FILTH, RUIN, AND THE COLONIAL PICTURESQUE: JAMES BAILLIE FRASER'S REPRESENTATIONS OF CALCUTTA AND THE BLACK HOLE MONUMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

In the early nineteenth century, British consumers increasingly demanded representations of foreign areas newly opened up by British imperial expansion. This thesis considers a series of twenty-four aquatints by British artist James Baillie Fraser, published between 1824 and 1826 as *Views of Calcutta and its Environs*. Fraser's images at first glance appear to support the views held by European medical men and tourists of the period, who represented Calcutta as a city built in a pestilential environment, and divided between a seemingly tainted, Bengali "black town" and a pristine, European "white town." The white town was framed as a city of orderly neoclassical palaces, wide boulevards, and salubrious squares, whereas the black town was marked out as a chaotic space of disease and filth. By marshalling the tropes of the picturesque, an aesthetic mode that had long been associated with landscape and travel, and by advertising the series as following in the tradition of earlier representations of India —— such as the late eighteenth-century prints of Thomas and William Daniell that celebrated Britain's success in bringing progress and civilization to Bengal —— Fraser's *Views of Calcutta* offered viewers important vistas that marked Britain's presence in the city. However, while much of the scholarship has interpreted Fraser's images as seamless depictions of British hegemony, these readings obscure the slippages, tensions, and ambiguities that take form in his prints. My thesis focuses on four of Fraser's aquatints that picture key sites in Calcutta, including the British buildings in Tank Square, the monument to the Black Hole incident, the Hindu temple known as the "Black Pagoda," and the native bazaar on Chitpore Road. I argue that rather than portraying British hegemony and a clear division between the white and black towns of Calcutta, Fraser's images distinguish themselves from earlier representations by paradoxically revealing the fluidity of these boundaries. As a result, Fraser's collection registers the tenuousness of British

power over the perceived dangers of both the tropical environment and the native population, while also asserting the need to constantly maintain sanitary order by removing what was perceived as matter out of place.

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INTRODUCTION

Between 1824 and 1826, British artist James Baillie Fraser produced a series of twenty-four aquatint engravings published in eight parts as *Views of Calcutta and its Environs*. Based on drawings the artist made in the city between 1819 and 1820 that are not extant,[1] the collection of prints attempted to provide a complete view of Calcutta for British consumers at home and abroad, who increasingly demanded representations of India and other foreign locales newly opened up by British imperial expansion. Prior to his arrival in India, Fraser had been overseer of his family's sugar plantations in the region of Berbice in Guyana. In 1813, he travelled to India to help pay off his family's debts and spent eight years travelling through the British-occupied areas of the subcontinent. While in Calcutta, Fraser trained with two professional artists, George Chinnery and William Havell, producing sketches of India that he would later develop into his oil paintings and aquatints of the Himalayas and Calcutta.[2]

Marshalling the tropes of the picturesque, an aesthetic mode that had long been associated with landscape and travel, *Views of Calcutta* offered viewers important vistas that marked Britain's presence in the city. The series begins with a view of Chandpaul Ghat, the main landing place for visitors to Calcutta, and moves to pictures of British neoclassical[3] buildings (including Government House and other administrative spaces, private residences, and churches), effectively highlighting the sites of British imperialism. The collection closes with a

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[1] Mildred Archer and Toby Falk, *India Revealed: The Art and Adventures of James and William Fraser, 1801–35* (London: Cassell, 1989), 9. See also J. P. Losty, *Calcutta, City of Palaces: A Survey of the City in the Days of the East India Company, 1690–1858* (London: The British Library, 1990), 82.

[2] See Archer and Falk, *India Revealed*, 19, and 47–48; Hermione de Almeida and George H. Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 234–235; and Toby Falk, "Fraser, James Baillie (1783–1856)," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10111 (accessed 30 July 2010) for biographical information on James Baillie Fraser.

[3] In the scholarship on Calcutta, the terms "neoclassical," "Palladian," and "Georgian" are used to refer to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century European architecture of the city. Though these terms raise many issues, for the purposes of this paper, I will use them interchangeably in my discussion of the architecture of Calcutta.

scene of a native bazaar on Chitpore Road located near the centre of the city.[4] Scholars, in

particular J. P. Losty, and Hermione de Almeida and George H. Gilpin, have claimed that as a

series, Fraser's *Views of Calcutta* provided viewers with idyllic and ostensibly authentic images

of the city that worked to celebrate Britain's success in bringing progress and civilization to

Bengal.[5] However, as will emerge in my analysis of several key prints in the collection, Fraser's

Views of Calcutta were produced during a period in which British medical men —— and a British

public in general ——— viewed Calcutta as a city built in the disease-producing environment of

tropical marshes, and divided between a supposedly clean, European "white town" and a

seemingly pestilential, native "black town."

Fraser's images at first glance appear to support a division between white and black

sectors of Calcutta and to celebrate the improvements brought by the British. However, this

divide did not exist in the city as clearly as it seems to be represented in the aquatints of Fraser's

series. Indeed, as I will argue in my thesis, readings of *Views of Calcutta* as seamless

representations of British hegemony obscure the slippages, tensions, and ambiguities that

paradoxically take form in Fraser's pictures. One aquatint in particular, Fraser's *View of the*

Writers' Building from the Monument at the West End [Figure 1], provides the major focus for

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[4] Here is a complete list of Fraser's collection – Plate 1: *A View of Chandpaul Ghat*; Plate 2: *A View of Esplanade Row, from the Chowringhee Road*; Plate 3: *A View of Government House, from the Eastward*; Plate 4: *A View of the Botanic Garden House and Reach*; Plate 5: *A View of Esplanade Row, from the River at Chandpaul Ghat*; Plate 6: *A View of the Writers' Building from the Monument at the West End*; Plate 7: *A View of the Opposite, or Sulkhea, side, from the Respondia Walk with a North Wester coming on*; Plate 8: *A View of Tank Square, from the West*; Plate 9: *A View of Government House, from the Court House*; Plate 10: *A View of Barrackpore House, with the Reach of the River*; Plate 11: *A View of the Town Hall*; Plate 12: *A View of the Scotch Church, from the Gate of Tank Square*; Plate 13: *View of St. Andrew's Church, from Mission Row*; Plate 14: *View of Court House Street, from near the South-Eastern Gateway of Government House*; Plate 15: *View of Calcutta from the Glacis of Fort William*; Plate 16: *A View of Loll Bazaar, from Opposite the House of John Palmer, Esq.*; Plate 17: *View of Loll Bazaar and Portuguese Chapel*; Plate 18: *A View of the River, Shipping and Town, from near Smith's Dock*; Plate 19: *View of St. John's Cathedral*; Plate 20: *A View of Calcutta, from a point opposite to Kidderpore*; Plate 21: *A View of Serampore, from the Park at Barrackpore*; Plate 22: *A View of the West Side of Tank Square*; Plate 23; *A View of the Black Pagoda, in the Chitpore Road*; Plate 24: *A View of the Bazaar, Leading to the Chitpore Road*. See Archer and Falk, *India Revealed*, 14, 20, 47–51, and 74–88.

[5] See Losty, *Calcutta*, 82–94; and de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 234–240.

my analysis. As plate 6 of his collection, Fraser's *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument* is an evocative aquatint, which centres on the area of Calcutta that English residents and visitors considered the heart of their city: Tank Square (named for the reservoir or "tank" at its centre). In the image, the monument alluded to in the print's title, along with native figures, a cart, and oxen occupy the foreground. The monument was a memorial to the Black Hole of Calcutta, commemorating a key event in Britain's struggle for imperial supremacy in Bengal. Erected by John Zephania Holwell while he was temporarily Governor of Bengal in 1760, the monument was designed to honour the 123 citizens of the Empire who apparently suffocated in a cramped cell in their own fort after they were captured by Siraj-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Bengal, during his siege of the city in 1756 [Figure 2]. Holwell, who was a survivor of the incident, published accounts of the Black Hole in 1756, 1764, and over succeeding decades.[6] His narrative influenced subsequent histories of the event.[7] According to Holwell's accounts and the memorial's inscription,[8] the monument was designed to remind those living in Calcutta of the

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[6] John Zephania Holwell, *A Genuine Narrative of the Deplorable Deaths of the English Gentlemen, and others who were suffocated in the Black-Hole in Fort-William, at Calcutta, in the Kingdom of Bengal; in the night succeeding the 20th day of June 1756, in a letter to a friend* (London: Millar, 1756); and John Zephania Holwell, *India Tracts. By John Zephaniah Holwell, Esq. F.R.S. and friends. Containing, I. An Address to the Proprietors of East-India Stock; setting forth, the unavoidable Necessity, and real Motives, for the Revolution in Bengal, 1760. II. A Refutation of a Letter from certain Gentlemen of the Council at Bengal, to the Honourable the Secret Committee. III. Important Facts regarding the East-India Company's Affairs in Bengal, from the Years 1752 to 1760, with Copies of several very interesting Letters. IV. A Narrative of the deplorable Deaths of the English Gentlemen who were suffocated in the Black Hole in Fort William, at Calcutta, June 1756. V. A Defence of Mr.Vansittart's Conduct. Illustrated with A Frontispiece, representing the Monument erected at Calcutta, in Memory of the Sufferers in the Black-Hole Prison* (London: T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 2nd ed. 1764; 3rd ed. 1774), 383–418.
[7] Partha Chatterjee, "The Black Hole of Empire," paper presented at Presidential Lectures, 2007–08, Stanford Humanities Centre, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, 7 November 2008.
[8] The inscription on the front of the monument reads: "To the Memory of Edward Eyre, William Baillie Esq., the Revd. Jervas Bellamy, Messrs. Jenks, Revely, Law, Coates, Valicourt, Jebb, Torriano, E. Page, S. Page, Grub Street, Harod, P. Johnstone, Ballard, N. Drake, Carse, Knapton, Gosling, Dod. Dalrymple, Captains Clayton, Buchanan, Witherington, Lieutenants Bishop, Hays, Blagg, Simpson, J. Bellamy, Ensigns Paccard, Scott, Hastings, C. Wedderburn, Dumbleton, Sea Captains Hunt, Osburn, Purnel, Messrs. Carey, Leech, Stevenson, Guy, Porter, Parker, Caulker, Bendol, Atkinson, who with sundry other Inhabitants, Military and Militia to the Number of 123 Persons were by the Tyrannic Violence of Surajud Dowla, Suba of Bengal, Suffocated in the Black Hole Prison of Fort William in the Night of the 20th Day of June 1756 and promiscuously thrown the succeeding Morning into the Ditch of the Ravalin of this Place. This Monument is Erected by Their Surviving Fellow Sufferer, J. Z. Holwell." The inscription on the back stated: "This Horrid Act of Violence was as Amply as deservedly revenged on Surajud

alleged atrocity against the British Empire, and also to celebrate what amounted to the revenge

carried out by the British in their recapturing of the city and in their victory in the Battle of

Plassey in 1757 against the French-supported forces of Siraj-ud-Daula.

In Fraser's composition, the vista of the wide street on which the monument is situated

emphasizes other important British structures. These include the Georgian-style facades of the

Writers' Building, constructed between 1776 and 1780 for the clerks of the British East India

Company, and the newly built Presbyterian Church of St. Andrew.[9] These signs of a British

presence in Calcutta are illuminated by a bright sunrise emerging in the distance behind a small

grove of trees. Significantly, Holwell's monument, along with the Bengali residents engaged in

activities of commerce and leisure around its base, is cast in shadow and differs from the light-

filled middle ground and distance.

My paper sets out to examine critically this aquatint in conjunction with three others from

the series: Fraser's *View of Tank Square from the West* (plate 8) and *View into the Bazaar,*

Leading to Chitpore Road (plate 24), which both represent the centre of Calcutta, and *A View of*

the Black Pagoda, in the Chitpore Road (plate 23), which pictures a Hindu temple located in the

black town of the city. What emerges from considering the relation of these images to one

another is the fraught nature of British power in what had become, by Fraser's time, the seat of

government for British India.[10]

Dowla, by his Majesty's Arms, under the Conduct of Vice Admiral Watson and Colonel Clive. Anno, 1757." From Holwell, *India Tracts*, Frontispiece.

[9] For more information on these and other British buildings in Calcutta that will be briefly discussed below, see H. E. A. Cotton, *Calcutta, Old and New: A Historical and Descriptive Handbook to the City*, ed. N. R. Ray (Calcutta: General, 1909; revised 1980), 229–540.

[10] In 1772 the British administrative apparatus for the governing of Bengal was moved to Calcutta. In 1773 an Act of Parliament recognized the city as the "seat of government for the supreme authority over British India." From P. J. Marshall, "Eighteenth-Century Calcutta," in *Colonial Cities*, ed. Robert J. Ross and Gerard J. Telkamp (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), 90. In 1834 Calcutta was officially recognized as the capital of British India. The city ceased to be the capital in 1911 when the British moved their capital to New Delhi.

Significantly, there is a surprising lack of any critical visual analysis of the important role played by Fraser's *Views of Calcutta* in supporting, managing, or challenging British perceptions of the urban structure of Calcutta and British power in the city. Mildred Archer and Toby Falk's *India Revealed: The Art and Adventures of James and William Fraser, 1801–35*, from 1989, is one of the first books to provide a complete catalogue of Fraser's *Views of Calcutta*, as well as of the print collections he produced of other areas of India. However, the text is primarily composed of biographical information for both James and his brother William Fraser during their time in Calcutta. In short, Archer and Falk detail James Fraser's artistic career and the publication process of his collections, but they do not provide a critical visual analysis of the plates themselves.

Similarly, J. P. Losty's *Calcutta, City of Palaces: A Survey of the City in the Days of the East India Company, 1690–1858*, published a year later in conjunction with a British Library exhibition of the same name, surveyed European prints and paintings of Calcutta from the late seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries and presented an overview of the various ways the city was represented over this period. Losty includes several of Fraser's plates in his book and he does provide some information concerning what is represented in them. However, his analysis focuses largely on what the prints reveal about the architecture and topography of nineteenth-century Calcutta, and does not interrogate how Fraser's images might have played a part in constructing colonial discourses.

Another catalogue of British representations of India is Hermione de Almeida and George H. Gilpin's *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* from 2005. Surveying a far larger and wider field of British pictures of the subcontinent, de Almeida and Gilpin provide both historical information on and interpretations of the images. In their

analysis of Fraser's plates of Calcutta, the authors explain the significance of the scenes in terms of the socio-political climate and power relations of the colonial city; however, by doing so, de Almeida and Gilpin fix the meanings of Fraser's work into a singular reading of how they reflect British hegemony in Bengal.

The most detailed and critical analysis of British representations of the city, including Fraser's plates, is provided by Swati Chattopadhyay's *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism and the Colonial Uncanny*, also published in 2005. Chattopadhyay claims that works such as Fraser's highlighted Britain's accomplishments in Calcutta and supported beliefs in the division between the black and white towns. Importantly, Chattopadhyay's analysis of picturesque representations of Calcutta also reveals the slippages in British hegemony over the city. For Chattopadhyay, a native presence that seems to destabilize ideas of the civilization and order Britain brought to India, or what she terms a colonial uncanny quality, is inherent in these images.

Building on her broader study of British depictions of Calcutta, and drawing on a range of poststructuralist and postcolonial theories, my paper focuses on Fraser's aquatints and underscores how his images specifically exposed the limits of British power in Calcutta at a time when concerns over the health of the city began to emerge. The work of both Henri Lefebvre on the social construction of space, and Michel de Certeau on the contestations and everyday uses of urban space —— along with Mary Douglas's study of the cultural formation of things perceived as dirt and Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject —— form an important component of my analysis of the dynamics of Calcutta's topography, and the formation and fluidity of the boundaries of the city. Moreover, Homi K. Bhabha's examination of the tensions, frictions, and ambivalences of colonial power informs my interpretation of Fraser's aquatints in terms of their role in supporting

both British colonial power and the ambiguities that arise in the project of colonialism. The aesthetic codes of the picturesque and nineteenth-century travel literature also frame my reading of Fraser's collection within the context of the growing British interest in the foreign locations being opened through imperial expansion. As I argue, while attempting to portray British hegemony in Calcutta and a clear distinction between the white and black towns, Fraser's plates also register the fluidity of these boundaries and the tenuousness of British power over the perceived dangers of both the tropical environment and the native population to the white town.

CONSTRUCTIONS OF PLACE / NARRATIVES OF FILTH: CALCUTTA UNDER THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

The urban fabric of Calcutta plays an important part in framing Fraser's series; therefore, I want to provide a brief history in order to contextualize the heterogeneous and contentious atmosphere of the spaces of the city, and the ways in which they were represented. In the mid-eighteenth century, Calcutta was an economic trading hub with a diverse population composed of Hindus, Muslims, and Jains, along with European traders. These included British associated with the East India Company, Armenians, French, Portuguese, Dutch, and others. Europeans had been present in this area of Bengal since the early-sixteenth century with the Portuguese establishing a trading lodge or factory in 1535 in the town of Hugli, 25 miles upstream from the site that would become Calcutta. The Dutch and British followed suit in the mid-seventeenth century and Hugli became a rising commercial centre. In 1690, Job Charnock, an agent of the British East India Company, established the Company's headquarters at the site of the villages of Kalikata, Sutanuti, and Gobindapur on the Hugli River. By 1696, the British began constructing the original Fort William here even though they did not have legal ownership of the land.[11] With tensions growing between the British and the French during the Seven Years War (1756–1763) over control of the trade in India, the British fortified Calcutta in preparation for a French attack. The British fortification of the city, along with several other factors, led Siraj-ud-Daula, the new Nawab of Bengal, to lay siege to the British fort and to capture the city in June of 1756.[12] In his account of the incident —— one that recent postcolonial scholars have challenged

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[11] P. Thankappan Nair, "The Growth and Development of Old Calcutta," in *Calcutta: The Living City, Volume I: The Past*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), 10 and 11.
[12] C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 50.

but which was the basis for subsequent British narratives of the event[13] —— Holwell claimed that after Siraj-ud-Daula took Fort William, his troops locked 146 prisoners in a small cell, known as the Black Hole.[14] Holwell's narrative dramatically recounted the events that transpired during the night, emphasizing how British society seemed to crumble within the confines of the Black Hole as rank and civility disappeared in the fight for survival.[15] In the morning, the Nawab ordered the prisoners released, but, Holwell notes, only 23 survived; the rest died from the suffocating conditions and were buried together in a ditch outside the Fort.[16] Significantly, postcolonial scholar Partha Chatterjee challenges British colonial histories associated with Holwell's account by arguing that the narrative exaggerated events, and that its polemical strategies were designed to stress the degradation and threat that India posed to British civilization.[17] However, Holwell's contemporaries understood his narrative as a vivid and explicit example of the so-called savagery of the Indian people and as a justification for British rule.[18] The British East India Company's troops recaptured Calcutta, and defeated the French-backed Nawab in the Battle of Plassey in 1757. With their victory, the Company was able to consolidate its power in Bengal, using the province as a base from which it strengthened its army and checked any threats from other Indian kingdoms.[19]

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[13] Chatterjee, "Black Hole."
[14] Holwell, *Genuine*, 8–10. See also Ian J. Barrow, "The Many Meanings of the Black Hole of Calcutta," in *Tall Tales and True: India, Historiography and British Imperial Imaginings*, ed. Kate Brittlebeck (Victoria: Monash University Press, 2008), 9; de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 237; and Chatterjee, "Black Hole."
[15] Holwell, *Genuine*, 11–20.
[16] Holwell, *Genuine*, 36.
[17] Chatterjee, "Black Hole;" see also Barrow, "Many Meanings," 11.
[18] Barrow, "Many Meanings," 12.
[19] Bayly, *Indian Society*, 46.

While Calcutta served as a significant trading centre for the Company, and by 1773 had been declared the seat of government for British India,[20] British medical men and travellers saw the environment of the city as posing a threat to the health of its inhabitants. James Johnson, an influential early-nineteenth century writer on tropical disease,[21] described how Calcutta suffered from its location amidst the sunderbunds (which he and other European medical men likened to swamps) that held "an immense surface of slime and feculence," and which, when "exposed to the rays of a vertical sun," released miasmata that "spread pestilence and death in every direction."[22] Johnson elaborated that decomposing animal and vegetable matter in the sunderbunds produced miasmata that caused disease. These miasmas were capable of accumulating to exceedingly powerful levels in tropical climates such as Calcutta's, because of the dense jungles around the city that trapped miasmas and the lack of breezes to dissipate them.[23] Johnson's opinion of the dangers of the vapours emitted by the city's swamps and marshes were shared by travellers who visited Calcutta in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. European tourists such as Edward Ives writing in 1773, Walter Hamilton in 1820, and Emma Roberts in 1835 also described the fetid and dangerous conditions of Calcutta's environment,[24] concluding that the location of the city in a pestilential swamp, with no air to remove the marsh emissions, posed a threat to the inhabitants of Calcutta.

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[20] For Calcutta's importance as a centre of trade see Pradip Sinha, "Calcutta and the Currents of History, 1690–1912," in *Calcutta: The Living City, Volume I: The Past*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), 32. See note 10 above for Calcutta as the seat of government in 1773.

[21] Mark Harrison, "Tropical Medicine in Nineteenth-century India," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 25, no. 3 (1992): 304.

[22] James Johnson, *The Influence of Tropical Climates, more especially the Climate of India, on European Constitutions; the Principal Effects and Diseases thereby induced, their Prevention or Removal, and the Means of Preserving Health in Hot Climates, Rendered Obvious to Europeans of Every Capacity* (London: J. Callow, 1815), 34. It is important to note that although European medical men classified the sunderbunds as the swamps and wooded marshes of the Ganges River delta, in Bengali the word *sundarbans* literally translates to "beautiful forests." Translation provided by Professor Katherine Hacker.

[23] Johnson, *Influence*, 34 and 64.

[24] Edward Ives, "Edward Ives," in *Calcutta in the 18th Century: Impressions of Travellers*, ed. P. Thankappan Nair (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1984), 111; Walter Hamilton, "Calcutta in 1820," in

However, according to British writers, the dangers of Calcutta's environment could be mitigated by British intervention. As scholar Ishita Pande notes, Europeans believed that their engineering would be able to "tame the insalubrious Bengali wilderness."[25] Indeed, according to James Ranald Martin, a surgeon of the East India Company and, later, president of its medical board,[26] both Fort William and the European neighbourhood of Chowringhee in Calcutta were built over a jungle with huts and small tracts of arable land.[27] Moreover, Martin believed that European education would positively influence the moral character of the native inhabitants, and that establishing an English School of Medicine would "demonstrate to the natives the superiority of European knowledge" and the need to cultivate this knowledge in order to "rise in the scale of nations."[28] For Martin, British intervention in Calcutta had improved the environment by replacing wild jungle and small huts with large fortifications and grand European boulevards, while further involvement would help educate and civilize the Bengali inhabitants of the city.

British notions of progress were understood to be registered particularly in the establishment of the European section, or white town, of the city, which historical accounts locate in the centre of Calcutta, around Tank Square, Fort William, and the suburb of

Calcutta in the 19th Century (Company's Days), ed. P. Thankappan Nair (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1989); and Emma Roberts, "Calcutta in 1835," in *Calcutta in the 19th Century (Company's Days)*, ed. P. Thankappan Nair (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1989), 581. See also Lord George Valentia (George Annesley Mountnorris, 2nd Earl of Valentia), "Calcutta in 1803," in *Calcutta in the 19th Century (Company's Days)*, ed. P. Thankappan Nair (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1989), 13, and Captain Leopold von Orlich, "Calcutta in 1843," trans. H. Evans Lloyd, in *Calcutta in the 19th Century (Company's Days)*, ed. P. Thankappan Nair (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1989), 868 for similar descriptions of Calcutta's environment.

[25] Ishita Pande, *Medicine, Race and Liberalism in British Bengal: Symptoms of Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 113.

[26] Harrison, "Tropical," 309.

[27] James Ranald Martin, *Notes on the Medical Topography of Calcutta* (Calcutta: G. H. Huttmann, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1837), 9.

[28] Martin, *Notes*, 47 and 60.

Chowringhee.[29] As the settlement of Calcutta began in the late seventeenth century, boundaries between spaces perceived as European and Bengali developed. Europeans erected palisades with guarded gated exits around their settlement, which effectively created what Dhriti Kanta Lahiri Choudhury has termed a "white ghetto."[30] Choudhury also notes that a psychological distinction between the white and black towns arose, with the location of the white town identified as the area around the former village of Kalikata on the north side of the original Fort William, and the black town marked out as the areas to the south of the British settlement in Gobindapur, and to the north of the white town in the villages of Sutanuti and Chitpur.[31] The Bengali and British sections of Calcutta were separated by Armenian and Portuguese neighbourhoods, each with its own church.[32] According to Choudhury, the English viewed Siraj-ud-Daula's siege of the city in 1756 as a disaster, because the Nawab's troops destroyed a large part of the English settlement.[33] With their subsequent victory at Plassey, the British began an intense rebuilding of the white town. Tank Square was constructed over the site of the original white town. A new and heavily strengthened Fort William, along with an open parade ground called the Maidan, was laid over the village of Gobindapur. The new suburb of Chowringhee, filled with pristine Palladian-style houses, now occupied the area south of the maidan [see Figure 3].[34] These newly erected British spaces supported the belief that Calcutta was divided into two separate towns.

A key element in the physical distinction between the white and black towns was the nineteenth-century European belief that the white town brought civilization and sanitation to

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[29] Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism and the Colonial Uncanny* (London: Routledge, 2005), 9.

[30] Dhriti Kanta Lahiri Choudhury, "Trends in Calcutta Architecture, 1690–1903," in *Calcutta: The Living City, Volume I: The Past*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), 157.

[31] Choudhury, "Trends," 157.

[32] P. J. Marshall, "The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company," *Modern Asian Studies* 34, no. 2 (2000): 315.

[33] Choudhury, "Trends," 158–159.

[34] For the locations of Tank Square and Chowringhee see Marshall, "White Town," 317; for the location of the new Fort William and the Maidan see Choudhury, "Trends," 159.

Calcutta. British travellers noted that the wide plain of the maidan around Fort William spread over a spacious area and contained broad roads that led into the fashionable suburb of Chowringhee.[35] This neighbourhood was described by Walter Hamilton in 1820 as "formerly a collection of native huts [that] is now an entire village of palaces."[36] The new building program followed strict neoclassical models, which were applied with few concessions to available local building materials and climate. Still, the results were described as providing a "superb appearance" and "giving the impression of Grecian temples" to the buildings.[37] Chowringhee, as noted by Emma Roberts when she visited in 1835, consisted of houses located "in the midst of gardens, sometimes divided from each other by very narrow avenues, though more frequently intersected by broad roads."[38] Roberts also described the European section of the city centre as "extremely handsome, consisting of streets and squares, in which the greater portion of the houses are only united to each other by ranges of terraces built over the godowns (warehouses), stables, and servant's offices."[39]

Significantly, the white town required constant maintenance to remain pristine. Martin pointed out in 1837 that "it is only by constant efforts of industry that the salubrity of any spot is maintained; when these are relaxed, or when prosperity and civilization decline, the seeds of diseases are immediately deposited in the earth."[40] For Martin, maintenance of the health and cleanliness of the environment required continuous care and vigilance. In Calcutta, the Palladian buildings of the British residents required constant attention to stay clean. They were often constructed out of brick and faced with plaster, which required regular whitewashing after each

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[35] Roberts, "1835," 574
[36] Hamilton, "1820," 222. See also Lord Valentia's account, which describes Chowringhee in similar terms. Valentia, "1803," 12.
[37] Marshall, "White Town," 316.
[38] Roberts, "1835," 579–580.
[39] Roberts, "1835," 580.
[40] Quoted in Martin, *Notes*, 15.

rainy season.[41] As Roberts noted in her travel account, even in the fashionable section of

Calcutta, European habitations could become stained and dilapidated as a result of the hot and

humid tropical climate. She wrote:

> a certain want of keeping and consistency, common to everything relating to
> India, injures the effect of the scene. […] Few of the houses excepting those
> exclusively occupied by Europeans, are kept in good repair; the least neglect
> becomes immediately visible, and nothing can be more melancholy than the
> aspect of a building in India which has suffered to fall into a dilapidated state.
> The cement drops from the walls in large patches, the bare brick-work is
> diversified by weather stains, in which lichens and fungus tribe speedily appear,
> […] the courtyards are allowed to accumulate litter, and there is an air of squalor
> spread over the whole establishment which disgusts the eye.[42]

In other words, the sanitary cleanliness of British Calcutta required frequent attention to maintain

the gleaming palaces that were boasted as having tamed the Bengali jungle and replaced the

native huts.

In contrast to the order and amenities associated with the white town, medical and travel

literature represented the black town as an identifiable section of Calcutta separate from the

white town, and characterized by filth and stagnant conditions. East India Company surgeon

Martin located the native section of the city in the northern portion of Calcutta, between Bow

Bazaar and Muckoa Bazaar. He described the area as consisting of ruinous tenements, half dried

tanks, accumulations of filth, densely constructed homes of mud, reed, or bamboo with straw or

tiled roofs and dirt floors, stagnant air, dirty, narrow, and unpaved streets, and lanes filled with

rank compounds which emitted villainous odours.[43] Early nineteenth-century British travel

accounts also identified the location of the native town in the north of the city, stated how the

black town was a complete contrast to the European village of palaces, and highlighted the dirty,

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[41] Archer and Falk, *India Revealed*, 50.
[42] Roberts, "1835," 575.
[43] Martin, *Notes*, 18–21 and 23.

dilapidated, wretched, and unsightly conditions, and fetid odours of the narrow streets and mud homes of the native residents.[44]

The emphasis on fixing the location of the black town in the accounts cited above, and on stressing the contrast between the seemingly "filthy" native town and "clean" white town, established and maintained the boundaries between what was perceived as the civilized British and the savage Bengalis. The British, crucially, marked out the native inhabitants as producers of disease and filth. Throughout his text, Martin described how the labouring classes of the Indic population lived in mud and reed huts which emitted injurious exhalations, how their densely constructed and filthy portion of the city bred contagious diseases, and how the British had to teach the native inhabitants of Calcutta the value of sanitation.[45] Other European commentators shared Martin's view of the native residents. For example, in his travel account of 1803, Lord George Valentia noted that while the tropical climate of Calcutta might lead to disease, the influence of the native inhabitants, who had created a belt around the city planted with fruit trees, had rendered the area impervious to air and made the European plantations more insalubrious.[46] Louis de Grandpre, who first published his travel narrative of his voyage to Calcutta in French in 1801 and then in English in 1803, stated: "The natives are sufficiently cleanly as to their persons and houses; but, having removed from the latter everything which would occasion filth, they conceive themselves to have done all that is necessary. They leave even their ordure at the door or in the street, and, though they complain of the stench, will not give themselves the trouble to

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[44] See Valentia, "1803," 12; Hamilton, "1820," 224; Lt. R. G. Wallace, "Calcutta in 1823," in *Calcutta in the 19th Century (Company's Days)*, ed. P. Thankappan Nair (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1989), 310; Roberts, "1835," 575 and 580–581; and R. Montgomery Martin, "Calcutta in 1857," in *Calcutta in the 19th Century (Company's Days)*, ed. P. Thankappan Nair. (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1989), 999.
[45] Martin, *Notes*, 15, 19, 21, and 24.
[46] Valentia, "1803," 13.

remove it."[47] As Martin, Lord Valentia, and de Grandpre's opinions demonstrate, Europeans

believed that the Bengali population was partially responsible for creating an environment that

was conducive to disease and that they required the British to teach them the importance of

cleanliness. As a result of this opinion of the black town and its inhabitants, this area and

surrounding neighbourhoods were seen to be as dangerous as the swamps and jungles for

contracting disease.[48]

   As scholars such as Pande and Chattopadhyay have argued, the desire to segregate

Calcutta into white and black towns stemmed from the British fear of corruption and contagion

from the native population, which the British believed could lead to physical and moral

degeneracy.[49] Moral and physical corruption became materialized in the concept of filth, which

as Pande notes, connoted a thing, idea, or person ascribed with alterity.[50] The British

characterized the native inhabitants of Calcutta in terms of filthy sources of disease to highlight

their otherness, and to establish a boundary between the Bengalis and the British as a way of

protecting the white town and its residents from the physical and moral contamination of the

native population.

   It is important to stress that this representation of a white town and black town in the

travel accounts by British East India Company officials and visitors was in large part a

manufactured one. Granted, physical boundaries did exist. The walls of the original white town,

mentioned above, surrounded the English settlement and separated this space from the native

areas. A palisaded trench was also dug in the early eighteenth-century between the British

settlement and the "native" village of Sutanuti, ostensibly to improve drainage but also to keep

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[47] Louis Marie Joseph O'Hier Comte de Grandpre, "L. de Grandpre," in *Calcutta in the 18th Century: Impressions of Travellers*, ed. P. Thankappan Nair (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1984), 232.
[48] Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 64.
[49] Pande, *Medicine*, 101 and Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 125–126.
[50] Pande, *Medicine*, 101.

the British space wholesome and dry.[51] While boundaries were erected to protect the white town

from the black town, as Chattopadhyay and Pande claim, these boundaries were far less stable

than the representations offered by British commentators. Indeed, the nature of colonial life

required the everyday border-crossings of Indic servants and the heterogeneous use of public

spaces.[52] For instance, during the beginning of European settlement in Calcutta, the British

depended largely on Indian agents to help them to find housing and servants.[53] As well, the

quarters of European residents and the homes of their Indic servants were, in some cases, located

in close proximity to each other.[54] The city, as Chattopadhyay elaborates, was comprised of

overlapping geographies and ideas of territory and space, both native and foreign, that were

frequently negotiated, and which shifted depending on the perception and context of the

viewer.[55] The boundaries between the white town and the black town established in the written

discourses on the city were, in the everyday lived reality of Calcutta, far more fluid.

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[51] P. Thankappan Nair, "Civic and Public Services in Old Calcutta," in *Calcutta: The Living City, Volume I: The Past*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), 227.

[52] Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 76 and Pande, *Medicine*, 98. See also Marshall, "White Town," 317 and 329.

[53] Rudrangshu Mukerjee, "'Forever England': British Life in Old Calcutta," in *Calcutta: The Living City, Volume I: The Past*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), 49.

[54] Nair, "Growth," 18.

[55] Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 79.

INDIAN DECLINE VS. BRITISH PROGRESS: PICTURESQUE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SUBCONTINENT

In his *Views of Calcutta*, Fraser's aquatints employed the visual language of the picturesque to construct a particularly English image of the capital of British India. Promoted in the late eighteenth-century by Uvedale Price, Richard Payne Knight, and William Gilpin, the picturesque was a way of organizing landscape views in terms of variation and contrasts, which served initially to aestheticize irregularities —— both social and natural —— in the English countryside.[56] In terms of its role in imperialism, the picturesque could also be used to link distant lands to England. In his article on the picturesque imaging of Australia, Terry Smith explains that the British carried out a process of calibration, obliteration, and aestheticization in their depictions of the colony, which mapped and controlled the landscape, effectively removing the native inhabitants, and connecting incompatible sites and sights together.[57] These representations aided the colonial process by creating the appearance of control and order, while also re-making foreign spaces into vistas associated with the English landscape in order to encourage emigration to the colony, and to demonstrate the civilization brought to wild and distant areas by Georgian order.[58]

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[56] See Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and Beautiful; and on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape* (London: J. Robson, 1794); Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape, a Didactic Poem. In Three Books. Addressed to Uvedale Price, Esq.* (London: W. Bulmer and Company, 1794). William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape: to which is added a Poem, On Landscape Painting* (London: R. Blamire, 1792). For current scholarship on the picturesque, see Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740–1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Garside, Peter and Stephen Copley, ed. *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape, and Aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[57] Terry Smith, "Visual Regimes of Colonization: Aboriginal Seeing and European Vision in Australia," in *the Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mizoeff (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 483–484.

[58] Smith, "Visual Regimes," 484 and 490.

In terms of India, early picturesque views often focused on the ruins of Hindu and Muslim buildings, framing these structures within pictures that claimed to provide "authentic" vistas that taught the viewer how to look at the scene. For historian Tapati Guha-Thakurta, in British colonial scenes of India, these ruins became monuments through their rendering into replicable and effective copies that could then have a variety of uses.[59] She explains, "the process of the transformation of objects into images nevertheless involved various layers of aesthetic mediations, for the aim was also to give buildings better perspectives, to play up their magnitude and their contrasted tones, to achieve pictures that were both authentic and pleasurable."[60] British representations of Indian ruins as monuments were made to fill the composition and loom large over the landscape, dwarfing the native figures in the scenes.[61]

Images of Bengali structures as ruins, as opposed to viable architectural sites, also served a number of purposes. They played a role in the way that publications of picturesque scenes of India served to give English consumers images that both pleased the eye and ostensibly provided complete knowledge of the represented spaces.[62] At the same time, the monuments of India were also rendered as failed and dilapidated relics of the past.

British representations of colonial urban spaces functioned similarly to the picturesque's aesthetic mediations of Indian ruins posited by Guha-Thakurta's analysis. As scholars have noted, picturesque representations of Calcutta, including Fraser's publication, were designed to direct English viewers to British accomplishments in the city and to compare these achievements to the seemingly "primitive" culture of the Bengalis. Indeed, according to scholars Archer and

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[59] Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "The Compulsions of Visual Representation in Colonial India," in *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture and the Politics of Representation, 1850–1900*, ed. Maria Antonella Pelizzari (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2003), 110.

[60] Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 11.

[61] Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments*, 12.

[62] Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments*, 24.

Falk, the publishers of Fraser's collection, Rodwell and Martin, advertised the plates as following in the same tradition as other picturesque aquatint collections of India, such as Thomas and William Daniell's *Oriental Scenery*, published more than three decades earlier in 1792.[63] Such representations narrated empire by coding a certain set of spatial relationships that were expected to remain static, and helped to form notions about the black and white towns.[64] Furthering Guha-Thakurta's analysis, Chattopadhyay argues that though picturesque scenes of the Indian landscape focused on crumbling ruins or natural wonders, these are identified as significant sites that were neglected and misunderstood by local inhabitants. In contrast, she notes that scenes of urban environments focused on the newly erected Palladian buildings in the urban centre to proclaim the order Britons saw themselves as bringing to the city.[65] Yet, while Chattopadhyay claims that British artists used the picturesque to highlight the difference between the civilized state of British intervention and the degraded state of the local inhabitants,[66] these representations had other effects as well. In the following sections, I build on her work and explore the role of the picturesque in effacing the heterogeneous nature of colonial Calcutta, effectively portraying a city dominated and ordered by the British when such a city did not exist.

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[63] Archer and Falk, *India Revealed*, 49.

[64] For images focusing on British accomplishments in Calcutta and comparing these to Indic culture see de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 189; for the images narrating empire and for the images creating ideas of the white and black towns see Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 22 and 34 respectively.

[65] Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 42–43 and 48.

[66] Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 46.

PICTURESQUE SALUBRITY: CALCUTTA'S TANK SQUARE IN PRINT

The area of Calcutta that is the focus of Fraser's *A View of Tank Square from the West*
[Figure 4] was understood by British viewers as a healthy and sanitary area of the city. Tank
Square was regarded as the fashionable European district and made up the centre of the city, with
administrative buildings, large auction houses, warehouses, and taverns lining its streets.[67] One
traveller, who visited in 1843, identified Tank Square as one of "the most salubrious parts of the
city."[68] Aside from being located in the white town, European inhabitants also saw Tank Square
as a healthy space because of the large, British-built tank in the centre of the square, which
provided fresh drinking water to the city. Both Johnson, in his treatise from 1815, and Martin,
who wrote his medical topography of Calcutta two decades later, indicated that Calcutta's
drinking water was contaminated by decaying organic matter and that the half-dried tanks, which
provided much of the city's drinking water due to the poor quality of the river water, emitted
deleterious exhalations.[69] The poor state of the tanks, Martin claimed, was a result of the neglect
of the native inhabitants, who allowed vegetation to accumulate at the bottom, making the tanks
shallower until they became "the half-dried, green and slimy puddles, which so contaminate
every portion of the native town."[70] The lack of native sanitary care led to the pollution of
drinking water and created sources of miasma within the city. The British, though, as part of
their plans to improve the health of Calcutta (which included building roads, bridges, and
aqueducts, creating drainage, and filling old tanks), claimed to have vastly restored the large
reservoir in Tank Square in 1709 —— transforming it from the dirty pond filled with weeds and

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[67] Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 77 and 82.
[68] von Orlich, "1843," 868. Von Orlich also named the suburb of Chowringhee and the Esplanade in front
of Fort William as the other two salubrious areas of Calcutta.
[69] Johnson, *Influence*, 33 and Nair, "Civic," 225 for the contaminated water, and Martin, *Notes*, 24 for the
half-dried tanks.
[70] Martin, *Notes*, 28.

noxious matter, which had been at the site since before Charnock's arrival in 1690, into a modern reservoir —— to provide the residents of Calcutta with drinking water.[71] Other communities in the city also dug tanks. An Armenian merchant named Peter Sukeas allowed the public access to the tank of his palatial home and the communities of each *paras* (neighbourhoods) often dug their own tanks.[72] Martin's criticism of the state of Calcutta's tanks, however, might have indicated that the tanks of the Indic and Armenian communities were inadequate and dangerous, and thereby justified Britain's role in providing clean water to the city. European tourists described the water of the tank as pleasant, sweet, and noble, and specified that the tank was surrounded by grass, had steps leading down to its bottom, and was protected by a handsome stone fence, which prevented the native patrons from washing in the tank.[73] Martin stressed the critical importance of prohibiting the native population from bathing and washing clothing in the tank in order to maintain the cleanliness of the drinking water.[74]

Fraser provided several views of Tank Square. One, *A View of Tank Square from the West* [Figure 4], plate 8 in the series, gives form to the British belief in the salubrious nature of the area. In the print, a broad, bustling street runs from the foreground of the image into the distance of the New China Bazaar. The gateway occupies the left half of the image. Two tall stone balustrades define the gateway and a stone-railed fence surrounds the tank. Native inhabitants stroll in an orderly manner down the street. A group of *bhistis* (water carriers) exit the tank with water-filled goat-skins slung over their shoulders, while a woman balancing a

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[71] For the British plans to improve the health of Calcutta see Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 87. For the building of the tank in Tank Square for the use of both European and native inhabitants see Cotton, *Calcutta*, 18; Nair, "Civic," 225; and John Splinter Stavorinus's travel account from 1798, Stavorinus, "Admiral Stavorinus," in *Calcutta in the 18th Century: Impressions of Travellers*, ed. P. Thankappan Nair (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1984), 162.

[72] Nair, "Growth," 16 and 21.

[73] For the sweet and pleasant quality of the water and the fence preventing people from washing in the tank see Stavorinus, "Admiral," 162; for the grass plot and fence see de Grandpre, "Grandpre," 230; and for the fence and steps see Hamilton, "1820," 222, and Martin, "1857," 981.

[74] Martin, *Notes*, 28.

water pot on her head approaches the tank. Another woman, dressed in a red *sari* and yellow

shawl, carries a child and walks toward the bazaar. Other figures walk along the grassy banks of

the tank. The gleaming facades of the Writers' Building, constructed between 1776 and 1780 for

the clerks of the British East India Company, and the steeple of the newly erected Presbyterian

Church of St. Andrew, consecrated in 1818, lie behind the stand of trees that borders the side of

the tank. The steeple of the Old Mission Church —— begun in 1767 by the Swedish missionary

John Zachariah Kiernander and later purchased by Charles Grant, a Scottish merchant and later

Director of the British East India Company[75] —— can be seen in the distance on the right. The

obelisk of Holwell's memorial to the Black Hole of Calcutta (which is emphasized in plate 6, *A*

View of the Writers' Building from the Monument) rises in this image in the background behind

the trees on the left. The top of the monument echoes the spire of the church, linking the British

past with the new building projects being carried out in the city. Puddles of water have formed

on the dirt road in front of the gateway to the tank. The gateway contains a bank of turnstiles,

designed to prevent animals from entering the tank. Sentry boxes, located just beyond the

gateway, housed watchmen who were placed there to ensure that patrons did not bathe in the

tank and contaminate the water.[76] The fence, turnstiles, and sentries all worked to maintain the

purity of the tank's drinking water.

Sanitary order is also maintained by the *bhistis* and female water carriers. According to

Pande, higher-caste Hindus employed *bhistis*, or water carriers, from their own caste, because the

touch of a Christian, Muslim, or member of a lower caste would pollute the drinking water,

while poorer classes sent their women to fetch the water.[77] The presence of *bhistis* and female

water carriers in the aquatint suggests that proper native social order and rules of purity were also

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[75] For more information on the Old Mission Church, see Cotton, *Calcutta*, 514–540.
[76] Losty, *Calcutta*, 86.
[77] Pande, *Medicine*, 116.

being maintained in the collection of drinking water. Fraser's *View of Tank Square* presents an image of the city centre as orderly and clean, a sanitary achievement brought by British intervention in Calcutta.

At the same time that Fraser's print portrays the British as the source of sanitary order in Calcutta, the representation also effaces the diversity of the city's population in order to emphasize a clear distinction between the native and white towns. The only figures in the scene appear to be the Hindu residents of the city. Calcutta, however, was a multicultural city of English, Portuguese, Armenian, Chinese, Hindu, and Muslim merchants. It is important to note, as Sumanta Banerjee's research has shown, that the black town was largely shaped by wealthy Hindus who amassed their fortunes by dealing with the British. Muslims did form a large part of Bengal's population; however, many were agriculturalists and preferred the security of their land to entering into service for the British in Calcutta.[78] By Fraser's time, commercial areas of Calcutta were occupied by both European and native businesses, and Tank Square had become a grey or intermediate space between the black and white sections of the city, having been taken over by members of the "half-castes," poor whites, Indian Christians, Portuguese, Armenians, Jews, and others.[79] What, therefore, surfaces from this context is that Fraser's print both effaces the other inhabitants from the space, as it attempts to represent accurately the Bengali population of the black town, and presents Tank Square as a site completely constructed by the British. British administrative and religious structures line the streets, and the tank in the centre was built

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[78] Sumanta Banerjee, "Economy and Society in Nineteenth Century Calcutta," ch. 2 in *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1989), 27 and 28. See also Krishna Dutta, *Calcutta: A Cultural and Literary History* (New York: Interlink Books, 2003), 23–24.

[79] For the diversity of Calcutta's merchants see Martin, *Notes*, 7; for Calcutta's commercial areas see Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 84; for Tank Square as a grey or intermediate space see Choudhury, "Trends," 159–160; and Marshall, "White Town," 317. See also Pritha Chowdhury and Joyoti Chaliha, "The Jews of Calcutta," in *Calcutta: The Living City, Volume I: The Past*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), 52; and Jaya Chaliha and Bunny Gupta, "The Armenians in Calcutta," in *Calcutta: The Living City, Volume I: The Past*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), 54.

by the British to improve the sanitary conditions of the city. The omission of Muslim figures in the scene also supports the British belief that they themselves were the successors to the Mughals and were, therefore, the legitimate rulers of India.[80] With no Muslims in the scene to allude to any of the current Mughal rulers, the presence of only Hindu figures could suggest to the viewer that the British were the only power in Calcutta. The British emerge as the only European merchants in the city —— they are the builders of the pristine white town, and they provide the residents with the benefits of civilization and sanitation.

There are slight slippages in Fraser's representation of Tank Square, though. The presence of *bhistis* and female water carriers does support Hindu purity practices; however, the encoding of these practices in Fraser's picture helps to legitimate them for British viewers. At a time when medical treatises on Calcutta, such as the text by the East India Company surgeon Martin, stressed how unclean the native population was, Fraser's representation of proper Bengali social procedures in the gathering of drinking water contradicts British notions of the local inhabitants as primitive and requiring British civilization. Moreover, the location of a tank for the Bengali residents in the white town encourages the native population to travel from the black town into the British section of the city to obtain fresh water. The vista leading to the New China Bazaar, along the broad road, emphasizes the distance between the white and black towns, but it also reveals the movement of natives from their section of the city into the British quarter. Granted, most of the figures in the picture appear to be walking back to the bazaar; however, the

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[80] See Bernard S. Cohn, "Cloth, Clothes, and Colonialism: India in the Nineteenth Century," in *Cloth and Human Experience*, ed. Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 316–318 for examples of how the British copied Mughal gift giving practices in order to portray themselves as Indian sovereigns. Banerjee notes that the British may have distrusted Muslims, because the British had recently usurped power from the Mughal rulers. See Banerjee, "Economy," 28. See also Thomas R. Metcalf, "Monuments and Memorials: Lord Curzon's Creation of a Past for the Raj," in *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture and the Politics of Representation, 1850–1900*, ed. Maria Antonella Pelizzari (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2003), 246 for a later example of British rulers of India connecting themselves with the Mughal Empire to legitimate their power.

two Hindu men in the left foreground trouble the scene by their seemingly persistent movement toward the viewer. The men are too far from the gateway to suggest that they are going to the tank, and the slightly bent legs of each of the men indicate a walking motion, a movement which will take them past the tank and further into the white town. As Fraser's *View of Tank Square* might suggest, the British may have brought sanitation to the native residents of Calcutta, but in doing so they also encouraged the transgression of the boundary between the supposedly "clean" white town and "filthy" black town.

FOREGROUNDING HOLWELL'S MEMORIAL: FRASER'S *VIEW OF THE WRITERS'*

BUILDING FROM THE MONUMENT AT THE WEST END

The tensions in Fraser's *View of Tank Square* are further evinced when the viewer is provided with closer access to the site in his *A View of the Writers' Building from the Monument at the West End* [Figure 1]. Holwell erected the monument in 1760 and placed it in Tank Square on the ditch where those who perished in the Black Hole were, according to Holwell, promiscuously buried with no recognition for class distinction.[81] As noted in the introduction, Fraser places the memorial to the Black Hole directly in the foreground of the image. Constructed out of brick and plaster, and comprised of an obelisk and octagonal base with pilaster-framed plaques capped by gables [see Figure 2],[82] the monument is rendered so large that its base occupies almost half of the foreground and its top is cut off by the border of the image. It contains no visible inscription.

The image attempts to establish a binary view of the urban space as one divided between an ordered architecture of the British realm, and a darker foreground inhabited solely by the native inhabitants of Calcutta. The activities of these figures are revealing. A bullock cart, used in the city to transport goods and remove refuse, occupies the foreground to the right of the monument. A pair of unhitched oxen stands on either side of the cart as two men repair it. A barber attends to a customer in the shade of a temporary canopy, created by affixing a large piece of cloth to the base of the monument with two wooden poles supporting the awning. Two men converse on the left. Several locals rest against the base of the memorial, while a woman holding a basket by her side approaches them, presumably to sell her wares. Shards of broken

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[81] Holwell, *Genuine*, 36 for the burial of the victims; Chatterjee, "Black Hole," and Losty, *Calcutta*, 52 for the monument's location over the grave of the Black Hole victims; and de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 237 for the monuments location on the ditch in front of the old Fort's prison.
[82] Losty, *Calcutta*, 84.

pottery litter the street. Three birds perch on the monument as others circle the area. An *ahir* or milkman carrying two jugs stands in the middle of the dirt road facing the crowd. The Writer's Building, with its neoclassical façade, stretches out behind the monument and leads the viewer's eye to the Church of St. Andrew, the latter of which, not insignificantly, was modelled on St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London.[83] The two buildings are bathed in the golden light of a rising sun. Trees and the fence of the neighbouring tank line the right side of the street. A steeple appears in the distance behind the trees, referring to the Old Mission Church. In the distance, a large mass of Bengali residents gathers at the end of the street, situated between the illuminated buildings of St. Andrew's, the flagged exterior of the Collector's Office, and other buildings holding British businesses and administrative offices.[84] In the middle ground, two gentlemen wearing top hats and on horseback appear to follow, confront, or push the crowd, as other native figures standing by the Writers' Building look on. While the Georgian facades and golden sun effectively argue for the stability the British claimed to have brought to Calcutta, it also asserts the British Empire as the legitimate successors to a Greco-Roman tradition of civilization and enlightenment. Like the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome, Britain is portrayed as bringing progress to distant lands as these earlier civilizations had done. While the large crowd gathered at the front of the church, bathed in its light, might possibly evoke loyal subjects who wish to receive British enlightenment and morality, the figures by the memorial, turned away from both it and the church, seem at a remove from British ideals of progress.

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[83] Choudhury, "Trends," 166.

[84] The Calcutta Collector's office was located on the corner, across from the Old Court House where St. Andrew's Church now stands, in the late eighteenth-century. Businesses such as the auction house of Taylor and Company and the Oriental Library (a bookshop) also occupied the south side of the street, while the coachbuilders James Stewart and Company, John Palmer's house (which would be converted into a police station in the late 1820s), and a house used as the court for the Justices of the Peace occupied the north side of the street. See Losty, *Calcutta*, 54, 68–69, and 86.

The contrast between a shadowed Bengali space and an illuminated realm of British edifices was a common trope of Fraser's work, and one that scholars have noted.[85] However this contrast does more than emphasize British superiority over the city's inhabitants, it also opens the image to an alternative, contradictory reading. Scholars de Almeida and Gilpin claim that the memorial in Fraser's image "casts a very large shadow on the Indians depicted clustering at its base. They are pictured as docile and in awe of British might, but their dark history bodes ill and requires ominous reminders like the Holwell monument."[86] The memorial does seem to loom over these inhabitants around its base, but the image also works against de Almeida and Gilpin's interpretation. Indeed, the monument —— made use of as a lounging place for local Bengalis and scavenger adjunct birds —— appears to have become part of the landscape of the space. The structure that emerges is —— like other picturesque ruins in representations of India —— largely neglected, and one that has been re-appropriated by the city's Bengali population for their own economic and social activities.

The Church of St. Andrew, the Collector's Office, and the steeple of the Old Mission Church frame the native crowd gathered on the street. The juxtaposition of the steeples of the Church of St. Andrew and of the Old Mission Church suggests that the scene may be interpreted as one that espouses the enlightenment progress of Scottish Presbyterianism, as St. Andrews was a Presbyterian church and the Mission Church had, by then, been purchased by the Scotsman Charles Grant, a Director of the East India Company.[87] Yet, the picture also points to internal tensions between the different sects of British Protestantism in Calcutta. During the construction of St. Andrew's, Anglican Bishop Middleton attempted to stop the building of the steeple, because the Scottish church wanted one higher than the steeple of the Church of St. John.

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[85] de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 237.
[86] de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 237.
[87] See page 23 and note 75 above.

Consecrated in 1787 and situated southwest of the monument, St. John's was the first Anglican Church built in Calcutta. It was also modelled after St. Martin-in-the-Fields, but with many modifications to the architecture. Upon completion, the steeple of St. Andrew's did surpass the height of St. John's ⸺ indeed, according to Choudhury, the architecture of St. John's appeared to some as vulgar in comparison to St. Andrew's ⸺ and was crowned with a cock to crow over the Bishop's defeat.[88] The Anglican and Presbyterian churches competed with each other over supremacy of the urban vista of Calcutta, undermining notions of a unified British power within the city.

Initially, Fraser's representation of the Holwell memorial appears to provide a historical narrative of British hegemony in Calcutta. The obelisk shape was associated with death, timelessness, and memorials. The octagonal shape of the base suggests, however, that the monument was not just meant to commemorate the dead and the Black Hole; it was also designed to demonstrate the power of the British by referencing the grander and heavily strengthened new Fort William that the British were building in the city they recaptured [see Figure 3].[89] As noted above, Holwell's monument also displayed an inscription (which according to de Grandpre was in both "the English and Moorish languages"[90]) claiming that the victims of the Black Hole died under the tyrannical Siraj and that the British deservedly revenged the act of violence in 1757. By locating the monument in Calcutta, Holwell apparently intended the memorial to be viewed by both local inhabitants of the city and other Europeans. According to scholar Joan Coutu, since it was built after the British recaptured the city, the obelisk stood as a bold symbol of the reclamation of what the British and Holwell believed was

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[88] Choudhury, "Trends," 160–161 and 166.
[89] The new Fort William was constructed as an irregular octagon with seven gates. The Fort was based on the latest advancements in siege technology and took the form of a star shape, which allowed for better defense during an attack. See Losty, *Calcutta*, 36.
[90] de Grandpre, "Grandpre," 230.

rightfully theirs.[91] As public objects of imperialism, monuments were designed to imply the

eternity, permanence, and power of the empire that erected them. In the context of Bengal, the

British used monuments, along with other objects and media (including publications of

picturesque scenes of the subcontinent), to disseminate a vision of the East India Company and

of Britain as both benevolent and contributing to the health and permanence of Calcutta, their

new city, and of the Empire as a whole.

British memorials were designed to mark out a living past that gave meaning to and

informed the present. Events such as the Black Hole were central to Britain's mythologizing of

its past, as it laid claim to the barbarisms of Indian rulers and the sacrifices suffered by the

British in order to justify a civilized and benevolent colonial presence and present.[92] In her study

of the later 1763 Patna Massacre memorial (to the British military officers killed in the city of

Patna by agents of the Nawab Mir Qasim during a war for control of Bengal and Bihar), Rebecca

M. Brown notes that the presence of this memorial in the city claimed both a space and time for

the event. Modifications to the memorial over the course of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and

twentieth centuries, however, transformed the monument into a site where successive

reinterpretations of the story were inscribed, effectively demonstrating the role played by

monuments in the refiguring and mythologizing of colonial histories.[93] As with the Patna

memorial, Holwell's Black Hole monument served to reframe the history of the event through its

presence in Calcutta. The space marked by the monument, that is the perceived location of the

atrocity, became separated from the lived reality of the British inhabitants of the city as they

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[91] Joan Coutu, *Persuasion and Propaganda: Monuments and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 295.

[92] For British memorials as part of a living past, for the importance of the Black Hole to the British, and for the sacrifices of the British see Metcalf, "Monuments" 243 and 250–252. For memorials demonstrating Indian barbarism and justifying colonial rule see Rebecca M. Brown, "Inscribing Colonial Monumentality: A Case Study of the 1763 Patna Massacre Memorial," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65, no. 1 (2006): 101.

[93] Brown, "Inscribing," 91–93.

moved away from Tank Square into the suburbs. As Brown notes, monuments were fixed in

space and time while the myth of the event remained malleable according to the requirements of

colonial discourse.[94]

Brown's analysis of the Patna memorial has implications for the Black Hole memorial.

The migration of British residents out of Tank Square and away from Holwell's monument

transformed the latter into a marker that could be re-inscribed continually with a mythologized

history that retained meaning. Though the monument itself became a fixed marker of the Black

Hole in the city, reproductions of the obelisk, like the mythologized history of the event itself,

created flexible interpretations of the history to serve colonial discourses. The British were

careful to frame their monuments, such as the Black Hole memorial, differently from native

monuments, portraying the latter as picturesque ruins set in a distant past. Reproducible and

readily available images of British memorials, though, allowed them to persist and resonate in

public memory, as the images stood in for the original monument, and had power by making a

spatially and temporally remote monument present to the viewer.[95] Often devoid of value as

objects themselves, colonial monuments accrued different meanings and exerted power through

their reproduction in images.

Fraser's *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument* works to re-present Holwell's

Black Hole memorial in a way that supports the colonial myth of Britain's hegemony over

Calcutta. Indeed, the title of Fraser's images identifies the appropriate perspective for viewing

the scene; in this case, the viewer is meant to see the Writers' Building from the position of

Holwell's monument.[96] The memorial, marking a past event in Britain's history in India, one

that saw the British East India Company recapture Calcutta and consolidate its power in Bengal,

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[94] Brown, "Inscribing," 94.
[95] Guha-Thakurta, "Compulsions," 110.
[96] de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 238.

identifies the moment when Britain established control of the city. From this particular place, the rest of British Calcutta —— symbolized by the Writers' Building, the new church, and the tank —— emerged.

UNSTABLE TROPES: COMPARING FRASER'S PRINT OF THE MEMORIAL TO EARLIER REPRESENTATIONS

Fraser's *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument* appears to establish a history of British hegemony and civilizing progress over Calcutta, but no sooner is this idea made clear than it gives way to an alternative interpretation. The contrast between the dark foreground and the illuminated background does delineate a separation between the Indic and British spaces of Calcutta, and it does showcase Britain's power. However, the image also locates the memorial to the Black Hole, a structure commemorating a British tragedy, squarely in a Bengali space. During a period when the boundary between the black and white towns was being secured, Fraser's positioning of native figures around the memorial reveals the porous nature of this boundary.

Earlier representations of Tank Square ⸺ such as Thomas and William Daniell's *East side of the Old Fort, Clive Street, the Theatre and Holwell Monument* and *North side of Tank Square with the Old Fort and Holwell Monument in the Distance, Writers' Buildings, and the Old Court House*, both of which were published in their *Views of Calcutta* from 1786, and *The Writers' Buildings, Calcutta* from the 1792 edition of the Daniells's *Oriental Scenery* ⸺ contrast with Fraser's later prints by depicting Britain's new supremacy over the city. The Daniells's earlier scenes of Calcutta reflect the atmosphere of exchange and interaction that took place between Europeans and Bengalis during the eighteenth century,[97] while at the same time maintaining the belief in Britain's hegemony over the native residents. Fraser's *Views of Calcutta* was, according to its publishers, designed to build on the tradition of colonial picturesque representations established by the Daniells and others; however, Fraser's images are

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[97] Banerjee, "Economy," 23.

far more ambiguous. Produced during a period in which the British grew increasingly concerned with the threat of contamination from the Bengali residents and the tropical climate,[98] Fraser represents Calcutta as a city built by the British but populated solely by native inhabitants whose presence seems to destabilize notions of British domination.

In the Daniells's *East side of the Old Fort, Clive Street, the Theatre and Holwell Monument* of 1786 [Figure 5], akin in geographical location to Fraser's *View of Tank Square*, a bustling Clive Street stretches from the foreground toward the distance, terminating in a cluster of faint Palladian buildings. Holwell's memorial, protected by a solid stone wall, is situated on the right side of the thoroughfare and the ruins of the old Fort occupy the left side of the street. The Writers' Building, the theatre (which British residents believed was the first building devoted to bringing English culture to Calcutta),[99] and the grand home of Colonel Robert Clive, the military officer responsible for recapturing the city in 1757, frame the space. The ruins of the old Fort appear to loom over the road. Indic and European figures travel along the street. A native guard escorts a Bengali woman carrying a child out of the fort. Two other guards casually converse with each other at the entrance to the ruined fort. Two oxen pull a cart loaded with crates and a driver under an umbrella, while four native figures follow with a large crate hoisted above their heads. Over to the right, four Bengali servants carry a palanquin, led by a turbaned man with a staff. Groups of figures in conversations and pedestrians, some under umbrellas, occupy the rest of the street. The juxtaposition of Holwell's monument on one side of the street and the old Fort on the other frames the scene within a mythologized history of the space. The obelisk commemorates the tragedy that took place in the Fort across the street, the event that spurred Britain to recapture Calcutta. The Georgian structures along the road ⸺ the theatre, the

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[98] Banerjee, "Economy," 23. It is important to note that both Johnson and Martin's texts were published during Fraser's lifetime, and that Johnson's was published two years after Fraser had travelled to India.
[99] de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 185. See also Losty, *Calcutta*, 51–52.

Writers' Building, and Clive's residence —— serve to naturalize Britain's presence in Calcutta and to indicate the permanence of its imperial position. In the Daniells's aquatint, many of the native figures on the street are engaged in activities that mark their subservience within Britain's imperial hierarchy by transporting goods, bearing palanquins, and looking after the old Fort. The position of the viewer is set above the street. In her study of Victorian tourism, Marjorie Morgan notes that British travellers often preferred "to look down rather than out across or up at [a] landscape."[100] From this location, British tourists occupied a position of power and could survey the space below. By placing the viewer above the scene of Clive Street, in an image with the picturesque elements of the ruined Fort and native inhabitants, the Daniells's aquatint also allowed the viewer to dominate and consume the entire view. Elizabeth Helsinger has noted in the picturesque landscapes of Britain that "to be the subject, and never the viewer, of these landscapes means to be fixed in place [... and] circumscribed within a social position and a locality."[101] The Indic servants in the Daniells's print, as subjects of a colonial picturesque image, are thus situated in contrast to the privileged viewer. Indeed, the servants and other labourers in *East side of the Old Fort*, as well as in the Daniells's other views of Calcutta, are portrayed as dependents of British benevolence.

In contrast, Fraser's later *View of Tank Square* is not teeming with seemingly subservient Bengalis and the viewer is positioned at the same level as the Indic inhabitants in the scene. Where the native residents in the Daniells's picture are apparently engaged in servile and economically productive tasks for the British, the native figures in Fraser's print perform everyday activities, such as fetching water for their homes in the black town. Furthermore, as a

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[100] Marjorie Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 47.
[101] Elizabeth Helsinger, "Turner and the Representation of England," in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 105.

result of the lowered position in Fraser's plate, the trees block the viewer from seeing much of the Writers' Building, St. Andrew's Church, and the Holwell monument —— the objects of British power. The viewer can see the tank, another sign of English progress, but what is also prominent are the Bengali residents walking around the Square. Granted, the native figures remain objects of the viewer's gaze. Yet, in contrast to the Daniells's earlier aquatint, the authority of the viewer in Fraser's image is diminished by his or her placement at the level of the street. The native figures share the same vertical plane and move toward the viewer's space, as noted above in the case of the two men approaching to the left. These men force the viewer to engage with them. The patch of empty dirt road between the viewer and the natives does separate the two, maintaining a small boundary between the black and white spaces, but the British viewer is no longer above and apart from the Bengalis.

These tensions in Fraser's pictures are also not as present in the Daniells's other aquatint, *North side of Tank Square with the Old Fort and Holwell Monument in the Distance, Writers' Buildings, and the Old Court House* of 1786 [Figure 6]. Here, Holwell's memorial is located in the distance, at the end of a bustling street lined with neoclassical buildings. The long three-storey facade of the Writers' Building stretches across much of the background and the Old Court House, built during Clive's governorship in 1756 and later replaced by St. Andrew's Church, occupies the right side of the image. The street is filled with fashionable Europeans and unobtrusive native inhabitants. Many people are gathered on the steps and under the stone portico of the Old Court House. Pedestrians and oxen carts transporting goods move along the road. A large coach, drawn by two horses, carries a fashionably attired European couple. Two native servants walk behind. Other Indic figures carry a palanquin bearing a European man, while a Bengali servant, towing four leashed pet dogs, follows. The dogs seem to have

frightened a horse, which has reared up on its hind legs but remains in the control of its European

rider. The edifices of the British buildings, institutional sites of colonial power, frame the entire

scene. Both the facades of the Old Court House and the Writers' Building form a barrier that

contains the space of the street and draws the viewer's eye across the scene towards the Holwell

monument in the hazy distance.[102] Reading the Daniells's aquatint from right to left, the distant

memorial situates an origin for British involvement in India. From this marker stems the grand,

ordered, Palladian buildings along the street, which advances a continuum of progress and power

in the city.

Reminiscent of early modern *veduti*, such as the etchings of Roman ruins by Giovanni

Battista Piranesi or the paintings of urban vistas by Canaletto,[103] the Daniells's print aesthetically

mediates the urban space of Calcutta to celebrate the order Britain brought to the city. For

Chattopadhyay, the Daniells's prints of Indian ruins recalled Piranesi's *veduti*, because they

reflected the exaggerated perspective depth and aesthetic enhancements with which Piranesi

represented Roman ruins. Chattopadhyay, however, contends that the Daniells's pictures of

Calcutta did not take up Piranesi's visual vocabulary, because the ruinous and exaggerated

effects of *veduti* did not support the British colonial discourse of bringing civilization to

Bengal.[104] As Chattopadhyay notes, instead of portraying ruins (the common subject of

picturesque scenes), the Daniells's urban vista featured the orderly and regular Palladian

architecture as a contrast to the disorder of the native elements in the scene, so as to distinguish

the "fashionable" white town from the "chaotic" black town, and to proclaim British authority

over the city. While I concur with Chattopadhyay's assessment that the Daniells's aquatint does

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[102] Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 49.
[103] For more information on the works of Piranesi and Canaletto, see Richard Rand and John L. Varriano, *Two Views of Italy: Master Prints by Canaletto and Piranesi* (Hanover, NH: Hood Museum of Art, 1995).
[104] Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 48.

not contain the exaggerated effects of *veduti*, I believe that the scene also functions similarly to other early modern representations of urban spaces. In her work on seventeenth-century prints of Rome, Rose-Marie San Juan argues that urban imagery could depict the city as orderly, progressive, changeable, or unpredictable, while the new modes of representing the city through print could facilitate touristic desires as well as urban transformation and control.[105] She also contends that prints of the city made spaces previously excluded from viewers accessible while at the same time holding the unreadable and unpredictable at bay.[106] The Daniells's aquatint opened Tank Square to the British gaze. It also constructed the site as an imperial space where British progress removed or transformed abject elements, the unpredictable and unreadable, into healthy sites and obedient subjects.

The Daniells's *The Writers' Buildings, Calcutta* of 1792 [Figure 7], a predecessor to Fraser's *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument* by some decades, contrasts with Fraser's vista. In the Daniells's print, Holwell's obelisk is rendered as a whole, looming over the Writers' Building and the figures on the street. A stone and iron fence protects the memorial and each of the pediments on the base is capped with an urn. The Bengali population are engaged in productive —— though controlled and subservient —— activities; they carry water, escort carriages, or carry palanquins with European riders. While two figures do appear to use the memorial as a resting spot, sitting against the stone fence along with their two goats and airing cloaks on the railing behind them, they are the only figures in the entire scene near the structure. A trio appear to regard the obelisk with at least some degree of acknowledgement, stopping before it as they pass by.

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[105] Rose-Marie San Juan, *Rome: A City Out of Print* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 10.

[106] San Juan, *Rome*, 66 and 88.

Fraser's *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument*, however, differs in relation to the triumphant British imperialism presented in the Daniells's images of Tank Square. In Fraser's print, the scene is dominated not by a European population, but by a Bengali one. Holwell's memorial is dark, dirty, and stained. The urns that once capped the monument's pediments are gone, replaced by birds that use the spots to roost. The presence of the birds, in particular of the stork on the corner of the Writers' Building, suggests that the space is in decay, as they are scavenger birds that feed on dead matter. Nineteenth-century travellers to Calcutta regarded the birds as extremely useful, because they contributed to the cleanliness of the city by removing decaying matter.[107] While the birds in Fraser's image may suggest that the space between Tank Square and the Writers' Building is being cleaned of its filth, the very presence of the scavengers indicates that rotting matter is present in the salubrious Square. A bullock cart, often used to carry goods or refuse, lies unhitched next to the obelisk. The placement of the cart in the image may imply that economic or sanitary measures are being carried out, that trade goods are being transported in and out of Calcutta or that garbage is being removed from the city. However, the unhitched state of the bullock cart and the two men repairing it may also suggest that the cart is ineffective at the moment. Where the viewer of the Daniells's aquatint occupies a position slightly above the street and distanced from the figures, which allows the viewer to look down at and survey the entire scene, in Fraser's later representation, the viewer is placed on the dirt road at the same level and in the same space as the native figures around the monument. In order to move down the road, out of the dark foreground and toward the light, the viewer must navigate around the Bengali figures, cart, oxen, and the monument. Indeed, the figures and objects that occupy the foreground displace the viewer; he or she is forced to move

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[107] de Grandpre, "Grandpre," 232. See also Nair, "Civic," 226 and 232.

around them to the side of the road, to walk over the broken pottery, if he or she wants to travel through the represented space.

Significantly, by the time Fraser produced *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument*, British residents had left Tank Square for the garden houses and palatial mansions of the suburbs, and the site was now occupied by Armenians, Portuguese, and other non-English inhabitants.[108] The displacement of the viewer affected by Fraser's print might, therefore, give form to the replacement of English residents by other ethnic groups as Calcutta grew. The image of a sanitary and British-dominated Tank Square presented in Fraser's previous aquatint is troubled by this closer view of the site.

The tenuousness of the boundaries between the white and black towns, between notions of Britain as a purveyor of civilization and progress and the representation of the Bengali environment in terms of disease or filth, is further demonstrated through the contrast between the Daniells's and Fraser's depictions of the architecture of the space. Although the Daniells's earlier print draws attention to the pristine facade of the Writers' Building, Fraser's image shows the building surrounded by a makeshift veranda. Martin and other contemporaries commented on how the neoclassical architecture of the British buildings failed to provide adequate protection from the rays of the tropical sun.[109] The symmetrical and orderly neoclassical architecture of the Writers' Building thus required a veranda constructed from reeds (the same material used to make the mats employed by native inhabitants on their homes) to protect the interior of the building from the heat of the harsh sun. The fence that surrounded the base and separated the memorial from the public is also gone. Now, the inhabitants can rest against the monument itself or attach temporary structures to its base. Indeed, Fraser has cut off the monument part way up

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[108] See page 24 and note 79 above.
[109] Martin, *Notes*, 61; and Hamilton, "1820," 222. See also Choudhury, "Trends," 161–162 and 165–166.

the obelisk. The memorial is not complete; rather it is broken, cut off, lacking. It is no longer a monument.

Importantly, the Bengali figures surrounding the memorial in Fraser's print also differ from those in the Daniells's earlier aquatints. In contrast to the Daniells's *Writers' Buildings*, Fraser's individuals are not labourers engaged in servile tasks for Europeans. Rather, they are carrying out everyday economic and social activities: attending to customers, conversing, or repairing a cart in the middle of the broad public road. Moreover, they have re-appropriated a space that apparently was neglected for a period of time. Lush grass and ferns have had the opportunity to grow on the dirt around the monument, signifying that the ground has not been trodden on for some time. The patch of dirt under the temporary stall points to a growing reoccupation of this area of the white town, but a reoccupation that is being carried out by a Bengali population who ignore the monument, do not support the activities of the East India Company, and, thus, are outside of Britain's imperial present in Calcutta. Whereas in the Daniells's aquatints the scenes are filled with fashionable Europeans and ostensibly subservient Bengalis interacting before the newly-erected buildings of the British administration, in Fraser's *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument* the picture is, instead, of a space populated largely by native figures with a British presence marked out primarily by the pristine Palladian edifices of the Writers' Building and the Church of St. Andrew. Crucially, though, the authority symbolized by the neoclassical facades in Fraser's print is troubled by the presence of the reed veranda, which reminds the British viewer of the dangers posed by the Bengali climate and the compromises the British had to make in order to maintain their presence in India.

INDIAN "TYPES" AND NATIVE "DIRT": FRASER'S REPRESENTATION OF THE BLACK TOWN

In the previous sections I have suggested the ways in which Fraser's *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument* references the sanitary cleansing of Tank Square. This analysis is further supported through a juxtaposition of this aquatint with Fraser's last print in his collection, *A View in the Bazaar, Leading to Chitpore Road* [Figure 8]. Calcutta's bazaars constituted important economic bases for the British East India Company, providing sites for investment and commercial enterprises.[110] British tourists, though, viewed the bazaars as unsanitary environments of the black town. Visiting Calcutta in the same period as Fraser, the Reverend Reginald Heber, Lord Bishop of Calcutta, described the bazaars as "wretchedness itself," while British residents viewed them as sources of contagion, filth, and corruption, and markets where rotting or adulterated food was sold and where vendors cheated customers.[111] Indeed, as Pande notes, "in the native bazaar, exchange was marked by the double corruption of putrefaction and duplicity."[112] The bazaar represented in Fraser's final aquatint was located at the entrance to the native quarters of the city, north of where Lall Bazaar Street crossed Chitpore Road [see Figure 3].[113]

Fraser's *View in the Bazaar* represents a generic view of a market of the native town. As Chattopadhyay argues, British images of bazaars were often extensions of the foreground idiom

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[110] Pande, *Medicine*, 100.
[111] Bishop Reginald Heber, "Calcutta in 1823–24," in *Calcutta in the 19th Century (Company's Days)*, ed. P. Thankappan Nair (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1989), 387 for the bazaars as wretchedness itself; and Pande, *Medicine*, 109 for the bazaars as sources of corruption.
[112] Pande, *Medicine*, 109.
[113] According to Losty, "at the east end of Esplanade Row, the European quarter continued if one turned at right angles southwards down the Chowringhee Road. However, if one turned left up Cossitollah Street (named from its being the butchers' quarter originally), one began to enter the Indian city, and especially so when this road crossed the Lall Bazaar and became the Chitpore Road." Losty, *Calcutta*, 93.

of the pictures of Calcutta's white town.[114] Throughout his series, Fraser populated his

foregrounds with native inhabitants. The first impression of Fraser's picture of the black town is

that it provides a complete contrast to the pristine white town. As de Almeida and Gilpin claim,

"nothing could be more different from the monumental architecture of British Calcutta than the

Indian bazaar, or freak show, of Chitpore Road."[115] Certainly, Fraser's aquatint of the bazaar

provides a stark contrast to his earlier images of Tank Square and the Writers' Building.

The street is bustling with native figures individualized by their various forms and

colours of dress. However, as Chattopadhyay points out, the native figures that occupy Fraser's

aquatints are devoid of individualism and, instead, conform to what Europeans viewed as the

"typical" Indian.[116] Catalogues of Indian figures —— such as the work of European artist

Balthazar Solvyns or the "Company" paintings Fraser commissioned from Indian artists ——

were used to provide clear examples of the various costumes, objects, and customs of Indians in

order to identify and make readable the native population of the subcontinent.[117] Working in a

similar mode to these catalogues, Fraser employs formulas of Indic costume as markers of

identity and difference in his scene. Playing on British ideas of the exotic, Fraser highlights the

bare chests and limbs, and dark skin of the native figures. The alleged "nakedness" of Indians

had struck English travellers early on.[118] The exposed skin of Fraser's figures alludes to that first

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[114] Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 59.

[115] de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 238.

[116] Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 52.

[117] See Robert L. Hardgraves, *A Portrait of the Hindus: Balthazar Solvyns and the European Image of India, 1760–1824* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) for an example of such nineteenth-century European catalogues and a comprehensive study of Solvyns's work. Solvyns published several editions of his etchings of Hindu figures between 1796 and 1808. Though Solvyns's editions failed financially, they did circulate in Europe and were even published in England between 1804 and 1805 by Edward Orme without Solvyns's permission. See Hardgraves, *Portrait*, 9 and 54. Fraser (and his brother William) commissioned the "Company" paintings, so called because they were produced by Indian artists for employees of the East India Company, from Indian artists in Delhi in order to have a record of Indian characters that Fraser used for his own representations of the subcontinent. Archer and Falk, *India Revealed*, 9 and 43. For a catalogue of Fraser's collection of Company paintings, see Archer and Falk, *India Revealed*, 90–136.

[118] Cohn, "Cloth," 331.

touristic encounter by presenting the British viewer with a representation of Calcutta's native residents as "Other."

Difference is further marked through the clothing worn by the figures in the image, which not only serves to support a basic binary of Indian/European, it is also used to classify the diverse social, religious, and occupational identities of the native residents, and then to categorize them under a British idea of "Indianness." In Fraser's print, the figures populating the street are clothed in Indic garments, which included *dhotis* wrapped around the lower half of their bodies, *chadars* (cotton shawls), *saris*, *pagris* (turbans), *jamas,* and other garments of stitched and unstitched cloth in bright colours of white, blue, red, green, and yellow. It is important to note that Hindu and Muslim clothing differed in that while Hindu garments were made of unstitched and uncut cloth folded, tucked, or draped around the body, Muslim garments were cut, stitched, and sewn together.[119] The figures wearing *pagris*, *dhotis*, and other long, draped garments are dressed in clothing that marks them out as members of the Hindu community.[120] Furthermore, according to Bernard S. Cohn, details such as the method by which a *dhoti* was tucked at the waist and the length of the draping marked out the status or occupation of the wearer.[121] The different lengths of the *dhotis* worn by the male figures in the aquatint, as well as the tighter or looser fit of the garment around their bodies, suggest that the Hindu men are from diverse castes and occupations. Colour also served to mark out identities.[122] Some of the figures are clothed in white —— a colour suitable for the climate, and one that was appropriate for widows and

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[119] Cohn, "Cloth," 332.
[120] Cohn, "Cloth," 331–332.
[121] Cohn, "Cloth," 332.
[122] C. A. Bayly, "The Origins of Swadeshi (Home Industry): Cloth and Indian Society, 1700–1930," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 291 and 304. See also Bayly, "Origins," for the political implications of the use of European manufactured cloth in India, particularly during the swadeshi movement and the rise of Indian nationalism.

Brahmins because of its associations with purity.[123] A few of the figures appear to be dressed in stitched clothing. The long, tailored robes worn by some of the male figures in the bazaar may be *jamas* or *angarakhas*, a long coat tied at the waist that was worn by both Muslims and Hindus. While both groups wore the same type of garment, they did differentiate from each other in the way they tied their *jamas*, as Muslims tied the garment on the right and Hindus tied it on the left.[124] Hindus did sometimes wear Muslim-style clothing in public if their work required them to do so.[125] The different styles of clothing worn by the figures in Fraser's representation are used to illustrate the diversity and "exotic" character of the black town.

Interestingly, in Fraser's *View of Tank Square* and *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument*, the Indic inhabitants appear to be from the Hindu community. The figures in both plates are dressed in garments, such as the *dhoti*, which the British believed were "traditional" Hindu costumes. The figures are slightly individualized through the colour of their clothing and the arrangement of the garments on their bodies; however, the diversity present in Fraser's aquatint of the bazaar is not pictured in these earlier prints. Where Fraser's *View in the Bazaar* represents a space of the black town filled with a plethora of Indic "types," the only native figures shown entering the white town in *View of Tank Square* and *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument*, are Hindu, who, as noted above, composed the majority of the population of Calcutta's black town, and who regularly interacted and conducted business with the British.

The clothing depicted in Fraser's images also positions the native figures as subservient and in the past. By the mid-nineteenth century, Cohn asserts, increasing numbers of Indians living in urban centres, such as Calcutta, began wearing European clothing.[126] However, during

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[123] Bayly, "Origins," 291.
[124] Cohn, "Cloth," 333.
[125] Cohn, "Cloth," 332.
[126] Cohn, "Cloth," 333.

this same period, the British encouraged Indians to wear what the British deemed to be their traditional clothing as part of a larger project of colonial control that allowed the British to govern in what they believed was an "oriental manner:" by establishing and enforcing Indian social hierarchies —— with the British placing themselves at the top as successors to the Mughal Empire —— governing with a strong hand and expecting instant obedience.[127] None of the Hindu figures in Fraser's aquatint appear to be dressed in European clothing. Instead, they wear their "traditional" garments, which designate their occupations and status. Fraser's Bengali figures fit within the British construct of India's social hierarchy, portraying them as subjects of British rule.[128] Moreover, the garments suggest that the Indic figures are traditional; that they have not changed over time. As with native figures in picturesque scenes, the Calcutta residents depicted in Fraser's *View in the Bazaar* are firmly situated in the past and, thus, dependent on the British to improve their conditions.

The bazaar of Fraser's print is, thus, a space that appears to conform to European ideas of the black town. A small group of men, women, and a child gather around the brazier of a market stall. The smoke of other braziers rises from stalls lining the street. Two women —— one leaning on a cane and wearing a green *chadar* and red *sari*, and the other wearing a blue *chadar*, a lilac *choli* (a fitted, stitched blouse), and colourful striped pants —— pass each other on the road. Their garments seem to identify these women as maids or wet-nurses who served in the European houses of the white town.[129] Two other women, dressed in similar garments, look down on the street from the roof of the building on the right. Further up the road a man in blue

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[127] Cohn, "Cloth," 316–317 and 325.
[128] See Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) for a critical examination of the European colonial project of identity formation in India; and see Christopher Pinney, "Classification and Fantasy in the Photographic Constructions of Caste and Tribe," *Visual Anthropology* 3 (1990): 259–288 for an examination of the role of the visual in European constructions of Indian identity.
[129] See Hardgraves, *Portrait*, 306–307 for examples.

and white clothing squats by a stall, perhaps resting. A bearded man in a blue *pagri*, a long rose-coloured garment, and a green coat converses with another man in a red coat in the middle of the street. The beard and *pagri* may designate the man as a Sikh.[130] A woman, wearing yellow and blue clothes and carrying a jug, moves behind the pair. The two men in the left foreground are ascetics, clad in tightly wrapped white loincloths and tiger-skin capes. The ascetic with his arms raised over his head might be an *udbahu*, an ascetic who showed his devotion by always keeping his arms in an upraised position.[131] Two men transporting an empty red palanquin follow a carriage with an elaborate gold and white tent as it progresses down the street. Past this carriage, and moving further into the native town, the street becomes more densely populated —— filled with a mass of heads —— and narrower, as the buildings on the right side of the street curve toward the structures on the left in the hazy distance. The buildings are made of plaster-covered brick and the structures on the right side of the street are constructed in an Indian architectural mode, with multiple balconies supported by thin columns and decorated with cusped arches. The facades appear slightly dilapidated and stained. Laundry hangs from the railings of the balconies, and the interiors are protected from the sun by woven reed mats with small apertures for windows cut out of them. The buildings are a combination of residential quarters on the top floors and shops on the ground floor. Market stalls line both sides of the street and are also protected by awnings of reed or cloth. Food and other goods are displayed in the open on the stands. The display of one stall, on the right side of the image, contains goods and two white-clothed children. A cart loaded with large sacks is stopped in front of a shop on the left with a white and blue striped awning. It appears that two men are unloading the goods, as one man

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[130] See Hardgrave, *Portrait*, 210–211 for the European depiction of a Sikh and see Cohn, "Cloth," 305–306 for a discussion of Sikh customs of appearance.

[131] See Hardgraves, *Portrait*, 309–330 for European representations of Indian ascetics, including the *udbahu* (322–324). See also Archer and Falk, *India Revealed*, 101 and 118 for "Company" paintings of ascetics Fraser owned.

stands on the pile in the cart and passes a sack to the other man standing next to the cart.

Bananas and other fruits are piled on shelves and on the dirt road in front of a shop located in the

foreground of the print. A bull is eating the fruit, while the vendor in a white *dhoti* tries to chase

it away. There are no fences, turnstiles, or sentries to enforce sanitary order here, and it seems

that animals are allowed to roam the streets freely. Fraser's bazaar appears to provide viewers

with a space that is entirely filled with what seems like a complete catalogue of Indian "types."

The picture also represents both the fertile commodity market that first attracted the East India

Company to the subcontinent and a space that is very different from the British-dominated areas

represented in Fraser's earlier prints in the series.

View in the Bazaar also troubles British ideas of hegemony in Calcutta. While the

buildings on the right side of the street seem to reflect Indic architecture, the buildings on the left

side of the street are constructed in a neoclassical style favoured by the British in the city. These

Palladian facades, though, are decaying. Plaster has fallen off of the tall columns, revealing the

brickwork underneath. Stains also mar the façade. Large sheets have been suspended from the

entablature of the building in the left foreground to protect it from the heat of the sun. The Indic

buildings on the right are bathed in sunlight, while the deteriorating neoclassical buildings on the

left are engulfed in shadow. What were potentially once gleaming Palladian structures, similar

to the Church of St. Andrew and the Writers' Building, have been neglected. Indeed,

contemporary commentators criticized British residents for the use of brick and plaster, and for

the modifications made to the codes of neoclassical architecture when it was imported to the

subcontinent, seeing it as a form of "pariah Palladian" lacking in the variation, richness, and

subtlety of the architectural mode.[132] Moreover, the location of a fruit stand in front of the

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[132] Choudhury, "Trends," 165–166. "Pariah Palladian" quoted in Choudhury, "Trends," 165. See also Choudhury, "Trends," 165–167 for examples of "flawed" British architecture in Calcutta.

Palladian building on the left indicates that these structures have become a part of the native town. The presence of the two women in the costumes typical of Indian maids and wet-nurses further troubles British beliefs in a binary black and white Calcutta. The placement of Bengali women who serve British ladies, and care for and feed British children, in a scene of the native bazaar highlights the fluidity of the boundaries between the white and black sections of the city, and emphasizes the ease with which elements of the native quarter could enter even the most private realms of the British neoclassical palaces.

Fraser's juxtaposition of European and Indic styles of architecture in *View in the Bazaar*, coupled with plate 23 (the preceding print in the collection), *A View of the Black Pagoda, in the Chitpore Road* [Figure 9], further destabilizes beliefs in Britain's supremacy in Calcutta. *View of the Black Pagoda*, depicts a bustling Chitpore Road filled with native inhabitants. Two ascetics draped in tiger skins walk down the right side of the dirt road. A woman in yellow and blue garments, a typical figure in Fraser's prints, carries her child as she moves towards the viewer.[133] A group of white *dhoti*-clad men, possibly Brahmins, have gathered by the porch of a building on the left.

The plate juxtaposes seemingly "authentic" Indian architecture with the new hybrid architecture of the wealthy Bengali inhabitants. From the eighteenth century on, affluent Bengali residents, many of whom made their money through dealings with the East India Company, began to build grand homes that combined Indian and neoclassical architectural styles.[134] In the left foreground of the aquatint, where a large group of white-clothed men have gathered, is the

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[133] A similar figure of a woman holding a child appears in Fraser's *View of Tank Square* (see Figure 4), but in this scene she is wearing yellow and red garments and walks away from the viewer. In Fraser's *View in the Bazaar*, a woman wearing yellow and blue clothes, but this time carrying a jug, walks along the street toward the viewer [see Figure 8].

[134] See Bunny Gupta and Jaya Chaliha, "Chitpur," in *Calcutta: The Living City, Volume I: The Past*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), 27–28; Chitra Deb, "The 'Great Houses' of Old Calcutta," in *Calcutta: The Living City, Volume I: The Past*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), 58; Choudhury, "Trends," 163–167; and Dutta, *Calcutta*, 48 for more information.

veranda of a building that combines Indian and European architectural styles. The veranda form, the raised platform, and the carved wooden roof beams reflect Indian tastes, while the Ionic columns point to European influences. The structure might be the *thakur dalan* (a hall of worship) of a private residence —— a space, according to Choudhury, which some wealthy residents designed for entertainment and ostentation, utilizing the Palladian idiom of columns but not pediments as part of the display of luxury.[135]

Across the road lies another religious building, the so-called "Black Pagoda," a Hindu temple dedicated to the goddess Kali. The structure was built around 1731 by Gobindram Mitter, who was known as the Black Zamindar because he was the aide of the East India Company zamindar (who at that time was Holwell) and helped in the collection of revenues. Erected in the northern end of Calcutta in a distinctive Bengali style, the temple was meant to be an impressive structure, as it was built with a main tower consisting of five pinnacles (*pancaratna*) and two subsidiary shrines consisting of nine pinnacles (*navaratna*), and was named the *Navaratna Mandir* (or Nine-Jewelled Temple). Once complete, the Hindu temple would have dominated the northern section of the city. It was apparently never finished and the main tower was said to have collapsed in 1813.[136] Fraser represents one of the two subsidiary towers. The stone is darkened with age and partly overgrown with vegetation. Two huts and a trio of goats occupy the space to the right of the temple. As the focus of the aquatint, and framed within a picturesque collection of views of Calcutta, the Hindu temple is marked as an important site; that is, it is identified as an Indic religious structure that has fallen into ruin through the neglect of the native inhabitants of the city, but which is valued by the British for its history as a relic of India's past. The temple as ruin also contrasts with the emphasis Fraser places on the

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[135] Choudhury, "Trends," 164–165.
[136] Losty, *Calcutta*, 18, 48, and 104 for the history, location, and style of the so-called Black Pagoda; and Dutta, *Calcutta*, 48 for the name of the temple.

prints of Christian churches that are seen throughout his series as a whole.[137] Several native

figures are turned toward or are approaching the entrance to the temple, drawing the viewer's

attention to the monument as ruin. The Hindu temple thus contrasts with the other religious site

in the image, the hybrid Indo-Palladian *thakur dalan* in the foreground. Indeed, such mixed

architecture of the black town was dismissed as inauthentic by the British, who believed,

according to Chattopadhyay, that such hybrid modes developed not from a genuine conviction

for British neoclassicism, but from the clumsy and blind mimicry of European tastes.[138] In the

aquatint, the veranda is presented as merely a part of a larger Indo-Palladian home of an affluent

Bengali that does not merit the viewer's attention and, thus, is cut off by the picture.

The dismissive opinions of the new mixed Indian architecture of the Bengali elite brought

forth in *View of the Black Pagoda* suggests other important readings of the crumbling

neoclassical buildings in Fraser's *View in the Bazaar*. The decaying and potentially hybrid

architecture of *View in the Bazaar* might have served for some viewers to characterize the native

residents of Calcutta as inattentive to the sanitary maintenance of the city. More significantly,

the deteriorating facades also point out the limits of British colonial hegemony. The work of

postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha has shown that although the project of colonialism

attempts to fix boundaries and identities, and to establish difference, transgressions and failures

emerge, resulting in ambiguities that challenge these power relations. As Bhabha has argued,

mimicry was a strategy of colonial power where "a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of*

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[137] Christian churches are either the central focus or are partially pictured in no less than nine of Fraser's prints. See Plate 6: *A View of the Writers' Building from the Monument at the West End*; Plate 8: *A View of Tank Square, from the West*; Plate 12: *A View of the Scotch Church, from the Gate of Tank Square*; Plate 13: *View of St. Andrew's Church, from Mission Row*; Plate 14: *View of Court House Street, from near the South-Eastern Gateway of Government House*; Plate 15: *View of Calcutta from the Glacis of Fort William*; Plate 17: *View of Loll Bazaar and Portuguese Chapel*; Plate 19: *View of St. John's Cathedral*; and Plate 22: *A View of the West Side of Tank Square*.

[138] Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 67 and 135.

a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" was desired.[139] Affluent native residents who

obtained their wealth by supporting the East India Company also began to adopt European styles

of architecture by embracing a British architectural vocabulary associated with both order and

enlightenment. However, the ambivalence of colonial mimicry, as Bhabha points out, "does not

merely 'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the

colonial subject as a 'partial' presence." Bhabha adds: "by 'partial' I mean both 'incomplete'

and 'virtual.'"[140] Despite the blending of neoclassical elements with Indic architectural modes, a

reformed and recognizable "Other" desired in the project of colonialism did not emerge in the

representations of Calcutta's architecture. In effect, the mixed Indo-Palladian architecture

brought forth the limits of British colonial power by exposing what Bhabha has asserted is

mimicry's menace: the double vision of mimicry which both reveals the ambivalence of colonial

discourse and also challenges its authority.[141] Rather than support British beliefs in the

effectiveness of their civilizing mission, the hybrid architecture was understood by British

visitors to Calcutta as a kind of inept mimicry performed by the Bengali elite.[142] Their supposed

failure to effectively follow British cultural modes made visible the incompleteness of Britain's

supremacy in the city.

Moreover, the decaying Palladian facades in Fraser's *View in the Bazaar* create what

Chattopadhyay calls the colonial uncanny. The neoclassical architecture the British brought to

the city was intended to remain a secure symbol of British authority; instead, it evoked a sense of

anxiety in British visitors when they witnessed how transformed these pristine structures had

become through the deterioration and the adaptations made to the facades as a result of the

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[139] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 85–86.
[140] Bhabha, *Location*, 86.
[141] Bhabha, *Location*, 88.
[142] See page 52 and note 138 above.

Bengali climate.[143] Interestingly, while the architecture of Fraser's bazaar posits an ambiguous and unstable interpretation, the identity of the inhabitants in the street are more fixed as a result of their representation in costumes that categorize them under specific Indian "types."

The juxtaposition of Fraser's last two prints in his series reveals the partial and tenuous character of British hegemony in Calcutta. The Bengalis appropriated only certain parts of British culture, while rejecting those that may not have been useful for living or functioning within a city in India. Fraser's *View in the Bazaar* ——— with the decaying Georgian architecture and the Indic buildings bathed in light ——— brings to the fore the fraught nature of importing and maintaining British culture in the subcontinent.

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[143] Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 32.

URBAN RUIN: THE HOLWELL MONUMENT IN MEMORY

By the time Fraser published *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument* (between 1824 to 1826), Holwell's memorial had been removed from Tank Square. Descriptions of the memorial from travel accounts, written between 1792 and up to the obelisk's removal in 1821, note the ruinous and decayed state of the structure, the obliteration of its inscription (also noted in Fraser's representation), and the fact that it had been damaged by a lightning strike.[144] The monument was removed by the Marquess of Hastings, because of its growing unsightliness and because it had been re-appropriated by the native inhabitants of the city. That is, it had become a lounging place where barbers carried out their trade.[145] Like the Patna Massacre memorial, Holwell's monument fell into decay when it became irrelevant to preserving a colonial presence in the city.[146] With the removal of the monument, British travellers described the space in front of the Writers' Building as being much improved, linking the transformation of the space to the Marquess of Hastings's sanitary improvements of the city.[147]

Though Holwell's memorial was taken down, it would continue to play an important role in subsequent British representations of Calcutta. Holwell's obelisk was depicted in an inset, entitled "Writers Building," in a map of Calcutta produced by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) and published in London in the 1830s [Figures 10 (map) and 11 (inset)]. The representation of the monument, alongside two other spaces indicative of British

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[144] Thomas Twining, "Thomas Twining," in *Calcutta in the 18th Century: Impressions of Travellers*, ed. P. Thankappan Nair (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1984), 279 for the ruinous state and the obliteration of the inscription on the monument; Hamilton, "1820," 222 and Wallace, "1823," 311 and 332 for the decayed state of the monument and for lightning striking it.

[145] Dutta, *Calcutta*, 17 and Losty, *Calcutta*, 84.

[146] Brown, "Inscribing," 110.

[147] Oriental Annual (Oriental Annual, or Scenes in India; comprising Twenty-five engravings by William Daniell, text by Rev. John Hobart Counter), "Calcutta in 1835," in *Calcutta in the 19th Century (Company's Days)*, ed. P. Thankappan Nair (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1989), 570 for the removal of the monument improving the space; and Martin, "1857," 999 for the link between the removal of the monument and the Marquess's sanitary improvements.

Calcutta, Government House and the harbour, demonstrates that it continued to be significant even after it was removed.[148] The inset appears to be based on an amalgamation of the Daniells's *Writers' Buildings* and Fraser's *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument*, as the Georgian façade of the Writers' Building occupies the background of the image, behind the monument. St. Andrew's is located next to the Writers' Building on the right. Other similar elements are the crowd of figures in front of the church, the milkman in the middle of the dirt road, and the two figures and oxen around the bullock cart. The monument is represented in its entirety, with a fence around it and two lanterns on top of the pediments of the base. The reed-roofed veranda around the Writers' Building is gone. The building has returned to its pristine Palladian state and seems to function in the Calcutta climate. The obelisk is not crumbling, but looks as if it is almost new. In the SDUK map, Holwell's memorial continues to mythologize Britain's history in Bengal and to act as a symbol marking the event that gave Britain its authoritative place in the city. In 1902, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, reproduced Holwell's memorial on the same site, but in white marble and on a grander scale, as part of a larger project to commemorate the Black Hole that included marking out the cell and fort where the incident took place [Figure 12]. However, Curzon changed Holwell's original inscription [see Figure 2 for reference], removing the comments about British revenge in order to acknowledge the event but to forgive it as well.[149] Many postcards were printed of Curzon's version of the monument.[150] Throughout the early twentieth century, Indians criticized Curzon's memorial and when independence was achieved, it was moved to the cemetery of St. John's Church. As with

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[148] Metcalf, "Monuments," 246.
[149] Metcalf, "Monuments," 257–258. For the inscriptions Curzon placed on his version of the Black Hole monument, see Cotton, *Calcutta*, 341–344.
[150] Metcalf, "Monuments," 256.

Holwell's monument, Curzon's version was removed from its space, surviving and producing meaning in images instead.

Fraser's *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument* reveals the shifting nature of colonial rule. By placing Holwell's memorial in a Bengali space, Fraser portrayed it as a ruin. The obelisk —— which commemorated the Black Hole, an embarrassing and tragic incident in Britain's history in Bengal —— did not fit with Britain's glowing neoclassical present of religious enlightenment and mercantile control. Indeed, like the native figures around the obelisk, the memorial was abject matter. It was filth and Fraser's aquatint supported its removal by framing it as a picturesque ruin in the process of fading into oblivion.

Crucially, the bazaar represented in the final aquatint of Fraser's series is located in the illuminated distance in his *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument*, east of the Church of St. Andrew and just beyond the vista provided by the print [see Figure 3]. As I have argued, the print re-images the black town and the white town, and gives form to anxieties around the boundaries attendant on British rule. In fact, by considering Fraser's *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument* in relation to his *View in the Bazaar*, the viewer could have read the image as one which encouraged the removal of abject matter from Tank Square. The horsemen approaching the crowd in Fraser's print may not be moving the Bengali people toward a British enlightenment. Instead, and given the restrictions the British placed on the movement of Bengali residents in the city,[151] the horsemen —— English gentlemen, marked out by their top hats —— are perhaps performing the duty of empire by policing the boundary between the British and

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[151] For instance, in a quotation cited by Banerjee, a nineteenth-century commentator states: "How jealously these English settlers tried to guard themselves from any possible contamination by the black inhabitants of the lower orders —— the labourers, the vendors, etc. —— is evident from the frequency of orders issued from Fort William banning the entry of 'natives' into the precincts of the White Town, except at certain hours." Banerjee, "Economy," 23. Banerjee goes on to explain that the British restricted the movements of the native inhabitants of Calcutta by imposing times when they could cross into the white town. Banerjee provides an example of one such restriction by referring to an order issued in 1821, which stated that native residents were not allowed to pass the Sluice Bridge between the morning and evening hours of 5 and 8. See Banerjee, "Economy," 212, note 10.

native quarters, and by driving the native crowd out of the British section of Calcutta and back into their own neighbourhood, towards the bazaar on Chitpore Road. The prints work together to support an interpretation of the British striving to maintain the boundaries between the white and black towns, and to return the abject matter to where it belonged. However, the implication that the street in *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument* ends in an Indic space —— coupled with the positioning of the viewer in the shadowy native foreground, behind the monument, cart, and broken pottery —— suggests that the viewer is surrounded and, possibly, trapped by the black town.

CONCLUSION

Eighteenth and nineteenth-century British medical and travel accounts presented Calcutta as a city that was located in a fetid and diseased environment, and was divided between a seemingly abject, native "black town" and a pristine, British "white town." Four aquatints from Fraser's *Views of Calcutta and its Environs* —— *A View of Tank Square from the West*, *A View of the Writers' Building from the Monument at the West End*, *A View of the Black Pagoda, in the Chitpore Road*, and *A View in the Bazaar, Leading to the Chitpore Road* —— attempted to support British beliefs in a segregated Calcutta that benefited from the progress and improvements brought by the British. *View of Tank Square* represented the centre of the city as a picturesque British space filled with monuments, churches, and administrative buildings surrounding a large tank constructed by the British to provide sanitary amenities to the inhabitants of the city. The only people in the scene are the Hindu residents of Calcutta, who move between their quarters in the distance into the white town to obtain water; the other ethnic groups who lived in the city have been effaced from the space in order to support the idea of a British hegemony over Calcutta. The tenuousness of British power and sanitary order are revealed as Fraser takes the viewer deeper into the city. In *View of the Writers' Building from the Monument*, Fraser provides a closer image of a section of Tank Square: a street containing the pristine facades of the Writers' Building and the Church of St. Andrew, and the decaying monument to the Black Hole. Initially, the image appears to support a notion of British order. Abject native crowds and the troubling memorial will be removed from the space. However, the picturing of sanitary order being carried out, coupled with the presence of scavengers attracted to rotting matter and the failure of the Georgian architecture in the tropical climate, exposed the fragility of the boundaries between the black and white towns, and between filth and cleanliness.

In the last plate of his series, *View in the Bazaar*, Fraser provides an aquatint of the seemingly chaotic black town to emphasize the otherness of this space. The native bazaar is represented as a dense and dilapidated site filled with a catalogue of Indic inhabitants; yet, closer examination of this plate —— along with the preceding print in the series, *View of the Black Pagoda* —— reveals that part of the space either once belonged to the neoclassical white town or reflects the new hybrid architecture of the Bengali elite. The ruinous facades of the neoclassical buildings engulfed in shadow might suggest that the native town is re-appropriating or "contaminating" the British quarter, and that British power over the city is incomplete and lacking.

My analysis of Fraser's images is not meant to provide a definitive reading of these prints or of his collection as a whole. Rather, I have tried to stress the ambiguity of Fraser's aquatints. At a time when European medical and travel literature on Calcutta defined the boundaries of the white and black towns —— identifying the British city as orderly, salubrious, and filled with palaces that tamed the fetid jungle of Bengal, while also marking out the native city as a space of filth, chaos, and full of native inhabitants who helped spread contagion through their lack of sanitary care —— Fraser's aquatints paradoxically reflected these views. Although his *Views of Calcutta* was advertised as following in the tradition of the earlier representations of the city produced by Thomas and William Daniell, Fraser's series in fact differs from the Daniells's collections. As I have shown, while the Daniells's aquatints of Tank Square featured bustling streets filled with fashionable Europeans and labouring Bengalis framed by the orderly neoclassical facades of British institutions of power —— celebrating the progress the British claimed to have brought to the city —— Fraser's prints are much more ambivalent. In their picturesque framing of Tank Square, the Writers' Building and Holwell's memorial, the Hindu temple known as the Black Pagoda, and the bazaar on Chitpore Road, Fraser's plates
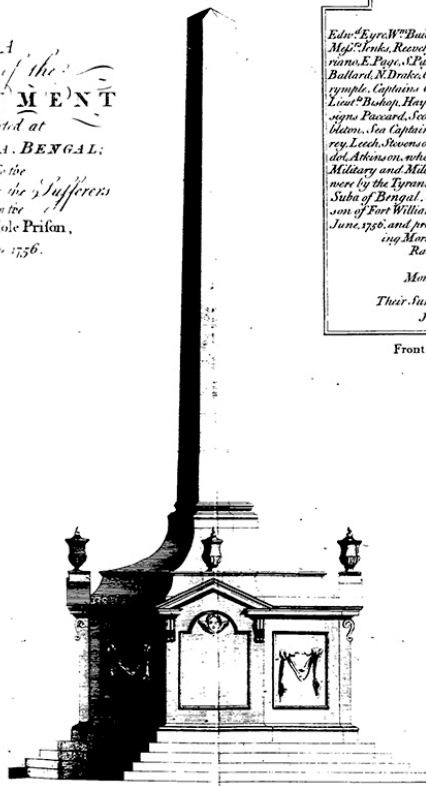
paradoxically exposed the shifting interpretations of the urban fabric of Calcutta that allowed for alternative and contradictory readings of the scenes. In Fraser's aquatints, the boundaries between the white and black towns seem to be fixed and policed; however, native figures are also shown carrying out everyday activities in or near the British centre of Calcutta. In turn, Holwell's memorial to the tragedy of the Black Hole appears as a ruin and the neoclassical facades that marked Britain's presence in Calcutta are portrayed as decaying from the tropical climate. Fraser's plates of Tank Square, and of his series as a whole, helped to shape the discourses of British imperialism; yet, they also paradoxically represented the tensions and ambivalences inherent in the colonial project in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The ambiguity of Fraser's representations of Calcutta thus points to the fraught nature of British power in the city —— a power that, like the Georgian facades of the white town, could only be maintained through vigilant sanitary control and the elimination of things perceived as matter out of place.

FIGURES

Figure 1. James Baillie Fraser, *A View of the Writers' Building from the Monument at the West End*, plate 6 from *Views of Calcutta and its Environs*, London, 1824–26. Coloured aquatint engraved by R. Havell Jr., 28 x 42.5 cm. British Library, London. © The British Library Board. [X644(6)].
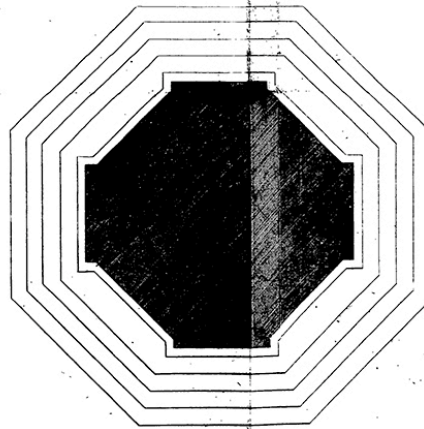
Figure 2. *A View of the Monument Erected at Calcutta, Bengal: To the Memory of the Sufferers in the Black Hole Prison, June 1756.* Frontispiece from John Zephania Holwell's *India Tracts.* London: T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 3rd ed. 1774. © The British Library Board. [583.g.2].
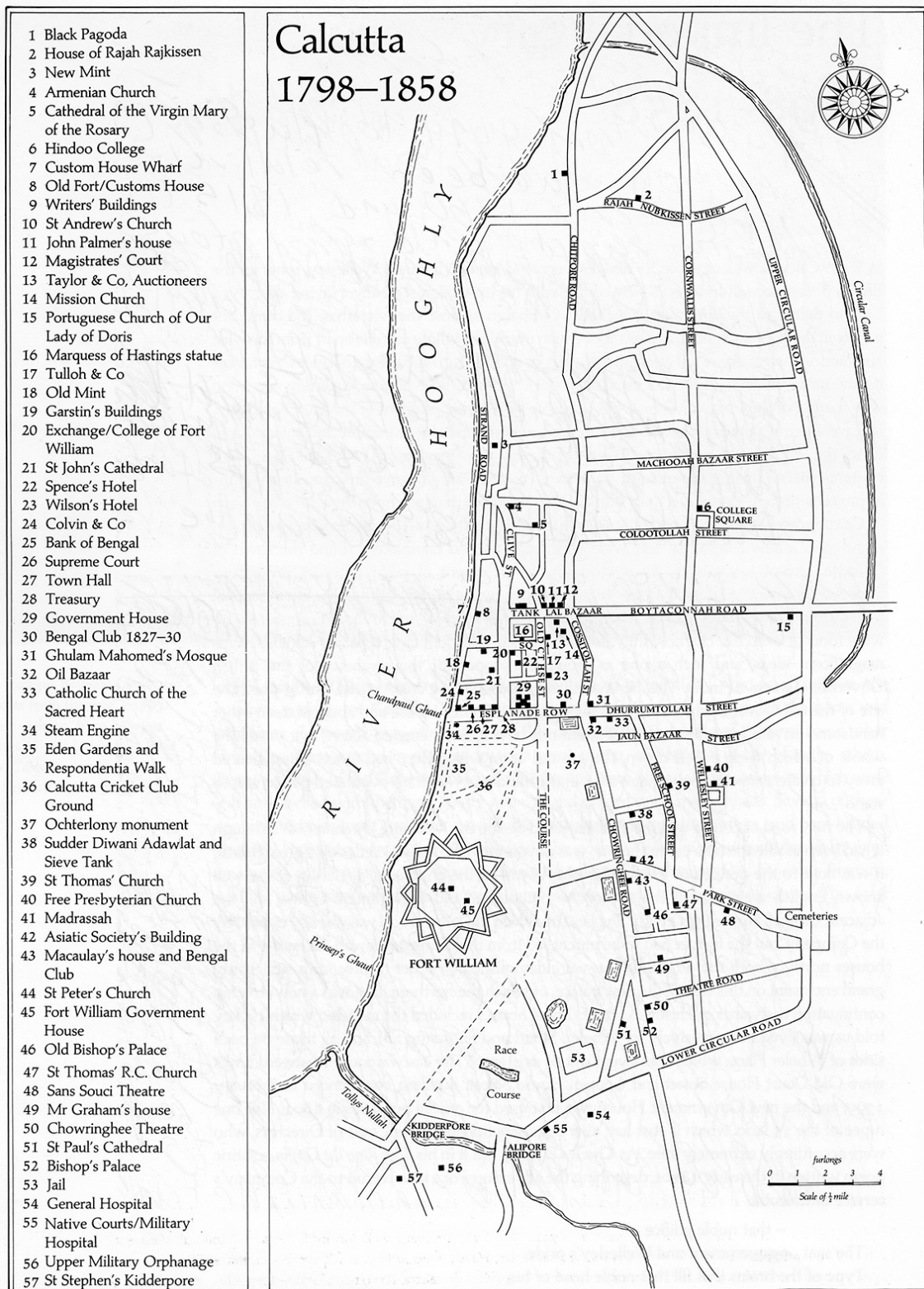
Calcutta 1798–1858

Figure 3. Map of Calcutta, 1798–1858, from J. P. Losty, *Calcutta* (London, 1990), 72. © The British Library Board. [YC.1990.b.6211].

Figure 4. James Baillie Fraser, *A View of Tank Square from the West*, plate 8 from *Views of Calcutta and its Environs*, London, 1824–26. Coloured aquatint engraved by R. Havell Jr., 28 x 42.5 cm. British Library, London. © The British Library Board. [X644(8)].

Figure 5. Thomas and William Daniell, *East side of the Old Fort, Clive Street, the Theatre and Holwell Monument*, from *Views of Calcutta*, Calcutta, 1786. Coloured etching with aquatint, 40 x 52.4 cm. British Library, London. © The British Library Board. [P88].

Figure 6. Thomas and William Daniell, *North side of Tank Square with the Old Fort and Holwell Monument in the Distance, Writers' Buildings, and the Old Court House*, from *Views of Calcutta*, Calcutta, 1786. Coloured etching with aquatint, 40 x 53 cm. British Library, London. © The British Library Board. [P95].

Figure 7. Thomas and William Daniell, *The Writers' Buildings, Calcutta*, from *Oriental Scenery*, London, 1792. Coloured etching with aquatint, 54 x 73.7 cm. British Library, London. © The British Library Board. [P939].

Figure 8. James Baillie Fraser, *A View in the Bazaar, Leading to the Chitpore Road*, plate 24 from *Views of Calcutta and its Environs*, London, 1824–26. Coloured aquatint engraved by F. C. Lewis, 28 x 42.5 cm. British Library, London. © The British Library Board. [X644(24)].

Figure 9. James Baillie Fraser, *A View of the Black Pagoda, in the Chitpore Road*, plate 23 from *Views of Calcutta and its Environs*, London, 1824–26. Coloured aquatint engraved by F. C. Lewis, 28 x 42.5 cm. British Library, London. © The British Library Board. [X644(23)].

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Figure 10. *Map of Calcutta from the Business District (L.) to Fort William (R.), with at Bottom (L. to R.) the Original Black Hole Memorial with the Writers' Building Beyond, Government House, and the Harbour*, plate 25 from *Plans of Cities in Europe*, London: Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, 1830–41. Hand-coloured steel engraving, 34 x 41 cm. British Library, London. © The British Library Board. [P2348].
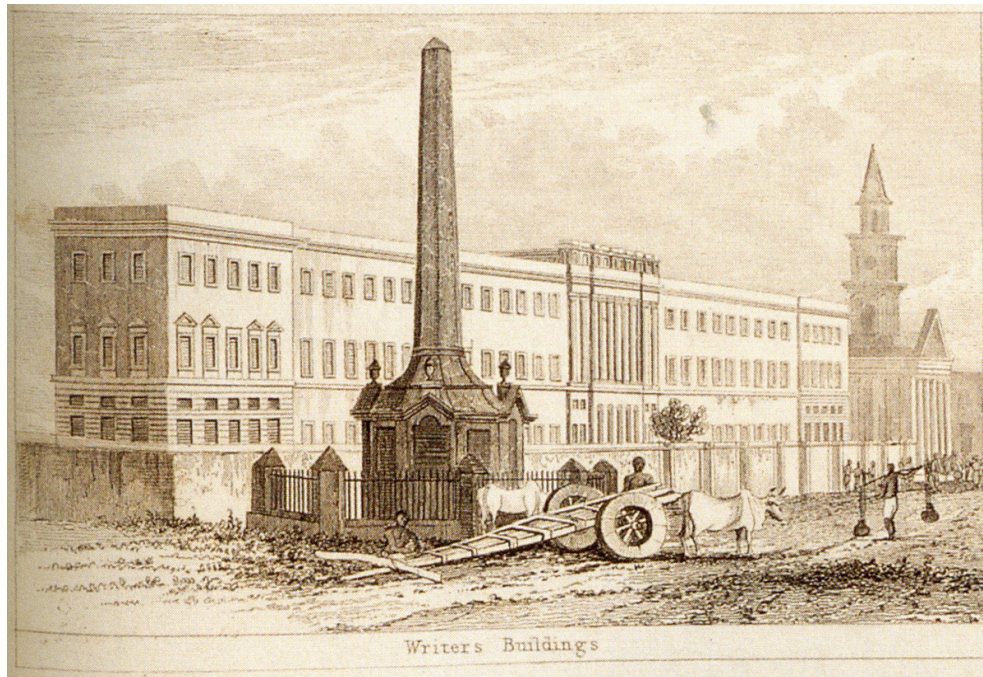
Figure 11. "Writers Building" Inset from *Map of Calcutta from the Business District (L.) to Fort William (R.)*, London: Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, 1830–41. British Library, London. © The British Library Board. [P2348].

Figure 12. Unknown Photographer, "The Reconstructed Black Hole Monument in Front of the General Post Office," Calcutta, 1930s. Postcard, 8.4 x 13.1 cm. Paul F. Walter Collection, New York. [Source: Thomas R. Metcalf, "Monuments" (Montreal, 2003), 257].
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

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