.
rather than as a professional administrator of the virtuous empire. Uncultivated by
imperial apparatuses, it is unsurprising that he is baffled by the actually existing
conditions of imperial administration. Committed to the empire in principle, Oakfield
never discerns his purpose: “I say to myself, how am I to apply all this [to the] problem?
how do you work at it? when? where?” (1: 171). His confusion, I would argue, is a
consequence of his institutional conditioning: “Religiously brought up as a child,
Oakfield] had passed a creditable career at Winchester; and, full of hopeful confidence,
gone up to Oxford as a student of Christ Church” (1: 14). This is a gloss for William
Arnold’s life under his father, the famous headmaster whose Rugby formed the basis for
the modern English public school system. The innovation of Dr. Arnold, as anyone who
reads Thomas Hughes’s Tom Brown’s Schooldays (1857) will recall, was to establish
character and individual morality as pedagogical objects equivalent in value to
intellectual accomplishment and liberal humanism. And so it happens that Oakfield
experiences great moral distress when the virtue cultivated by Arnoldian institutions
conflicts with the moral virtue of the established Anglo-Indian institutions. Oakfield
simply cannot reconcile the two: “I think it a very hard matter to decide...[A] man
certainly owes something to the regiment, and is under a prima facie obligation to support
its institutions, especially the most important one—the mess; but there are other
obligations which outweigh this” (1: 72). This pronouncement typifies Oakfield’s future
responses to ethical conflict: when in doubt, he gives priority to his “other” obligations.

112 The globe-trotter is the species of Englishman described by Kipling in “Letters of Marque” as “the man
who ‘does’ kingdoms in days and writes books upon them in weeks” (7: 12). O. Douglas, in her first novel
Olivia in India (1912) makes equally derisive remarks on foolish globetrotters, her protagonist asking “Can
you imagine anything more ghastly?” (39).
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It might be proposed that those other obligations are simply his personal beliefs and that the narrative of Edward Oakfield shows both how frequent and how serious the conflict between personal and professional ethics can be. Certainly this seems the obvious conclusion based his response in the following exchange with Middleton:

“As a mere arrangement for preserving the peace…military law has, I think, a right to prescribe a certain code of manners, even as they, and as colleges, and other public institutions do a certain code of dress, habits, and even diet.”

“You cannot mean that a man is bound to submit to a code of manners which his own code of morals rejects.” (2: 10)

Convinced that his primary duty is to secure his own soul, Oakfield resolves never to traduce his established sense of what is right. This moral security drives the action of the novel, since it inevitably creates conflict between Oakfield and his less scrupulous peers. He rejects the fraternity encouraged by company institutions, such as the training colleges and the military esprit de corps, and in fact cares very little for the opinion of his fellow officers. When another friend, Lt. Perkins, suggests that “the world” will presume Oakfield a craven if he refuses to duel with Lt. Stafford, Oakfield responds that the only opinions which matter are those of his private, sympathetic friends (1: 274-76). His closing speech during his trial makes the same point, but in even stronger terms: “no authority is more usurped and unlawful, none imposes a more degrading and ignominious yoke upon the slaves who yield to it, than Public Opinion,—which is the World,—which
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is enmity with the one centre of all authority,—God” (1: 331). Public opinion always responds in kind and Oakfield is quickly “cut” by every Anglo-Indian society he visits.

But before we take Oakfield as an example of the tension between the individual and the collective, it is best to recall that in nearly every respect, Oakfield is an atypical Anglo-Indian. His disregard for public opinion startles even his truest friends. The profoundly anti-social Stanton, for one, cannot understand Oakfield’s refusal to “round [his] corners off somehow to fit into the state of things we find, and which all our angularity will not alter” (1: 78). Similarly, the open-minded Wykham, who has “all [his] life been taught to respect and to dread” the opinion of the world, thinks Oakfield the expounder of “queer notions” (1: 299). Against such opposition, it is better to read Oakfield’s obstinate morality—Forster called it Oakfield’s “priggishness” (“Some” 411)—as his professional rather than his personal concern and the novel’s opening pages support this interpretation. There, before Arnold ever indulges in one of this novel’s many moral monologues, he reveals that Edward Oakfield’s circumstances are very unusual for an ensign in the Company’s service. Arriving at twenty-one he is four years older than most ensigns, a sizable gap in a country where ten years of service distinguishes a person as a “veteran, according to Anglo-Indian estimation” (1: 3). Immediately, this sets Oakfield apart from his colleagues who were “sent forth over the threshold of life, at the critical age of seventeen, to make [their] way with such helps as [they] could find” (1: 47).113

Also, unlike his peers, Oakfield spent his late teenage years at Oxford, continuing the moral education set in place by his father. As Arnold’s narrator explains, “In those

113 The allusion to Burke’s parliamentary speeches on both Fox’s India Bill and the Impeachment of Warren Hastings clearly identifies Arnold’s dissatisfaction with the moral character of the Company’s officers.
changing years, from nineteen to twenty-one, [Oakfield’s] mind, hitherto quiescent or satisfied by the claims of school and college duty, began to work” (1: 14-15, emphasis added). In other words, Oakfield has reached intellectual, emotional, and moral maturity outside the corporate institutions of the East India Company. Thus it is that the narrator claims of Oakfield what could never be claimed for any true company man: “To tell the truth, [Oakfield] was still stunned by the wonderful change which a few weeks had wrought for, but not in him. He himself being unchanged, he was perplexed by the entire metamorphose of all his circumstances” (1: 12, emphasis in original). This declaration of internal psychological stability is really unrivalled in Anglo-Indian fiction, a body of texts which takes India’s influence on human subjectivity as its sine qua non, the wellspring for the oft-repeated lament that no one in Britain really understands how things must be done in India.

Yet despite Arnold’s adamant disapproval of mainstream Anglo-India and his certainty that a man like Oakfield could never acquire its habitus, his novel nevertheless testifies to the strength and persistence of corporate culture. Not only are Stanton and Middleton examples of the virtue that can emerge from the preparatory colleges. More significant is the fact that the best solution Arnold can propose for India is to replace a corrupt esprit de corps with another form of corporate membership, the novel’s titular “Fellowship in the East.” Arnold’s fictional coalition is a group of hard-working, misunderstood, employees who meet infrequently but never doubt that they know each other intimately. Their membership is open and the elder fellows spend considerable time and effort initiating junior candidates like Vernon, Perkins and Wykham. What is more, beyond their conviction that they have exclusive purchase on how things ought to be
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done (as with Oakfield’s moral priggishness, or Middleton’s faith in infrastructure projects), the fellows accept and even celebrate the fact that this knowledge will alienate them further from the countrymen who they nominally represent. If all this sounds like the sociology of a Kipling story like “At the End of the Passage,” it is because through his fellowship, Arnold demonstrates a commitment to corporate fraternity that is more Anglo-Indian than the present Anglo-Indian community itself.

The Competition Wallah

If Oakfield is an unrepentant prig who affects to be unaffected by India, then Henry Broughton, the hero of G.O. Trevelyan’s The Competition Wallah (1863), supplies the more orthodox view of India’s influence when he writes to his friend in England that “A man gains more new ideas, or, which comes to the same, gets rid of more old ones, within his first month on Indian soil than during any equal period of his life” (21). On the surface it seems strange to have such antithetical views expressed in mid-Victorian novels whose protagonists both claim Oxbridge degrees, especially if as I have been arguing it is precisely Oakfield’s university experience which inoculates him from Indian influences. However, the contrasting reactions described in Oakfield and The Competition Wallah can be explained by the change intermediating their publication dates, namely, the substitution of the competition examination for the patronage system. In fact, according to most histories of the early ICS, the competition examination was designed explicitly to attract top honours students from Oxbridge.114 So whereas a university

114 J. M. Compton argues that the committee which drew up the examination anticipated that successful competitioners would be top Oxford and Cambridge honours graduates. “But,” he continues, “as the years went by, the Civil Service Commissioners had to be content with, first, any men from Oxford and Cambridge, and, finally, men from any university at all. Yet they were still manipulating a system drawn up
education irretrievably alienates Oakfield from Anglo-India in 1847-48, it becomes a requisite condition of Broughton’s initiation in 1863.

With the competition exam, eligibility for an Indian career was extended to every British male. This meant that the relative cultural cohesion guaranteed by selecting candidates from within a small social network—the cohesion that made both William Arnold and Edward Oakfield such standouts—came under great strain. The new generation of civilians, known as the “competition wallahs,” changed not only the demography of Anglo-India but also altered its social landscape. So if Oakfield might be described as a lament for Britain’s failure to behave honourably as Christian gentlemen, The Competition Wallah has no doubt that men of sufficient character occupy the positions of power.

As with Oakfield, The Competition Wallah relegates the Indian native to part of the scenery; the real subject of Broughton’s letters is the British in India. Set in 1863, six years after the Indian Mutiny and five after the British Crown assumed direct control of its Indian empire, the novel celebrates the transition to administrative meritocracy.

expressly for a high proportion of high honours graduates from the two older universities” (267). R.J. Moore attributes this pride of place to the self-interested political machinations of Benjamin Jowett. The original plan for the competition examination did not entail the closure of Haileybury, according to Moore, but Jowett lobbied heavily for amendments. Jowett seems to have been particularly effective in influencing Gladstone, member for Oxford, and concluded one letter, dated 23 July 1853, with an excellent example of Victorian pork barrelling, pleading that “you love Oxford too well not to do what you can for it” (qtd. in Moore 251).

115 For a brief summary, see Metcalf 134-41.
116 Like William Arnold, George Otto Trevelyan differed very little from his father, Charles (reformer of the domestic civil service as well as the man whose errors in administering famine relief in Ireland led to his immortalisation in the popular ballad “The Fields of Athenry”) in morals or politics and so it is unsurprising that the fictional letters were “sent” to and published in Macmillan’s Magazine. Well-known for reflecting the evangelical, intellectual, and Arnoldian outlook of its founders, Macmillan’s was a suitable venue for Trevelyan’s liberal gloss of the first six months of a civilian career under the new selection regime. According to memoir written by his son, George Macaulay, G. O. Trevelyan was an orthodox Whig whose only significant deviation from Foxite Whiggery was his interest in radical administrative reform. See George Macaulay Trevelyan’s Sir George Otto Trevelyan: A Memoir. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1932. See also the entry in the Dictionary of National Biography which describes his “reverence for Macaulay…and his proud sense of family tradition” (Jackson, “Sir George Otto Trevelyan”).
According to Broughton, this fairer system has ensured that the best talents are working in India, with the result that, "[t]he days of corruption have long passed away. The hands of civil servants are as pure and as white as his summer trousers" (242). Comparing Britain to imperial nations of the past, and indirectly answering Adam Smith's charge that a mercantile corporation is incapable of wielding sovereignty justly, he insists with confidence that

It is a rare phenomenon this of a race of statesmen and judges scattered throughout a conquered land, ruling it, not with an eye to private profit, nor even in the selfish interests of the mother country, but in the single-minded solicitude for the happiness and improvement of the children of the soil. (149)

This praise of the virtuous empire, full of noble and disinterested administrators, is the apotheosis of the vision expressed in Richard Wellesley's "Notes" to create "a sufficient supply of men qualified to fill the high offices of the State with credit to themselves and with advantage to the public" ("Notes" 723).

Partly, the demise of corruption is attributed to improved methods of passive surveillance which has eradicated the necessity for social pretence. The administrators of India may not naturally be inclined towards honest work, Broughton admits, but its members quickly realise that in such a transparent society honest work is the only option. He cites, among other prudent practices, the positive effects generated by the publication of every official salary and promotion in the annual Gazetteers: "There is no temptation to display; for every member of society knows the exact number of rupees which you
draw on the fifteenth of each month” (146-7). Such knowledge forecloses the opportunities for social-climbing which plague and intrigue the society of domestic Victorian novels; in India no one can inflate their perceived income through fashion, carriages, or parties. Broughton asks, “What well-regulated female can make dress an object in a society of a dozen people who know her rank to a tittle and her income to a pice?” (141). Modes of deception, under whose aegis Broughton includes fashion, gossip, and to an extent even literature, have little practical function in such a world, where work is the single index of social standing. Combined with Broughton’s praise for vigorous provincial life—“Where there is so much work to be done by any one who will put his hand to the plough, [that] men have no time to quarrel about the direction and depth of the furrows” (150)—this critique of urban lassitude and fashionable society places Trevelyan as a forerunner of Kipling.

The difference between Trevelyan’s and Kipling’s vision is palpable in the confidence each holds that Anglo-India is a meritocracy. Kipling obviously held no such faith in the upper-class’s ability to discern merit but Trevelyan makes the unqualified assertion that all positions in the Indian administration “are open to every subject of the Queen, though his father be as poor as Job subsequently to the crash in that patriarch’s affairs, and though he does not number so much as a butler of a member of Parliament among his patrons and connexions” (147). Proving the existence and virtue of this meritocratic system is the chief object of Trevelyan’s novel and, accordingly, he pays

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117 Contemporaneous examples include Thackeray’s The Newcomes (1855), Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s Lady Audley’s Secret (1863), and Dickens’s Our Mutual Friend (1864-65).
118 In this, Trevelyan anticipates Kipling’s antipathy to the artifice of the Indian Government’s headquarters in the hill-station of Simla, “the seething, whining, weakly hive, impotent to help itself, but strong in its power to cripple, thwart, and annoy the sunken-eyed man who, by official irony, was said to be ‘in-charge’ of it” (“The Education of Otis Yeere” 6: 23).
119 Though Henry Broughton is a competition wallah, G. O. Trevelyan was not. Trevelyan, in fact, never worked in the Indian administration but rather visited when serving as his father’s private secretary.
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particular attention to the principle of open competition. To achieve this purpose, Trevelyan invents a foil for Broughton, an erstwhile college chum named Charles Simkins. Simkins is meant to be the original recipient of the letters; it is he who has undertaken to collect and forward them on to the fictional editor of Macmillan’s.

Along with those letters, Simkins provides a covering letter of introduction and it is there that Trevelyan clarifies how these prizes will only ever be won by men of a particular character, a character wholly consistent with Uncle Macaulay’s intention. Simkins establishes the contrast when he describes his friendship with Broughton in terms of the classical fraternity between Damon and Pylades. “Our characters,” he explains, “were admirably fitted to supply what was wanting in the other” (2). And so, whereas Simkins calls himself “the more thoughtful and intellectualler of the two,” the one who “pondered out in solitude the great problems of existence;” Broughton is “the more practical and quick sighted,” the one who “lived with the men of action” and “wrote and talked, wielded the oar and passed the wine cup, [and] debated on the benches of the Union high questions of international morality and ecclesiastical government” (2). As Simkins tells it, as their undergraduate days drew to an end both men decided to try for an Indian career.

Through their opposing characters, Trevelyan allegorises the antagonism between the two dominant forms of imperial desire circulating among the middle classes in nineteenth-century Britain. Simkins represents the idealist reformer, who is “fired at the idea of being placed with almost unlimited power among a subject-race who would look

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120 It is worth noting, because it cannot be accidental, Trevelyan’s choice to name this pretentious character Simkins. Given that his uncle wrote the definitive historical essay on Warren Hastings, and given his admiration of that uncle, Trevelyan would surely have been familiar with The Letters of Simkin the Second (1790), the poetic account of the Impeachment. As a Hastings supporter, “Simkin” had openly mocked both Charles Fox and Edmund Burke, two figures deeply respected in Trevelyan’s strain of liberalism.
up to me for instruction and inspiration” (3). He thus conceives of India as a laboratory, where one could test the efficacy of Europe’s most radical social ideas before importing the successful ones back to England. Such opinions gesture towards the intellectual movements that shaped both the English middle class and its imperial enterprise in the first half of the nineteenth century: utilitarianism and evangelicalism. Simkins makes the association explicit, as he waxes on the prospects for an Indian career: “What a position for a philosopher! What for a philanthropist! Above all, what for a philosophic philanthropist!” (3). As Simkins continues, he alludes to his “advanced opinions on the destination and progress of our race” (4) and the reader familiar with the Company’s involvement with India cannot miss this allusion to William Bentinck, the aristocratic utilitarian who on the commencement of his seven-year tenure as Governor-General is supposed to have written to Jeremy Bentham: “I am going to British India, but I shall not be governor general. It is you who shall be governor general” (qtd. in Cohen 8). Likewise, it is hard to dissociate Simkins’s humanistic benevolence from that of men like Charles Grant, the longtime Director and sometime Chairman of the Board who advocated the intellectual and religious improvements of the natives in accordance with Christian ideals and who also played an instrumental role in establishing the Christian missions in Bengal.

Broughton, alternatively, represents the new imperial man, the subject whose desire has neither utilitarian nor evangelical motivation. To Simkins’s “mission of reforming society by [his] pen,” Broughton pronounces “indifference” (18). Throughout his letters, we see that Broughton aspires to secure neither social justice nor civilisation for the wretched of the earth. Unlike Oakfield, Broughton is unexcited by the prospects of
either improving India or saving his soul. Rather, he aspires to work. Broughton’s zeal, if we can call it that, is disinterested professionalism and he chose India, according to Simkins’s prefatory letter, simply because he maintains “that the vital object to be looked for in the choice of a line in life was to select one that would present a succession of high and elevating interests” (3). As many Anglo-Indian writers before and after him attest, an Indian career is represented as one of the best guarantees for such variety: “Work in India is so diversified as to always be interesting” (137). Later he will confide to Simkins that “It is a great thing to live in a community where every one has work to do, and where almost every one does it with a will” (236).

The relative fortunes of Simkins and Broughton comprise Trevelyan’s definitive statement as to the best type of character for company service: Broughton places third overall and wins his Indian career; Simkins fails utterly. Yet, even here Trevelyan is careful to ensure that his readers realise that Simkins has not in any way been hard done by and so, after a few more paragraphs Simkins exposes himself as a deluded, idle, and self-important character, the author of useless and unpublished articles, such as “The Subjectivity of Buckle” which lately has been rejected by this particular editor, and verse “in the vein of Browning” (5), which we gather will meet the same doom.

The competition exam is designed to exclude men who would be kings like Simkins and to reward professionally ambitious men like Broughton. Yet, although it is generally accepted that Trevelyan’s opinions on the abstract speculation of utilitarian or evangelical thought varied little from those held by both his father and uncle, it is important to observe that, despite having Simkins fail the competition exam, this author is not disavowing utilitarianism or evangelicalism tout court. Broughton’s penultimate
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letter, which represents how much has changed since his initially disinterested application for an Indian career, affirms the civilising mission: “To educate, to enlighten, to strike off the fetters of custom and superstitions, this is the grand duty the fulfilment of which we must further by all honest means” (406). Like Arnold’s Middleton, Trevelyan’s Broughton argues that enlightenment cannot arrive instantaneously. The “battle of Truth,” writes Broughton, will likely not be won “in our lifetime, nor mayhap in the lifetime of our sons” and the British in India must simply “labour in the way it which it is given to us to labour, or not at all,” by which Broughton means the development of “Colleges and railroads, libraries and newspapers, national justice and moderation”; in short, everything that Edmund Burke demanded eighty years earlier in his speech supporting Fox’s India Bill (406-7). Answering Burke’s charges, Broughton insists that “As far as India is concerned, we do our duty by the commonwealth of nations” (373). So, although Trevelyan pledges allegiance to liberal imperial ideals, his summary dismissal of Simkins demonstrates his belief that the qualities through which Britain claims the virtue of its empire, be they the spread of Christianity or improved governance, are not those the administration must seek in its employees.

Having made this point, Trevelyan allows the Simkinses of the world to slide into marginal oblivion, and Broughton’s narrative commences. The first letter begins with an apology for not having written sooner. He attributes the two-week delay to the “low spirits” brought about by his acute sense of loneliness which he now, with a fortnight’s wisdom, understands to be the universal plight of the newly-arrived civilian (6-7). This malaise provides an opportunity for Trevelyan’s disquisitive analysis of Anglo-Indian society. In India in 1863, the Civil Servants are roughly split between two groups:
Haileyburians and Competition Wallahs. As Broughton belongs to the latter group and finds himself profoundly unhappy, the Cambridge graduate decides that “the advantages of Haileybury outweighed the defects” (8). The competition process, which determines eligibility for the civil service solely on the basis of exam results, receives harsh criticism, primarily because of its alienating effect. Loneliness, Broughton argues, would not have been as debilitating for previous generations since, back then, every new recruit would arrive already in possession of a two-year acquaintance with his Haileybury cohort. To this the Haileybury graduate could look forward to the natural hospitality and fraternity extended by the college alumni already established in India. In this way Haileybury could unite all Anglo-Indians irrespective of age, providing a common point of reference and a positive symbol against which all could contrast their negative Indian experiences.

For Broughton, nostalgia for this collegiate *esprit de corps* is palpable. As the letter continues, Broughton wonders whether the current competition system might be altered somehow so that “A sense of brotherhood would again unite the members of the Civil Service, bound together by the most indissoluble ties” (17). Despite never having attended Haileybury, he feels that he too can commune with its graduates and appreciate the sympathetic homosocial bonds created when they “rowed together on the Lea ... larked together in Hertford ... [and] shared in that abundant harvest of medals which rewarded the somewhat moderate exertions of the reading man at the East-India College” (8). In this way, Haileybury functions as what French sociologist Pierre Nora has called “a site of memory.” In his work on memory in late-twentieth-century Western culture, Nora elaborates that the *lieux de mémoire* “make their appearance by virtue of the
deritualization of our world...mark[ing] the rituals of a society without ritual; integral particularities in a society that levels particularity; signs of distinction and of group membership in a society that tends to recognise individuals only as identical and equal” (Nora 12). One could argue that Anglo-India after the competition exam was just such a deritualised territory, and looking for evidence, we could point to Broughton’s anxiety about his isolated position: “Few of us are lucky enough to have more than two or three acquaintances among the men of our own years; and, while our seniors persist in looking on us as a special class, we have no bond of union among ourselves” (8). For a young recruit, thrown into an Indian career without any cultural or communal support, the idea of Haileybury and its esprit de corps provides security and a common, if imagined, context in which to complete his work.

This desire for an absent fraternity is reinforced institutionally in the new Anglo-India. With Haileybury receding further into the historical background, other modes of unifying diversely spread communities become more prominent. Now, in addition to the publication of employee’s salaries, titles and promotions, the liberal rhetoric of meritocracy, encouraged first in the competition examination, has become a distinct feature of the corporate culture. According to Broughton,

An Englishman can never be comfortable if he is in a false position; and he never allows himself to be in a true position unless he is proud of his occupation, and convinced that success will depend on his own efforts. These agreeable sentiments are experienced to the full by an Indian civil servant...[H]e is well aware that his advancement does not hang upon the will and pleasure of this or the
other great man, but is regulated by the opinion entertained of his ability and character by the service in general” (143-44, emphasis added).

In this climate, where public scrutiny is universal and omnipotent, where work is the overdetermining facet of life, Henry Broughton represents very nearly the ideal Macaulay had in mind when he first suggested the wholesale reform of civil service appointments.

What is even more interesting is how this unyielding scrutiny and its accompanying compulsion to work has become a source of pride for company men. Broughton, for example boasts, “I know of no better company in the world than a rising civilian...In most cases, the normal condition of a clever Englishman between the ages of twenty-two and thirty is a dreary feeling of dissatisfaction about his work and his prospects” (142). Service in the Indian Civil Service is of a different order, he argues, because “[t]here is no career which holds out such certain and splendid prospects to honourable ambition” (148). Keeping in mind Macaulay’s intention to attract men psychologically disposed to compete purely for the sake of competition, we might further note how Trevelyan’s picture of the modern civil servant pays the ultimate compliment to his uncle’s plan. Broughton tells his domestic correspondent that “It is a great thing to live in a community where every one has work to do, and where almost every one does it with a will; where intolerance and bigotry are at a ruinous discount; where liberal and unselfish views are as plentiful as blackberries at the bottom of a Surrey valley” (236).

Trevelyan’s portrait also suggests that aristocratic virtue has become embedded in Anglo-Indian culture. According to Broughton, the modern company man is impervious
to "dissatisfaction about his work and his prospects, and a chronic anxiety for 'a sphere'"
(142):

It is impossible for him to have any misgiving concerning the dignity and importance of his work. His power for good and evil is almost unlimited...He is the member of an official aristocracy, owning no social superior; bound to no man; fearing no man. (143)

But in that same letter, in a gesture which confirms the ambivalent status of the subject-in-power, Broughton deflates this portrait of unfettered power, as he reveals the full disciplinary effects of the idea of the virtuous empire and the rhetoric of aristocratic virtue. The aristocrat, that is, becomes the (willingly) dutiful servant:

[H]e never speaks of his duties except in a spirit of enthusiasm, or his profession without a tone of profound satisfaction. He no more dreams of 'a sphere' than for a pentagon or a rhomboid. (145)

The picture of a nearly homogenous group of liberally-minded administrators, who are so satisfied with their occupation that it eliminates the need for all other social groups, gives new meaning to the word preoccupied. To return to Benedict Anderson's phraseology, if there is an imagined community of Anglo-Indians, then it exists as a community created by dreams of work and fulfilling one's duties.

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Kipling’s Short Stories

Just how this sense of duty was cultivated forms the subject for Kipling’s “A Wayside Comedy” (1888), where the narrator prefaces a report of Ted Kurrell’s licentious behaviour with the following apology:

You must remember, though you will not understand, that all laws weaken in a small and hidden community where there is no public opinion. When a man is absolutely alone in a Station he runs a certain risk of falling into evil ways. This risk is multiplied by every addition to the population up to twelve—the Jury number. After that, fear and consequent restraint begin and human action becomes less grotesquely jerky. (6: 115)

Kipling here has stated the basic problem of managing overseas employees: how does one prevent corruption in the absence of public opinion? The German sociologist Emile Durkheim, who never applied his theories to imperialism, considered just such a problem by way of a hypothetical uncannily familiar to Kipling’s:

Imagine a population scattered over a vast area, without the different elements of being able to communicate easily; each man would live for himself alone and

121 Nor was Kipling the only Anglo-Indian to realise that corruption would spread without the countervailing influence of public opinion. Here is an excerpt from Henry Cotton’s 1911 memoir Indian Home and Memories:

At that immature age I was, like all other members of the Civil Service—and as they are still are up to the present time—vested with magisterial powers beyond comparison greater than those possessed by young men of the same age under any civilised Government. Uncontrolled by public opinion and from the nature of the case with little judicial experience, it would have been strange if I had not been led into occasional errors and sometimes into abuse of power. That must be the obvious result of a system which is to blame. (79-80)
public opinion would develop only in rare cases entailing a laborious calling together of these scattered sections. (8)

Durkheim is specifically concerned with the manufacture of professional ethics by social institutions. According to him, when individuals are deprived of the traditional immediate and frequent solidarity with other members of the group, collective consciousness can only emerge through a stable and organised corporate structure, which meant either a profession or a State. The great puzzle for Durkheim is how organisation and discipline emerge in the economic sphere, which at once dominates all aspects of modernity and simultaneously operates without a professional ethics or, at least, that “the ideas current on what the relations should be of the employee with his chief of the workman with the manager, of the rival manufacturers with each other and with the public … are so slight that they might as well not be” (9-10). Political economists, operating where Durkheim feared to tread, have theorised the problem of employer-employee relations in terms of agency.122 Two parties, the principal and their agent, are united in interest; the agent agrees to represent the interest of the principal who in turn agrees to compensate the agent for this service. The agency relationship, however, is dynamic, meaning that at any time an agent might choose to pursue another interest which offers greater remuneration. Thus, while “the evil ways” pursued by Kipling’s Ted Kurrell are limited to adulterous womanizing, the menace of unregulated individuals evokes the more material threat at the core of British imperialism.

The consonance between Kipling and Durkheim was of course first made by Noel Annan, who argued that Kipling saw society as a nexus of groups regulated by “religion,

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law, custom, convention, morality—the forces of social control—which imposed upon individuals certain rules which they broke at their peril” (331). More recently, John Kucich has explored the sadomasochistic dimension of these secret, “magical,” groups in Kipling’s fiction (*Imperial Masochism* 139). For Kucich, magical groups, operating under a calculus of pain and shame, were an important tool as Kipling attempted to restructure imperial hegemony around proficient, technocratic, lower-middle-class professionals. I want to consider the limitations of Kucich’s model later, but for now, let me restrict my attention to the claim he shares with Annan that Kipling’s sociological approach to imperial society acknowledges the productive function of groups in producing collective discipline.

In Kipling’s stories, not only does a character’s social status depend entirely on the discharge of one’s administrative duties, but characters can be assured that each transgression or failure will be universally disseminated. As we read his fiction, we witness work and transparency calcifying into an imperial ethic which overrides personal interest. It may be suggested by some, taking a page from D. A. Miller, that the appearance of these topoi heralds the triumph of imperial discipline, the product of circulating micropowers which regulate the behaviour of social bodies. Continuing in this vein, the ambivalence between private and public selves can then be reconfigured as the confrontation between the romantic individualist and the homogenising and totalising impulses of social networks. Zoreh T. Sullivan argued this much when she described Kipling’s short stories of the 1880s as testaments to “the world’s greatest imperial power collaps[ing] at its human joints” (80). Her *Narratives of Empire* (1991), an exemplary

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123 Kucich’s work on magical groups was first developed in “Sadomasochism and the Magical Group: Kipling’s Middle-Class Imperialism,” (2003), which was expanded and revised into the chapter of the same name in *Imperial Masochism* (2006).
piece of postcolonial criticism, weaves together the theories of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha to demonstrate how Kipling's representation of ethical crises illuminates the ambivalent nature of colonial discourse. However, Sullivan's reading of Kipling's vacillation or doubt reveals her critical tendency to read conceptual ambivalence solely as a symptom of anxiety or repressed desire.

We can challenge Sullivan's line of interpretation by examining the special circumstances and meanings of the ethical crises in Kipling's fiction. I would suggest that we play the part of Sporus in the case of the butterfly if we resort to micropowers in our explications. Miller, we will remember, defines Foucaultian discipline as, amongst other things, "an ideal of unseen but all-seeing surveillance, which, though partly realised in several, often interconnected institutions, is identified with none" (viii). Patently this is not the case in Anglo-India where there is practically only one institution: the government. Transparency is directly and intentionally produced by the State since India, if we are to believe the narrator of Kipling's "William the Conqueror" (1898), is "a land where each man's pay, age, and position are printed in a book, that all may read, [so] it is hardly worth while to play at pretences in word or deed" (13: 226). The circle can be drawn tighter still, for the Indian Government of Kipling's day was not really a government at all but a corporate administration created by the East India Company.124 Whereas Trevelyan's Competition Wallah might be thought to describe an India in transition between corporate and crown rule, Kipling's short stories reveal the persistence

124 Some histories take the 1857 Indian Mutiny as the catastrophe which galvanised opinion against the irresponsible Directors of the East India Company and compelled the government to assume direct responsibility for India in 1858. However, the transition from Company to Crown rule was more semiotic than structural. Titles changed—the Governor-General became the Viceroy, etc.—but the offices and the officials remained in place (Bayly 233).
both of the Company’s original logistical problem and the complex cultural discourses
developed to resolve it. In those short stories Kipling reproduces and complicates the
control crisis at the heart of the East India Company’s administration. On the one hand,
Kipling is keen to consign “John Company” to history, transmogrifying it into the sub-
lunar deity Kumpani in “The Bridge-Builders.” On the other, he continually confronts its
social architecture in his anxious return to issues of duty, sacrifice, and matters of
conscience.

The society presented in Kipling’s Anglo-Indian short stories is structurally
unchanged from the days of Company rule. The supreme power continues to operate
from afar, ignorant of the reality in the field. The gap between the authority and its agents
has not, if we again trust the portrait in “William the Conqueror,” been reduced by the
advances in communication networks, “for the Government held the Head of the Famine
tied neatly to a telegraph-wire, and if Jimmy had ever regarded telegrams seriously, the
death-rate of that famine would have been much higher than it was” (13: 244). In nearly
all his early stories, Kipling burdens the proficient technocratic officials of Anglo-India
not only with the impossible Swiftian task of making “two blades of grass grow where
there was but one before,” (1: 156) but also with the cumbersome expostulations of
abstract thinkers in the central government. Such obstacles are numerous and are
frequently a source of humour in Kipling’s stories. The most familiar is probably the
inert Bengali, Grish Chunder Dé, the man appointed to run a district by a Viceroy
seeking to satisfy his “liberal” sentiments (“The Head of the District”). Dé succeeds
Yardley-Orde, a man who is either a caricature or an apotheosis (a student of Lacanian
psychoanalysis would say likely both) of Anglo-Indian fortitude. On his deathbed,
Yardley-Orde utters what are surely two of the most unintentionally comic lines in Kipling’s fiction: “Sorry to be a nuisance, but is—is there anything to drink?” and “It isn’t that I mind dying,’ he said. ‘It’s leaving Polly and the district’” (6: 123). Against such a hero, Dé fails spectacularly, conforming to the stereotype of the Bengali Babu, fleeing from the terror of manly Indian tribesmen in revolt.\textsuperscript{125}

However, before we attribute this ineptitude entirely to Kipling’s racist opinion and/or fear of educated Indians, we should note that Grish Chunder Dé has plenty of European counterparts in Kipling’s short stories. The gamut of characters runs from Aurelian McGoggin (“The Conversion of Aurelian McGoggin”), the naive disciple of Comte and Spencer, dubbed the Blastoderm by his fellows, who becomes Kipling’s first eponymous hero to suffer an aphasic collapse, through Pinecoffin (“Pig”), the earnest official driven to madness by writing reports on the essence of a pig, right up to the quintessence of bureaucratic madness, the accounts clerk (“The Pit that They Digged”) who denies the vitality of man, who has recovered from his death-bed and now finds himself asked to pay for the costs of his mistakenly-dug grave.

Such obstacles are insurmountable; even the Carlylean hero, Yardley-Orde, expires before completing his day’s work. It is certainly not for lack of effort, but it remains a curious fact of Kipling’s fiction that few if any of his characters ever finish their job. Repeatedly, we see independent thought swamped by the pressure to complete the work at hand and we begin to perceive why the narrator of “A Germ Destroyer” (1888) states that “[a]s a general rule, it is inexpedient to meddle with questions of State in a land where men are highly paid to work them out for you” (1: 134); or why in

\textsuperscript{125} So cowardly is Dé that he cannot even die with honour; it is his brother who supplies Dé’s proficient (white) replacement with the title’s “head” of the district.
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“Kidnapped” (1888) the best praise we hear of Peythroppe is that “[a]ll his superiors spoke well of him, because he knew how to hold his tongue and his pen at the proper times” (1: 143). The path is cleared for the encounter between the London-based member of parliament and a ex-Radical now employed by the Indian Government. When Padgett asks the former agitator about the rise of the Indian National Congress, he is told simply that, “There are no politics, in a manner of speaking, in India. It’s all work” (“The Enlightenments of Pagett MP” 4: 350).

Some might argue that this image of an overworked administrative corps invariably doomed never to finish their job underwrites Kipling’s defence of a permanent British presence in India. Others, taking the long view, could see it as a continuation of an institutionally-cultivated sense of failure, deliberately encouraged to stunt the ambition of company agents who, were they so inclined, could easily take advantage of their unchecked power. We could argue, following John Kucich, that masochism makes for the best administrators; at the very least we can assert that those administrators most conscious of their inability to succeed in full would be most likely not to fail in total. To confirm this attitude in Kipling’s fiction, consider the crisis experienced by Findlayson, the civil engineer who sees his bridge swept away by a spectacular Ganges flood: “For himself, the crash meant everything—everything that made a hard life worth the living” (13: 24).

Yet to get a sense of the limits of Kipling’s masochistic tendencies, it is better to consider his description of a self-denying character who, technically, is not connected to the government at all. “A Bank Fraud,” tells the story of Reggie Burke, a commercial
bank manager and overseer of London-based colonially-invested capital. Kipling’s narrator opens with a salacious promise:

If Reggie Burke were in India now he would resent this tale being told; but as he is in Hong Kong and won’t see it, the telling is safe. He was the man who worked the big fraud on the Sind and Sialkot Bank. (1: 206)

Given such an introduction, we might quite reasonably expect an adventure similar to Conan Doyle’s contemporary story of a bank fraud, “The Red-Headed League” (1891). Sans Holmes, we might think Reggie Burke succeeded and absconded to enjoy his fortune in foreign climes. For several pages, the narrator sustains such expectations, introducing Reggie Burke as a well-liked Branch Manager for a bank whose Directors “had tested Reggie up to a fairly severe breaking-strain. They trusted him just as much as Directors ever trust their Managers” and Kipling invites his readers to “see for yourself whether this trust was misplaced” (1: 207). Burke’s life is disturbed with the arrival of a new assistant, an accountant named Riley who is introduced as a Yorkshireman full of “savage self-conceit...wonderfully narrow-minded in business, and, being new to the country, had no notion that Indian banking is totally distinct from Home work” (1: 208). Burke and Riley “failed to hit it off” but Burke’s chance appears on the day when Riley is pronounced terminally consumptive; the same day a message arrives informing the manager that Riley will be fired in thirty days.

Anglo-Indian history provides a legion of opportunistic precedents for Reggie Burke, including most notably Robert Clive, the clerk-turned-general who in the mid-
eighteenth century saw in the coincidence of the Seven Years War and internal Indian political instability the chance to make his fortune. But Kipling did not name his hero haphazardly and, following his eighteenth-century namesake, Burke rejects the opportunity for personal enrichment, turning “A Bank Fraud” into an allegory for the ideal company man. We discover that Burke’s “fraud” is the net of lies woven to provide palliative care to his assistant and this humanitarian fortitude symbolises the transition Anglo-India has made since the days of Clive’s nabobs. He chooses to ignore the orders of the Head Office and withholds the termination letter, forging in their stead praiseworthy despatches. He sustains the illusion by paying Riley’s salary out of his own pocket and even contrives at one point, “contrary to all the laws of business and finance” to give Riley a twenty-five percent raise (1: 215). Riley, the Directors, and (until the narrator chooses to disclose it) the public remain ignorant and ungrateful to the end and when Riley expires, Burke’s only consolation is that he has sustained the man for one month in excess of the Doctor’s prediction.

In the end, Reggie’s “big fraud” affects three parties. First are the Bank Directors, who are neither told of Riley’s condition nor of the sacrifices their branch manager is making on his behalf. The centre of power is at an unbridgeable distance, and the manager never once considers the possibility of appealing to the directors for intercession. Second is Riley, the portrait of the ignorant Englishman in India, who presumes the universal applicability of his customs and culture and so completely misunderstands Anglo-Indian society that he repays heroic charity with ungrateful moral sermons. The third victim is the perpetrator himself, Reggie Burke, a representative member of the Anglo-Indian class described in “The Phantom Rickshaw” as “[t]he men
who do not take the trouble to conceal from you their opinion that you are an incompetent ass ... [yet who] will work themselves to the bone in your behalf if you fall sick or into serious trouble” (5: 2).

The sacrifice of Reggie Burke is typical of the painful and putatively noble sacrifice made by the heroes of Kipling’s early fiction. John Kucich has identified these moments of futile self-sacrifice as the key component of the “virulent class politics underlying Kipling’s consolidation of middle-class ideological systems” (188). In *Imperial Masochism* (2007), Kucich positions Kipling as an author who was critical of upper-class mores (and Toryism in general) as they represented themselves in both domestic and colonial societies. Building on Kipling’s evident support for technocratic professionalism, Kucich sees Reggie’s self-defeating use of his privileged knowledge as an act of “a self-martyring moral despotism,” one of the many instances of “masochistic self-glorification” in the early stories (175, 177). By refusing to take part in regular social practices (by telling Riley that he has been sacked), Reggie Burke’s affective transaction takes place in a secret social economy, one that runs parallel to the official chain of command. The new economy is structured by one’s access to knowledge, rather than one’s rank, which enabled Kipling to create a symbolic order whereby the lower middle-classes could be incorporated into, and indeed feel that they were in control of, imperial culture.

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126 Kucich argues that Kipling’s work was driven by “an unusually intense animosity toward both the social top and the social bottom” and that Kipling “routinely denigrated top-tier Anglo-Indian administrators for their self-serving ambitions and their obtuseness (as in “The Enlightenments of Pagett, M.P. [1890])” (189). The point holds generally even if Kucich’s choice of supporting evidence is incorrect. After all, the only self-serving and obtuse character in that particular story is Pagett who, as the title suggests, is a Member of the British Parliament who is visiting India, not a “top-tier Anglo-Indian Administrator.” A much better example would have been “William the Conqueror.”
The benefit of Kucich's argument is its correction of Kipling's conservative rehabilitators, who have celebrated the author's classlessness.\textsuperscript{127} Kucich is also absolutely right in insisting that Kipling's work conveys "a remarkably unilateral class politics" (138). But this argument loses some of its traction when Kucich proposes that this unilateral politics is an expert synthesis of "the ideological languages of distinct metropolitan middle-class constituencies" (139). Searching for the source of Kipling's alienated, suffering and, to use Kipling's favoured adjective, "grim" characters, Kucich suggests an "imaginative fusion" of evangelical, utilitarian, and professional values, the favoured formula for most twentieth-century studies of Victorian colonial culture.\textsuperscript{128} However, it is not clear that any imaginative fusion of metropolitan Victorian ideologies was necessary in the Anglo-Indian case, where a corporate ethic dominated. To be clear, I am not dismissing the influence of either evangelicalism or utilitarianism on the rhetoric of Anglo-Indian colonial discourse (whether Kipling's or anybody else's) as much as I am suggesting that neither generated it. The consistent emphasis on these ideologies overvalues the influence of vague metropolitan culture at the expense of the structures of feeling produced by one specific colonial institution.

One of the strongest proofs that Kipling was more interested in Anglo-Indian cultural practices than with synthesising metropolitan middle-class ideologies is the nature of his early audience. As one Edwardian chronicler of Anglo-Indian literature puts it, while Kipling was the first Anglo-Indian author to write for two audiences (one colonial, the other metropolitan), his art remained great because he refused to play the

\footnote{\textsuperscript{127} Kucich cites Christopher Hitchens and Andrew Rutherford as two of the more prominent proponents of this view (137).}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{128} For other discussions of evangelicalism and utilitarianism in relation to Anglo-Indian culture, see Stokes's \textit{The English Utilitarians and India}; Viswanathan's \textit{Masks of Conquest}, especially p. 77; Suleri's \textit{The Rhetoric of English India}; and Hutchins's \textit{The Illusion of Permanence}.}
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part of a Janus-faced intermediary between colony and metropolis. Kipling, according to Edward F. Oaten, knew he must write “primarily for his own people, who possess [his] sympathies and point of view” (142). Kipling wrote his early stories, including “A Bank Fraud,” for the Civil and Military Gazette, hoping no doubt that they would eventually be published widely but intending them presumably for immediate consumption by an audience of Anglo-Indian professionals. Andrew Rutherford notes that the third edition of Plain Tales from the Hills, the first to be published in England, contained many revisions to make the stories more intelligible to a domestic audience. Kipling did not earn his metropolitan fame until 1890 and so whatever effect this celebrity had on his art and ideology, in the case of the stories written in the 1880s, the class, pace Kucich, was already consolidated. Thus when Kipling’s narrator says of Reggie Burke that “You must see for yourself whether this trust was misplaced,” (“Bank Fraud” 1: 207) he does not so much modulate, following Kucich’s argument, the “ambiguous affective positioning” (55) of the bystanding reader. Instead, the narrator appeals to a readership preconditioned to recognise Reggie Burke as one of their own and, moreover, to take grim pleasure in the revelation of his secret heroism. Reggie Burke’s sacrifice confirms their sense that they serve an ideal rather than an inefficient and uninterested employer. As opposed to the conventional lenses of evangelicalism or

More recently Stephen Arata has come to a similar conclusion when he argues that the fiction and poetry of the 1880s and 1890s “explicitly rebuffed the English reader” through their copious use of “the untranslated phrase, the unglossed allusion, the in-joke, the unapologetic gesture towards structures of feeling and experience which had no counterpart outside the enclosed world of Anglo-India” (154-55). Lionel Trilling gives a more progressive interpretation of this sense of bafflement in describing his boyhood encounter with Kipling’s literature. According to Trilling, Anglo-Indian society can be “worked … out by a sort of algebra … discover[ing] the meaning of the unknowns through the knowns.” Thus “one got without adequate definition an adequate knowledge of what a sais was, or a dak-bungalow, and what the significance of pukka was” (91).

Rutherford explains how “the phrase ‘out here’ is replaced by ‘in India’ throughout; and, not surprisingly, there is a further reduction in the use of Indian vocabulary. Thus ‘a memsahib’ becomes ‘a white woman’; ‘the shroff’ becomes ‘the bankers’; ‘dead on the charpoy’ becomes ‘dead on the bed’.” (xxvii). Rutherford continues for about a page in this vein, citing many other emendations.
utilitarianism, it might be better to read scenes like these in terms of the parallel economies of inevitable shame and impossible ambition. We need only return to Oakfield’s fellowship to see that what Kucich recognises as the “sadomasochistic logic” (35) original to Kipling’s sociology might better be understood historically as the already existing products of Anglo-India’s corporate culture.

*Sara Jeannette Duncan’s Set in Authority*

The tendency towards sacrifice and suffering is characteristic of late-nineteenth century Anglo-Indian fiction but rather than enumerate the examples of those authors who emulate or reiterate these persistent themes from the inside, I want to conclude this chapter by examining how the masochistic corporate fraternity appeared to an outsider. Sara Jeannette Duncan was born in Canada but, while stopping in Calcutta on a globetrotting world-tour, she met and married Everard Coates, superintendent of the city’s Indian museum. Though she was certainly a supporter of the British Empire, Duncan’s Canadian heritage provided her with a non-metropolitan perspective and in India she occupies the vantage point of an intimate outsider, someone who is almost but not quite the same as her Anglo-Indian colleagues.¹³¹ Like William Arnold, Duncan comes to India having been influenced by other, non-corporate, institutions and so the degree to which her narrative voice is alienated or surprised with the behaviour of Anglo-Indians registers the presence of the “cultural practices” predicted in the model proposed by the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*. Unlike Arnold, who was concerned more with morality and the path to the good life, Duncan shares with Kipling a journalist’s eye and

¹³¹ This perspective is definitively registered in her 1904 novel *The Imperialist*, which is taken as a seminal text in Canadian national literature.
she has a professional inclination towards recording the quirks, faults and trivialities of society. All this places Duncan in a position to interrogate rather than affirm or deny the principles which structure Anglo-India’s corporate culture.

The novel I want to consider in detail, *Set In Authority*, is a social drama that focuses on the reaction of several different communities to a murder trial. The proverbial stone in the pond is Henry Morgan, alias Herbert Valentina Tring, a private British soldier accused of murdering the husband of his Indian mistress. Morgan’s trial receives more than the usual attention because it is scheduled to take place in a district where a Muslim has just been appointed as magistrate. The consequent prospect of a British subject being judged by a native in a capital case causes a scandal that tests the limits of *fin-de-siècle* liberalism in both India and England. The historical context for this examination is the controversy surrounding the Ilbert Bill, Lord Ripon’s attempt in 1883 to place European subjects under the jurisdiction of native Indian judges.\(^{132}\) In both real and Duncan’s fictional India, the popular reluctance to exclude magistrates from cases purely on the basis of race contradicted one of liberal philosophy’s first principles.

Though some minor characters represent the entrenched conservative position, all the major characters in this novel are liberals, but Duncan is less interested with identifying their hypocrisy than with exploring the gap between principle and practice.

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\(^{132}\) Ripon cited John Stuart Mill among others in arguing that the race of a candidate was immaterial to his qualifications. However, many Anglo-Indians feared that native judges would be hopelessly prejudiced against European defendants and would abuse their positions to redress the colonial imbalance. The reaction against the Ilbert Bill was so strong that it was soon characterised as the “White Mutiny.” For an analysis of the historical reaction to the Bill, in both Britain and in India, see Chandrika Kaul’s “England and India: The Ilbert Bill, 1883” (1993). Jenny Sharpe and Nancy Paxton have separately argued for a correlation between anxiety surrounding the Bill and the contemporary revival of “Mutiny novels.” Sharpe, in *Allegories of Empire* (1993), argues that Anglo-Indian writers attempted to rebuke the perceived capability of Indian judges by retelling tales of the betrayal, cunning, deception, and anti-European sentiment beneath the supposedly civilised veneer of Westernised natives. Paxton, in *Writing Under the Raj* (1999), puts even more emphasis than Sharpe does on the crucial period between 1880 and 1900.
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This means that issues of ethical balance, conscience and duty are foregrounded as honest liberals debate between themselves how best to handle the Morgan case. For the most stubbornly principled (the group we might call the descendants of Edward Oakfield), this means absolutely disregarding the likely effects of their decisions and committing to the principles of governance instead of the pragmatics of governing. For the more politically astute, this means striking a balance between competing sets of interests. While this second group would never deny the abstract right of a qualified native to preside in a capital case, they also recognise that the judge is not the only person whose civil rights are in jeopardy in the trial.

The action of the novel takes place in London and Calcutta, but mostly in Pilaghur the district where the crime allegedly occurred, and it is in Pilaghur that Duncan scrutinizes the bonds tying a community of Anglo-Indian officials to each other and to the wider imperial administration. To their consternation, the Viceroy has insisted that the Muslim judge remain in place. When this judge surprises his racist opponents and actually acquits the soldier, the Viceroy turns consternation into apoplexy by ordering a retrial. As the news of the affair reaches London, the liberal set describe it in Kiplingesque terms as “a soldier tragedy from India, one of those ‘Without Benefit of Clergy’ things” (171). Unable to decide whether to praise or disavow the Viceroy, the elderly liberal members of the Aganippe Club appeal to one of the younger generation. Victoria Tring gives a measured response: “I should like to know more about it first, but on the face of it, it looks to me very like one of those matters in which it would be wise to trust the man on the spot” (135). Victoria Tring presumes the man on the spot to be the Viceroy, the man who will eventually become her fiancé.
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But Duncan makes it clear that the real man on the spot is the company man, the Chief Commissioner of the district where the alleged crime took place. Duncan introduces this character as a paragon of virtue. As Pilaghur's supreme civilian authority, Eliot Arden is articulate, charming, cultured, sympathetic, and liberally-minded. He is in all respects a liberal gentleman, the incarnation of Richard Wellesley's hope—expressed a century earlier in the College of Fort William's first prize-winning essay—that company men would be "valuable and ornamental members of society" (Martin 6). His excellence might be summarised in the Viceroy's observation that "he could read as well as write, which was not so common" (Set 79). The implication here is that Arden is no mere functionary but rather an independent man capable of reflective and critical thought.

By its very title, the novel announces its intention to explore the nature of colonial power. To be set in authority is, of course, to be an agent and Duncan repeats the familiar view that administrators like Arden exercise a circumscribed despotic imperium: "The Chief Commissioner has the glory and responsibility of power...Both garland and rein lie upon his neck" (76). Arden, then, belongs to the tradition of educated middle-class men who find themselves asked to embody, represent, and exercise imperial power on behalf of a metropolitan authority. However at the outset Arden is described as one who has overcome the psychological ambivalence that paralyses so many other characters in his position, and he fluently negotiates between centralised imperial policies and the particular demands of his district. As a result, he is admired not only by the local community of Anglo-Indians, but also by the colonial Indians and, most importantly, by the Viceroy. The affection between the Viceroy and this Commissioner is an important narrative point since all the other Anglo-Indian officials in this novel see their Viceroy in
more orthodox terms: i.e., as a metropolitan politician who knows nothing of India but has been parachuted into power because of his London connections. However, because the Viceroy thinks Arden is “a type of man in some ways rather like himself” (79), Duncan is able to isolate the systemic problems of colonial governance. As one character observes, it is “curious...that Lord Thame should have been predestined to persecute Morgan, and you [Arden] predestined to protect him, from exactly the same motive—what you believe to be right” (156). Both Arden and the Viceroy subscribe to liberalism and so without the potential distraction of political partisanship, Duncan can explore the problematic position occupied by a moral man who has been set in authority.

The moral dilemma occurs after Morgan’s initial acquittal when Arden receives a dossier of testimony from Indian witnesses that apparently confirms Morgan’s guilt. The officer responsible for collecting the dossier is akin to Kipling’s Riley or Aurelian McGoggin, someone newly arrived with his metropolitan sensibilities still intact and unable to understand the customary application of imperial power. When Arden mentions the dossier to his confidante, Ruth Pearce, she asks:

‘Do you find anything in it?...

‘It’s the usual thing – a little truth and a great deal of lying, constructive lying, after the event, it seems to me. It’s cleverly put together.’

‘Does the truth in it bear at all importantly?’

‘Not importantly enough to justify a second trial. But you mustn’t pin me down like that. I speak of only what I conceive to be the truth. The Viceroy, no
doubt, will believe much more of it; because it is in the line of what he wants to prove.’ (187)

Arden, the man who can read, recognises that many “truths” can be derived from the dossier. As a local expert, familiar with the land and its people, he recognises it as “the usual thing.” He also perceives that the Viceroy, a man of policies and principles, will be more susceptible to the half-truths of a cleverly crafted dossier.

Knowing that the dossier, if forwarded to the Viceroy, would condemn the soldier, Arden here literally holds a life in his hands. He also acknowledges his discretionary authority when he tells Ruth that he “need not do it... They might override me—the law provides for it; but practically they couldn’t” (156, emphasis in original). Here is a clear opportunity for heroic action, to take advantage of the power invested in his position and, by obeying protocol, withhold the dossier from the Viceroy. Such an act would not only satisfy his conscience but also serve principles of justice. But for Arden, what exists de jure does not exist de facto and when Ruth “wildly” suggests that he follow this path, Duncan describes how he, “took with some eagerness the moral upper hand. ‘You can’t mean that... It went on at once’” (187, my emphasis). Now unless we are willing to understand Arden as a disciple of a perverted form of Kantian deontological ethics, for whom following procedure is the only possible path to the good, then it is hard to understand how his choice to send a fatal dossier which in his opinion is “a great deal of lying...cleverly put together,” could be construed as the moral upper hand. It is hard, that is, unless we admit as an ethic that of the professional bureaucrat, the functionary who, recalling Richard Wellesley’s vision, is “properly qualified to conduct the ordinary movements of the Great machine of Government” (“Notes” 731). Later in
the novel, when Arden realises that indeed the soldier will be convicted and executed, he
absolves himself from personal responsibility because once the matter passes out of his
hands, “he did not see it to be a doubt in which his conscience was sole and predestined
arbiter” (202). In another context, Hannah Arendt has shown this to be the ethics shared
between imperialism and the concentration camp. Arden justifies his action because he
has taken the idea of the virtuous empire as the supreme good and has accepted the
system of administrative power as its legitimate worldly institution.

This scene with Ruth is one of many in the novel where Duncan elaborates
Arden’s corporate ethic through dialectical conversations. Ruth provides the antagonistic
position because, like Duncan herself, she is not fully a member of Anglo-Indian society.
Furnished with all the capabilities of a late-Victorian New Woman, including a
profession and a fierce independence, she interrupts the established order of corporate
Anglo-India. As the narrator explains when introducing the guests at a dinner-party,
“Miss Pearce properly comes last, because she had no quotable position. The table of
precedence does not provide for demi-official lady-doctors” (85). This demi-official
status enables her to take liberties denied to (or is it repressed by?) Anglo-Indians. For
example, she has comfortable social relations with the local elite of Pilaghur’s native
population. Likewise, she has formed an unusually strong bond with Arden, who
admits that it is precisely the lack of an official relationship which enables their
confidence: “From the first he had felt himself with Miss Pearce essentially the man and

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133 See Arendt’s meditation on the connection between racism, imperialism, and bureaucracy in The
Origins of Totalitarianism (1968) and her apt description of institutional men in the South African context:
“They were nothing of their own making, they were like living symbols of what had happened to them,
living abstractions and witnesses to the absurdity of human institutions” (189).

134 If all this sounds like a premonition of E. M. Forster’s description of Adela Quested, it should be
remembered that Duncan hosted Forster on his first trip to India.
but incidentally the Chief Commissioner; he who was so universally the Chief Commissioner that he might hardly have claimed any other identity” (185).

A confident and quick-witted character who shares Arden’s liberal predilections, Ruth serves partly as Arden’s conscience but she also represents transgressive desire.

Officially, Arden is a married man with a duty to obey the directives of his superior. Yet he is intrigued by Ruth’s argument that action should be dictated by conscience. As they discuss the dossier, she insists that “one isn’t bound by the beliefs of others. One is bound by one’s own” (157). At this point, the narrator makes a general comment on the nature of their relationship:

They came back so constantly, these two, to the question of conscience, duty, right. It seemed always just below the level of their thoughts; the least reference disclosed it. They were forever inciting one another to this abstract consideration; if it lurked under any aspect of any subject they would have it out, and fling it back and forth between them. One would say they drew a mutual support and encouragement from the exercise; one might go further and say that one offered it to the other. (157)

This passage illuminates the subconscious function of ideology—the lurking thing just below the level of the characters’ thoughts—but we should also notice how that other subconscious discourse which makes ideology perceptible.135 The co-presence of

135 More generally, Julia Kristeva has argued that the frequency of these intersections in literature and culture is what makes psychoanalysis such a radically useful form of ideology critique. See “From Symbols to Flesh: The Polymorphous Destiny of Narration” *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 81 (2000): 771-87.
sexuality and thought forces the moral and the romantic plots to intertwine, with Arden finding his path to personal pleasure doubly thwarted by his obligation to the institutions of administrative power and marriage.

Like the speaker in Kipling’s poem, “A Song in Storm,” Arden believes that the game is more than the player of the game and the ship is more than the crew. To show how effectively the corporate ideology has reduced personal agency in Anglo-India, Duncan contrives circumstances that would completely exonerate either the official or the marital transgression. In the case of the former, I have already noted that Arden is perfectly within his rights to withhold the document; he is officially bound to screen everything submitted to the Viceroy and in his expert professional opinion, this dossier is rubbish. In the case of the latter, Duncan sends Mrs. Arden back to Europe where she contracts tuberculosis and dies, leaving Arden free to pursue his affection for Ruth. Yet even in these conditions, Arden is incapable of heroic action. It might be helpful to contrast his behaviour to that of William Arnold’s Oakfield. Whereas the son of the Rugby headmaster insists that his personal morality is the last bastion of his subjective integrity, Arden, the corporate employee, says he finds satisfaction in being a component in “the machinery of the best-oiled bureaucracy” (204).

Duncan seems determined to press this point for, while Arden and Ruth wrestle over matters of conscience in India, back in London, the Viceroy’s mother relates an illustrious moment in the family history:

“‘There was once a dispute between a Thame and Cromwell,’” said Lady Thame, “‘My son’s ancestor had his conscience behind him and Cromwell gave
Such agency is denied the servants of the Indian Government. Arden derives his virtue from sources other than his conscience. He is a man who “had made it a point of honour for twenty years never to protest, and he did not protest now” (218). When Arden meets his Cromwell in the guise of Viceroy Thame, the result is a retrial where the soldier is convicted to and sentenced to death. In his “failure to keep covenant with his opinion,” Arden alienates Ruth and, according to the narrator, grows “a little more formal and official, a little greyer and sadder” (218).

I should make it clear that Arden’s failure to act is not the result of a personal weakness. He is, as I have said, consistently described as the paragon of Anglo-Indian virtue. In fact, what little resistance he does put up against the Viceroy’s will is seen by the Anglo-Indian community as foolishly courageous. His colleagues presume he has ruined his prospects and his assistant eulogises him as “a pyrotechnic sacrifice to an opinion” (162). The disciplined community of officials thus described cannot entertain the possibility of real heroic action since they are more automatons than autonomous. Similarly, the love-story of Ruth Pearce and Eliot Arden collapses because at the decisive moment, neither character is capable of decisive action. This is not to say that they do not recognise or value heroism. Far from it. For instance, when Ruth compares the opinions of Arden and the Viceroy she admits she admires the latter: “The Viceroy’s is the more heroic attitude because it is the more unpleasant” (156).
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The difficulty for characters like Arden and Ruth is that they have been conditioned to live and work in the shadow of the Viceroy, finding their Virtue not in their own agency but in his magnificence. As the narrator describes it:

[The Viceroy] stands for the idea, the scheme, and the intention to which they are all pledged; and through the long sacrifice of the arid years something of their loyalty and devotion and submission to the idea gathers in the human way about the sign of it. (84)

At first it might seem odd that I have included Ruth among those under the Viceroy’s symbolic influence. After all she has no official position in and therefore no direct obligation to Anglo-Indian society. She is additionally the most assertive character in the novel, a woman who speaks “fearlessly, with [a] disregard of everything but the issue.” As proof, when Arden asks “You think there is no room for the speculation how far one is entitled to come between the ruler and his conscience?” Her reply is decisive: “None at all” (185).

One might presume that the free-thinking Dr Pearce is capable of independent action but at the end of the novel when, in an echo of the dossier scene, she has the fate of the Viceroy literally in her hands, the distant notes of “God Save the King” induce a curious response. This faint pageant is enough to convince her to withhold the letter that would otherwise reveal to Victoria Tring that the man condemned to death by her fiancé is, in fact, her estranged brother Herbert in disguise. So what do we make of Ruth’s final act? Why does the woman with no official obligation, and with better reason than most
for discrediting the Viceroy, why does this woman throw the letter of a dying man into the fire? She burns it without hope of recognition or satisfaction. Having never expressed any loyalty to the empire in the first place, having always insisted on the significance of one’s conscience, she breaks a deathbed promise and consigns a condemned man’s last words into oblivion. In the end, she sacrifices “her sense of duty” in a “curious little holocaust” to preserve the honour of the Indian Empire (271). If nothing else, her Pavlovian defence of the chief executive triggered by the distant trill of the national anthem confirms just how deeply Duncan thinks corporate discipline has sedimented in Anglo-Indian society.

I would like to conclude by returning to Victoria Tring’s suggestion in the Aganippe Club, that liberals should trust “the man on the spot”. The problem is that in India, the man on the spot is a colonial agent whose trustworthiness his employers have systematically presumed negligible. Trust is the radical singularity which the East India Company could not confront when it designed the corporate discipline for Anglo-Indian society. Instead, it carefully crafted the illusion of agency, including especially the secret heroism of the romantic Anglo-Indian novels that Duncan so clearly distances herself from. When Arden yields to the Viceroy’s will he becomes “aware of a loss of significance; a familiar deadly conviction overcame him that he was a convention of the Indian Civil Service, and nothing more” (190). What I hope to have shown is that Duncan’s novel reveals a society whose ethics have been overdetermined by a sense of duty to an idea. The idea is noble, to be sure, but for Anglo-Indians it is not a source of strength; rather, its pursuit cripples the novel’s central characters by stripping them of individual agency. The pathetic, anti-romantic fate of the protagonists, who surrender
both justice and their consciences to duty, testifies to Duncan’s dissatisfaction with existing imperial structures. So often, Anglo-Indian writers, just as Wellesley, Malthus and Macaulay before them, describe individual agents as cogs in a machine. In failing to indulge in rage against the machine, the middle-class agents of empire concede that they have invested too much of themselves in corporate structures. Thus, whether through caricature, satire, or melancholia, the fiction of Anglo-India anticipates modernity by circulating amongst its readership what would become the defining feature of middle-class employees of large modern organisations: self-pity.
Chapter 4

The Unmaking of a Company Man in Rudyard Kipling’s Kim

The game is more than the player of the game,
And the ship is more than the crew
—Rudyard Kipling, “A Song in Storm”

In relation both to Kipling’s oeuvre and to the conventions of Victorian fiction, Kim (1901) is an exceptional text. Edmund Wilson, the first twentieth-century critic to take Kipling’s work seriously, called it Kipling’s “only successful long story” (100). Kipling likewise seemed unsure what to think of it, calling it plotless and adding that the narrative required an author with the skill of Cervantes.136 Playing with the idea of Kim-as-picaresque, Kipling even suggests that the eponymous hero practically wrote the novel himself. “The only trouble,” he confesses in his autobiography, “was to keep him within bounds” (140). Kipling’s fantasy of limitlessness requires qualification however, because it is important to remember that in Kim’s picaresque travels, the tour d’horizon is not a tour du monde: the novel remains firmly bounded within the sociological unity of British India. Because of these bounds, Kim has since been described as one of the archetypal novels in the canon of colonial literature. In his famous introduction to the novel, Edward Said has argued that Kim naturalises British hegemony precisely by confusing a colonial state of affairs for a universal portrait of reality.

By its reference to realism, Said’s argument suggests why this story had to be a novel. At the time he wrote Kim, Kipling was an Indian expatriate and I am inclined to think that his desire for a self-fashioned, re-membered home explains Kim’s genre, why he felt it necessary to move away from the short-story form, which had elsewhere made

136 For Kipling’s assertion of Kim’s picaresque qualities, see Something of Myself (138-142).
his literary reputation. *Kim* had to be a novel because, if we follow Lukács’s general theory, only the novel has the generic capacity to produce sociological units so complex that they mirror entire worlds (*Theory of the Novel* 70-1). Additionally, because of its interdependent relationship with the bourgeoisie, the conventional nineteenth-century novel is heavily invested in the manufacture of new worlds, with social invention, exploration, change, and reform.\(^{137}\) As Nancy Armstrong has recently argued, that social class and this genre supported each other not only to eradicate aristocratic or feudal worldviews but also to suppress alternative forms of modern subjectivity.\(^{138}\) Thus in opening with an orphaned protagonist who is preternaturally skilled at mimicking and is known as the “Little Friend of all the World” (5), Kipling seems to have polished a perfectly clear lens to apprehend what Said calls a “consolidated vision” of British colonial India.

Said is one of many critics who have interrogated Kipling’s allegedly accurate representation of India, applying his famous “Orientalism” thesis to argue that *Kim* does not describe India as it actually was but rather as Kipling would like it to be seen.\(^{139}\) Crucial to Said’s analysis is the preternatural skill of Kim, whose mutability is understood as a colonialist’s fantasy: a white man who can think, speak, and act like a native. Since Said’s pathbreaking re-reading of the novel, most readers have agreed that *Kim* is organised around the maturation of an orphaned bazaar boy into a potential

\(^{137}\) This to me is the basis for both Benedict Anderson’s argument about the contributing role of novels in the formation of national consciousness and Nancy Armstrong’s belief that the novel invented what we now think of as “natural” modern individual subjectivity.

\(^{138}\) In *How Novels Think* (2006), Armstrong suggests that certain forms of fiction created an empowered subject—a witty, wilful, or energetic character—that was able to change the existing social order and acquire the social credit commensurate with their talents. Once the novel had created this figure, readers understood their own identity in terms of narrative that worked towards the production of a self-governing, self-aware subject.

\(^{139}\) For similar arguments, see JanMohammed and Roy.
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colonial agent. In fact, despite Kipling’s appeal to the picaresque, it is difficult to think of a character in Victorian fiction more explicitly conscious of his subject formation than Kimball O’Hara. After all, there are few *bildungsromans* which prompt their heroes to ask, on three separate occasions, “Who is Kim?” (101, 156, 234). On the one hand, Kim is a colonial Proteus, able to assume many shapes, speak many languages, and perform many cultural identities at his whim. On the other, he lacks the confidence of Poseidon’s son and frequently lapses into the existential doubt caused by his mutability.

In the postcolonial appraisal of the novel, Kim’s fluctuating identity provides an analogy for understanding the function of colonial discourse. While the character and the author maintain that they are in control of dynamic and fluctuating situations, they are in fact neurotically or anxiously struggling to stamp an order on an object that is, ultimately, ambivalent. The postcolonial emphasis on the ambivalence of discourse and subjectivity, in turn, has enabled Kipling’s readers to illuminate the destabilising effects of colonial discourse, culture, and responsibility on the psyche of this boy, “a poor white of the very poorest” (3). While the critical emphases of individual studies may vary—encompassing race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and philosophical affiliation—nearly all scholarship takes Kim’s ambivalent subjectivity as a point of departure. There is nothing controversial in this since from the beginning of the novel Kipling has deliberately fashioned a boy with no history other than a few papers asserting his parentage, a boy who belongs to no country or creed and so is seemingly able to permeate all.

It would go too far to accept Kim as the colonialist fantasy for a pure subject, which can only be subverted from within by pointing to the ambivalence of colonial discourse. More simply, Kim is not Defoe’s Crusoe, a character capable of fashioning a
world through his industry and wit. Even as Kipling insists that *Kim* is “nakedly picaresque,” we must also recognize the limits to Kim’s putatively raw and uninhibited subjectivity. In other words, while Kim is “vagabonding over India,” it is not of his own accord; rather, his mobility is managed and his access to India is contingent upon his submission to other authorities. The lama puts him on the road to Benares; Mahbub Ali commissions him with the secret message which brings him into contact with the Colonel; the Colonel intervenes to allow Kim his wandering holidays; and employment in the Government’s Indian survey—the euphemism for the British secret service—which shuttles him across India. Without any of this, Kim might still lay claim to the title of “Little Friend of all the World,” but his world would be limited to the environs of Lahore.

Kim’s loose sense of identity is also reflected in the structure of the novel. Despite containing a series of adventures relating the moral, spiritual, intellectual, and physical growth of a young man, *Kim* defies the conventions of both the Victorian triple-decker and the *bildungsroman* of the wider nineteenth-century European tradition. If we take representative examples from these traditions, say, Dickens’s *David Copperfield* and Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, we quickly perceive why *Kim* does not fit: the protagonist’s journey from innocence to experience is incomplete. The incompleteness is apparent structurally as well, since at the last moment, the narrator shifts his attention from Kim to the boy’s spiritual mentor, Teshoo Lama. In the final scene the Buddhist monk, having reached enlightenment and merged with the Great Soul, has returned to the earthly plane so that his disciple, Kim, will not miss the Way: “Son of my Soul, I have wrenched my Soul back from the Threshold of Freedom to free thee from all sin—as I am free, and sinless. Just is the Wheel! Certain is our deliverance. Come!” (240).
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Where a conventional novelist would proceed to a resolution, relating the response of the protagonist either through direct speech or indirect narratorial comment, Kipling pushes Kim to one side. The next and final line—"He crossed his hands on his lap and smiled, as a man may who has won Salvation for himself and his beloved,"—speaks only of the metaphysical satisfaction of an old man who has always been secure in his identity and purpose (240). Critics have cited this awkward ending as proof of Kipling’s own divided loyalties. The lama, as Mark Kinkead-Weekes imagines in his formalist reading, would have initially been “a personality almost at the furthest point of view from Kipling himself” (215). But in an instance of the triumph of artistry over intention, the lama’s “negative capability” overwhelms even Kipling himself, preventing the author from giving the last word to his intended subject (221). Edmund Wilson argues the ambivalent ending is the only possibility remaining to an author who throughout the novel has refused to allow his primary antagonists to come into conflict. Because Colonel Creighton’s benevolent imperialism never clashes with the lama’s benevolent mysticism, Wilson says we should be unsurprised that no “final victory or synthesis [is] allowed to take place” (101). Whereas Wilson argues that Kipling’s traumatic childhood left the author disinclined towards confrontation, Edward Said’s materialist interpretation of Kim against contemporary imperial politics contends that the conflict is unresolved “not because Kipling could not face it, but because for Kipling there was no conflict” (CI 146). For Said, the strange conclusion is not so much a fault of Kipling’s aesthetic but of

140 Compare this to the final line of David Copperfield, spoken of course by David, which reveals the culmination of the protagonist’s moral, emotional, and spiritual development: “Oh Agnes, oh my soul, so may thy face be by me when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me like the shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward!” (877). Similarly, consider the conclusion of Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship: “‘I know not the worth of a kingdom,’ answered Wilhelm; ‘but I know I have attained a happiness which I have not deserved, and which I would not change with anything in life’” (542).
his politics, a symptom of “a great artist blinded by his own insights about India, confusing the realities that he saw...with the notion that they were permanent and essential” (CI 162). Zoreh T. Sullivan picks up these critics’ shared theory of Kipling’s involuntary incapacity in her divination of the aesthetic paralysis produced by “Kipling’s divided sense of self, its multiple loyalties to the power of empire...and his love for a lost India” (148). Thus Sullivan critiques Kipling’s “final evasion” as “a luminous freeze-frame” which “leaves Kim and the reader hanging in mid-air” (177-78). Like Wilson and Said, Sullivan chides Kipling for allowing “all that has been solid” to melt “into the air of visionary illusion and prayer” (177).

While all these critics are linked by their identification of Kipling as an artist suffering from a form of paralysis or indecisiveness, more recent critics have begun to trace ideological maneuvers of real substance operating in this seemingly static ending, in order to suggest that Kipling is re-visioning empire, or creating a new form of imperial subjectivity or identity.141 Certainly this is the thesis of John Kucich’s Imperial Masochism (2006), which places Kim alongside Stalky & Co. and the early short-stories as part of Kipling’s project to replace mid-century Tory imperialism with that of lower-middle-class technocratic professionals. Sullivan makes a similar gesture by saying that the unresolved conclusion “is also a beginning, or rather a colonial fantasy that suggests an impossible origin for a new colonialist, one with a split sense of the constitution of the self, who disavows difference from the native, yet knows otherwise” (177). Coeval with Sullivan’s reading, Anne McClintock’s Imperial Leather (1996) builds on Homi

141 And for what it’s worth Kipling gave his own measure of the conclusion in a letter dated 11 November 1902: “As to Kim, I don’t see myself that the Lama died, nor do I see any sign of the old man’s dying. My own idea is that in the fullness of time we may learn how Kim went on with his somewhat unusual career” (“To Edward Lucas White” Letters III: 111).
Bhabha’s famous description of colonial mimicry and calls Kim “an urchin mimic man” who represents “a reformed colonial control” (70). John McBratney provides a rough approximation of Sullivan’s “new colonialist” in his study of Kipling’s representation of the country-born. In his view, *Kim* is part of Kipling’s vision for a broader basis of imperial citizenship, one that is not dependent on the arbitrary features of English nationality but instead on locally-inflected versions of what Charles Dilke would call Greater Britishness. In McBratney’s argument, through figures like Kim, “Kipling hopes that the country-born may preserve the eclectic identity that makes him so deeply familiar with indigenous culture, so promising a ruler of Indians, and so suggestive of what a more ethnically plural British citizen might be” (xx-xxi).

Energising this new line of thought is Said’s imperative that *Kim* be read not as a representative example of British imperialism generally but of British imperialism in India at a particular point in history:

> A remarkable complex novel like *Kim* is a very illuminating part of that history, filled with emphases, inflections, deliberate inclusions and exclusions as any great work of art is, and made the more interesting because Kipling was not a neutral figure in the Anglo-Indian situation but a prominent actor in it. (*CI* 135)

However because Said’s followers have rushed to historicize the milieu of *fin-de-siècle* jingo-imperialism, or to elaborate Kipling’s plans for the empire’s future, I cannot help but wonder whether they have duly considered the tradition out of which *Kim* emerged or, in other words, the bounds of the novel’s sociological unity. At the very least,
McBratney and to a lesser extent both McClintock and Sullivan seem unaware that what they are calling the new form of imperial administrator, a local expert who possesses a split sense of self, is hardly different from Edmund Burke's insistence a century earlier that Britons not impose British institutions on India but should rather govern it by a British spirit that is sensitive to local traditions.

Part of the problem, I think, is the prevailing tendency to separate *Kim* from the rest of Kipling's work. John McClure, for example, distinguishes between Kipling's realistic (albeit ironical) short stories of "official" Anglo-India and the mythic fantasy operating in *Kim*. He rightly points out that the early stories were written for an Anglo-Indian audience, whereas *Kim* was written in England, when Kipling was an international celebrity—the author of among other things the nationalist hymn "Recessional" (1897) and the poem written to encourage the United States to intervene in the Philippines, "The White Man's Burden" (1899). Naturally, the allusions to corporate culture made by a precocious young writer looking to establish his reputation among his own people would make little sense to his international audience. Postcolonial readings of Kipling's mature fiction have instead concentrated on his imperial audience and the commodification of his writing within a global network of anglophonic cultural production. In these accounts, Kipling's representation of British India is a precise analogue of the Indian Civil Service (which inspired and became the model for the Overseas Civil Service); both are locally specific institutions whose practices could be generalised and adapted to other conditions.\(^{142}\)

\(^{142}\) Benita Parry, writing long before the rise of postcolonial criticism, was among the first to recognise how Kipling's fiction provided a set of metaphors and practices robust enough to have general applicability in political situations as diverse as South Africa, Canada, the Philippines, Jamaica (32). Elleke Boehmer thinks of Kipling as "the canny interpreter of the imperial imagination" (26) and John Kucich argues that
But *Kim* cannot be disentangled from Kipling’s Indian heritage and experience. In *Something of Myself*, Kipling describes how “in a gloomy, windy autumn *Kim* came back to me with insistence and I took it to be smoked over with my Father” (139). Kipling credits these nostalgic conversations with his father as the origins of the novel: “Between us, we knew every step, sight, and smell on [Kim’s] casual road, as well as all the persons he met” (140). This romantic recollection of an India perfectly re-membered by stories told between father and son, closes the referential loop started when Sara Jeannette Duncan conjoined imagination with “my people” in her short story “A Mother in India”: “They belonged to Bengal and to Burma, to Madras and to the Punjab, but they were all my people. I could pick out a score that I knew in fact, and there were none that in imagination I didn’t know” (63). My purpose in this chapter is to place Kipling back among his own people and re-situate *Kim* as a colonial novel which despite its metropolitan attachments cannot ultimately escape the corporate worldview of Anglo-Indian society. I will do this by revisiting Kipling’s mediation of the paradoxically powerful protagonist finding himself unable to make a decisive choice and reading him, to switch to the vocabulary of the previous chapters, as a plenipotentiary colonial official in the midst of an agency crisis.  

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Kipling “synthesized the ideological language of distinct middle-class metropolitan constituencies” in order to “broaden and solidify the social base of support for British imperialism” (35).

143 It is almost a cliché to observe that Kipling is a controversial genius who elicits strong opinions from his readers. Though there are those who condemn his racist and imperialist views and others who would rehabilitate his reputation, the consensus in this debate is that *Kim* is, and therefore should be read as, a colonial novel. There is however a third type of Kipling criticism, a small school who studiously ignore the Indian and imperial context. See for example William B. Dillingham’s *Rudyard Kipling: Hell and Heroism* (2005).
Agency Crises

The critical response to Kim’s famous question furnishes an excellent opportunity to demonstrate my point. Here is Kipling’s opening to the eleventh chapter:

Followed a sudden natural reaction.

“Now am I alone—all alone,” he thought. “In all India is no one so alone as I! If I die today, who shall bring the news—and to whom? If I live and God is good, there will be a price upon my head, for I am a Son of the Charm—I, Kim’

A very few white people, but many Asiatics, can throw themselves into a mazement [sic] as it were by repeating their names over and over again to themselves, letting the mind go free upon speculation as to what is called personal identity. When one grows older, the power, usually, departs, but while it lasts it may descend upon a man at any moment.

“Who is Kim—Kim—Kim?” (156)

In her analysis of the novel, McClintock characterises this incident as “ethnic vertigo,” a part of Kipling’s attempt to represent and thereby manage the threat of racial crossings (71). For McClintock, “On the cusp of cultures, denizen of the threshold zones of bazaar, rooftop and road, Kim is both cultural hybrid and racial mimic man” (69). This choice of modifiers (cultural, racial) in this argument indicates the mainstream of Kipling criticism. To date, nearly all critics of Kim read his ambivalence as a function of the struggle between, in Patrick Williams’s words, Kim’s “culturally Indian and naturally British”
identities (50). Deanna K. Kreisel, for example, links this persistent struggle for a stable, national identity to the novel’s trance scenes, “which are always occasioned by a sudden confrontation with [Kim’s] own ‘hybridity,’ the fact that he is not fully European and not fully Indian” (32). Against these tendencies, however, it might be better to re-read this crisis-of-identity scene within the context of the novel and ask why Kipling would choose this moment to cast his protagonist into uncertainty. To begin, we could casually observe that Kim asks similar questions and confronts his hybridity elsewhere in the novel, without succumbing to either magical trances or ethnic vertigo. Similarly, there is nothing in or around this particular scene which suggests that Kim has been “explicitly...confronted with emblems or reminders of racial crossings” (Kreisel 33).

On the contrary, this crisis-of-identity scene immediately follows the conclusion of Kim’s institutional training, understood dually as his matriculation from St Xavier’s school and his subsequent initiation into the fraternity of native secret service agents known as the Sons of the Charm. Moreover, Kim has been unbound and let loose upon India by Colonel Creighton, who has decreed that “For six months he shall run at his choice...[and be paid] twenty rupees a month” (148). Up until this point in the novel, Kim has been described as a free agent, a bazaar boy who distinctly dislikes being ordered about. Thus it seems strange that at this moment, the day of Kim’s greatest freedom, Kipling deflates the hero’s agency by describing instead how Kim falls “rapt” into a trance-like state where, instead of going where he pleases, he sits still and contemplates “the tremendous puzzle” of his life.

144 This is not only the case for postcolonial critics but also for earlier respondents. Here is Edmund Wilson’s assessment of the (in his opinion, flawed) conclusion: “Now what the reader tends to expect is that Kim will eventually come to realize that he is delivering into bondage to the British invaders those whom he has always considered his own people, and that a struggle of allegiances will result” (100).
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In this case, the novel gives very little suggestion that Kim’s crisis is prompted by cultural, racial, or national hybridity. Rather, what we have is an adolescent boy thrust out of his training college and enduring the anguish of isolation for the first time in his life. In short, we have a fictional reworking of the experience of just about every newly-trained civil servant in Anglo-Indian history. As I elaborate these historical echoes, I am less interested in refuting Kim’s ambivalence than in asking whether a new set of questions might direct our attention away from the dialectic of cultures (British/Indian) and races (European/native) and towards the Anglo-Indian community of colonial administrators. Instead of reading *Kim* as a novel of ethnic or cultural crisis written, as Said has ruled, just as Britain’s hegemony was beginning to feel the pressures from below that would culminate in Indian Independence, I want to suggest that it should also be read as a reworking of the issues, ideas, and ethics which over the course of the nineteenth century became the constituent elements of what I have been calling Anglo-India’s corporate culture.

*Orphans and Pure Subjectivity*

Any discussion of Kim’s subjectivity must begin with his status as an orphan, a pedigree disclosed in the opening chapter but also recalled, lest we forget, halfway through the narrative (3-4, 139). If we agree with Nancy Armstrong that there is a “constitutive relationship” between the novel and the modern subject, then we can argue that orphans—thought of as raw subjects uninterpellated by domestic institutions—provide deep reservoirs of potentiality out of which the authors might fashion their social message.
Certainly if we are looking for confirmation that the Victorians were deeply interested in how material conditions affected the development of human beings, one could do worse than observe the frequency of orphans in the major novels of the period. Heathcliff, Jane Eyre, Pip, Oliver Twist, Marian Halcombe, and Daniel Deronda: all are orphans and each is the subject of intense psychological scrutiny by their respective creators and readers. The orphan, moreover, seems especially well-suited to the genre of the novel because orphans begin relatively unencumbered by the cultural inheritance of conventional families. Admittedly this is a simplification since orphans neither enter nor live in the world in vacuo, unaffected by adopted or extended family networks. Yet because orphans are generally inoculated against the accidents of birth, they are excellent subjects for authors seeking to represent the effects of institutions on the soul or character.

As Said has argued, especially in the case of the novel, beginnings are preferable to origins, because a beginning can be chosen while an origin can only be acknowledged. Thus it is unsurprising to see orphans predominate in novels concerned with social reform: more than other characters, orphans are more easily recognised by readers as, in the Heideggerian sense, always "becoming." However, the case of the Victorian orphan supplies a cautionary tale for those who celebrate radical potentiality as the only path to liberation. According to Laura Peters, precisely because they lacked families, orphans (both real and fictional) also threatened the established socio-economic order. This placed orphans at the mercy of the most intense institutional forms of discipline and punishment.

Armstrong is not the only but simply the most prominent exponent of this argument. Originality must be ceded, on the one part, to Armstrong’s theoretical indebtedness to both Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser. On the other part, Armstrong’s general point was made nearly twenty years earlier, albeit in a form limited to incarceration, by John Bender in *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (1989).
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Using Jacques Derrida’s illumination of Plato’s *pharmakos* as an analogue, Peters emphasizes the ambivalent position of orphans in Victorian society. The orphan, she insists, “plays a pharmaceutical function in Victorian culture,” a surplus that acts as both poison and cure (18).¹⁴⁶

This assertion should and must be read more broadly, for it merely places orphans on par with other social undesirables, including the ever-fertile working classes and Irish immigrants to name only two, which were thought threatening by the bourgeois order. What differentiates orphans—and I think this is Peters’s crucial but unstated point—is that they are not explicitly Other. Orphans, generically speaking, are separated from the regular domestic order only by their lack of parents; unlike other marginal groups, they do not necessarily bring pre-existing class or racial interest into the discussion. In short, they could, conceivably, be “one of us”. Better equipped to “pass” in bourgeois civil society, the orphan thus becomes the object of ever more anxious scrutiny until, according to Peters, “the orphan embodies a surplus excess to be expelled to the colonies. This expulsion works to reinforce notions of belonging in Victorian culture” (18-19). Of course Victorian politicians and novelists were not the first to recognize the use-value

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¹⁴⁶ Admittedly, Peters takes Derrida far too literally. The object of “Plato’s Pharmacy” is to show that the multiple meanings of *pharmakos* (as poison, cure, recipe, drug) make inter-linguistic translation impossible, and from there to speculate the impossibility of communicating true meaning intra-linguistically:

It will also be seen to what extent the malleable unity of this concept, or rather its rules and the strange logic that links it with its signifier, has been dispersed, masked, obliterated, and rendered almost unreadable not only by the imprudence or empiricism of the translators, but first and foremost by the redoubtable, irreducible difficulty of translation. It is a difficulty inherent in its very principle, situated less in the passage from one language to another, from one philosophical language to another, than already, as we shall see, in the tradition between Greek and Greek; a violent difficulty in the transference of a non-philosophe into a philosophe. With this problem of translation we will thus be dealing with nothing less than the problem of the very passage into philosophy. (71-72)
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contained within the radical potential of orphans. As figures who were not quite fully English, orphans have always made ideal candidates for imperial service.\footnote{For example, in the years before it acquired territorial power in India, the East India Company was a prominent patron of Coram’s Foundling Hospital, from whence it recruited many of its writers. In the age before Clive, life in India was not unlike that imagined by Hobbes regarding man in the state of nature. Young boys without family connection made attractive candidates for a life that was nasty, brutish, and short. What is more—and here the Company exceeds Hobbes—orphans were less likely to complain about being poorly remunerated. We should also note that the policy of recruiting orphans into Her Majesty’s Service also extends well into the twentieth century (at least in fiction). Ian Fleming’s MI6 agent, James Bond, is one of the more famous orphan agents.}

Recent scholars have not ignored the significance of Kim’s background. Teresa Hubel is certainly correct to observe that his orphan status, compounded with his Irish working-class heritage, places Kim outside the community of middle-class Anglo-Indian colonial administrators. Hubel argues that this makes Kim a vehicle through which Kipling can fantasise about cultural combination without threatening the middle-class British \textit{imperium} (235).\footnote{Hubel’s argument, which more generally proposes that Kipling symbolically appropriated the working-classes in order to fantasise about intercultural mingling, is not without its problems, however. For example, Hubel insists that “It is extraordinarily meaningful that in Kipling’s poetry and prose about the East, white working-class people are the only characters and speakers who ever suggest that the East is equal to the West—even that the East is better than the West” (246). Yet we need go no further than Kipling’s famous “The Ballad of East and West” (1889) to find a counterexample. Though it is granted that the opening lines insist that there will never be a true meeting of cultures, this poem is not written in Kipling’s working-class vernacular (like, say, “Gunga Din”). Moreover, the equality proposed in the poem is between a (Western) cavalry officer and an (Eastern) horse thief.} Her argument dovetails nicely with Edward Said’s characterisation of Kim as, in anthropologist Victor Turner’s phrase, liminal. Said asserts that “by holding Kim at the centre of the novel...Kipling can \textit{have} and enjoy India in a way that even imperialism never dreamed of” (\textit{CI} 155). Both Hubel and Said see Kim as a marginal yet safe, almost-but-not-quite-white figure who, through a series of minor transgressions followed by an assimilation, helps to maintain the established order of a society.

But any service an orphan might render in the elaboration of an ideology or social order is limited by the orphan’s willing participation. In the final analysis, orphans are
beholden to nobody and are thus free agents. In the novel, muting this agency is usually a rather simple task, since the author exerts total control over what a character says and does, and can thus suppress any rebellion. It is very peculiar then to see Rudyard Kipling, that apparently most ideologically-committed imperialist, do precisely the opposite by allowing his protagonist to comprehend his independence. We can now return to the crisis-of-identity scene and recall that before asking his existential question, Kim laments that “In all India is no one so alone as I! If I die today, who shall bring the news—and to whom?” (156). Remember too that this alienation, which Kipling calls “a natural sudden reaction,” paradoxically follows the two great initiation rituals of the novel (joining the Great Game and becoming a Son of the Charm). The moment when Kim has acquired more friends and colleagues than this bazaar boy has ever had, becomes the first point in the novel when Kim is aware of the full significance of his free agency. Likewise at the end of the novel, after foiling the Russian plot, the horizon of possibilities is endless for Kipling’s hero. Here again, instead of looking to his colleagues for support or validation, Kim considers the startling power of his independence.

In both these scenes, Kim’s glimpse of his radical potential is swiftly followed by psychological disturbances: a trance and aphasia, respectively. Both might be understood as anxiety attacks which occur when Kim feels himself separated from an ordered system. They appear to contradict our received portrait of Kim’s ability to do and succeed at whatever he pleases. If Kim is meant to be read as an ideal colonial servant (and I think he is) then it is surely significant that his agency is curtailed and his potency diminished on the threshold of his greatest successes. I would contend that Kipling grants Kim these moments of insight in order to represent his more general concern over the potentially
radical agency of colonial administrators. By making Kim confront the scale of his individual power—a scale so awesome that it literally overwhelms his consciousness—just after his entry into and successes in the corporate structures of power, Kipling acknowledges the tenuous hold that the idea of the virtuous empire exercises over the activity of company men.

To appreciate what Kipling is working towards in this representation, it will be helpful to recall the misadventures of Peachy Carnehan and Daniel Dravot, the protagonists of Kipling’s “The Man Who Would Be King.” Like Kim, these characters are of lower-class origins and have received a degree of basic training from imperial institutions. Peachy and Dravot use these skills to set up an independent enterprise with a view to making themselves kings in an Afghan province. In doing so, they act out of personal interest, which Kipling, ever the disciple of Carlyle, imputes as lust for power and money. Kim, alternatively, is more publicly-minded. For example, he willingly tosses the seized Russian equipment, worth in excess of “a thousand rupees” (212) into a gorge, reasoning that “a Sahib cannot very well steal” (211) and later refuses the Woman of Shamlegh, who offers her kingdom saying “Shamlegh is thine: hoof and horn and hide, milk and butter. Take or leave” (214). What is more, in refusing her, Kim speaks and acts like an English Sahib, kissing her on the cheek—something the narrator says is “practically unknown among Asiatics”—and holding “out his hand English-fashion” (435).

So where the pursuit of personal interest leads Carnehan and Dravot to disaster, Kim’s ability to regulate, even repress, his passions assures his success. In his decisions,

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149 And a thousand rupees is not an inconsiderable sum given that for “Two or three hundred rupees a year,” Kim can receive “the best schooling a boy can get in India,” board included, at St. Xavier’s (82).
then, Kim is not unlike Henry Broughton, the character from George Otto Trevelyan’s *Competition Wallah* viewed to possess the ideal psychological demeanour for imperial service. Broughton, we will recall, insists that he chose to apply for an Indian career not because he was interested in civilising India or in making a name for himself but because, for him, “the vital object to be looked for in the choice of a line in life [is] to select one that would present a succession of high and elevating interests” (Trevelyan 3). This axiom could very easily describe Kim as well, since he is introduced as someone who will “use his properties” (i.e., his skills) only when “there was business or frolic afoot” (7). Personal advancement or profit hardly ever enters his mind.

**School and Training: Establishing a self-perpetuating corporate ethos**

Kim suppresses these urges because, despite the novel’s picaresque qualities or Kim’s own boundless freedom and power, *Kim* is a novel overwhelmingly concerned with the problem of agency and man-management. I want to turn my attention now to the similarities between Kipling’s description of Kim’s education and the ideals for colonial training established by senior colonial authorities for the training and selection of new recruits. Beyond identifying how the principles of aristocratic virtue are disseminated through various disciplinary apparatuses, I will emphasise how Kipling suggests a model of surveillance where not only intruding Russians or the potentially seditious Five Northern Kings but also colonial agents find themselves under perpetual scrutiny.

To understand the behaviour of company men like Kim, it is helpful to think of how Kipling represents rules and the law in this novel. On the one hand, it is correct to say that Kipling, through Kim, seeks to establish order amidst India’s chaos. On the
other, part of Kipling's charm is the way he permits his protagonists to transgress the stated policies. Recalling the adventures of Stalky and Co. in "The Ambush," Kim seems constantly to be adventuring out of bounds. The key for Kipling's imperial ideology is striking a balance between these antagonistic positions, of attaining a sort of regulated anarchy. To slip into the eighteenth-century register of Edmund Burke, it is about cultivating men who will implement the spirit rather than the letter of the laws. In this context, philosopher Peter Winch's analysis of how humans understand and follow a rule is instructive. Winch argues that understanding denotes that an agent possesses the ability to apply a rule appropriately. Following Heraclitus we know that no two situations are equivalent, and so we admit that precedence alone is insufficient for our evaluation of what or when is appropriate. Competent agents must in the final extent intuit their actions based on their subjective understanding of the rules. (Winch speaks of the similar phenomenon where competent speakers within a language community know how to form intelligible, grammatical, yet unique sentences.) In the case of company men, where the novelty of India meant that appeals to tradition and precedence would likely be less frequent than that of, say, a London magistrate, this intuition or character becomes

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150 A collection of linked short-stories, Stalky and Co. (1899) opens with one wherein the unimpeachable characters of his protagonists are established. "The Ambush" introduces Stalky and Co. as three spirited boys who find the strict rules of their school somewhat overbearing and accordingly yearn for independence. This desire leads them to trespass on the neighbouring estate of Colonel Dabney where, under the pretence of gathering specimens for the school's Natural Historical Society, they smoke tobacco and idle about. Eventually they are rumbled by King, master of one of the school's rival houses, who, in Stalky's words, "want[s] to catch us flagrante delicto" (18: 24). King's antipathy towards Stalky and Co. derives from his conviction that these boys are of a bad sort and, conjuring up the strongest invective one could attribute to the stereotype of a draconian house master, he brands them "Self-sufficient little animals!" (18: 19). The ambush of the section's title is the climax of the rivalry between King and the boys. Unlike the young fellowship who "had all Colonel Danby's estate to play with, and ... explored it with the stealth of Red Indians and the accuracy of burglars," King lacks subtlety and is duly captured for trespassing by the groundsman who brings his quarry before Dabney (18: 19). Dabney then berates King and his companions in an elaborate ritual humiliation, while the boys watch on from their secret hiding place with glee.

151 See Winch's discussion of rules in Chapter One Section 8 of The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy (1958).
especially important. A professional company administrator cannot know how to perform his duties by reference to a set of instructions or imperial policies, nor is the situation improved much by appeals to personal, informal experience. This was, of course, Edmund Burke’s point when he argued that intuition, which he understood as British character, rather than British institutions should form the basis for the colonial ethics.

In Kim, all the company men adhere to a set of rules, which they seem to apply intuitively. Their judicious knowledge of what must be done in a given situation contrasts the pedantic application of regulations by administrators such as Aurelian Mcgoggin. The way that Kim acquires his knowledge emphasises Kipling’s belief in the continuing importance of socialisation in the manufacture of imperial consciousness. Kim’s maturation, guided as it is by the advice he receives from his many father-figures, constitutes an exploration of how those rules are acquired. As first presented, precocious and impish, is Kimball O’Hara anything but pure intuition? At the beginning, his lack of interest in worldly affairs is partly a product of his natural inclination towards boyish games, the precursors to the colonial service known throughout the novel as “the Great Game.”

Developing this image, the coded conversations between Mahbub Ali and Colonel Creighton render the boy as a young horse, as when Mahbub recommends Kim to Creighton as an ideal candidate for the secret service: “when a colt is born to be a polo-pony, closely following the ball without teaching—when such a colt knows the game by divination—then I say it is a great wrong to break that colt to a heavy cart, Sahib” (98). However wiser men like Creighton are careful not to send a rough character, however

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152 J. A. Mangan’s The Games Ethic and Imperialism (1986) is an excellent history of Richard Wellesley’s brother’s famous statement about the virtues of the playing fields at Eton. Mangan shows how games like rugby and cricket taught men to complete tasks in dynamic non-linear environments, by autonomously exercising their skills in a cooperative way for the benefit of the collective.
naturally adept, into the field without a sense of the rules. Thus while Kim is chela to the lama, he is also variously apprenticed to experienced practitioners of the Great Game, men who teach him its rules. Creighton also adds that his informal tutelage must be augmented by a proper disciplinary atmosphere and so he insists that Kim attend a school.

In Kipling’s India, school can take three forms: the Military and Masonic Orphanages initially favoured by Father Victor and Reverend Bennett (82); the barrack-school for children of enlisted soldiers (91); and St Xavier’s, school for “the sons of subordinate officials in the Railway, Telegraph, and Canal services; of warrant-officers..., of captains of the Indian Marine, Government pensioners, planters, Presidency shopkeepers, and missionaries” (106). Of these three, St Xavier’s (by its name presumably run by Jesuits) is acknowledged as “the best schooling a boy can get in India” (155) and its positive influence on Kim has been greatly underestimated by critics. Perhaps because of Kim’s restless nature elsewhere in the novel, manifested especially in his desire to escape from the “three days of torment...in the big echoing white rooms” of the Irish Mavericks’ regimental school house, Kim is presumed to be disposed against all types of formal instruction (91). Despite puzzling claims by Edward Said, that St Xavier’s imposes a “useless authority” (CI 137), and John Kucich, that Kim alternates between feelings “condescension” and “contempt” (190) towards its schoolboys, Kipling makes it clear that St Xavier’s is a special type of school. His approval of its methods reflects the fact that, with the exception of school dinners, Kim enjoys his time there.

Primarily this is expressed through the image of the school as a collection of similarly disposed but unrelated trainees who build their community through storytelling.
CHAPTER FOUR

At St Xavier's, Kim develops a fraternity with his schoolmates as they relate "their adventures, which to them were no adventures, on their road to and from school that would have crisped a Western boy's hair." On occasion of these incendiary tales, involving tigers, floods, and elephant-requisitions,

Kim watched, listened, and approved. This was not the insipid, single-word talk of drummer-boys. It dealt with a life he knew and in part understood. (106)

This is not the first instance in Kipling's fiction of bonds being formed through storytelling. "At the End of The Passage" (1891) sits in on one of the periodic meetings of four civil servants who "were not conscious of any special regard for each other," but who cling to each other, swapping stories, rather than confront the abyss of their isolation. In both this story and Kim, the community of autobiographical storytellers establish a standard for behaviour through their shared experiences. In this environment Kim "quietly ... measured himself against his self-reliant mates" (106). The narrator confirms Kim's favourable reaction to life at St Xavier's: "The atmosphere suited him, and he throve by inches" (106-7).

Appropriately in this novel so concerned with fashion and dressing-up, Kim's favour is expressed in the form of sartorial approval. On the one hand, back in the barrack school Kim must dress as a "little scarlet figure" and he feels that "Trousers and jacket crippled body and mind alike" (91). On the other hand, when St Xavier's issues him "a white drill suit ... he rejoiced in the new-found bodily comforts as he rejoiced to use his sharpened mind over the tasks they set to him" (107). The joys are limned when Kim,
nearing his first set of holidays, thinks that “a barrack-school would be torment after St Xavier’s” (107). On another occasion, following Kim’s summer of training with Lurgan, the narrator observes that “Of all the boys hurrying back to St Xavier’s...none was so filled with virtue as Kimball O’Hara” (137).

St Xavier’s thus represented is an uncommon Indian school. The flourishing of knowledge, the sensitivity of the teachers, and the affability of the cohort make it seem closer to a Haileybury than the barrack-school where Kim “much disapproved of the present aspect of affairs, for this was the very school and discipline he had spent two-thirds of his young life in avoiding” (86). For the superior school, alternatively, Kim harbours only fond reminiscences. During his summer of vagabonding he cannot help “thinking of the neat white cots of St. Xavier’s all arow under the punkah,” a memory that “gave him joy” (116). Later, as he dreams of his future in the secret service, of being “almost as great as Mahbub Ali,” and stalking “Kings and ministers,” Kim remembers that “[m]eantime, there was the present, and not at all unpleasant fact of St Xavier’s immediately before him” (137). Kim even goes so far as to apologise to Mahbub for having earlier doubted the sense in sending him to school: “I say now, Hajji, that it was well done; and I see my road all clear before me to a good service. I will stay in the madrissah till I am ripe” (115).

Part of Kim’s affection for his alma mater derives from its institutional ethic; whereas at the barrack-school young boys are drilled in Gradgrindian facts, at St. Xavier’s aristocratic virtue is conspicuously cultivated. Its students are told “never [to] forget that one is a Sahib, and some day, when examinations are passed, one will command natives”; according to the narrator, this promise inspires Kim to learn, “for he
began to understand where examinations led” (107). Like the students at Malthus’s Haileybury or the candidates of Macaulay’s competition examination, Kim understands that the primary purpose of schooling is not to acquire knowledge but habits of industry, organization, and a desire to compete against his peers (he took a biography of Lord Lawrence as a prize for his proficiency in mathematics). He also begins to learn the proper codes of conduct befitting a secret service agent, as he explains to Mahbub that

The Colonel is the servant of the Government. He is sent hither and yon at a word, and must consider his own advancement. (See how much I have already learned at Nucklao!) (115)

The parenthetical boast confirms that the teachers at St Xavier’s do much more than train boys in facts. They seem also to have read their Burke, for Kipling represents them as having uncommon sensitivity towards the geographical and cultural specificity of India. “The country-born and bred boy has his own manners and customs,” Kipling writes of the typical Xavier’s student, “which do not resemble those of any other land; and his teachers approach him by roads which an English master would not understand” (105). So whereas Kim’s “quickness would have delighted an English master,” the teachers at St Xavier’s “know the first rush of minds developed by sun and surroundings” (107). Nevertheless, the education is not fully Oriental but rather a fusion of English character and Indian forms since, at the end of his time there, when he is about to undertake his appointment as a chain-man Kim receives, like Thomas Malthus’s Haileybury graduates, stern paternal warnings. In Kim’s exit interview, the Head cautions that there “is a great

153 Nucklao, i.e. Lucknow, the city of St Xavier’s School
deal of hard work before you,” and the narrator describes (sincerely) how Kim receives “much good advice as to his conduct, and his manners, and his morals” (149). It is also clear that St Xavier’s creates a strong sense of esprit de corps, since nowhere else in this novel does Kim respect boys of his age group. From Abdullah and Chota Lal toppled from Lahore’s Zam-zammah cannon in the novel’s opening allegory of imperial conquest; through the stereotypical regimental drummer-boy of the Irish Mavericks “loathed...from the soles of his boots to his cap-ribbons” (86); to the skilled Hindu boy apprenticed to Lurgan “cuffed” in anger (127); the boys who appear in this novel as rivals to Kim are as deeply loathed as they are eventually defeated. Not so the St Xavier’s boys who are never criticised and even reappear later in the novel, in connection with Kim’s pride in his accomplishments during his adventures. As Kim tramps through the hills with the lama, Kipling describes a process of physical maturation: “The hills sweated the ghi and sugar suet off his bones; the dry air, taken sobbingly at the head of cruel passes, firmed and built out his upper ribs; and the tilted levels put hard new muscles into calf and thigh” (194). Most importantly, though, as Kim endures this punishing regimen, he takes masochistic pleasure from it: “Then did Kim, aching in every fibre, dizzy with looking down, footsore with cramping desperate toes into inadequate crannies, take joy in the day’s march—such joy as a boy of St. Xavier’s who had won the quarter-mile on the flat might take in the praises of his friends” (194). On one level, this description of Kim’s masochistic pleasure is a piece of exemplary exposition on the Carlylean faith in the gospel of work. Kim signals his maturation by deriving manly satisfaction from private accomplishment where once, as a schoolboy, he would have sought the external validation of his peers. On the other hand, when Kim invokes the
admiration of the St Xavier schoolboys as the vehicle for his metaphor the passage reveals the extent to which Kim has *internalized* the ethic cultivated at St. Xavier’s.

Admittedly, St Xavier’s comprises only a part of Kim’s formal training; the other half occurs at Lurgan’s curiosity shop in Simla. Yet consistent with St Xavier’s, Lurgan’s more irregular institution registers the traces of Anglo-India’s corporate culture. Known as the Healer of Sick Pearls (with pearls and jewels being a codeword for students), Lurgan is responsible for preparing Indian natives for fieldwork in the Great Game; among others, the famous E23 is his protégé. On the first morning of their acquaintance, Lurgan tests “to see if there [is]—a flaw in the jewel” (131), by forcing Kim to look closely at the shards of a broken water jug and to describe what he sees. In Kipling’s stylized vision, this involves Lurgan encouraging Kim to see something that is not there, namely a reassembled jug, through the application of a mysterious pressure to the back of Kim’s neck. Lurgan’s grip is a “light touch” which paradoxically held “like a vice” so that Kim’s “blood tingled pleasantly through him” and “wave[s] of prickling fire raced down his neck” (130). Though Kipling never elaborates on what Lurgan has done to Kim, only to have Lurgan say that it is “not magic” (131), we know that with “each beat of his pulse” (130), Kim sees the jug coming back together. Should he believe the illusion, this would be a sign of his susceptibility to temptation and corruption. As Lurgan explains, “sometimes very fine jewels will fly all to pieces if a man holds them in his hand, and knows the proper way” (131).

However, Kipling proves Kim’s incorruptibility through a trick that would have pleased Edmund Burke greatly. Kipling informs us that throughout this trial “Kim had
been thinking in Hindi” and that when he takes “refuge in—the multiplication-table in
English,” Kim can extricate himself from Lurgan’s illusion:

The jar had been smashed—yess [sic] smashed—not the native word, he would
not think of that—but smashed—into fifty pieces, and twice three was six, and
twice three was nine, and four times three was twelve” (130).

From this passage it is clear that it is not only the practical and mechanical multiplication-
table which saves Kim but “the multiplication-table in English.” In other words Kim’s
escape is not simply the victory of (Western) scientific rationality over (Eastern) spiritual
mutability but rather the assertion of the relative practical values of different cultures.
Without Kim’s decision to use the word “smashed” in place of its Hindi analogue we
cannot know whether he would have broken the spell. Just as Edmund Burke insisted that
baptism in English character could inoculate company men against the temptations and
vice of Oriental despotism, so Kipling suggests that by judicious and timely appeal to
English character Kim becomes “the first who ever saved himself” from Lurgan’s illusion
(131)—Kim is also, of course, the first European ever to be trained by Lurgan and the
first who could ever use his English-ness as a defence.

English- or British-ness? The Location of Corporate Culture

By bringing Burke back into this discussion, I hope to do more than trace one line of
continuity across the nineteenth century imperial discourse. It is also to remind ourselves
of the arbitrary nature of the English (or British) identity itself, and especially its
contingency on cultural institutions. Thinking once more of the energy expended by administrators and educators like Wellesley, Malthus, and Macaulay in the direction of cultivating a particular character, and their attending confidence in the disciplinary apparatus of their choice, enables an interpretation of Kim’s success which moves away from the simple conclusion that Kim’s English-ness is something essential, natural, or bred in the bone. But this would seemingly run contrary to Kipling’s insistence on the first page that, despite his many “native” affectations, “Kim was white—a poor white of the very poorest” (3). As much as the Zam-zammah allegory, this opening declaration of Kim’s race has characterised recent approaches to the novel. McClintock, for instance, reads this scene as exemplary proof both of Kipling’s fascination with cross-cultural knowledge and understanding and of his simultaneous anxiety over the threat that the pure play of mutable imperial identities poses to the stability of imperial order. Endowing Kim with a British core, Kipling can allow his protagonist to immerse himself in all kinds of Indian practices, knowing that they are only temporary, idle, performances.

If we probe a little deeper into McClintock’s argument, it becomes less clear that Kipling places any virtue in essential racial identities. To begin with the contrary position, it is curious that despite McClintock’s interest in the collusion of transvestism and colonial surveillance that she does not even once mention the definitive cross-dressing scene in the novel. I refer here to the evenings of leisure in Lurgan’s shop:

After dinner, Lurgan Sahib’s fancy turned more to what might be called a dressing-up, in which game he took a most informing interest. He could paint faces to a marvel; with a brush-dab here and a line there changing them past
recognition...Lurgan Sahib had a hawk’s eye to detect the least flaw in the make-up; and lying on a worn teak-wood couch, would explain by the half-hour together how such and such a caste talked, or walked, or coughed, or spat, or sneezed, and, since ‘hows’ matter little in this world, the ‘why’ of everything. The Hindu child played this game clumsily. That little mind, keen as an icicle where tally of jewels was concerned, could not temper itself to enter into another’s soul; but a demon in Kim woke up and sang with joy at the changing dresses, and changed speech and gesture therewith. (134-5)

Aside from the masculine image of the hawk’s eye, this scene is as close as one can imagine a Tory imperialist like Rudyard Kipling ever gets to a high camp style. More pertinent, at least to McClintock’s argument if she had used it, is Kipling’s clear assertion here that the racialised Hindu boy lacks the ability to complete such a complicated trick. Only Lurgan and Kim, both of whom are described as Sahibs who are anything but Sahibs, are permitted by the anxious Kipling, the argument could be made, to pass.

However, against this position, we can observe that the nameless Hindu boy is not the only native who dresses up in the service of Her Majesty. More proficient and experienced is the Bengali babu, Mookerjee, who first meets Kim in Simla and is praised to Kim by none less than Lurgan, the master of disguise, deception, and detection:

From time to time, God causes men to be born—and thou art one of them—who have a lust to go abroad at the risk of their lives and discover news...These souls are very few; and of these few, not more than ten are of the best. Among these ten
I count the Babu, and that is curious. How therefore great and desirable must be a business that brazens the heart of a Bengali. (263)

The "thou" is Kim, the boy whose natural suitability for the service Mahbub confirms elsewhere when he confides to Colonel that "only once in a thousand years is a horse born so well fitted for the Game as this our colt" (274). Yet Mookerjee contradicts the equivalence of extraordinary talents with (British) racial background.

The standard view of Mookerjee is that he represents Kipling’s caricature of what the Russian spy calls “the monstrous hybridism of East and West,” (199) the Anglicized native whose origins are usually traced to Macaulay’s “Minute on Indian Education.” The stereotypical figure has appeared before in Kipling’s fiction (most famously in “The Head of the District”) and has more recently been denoted by postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha as a “mimic man,” the necessary historical product of ambivalent colonial discourse (87). For example, McClintock sees Mookerjee as “a risible mimic man…mimicry gone wrong” (70); Abdul JanMohamed calls his situation one of “absurdity” (69); Said says he is “the grimacing stereotype of the ontologically funny native, hopelessly trying to be like ‘us’” (153). None of these critics, whose work is ostensibly directed towards identifying moments of native resistance and agency within overwhelming structures of imperial power, are willing to attribute to Mookerjee the talents that they readily identify as part of Kipling’s idealisation of the proficient white male. That is to say, they refuse to consider the possibility that Mookerjee is faking it.

To evaluate this possibility, consider the public performance of the other characters who perform an uncharacteristic identity in order to achieve their true
objectives. Colonel Creighton, the man who commands armies in secret, is in public a man “easily cheated about a horse” a man who “is madder than most other Sahibs” (100). The same holds for Strickland, whom E23 calls “not less than the greatest” player of the Great Game, yet who appears in public as an “angry, stupid Sahib” prone to “strutting and twirling his dark moustache” (174-5). Kim, like the postcolonial critics, learns to see through these public facades, and even describes Creighton as “a man after his own heart—a tortuous and indirect person playing a hidden game” (100). It is baffling, therefore, that so no one has yet thought Mookerjee capable of the same feat, that Mookerjee plays the part of the cowardly Bengali babu just as easily and for the same ends as Creighton or Strickland play the part of the foolish sahib.

There is plenty of textual evidence to support this view. Consider how the stereotype enables this Bengali to ingratiate himself into the hunting party of the Russian and French spies. Consider too how easily Mookerjee shrugs off the stereotype when necessity requires it. Remember that Lurgan’s celebration of Mookerjee’s talents is said in retort to Kim’s impression of the “hulking obese Babu whose stockinged legs shook with fat” (135). Kim admits he does not “understand how he can wear many dresses and talk many tongues” (135). Yet Mookerjee consistently exceeds expectations. In the house of the Kulu woman, for instance

Kim looked on with envy. The Hurree Babu of his knowledge—oily, effusive, and nervous—was gone; gone, too, was the brazen drug-vendor of overnight. There remained—polished, polite, attentive—a sober, learned son of experience and adversity, gathering wisdom from the lama’s lips. (189-90)
Furthermore, though Mookerjee may insist to Kim that he is a “Bengali—a fearful man...awfully fearful” (187), the statement is later ironically undermined. Chasing the Russian and French spies through the hills, the narrator describes how “Hurree Babu, that ‘fearful man,’ had bucketed three days before through a storm to which nine Englishmen out of ten would have given full right of way” (196-7). Kim too finds his initial stereotypical assessment thwarted when he considers the peril Mookerjee undertakes by remaining with the Russian party after their documents have been stolen: “He makes a mock of them at the risk of his life—I never would have gone down to them after the pistol-shots—and then he says he is a fearful man” (234).

If we consider that Kimball O’Hara is a Celt who has learned the rule of strategically deploying (Anglo-Saxon) English character to his advantage, then we apprehend Mookerjee’s strategic manoeuvres. This Bengali differs from the stereotypical portrait painted in Kipling’s early fiction (an exemplary case being “The Head of the District”) because, like Kim, he has learned not simply the British forms but has learned the British character. Mookerjee knows the proverbial rules of the game, and has enough intuition to apply his knowledge judiciously. I am thinking in particular of the scene following Kim’s graduation, when Mahbub and Mookerjee arrange for Kim to have his “colour” changed by Huneefa the prostitute. There, just as Kim appealed to his multiplication-tables and English lexicon, Mookerjee refutes the devils invoked in the ceremony by calling them “dematerialised phenomena,” quoting Herbert Spencer, and “talking English to reassure himself” (152). In another important way, Mookerjee copies Kim’s strategic essentialism. For just as Kim negotiates his identity through a series of
positive statements—"I am a Sahib" (185) later becomes "I am not a Sahib. I am thy chela" (225)—Mookerjee vacillates between his allegiances.

Mookerjee’s proficiency evokes the moral of Kipling’s “The Ballad of East and West,” a poem remembered today for its opening couplet: “Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet, / Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment Seat.” That moral is actually contained in the next, less-well-remembered couplet: “But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, / When two strong men stand face to face, tho’ they come from the ends of the earth!” Britons and Indians may be irreparably separated, but Kipling’s poem develops a space where profession and talent (in the poem it is horsemen; in the novel it is secret service agents) can override the affiliations of, in the poet’s list, geography, nation, race, and class. Mahbub affirms this cosmopolitan and meritocratic sentiment when he tells Kim that “this matter of creeds is like horseflesh. The wise man knows horses are good—that there is a profit to be made from all” (121-22). But better still is the distinction Mookerjee draws between English and British as he briefs Kim on the Russian mission. The difference is drawn as Mookerjee explains his frustration that the Creighton would not simply “issue demi-official orders” to poison the intruding spies: “And Colonel Creighton, he laughed at me! It is all your beastly English pride. You think no one dare conspire. That is all tommy-rott.” Here not only does Mookerjee use English idioms to critique English behaviour but, in the next instant, both the case of the possessive pronoun and the modifier change as Mookerjee speaks of civil hospitality as “our British pride” (187). This switch, from yours to ours and from English to British, indicates an expansion of possible collaboration, as the community of accomplishment outlined in
“The Ballad of East and West,” appears in *Kim* as a collective of cooperating colonial subjects (Anglo-Saxons, Celts, Muslims, and Hindus) working together in the service of the British empire.

**Controlling the Radical Free Agent**

Identifying Kim O’Hara as a restless seeker and wanderer, Edward Said includes *Kim* within the late-Victorian aesthetic of disillusionment, noting that *Kim* is only separable from novels like *New Grub Street*, *Middlemarch*, and *Jude the Obscure* because of its optimism and its confidence. Unlike Gissing’s Edwin Reardon, Eliot’s Dorothea Brooke, or Hardy’s Jude Fawley, Kim successfully overcomes the obstacles which threaten his morale and his ability to progress in the existing social order. Said understands this success as a function of *Kim*’s imperial setting. Unlike domestic Britain whose green and verdant hills—the site of many a declaration of romantic subjectivity—were by the fin-de-siècle experiencing the full force of industrial capitalism, Kipling’s India, argues Said, continued to provide a practically limitless imaginative and geographical space:

For what one cannot accomplish in one’s own Western environment—where trying to live out the grand dream of a successful quest means coming against one’s own mediocrity and the world’s corruption and degradation—one can do abroad. Isn’t it possible in India to do everything? be anything? go anywhere with impunity? (159)
What Said seems to be saying is that where external circumstances cause other Victorian protagonists to slip into a crisis which leads, at best, to a compromised faith in their ability to fashion the world, Kim O’Hara is always, in the final analysis, master of his fate, his *kismet*.

Kim’s mastery, his ability to penetrate Indian communities and geographies as and when he pleases, should on the one hand be interpreted as a pure colonialist fantasy but it is equally important to consider how his agency is curtailed within the structure of administrative power. Sara Suleri advances this opinion by identifying “the terrifying absence of choice in the operations of colonialism” and diagnosing Kim as “an imperial casualty of more tragic proportions than he is usually granted” (116). In her reading, Kim’s Indian freedom is conditional on his submission to a higher order, the English set of practices regulated by Creighton.

Yet I am not so sure that Creighton’s supervening authority is as secure as this since Kipling himself devotes a good deal of this short book to scenes where the proverbial rules of the Great Game are disseminated. Kim consistently thinks of his relationship to Creighton in terms of a civil contract, a conception which differs strongly from the filial devotion he lavishes on the novel’s other two father-figures, Mahbub and the lama. We can appreciate Creighton’s relationship more clearly by comparing the official secret service with the unofficial fraternity of native-born agents known as the Sons of the Charm. The former is what Ferdinand Tönnies would call a civil society, something structured by artificial and soluble contracts; the latter a community, something tied by stronger bonds of fellow-feeling. In a civil society, a contract firstly presupposes parity between negotiating parties and it secondly confers the ability to
withdraw if the other party has violated the terms. Kim confirms the first presumption when he negotiates with the Colonel in Urdu and “actually dare[s] to use the *tum* of equals” (102). For the second part, we might look to Kim’s reaction when the Colonel encroaches on his holiday-time; his enjoyment of a perilous adventure with Mahbub Ali is curtailed “because—in defiance of the contract—the Colonel had ordered him to make a map of that wild, walled city” (143). Mahbub Ali warns the Colonel of the consequences: “If permission be refused to go and come as he chooses, he will make light of the refusal. Then who is to catch him?” (141-2). In short, the narrator suggests if Creighton fails to live up to Kim’s expectations, it follows that Kim will simply opt out of the contract and pursue other amusements and interests.

Creighton’s difficulty here is not dissimilar to the reality faced by the London Directors of the East India Company trying to manage their field agents. Both are aware that they exercise little direct control over their employees and so must resort to more indirect forms of man-management. This is why, despite his evident importance and influence in Kim’s life, the Colonel only speaks to the boy once after their initial meeting, and that is on the train to Lucknow where Kim will enrol in St Xavier’s. Here he dispenses advice on what not to do (i.e. sell information or act disrespectfully towards the natives), praises the boy’s “good spirit,” and promises him that if he diligently completes his duties, they shall meet again (101-2). Otherwise, though Creighton looms large, his influence on Kim is indirect. We know that he discusses Kim’s future with other members of the secret service and we also know that “often in the past few months” he “had caught himself thinking of the queer, silent, self-possessed boy” (109). Yet despite his alienation from his agent, it is hinted throughout the novel that he has intervened to
save Kim from punishment, an intervention which Kipling metonymises as the unseen “hand of friendship” which averts the “whip of calamity” (111). In this sense, like Miss Havisham of Dickens’s Great Expectations, Creighton is the absent authority under whose suspected scrutiny Kim regulates his behaviour. (For a Magwitch, Kipling gives us Teshoo Lama, the surprisingly resourceful mendicant who provides the funds for Kim’s excellent schooling at St Xavier’s.) Like Pip, Kim cannot prove whether Creighton is indeed the silent hand of friendship, but he is nonetheless convinced that this man knows everything about his life and has taken an active interest in monitoring its progress. Creighton haunts Kim’s thoughts and his conversations with Mahbub, Lurgan, and Hurree, with Kim always fearful that Creighton will “cast him off” (137).

Creighton metonymically stands for panoptic surveillance, the man who has rendered India transparent. In Said’s reading, this transparency is deployed to police India and its imperial subjects and, as such, “Creighton embodies the notion that you cannot govern India unless you know India” (CI 153). Colonel Creighton, the “ethnographer-scholar-soldier,” becomes the focus of Said’s analysis because he represents the “union of power and knowledge” (CI 183, 184). Said is certainly right that Kipling’s India appears as an impossibly complex social space put into order by colonial administrators committed to the Orientalist acquisition of knowledge about the land and its people. At times, as in the descriptions of the Grand Trunk Road, Kipling presents India as a teeming, incoherent mass of diverse humanity, structured with innumerable languages, cultures, and caste divisions. This is best shown as Kipling describes Kim’s first journey

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154 The figure of Creighton coincides with the revival of ethnological and anthropological studies in India during the reign of Viceroy Curzon (1899-1905). According to Bernard Groslier, in 1899 Curzon “energized” the Archaeological Survey of India with a speech full of Foucaultian rhetoric: “It is...equally our duty to dig and discover, to classify, reproduce and describe, to copy and decipher, and to cherish and conserve” (qtd. in Groslier 155-7).
on the road. At one point, Kim feels the Road rises a little, “so that one walked, as it were, a little above the country, along a stately corridor, seeing all India spread out to left and right” (56). From this slight vantage point, Kim apprehends briefly the Indian sublime but at this stage in the novel he is but one of many travellers on the road, a part of but unable to critically reflect on its meaning. The boy, as yet untutored, “felt these things, though he could not give tongue to his feelings” (56). After his training, however, Kim acquires the critical perspective which enables him both to survey and know India and so he will become the author of incredibly detailed, secret reports of cities like Jeysulmir (144). When he has been trained by Lurgan’s jewel game, Mookerjee’s rosary-bead division, and St. Xavier’s course in elementary surveying, Kim joins the fellowship of colonial administrators who study, know and then manage the jumble with a combination of rationality and respect for its diversity.

However, even more closely scrutinised than the India policed by the ethnographer-spies who “know the land and the customs of the land” (67) is the smaller community of ethnographer-spies themselves. And whatever desire critics might have to label *Kim* a novel about colonial surveillance, we have yet to take a full reckoning of the true object of their surveillance. I think this is something that Said hints at, but never explores, in his passing question on the fantasy of passing: “Was there ever a native fooled by the blue- or green-eyed Kims and T. E. Lawrences?” (*CL* 194-5). Said’s question is taken up more fully by Parama Roy in her study of the relation between “passing” and colonial surveillance. By considering the case of Richard Burton among others, Roy convincingly demonstrates that “going native” was successful only an
imperial fantasy; in fact, the natives always knew when an Englishman stained with tamarind juice was in their presence (20-1).

There are even suggestions in *Kim* that Kipling was aware of this impossibility since we should not overlook the fact that, on at least two occasions, Kim forgets which type of native he is impersonating and speaks incorrectly (157; 233). Elsewhere, though Kipling insists that Kim “found it easier to slip into Hindu or Mahommedan garb when engaged on certain businesses” (5), the novel gives no definitive indication that the natives are truly fooled by his costumes. On the contrary, when Kim asks Mookerjee how he was tracked from Simla to the house of the Kulu woman, the Bengali replies, “Oah. Thatt was nothing...all the common people know what you do...they know about you and the lama for fifty miles—the common people” (185). Indeed whether by his good looks or his actions, nearly every male native and certainly all the females seem to notice Kim.

I want to introduce Slavoj Žižek’s discussion of totalitarianism at this point because it helpfully points toward the true object of these exercises in “passing.” In associating Kipling with totalitarianism, I am exploring the lapsus in George Orwell’s 1942 essay, “Rudyard Kipling,” which considers “the shallow and familiar charge the Kipling was a ‘Fascist’” (75):

The “Fascist” charge has to be answered, because the first clue to any understanding of Kipling, morally or politically, is the fact that he was not a

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155 The inaccessibility of “true” native cultures by “passing” officials reminds me of nothing so much as Heisenberg’s principle on quantum mechanics: namely that the presence of an observer changes the system utterly so that the “true” or real object of scrutiny (whether the “spin” of subatomic particles or the “behaviour” of the natives) inevitably evades detection.
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Fascist. He was further from being one than the most humane or the most “progressive” person is able to be nowadays. (75)

Orwell does not propose to canonise Kipling, or to celebrate his politics, but rather chooses to identify “his confidence, his bouncing vulgar vitality,” in empire as a basically liberating (i.e. enlightenment) project:

Imperialism as he sees it is a sort of forcible evangelizing. You turn a Gatling gun on a mob of unarmed ‘natives,’ and then you establish ‘the Law,’ which includes roads, railways and a court-house. (78)

Žižek makes a similar argument as he distinguishes (Stalinist) totalitarianism as a product of the Enlightenment, in his proposal that totalitarianism liberates human subjects by transforming duty into pleasure. The difference between an authoritarian (Fascist) power and a (Stalinist) totalitarian power is that the former imposes on its subjects, saying “you must do this thing” while the latter adds, “you must do this thing and you must enjoy doing it!” Citing the bizarre fact that “on Stalin’s birthday, prisoners would send him congratulatory telegrams from the darkest gulags,” Žižek explains how totalitarianism differs from fascism in that it presupposes “a space in which the leader and his subjects could meet as servants of Historical Reason” (“Two Totalitarianisms” 4).

In a similar way we might understand Kipling’s affectionate rendering of Kim’s interaction with native Indians qua imperial agent. Mookerjee, as it were, answers Said’s rhetorical question: yes, all the common people know about you, and not only do they
permit your (invasive and surveilling) masquerade but they actually enjoy it. If we continue with the Stalinist analogy, we will see that the true purpose of going native is to deceive other members of the elite, the players of the Great Game rather than the “common” colonised natives. This is the case when Kim disguises E23 as a saddhu in the train compartment, to avoid both a gang of police led by “a hot and perspiring young Englishman” and the rivals for E23’s packet of letters (173). In similar fashion Kim’s native mimicry fools a treasonous English Commissariat sergeant as well as the Russian and French spies.

The most illuminating feature of the totalitarian analogy is its emphasis on the purge, the self-cannibalisation of the party. Indeed, I would argue that however flawed or efficient “passing” may be as a method for gathering or delivering information about your subjects and the enemies of the state, in Kim nothing compares to self-imposed transparency under which the players of the Game toil. Appropriately in this libidinal economy, the transparency carries both positive and negative connotations. When Mookerjee informs Kim that his “extraordinarily efficient performance” in the case of E23 is already well-known and that “we are all proud of you,” Kim is delighted:

For the first time in his life, Kim thrilled to the clean pride (it can be a deadly pitfall, none the less) of Departmental praise—ensnaring praise from an equal of work appreciated by fellow-workers. Earth has nothing on the same plane to compare with it. (184)
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In a similar scene Lurgan, Kim’s tutor in the arts of espionage, anticipates following Kim’s progress via the unofficial interdepartmental social network: “He foresaw the honour and credit in the mouths of a chosen few, coming to him from his pupil” (148).

The negative effect of this publicity is more keenly felt. At the crucial stages in his education, when he is learning from St Xavier’s and from Lurgan, Kim is taught, twice, the consequences of betraying his official trust. When Kim asks Mahbub what might befall a boy who sold the information he was entrusted to convey to Creighton, Mahbub simply replies that “Then thou wouldst have drunk water twice—perhaps thrice, afterwards. I do not think more than thrice” (219). Similarly, when he asks Lurgan about the price on Hurree’s head and is told that he might earn himself “a belt full of rupees,” by selling certain information, Kim follows-up by asking “how long might such a boy live after the news was told?” Lurgan replies, “Perhaps if he were very clever, he might live out the day—but not the night. By no means the night” (262-3). It is as if by their very power, colonial agents have become entrapped in a cycle of paranoid anxiety which they know can only result in their arbitrary destruction.

In Kim, characters ostensibly on the same “team” in the Game expend considerable energy surveilling and tricking each other. Consider Mookerjee’s appearance as a “Dacca drug vendor” in the house of the Kulu woman. Dacca is a city in Bengal and so we can reasonably conclude that the Bengali secret service agent’s costume cannot have been put on for any purpose other than to fool Kim. The effect of the trick is registered in Kim’s reaction. At first the narrator assumes a first-person intimacy with the protagonist, who is projecting his ideal sense of self: Kim feels “annoyed...that he had been hoodwinked.” But shortly thereafter the narrator pulls back
from Kim and adopts a more objective journalistic style, which reveals that even while the boy affects unflappability he has been deeply disturbed: “He chewed leisurely upon a few cardamom seeds, but he breathed uneasily” (184). Elsewhere Kim is twice unnerved by Mookerjee’s ability to vanish as “noiselessly as a cat” (138, 155).

We can see here in operation a process whereby the initiates are made aware of their inability to disguise themselves or to detect a disguise. Kim’s inferiority becomes apparent when we compare his nervous reactions with those of two other proficient secret service agents. The first incident occurs early in the novel as Kipling introduces the character of Mahbub Ali. Though Kim wants to surprise Mahbub by appearing as a Hindu beggar, and though Mahbub entertains this folly while Kim is “in character,” when Kim reveals himself by speaking in English, “the trader gave no sign of astonishment” (33, emphasis added). Similarly, lest we attribute this placidity to the horse-trader’s sanguine character, we should note Mookerjee’s response on his visit to Lurgan’s shop, where he sees Kim sitting in the corner in the disguise of “a certain caste of faqir” (260):

“I think,” said the Babu heavily, lighting a cigarette, “I am of the opinion that it is most extraordinary and efficient performance. Except that you had told me I should have opined that—that—that you were pulling my legs.” (261)

This praise for Kim’s performance is qualified not only because it is delivered in front of both the performer and his teacher, or because it is delivered among a fraternity of Game players, but also because Mookerjee, elsewhere so excitable and garrulous in the novel,
here speaks heavily, slowly, and languidly, taking the time to pause before carefully delivering the final compliment.

If we consider, as I think we should, *Kim* to be a novel about education and maturation, then Mookerjee’s performances teach through example and shaming. Kim’s failure to detect Mookerjee, coming so soon after his training in espionage with Lurgan in Simla, reminds both the boy and the reader of the cost involved in this fantastic totalitarian vision. And this proves Suleri’s point: Kim can “play” the Game and exercise colonial power only when he agrees to play by its rules. In the same way, the reader can have India, but only when it has been mediated by a colonial agent. Suleri, however, sees only the tragic consequence for this entrapped subject when she puts forward a teleology of disenchantment. In her withering assessment of the effects of colonial education, Suleri sees the magical, mercurial, and innocent bazaar-boy as one who receives the power to know and make meaning, but only at a mortal price. The cost of his critical perspective is an inability to participate freely in Indian life and so, Suleri reasons, the conclusion is Kipling’s elegiac fashioning of his admission that “posteducated Kim...must be killed” (130).156

Yet this bleak account leaves little room for the pleasures of imperialism, the love and fellow-feeling which courses through the novel between the principal characters. Mahbub, in particular, finds his parental affection for Kim increase as the boy progresses in the secret service. Consider also Kim’s satisfaction when he experiences the incomparable clean pride of Departmental praise. The positive affect spurs him actively

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156 We could, though Suleri does not, extend this to the situation of the colonial reader and state a sort of Heisenberg’s principle for the production of colonial knowledge. The presence that is both intermediate and supermediate, the author-agent that conveys as it creates, interrupts and changes the undisturbed system, so that its original essence remains ineffable.
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to seek further missions. “Well is the Game called great!” he exclaims when Mookerjee recruits him to help foil the Russian plot as he considers the value of “my share and my joy [in it]” (188). We should also recall that this novel ends not with suffering or death but in terms that suggest spiritual redemption. The lama tells Kim that he has “free[d] thee from all sin...Just is the wheel! Certain is our deliverance!” (240).

At the same time, there can be no doubt that this last and greatest mission, which began with Mookerjee’s Dacca deception, extracts a severe physical and psychic toll. Throughout its progress, Kim is described as a beleaguered agent, struggling to balance his official responsibility and his filial duty to the lama: “Kim’s shoulders bore all the weight of it—the burden of an old man, the burden of the heavy food-bag with the locked books, the load of writings on his heart, and the details of the daily routine” (224). But it seems that, consistent with the views expressed in Kipling’s early short stories, Kim takes pleasure from this self-sacrificing toil. At the climax of the mission, “Kim shivered with cold and pride. The humour of the situation tickled the Irish and the Oriental in his soul” (207).

But carrying the weak body of the lama and the heavy package of documents nearly kills the young man and, Kipling reminds us, “their weight on his shoulders was nothing to their weight on his mind” (228). But rather than choose between one or the other, Kipling allows his hero to indulge in a radical pleasure that is denied to most agents. When he finally descends from the Himalayas to the home of the Kulu woman, Kim shrugs off both his responsibilities: to personal conscience, represented by the lama, and to his duty, represented by the package. In this scene, the ultimate in pleasure-
through-pain is represented as Kim's agony is “relieved” by a massage which is described in terms of dismemberment:

[The two women] took him to pieces all in one long afternoon—bone by bone, muscle by muscle, ligament by ligament, and lastly, nerve by nerve. Kneaded to irresponsible pulp, [and] half hypnotized...Kim slid ten thousand miles into slumber—thirty-six hours of it—sleep that soaked like rain after drought. (229)

Arguably, this is the novel’s most controversial scene since it is here that the handsome and proficient masculine agent, who has hitherto rejected the affections of females in favour of homosocial affiliation, surrenders his agency to two women who render him irresponsible. The absence of a resolution in *Kim* shares coordinates with a corporate *Gemeinschaft*. What the critics have called the novel’s “failed” conclusion now seems appropriate for a novel fashioned out of a culture that valued work in itself, rather than work as a process towards some objective goal. Kim’s greatest joys in this novel do not come from private reflection on the significance of his efforts but rather from his expectation that his efforts will be acknowledged and appreciated by his peers.

*Kim’s Dream*

By way of conclusion, I would like to take advantage of the novel’s ambivalent ending to indulge in one possibility. As Kim lay in the home of the Kulu woman, blind and silent, he must have seemed to those around him to be dead already. Yet perhaps in the depths of that subconscious escape, he had real thoughts too. Perhaps like the lama, he
transcended the nets of earthly desires, achieving the perspective to see all India as it really was. But what if he trained his focus not on India but on corporate Anglo-India? Perhaps then he saw not only the Sons of the Charm leaving behind empty categories of nationalism in preference to professional fraternities. Rising further, perhaps he also perceived Henry Broughton’s smug confidence in competition and Edward Oakfield sneering at the moral inferiority of his peers. Perhaps Kim even reached such heights as to pierce the veil shrouding fiction from reality and saw precocious Macaulay devising the reform of British society, saw hare-lipped Malthus writing from his small cottage on the Haileybury grounds, saw even imperious Wellesley in the moment he decided to defy his masters for their own good. And finally, just at the horizon of the universe which contained his being, the universe of aristocratic virtue, perhaps there Kim caught a fleeting glimpse of the terrible Irishman who sought to save the British from their imperial selves, and the spectacular stage which inaugurated the idea of the virtuous empire.
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