

**TRAVELLING HOME AND EMPIRE
BRITISH WOMEN IN INDIA 1857 - 1939**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the British wives of civil servants and army officers who lived in India from 1857 to 1939 to examine the translation of feminine discourses of bourgeois domesticity over imperial space. Three questions form the subject of this research. First, how were cultures of domesticity and imperialism intertwined in complex and often contradictory ways over space? Second, did imperial rule, and the travel that it necessarily implied, challenge or reinforce the claim that 'there's no place like home'? Third, how and why were places both like and yet unlike 'home' produced by British women living in India? I start by examining the 'mutiny' of 1857-1858 as a period of domestic and imperial crisis, focusing on representations of and by British women at Cawnpore and Lucknow. Then, considering the place of British women in the post-'mutiny' reconstruction of imperial domesticity in India, I focus on two scales: first, home and empire-making on a household scale; and, second, seasonal travels by British women to hill stations in North India. In their travels both to and within India, British women embodied contested discourses of imperial domesticity.

Throughout, I focus on the mobile, embodied subjectivities of memsahibs. While imperial histories have often neglected the roles played by British women in India, revisionist accounts have often reproduced stereotypical and / or celebratory accounts of memsahibs. In contrast, I examine the ambivalent basis of imperial and gendered stereotypes and conceptualise spatialised subjectivities in terms of embodiment, critical mobility, and material performativity. As members of an official élite, the British wives of civil servants and army officers came to embody many of the connections and tensions between domesticity and imperialism. Both during and after the 'mutiny,' the place of British women and British homes in India was contested. The place of British women and British homes in India reveal contradictions at the heart of imperial rule by reproducing and yet destabilizing imperial rule on a domestic scale.

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Chapter 1

Travelling Home and Empire

An Introduction

Home, Sweet Home

'Mid pleasures and palaces, though we may roam,
 Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!
 A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there,
 That, seek through the world, is ne'er met with elsewhere.
 Home, home! sweet home,
 There's no place like home.

An exile from home, splendour dazzles in vain,
 O, give me my lowly thatched cottage again!
 The birds singing gaily, that came at my call;
 But give me the peace of mind dearer than all.
 Home, home! sweet home,
 There's no place like home.¹

One of the most notable performances of this popular Victorian song was at the opening ceremony of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in May 1886.² *Home, Sweet Home* was performed between Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus* and *Rule Britannia!*, reflecting and reproducing the sentiments of a British imperial imagination in its own highly sentimental way. *Home, Sweet Home* was first performed in 1823 by Maria Tree in the title role of the opera *Clari*,

¹ The words of *Home, Sweet Home* were written by an American, John Howard Payne, while he lived in London, and the music was composed by Sir Henry Rowley Bishop. The song was immediately and consistently popular over the course of the nineteenth century in both Britain and America. Bishop received his knighthood in 1842 as a result, and was the first musician to be honoured in this way. D. Ewen ed., American Popular Songs From the Revolutionary War to the Present, Random House, New York, 1966, 149-150.

² *Parliamentary Papers* 1887, xx: *Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London 1886*.

which was about the abduction of a girl from her village home.³ A reviewer in *The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* described *Home, Sweet Home* as 'simple, sweet and touching, beyond any air we almost ever heard. Never was any ballad so immediately and deservedly popular.'⁴ Indeed, *Home, Sweet Home* 'became one of the most popular airs of the Victorian era and one that prima donnas were particularly fond of interpolating into other operas.'⁵ As the words of *Home, Sweet Home*, its operatic genesis, and its wide and sustained popularity suggest, the clearest and fondest imaginings of home are often located at a distance of forced exile or voluntary roaming. Such a distance is temporal as well as spatial, whereby Clari's clear and fond imaginings of home were shaped by her memories over time as well as space. Home is imagined as a unique and distant place that can neither be discovered nor reproduced elsewhere and thus remains a site of continual desire and irretrievable loss. The ambiguity of the refrain that 'there's no place like home' suggests not only the impossible quest of discovering or reproducing home from a distance, but also that the prior existence and location of a unique, originary home is elusive.

The performance of *Home, Sweet Home* at the opening ceremony of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition must have seemed both poignant and paradoxical. The visual spectacle of the Exhibition represented the 'pleasures and palaces' of an imperial imagination to its five million visitors. While a number of Indian visitors had travelled to Britain to work at and to visit the Exhibition,⁶ the British visitors were 'transported' to India as they toured the Central Indian

³ Despite its first operatic performance in 1823, Bishop had previously published his composition *Home, Sweet Home* in his collection of 'National Melodies of all Countries,' where he claimed that it was a traditional Sicilian song. The British and American rather than Sicilian origins of the song became clear when it was performed in *Clari*.

⁴ Ewan op. cit., 149.

⁵ E. White, *The Rise of English Opera*, De Capo Press, New York, 1972, 88.

⁶ A. Burton, 'Making a Spectacle of Empire: Indian Travellers in Fin-de-Siècle London,' *History Workshop Journal*, 42, 1996, 127-146.

Court, the Indian Ethnological Court, and the Indian Palace, where 'India in miniature is conjured up.'⁷ In the courtyard of the Indian Palace, 'dense masses of spectators' crowded together to view Indian artists and artisans weaving gold brocade, carving wood and stone, and making jewellery.⁸ According to a special edition of the *Illustrated London News* that focused on the Indian section of the Exhibition, such displays of art and industry 'eloquently bring home to us the grandeur of the British Empire'⁹ by transporting Indian artists and artisans and their work to London. At the same time, the Exhibition was designed to show British people 'the marvellous progress made by their fellow-countrymen beyond the seas'; to increase commerce; and to promote a closer union between British subjects throughout the Empire.¹⁰ As such, the Exhibition not only positioned its British visitors as viewers of imperial spectacle and consumers of its commodification, but also as imperial citizens whose place at home in the heart of Victorian London was simultaneously a place at the heart of the British Empire.¹¹

But British visitors to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition were not merely positioned as passive viewers of imperial spectacle or as imaginary travellers throughout the British Empire, consuming imperial difference from a distance. The Royal Commission that planned the Exhibition also sought to represent the British Empire as a destination for the relocation of current and future British homes. As the Prince of Wales was keen to stress, 'We must remember that, as regards the Colonies, they are the legitimate and natural homes, in future, of the more

⁷ *Illustrated London News*, 17 July 1886.

⁸ Ibid..

⁹ Ibid..

¹⁰ *Parliamentary Papers 1887, xx: Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London 1886.*

¹¹ See J. M. Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City*, Routledge, London, 1996, for further discussion of Victorian London as the 'heart of Empire.'

adventurous and energetic portion of the population of these Islands.'¹² Domesticating the Empire to provide 'legitimate and natural homes' for British colonists depended not only on masculine discourses of imperial adventure and energy but also on more feminized discourses of domesticity.¹³ British homes in the Empire could only be established and maintained as 'legitimate and natural' when they housed British wives and mothers.

As a number of engravings in the *Illustrated London News* suggest, many women and girls were among the visitors to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Indeed, several engravings depicted some of the white women and girls who visited the Exhibition in particularly prominent ways. Within the ornate courtyard of the Indian Palace in Plate 1, two white girls are the main subjects of two imperial encounters. In the centre of the engraving, a young girl appears apprehensive on meeting an elderly Indian man, and leans towards her mother or her governess for support. In contrast, another girl confidently gazes at an Indian boy as he walks by, unaware of her scrutiny. Inside the 'cool vista of the handsome Durbar tent'¹⁴ of Plate 2, although a white man seems to be engaging two Indians in conversation, women predominate among the visitors. In both engravings, the prominence of female visitors to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition suggests that women as well as men were positioned as viewers of imperial spectacle and as vicarious travellers to 'other' places. Moreover, in light of the Prince of Wales' aims for the Exhibition, such women were also positioned as potential future travellers who might leave Britain to set up homes in the empire.

¹² *Parliamentary Papers 1887, xx: Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London 1886*. The Royal Commission was chaired by the Prince of Wales.

¹³ G. Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*, Routledge, London, 1994.

¹⁴ *Illustrated London News*, 17 July 1886, 82.

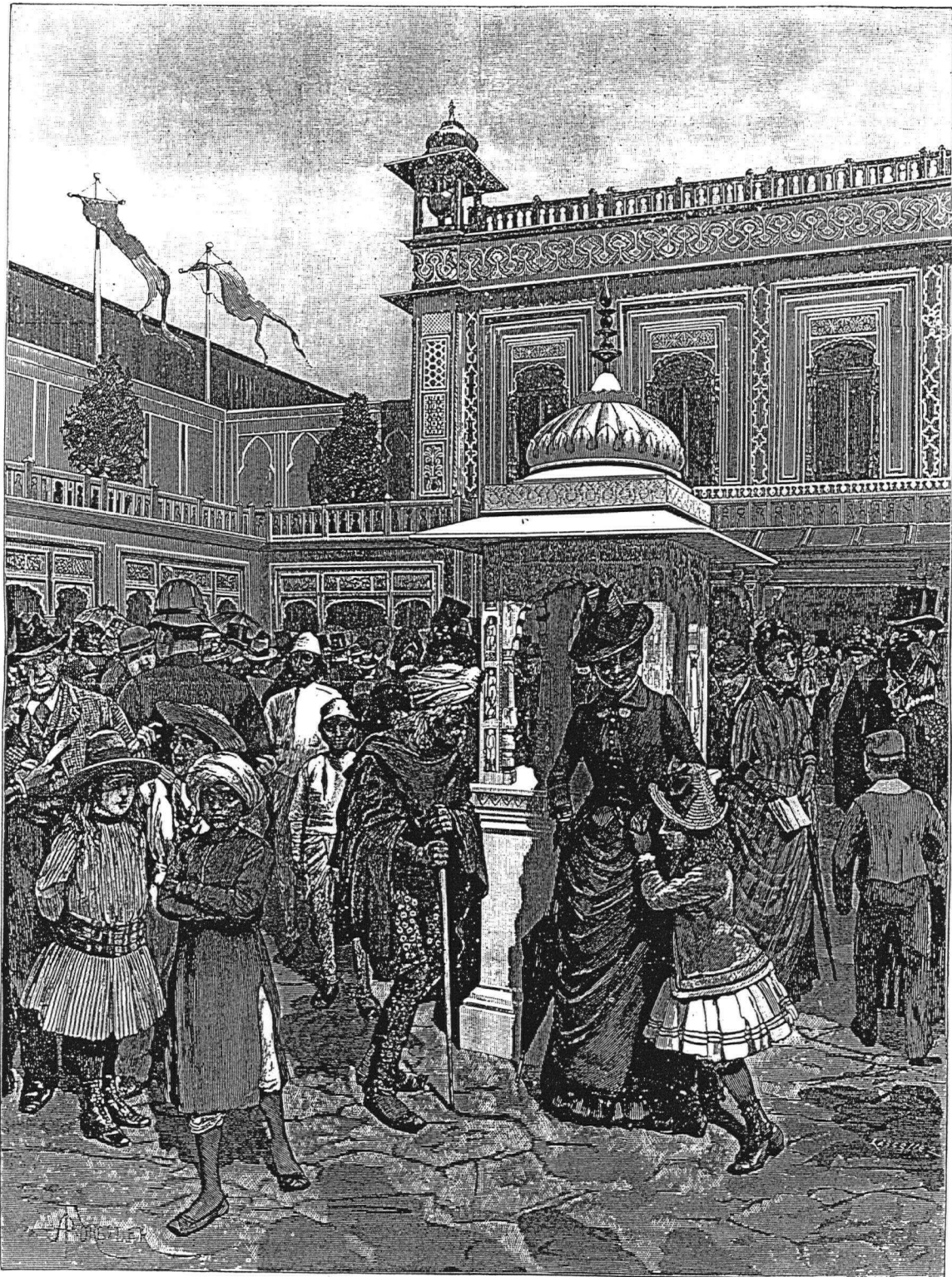


Plate 1: The Indian Palace Courtyard, Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, 1886.

Source: *Illustrated London News*, 17 July 1886.

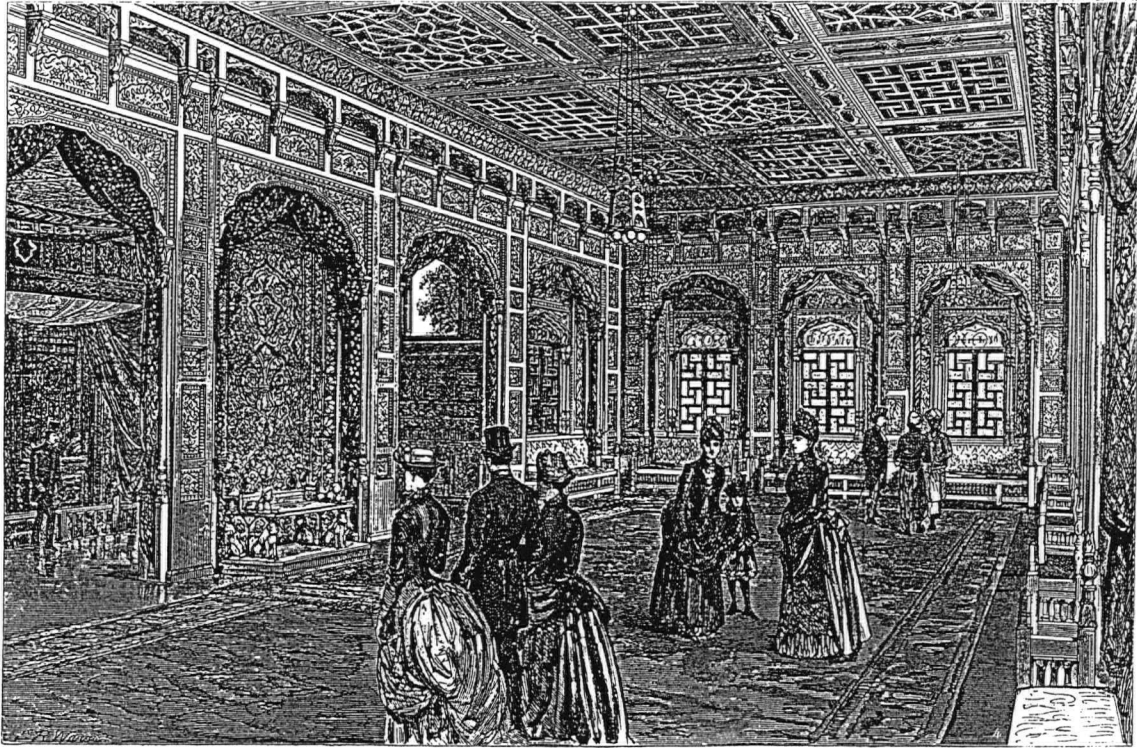


Plate 2: The Durbar Tent, Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, 1886.

Source: *Illustrated London News*, 17 July 1886.

The spatial extent of the British Empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries enabled middle class British women to travel more widely than ever before.¹⁵ Not only were British women as well as men privileged subjects in the context of imperial rule, but their imperial and gendered subjectivities were also influenced by their experiences of travel. Research on British women travellers has revealed their ability to transgress the confines of 'home' in social as well as spatial terms. The travels and writings of individual women suggest that they were empowered to travel and to transgress in the context of imperialism while away from the feminized domesticity of living at home.¹⁶ But the majority of British women who travelled in the empire did so to set up homes both with and for their families, either on a permanent basis in settler colonies such as Canada, Australia, and South Africa,¹⁷ or on a more temporary basis in places such as India.¹⁸ Imperial power and legitimation not only relied on

¹⁵ See, for example, J. Robinson, Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, for an extensive biographical and bibliographical survey of women travellers within but also beyond the British Empire of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

¹⁶ D. Birkett, Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989; A. Blunt, Travel, Gender, and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa, Guilford, New York, 1994; and S. Mills, Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism, Routledge, London, 1991.

¹⁷ See, for example, C. Harris, The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change, U.B.C. Press, Vancouver, 1997, and K. Schaffer, Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990. Clear parallels exist with work on the domestic roles of white women 'pioneers' in the American West; see, for example, A. Kolodny, The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1975. Unlike these accounts, I am focusing on the temporary nature of such settlement and the coexistence of ideas of 'home' within Britain and India.

¹⁸ British women generally lived in India for the whole of their married life and returned 'home' when their husband retired. Some, however, returned to Britain when their children were at school. P. Barr, The Memsahibs: The Women of Victorian India, Secker and Warburg, London, 1976. I will discuss debates about the colonization of India and the ways in which ideas of 'home' coexisted in Britain and India in Chapters 5 and 6.

imaginative geographies of 'other' places,¹⁹ but also on imaginative geographies of 'home.' Edward Said has traced both the imaginative geographies of 'other' places in orientalist writings as well as the importance of imperialism in shaping cultural representations at 'home.'²⁰ But Said largely overlooks the gendered production of such imaginative geographies as well as the coexistence and mobility of homes throughout the empire. In contrast, this study is concerned with the imperial domesticity of women who travelled away from Britain to establish temporary homes in India and contends that spaces of home and empire were closely intertwined and mobile rather than distinct and fixed.

The Colonial and Indian Exhibition was reported widely throughout the British Empire, helping distant British subjects in their imperial homes to imagine the links between their own imperial domesticity and a metropolitan, domestic imperialism. Indeed, British imperial homes were shaped by ideas of domesticity on household, national, and imperial scales, because 'The domestic spaces of the home is at once an individual domicile and suggestive of the domestic space in a larger sense, the domestic space of [Britain].'²¹ At this time, the place of British women and British homes in India was a central, contested part of debates about British imperialism in India. In India, the *Calcutta Review* described the opening ceremony of the Exhibition in the second of two articles that addressed the influence, position, and responsibilities of British women in India.²² The *Calcutta Review* was a fortnightly Anglo-Indian periodical that consisted of lengthy articles and book reviews and which, over the course of the

¹⁹ E. Said, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, New York, 1979.

²⁰ Ibid., and E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1993.

²¹ S. Meyer, *Imperialism at Home: Race and Victorian Women's Fiction*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1996, 7.

²² J. E. Dawson, 'Woman in India: Her Influence and Position,' *Calcutta Review*, 1886a, 347-357 and J. E. Dawson, 'The Englishwoman in India: Her Influence and Responsibilities,' *Calcutta Review*, 1886b, 358-370.

nineteenth century, included a number of articles on the place of British women in India.²³ At this time, the term 'Anglo-Indian' referred to British subjects living in India although, from the early twentieth century on, the term came to refer to the Eurasian population in India.²⁴ I am referring to *British* subjects throughout my account, despite a number of references in the *Calcutta Review* and in other sources to *English* subjects more specifically. During the period of my study, the British Empire incorporated England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland as well as more extensive territories throughout the world. Then, as now, references to 'England' often served to represent 'Britain' more broadly. Throughout this study, I refer to British rather than English subjects to resist rather than repeat this imperial elision and to recognize the involvement of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh men and women in the British, rather than the English, Empire.²⁵

The articles about British women printed in the *Calcutta Review* in 1886 claimed that imperial rulers in India were often nostalgic for a distant home, which was fondly remembered both in national and domestic terms:

²³ I will discuss the content of these and other articles in the *Calcutta Review* in greater detail in Chapter 2. Throughout my study I focus on six papers with different readerships. Two of these papers were published in India: the *Calcutta Review* and the daily newspaper, the *Bengal Hurkaru*. I also refer to the *London Times* and the *Illustrated London News* to compare two mainstream daily British newspapers, the latter of which included many engravings to illustrate articles. Finally, in Chapter 3 I discuss reports in two British newspapers that were addressed specifically to female readers: *The Englishwoman's Review* and *The Lady's Newspaper and Pictorial Times*.

²⁴ The 1911 Census of India was the first Census to use the category 'Anglo-Indian' to replace the unpopular category 'Eurasian.' *Census of India 1911*, Volume 1, 139. See J. Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993, 19-20 for further discussion.

²⁵ In doing so, my argument clearly differs from that of Jenny Sharpe, who writes that she 'use[s] *English* and *England* in their historical sense, that is, to designate a national culture that brings the 'Celtic fringe' of Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall under its hegemony.' J. Sharpe, op. cit., 167. To describe such an imperial elision as purely 'historical' denies its persistence today. It is also striking that Sharpe omits Ireland, but includes Cornwall, from her list of the 'Celtic fringe.' See K. Jeffery, ed. *'An Irish Empire?': Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1996 and L. Nochlin, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, Pimlico, London, 1992, for further discussion.

the saddest, yet inevitable result of Indian life, is the loosening of the sacred family bond...It is said, and said truly, that the Englishman is pre-eminent among the nations of the earth for his love of *home*! Let it be remembered, then, that it is at the sacrifice of his *home-life* that the Englishman in India earns his, by no means, immoderate and ever-decreasing income.²⁶

J. E. Dawson cited the performance of *Home, Sweet Home* at the opening ceremony of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition as evidence of the national and imperial significance of domestic nostalgia:

When we find on a great occasion that a picked élite of ten thousand of our countrymen and women are moved to tears at the sympathetic rendering by one woman's voice of the popular little song 'Home, Sweet Home,' we must feel convinced that both the sentiment and the music appealed to one of the strongest and most deep rooted of our national passions.²⁷

Here, a 'national passion' that cherishes an idea of home is evidently described as shared by British men and women. But Dawson claimed that British men in India could only enjoy imperial domesticity if they were married to British women. Only the presence of Anglo-Indian women as wives and home-makers could help to alleviate the domestic nostalgia of their husbands,

Among [whom] are hardworking, home-loving men - [whose] ideal of bliss is to consort with one to cheer them in health and nurse them in sickness, and who will tend their houses and administer their homes with discretion. All are Englishmen, and they love in their wives what is essentially English.²⁸

According to Dawson, British wives and mothers in India helped to create homes that were superior to the confined exclusion of Indian women who were 'immured from infancy to age,

²⁶ J. E. Dawson 1886a, op. cit., 349.

²⁷ J. E. Dawson 1886b, op. cit., 359.

²⁸ Ibid., 369.

within the bare and silent walls of those castles of ignorance and listlessness, they call their homes.'²⁹ British homes in India were seen by the *Calcutta Review* to foster appropriate gender roles, national virtues, and imperial rule. Anglo-Indian domestic life, its supposed superiority to Indian domestic life, and the place of British women in maintaining such domestic superiority, were all thought to bolster the success of imperial power.³⁰

The song *Home, Sweet Home*, its performance at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London, and reports of this performance in the *Calcutta Review* raise three questions that form the subject of this study. First, how were cultures of domesticity and imperialism intertwined in complex and often contradictory ways over space? Second, did imperial rule, and the travel that it necessarily implied, challenge or reinforce the claim that 'there's no place like home'? Third, how and why were places both like and yet unlike 'home' produced by British women living in India? I address these three questions by focusing on representations both of and by the British wives of civil servants and army officers who lived in India between the Indian 'mutiny'³¹ of 1857-8 and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. As wives of men in the official élite,³² such women came to embody many of the complex and often contradictory links between domesticity and imperialism. In what follows, I consider the ambivalent position of the

²⁹ J. E. Dawson 1886a, op. cit., 347.

³⁰ Imperial rule was regarded by Dawson in unequivocally positive terms: 'Compared with the conquering nations of the past, whether for the mildness of its administration, the purity of its intentions, and the equal justice that it seeks to deal to all classes as well as races, and to every creed alike, the rule of the English in India stands out on the page of history as a phenomenon that really appears unique.' J. E. Dawson 1886b, op. cit., 358.

³¹ The conflict of 1857-8 came to be known in imperial terms as the Indian or Sepoy Mutiny and in nationalist terms as the First War of Independence. I refer to the events of 1857-8 as a 'mutiny' because I am examining imperial representations of the conflict. See Chapter 3 for further discussion of the historiography of the 'mutiny.'

³² See Chapter 2 for discussion of the military and civilian 'aristocracy' of British rulers in India.

white, middle class, married British women who helped to produce places both like and yet unlike 'home' in India.

My study spans the period from 1857 to 1939. I start by examining the 'mutiny' of 1857-8 as a period of domestic and imperial crisis, focusing on the strategic and symbolic significance of British women at Cawnpore and Lucknow. I explore representations of and by British women during the conflict to trace the ways in which British women came to embody imperial anxieties and their domestic articulation. Here, I focus not only on domestic representations of the imperial conflict in British newspapers and parliamentary debates, but also on how such representations often depicted domestic defilement in India and how, in turn, such defilement was embodied by British women. Turning to the letters and diaries written by several British women who survived the siege of Lucknow, I consider further links between domesticity and imperialism to explore the ways in which such links shaped the everyday lives of British women during the conflict.

I then consider the place of British women in the post-'mutiny' reconstruction of imperial domesticity in India on two scales: first, home and empire-making on a household scale; and, second, seasonal travel by British women to hill stations in North India. Here, household guides, diaries, letters, and memoirs reveal the contested place of Anglo-Indian households and North Indian hill stations in producing a new geography of imperial domesticity after the 'mutiny.' Moreover, such sources also reveal the contested place of British women who travelled not only to but also within India as imperial home-makers. My study focuses on British women living in India until 1939 rather than 1947, the year of Indian Independence, for a number of reasons. The outbreak of the Second World War and, more specifically, the war against Japan had a greater impact on British women living in India than the First World War that had been fought largely

in Europe.³³ During the war, an increasing number of British women in India began to work outside the home in voluntary and paid employment. At the same time, the development of air transportation considerably reduced the distance between homes in Britain and India and, for the first time, many British families living in India owned a house in Britain ready for their return at or before Independence.³⁴

The performance of *Home, Sweet Home* at the opening ceremony of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in 1886 must have seemed both poignant and paradoxical because whilst the sentiments of the song conveyed domestic nostalgia and loss, the Exhibition sought to encourage imperial domesticity far away from 'home.' In what follows, I consider the contested and often contradictory representations of imperial domesticity and the embodiment of such representations by women who travelled away from Britain to set up imperial homes in India. The importance of British women in establishing and maintaining imperial domesticity was recognized in a service of commemoration and thanksgiving for the British who had 'served India' that was held in London in 1949:

[L]et us remember with reverence and thankfulness that great company of mothers, wives, sisters and daughters who gladly and bravely shared the labours and fortunes of their menfolk in a distant land; making homes for them; bearing children and training them in godly living; enduring with unfailing courage the sorrows and anxieties of long separations; and withal showing so much true friendship and care for the women and children of the country.³⁵

Such reverent thanksgiving for the British women who had lived in India clearly centres on their domestic, familial roles as imperial home-makers. However, the imperial domesticity of British

³³ P. Barr, The Dust in the Balance: British Women in India 1905-1945, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1989, and M. MacMillan, Women of the Raj, Thames and Hudson, London, 1988.

³⁴ Ibid..

³⁵ Service of Commemoration and Thanksgiving, St Margaret's Church, Westminster, 7 July 1949. Stokes Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

women in India that was so favourably evoked after Indian Independence had been seldom straightforward and had been frequently contested during British rule. In this study, I examine imperial domesticity from 1857 to 1939 to suggest more complex and often contradictory links between ideas of home and empire. By focusing on the British wives of army officers and civil servants, I consider representations both of and by British women who produced places that were both like and yet unlike 'home' in India. In so doing, I hope to reveal the ambivalent embodiment of imperial domesticity by British women who travelled both to and within India from 1857 to 1939. By investigating imperial domesticity at a time of conflict and reconstruction, this study seeks to reveal internal contradictions within discourses of imperial domesticity. Moreover, this study interrogates such contradictory discourses by focusing on the ambivalent place of British women at home in India. Representations of the white, bourgeois wives of army officers and civil servants reveal not only the material complexities of embodied subjectivities but also the ambivalence of imperial domesticity. Through my focus on British women travelling both to and within India to set up homes from 1857 to 1939, this study examines embodied representations of imperial domesticity over space and time.

Chapter 2

Gendered Geographies of Imperial Domesticity

Introduction

In 1623, several Portuguese women who lived in Goa were thought to be the first European women to have travelled to India.¹ By the early eighteenth century, a number of French and Dutch women lived in Bombay, and several British women were living in Calcutta at the time of the 'Black Hole' affair in 1756.² But in 1810, there were still only an estimated 250 European women living in India.³ By 1872, however, almost five thousand British women lived in the North Western Provinces alone⁴ and, by 1901, there were 42,004 female British subjects in India as a whole out of a total British population of 154,691.⁵ This Chapter examines the reasons for the dramatic increase in the number of British women living in India and considers how such an

¹ 'The English in India: Our Social Morality,' *Calcutta Review*, 1844, 290-336.

² The 'Black Hole' of Calcutta refers to the attack on the British Fort at Calcutta led by the Nawab Siraj-ud-daula. The Governor of Bengal deserted the Fort, the Fort surrendered, and those who remained were imprisoned in what was later referred to as the 'Black Hole' of Calcutta. By January 1757, Calcutta was regained by the East India Company forces under the command of Clive, and a treaty was signed with the Nawab. M. Edwardes, *A History of India*, Grosset and Dunlap, New York, 1970.

³ Ibid..

⁴ *Census of the North West Provinces 1872*, Volume 1: General Report, North Western Provinces' Government Press, Allahabad, 1873, 37. The total number of British subjects living in the North Western Provinces in 1872 was 12,433. In the provincial census of the Punjab conducted in 1868, 2,093 adult female Europeans were recorded out of a total of 17,958 Europeans. *Report of the Census of the Punjab 1868*, Indian Public Opinion Press, Lahore, 1870.

⁵ *Census of India 1901: Administrative Volume with Appendices*, Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1903. The first synchronous census for India as a whole took place in 1881, and continued every decade thereafter. In 1881, of 89,015 people born in Britain, 12,569 were women. In 1891, of 100,551 people born in Britain, 12,436 were women. However, the number of people born of British parents but outside Britain (totalling 50,360 in 1881) was not differentiated by sex.

increase was not only influenced by but also helped to influence changing discourses of imperial domesticity over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Feminine discourses of middle class marriage and motherhood were transported and translated over imperial space by British women travelling to India. Imperial domesticity was the subject of ongoing debates that centred on the presence of British women in India, the possibility of reconstructing British homes in India, and the coexistence of ideas of home on household, national, and imperial scales in both Britain and India. These debates often came to be discursively embodied by the British women who travelled from Britain to India. Thus, whilst agreeing with Anne McClintock that 'the cultural history of imperialism cannot be understood without a theory of domestic space and gender power,'⁶ this Chapter suggests that the connections between imperialism, domestic space, and gender power are also closely entwined with imperial travel. In this light, I examine ambivalent representations of British women travelling between homes that were imagined to coexist on household, national, and imperial scales to argue that not only did imperialism depend *on* travel, but also that living in imperial places was *itself* a form of travel.

This Chapter explores stereotypical representations of British women in India and discusses the ambivalent mobility of such stereotypes that is often overlooked in both imperialist and revisionist accounts. In an attempt to destabilize essentialist representations of both imperial power and gender, I introduce mobile, embodied subjectivities. Rather than celebrate fluidity and transgression, I explore notions of critical, grounded mobility. Such representations of spatialised subjectivities of British women travelling to and within India differ from other attempts to conceptualise gendered subjectivity, imperial and domestic spatiality, and imperial domesticity merely in terms of public and private space. I begin, however, by introducing British imperialism in India; by accounting for the increasing number of British women who travelled to India over the course of the nineteenth century; by explaining my focus on the British wives of a military

⁶ A. McClintock, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest, Routledge, New York, 1995, 133.

and civilian élite in India; and by tracing the contradictory discourses of imperial domesticity in British India.

British Imperialism in India

British involvement in India increased from at least 1618, when the East India Company obtained trading rights from the Mughal Empire and began to export Indian products to Europe.⁷ Following the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the East India Company exercised military and administrative as well as commercial control over the Bengal, Bombay, and Madras Presidencies. Each Presidency had its own army, composed of British officers and both British and Indian soldiers. Whilst the Bombay and Madras Presidencies were each ruled by a Governor, the Bengal Presidency was ruled by a Governor-General. The Governor-General was based in Calcutta and exercised supervisory control over the other two Presidencies and, from 1833, was retitled the Governor-General of India.⁸ The East India Company operated under a twenty year charter that was renewed by the British government in 1813, 1833, and 1853. The East India Company maintained its lucrative commercial monopoly until 1813. After this date, although India continued to be a source of raw materials for European markets it also became a major, protected market for British products. Overall, '[t]he Indian economy was being transformed into an agricultural support system for British manufacturing capitalism.'⁹ The area controlled by the East India Company continued to expand and eight more Indian states were conquered and

⁷ The East India Company had been established in 1599 by a charter from Queen Elizabeth I to protect a trading monopoly between Britain and places east of the Cape of Good Hope. See B. Gardner, The East India Company, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1971 and S. Suleri, The Rhetoric of English India, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, for further discussion. Gardner describes the East India Company as 'the most remarkable institution of private enterprise and capitalism that the world has ever known.' Gardner, op. cit., 298.

⁸ K. Ballhatchet, Race, Sex, and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793-1905, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1980.

⁹ F. Hamilton, 'Some of us are Imperialists, some of us are not' in J. Grant ed., Women, Migration and Empire, Trentham Books, London, 1996, 104.

brought under British rule from 1848 to 1856. Figure 1 shows the territory under British rule on the eve of the 'mutiny.' As Chapter 3 will show, the annexation of the province of Oudh was a major factor leading to the widespread unrest that culminated in the 'mutiny' of 1857-8. The main constitutional consequence of the suppression of the 'mutiny' was the Royal Proclamation of 1 November 1858 and subsequent Government of India Acts, which replaced the rule of the East India Company with that of the British Crown.¹⁰ This study focuses on British women living in India during and after the 'mutiny' to examine representations of imperial domesticity at a time of imperial conflict and reconstruction but begins by turning to the earliest British women who travelled to set up homes in India.

Discourses of Imperial Domesticity

In the mid eighteenth century, it has been estimated that up to ninety per cent of British men in India were married to Indian or Eurasian women, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century, intermarriage had virtually ceased and an increasing number of British women travelled to India either once they were married or in search of a husband.¹¹ By the 1790s, policies of integration were reversed and British rulers became increasingly distanced from their Indian and Eurasian subjects. Indians were no longer invited to social occasions at Government House, Eurasians were prohibited from holding either civil or military office in the East India Company, and, by 1808, no Eurasians remained in the British army.¹² Such social, administrative, and military exclusions in racial terms were reflected by domestic anxieties that centred on intermarriage and

¹⁰ Following the transfer of the government of India from the East India Company to the British Crown, a parliamentary Select Committee was appointed to consider the prospects of colonization and settlement in India. The findings of the Select Committee and their implications for British women travelling to India will be discussed in Chapter 5.

¹¹ R. Hyam, Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1990.

¹² *Ibid.*, 116.

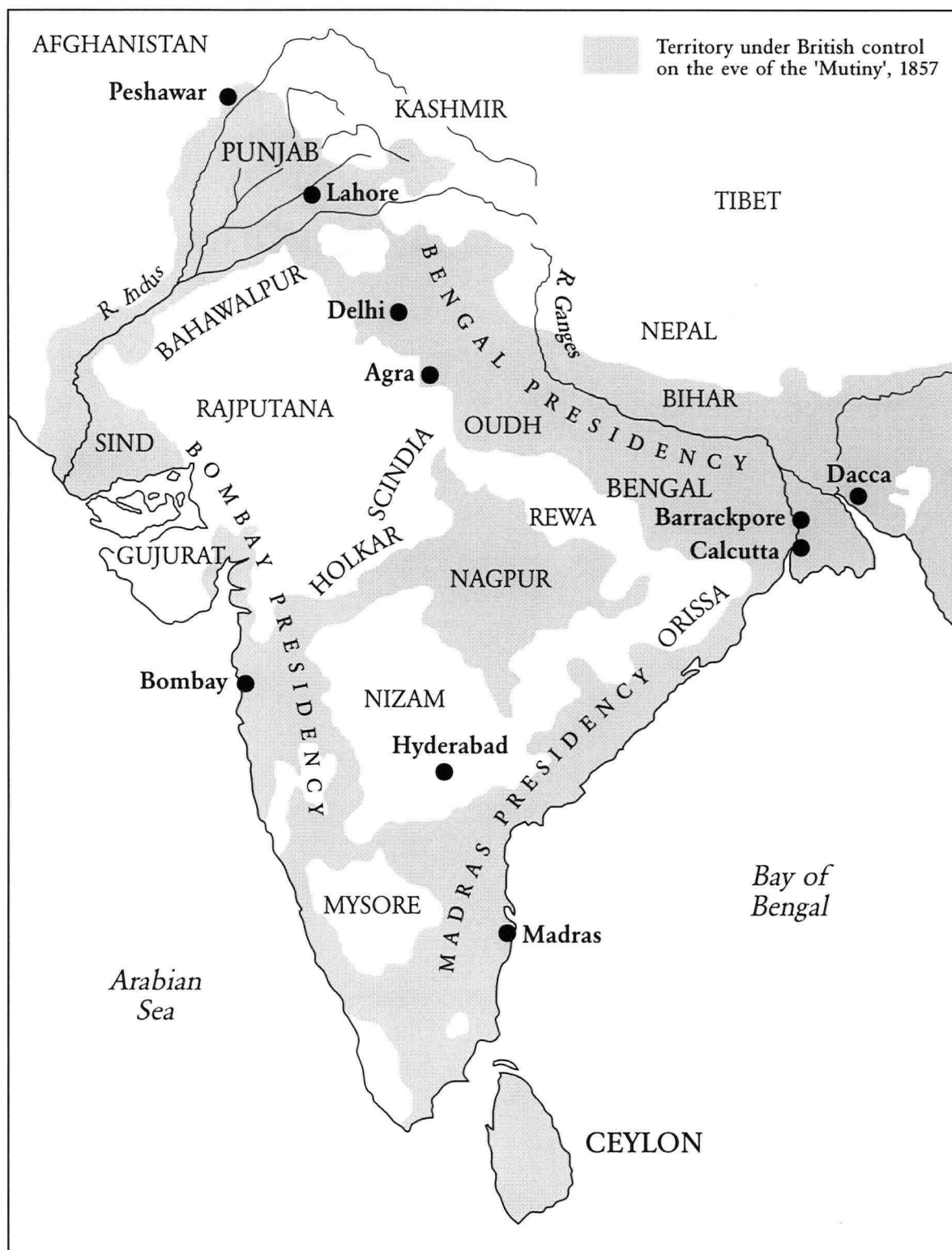


Figure 1: British India and Ceylon, 1857

Source: P. Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, Longman, London, 1993

miscegenation.¹³ Ronald Hyam identifies several reasons for the reversal of official attitudes to intermarriage in India in the late eighteenth century.¹⁴ First, the increasing number and influence of missionaries in India helped to tighten a code of Christian morality in increasingly racialised terms.¹⁵ Indeed, it has been claimed that 'the presence of missionaries of the ruling race encouraged the British to see themselves as more moral than Indians and to think that the preservation of social distance was morally justifiable.'¹⁶ Second, the policies of Governor-General Wellesley in the 1790s sought to strengthen British rule in India by establishing a widening, authoritative distance between apparently incorruptible British rulers and their Indian subjects.¹⁷ Finally, Hyam identifies the reaction to the uprising on the Caribbean island of Santo Domingo from 1791 as the most significant reason for the reversal of British social and domestic policies in India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The uprising in Santo Domingo led to the overthrow of French colonial rule, the declaration of Haiti as an independent republic in 1804, and the deaths of most of the 30,000 white population on the island in 1805. As a result, Hyam suggests that the British in India came to fear an uprising against their rule by Indian soldiers led by Eurasian officers.¹⁸ British rulers in India were increasingly encouraged to

¹³ See R. Young, Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race, Routledge, London, 1995 for further discussion of colonial discourses of inter-racial sex.

¹⁴ Hyam, *op. cit.*, 116-117.

¹⁵ See B. Christophers, 'Time, Space and the People of God: Anglican Colonialism in Nineteenth Century British Columbia,' Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1995, for further discussion of the roles of missionaries in regulating racial, sexual, and gendered conduct through Christian marriage elsewhere in the British Empire.

¹⁶ Ballhatchet *op. cit.*, 5.

¹⁷ See B. Cohn, Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, for more details about the distancing strategies of British rule and the public and often spectacular displays of such imperial power that both relied on and also reinforced such authoritative distancing.

¹⁸ Hyam, *op. cit.*, 117.

marry British women in an attempt to establish and to maintain their social and domestic distance from Indians and Eurasians.

But, as Kenneth Ballhatchet suggests, the regulation of racial, sexual, and gendered conduct through British marriages in India was class specific and contradictory because the social and domestic distance between British rulers and Indian and Eurasian subjects was restricted to an official élite. A domestic hierarchy in the army in the nineteenth century was reflected by the popular maxim that 'subalterns cannot marry, captains may marry, majors should marry, colonels must marry.'¹⁹ As in the British army, the army of the East India Company imposed strict regulations on the number of soldiers entitled to marry. Until the reforms of British army life in the late nineteenth century, soldiers were only able to marry if they were aged over twenty six, and, even then, only six per cent of soldiers in a company gained official permission to marry 'on the strength.'²⁰ The wives of soldiers who married 'on the strength' were able to live in barracks, eat army food, and enrol their children at regimental schools, and were often employed in a domestic capacity by the regiment.²¹ In India, although twelve per cent of soldiers were entitled to marry 'on the strength,' the permitted level was rarely attained. By 1862, for example, the proportion of married British soldiers was 4.75 per cent in Bengal, 6 per cent in Bombay, and 8 per cent in Madras.²² Over the course of the nineteenth century, whilst the official British élite in India was increasingly encouraged to marry British women, military restrictions limited the number of British soldiers able to marry at all.

¹⁹ Ibid., 121.

²⁰ A. R. Skelley, The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859-1899, Croom Helm, London, 1977 and E. M. Spiers, The Army and Society, 1815-1914, Longman, London, 1980.

²¹ V. Bamfield, On the Strength: The Story of the British Army Wife, Charles Knight, London, 1974, and M. Trustram, Women of the Regiment: Marriage and the Victorian Army, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.

²² Ballhatchet, op. cit., 35.

In contrast to the sexual and domestic distancing achieved in part by marrying a British woman, sexual contact between British soldiers and Indian and Eurasian women was officially sanctioned and regulated by the provision of regimental brothels or *lal bazaars* and lock hospitals. By establishing *lal bazaars*, regimental authorities could inspect and register prostitutes living in cantonments. From the mid 1850s until 1888, this practice had become so widespread that regimental brothels could be found in seventy-five Indian army cantonments.²³ In the course of their compulsory inspection, any prostitute who was found to have contracted a venereal disease could be detained in a lock hospital.²⁴ This system of regulated prostitution was thought both to protect and to promote the masculine virility of British soldiers by channelling their sexuality away from the perceived dangers of masturbation and homosexuality and by protecting them from venereal disease. In light of the class distinction between British officers and soldiers, Ballhatchet has identified a stark contradiction 'between the care with which the military authorities provided facilities for sexual relations between British soldiers and native women, and the care with which other authorities tried to discourage sexual relations between British officials and native women.'²⁵ According to Ballhatchet, this apparent contradiction arose from a fundamental concern to preserve the basis of imperial power: 'In the one case the soldiers' virile

²³ Hyam, *op. cit.*, 123.

²⁴ Ballhatchet, *op. cit.*. Similar regulations existed in Britain under the Contagious Diseases Acts from 1864 to 1886. Josephine Butler was a leading campaigner against these Acts both in Britain and in India. Although the Contagious Diseases Act was repealed in India in 1888, a number of 'Cantonment Rules' continued to sanction brothels within the regimental lines and continued to impose the compulsory examination of prostitutes. As Antoinette Burton has shown, the campaigns against the Contagious Diseases Acts provide clear examples of the imperial complicity of nineteenth century British feminism. A. Burton, 'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and 'The Indian Woman,' 1865-1915,' in N. Chaudhuri and M. Strobel eds. Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1992 and A. Burton, Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1994.

²⁵ Ballhatchet, *op. cit.*, 164.

energies had to be maintained. In the other case the social distance between the official élite and the people had to be preserved.'²⁶

Throughout this study, I focus on discourses of imperial domesticity and their embodiment by British women at home in India to reveal further contradictions that fractured and destabilized imperial power and authority. Following the work of Nicholas Thomas, the exposure of such internal contradictions can begin to disrupt an essentialist, unitary view of imperial power 'as a coherent imposition, rather than a practically mediated relation.'²⁷ As Thomas writes,

Colonizing projects were...frequently split between assimilationist and segregationist ways of dealing with indigenous peoples; between impulses to define new lands as vacant spaces for European achievement, and a will to define, collect and map the cultures which already possessed them; and in the definition of colonizers' identities, which had to reconcile the civility and values of home with the raw novelty of sites of settlement.²⁸

By focusing on British women married to army officers and civil servants, I explore the contradictory discourses of imperial domesticity that centred on both the place of British women and the place of British homes in imperial India. Following Thomas, my aim is 'not to rehabilitate imperial efforts, but to understand how far and why they were (and are) supported by various classes and interest groups'²⁹ by examining gendered geographies of imperial domesticity among the official British élite.

²⁶ Ibid., 164.

²⁷ N. Thomas, Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government, Polity, Cambridge, 1994, 3.

²⁸ Ibid., 2-3.

²⁹ Ibid., 17.

An Imperial Aristocracy

British officials in India, both military and civilian, have been described as emulating an aristocratic ruling class. According to Benedict Anderson, high capitalist imperialism 'permitted sizeable numbers of bourgeois and petty bourgeois to play aristocrat off centre court: i.e. anywhere in the empire except at home.'³⁰ The aristocratic aspirations of imperial officials were displayed in a 'tropical Gothic' lifestyle that was epitomised by 'the bourgeois gentilhomme speaking poetry against a backcloth of spacious mansions and gardens filled with mimosa and bougainvillea, and a large supporting cast of houseboys, grooms, gardeners, cooks, amahs, maids, washerwomen, and, above all, horses.'³¹ The appearance of 'capitalism in feudal-aristocratic drag'³² was embedded in the structures and organisation of imperial power within but also beyond imperial households. In the nineteenth century, the organisation both of army regiments and the civil service in India arguably relied on and reproduced a feudal hierarchy that elevated a privileged and powerful élite of imperial officials. The effectiveness of military organisation was thought to depend on the replication of a feudal hierarchy through the 'successful adaptation of gentry lifestyle and social relations to the messroom and barrack yard.'³³ By providing for the emotional, sexual and spiritual as well as physical needs of soldiers, the regimental system came to encompass a range of domestic and familial as well as military roles.³⁴ Because of its hierarchical organisation between as well as among officers and other ranks, the domestic and familial roles of a regiment came to replicate feudal-aristocratic relations. The incorporation of British wives of officers and soldiers into regimental life not only reflected the domestic and familial functions of a regiment, but also reinforced the hierarchical

³⁰ B. Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Verso, London, 1991, revised version, 150.

³¹ Ibid., 150-151.

³² Ibid., 151.

³³ Trustram, op. cit., 16.

³⁴ Ibid..

basis of such functions.³⁵ British wives of officers and soldiers were similarly positioned on a regimental hierarchy, deriving their status from the rank of their husband.³⁶ As a result, a clear distinction existed between women married to soldiers and 'ladies' married to officers. Whilst the wives of soldiers often worked as cooks, seamstresses, and washerwomen both for their husbands and the regiment, the wives of officers aspired to bourgeois and aristocratic ideals of feminine domesticity not only within their own families but also in their familial relations with the regiment itself.³⁷

If British army officers constituted a military élite in India, civil servants constituted a civilian élite. The term 'civil service' was first used in India to describe all non-military employees of the East India Company.³⁸ These employees were initially traders but as the Company became a government rather than a commercial monopoly, its civil servants became administrators. The covenanted service of the East India Company referred to those civilians who, on their appointment, entered a covenant to the effect that they would refuse any gifts or bribes that were offered in the course of their duties.³⁹ The covenanted service came to be

³⁵ H. Callan and S. Ardener, eds., The Incorporated Wife, Croom Helm, London, 1984. The essays in this volume consider a range of historical and contemporary examples of a wife's 'incorporation' to her husband's status.

³⁶ As Trustringham writes, 'The problems which wives of men commissioned from the ranks faced in fitting into the social world of the officer class well illustrate the gulfs [between women in a regiment]. Even within the officer class the wife of a man who married without his commanding officer's approval might find herself shunned by other wives: the commanding officer's wife having been detailed by her husband to encourage the wives to ignore her, in order to punish the husband for *his* misconduct.' *Ibid.*, 194.

³⁷ Bourgeois ideals of feminine domesticity will be discussed below. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the regimental organisation and military implications of imperial domesticity in greater detail by examining representations of and by the British wives of officers during the 'mutiny' of 1857-8.

³⁸ E. Blunt, The I.C.S.: The Indian Civil Service, Faber and Faber, London, 1937. Also see L. S. O'Malley, The Indian Civil Service 1601-1930, John Murray, London, 1931 for a history of the civilian elite in India.

³⁹ Ballhatchet, *op. cit.*, 2.

known as the Indian Civil Service and its members, who numbered little over a thousand and ruled more than 300 million Indians, have been described '[i]n their heyday' as 'the most powerful officials in the empire, if not the world.'⁴⁰ The 'heaven-born'⁴¹ élite of the Indian Civil Service administered the diverse activities of the Anglo-Indian state: 'They collected the revenue, allocated rights in land, relieved famines, improved agriculture, built public works, suppressed revolts, drafted laws, investigated crimes, judged lawsuits, inspected municipalities, schools, hospitals, cooperatives - the list is endless.'⁴² From 1855, civil servants were recruited by open examinations that spanned classics, mathematics, social sciences, Indian history, and Indian languages.⁴³ Three years later, pay scales were drawn up to offer successful candidates substantially higher salaries than they could expect at home, security of tenure, and a pension of £1000 after at least twenty-five and at most thirty-five years' service.⁴⁴ The Indian Civil Service was a hierarchical system that included assistant, deputy, and full commissioners, provincial governors, and central government officials.⁴⁵ As in the army, British wives were incorporated

⁴⁰ C. Dewey, Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service, The Hambledon Press, London, 1993, 3.

⁴¹ Referring to civil servants as 'heaven-born' likened their status to that of the superior Brahmin caste. MacMillan op. cit..

⁴² Dewey, op. cit., 3.

⁴³ E. Blunt, op. cit.. Before 1855, future civil servants were trained at the East India Company College at Haileybury. In 1863, Satyendranath Tagore was the first Indian candidate to be successful in the Civil Service examinations. As Ballhatchet writes, '[t]he Civil Service Commissioners reacted in characteristic fashion by manipulating the marking scheme so as to impede subsequent Indian candidates.' Ballhatchet, op. cit., 6. From the late nineteenth century, a policy of 'Indianization' was gradually emerging. In 1915, sixty three Indians accounted for five per cent of civil servants and by 1935, more than four hundred Indians accounted for thirty two per cent of the Indian Civil Service. E. Blunt, op. cit.. See T. R. Metcalf, The New Cambridge History of India III.4: Ideologies of the Raj, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, for further discussion.

⁴⁴ Dewey, op. cit., 5. As Dewey notes, the pay scales fixed in 1858 remained virtually the same until 1947 and the salaries of civil servants declined in real terms because of inflation.

⁴⁵ Ibid..

into this hierarchy by acquiring status from their husband's rank. Moreover, British wives played important roles in both establishing and maintaining this hierarchy in domestic and social terms. As Margaret Strobel writes, '[a] wife who did not act in a manner appropriate to her husband's rank upset the entire community by disrupting the social order upon which European society was based.'⁴⁶

British officials in India, both military and civilian, have been described as an aristocracy and often regarded their position as imperial rulers in similar terms. As Ballhatchet writes:

Not merely were they mainly recruited from a middle class which admired the lifestyle of the landed aristocracy in England. They themselves had an analogous function in the imperial structure, dominating the administrative and military systems, deriving their incomes from a predominantly agrarian economy and playing a paternalistic role among respectful peasants. So they saw themselves, and social distance seemed essential to their authority: because they were remote they would be feared as alien and trusted as incorruptible.⁴⁷

The British official élite distanced itself not only from Indians and Eurasians, but also from British planters, missionaries, and those with business or commercial interests who often remained socially and spatially marginal to the more formal exercise of British rule.⁴⁸ Among the official élite, the increasing tendency to marry British women over the course of the nineteenth century represented an attempt to establish and maintain strategies that distanced themselves as authoritative and incorruptible in both racial and class terms. But the contested place of British women and British homes in India suggests that such distancing strategies were both complex and contradictory.

⁴⁶ M. Strobel, European Women and the Second British Empire, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1991, 13.

⁴⁷ Ballhatchet, op. cit., 164.

⁴⁸ See Chapter 5 for discussion of the antagonism between many planters and the Indian Civil Service that became evident in debates about colonization and settlement after the 'mutiny.'

Travelling Home to India

Imperial domesticity relied in many ways on the presence of British wives and mothers in India, but British women who travelled to India were often represented in ambivalent ways. An article in the *Calcutta Review* in 1844 looked back to the late eighteenth century to mark half a century of domestic progress among Anglo-Indians. The article claimed that in the late eighteenth century, domestic improvements, which were seen as the only way to cultivate a British morality, lagged far behind social improvements. As the article stated, 'People wear their new garments out-of-doors before wearing them at home.'⁴⁹ Domestic improvements depended, it was claimed, on an influx of British women to facilitate 'honourable connexions.' And yet, the *Calcutta Review* was highly critical of those British women who had travelled to India in the late eighteenth century. As the following extract suggests, the *Calcutta Review* was anxious to distance the domestic progress of the 1840s from the late eighteenth century:

there are few if any of our readers...who have not heard much and read much on the subject of Female Adventurers, and the Marriage Market, and young ladies going out to India, on what was vulgarly called 'a spec.' All this is quite swept away. There are young ladies in every part of India - but the question of what they are doing there may be answered without a reference to the Marriage Mart. In most cases, they are found in our Indian stations, for the same reason that other young ladies may be found in London, or Liverpool, or Exeter - simply because, when in these places, they are in their proper homes. Adventuresses there are none.⁵⁰

Here, domesticity is tied to the appropriate behaviour of women and it was unacceptable, 'vulgar' behaviour to travel to India in search of a husband, even though such travel provided the very basis for later domestic and moral improvement. The appropriate behaviour of British women in India was seen in domestic terms and was bound up with ideas about home.

⁴⁹ 'The English in India - Our Social Morality,' *Calcutta Review*, 1844, 290-336, 321.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 331.

By the 1840s, it was seen as acceptable for British women to travel to India because they were seen to be travelling home. It was claimed that, by the 1840s, 'Young ladies now are never 'transported to India' 'to take their chance.' Apart from all matrimonial intentions, they have a legitimate purpose in visiting India...When they turn their faces to the East, they do so, not leaving but seeking their proper homes.'⁵¹ Another article in the *Calcutta Review* also described British homes in India, stating that 'India is the home of every girl whose parents are in it; of every married woman.'⁵² However, the article went on to question the tendency of many British people in India who continued to perceive Britain rather than India as 'home':

We all, both men and women, talk of home; but home, as we use it, means not India, but England in which perhaps we have not a single relation or a single local tie. The phrase is pardonable, but yet we could wish it altered, especially among those who have both husband and parents in this land. It would conduce much to their contentment and happiness, if they would not only call, but learn to consider this country as home, and England as but England; - a country to which they may possibly be driven to seek for the restoration of their health - in which they may possibly be buried.⁵³

Representing *Memsahibs*

The wives of British officials in India were often known as *memsahibs*. This term originated in the Bengal Presidency from 'madam-sahib' and came to be used in British colonies throughout Asia and Africa.⁵⁴ Memsahibs have been represented in such stereotypically negative ways that Margaret Strobel has suggested that 'The most unflattering portrait of European women [in the British Empire] comes in the characterization of memsahibs in India.'⁵⁵ Memsahibs have been

⁵¹ Ibid., 332.

⁵² 'Married Life in India,' *Calcutta Review*, 1845, 394-417, 404.

⁵³ Ibid., 404-405.

⁵⁴ N. Chaudhuri, 'Memsahibs and Motherhood in Nineteenth-Century Colonial India,' *Victorian Studies*, 1988, 517-535.

⁵⁵ Strobel, op. cit., 7.

stereotypically portrayed as 'narrowly indolent, more prejudiced and vindictive towards the colonized than their men, abusive to servants, usually bored, viciously gossipy, prone to extra-marital affairs, destructive to peaceful social relations, and cruelly insensitive to women of the colonized races.'⁵⁶ In many accounts, the growing distance between British rulers and Indian subjects over the course of the nineteenth century is attributed to the presence of an increasing number of white British women in India. As Ann Laura Stoler writes, 'Some accounts claim that the increasing number of women in colonial settlements resulted in increased racism not only because of the native desire they excited and the chivalrous protection they therefore required, but because women were more avid racists in their own right.'⁵⁷ Not only did the presence of British women lead to the creation of exclusively British domestic and social life, but such women were also thought to need protection from the desire of Indian and Eurasian men. In 1859, a Eurasian gynaecologist, Dr Gillies, was accused of negligence and ungentlemanly conduct in his treatment of a British patient, Mrs Stonehouse, who died of peritonitis. A wide debate ensued about whether British women should be treated by Indian or Eurasian doctors.⁵⁸ In another attempt to control the perceived desire of Indian as well as Eurasian men for British women, laws restricted the mobility of Indian princes in Europe over the course of the nineteenth century:

Indian princes were suspected of designs upon white women, and this was seen as a reason for restricting their travels to Europe. Then white women were thought to be attracted to Indian princes, and this was seen as a reason why princes should not

⁵⁶ B. Gatrell, 'Colonial Wives: Villains or Victims?' in Callan and Ardener op. cit., 165-185, 165.

⁵⁷ A. L. Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule,' in N. Dirks, ed., Colonialism and Culture, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1992, 319-352, 331.

⁵⁸ S. Mills, 'Gender and Colonial Space,' Gender, Place and Culture, 3, 1996, 125-147. Heated debates about the professional status of Indian and Eurasian doctors and their ability to treat British women were paralleled by debates about Indian and Eurasian judges who, following the Ilbert Bill of 1883, were able to pass judgement on British women and men. See Ballhatchet, op. cit., for further discussion.

linger long in Europe. In both cases, the underlying threat was to the structure of power.⁵⁹

Both imperial domesticity and imperial power more broadly were thought to depend on British officials marrying British women.

Both contemporaneous and current accounts have attributed stereotypical representations of memsahibs to a lack of knowledge about the lives of British women in India. Writing in 1909, in a book about the duties and responsibilities of 'Englishwomen' in India, Maud Diver was keen to redress British ignorance about life in India. As she wrote, 'it would be as well for those at home to realise, as vividly as may be, the special dangers and difficulties which complicate the lives of Englishwomen in India.'⁶⁰ But the lack of knowledge about such dangers and difficulties led Diver to conclude:

That Englishwomen are disposed to pass judgement on their Anglo-Indian sisters, as a class, is undeniable. From pedestals of sober respectability and energetic industry, they denounce as idle, frivolous, and luxury-loving, those other women of whose trials and temptations they know little or nothing; and it must be acknowledged that a surface glance at certain aspects of Anglo-Indian life would appear to justify much of the unsparing criticism to which they are subjected. But a deeper knowledge of what life in India really means would soften those criticisms to a surprising extent.⁶¹

Such stereotypical images of memsahibs arguably persist today because of the neglect of British women in histories of India and imperialism more generally. The study of British women in India has ranged from neglect in masculinist imperial histories to a revisionist celebration of, particularly, memsahibs. Pat Barr's book Memsahibs is subtitled 'In Praise of the Women of Victorian India,' rejects the 'historical cliché' of memsahibs as 'frivolous, snobbish and selfish,' and rather claims that 'For the most part, the women loyally and stoically accepted their share of

⁵⁹ Ballhatchet, op. cit., 121.

⁶⁰ M. Diver, The Englishwoman in India, William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh, 1909, 6.

⁶¹ Ibid., 5.

the white people's burden and lightened the weight of it with their quiet humour, their grace, and often their youth.'⁶² Margaret MacMillan has also sought to displace stereotypical images of memsahibs by writing that

British women in India certainly behaved badly; they also behaved well. They were brave in ways that are difficult to comprehend today. They might say dreadful things but their actions were often quite different from their words. They did not, it is true, conduct themselves in India with the patience of saints, the understanding of anthropologists. They were merely, most of them, ordinary middle-class women put into an extraordinary situation.⁶³

Imperial histories that neglect the gendered nature of imperialism remain within an imperialist framework by isolating and perpetuating ideas of racial difference. But revisionist celebrations of memsahibs often ignore imperial power, essentialise gender, and overlook other facets of subjectivity such as class, whiteness, and sexuality. Moreover, recent interest in the imperial roles of British women has often taken the form of romantic, nostalgic imagery in literature, television, and film, particularly since the 1980s.⁶⁴ In its recent celebration of the wife of a defeated Conservative Member of Parliament, a British newspaper proclaimed on its front page that 'With more women like her we'd never have lost the Empire.'⁶⁵ Not only does this lament the loss of the British Empire, but this loss is ascribed to the destructive presence of British women. In response to such nostalgic images, the persistence of gender-blind imperial histories, and imperial histories and popular representations that incorporate only individual and/or

⁶² Barr 1976, op. cit., 1.

⁶³ MacMillan, op. cit., 7-8.

⁶⁴ Chaudhuri and Strobel, op. cit..

⁶⁵ *Daily Mail*, 9 April 1997. This right-wing tabloid newspaper was describing the loyalty of Christine Hamilton whose husband Neil was allegedly implicated in parliamentary corruption. The newspaper went on to describe Christine Hamilton as a model incorporated wife: 'She's the kind of old-fashioned wife whose life is totally intertwined with that of her husband. She's his secretary, rock, defender and rear gunner. Attack him and you attack her. If he's wounded, she bleeds.'

stereotypical women, there have been an increasing number of attempts to examine both gender and imperialism in more critical ways.⁶⁶ Aiming neither to perpetuate nor simply to dismiss stereotypical representations of memsahibs, I seek to reveal the ambivalence of such representations. Through a focus on British women travelling to India, I aim to destabilize essentialist representations of both imperial power and gender by tracing the mobile, embodied subjectivity of memsahibs.

Following Homi Bhabha, the study of colonial discourse should address the creation of colonial subjects, moving beyond the identification of images as positive or negative towards a more structural understanding of subjectification.⁶⁷ Colonial discourse depends on fixity in the construction of otherness, which, as 'the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference,' is a paradoxical form of representation, reproducing 'rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition.'⁶⁸ The stereotype is the main discursive codification of fixity and is similarly ambivalent because it 'is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place,' already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated.'⁶⁹ Stereotypes do not represent false images that become discriminatory scapegoats; rather, they are complex and ambivalent in their 'projection and introjection, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, overdetermination, guilt, aggressivity; the masking and splitting of 'official' and phantasmatic knowledges to construct the

⁶⁶ See, for example, Chaudhuri and Strobel, op. cit.; T. Foley, L. Pilkington, S. Ryder, and E. Tilley, eds., Gender and Colonialism, Galway University Press, Galway, 1995; J. Haggis, 'Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender? Recent Women's Studies Approaches to White Women and the History of British Colonialism,' Women's Studies International Forum, 13, 1990, 105-115; B. Melman, Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion and Work, Macmillan, London, 1992; and V. Ware, Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History, Verso, London, 1992.

⁶⁷ H. Bhabha, 'The Other Question....,' Screen, 24, 6, 1983, 18-36.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁹ Ibid..

positionalities and oppositionalities of racist discourse.⁷⁰ For Bhabha, such ambivalence is productive, giving rise to otherness that is 'an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity.'⁷¹ To overlook ambivalence is to remain constrained within a unitary, essentialist colonial discourse, perpetuating the hegemonic metanarrative of otherness that legitimates such a discourse. Rather than make normalizing judgements about colonial representation, it is important to engage with the colonial regime of 'truth' that made stereotypes effective. By revealing stereotypical representations of memsahibs as ambivalent, the colonial regime of 'truth,' knowledge, and power becomes more fractured, unstable and contradictory than permanent, stable, and unitary. The political importance of such a strategy lies in the destabilization of the otherwise hegemonic production of colonial 'truth' and the exercise of colonial power. But this strategy does not deny the material violence, domination, and exploitation often resulting from imperial expansion and conquest. Rather, by exposing the ambivalent basis of imperial power and the production of imperial knowledge, the truth effects and the legitimation of imperial power become destabilized, revealing internal contradictions that fractured imperial power and opening important lines and locations of resistance to such power.

For Denise Riley, the category 'women' is constructed and hence unstable, constantly produced and reworked over time.⁷² In similar terms, by destabilizing stereotypical representations of memsahibs, the ambivalent mobility of otherwise apparently fixed stereotypes generally and stereotypical memsahibs more specifically can begin to be revealed. In poststructuralist terms, subjectivity is inherently unstable through its discursive constitution because 'the fragmented, unstable subject...is not regarded as a rational autonomous unit

⁷⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁷¹ Ibid., 19.

⁷² D. Riley, 'Am I That Name?' Feminism and the Category 'Women' in History, Macmillan, London, 1988.

producing meanings and values, but rather as being constituted in the ebb and flow of conflicting meanings generated by various discourses.⁷³ Rather than merely add gendered subjects to historical and geographical inquiry, the constitution of subjectivity itself becomes a central concern. In this way, rather than delimit an unproblematic category of 'British women living in India,' this study examines the constitution of subjectivity in relation to gendered discourses of imperial domesticity. Following Michel Foucault, discourse represents 'a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs.'⁷⁴ Because of the material specificity of discursive formations over space and time, I examine gendered discourses of imperial domesticity in three contexts: during the 'mutiny' of 1857-8; on a household scale after 1858; and in the seasonal travel of British women to hill stations after 1858.

Dwelling and Travelling

For many feminists, clear tensions exist between recognising both gender and subjectivity as constructed and the strategic need to assert gendered subjectivity.⁷⁵ As Riley notes, 'both a concentration on and a refusal of the identity 'women' are essential to feminism.'⁷⁶ Such tensions are often articulated in spatial terms whereby gendered subjectivity both repeats and yet denies its grounded confinement. The evocation of spatial imagery, which can include a rhetoric of

⁷³M. Valverde, 'Poststructuralist Gender Historians: Are We Those Names?' Labour / Le Travail, 25, 1990, 227-236, 228.

⁷⁴ J. W. Scott, 'Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference: or, The Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism,' Feminist Studies, 14, 1988, 33-50, 35.

⁷⁵ As discussed by L. Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism versus Poststructuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory,' Signs, 13, 3, 1988, 405-437; and S. Hekman, 'Reconstituting the Subject: Feminism, Modernism and Postmodernism,' Hypatia, 6, 2, 1991, 44-63.

⁷⁶ Riley, op. cit., 1.

mobility, positions of marginality and exile, and representations of borderlands as a place,⁷⁷ often inscribes spatialised subjectivities in more contingent, unstable, and decentred terms.⁷⁸ Spatial discourses of dwelling and travelling can be contextualised in materially specific and embodied terms by focusing on imperial domesticity and the place of British women at home in India. Rather than celebrate a transgressive and fluid mobility that can transcend grounded confinement and an originary authenticity, the spatial discourses of dwelling and travelling are not only more connected than distinct, but are also embodied and located in material terms. Such connections were embodied in ambivalent ways by British women travelling to set up homes in India. According to Geraldine Pratt and Susan Hanson,

A careful positioning *in place* would seem to be a prerequisite for the task of disentangling our shared complicities and struggles *as well as* our differences. An overvaluation of fluidity as subject position may lead away from a careful consideration of the processes through which identities are created and fixed in place.⁷⁹

In my focus on British women travelling to India from 1857 to 1939, I explore subject positions in place and across space on bodily, homely, and imperial scales. Such spatialised subjectivities reflected and also reproduced the simultaneous fixity and fluidity of spatiality and subjectivity. Following Judith Butler, spatialised subjectivities can be examined in terms of material

⁷⁷ G. Pratt, 'Commentary: Spatial Metaphors and Speaking Positions,' Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 10, 1992, 241-244.

⁷⁸ See, for example, K. Ferguson, The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993; I. Grewal and C. Kaplan, eds., Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1994; C. Kaplan, Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement, Duke University Press, Durham, 1996; and K. Kirby, Indifferent Boundaries: Spatial Concepts of Human Subjectivity, Guilford, New York, 1996.

⁷⁹ G. Pratt and S. Hanson, 'Geography and the Construction of Difference,' Gender, Place and Culture, 1, 1994, 5-30, 9.

performativity both in place and across space.⁸⁰ Notions of performativity resist essentialized subjectivities and spatialities by embodying spatialised subjectivities in material terms. In this study, I examine the embodied and material performativity of imperial domesticity by white, middle class British wives and mothers who lived in imperial India.

The tensions between asserting and resisting gendered subjectivity are reflected by feminist attempts to assert and yet resist embodiment. Moving beyond a split between the biological constitution of sex and the social constitution of gender, feminists such as Judith Butler and Elspeth Probyn have interrogated sex as gendered and gender as sexed and have traced the discursive inscription of bodies.⁸¹ In both cases, the material performativity of sex and gender are located on a bodily scale, whereby bodies/bodies' *matter* 'not as site or surface, but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter.'⁸² The material performativity of subjectivity on a bodily scale both grounds and yet resists the grounded confinement and fixity of bodies, subjectivities, and spatialities: 'Not only [do] bodies tend to indicate a world beyond themselves, but this movement beyond their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, appear[s] to be quite central to what bodies 'are.'⁸³ Here, the mobility as well as the materiality of performativity becomes clear. And yet, because such mobility is itself embodied and located in material ways, it can be termed a *critical* mobility that resists and yet repeats the performativity of imperial domesticity.

⁸⁰ J. Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, Routledge, New York, 1990, and J. Butler, Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex', Routledge, New York, 1993.

⁸¹ Butler 1990 and 1993, op. cit., and E. Probyn, Sexing the Self: Gendered Positions in Cultural Studies, Routledge, London, 1993.

⁸² Butler 1993, op. cit., 9.

⁸³ Ibid., ix.

Attempts to embody the production of knowledge have challenged a Cartesian split that privileges mind over body and serves not only to disembody the production of knowledge, but also to obscure the partiality and situatedness of knowledge. The authority of a disembodied gaze has been increasingly questioned by attempts to embody the producer as well as the production of knowledge.⁸⁴ For Grosz, 'Corporeality can be seen as the material condition of subjectivity,'⁸⁵ embodying lived subjectivities and experiences. I would add that corporeality can also be seen as a *spatial* condition of subjectivity, locating and embodying constructions of difference in critically mobile ways that reflect an ambivalent fixity and fluidity in place and across space.⁸⁶ Both the materiality and the spatiality of embodied subjectivities are produced by discourses that regulate, discipline, control, and administer bodies because embodied subjectivities are contested sites that are discursively constituted through the exercise of power and the production of knowledge. Michel Foucault and Timothy Mitchell have revealed the institutionalised disciplining of bodies in space by focusing on, for example, schools, prisons, and clinics.⁸⁷ Judith Butler and Elizabeth Grosz have focused on and resisted sexed and gendered regulatory norms that include a heterosexist matrix and the discursive inscription of

⁸⁴ See, for example, C. Nash, 'Remapping the Body/Land: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender, and Landscape in Ireland,' in A. Blunt and G. Rose, eds., Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies, Guilford, New York, 1994, C. Nash, 'Reclaiming Vision: Looking at Landscape and the Body,' Gender, Place and Culture, 3, 1996, 149-169, and G. Rose, Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge, Polity, Cambridge, 1993.

⁸⁵ E. Grosz, Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies, Routledge, London, 1995, 103.

⁸⁶ See R. Longhurst, 'The Body and Geography,' Gender, Place and Culture, 2, 1995, 97-105, who claims that 'the body' will be a key site for future geographical work. Also see D. Gregory, 'Between the Book and the Lamp: Imaginative Geographies of Egypt, 1849 - 1850,' Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, N. S., 20, 1995, 29-57, for a discussion of the physicality of travel through a focus on the journeys and writings of Florence Nightingale and Gustave Flaubert, travelling down the Nile.

⁸⁷ See, for example, M. Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic, Tavistock, London, 1973, M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, Penguin, London, 1977, and T. Mitchell, Colonizing Egypt, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988.

women's bodies in maternal terms.⁸⁸ As Butler asks, 'to what extent does a body get defined by its capacity for pregnancy? Why is it pregnancy by which that body gets defined?'⁸⁹ Focusing on middle class British wives and mothers travelling to and within India, the embodiment of discourses of imperial domesticity revolved not only around marriage, maternity, and the contested spaces of imperial homes, but also around bodies that were racialised as well as sexed, classed, and gendered. I am focusing on *white*, middle class British women who travelled to set up homes in India from 1857 to 1939 and I hope to trace the spatialities of racialized, classed and gendered subjectivities. Following Pratt and Hanson, geography is central to 'the ways in which gendered, racialised, and classed bodies are constructed in place and in different ways in different places.'⁹⁰ Rather than delimit space as a container fixing subjectivity, or merely as a stage on which subjectivities are performed, spatialities and subjectivities help to constitute each other and can both be interpreted in terms of material performativity. In this study, I examine the material performativity of spatialised subjectivities with reference to travel over imperial space and the contested place both of British women and of British homes in India.

My focus on white British women travelling to and within India represents an attempt to resist the frequently assumed 'transparency' of whiteness and white bodies moving through space and time. As bell hooks writes, whiteness only seems to be transparent in a white imagination because 'the rhetoric of white supremacy supplies a fantasy of whiteness,'⁹¹ which exercises a terrorizing force over non-white people. Not only does whiteness seem transparent in

⁸⁸ Butler, op. cit., and Grosz, op. cit.. Also see E. Grosz, Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1995, and E. Grosz and E. Probyn, eds., Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism, Routledge, London, 1995.

⁸⁹ J. Butler, 'Gender as Performance: an Interview with Judith Butler,' Radical Philosophy, 67, 1994, 32-39, 33.

⁹⁰ Pratt and Hanson, op. cit., 2.

⁹¹ b. hooks, 'Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination,' in L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, and P. Trenchler, eds., Cultural Studies, Routledge, London, 1992, 340.

a white imagination, but racism means that those non-white people constructed as racially 'other' are represented in dehumanised terms. As Razia Aziz suggests, 'Black women's particularity is transparent because of racism; any failure of white women to recognize *their* own particularity continues that racism.'⁹² Recent attempts to represent whiteness within a feminist imagination reflect the importance of challenging an essentialist category of 'women,' unmarked in terms other than gender and its difference from a similarly essentialist category of 'men.' Focusing on differences among as well as between women and men has destabilized the universal claims of a white, middle class, heterosexual feminism.⁹³ At the same time, feminists have also cautioned that a focus on 'difference' may conceal or become a substitute for the analysis of power relations.⁹⁴ Attempts to represent whiteness that aim to destabilize its false unity and assumed transparency as well as revealing the ways in which its normalisation exercises power in racist societies, can begin to reveal and resist the power relations underpinning constructions of difference. In her work on white women, racism and history, Vron Ware studies histories of slavery and imperialism 'not to bring white women to account for past misdeeds, nor to search for heroines whose reputations can help to absolve the rest from guilt, but to find out how white women negotiated questions of race and racism - as well as class and gender.'⁹⁵ Focusing on

⁹² R. Aziz, 'Feminism and the Challenge of Racism: Deviance or Difference?' in H. Crowley and S. Himmelweit, eds., Knowing Women: Feminism and Knowledge, Polity, Cambridge, 1992, 291-305, 297.

⁹³ See, for example, M. Barrett, 'Some Different Meanings of the Concept of 'Difference': Feminist Theory and the Concept of Ideology,' in E. Meese and A. Parker, eds., The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory, John Benjamin, Amsterdam, 1989, P. Collins, 'The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought,' Signs, 14, 1989, 745-773, D. Fuss, Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference, Routledge, London, 1989, A. Hurtado, 'Relating to Privilege: Seduction and Rejection in the Subordination of White Women and Women of Colour,' Signs, 14, 1989, 833-855, and S. Phelan, 'Specificity: Beyond Equality and Difference,' Differences, 3, 1991, 128-143.

⁹⁴ M. Gatens, 'Power, Bodies and Difference,' in M. Barrett and A. Phillips, eds., Destabilizing Theory, Polity, Cambridge, 1992, 120-137, L. Gordon, 'On Difference,' Genders, 10, 1991, 91-112, and Pratt and Hanson, op. cit..

⁹⁵ Ware op. cit., 43.

white femininity as historically constructed and the development of feminism as a political movement in a racist society, Ware politically and materially contextualises representations of whiteness.

Ruth Frankenberg conceptualises whiteness in explicitly spatial terms, writing that 'First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a 'standpoint,' a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, 'whiteness' refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed.'⁹⁶ In political terms, Frankenberg writes that

Attention to the construction of white 'experience' is important, both to transforming the meaning of whiteness and to transforming the relations of race in general. This is crucial in a social context in which the racial order is normalized and rationalized rather than upheld by coercion alone. Analyzing the connections between white daily lives and discursive orders may help make visible the processes by which the stability of whiteness - as location of privilege, as culturally normative space, and as standpoint - is secured and reproduced. In this context, reconceptualizing histories and refiguring landscapes are political acts in themselves.⁹⁷

The contested place of British women and British homes in India reveal contradictions at the heart of imperial rule. Memsahibs occupied an ambivalent place at home in India because they could share in imperial power through their whiteness while, at the same time, they were constructed primarily in marital and maternal terms as wives and mothers who discursively embodied feminine domesticity and its translation over imperial space.

The imperial roles of white women are particularly pertinent to feminist historiographies of geography and geographical knowledge. Mona Domosh cites women travellers to outline a feminist historiography of geography, but she neglects the whiteness that enabled such women

⁹⁶ R. Frankenberg, White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993, 1.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 242.

to travel in the context of imperialism.⁹⁸ As a result, Domosh overlooks not only imperial power but also the whiteness of geography as an academic discipline. Although Gillian Rose claims to be examining the whiteness and heterosexism as well as the masculinism of geographical knowledge, the whiteness of disciplinary geography appears at its most transparent only in her discussion of time-geography. While time-geography posited the corporeality of movement over time and space, the bodies themselves remained undifferentiated and began to be defined precisely by their lack of differentiation: 'they are literally colourless...the trace that they leave does not tell whether the body is white or black.'⁹⁹ In contrast, bell hooks writes that 'from certain standpoints, to travel is to encounter the terrorizing force of white supremacy,'¹⁰⁰ because travel is experienced differently by different people and because travel may be forced as well as voluntary. As James Clifford writes, 'travel' can represent 'constructed and disputed *historicit*ies, sites of displacement, interference, and interaction' and he proposes its use in cultural studies

precisely because of its historical taintedness, its associations with gendered, racial bodies, class privilege, specific means of conveyance, beaten paths, agents, frontiers, documents, and the like. I prefer it to more apparently neutral and 'theoretical' terms, such as 'displacement,' which can make the drawing of equivalence across different historical experiences too easy.¹⁰¹

Rather than focus on the metaphorical importance of travel,¹⁰² I consider its material specificity as white, middle class, married British women travelled to set up homes in India from 1857 to 1939.

⁹⁸ M. Domosh, 'Toward a Feminist Historiography of Geography,' Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, N.S., 16, 1991, 95-104.

⁹⁹ Rose op. cit., 31.

¹⁰⁰ Hooks, op. cit., 344.

¹⁰¹ J. Clifford, 'Travelling Cultures,' in Grossberg, op. cit., 110. See Blunt, op. cit., and D. Gregory, Geographical Imaginations, Blackwell, Oxford, 1994, 9-14, for further discussion.

¹⁰² For more metaphorical considerations of travel, see Kaplan, op. cit., G. Robertson, et. al., eds., Travellers Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement, Routledge, London, 1994, and J. Wolff, 'On the Road Again: Metaphors of Travel in Cultural Criticism,' Cultural Studies, 7,

Ideas of home are centrally important in considering travel, conceptualising spatialised subjectivities, and contextualising imperial domesticity. Spaces of home and away are more blurred than distinct through travel because the very idea of home can only be imagined from a distance and necessarily changes on return. As Georges Van den Abbeele suggests, 'the concept of a home is needed (and in fact it can only be thought) only *after* the home has already been left behind. In a strict sense, then, one has always already left home, since home can only exist as such at the price of it being lost.'¹⁰³ Travel thus involves the domestication of the unfamiliar at the same time as the defamiliarization of the domestic not only because home can only be imagined from a distance, but also because its originary authenticity is more fluid than fixed.

Travel can seem potentially liberating because of its transgressive potential. But such transgression is necessarily bounded because 'the very understanding of...error as 'wandering' implies a topography or space of wandering.'¹⁰⁴ The embodied nature of travel and such bounded transgressions away from home have been explored with reference to imperial travel. While white, middle class British women were able to travel and to transgress away from home on their imperial travels, their feminine domesticity was often reasserted on their return.¹⁰⁵ Mary Kingsley, who travelled from Britain to West Africa in the 1890s, described her brief sojourns in colonial settlements as equally if not more confining than life at home, and was anxious to

1993, 224-239. See Blunt, op. cit., and L. McDowell, 'Off the Road: Alternative Views of Rebellion, Resistance, and 'The Beats,' Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, N. S. 21, 1996, 412-419, for feminist critiques of the masculinism of such metaphors and other representations of travel.

¹⁰³ G. Van den Abbeele, Travel as Metaphor: From Montaigne to Rousseau, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1992, xviii-xix.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 47.

¹⁰⁵ See Blunt, op. cit., for discussion of Mary Kingsley's travels in West Africa in the 1890s.

travel away from such places as soon as she could.¹⁰⁶ The ambivalent place of British women establishing homes in India similarly reflects connections between dwelling and travelling and the limits of transgression.

Moving away from ideas of home as fixed, static, and confining, a number of feminist and postcolonial critics have begun to represent home in more mobile, productive terms. So, for example, Elspeth Probyn writes of her desire for a place of 'belonging,'¹⁰⁷ while bell hooks rewrites home as a 'site of resistance.'¹⁰⁸ Minnie Bruce Pratt represents different ideas of home over space and time, tracing her white, middle class, lesbian subjectivity and consciousness in relation to different places in her life.¹⁰⁹ As she writes and locates her own and others' histories, Minnie Bruce Pratt is an 'extraordinary' narrator who refuses 'to allow guilt to trap her within the boundaries of a coherent 'white' identity. It is this very refusal that makes it possible for her to make the effort to educate herself about the histories of her own and other peoples - an education that indicates to her her own implication in those histories.'¹¹⁰ In many attempts to write previously unwritten histories and geographies, postcolonial critics have similarly reconceptualised home in more mobile than static terms. As Edward Said writes, 'liberation as an intellectual mission'

¹⁰⁶ See Birkett, op. cit., who suggests that Mary Kingsley went on a disproportionate number of solitary fishing trips to escape the confinement of colonial society.

¹⁰⁷ E. Probyn, Outside Belongings, Routledge, New York, 1996.

¹⁰⁸ b. hooks, 'Homeplace: a Site of Resistance,' in Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics, South End Press, Boston, 1990.

¹⁰⁹ M. B. Pratt, 'Identity: Skin Blood Heart,' in E. Burkin, M. B. Pratt, and B. Smith, eds., Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism, Firebrand Books, New York, 1984, 9-63.

¹¹⁰ B. Martin and C. T. Mohanty, 'What's Home got to do with it?' in T. de Lauretis, ed., Feminist Studies / Critical Studies, Macmillan, London, 1986, 191-212, 198.

has now shifted from the settled, established, and domesticated dynamics of culture, to its unhoused, decentered, and exilic energies, energies whose incarnation today is the migrant, and whose consciousness is that of the intellectual and artist in exile, the political figure between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages.¹¹¹

Homi Bhabha has written of the 'unhomely' displacement of the modern world and discusses postcolonial attempts to position the world in the home and the home in the world. The inscription of in-between, hybrid spaces of 'border existence' 'inhabits a stillness of time and a strangeness of framing that creates the discursive 'image' at the crossroads of history and literature, bridging the home and the world.'¹¹² Focusing on literature, Rosemary Marangoly George suggests that an immigrant genre is marked by 'a curiously detached reading of the experience of 'homelessness' which is compensated for by an excessive use of the metaphor of luggage, both spiritual and material.'¹¹³ Finally, Paul Carter suggests that movement between homes could be reconceptualised as a condition of migrant existence: 'an authentically migrant perspective...might begin by regarding movement, not as an awkward interval between fixed points of departure and arrival, but as a mode of being in the world.'¹¹⁴

Postcolonial critics are concerned to recover experiences and representations by and about people from places constructed as marginal in a Western, imperialist imagination. At the same time, postcolonial critics are also concerned to examine the construction and effectiveness of a Western, imperialist imagination that constructed people and places as 'other' to its centred, dominant, and hegemonic 'self.' As Jonathan Crush writes, the aims of a postcolonial geography might include

¹¹¹ Said 1993, op. cit., 332.

¹¹² H. Bhabha, 'The World and the Home,' Social Text, 31/32, 1992, 141-153.

¹¹³ R. M. George, 'Travelling Light: Of Immigration, Invisible Suitcases, and Gunny Sacks,' Differences, 4, 1992, 72-99.

¹¹⁴ P. Carter, Living in a New Country: History, Travelling and Language, Faber and Faber, London, 1992, 101.

the unveiling of geographical complicity in colonial dominion over space; the character of geographical representation in colonial discourse; the de-linking of local geographical enterprise from metropolitan theory and its totalizing systems of representation; and the recovery of those hidden spaces occupied, and invested with their own meaning, by the colonial underclass.¹¹⁵

Examining the contested place of British women and British homes in India can challenge totalizing representations of imperial power. Focusing on geographical representations of home as well as empire, and domesticity as well as imperialism, can begin to mobilize and to embody the spatialised subjectivities of British women travelling to and within India and can help to reveal internal contradictions that destabilized imperial power and legitimation.

Spaces of Home and Empire

By referring to the spatialised subjectivities of British women travelling to and within India, my study clearly differs from other attempts to conceptualise gendered subjectivity, imperial and domestic spatiality, and imperial domesticity, merely in terms of public and private space. According to Carole Pateman, 'The dichotomy between the private and the public is central to almost two centuries of feminist writing and political struggle; it is, ultimately, what the feminist movement is about.'¹¹⁶ But, as an increasing number of accounts have challenged both essentialised subjectivities and spatialities, the complexity and contestation of private and public spheres are increasingly examined in historically, geographically, and socially specific terms. So, for example, Aida Hurtado writes that a dichotomy between private and public space is only relevant for white middle and upper class women because 'There is no such thing as a private sphere for people of Colour except that which they manage to create and protect in an otherwise

¹¹⁵ J. Crush, 'Post-colonialism, De-colonization, and Geography,' in A. Godlewska and N. Smith, eds., Geography and Empire, Blackwell, Oxford, 1994, 336-337.

¹¹⁶ C. Pateman, The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory, Polity, Cambridge, 1989, 118.

hostile environment.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, historical discourses of separate spheres were class specific, helping an emerging and rapidly growing bourgeoisie in Europe and North America to distinguish itself from other classes.¹¹⁸ Bourgeois discourses of feminine domesticity in Victorian Britain helped to shape representations of the home, marriage, and motherhood and discourses of separate spheres helped to structure domestic subjectivity as well as spatiality. Such discourses of separate spheres remain prevalent in accounts of imperial domesticity but the importance of race as well as class and gender often remains unarticulated. In contrast, a focus on the embodiment of imperial domesticity by British women travelling to and within India can reveal the political constitution and contestation of domesticity in the production and reproduction of imperial power and legitimation.

According to Penny Brown,

With the rise of the middle classes and the Evangelical movement in the late eighteenth century there emerged strong ideologies of domesticity, dependent on a clear division between the public and private spheres, with the home seen as a haven of peace, a source of stability, security, virtue and piety, held together by moral and emotional bonds, a construct modelled on the heavenly home to which all who experienced personal conversion might aspire.¹¹⁹

Bourgeois and Christian discourses of familial domesticity at home, which enshrined the values of piety, purity, and stability, depended on the moral and material influence of wives and mothers. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the rise of industrial capitalism led to the growing separation of home and work, the growth and increasing wealth of the middle class, and

¹¹⁷ Hurtado, op. cit., 849.

¹¹⁸ See A. Blunt and G. Rose, 'Introduction: Women's Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies,' in Blunt and Rose, op. cit., for further discussion.

¹¹⁹ P. Brown, The Captured World: The Child and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in England, Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York, 1993, 92.

an increasing valorization of home and domesticity as sites of both consumption and the reproduction of labour power. As a central example of the profound changes in the gendered and spatial organization of the family and domestic life, Catherine Hall traces the historical emergence of the housewife at the same time as the rise of industrial capitalism:

Women became considerably less important in the direct creation of surplus value but more important in the reproduction of conditions for labour power - the family had to become the training ground of rational men. With the development of capitalism comes the separation of capital from labour, the separation of the home from the place of work and the separation of domestic labour and commodity production.¹²⁰

Although legislation concerning marriage, property rights and earnings meant that all wives were subordinate to their husbands, discourses of feminine domesticity were clearly differentiated by class.¹²¹ The 'gilded cage' of bourgeois homes reflected not only the growth but also the domestic reproduction of this class. Unlike the aristocracy and working classes, the middle classes experienced the greatest changes in domestic life over the nineteenth century: 'Strengthened by industrialism's prosperity and increasing amounts of paid domestic service, it benefited from a revolution in living standards and comfort not needed by the aristocracy and not accessible to the working class until the mid-twentieth century.'¹²² As the location of home and paid employment became increasingly distant, domestic ideals came to be represented in terms of separate spheres. The bourgeois wife and mother, responsible for maintaining the home as a haven for her working husband, was often discursively embodied as 'the angel in the

¹²⁰ C. Hall, White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History, Polity, Cambridge, 1992, 51.

¹²¹ J. Perkin, Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England, Routledge, London, 1989. This book includes extensive discussion of women, marriage, and the law. As Perkin notes, the nineteenth century also witnessed the rise of anti-marriage campaigns that resulted both in a backlash of the glorification of marriage as well as sustained campaigns for legal reform.

¹²² Ibid., 314. Also see M. Abbott, Family Ties: English Families 1540 - 1920, Routledge, London, 1993.

house.¹²³ Family life, the home, and the presence of a wife and mother on which both relied, were elevated in importance over the course of the nineteenth century.¹²⁴ To an unprecedented extent, the Victorian middle classes came to revere the home and familial domesticity:

There were few aspects of their society the Victorians regarded with greater reverence than the home and family life within it...the Victorians regarded it as axiomatic that the home was the foundation and the family the cornerstone of their civilization and that within the family were first learned the moral, religious, ethical and social precepts of good citizenship.¹²⁵

Over time, as the separation of public and private space came to be increasingly manifest in the built environment, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall suggest that this separation also came to be increasingly demarcated in gendered terms. So, for example, they write that 'A masculine penumbra surrounded that which was defined as public while women were increasingly engulfed by the private realm, bounded by physical, social and psychic partitions. Men, in their privileged position, moved between both sectors.'¹²⁶ And yet, within the spatial confines of home, middle class women were also actively engaged in reproducing social divisions by maintaining class hierarchies through their household management of servants. Not only did the employment of at least one, and usually two or three, servants help to define class distinctions that privileged the bourgeoisie, but the presence of household servants helped to reinforce this class hierarchy on a daily basis. As Elizabeth Langland suggests, 'a Victorian wife,

¹²³ E. Langland, Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1995.

¹²⁴ A. J. Hammerton, Cruelty and Companionship: Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Married Life, Routledge, London, 1992. Hammerton considers the less visible and less frequently recorded experiences of Victorian domesticity by focusing on conflict, domestic violence, and divorce.

¹²⁵ A. S. Wohl, 'Introduction,' in A. S. Wohl, ed., The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses, Croom Helm, London, 1978, 9-22, 9-10.

¹²⁶ L. Davidoff and C. Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780 - 1850, Routledge, London, 1992, 319.

the presiding hearth angel of Victorian social myth, actually performed a more significant and extensive economic and political function than is usually perceived.¹²⁷ By the 1850s, a middle class housewife was acknowledged as the mistress of her domestic sphere and, while this sphere remained subordinate to the public sphere of her husband's work and citizenship, she could manage the household 'as rationally and efficiently as her husband did his business.'¹²⁸ The management and surveillance of servants within rigidly hierarchical households articulated and reinforced class distinctions that were frequently expressed in moral terms.¹²⁹ Bourgeois discourses of feminine domesticity increasingly positioned wives and mothers as moral guardians on a household scale, whose influence could transcend the boundaries of private space.¹³⁰ Moreover, the stability of home and family life were seen as centrally important to national as well as class stability. As Davidoff and Hall suggest, 'Women had both the time, the moral capacity and the influence to exercise real power in the domestic world. It was their responsibility to re-create society from below.'¹³¹

In a widely cited lecture that was subsequently published in 1865, John Ruskin encapsulated such discourses of separate spheres by celebrating the feminised space of 'Queens' Gardens.' Protected from the dangers of the world by masculine chivalry, a woman 'ruled' the house and home of her husband, which represented 'the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division....so far as it is a sacred place, a vestal

¹²⁷ Langland, op. cit., 8.

¹²⁸ Perkin, op. cit., 245.

¹²⁹ Langland, op. cit.. Also see L. Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England,' Journal of Social History, 7, 1974, 406-459 and L. Davidoff, Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class, Polity, Cambridge, 1995.

¹³⁰ See Chapter 3 for discussion of feminine discourses of Victorian philanthropy, which represent a clear example of the moral influence of bourgeois women that was seen to extend beyond the home.

¹³¹ Davidoff and Hall, op. cit., 183.

temple, a temple of the hearth watched over by Household Gods, before whose faces none may come but those whom they can receive with love...so far it vindicates the name, and fulfils the praise, of Home.¹³² Representations of the home as a sacred space correspond with the moral duties of bourgeois wives and mothers that were intimately connected with the influence of Evangelical Christianity. As Davidoff and Hall write, 'If home was the physical location of domesticity, marriage was at its emotional heart.'¹³³ The Christian sacrament of marriage not only reproduced a moral vision of domesticity in explicitly religious terms, but also provided the economic and social family unit of the rapidly growing middle classes. Although Evangelical Christianity reached its popular peak in the 1830s, its doctrines continued to exert considerable influence for the rest of the century, particularly among the middle classes.¹³⁴ According to Penny Brown,

Religion was given a central place in the intellectual and moral framework of middle-class culture and in the ideology of the home, reflecting the idea of the congregation of believers as a family, with struggles in the domestic environment seen as equally important in spiritual terms as human conflicts in any other sphere.¹³⁵

Homes were represented as sacred spaces that were concerned with the spiritual as well as social and economic well being of a family. In their domestic roles as wives and mothers, bourgeois women were positioned as the moral guardians of home life and family relations in explicitly Christian terms.

¹³² J. Ruskin, 'Of Queens' Gardens,' in E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, eds., The Works of John Ruskin, George Allen, London, 1905, 109-144, 122.

¹³³ Davidoff and Hall, op. cit., 178. Also see J. R. Gillis, For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present, Oxford University Press, New York, 1985.

¹³⁴ Perkin, op. cit..

¹³⁵ Brown, op. cit., 93.

The moral duty of bourgeois women extended to their maternal as well as marital roles because 'The production and upbringing of children was likewise a carrying out of God's will.'¹³⁶ According to Sally Shuttleworth, 'Motherhood was set at the ideological centre of the Victorian bourgeois ideal.'¹³⁷ But maternity was a source of bourgeois anxiety, as women came to be embodied in sexual as well as maternal terms. Following Foucault, Jill Matus examines Victorian discourses of sexuality that represented female bodies in unstable terms, oscillating between representations of an asexual femininity and the medical, scientific, religious, and social regulation and administration of female sexuality.¹³⁸ Bourgeois discourses of feminine domesticity focused on the moral, national, and imperial duties of childrearing rather than childbearing. While the rise of industrial capitalism led to the growing separation of work and home for the growing middle classes, it also inaugurated 'the early modern mother in the modern nuclear family.'¹³⁹ To an unprecedented extent, children were represented as individuals in the nineteenth century, and middle class mothers were increasingly represented as responsible for rearing their sons as future professionals and their daughters as marriageable women.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Perkin, *op. cit.*, 239.

¹³⁷ S. Shuttleworth, 'Demonic Mothers: Ideologies of Bourgeois Motherhood in the Mid-Victorian Era,' in L. Shires, ed., Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History and the Politics of Gender, Routledge, New York, 1992, 31-51, 31.

¹³⁸ M. Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume 1, Translated by R. Hurley, Vintage, New York, 1990, and J. L. Matus, Unstable Bodies: Victorian Representations of Sexuality and Maternity, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995.

¹³⁹ E. A. Kaplan, Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama, Routledge, London, 1992, 17. Kaplan distinguishes between historical, psychoanalytic and fictional 'representational spheres' that correspond to three main kinds of 'discursive mothers': mothers in socially constructed, institutional roles; the mother in the unconscious; and fictional mothers, who encompass institutionally positioned and unconscious mothers. In my study, I am focusing on the discursive embodiment of imperial domesticity by British women in India, which, through its material focus, relates most closely to the 'historical sphere' identified by Kaplan. *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁴⁰ P. Kane, Victorian Families in Fact and Fiction, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1995.

As wives and mothers, British women performed domestic, national, and imperial duties. Anna Davin has revealed the extent to which imperial politics influenced practices and representations of motherhood in Britain.¹⁴¹ The promotion of public health, hygiene and domestic education as well as the rationalisation of maternity through weighing and measuring babies, tied domestic reproduction explicitly to national and imperial reproduction that relied on ideas of racial purity, strength, and health. At the beginning of the twentieth century, these practices and regulations dramatically increased after the Boer War, when the poor health of many working class soldiers became the cause of national and imperial as well as domestic concern. As McClintock writes, 'Controlling women's sexuality, exalting maternity and breeding a virile race of empire-builders were widely perceived as the paramount means for controlling the health and wealth of the male imperial body politic.'¹⁴²

Other aspects of domestic life in Britain were likewise closely tied to imperial power and imaginations. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the domestication of 'exotic' species in private British gardens as well as public gardens such as Kew represented the transplantation and rooting of imperial imaginations at home on a household as well as a national scale.¹⁴³ The growth of commodity consumption during the nineteenth century similarly reflected and reproduced imperial imaginations on household and national scales, as shown by clothing, food, and early advertising.¹⁴⁴ As discussed in Chapter 1, imperial exhibitions not only represented the

¹⁴¹ A. Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood,' History Workshop Journal, 5, 1978, 9-65.

¹⁴² McClintock, op. cit., 47.

¹⁴³ R. Preston, 'The Scenery of the Torrid Zone': Imaginary Travels and the Culture of Exotics within Nineteenth Century British Gardens,' Imperial Cities Project Working Paper 9, Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London, 1997. Also see J. Browne, 'Botany in the Boudoir and Garden,' in D. P. Miller and P. H. Reill, Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, N. Chaudhuri, 'Shawls, Curry, and Rice in Victorian Britain,' in Chaudhuri and Strobel, op. cit., McClintock, op. cit., T. Richards, The Commodity Culture of Victorian Britain: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851 - 1914, Verso, London, 1990, and S. Zlotnick,

products of the British Empire to British subjects 'at home,' but also encouraged settlement in the Empire. Other Exhibitions drew explicit links between imperialism and British domesticity 'at home.' Focusing on the Ideal Home Exhibitions from 1908 to 1951, Deborah Ryan has shown the importance of imperial imaginations in fashioning suburban domesticity and cultures of consumption.¹⁴⁵ Also focusing on commodity consumption, Anne McClintock has examined the ways in which imperial and domestic space and power were intertwined, while Ann Laura Stoler and Rosemary Marangoly George have focused on empires in the home as well as homes in the empire to explore power relations along lines of gender, race, class and sexuality both within and beyond imperial homes.¹⁴⁶

But other attempts to theorize the translation of bourgeois discourses of feminine domesticity over imperial space continue to invoke separate spheres, ironically fixing the spatialised subjectivities of British women travelling to and within places such as India. Moreover, such representations of public and private space frequently overlook representations of whiteness and racial privilege in the context of imperialism by describing private space in racially exclusive terms that remain both transparent and tenuous. In their analyses of imperial masculinities, both Graham Dawson and John Tosh characterise masculine spaces of imperial adventure as an escape from feminised domesticity, which serves to polarize male, public spaces

'Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian England,' Frontiers: a Journal of Women's Studies, 16, 1995.

¹⁴⁵ D. S. Ryan, 'The Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition and Suburban Modernity, 1908 - 1951,' Unpublished PhD. Thesis, University of East London, 1995, and D. S. Ryan, 'The Empire at Home: The Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition and the Imperial Suburb,' Imperial Cities Project Working Paper 6, Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London, 1997.

¹⁴⁶ McClintock, op. cit., A. L. Stoler, op. cit., A. L. Stoler, Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's *History of Sexuality* and the Colonial Order of Things, Duke University Press, Durham, 1995, and R. M. George, 'Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home,' Cultural Critique, 15, 1994, 95-127.

of empire from female, private spaces of domesticity.¹⁴⁷ In these and other accounts, public and private spaces are delimited in gendered and racially exclusive terms. During the nineteenth century it was estimated that the smallest British household in India would require ten to twelve servants while larger households would require up to thirty, and, until the 1930s, it still remained common to employ up to a dozen servants.¹⁴⁸ The British wives of officials were advised to issue daily orders, to complete a daily inspection of stores and the kitchen, and to be responsible for household accounts that included the servants' wages. Such daily contact with Indian servants contrasts with accounts that posit the racial and gendered exclusivity of British homes in India, which, according to Jenny Sharpe, represented 'a space of racial purity that the colonial housewife guard[ed] against contamination from the outside.'¹⁴⁹ In a similar way, Inderpal Grewal asserts that 'most Englishwomen lived in English communities along race and class lines without associating with the 'natives.'¹⁵⁰ In their attempts to challenge both stereotypical and celebratory representations of memsahibs, Sharpe and Grewal are keen to stress the roles played by British women in the exercise of imperial power and authority. But Sharpe and Grewal both rely on distinctions between public and private space that separate domestic and imperial power relations to such an extent that the complex and often contradictory place of British women and of British homes in India remains unchallenged. Grewal, for example, writes that

the domestication of women, the regulation of sexuality, the division between private and public, between the home and the marketplace were...part of the habitus in which

¹⁴⁷ G. Dawson, 'The Imperial Adventure Hero and British Masculinity: The Imagining of Sir Henry Havelock,' and J. Tosh, 'Imperial Masculinity and the Flight from Domesticity, 1880 - 1914,' in Foley, op. cit..

¹⁴⁸ 'The Englishwoman in India: Her Influence and Responsibilities,' *Calcutta Review*, 1886, 358-370. The employment and management of Indian servants is discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

¹⁴⁹ Sharpe, op. cit., 92.

¹⁵⁰ Grewal, op. cit., 72.

the individual subject was formed and which replicated the divisions of race and gender which were the nexus of colonial power relations.¹⁵¹

Thomas Metcalf uncritically reproduces a distinction between public and private space in his discussion of 'gender and the colonial order,' writing that 'The everyday life of the British in India, with women for the most part secluded, though...by no means inactive, in darkened bungalows, and with men engaged in the work of empire in court and camp, reinforced the distinctions between home and the world, and between the private and the public, which lay at the heart of the British domestic ideology.'¹⁵² Just as in Grewal's account, the imperial relations shaping the home as well as the empire beyond become obscured and the discursive embodiment of imperial domesticity by British women remains unexplained. By dividing public and private space in this way, Grewal, Metcalf, and Sharpe ignore the vital, and often contradictory nexus of imperial power relations that existed *within* British homes in India. Rather than examine the power relations shaping imperial domesticity within the home, such accounts overlook the domestic as well as imperial power exercised by the wives of British officials in their management of Indian servants. By reasserting rather than destabilizing the artificial boundaries between the private space of home and the public space of empire, such accounts ironically neglect the exercise of imperial power in everyday domestic life by British women. Kumari Jayawardena describes the 'reality of the colonial wife' in terms that similarly detach her from the imperial power relations that existed within as well as beyond British homes in India. In Jayawardena's terms, 'the colonial wife' lived 'in a sort of doubly refined bondage - isolated in the home as a *woman* and alienated in the colony as a *foreigner*.'¹⁵³ Here, the spatial distinction drawn between home and empire reproduces a split between a sphere of private domesticity and public imperialism. Furthermore, the subjectivity of British women in India is

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 88.

¹⁵² T. Metcalf 1994, op. cit., 93-94.

¹⁵³ K. Jayawardena, The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia During British Rule, Routledge, New York, 1995, 4.

also represented in spatially distinct terms that overlooks the importance of imperial domesticity that was discursively embodied by British women travelling to and within India.¹⁵⁴

Conclusions

Rather than view imperial domesticity in terms of public and private space, I examine the mobile, embodied subjectivities of memsahibs who travelled to set up homes in India and attempt to move beyond essentialist representations of both spatiality and gendered subjectivity that have been characterised in terms of separate spheres. Not only was British domesticity in India inseparable from the exercise of imperial rule, but British imperialism in India was also shaped by discourses of home and domesticity. I examine the contested place of British women and British homes in India, the coexistence of ideas of home in India and Britain, and challenges to and the reconstruction of imperial power on a domestic scale.

This Chapter has travelled over a range of theoretical and empirical terrains. But, just as spaces of home and away are inseparably bound, so too are the theoretical origins and empirical destinations both of this Chapter and of this study as a whole. By considering embodied subjectivities, material performativity, and critical mobility, I have argued that the discursive inscription of bodies, homes, and empires need to be grounded and located in ways that resist confinement. Through a focus on spatialised subjectivities and ambivalence, I have stressed the need to locate a position from which to destabilize essentialist representations of space and subjectivity as well as the totalizing metanarratives of imperial power and the production of imperial knowledge. Discursive formations are materially specific in both space and time but also travel and change over space and time. By tracing notions of critical mobility, I aim to resist grounded confinement, infinite transgression, and aspatial metaphors of travel. In contrast, the material performativity of embodied subjectivities and imperial domesticity reflect the

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter 6 for a critique of the distinctions between public and private space that have been invoked in the analysis of seasonal travel by British women to hill stations.

simultaneous fixity and fluidity that can destabilize essentialist representations of space, subjectivity, and imperial power.

British women travelling to India were represented in ambivalent ways on two scales: first, on a household scale as they left 'home' to produce places both like and yet unlike 'home' in India; and, second, on national and imperial scales as tensions between ideas of Britain and of India as 'home' were in many ways embodied by the contested place both of British women and British homes in India. The rest of this study examines the contested place of British women and British homes in India and ambivalent representations of imperial domesticity at a time of conflict in 1857 - 1858 and a period of reconstruction from 1858 to 1939. Before doing so, however, I will introduce Francis Wells, who travelled from Britain to set up home in India in 1853. Her letters to her father represent a unique record of her sojourn in India, before, during, and after the 'mutiny.' As such, her letters represent in vivid detail the life of a newly-wed, middle class British woman and her experiences of imperial domesticity.

Interlude

Travelling to India

The Letters of Francis Wells, 1853 - 1857

Francis Wells, a doctor's daughter and the young wife of Walter Wells, a doctor in the Indian Army, left her home near Bristol in 1853 to travel to India. Although they expected to stay in India for at least seven years, the Wells' returned to Britain in 1858 after surviving the siege of Lucknow in the 'mutiny.' Over the five years that she lived in India, Francis Wells maintained a regular correspondence with her father, usually writing a monthly letter. In these letters, Francis Wells vividly depicted the life and anxieties of a middle class British wife and mother who travelled to set up home in India. Her letters describe the three month journey to India, setting up home in different places in North India, the routines of daily domestic and social life, and the vagaries of an 'imagined community' of British officials in India. As such, her letters provide a clear picture of middle class imperial domesticity in the years immediately before the 'mutiny' of 1857-8.

Francis and Walter Wells sailed to India on the Lady Jocelyn, 'alias Jostling,'¹ which left Plymouth Sound in October 1853. Plate 3 of the iron screw steamer Chusan represents a ship of a similar appearance and design to the Lady Jocelyn. On their first day aboard, while still under anchor in Plymouth Sound, Walter wrote to reassure his father-in-law that 'your dear daughter [is] very well and under all circumstances very happy. She slept like a 'Top' and ate a very good breakfast.'² But Francis' unhappiness and homesickness is painfully clear in her first letter to her father. As she wrote,

¹ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 23 October 1853, Bernars Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

² W. Wells to Dr Fox, 15 October 1853.

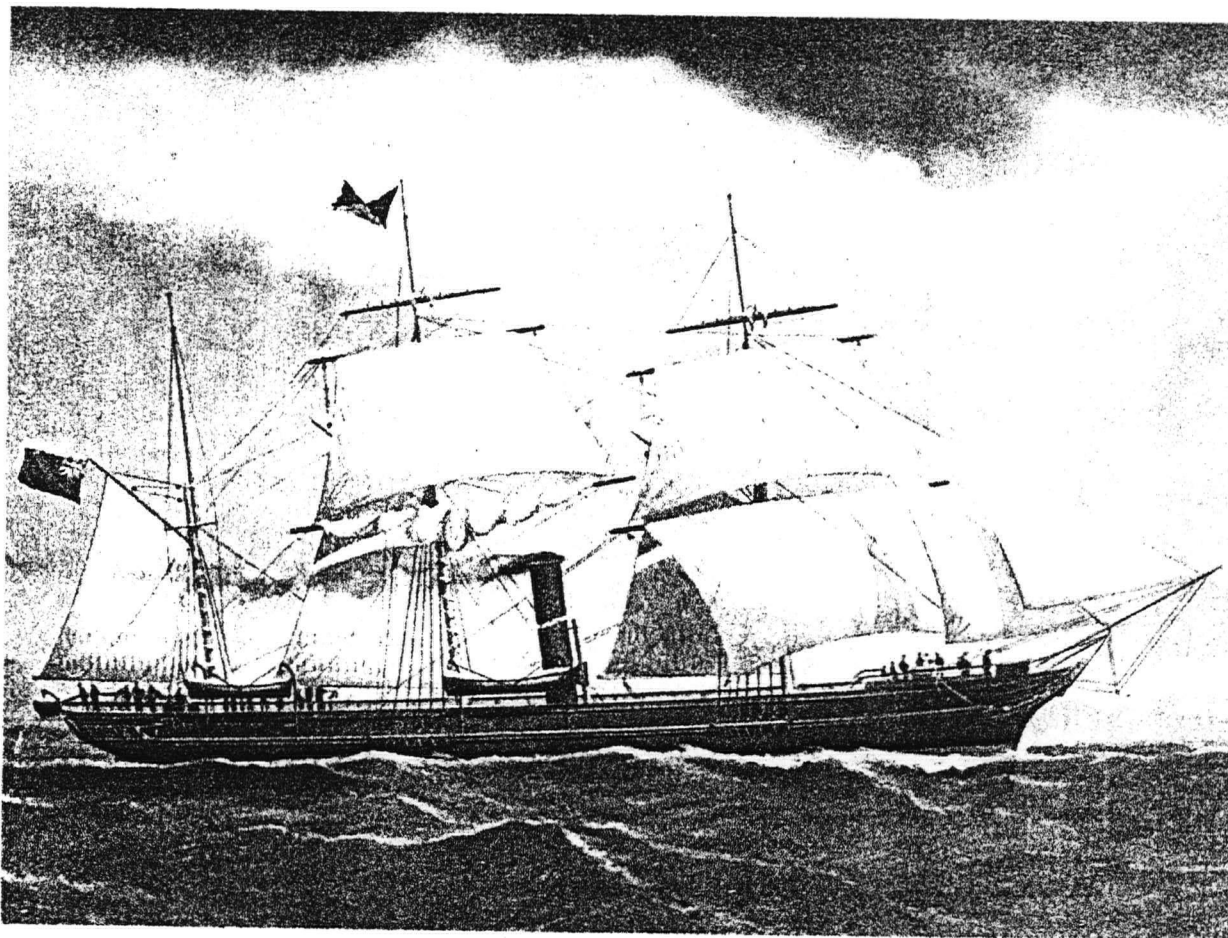


Plate 3: Steamship Chusan, Built 1852.

Source: B. Cable, A One Hundred Year History of the P and O, 1837 - 1937, Ivor Nicholson and Watson, Ltd., 1937.

*I hope dear Papa that you reached home safely, my thoughts were much with you and I am sure yours were with me. I knelt up at my cabin window for a long time after dinner yesterday looking at the reflection of the moon in the water which was truly lovely, and I felt very glad to think that at least we can look at some things in common.*³

*In the Bay of Biscay, Francis was one of few passengers to escape seasickness but her homesickness continued unabated. As she wrote, 'I have envied every homeward bound ship that we have seen.'*⁴ *Despite her initial unwillingness to talk to other passengers, who included 'eighteen ladies' and French and Dutch as well as British men, by the end of October, Francis and Walter had made several acquaintances on board. Francis describes her acquaintance with two 'officers' wives who were 'both about my own age and have only been married a few months.'*⁵ *Mrs Percival was travelling to the Cape, while Mrs Murray was travelling on to India and, according to Francis Wells, 'We are very exclusive and form a pleasant coterie. People are very free to talk on board ship and Walter says I have an inimitable way of keeping them at a distance.'*⁶ *Francis also seems distanced from other passengers in her Christian piety. As she wrote to her father, 'It is quite grievous to see how many of the people here read novels on a Sunday; after service is over they seem to forget what the day is, and the foreigners pay no regard whatever to it as they play the piano all day.'*⁷

*Daily life on board the Lady Jocelyn followed a clear, monotonous routine and although 'it is certainly as pleasant as I could ever expect, yet I am very tired of it.'*⁸ *Francis wrote that*

³ F. Wells to Dr Fox, October 1853.

⁴ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 23 October 1853.

⁵ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 24 October 1853.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid..

⁸ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 25 October 1853.

she woke at 7.30 and then spent the next hour and a half dressing as she and Walter had to take turns washing in a tub of cold salt water. After breakfast at nine and prayers in their cabin, Francis spent time darning and adding to her letter home, and then sat on the deck, reading, embroidering, and talking to other passengers before lunch of 'bread and cheese, biscuits, sardines and anchovy paste.' After lunch, Francis would return to the deck to talk to the captain, watch observations of the sun being taken, and hear any news: 'everything is here a matter of interest, a ship in sight, a little bird, in short things almost too trivial to mention.'⁹ Then, retiring to her cabin, Francis would play her guitar until it was time to dress for dinner. After dinner and a final walk on deck, the evenings were spent in the cuddy and were, for Francis, 'the worst part of the day as the lights are not good and it is difficult to see to read or work.' Music was played both by a band and by passengers and, although Francis seems to have been an accomplished musician, her participation was limited by her husband: 'I always dread playing before strangers...My husband will not let me sing tho' I have been often asked to do so. He says I am not to make myself cheap.'¹⁰

By the last week of October, the tropical heat meant that Francis had to change her clothes and suffer aching feet and ankles. An awning over the poop deck meant that she could sit out without her bonnet, and she wrote that 'You cannot imagine how magnificent the tropical sunsets are, quite unlike anything you see in England.'¹¹ On October 30, the passengers set foot on land for the first time since leaving Plymouth, spending a day on St Vincents in the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands. Francis described the island as 'perfectly barren, but of a most beautiful and picturesque form.'¹² Here, they followed a well worn route of passengers before

⁹ Ibid..

¹⁰ Ibid..

¹¹ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 28 October 1853.

¹² F. Wells to Dr Fox, 30 October 1853.

them: 'We all took a walk to the tomb of a lady who died on board one of these steamers and was buried here.'¹³ Here also, Francis encountered Africans for the first time and described them in grotesque terms: 'The inhabitants are all real Africans as black as coal and hideous beyond description.' And yet, Francis thought that the appearance of African women contributed to the picturesque nature of the island: 'The women are very odd looking, but their dress makes them add much to the beauty of the scene.'¹⁴

In the second letter of his occasional correspondence, Walter Wells again wrote to reassure his father-in-law that 'my wife is quite well and very happy and comfortable and is now quite at home...She has made the acquaintance of the élite of our Lady passengers and plays daily on the Piano and works and reads.'¹⁵ He suggested that Francis should have a piano of her own and enclosed price lists from London. Walter added that he had spent seven hundred pounds on his outfit and passage, and anticipated spending a further three hundred pounds on their arrival, thus implying that the seventy pounds needed to buy a piano was beyond his financial capabilities. Soon after their arrival in Calcutta, Francis declined her father's offer of a piano because she said that he could not afford it. In the event, Francis did not own a piano until two years later when Walter bought one from a couple who were returning to Britain for the first time in thirty five years. The piano that Francis eventually owned was more suited to life in India than one purchased in London as it was 'bound completely with brass, so as to stand the climate, with a packing case lined with tin, and a red wadded cover, which is always necessary in India and four glass insulators to keep the white ants off.'¹⁶

¹³ Ibid.. Later in the voyage, Francis noted the funeral on Christmas Day of Major Talbot who had died of dysentery. F. Wells to Dr Fox, 26 December 1853.

¹⁴ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 30 October 1853.

¹⁵ W. Wells to Dr Fox, 29 October 1853.

¹⁶ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 21 October 1855. Francis wrote in the same letter that her guitar had split in the heat.

In late November, Francis wrote to her father with the news that she was expecting her first child in July. Describing her stepmother, who was herself expecting a child, Francis wrote that 'I wish I had asked Mrs Fox many questions about various things before I left England as it is not pleasant having only strangers to ask.'¹⁷ Among the new passengers to join the ship at the Cape of Good Hope, Francis befriended Mrs Brookes, the wife of an army officer, who 'has one sweet little baby and has given me several useful hints.'¹⁸ Twelve days after leaving the Cape, the ship docked in Mauritius where Francis visited a fish market and a flower show and wrote to describe the natural beauty of the island: 'The foliage is so dense and flowers so gorgeous, I never saw such colours: the island is famous for its jessamine and the whole air seems perfumed with it: it grows in trees about the size of large laburnums; roses are wild in every direction and many other flowers that were quite new to me.'¹⁹ Two weeks later, in January 1854, the Lady Jocelyn reached Calcutta and Francis Wells' new life in India had begun.

In her first letter from India, Francis was keen to reassure her father that she was still equally if not more interested in news from home. As she wrote:

you are quite mistaken in thinking that my new career of life can make any home concerns appear insignificant: on the contrary amidst the numerous new scenes and faces I have seen, my heart continually longs for you all and my greatest pleasure is to hear everything about you all, trifles as much as anything else.'²⁰

When they arrived in Calcutta, Francis stayed in a hotel while Walter secured accommodation in Barrackpore, eighteen miles away. At this time, Francis occupied herself by learning

¹⁷ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 27 November 1853.

¹⁸ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 26 December 1853.

¹⁹ Ibid..

²⁰ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 14 January 1854.

*Hindustani, being visited by officers, and sewing dusters and kitchen cloths. She found the social life of the British official élite restrictive, writing that 'I am not much in love with Calcutta dinner parties, they are very stiff and the obsequiousness of the servants is quite oppressive; I do not like being incessantly bowed to, and the total want of any words corresponding to please and thank you puts me out extremely.'*²¹

*By the end of January, the Wells' had moved into a bungalow in Barrackpore where Walter worked as a doctor in the 48th Regiment of the Native Infantry. Francis found that Barrackpore was 'an exceedingly pretty place' and described her bungalow as 'a square white house entirely surrounded with a verandah, all on one floor and consisting almost entirely of doors and windows.'*²² *She wrote favourably of her eleven servants, who, because of caste restrictions, were each responsible for a specific household task. As Francis wrote, 'there is no impudence, no finery with them and I think ours will soon get into order.'*²³ *Over the course of her correspondence, however, Francis wrote to her father about frustrations with her Indian servants. In June 1854 she dismissed her dhoby or washerman for being drunk for three days but was having difficulty replacing him. At the same time, Walter had lost some gold shirt studs and the pay for all servants was being withheld until they were found. At other times, Francis wrote that 'I always pack off my women servants as soon as I can after breakfast for they do irritate me so I can hardly bear it'*²⁴ *and described her servants as 'wretches [who] are enough to aggravate a saint, the kinder you are to them the worse they behave.'*²⁵

²¹ Ibid..

²² F. Wells to Dr Fox, 26 January 1854.

²³ Ibid..

²⁴ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 15 November 1854.

²⁵ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 24 January 1855.

Although Francis had had some experience of housekeeping in Britain and could keep and balance accounts, new challenges of housekeeping in India included remembering the responsibilities of each servant and giving orders in Hindustani. Her days were occupied by 'working, writing, singing and reading.'²⁶ Daily life invariably followed the same routine, with Francis waking at seven, dressing, having breakfast at nine, and reading a chapter from the Bible and a daily prayer. For the rest of the morning, Francis ordered dinner, settled the household accounts, and attended to 'the numerous petty domestic affairs which you know require looking after in every house however small.'²⁷ After lunch, visitors could call over a two hour period, and, after a walk in the early evening, Francis would dress for dinner. In the evenings, Francis sewed while Walter read to her. As she wrote to her father, 'I have had some trouble to effect this last end, but unless he reads I will not sing and in this way I have managed it.'²⁸

After a year at Barrackpore, the Wells' spent two months travelling to Allahabad with the 48th Native Infantry and lived there for a further year. In January 1856, the annexation of Oudh meant that Walter was posted to Cawnpore for two months while Francis remained in Allahabad. Francis joined him at his next posting in Lucknow in April 1856. Francis had to arrange their move to Lucknow, despatching furniture, twenty boxes of possessions, their servants, and their carriage horse. Francis was keen to stress in her letters home that she was enjoying life in India. As she wrote to her sister Florry, 'I am very happy in this country and like it very well except the hot weather, that certainly is dreadful, but you must not say 'horrid' India

²⁶ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 28 January 1854.

²⁷ Ibid..

²⁸ Ibid..

*for I do not think it a bad place by any means.*²⁹ Writing to her father, Francis said that 'I do not dislike [India] at all and have much better health here than I had in England. I never have a spot of any kind on my face and at one time at home I frequently had.'³⁰ In March 1857, Francis wrote that Walter planned to retire from Indian service two years later. As she said, 'The longer I live in India the more I like it, of course there are some great drawbacks - the natives and the heat for instance but on the whole I think it is a pleasant country.'³¹ The life that Francis enjoyed in India was clearly the Anglo-Indian life of an official British élite.

When she arrived in Calcutta, Francis noted that 'The ladies here are excessively smart and pink is the predominating colour for bonnets: I am almost the only person with pink in my cheeks, and I notice that ladies' pallor is very much in proportion to the number of children they have with them.'³² Francis gave birth to three children while she lived in India. Walter was born in July 1854, a second baby was born at seven months and died five days later in September 1855, and George was born in August 1856. Before Walter was born, Francis wrote of her anxieties about raising a child in India. As she wrote, 'The more I see of [Anglo-]Indian children the more I hope to be able to send mine home before it is very old as they contract such bad habits in this country, all look so pale and sickly, and get to speak with a dreadful twang, indeed many speak no English which I think is a great pity.'³³ But as soon as Walter was born, she began to dread being separated from him: 'I do not think I can ever spare my boy to go home certainly not for five years and even then although I know it will be right to send him to

²⁹ F. Wells to her sister Florry, 17 February 1855. Francis also wrote that 'I do not think I would have come out to India if I could have imagined this heat, though it is a charming climate in the cold weather, but no one in England can.' F. Wells to Dr Fox, 18 June 1855.

³⁰ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 10 May 1856.

³¹ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 9 March 1857.

³² F. Wells to Dr Fox, 17 January 1854.

³³ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 24 June 1854.

England I shall not know how to part with him.'³⁴ At one year old, Francis reported Walter's wide vocabulary: 'Of course principally Hindostanee [sic] but that is unavoidable and he will soon learn English.'³⁵ In raising an Anglo-Indian child, Francis was concerned that her son Walter would acquire the worst traits of other Anglo-Indians, including his father: 'I am fearful lest he learns to abuse the natives as is too much the custom out here. Walter says he must be whipped if he does so, but I contend that will be quite useless if he hears his Papa do the same thing. You can have no idea in England to what extent this practice is carried out and sometimes it makes me feel quite ill.'³⁶ In her hopes for the future, Francis wrote that 'I should like to bring one of my boys up to the Civil Service, but Walter says he shall never be able to afford him the requisite education. Dear little creatures I hope we shall be able to afford to bring them home in three years, as unless compelled by most urgent necessity we never intend to send them to England unless we can accompany them.'³⁷

As well as reassuring her father that she was enjoying life in India, Francis Wells also sought to reassure him that she was enjoying married life. As she wrote on the voyage to India, 'I am very happy with [Walter]. I do hope that you will try for my sake to get over the feeling of reserve which you entertain for him.'³⁸ She also relieved her father's anxieties that his letters were being read by Walter: 'Do not be afraid of my husband seeing them, as I only read him such news as I like him to hear.'³⁹ Throughout her correspondence, several points of tension between Francis and Walter emerged. As well as his abuse of Indian servants, Francis also

³⁴ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 17 October 1854.

³⁵ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 16 July 1855.

³⁶ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 5 April 1856.

³⁷ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 5 January 1857.

³⁸ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 27 November 1853.

³⁹ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 16 January 1854.

complained that 'my dear husband's driving is rather peculiar'⁴⁰ and that 'I have yet to cure him of kissing me in the hot weather for I found that very unpleasant on board ship.'⁴¹ She also wrote to ask her father's advice when Walter stopped taking Holy Communion, which was clearly at odds with her own devout Christianity. But despite such points of tension, Francis wrote that 'I do try to be a kind, dutiful and affectionate wife but it is not very difficult to do so with a husband as I have; he is so indulgent and fond and the only trouble I have with him is about his shirts on which point he really is very trying: the shirts must have exactly the proper quantity of starch in and I cannot get them done right.'⁴² For his part, Walter described Francis' domestic devotion in favourable terms: 'You have no idea what a good manager she is in all her domestic affairs making things for our dear child which I had no idea she could accomplish and manages her house beautifully.'⁴³ Overall, Francis believed that she was closer to Walter in India than she might have been had they remained in Britain:

I fancy married people are much more fond of each other in India than they are in England...they are thrown together and for so many months in that year are dependent on each other for society. At home I used to think a gentleman in the house all day quite a bore, but now if Walter goes out for an hour I cannot keep away from the window watching for his return.⁴⁴

And yet, such marital and domestic happiness was seen to depend on the domestic capabilities of a wife. In contrast to her own marriage, Francis described the unsuccessful marriage of Captain and Mrs James: 'He is going to send his wife home and he says she is the most useless wife anyone ever had and cannot keep an account and though she has been so long in India

⁴⁰ Ibid..

⁴¹ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 17 January 1854.

⁴² F. Wells to Dr Fox, 7 April 1855.

⁴³ W. Wells to Dr Fox, 2 September 1855. Walter wrote this is in the letter in which he told Dr Fox of the death of his and Francis' second child.

⁴⁴ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 21 October 1855.

cannot speak a word of Hindostanee. I cannot think what would have become of me now unless I could speak the language and keep my servants in order.⁴⁵ Imperial domesticity and marital happiness were clearly seen to depend on the domestic proficiency of a British wife.

Francis Wells perceived her Christian marriage as a sacred contract that was governed by certain rules of propriety. She was conscious, however, that her views differed from those of many other Anglo-Indians. Such differences were particularly marked on social occasions. As Francis wrote,

I have never danced since my marriage and never intend to do so: I am universally laughed at but I do not think it consistent with the quietness and sobriety which are enjoined on married women: at the same time I do not exactly like to give this as my reason, because as almost everyone, married or not dances in this country it would seem to be setting up as better than others so I think the best thing is to stay at home and avoid all discussion on the subject.⁴⁶

In another letter nearly two years later, Francis stated in more categorical terms that 'It is quite disgusting to see how some married ladies dance and go on in this country, and makes me quite blush for my sex sometimes.'⁴⁷ By the time that she lived in Allahabad, Francis wrote that she was content with her domestic life: 'I am quite indifferent about society now as I am perfectly happy with my husband and child so do not care if I never see a creature.'⁴⁸ However, as a new resident, 'I have been quite overwhelmed with morning visitors since our arrival and quite dread returning them all, it is such a bore making new acquaintances.'⁴⁹ But, a month later, Francis

⁴⁵ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 5 February 1856.

⁴⁶ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 7 April 1855.

⁴⁷ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 9 December 1856.

⁴⁸ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 17 February 1855.

⁴⁹ Ibid..

wrote that *'I think we shall find this a sociable place, the civilians are all pleasant people and seem inclined to entertain.'*⁵⁰

For Francis Wells, the rules of propriety that governed marriage and social conduct were specifically bourgeois ideals. Francis' notions of bourgeois propriety became vividly clear in her outraged reaction to the 'disasterous' news that her brother Edward - a doctor, like her father and husband - was planning to marry a governess.⁵¹ Once the marriage had gone ahead, Francis described her sister-in-law in bitter terms: 'She is an unprincipled thing to have married a young man in defiance of his father's wishes, and can have no love for him or she would not have destroyed his prospects in this way.'⁵² Because she believed that 'Edward has so irretrievably ruined his prospects in England,'⁵³ Francis suggested that he should apply to the Medical Service of the East India Company.

The status of Francis Wells as an incorporated wife in the 48th Native Infantry is evident in her description of other 'regimental ladies' with whom she identified. Soon after arriving in India, she wrote that 'people say it is rather a quarrelsome corps, but the safest way here is never to talk of individuals and in that way it surely must be easy to keep on good terms with everyone.'⁵⁴ It was particularly important for Francis, as the wife of a regimental surgeon, to keep on good terms with other women of a similar standing in the regiment. For the first few months, however, Francis regretted that 'I know no one well enough to speak to on anything but

⁵⁰ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 8 March 1855.

⁵¹ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 30 April 1855.

⁵² F. Wells to Dr Fox, 5 January 1857.

⁵³ Ibid..

⁵⁴ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 2 March 1854.

*indifferent subjects, but I hope in time to get intimate with some of the ladies of the regiment.'*⁵⁵ Francis was one of only three 'regimental ladies' on the two month march from Barrackpore to Allahabad. Moreover, one of these ladies had only recently arrived in India and, after meeting her husband, Francis feared that Mrs Dashwood would be an inauspicious addition to the regiment: 'We have just had a visit from Mr Dashwood, such a coarse vulgar sort of man, smelling so dreadfully of smoke: I am sure if his wife is in his style she will be no addition to our society.'⁵⁶ Once the Wells' arrived in Lucknow, it was their duty to call on other Anglo-Indian officials and their wives who were already resident. This social protocol of calling on other Anglo-Indians of a similar status reinforced the hierarchy of a British official élite. On one occasion, Francis wrote to her father in tones of great indignation when this hierarchy appeared to be under threat:

*There is a neice of Major Prior's in this station married to Mr Lewin of the Artillery: they are the only people we have not called upon as they neither of them [are] worth knowing, I will not say more: she has told people that my family are so intimate with her Uncle that our Park gate!! is exactly opposite his! and that we used to meet every day; so much for the truth people tell: she is pretty looking and very young and wants someone to guide her sadly instead of which her husband is a fool, and in consequence I should not like to be spoken of as she is.'*⁵⁷

From April 1856, Francis and Walter Wells lived in Lucknow, the capital city of the recently annexed province of Oudh. Two years later, the Times correspondent William Howard Russell described the splendours of this city, which presented:

⁵⁵ Ibid.. Francis wrote this in connection with asking for advice from her father when Walter stopped taking Holy Communion.

⁵⁶ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 15 November 1854. Mrs Ouseley, 'the nicest of all,' was in Calcutta with her husband for six months 'with an insane brother a civilian, who stabbed a native the other day and is to be brought to trial for it tho' he is violently mad.' F. Wells to Dr Fox, 15 November 1854.

⁵⁷ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 9 December 1856.

A vision of palaces, minars, domes azure and golden, cupolas, colannade, long façades of fair perspective in pillar and column, terraced roofs - all rising up amid a calm still ocean of the brightest verdure. Look for miles and miles away, and still the ocean spreads, and the towers of the fairy-city gleam in its midst. Spires of gold glitter in the sun. Turrets and gilded spheres shine like constellations. There is nothing mean or squalid to be seen. There is a city more vast than Paris, as it seems, and more brilliant, lying before us. Is this a city in Oudh? Is this the capital of a semi-barbarous race, erected by a corrupt, effete, and degraded dynasty? I confess I felt inclined to rub my eyes again and again.⁵⁸

For their first four months in Lucknow, the Wells' lived in 'the very heart of the city, buried alive in fact for I do not suppose we shall ever see a white person here.'⁵⁹ Unlike most of the Anglo-Indian population of Lucknow, who lived in bungalows in cantonments or civil lines four miles away, Walter Wells was posted to the City Guard and he and Francis lived in an old palace in the centre of the 'native city.' As Francis wrote,

All the palaces here are beautiful, such wonderful architecture, of course very Eastern but most picturesque...We are quite private and shut out from everyone in the house, but outside it is terribly public and very unpleasant to us both as we like quiet and here the officers and sepoys are all over the place: it is a great nuisance in the evening when we want to sit outside.⁶⁰

Francis also reported that her movements had been seen by Indian women who lived in a zenana nearby.⁶¹ As she wrote,

⁵⁸ W. H. Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, edited by M. Edwardes, Cassell, London, 1957, 57-8. See V.T. Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856-1877*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1984, for discussion of the contrast between such descriptions of Lucknow from a distance and other descriptions of the streets and bazaars of Lucknow as 'mean [and] squalid,' and the implications of such descriptions for urban planning policies following the 'mutiny.'

⁵⁹ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 5 April 1856.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ 'Zenana' refers to the part of a house reserved for the seclusion of high-caste women. See J. Nair, 'Uncovering the Zenana: Visions of Indian Womanhood in Englishwomen's Writings, 1813 - 1940,' *Journal of Women's History*, 2, 1991, 46-81.

*when I and the other ladies arrived, the black ladies sent a message to the Colonel 'that their hearts were quite happy now they saw some mem sahibs about' and requested that the sahibs would never go on to the roof of our quarters as that commands a full view of the zenana: so none of the officers are allowed to go up, but I intend to, some day when the weather is not so warm.*⁶²

*But before the end of the hot season, Francis and Walter Wells had moved away from the native city to live in cantonments. Here they lived in 'a beautiful bungalow, the largest and best we have ever had [with] a good garden.'*⁶³ *For the rest of the year, Francis' domestic and social life continued to revolve around lunches, dinners, balls, and entertaining visitors. By now, Francis rose and dressed by five and retired at nine and, unlike many other Anglo-Indian women, would not lie down all day unless she was ill: 'Many people have a nasty, slovenly habit of sitting half the day in a dressing gown, but that is a trick I have never indulged in.'*⁶⁴ *But at the same time as writing about her domestic and social life, Francis also noted tensions that were emerging in the regiment. In March 1857, she described Captain Hasall as 'the black sheep' of the 48th Native Infantry who was often drunk and was 'without exception the most horrible man I ever heard of.'*⁶⁵ *According to Francis, although Walter had been extremely attentive to Mrs Hasall during her 'dreadful confinement' in childbirth, Captain Hasall had insulted him and their disagreement had been referred to the Colonel of the regiment. In the following month, Walter offended the religious beliefs of sepoys in his regiment by drinking medicine straight from a bottle in the hospital. As Francis later described to her father:*

when Walter went to the hospital one morning not feeling well he put a bottle of medicine to his lips and tasted a few drops of it; he was thoughtless certainly to have done such a thing, but still it was an act of inadvertence and who could have thought

⁶² F. Wells to Dr Fox, 10 May 1856.

⁶³ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 18 September 1856.

⁶⁴ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 6 April 1857.

⁶⁵ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 9 March 1857.

*of such great consequences arising from it...the natives here got the story that Walter spat into the bottle.*⁶⁶

*On April 6, Francis wrote that 'last night our house was burned to the ground over our heads.'*⁶⁷ *Francis ran to the Dashwood's bungalow in her nightgown, carrying her two children, and wrote that 'I never knew such terror before and I hope I never may again. I think my heart will never beat quietly again.'*⁶⁸ *The fire destroyed the Wells' home and many of their possessions, including all of their crockery, glass, and stores of food as well as one thousand rupees. As Francis wrote:*

*there is a very mutinous spirit in the native army now...my woman went outside to drink water and saw ten sepoy's placing lighted straws on the thatch, she instantly screamed out and the men ran off but the thatch being old and dry caught in a second...I feel so ill and miserable...It is a terrible loss to us and will of course compel us to remain in India longer than we intended.*⁶⁹

*Because Walter's actions were thought to have provoked the arson attack, he was deemed liable for the damage to the bungalow. A fortnight later, Francis wrote that 'I do not think we shall remain with this regiment: things have occurred which render it disagreeable to do so: and I think it is desirable that we should leave, however we have not yet quite made up our minds. It is such a terrible expense moving in India.'*⁷⁰

But before the Wells' were able to decide whether or not to leave Lucknow, unrest among sepoy's intensified both in Lucknow and throughout Oudh and culminated in the 'mutiny' that began in May and spread throughout north and central India during 1857. Francis wrote her

⁶⁶ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 1 May 1857.

⁶⁷ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 6 April 1857.

⁶⁸ Ibid..

⁶⁹ Ibid..

⁷⁰ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 1 May 1857.

last letter to her father from Lucknow in May 1857 and her correspondence then ceased for the next seven months. During this time, Francis and Walter Wells, together with the rest of the Anglo-Indian population of Lucknow, were held under siege in what became one of the most significant conflicts in the 'mutiny.' The imperial domesticity that Francis Wells had enjoyed since 1854 was shattered by the 'mutiny' of 1857 to 1858.

Chapter 3

Domestic and Imperial Crisis

British Women at Cawnpore and Lucknow, 1857-8

Introduction

Despite improvements in transport and communications between the two countries, in June 1857, an article in the *Calcutta Review* lamented the apathy and ignorance about India in Britain. In India, news five weeks old was received every two weeks and there were, according to the *Review*, two 'easy modes' of travel home, either by sea to Suez and then overland to Alexandria, or the longer route by sea around the Cape of Good Hope. As the article stated, 'Time and space, though not annihilated, nor even contracted to their shortest span, have been considerably reduced.'¹ And yet, awareness of this reduction seemed to be largely one way. The *Review* argued that only an empire-threatening crisis would be likely to change the neglect of India in newspapers, Parliament, and among the British public more generally.

This article appeared just as the first outbreaks of unrest marked the beginning of such a crisis. Over the course of the next year, events in India came to command an unprecedented level of public attention in Britain, as shown by daily newspaper reports and parliamentary debates.²

¹ 'India in England,' *Calcutta Review*, June 1857, 335-363, 335.

² Graham Dawson has described the 'mutiny' as 'the first 'national-popular' imperialist war fought by Britain in its Empire.' Dawson 1995, op. cit., 47-8. The 'mutiny' continued to shape imperial imaginations about India after 1858, as shown by the publication of a wide range of imperial histories, including, for example: W. H. Fitchett, *The Tale of the Great Mutiny*, Smith and Elder, London, 1902; G. W. Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny*, Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh, 1904; J. W. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India 1857-58*, W. H. Allen, London, 1876; and G. B. Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*, Seeley and Co., London, 1891. More than fifty English novels about the 'mutiny' were published between 1857 and 1900 and thirty more appeared before 1939. P. Brantlinger, 'The Well at Cawnpore: Literary Representations of the Indian Mutiny of 1857,' in *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1988, and N. Paxton, 'Mobilizing

One central focus of attention was the fate of British women in India, with accounts of their deaths and barely veiled hints at their violation resulting in impassioned cries for vengeance. The 'mutiny' of 1857-8 marked a turning point not only in terms of British rule in India, but also in terms of representations of British women in India. In this chapter, I argue that the imperial conflict was often represented through images and accounts of domestic defilement that were, in many cases, embodied by British women. The 'mutiny' was represented as a crisis of imperial domesticity that threatened the permanence not only of British homes but also of British rule in India. I am focusing on representations of British women during the 'mutiny' on a range of scales: in Britain and in India; and at Cawnpore and at Lucknow. In particular, I contrast representations of British women as victims at Cawnpore and as survivors and as heroines at Lucknow. In both cases, I suggest that the fate of British women could only be represented through their absence, either from the place where they died at Cawnpore or from the place where they lived under siege at Lucknow.

Disaffection among Indian infantry soldiers or sepoy had been intensifying since January 1857 and events in May marked the start of what in imperial terms came to be known as the Indian or sepoy 'mutiny' and in nationalist terms as the 'First War of Independence'.³ Detachments of the Bengal army mutinied at Meerut, killing several British officers and setting fire to the cantonment, before marching to Delhi and declaring the Mughal king, Bahadur Shah

Chivalry: Rape in British Novels about the Indian Uprising of 1857, *Victorian Studies*, 36, 1992, 5-30, 7. Also see 'The Indian Mutiny in Fiction,' *Blackwood's Magazine*, 161, 1897, 218-231 for an account of the popularity of such novels in the 1890s.

³ See M.L. Bhargava, *Saga of 1857: Success and Failures*, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, 1992, S. B. Chaudhuri, *English Historical Writings on the Indian Mutiny 1857-9*, The World Press, Calcutta, 1979, and J. Ladendorf, *The Revolt in India 1857-8: An Annotated Bibliography of English Language Materials*, Inter Documentation Company, Zug, for a historiography and bibliographies of the 'mutiny.' See R. Guha, 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India,' in R. Guha and G. C. Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, for a critical discussion of the elitism of Indian historiography. I am referring to events of 1857-8 as a 'mutiny' because I am examining imperial representations of the crisis.

II, as the reinstated ruler of Hindustan. Over the next year, revolts against British rule spread throughout central and northern India, taking place most notably at Delhi, Lucknow, and Cawnpore, as shown by Figure 2. The 'mutiny' largely took the form of uprisings by Indian soldiers against their British officers in the Bengal army but did not spread to the two other armies of the East India Company in the presidencies of Madras and Bombay. However, in some places, particularly in the recently annexed province of Oudh, the 'mutiny' was also characterized by widespread agrarian unrest.⁴ But such military and popular struggles tended to remain localized and disparate, so that the events of 1857-8 represented 'something more than a sepoy mutiny, but something less than a national revolt.'⁵ The 'mutiny' was brutally suppressed by more than 35,000 soldiers sent from Britain by June 1858. Writing from London for the *New York Daily Tribune*, Karl Marx wrote that 'it should not be forgotten that, while the cruelties of the English are related as acts of martial vigour, told simply, rapidly, without dwelling on disgusting details, the outrages of the natives, shocking as they are, are still deliberately exaggerated.'⁶ Such 'disgusting details' often centred on the fate of British women in the 'mutiny.'

⁴ See, for example, G. Bhadra, 'Four Rebels of Eighteen-Fifty-Seven,' in R. Guha and G. C. Spivak op. cit., R. Guha, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, J. Pemble, The Raj, the Indian Mutiny and the Kingdom of Oudh 1801-1859, The Harvester Press, London, 1977, and E. Stokes, The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978.

⁵ T. Metcalf, The Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857-1870, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1965, 60.

⁶ K. Marx and F. Engels, The First Indian War of Independence 1857-1859, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1959, 83.

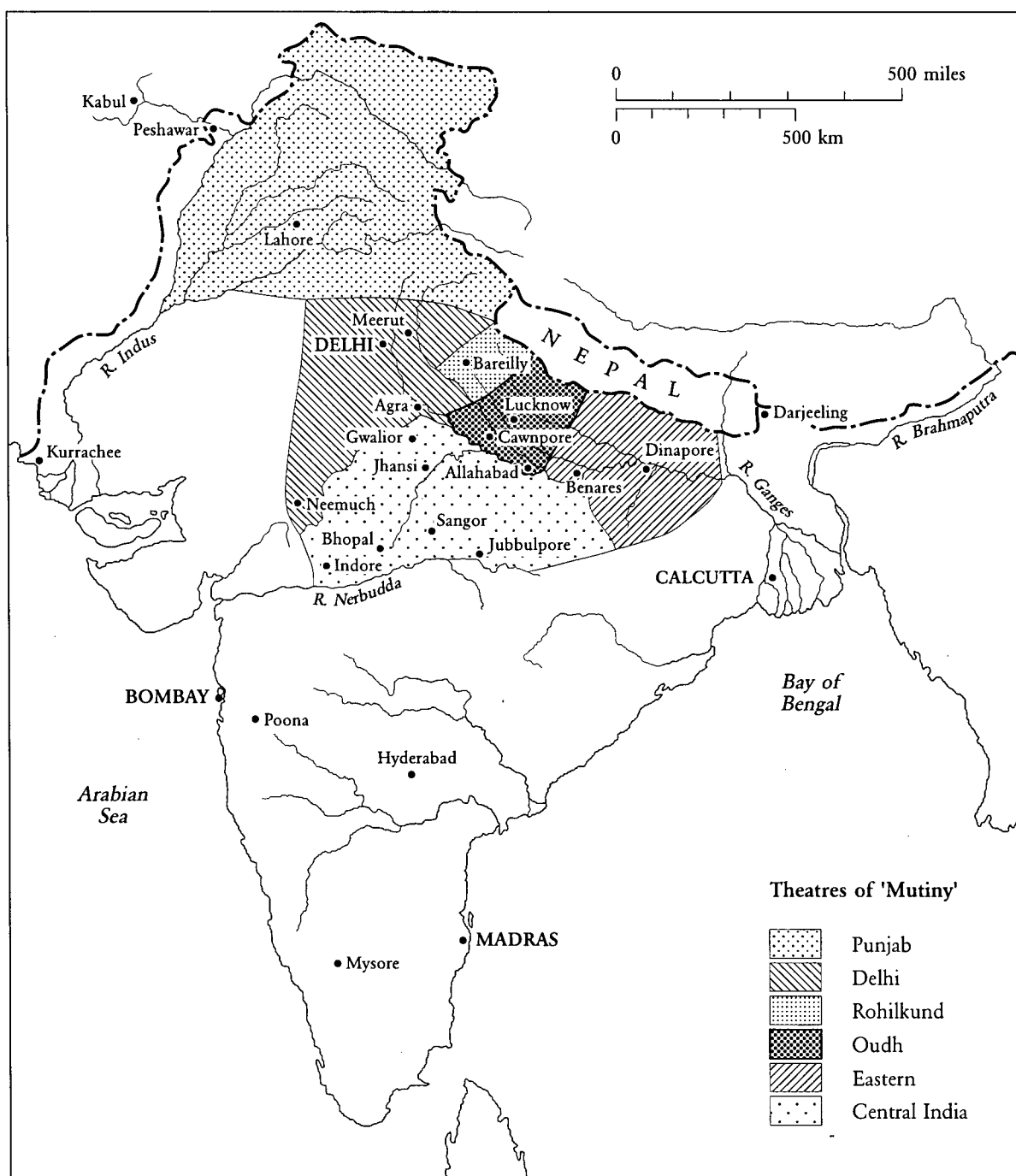


Figure 2: Theatres of War in the Indian 'Mutiny', 1857-8

Source: Innes, op. cit. and MacMunn, op. cit.

There have been many debates about the causes of the 'mutiny' both at the time and since. Imperial histories of the 'mutiny' have tended to focus on the rumour that cartridges for new Enfield rifles had been greased with beef and pork fat. Biting into such cartridges would, therefore, break the religious faith of both Hindu and Muslim sepoys.⁷ However, public and parliamentary opinion at the time ranged more widely with, for example, the *Bengal Hurkaru* reporting that 'The origin of the mutiny seems day by day more difficult of detection. Unctuous cartridges, unctuous Colonels, Indian princes, Oud[h], low pay, Russia, annexation, are each in turn suggested, and at every new solution, more insoluble appears the difficulty.'⁸ Furthermore, in parliamentary debates, the Marquess of Clanricarde stated that 'to suppose that this was a mere question of greased cartridges was absurd'⁹ and Disraeli, a member of the Conservative Opposition, was equally adamant that 'The decline and fall of empires are not affairs of greased cartridges.'¹⁰

Most contemporary debates about the causes of the 'mutiny' focused on the organization of the Bengal army and the recent annexation of the province of Oudh, which is mapped in Figure 3. The Bengal army consisted of 150,000 men, of whom 23,000 were European,¹¹ although the latter force was further diminished by soldiers fighting away from India in the Crimean and Persian wars. European forces were also spatially concentrated, with, for example, only one European regiment stationed between Agra and Barrackpore. Moreover, up to a third of

⁷ See Jenny Sharpe's discussion of the 'truth-effects' of this rumour in imperial historiography. Sharpe, op. cit., 59-61.

⁸ *Bengal Hurkaru*, 28 May 1857.

⁹ Marquess of Clanricarde, 6 July 1857, Hansard op. cit., Vol. CXLVI, 951.

¹⁰ Benjamin Disraeli, 27 July 1857, Hansard op. cit., Vol. CXLVII, 475.

¹¹ Metcalf, op. cit. Most of those designated 'European' were British soldiers. The armies of the Bengal, Bombay, and Madras Presidencies consisted of 281,940 men, of whom 41,475 were European and 3644 were English commissioned and non-commissioned officers. *Illustrated London News*, 11 July 1857.

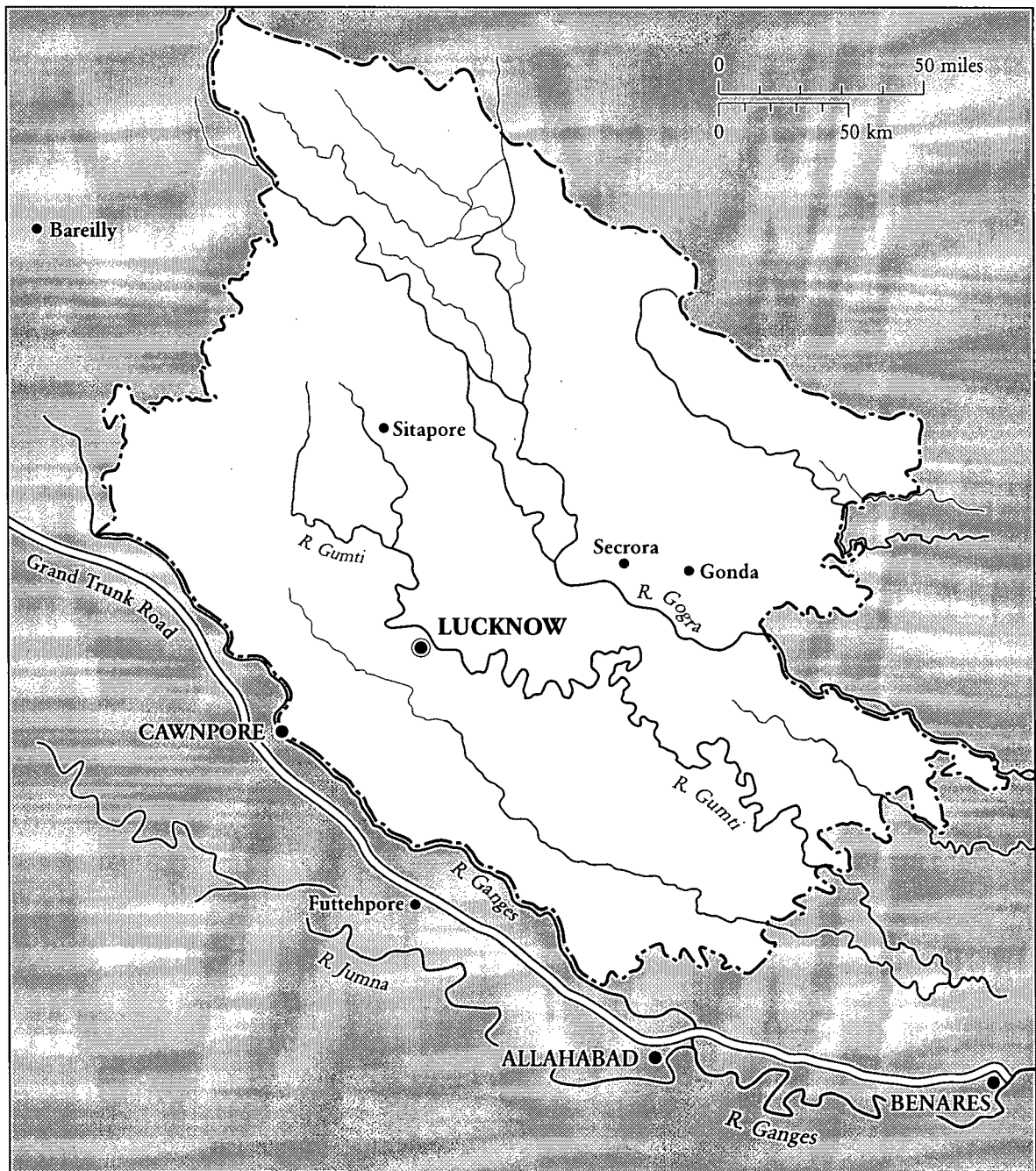


Figure 3: Map of Oudh, 1857

Source: Innes op. cit. and Pemble op. cit.

sepoys in the Bengal army came from Oudh. An estimated 50,000 sepoys were denied many of their landholding privileges and became subject to a new, rigid revenue system when the British deposed the king and forcibly annexed the province of Oudh in 1856.¹² The disaffection of the Bengal army was also attributed by some commentators to the widening distance between British officers and sepoys. It was argued that increased proximity to Britain led to a greater detachment from and disinterest towards both India and the sepoys under their command. Rather than view India as 'home,' British officers, like Walter Wells, regarded their sojourn there as more temporary than permanent. As Robert Vernon Smith argued in Parliament,

the attachment which the native soldier formerly bore to his officer has of late years, from various causes, considerably diminished. In past times, the yearning for home used not to prevail to the same extent among the officers, or at least it had not the same chance of being gratified. Englishmen in military command used to look upon India as their home and residence. Now, however, the modern facilities for furlough has given rise to an unceasing appetite to the same class of men for a return to England; and this circumstance, I have no doubt, has exercised a considerable influence in promoting disaffection in the Indian army.¹³

In similar terms, Lord John Russell argued that

Young men go to India; they hope before long that they shall get back to their native country; they receive the English newspapers constantly; they get letters from home twice a month; their feelings and habits remain English; and that being the case, they cannot condescend to enter into the feelings of the natives, and to show that sympathy which existed between the two races in former times.¹⁴

The greater proximity between Britain and India due to improved transport and communications arguably contributed to an increasing social distance between British officers and Indian sepoys. At the same time - and as discussed in Chapter 2 - the increasing tendency of British officers to

¹² Metcalf op. cit. and Pemble op. cit.

¹³ Vernon Smith, 27 July 1857, Hansard, op. cit., Vol. CXLVII, 496.

¹⁴ Lord John Russell, 27 July 1857, Hansard, op. cit., Vol. CXLVII, 523-524.

marry British rather than Indian women also contributed to a widening gulf between British officers and the Indian soldiers under their command. Some commentators attributed the outbreak of the 'mutiny' both to perceptions of Britain rather than India as 'home' and to a widening domestic and social distance between British rulers and their Indian subjects.

Within Britain, public consciousness of events in India reflected not only the increased ease of transport and communications between the two countries but also the domestic as well as imperial significance of the crisis. In December 1857, the *Illustrated London News* was keen to represent the crisis within Britain as well as India, stating that 'Many an eloquent pen chronicles the fortitude and resignation of those who have had to go through the fiery ordeal of the Indian revolt; but who will describe the equal heroism of the innocent sufferers from the crisis at home?'¹⁵ In a well documented example of such sufferings at home, a Scottish man was reported to have lost twenty two relatives in the 'mutiny' in a six week period.¹⁶ Concern about events in India was seen to extend from individual families to the British public more generally. As Vernon Smith said, 'I remember nothing occurring at so great a distance which has so powerfully affected society. It is impossible to walk the streets of the metropolis without witnessing the anxiety with which the arrival of news from India is expected.'¹⁷

To an unprecedented extent, private information came to shape public knowledge of the 'mutiny.' Because Anglo-Indian as well as Indian newspapers were subject to censorship during the 'mutiny,' private letters came to provide information that was often reprinted in the press and cited in Parliament. Although the *Bengal Hurkaru* was critical of the 'highly coloured and embellished' information contained in many letters, such information came to acquire strategic

¹⁵ *Illustrated London News*, 26 December 1857.

¹⁶ *Illustrated London News*, 17 October 1857.

¹⁷ Vernon Smith, 27 July 1857, Hansard, op. cit., Vol. CXLVII, 504.

as well as personal importance.¹⁸ In Parliament, the Earl of Ellenborough complained that 'not one word of official information has yet been given to Parliament. We have been left to depend upon private letters and upon articles in the newspapers.'¹⁹ At this time, the extension of the telegraph had begun to revolutionize communications between Britain and India. In August 1857, in the depths of the 'mutiny,' it was estimated that by early 1858, the extension of telegraphic communication between London and Alexandria would enable news to travel from Bombay to Britain in fifteen days. According to the *Times*, the extension of the telegraph represented

the greatest change in our relations with India that has taken place since our possession of the Empire...It appears as if we could really afford to get into scrapes, the resources of escape, repair, and renovation are so exuberant; so that at the very bottom of an adverse emergency, in the very depth of the crisis, and when our Indian reputation is for the moment prostrate, we inaugurate a new era for India, in which our hold over her will be ten times tighter than ever, and in which that Empire will be more in the relation of Ireland, or we might almost say an English county, to us than that of a distant continent.²⁰

Whilst recognising 'the very depth of the crisis,' this article anticipated the reassertion of British rule in India and pointed to the strategic role of the telegraph in binding India closer to Britain and thus ensuring future imperial security.²¹ During the 'mutiny,' news from India arrived in Britain by telegraph every seventeen days.²² As Earl Granville noted in Parliament, 'the public have been put in possession by electric telegraph of the whole substance of what we know.'²³

¹⁸ *Bengal Hurkaru*, 19 June 1857.

¹⁹ Earl of Ellenborough, 13 July 1857, Hansard op. cit., Vol. CXLVI, 1323.

²⁰ *Times*, 18 August 1857.

²¹ 'Our hold over her' suggests the masculinist physicalism of 'time-space compression' that was celebrated by many commentators both at the time and since. See D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, for further discussion.

²² *Times*, 28 July 1857.

²³ Earl Granville 13 July 1857, Hansard op. cit., Vol. CXLVI, 1331.

Both the greater accessibility of information by telegraph and the flow and nature of private information raised popular consciousness of events in India to an unprecedented level. This popular consciousness was often heightened by representations of British women in the 'mutiny.'

The 'mutiny' had far reaching implications for British rule in India. The main constitutional consequence of the 'mutiny' was the Royal Proclamation of 1 November 1858 and subsequent Government of India Acts, which replaced the rule of the East India Company with that of the British Crown. As Thomas Metcalf argues, 'Although not often apparent on the surface, the India of the Queen was markedly different from the India of the Company'²⁴ because the 'mutiny' had disrupted not only the formal structures of imperial rule but also the imperial representations that had legitimated such rule. Jenny Sharpe suggests that the 'mutiny' ruptured ideas of British imperialism as a civilizing mission based on consensual notions of British generosity and Indian deference.²⁵ As Bernard Cohn has argued, the 'mutiny' led to significant changes in the increasingly formalized, ritualized, and often spectacular display of British authority in India. Memories of the 'mutiny' continued to shape representations of imperial identity and authority to the British themselves. As Cohn writes,

the Mutiny was seen as a heroic myth embodying and expressing [the] central values [of the British] which explained their rule in India to themselves - sacrifice, duty, fortitude; above all it symbolized the ultimate triumph over those Indians who had threatened properly constituted authority and order.²⁶

²⁴ Metcalf, op. cit., vii. Metcalf contextualizes the 'mutiny' and its implications in terms of Victorian liberalism, arguing that it marked a departure from liberal ideas of improvement to a more cautious, conservative era of imperial rule.

²⁵ Sharpe, op. cit., 1993, 58.

²⁶ B. Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India,' in B. Cohn, An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, 647.

Particular places imbued with heroic myths of the 'mutiny' shaped a new imperial geography of India in the years after 1857. Travelling around central and north India on the clear itinerary of a 'mutiny tour' helped British residents and visitors to imagine their place as imperial rulers.²⁷ In particular, the siege of Lucknow continued to shape British imperial imaginations over many years following the 'mutiny,' as shown by the *Times* stating in 1930 that 'probably no achievement in British history stirs the blood of Englishmen more deeply than the defence of Lucknow.'²⁸ Indeed, after the recapture of the Residency at Lucknow in March 1858, the Union Jack was lowered from its tower for the first and last time on August 15, 1947, the date of Indian Independence. This was the only Union Jack in the British Empire to fly day and night and when it was finally lowered, the *Illustrated London News* reported the event as 'probably the most poignant flag ceremony of the day.'²⁹

The 'mutiny' was often represented in terms of domestic defilement both in terms of the destruction of British homes in India and the challenge to British rule in India. Such representations were often embodied in ambivalent ways by the fate of British women in 'mutiny.' I examine how the conflict was represented in Britain in two connected ways. First, I consider how and why the 'mutiny' was represented by domestic imagery. Second, I discuss the ways in which representations of British women came to embody representations of the imperial conflict. Here, I examine the ways in which imperial domesticity was discursively embodied by British women as victims and heroines at Cawnpore and Lucknow.

²⁷ M. Goswami, 'Englishness' on the Imperial Circuit: Mutiny Tours in Colonial South Asia,' *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 9, 1996, 54-84. See Chapter 5 for further discussion of these 'mutiny tours' and the memorialization of the 'mutiny' at Cawnpore and Lucknow. A clear parallel exists with Inderpal Grewal's work on Indian women developing a national imagination and consciousness by travelling around India. I. Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Cultures of Travel*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1996.

²⁸ *Times*, 18 February 1930.

²⁹ *Illustrated London News*, not dated, from The Mutiny Scrap Book, School of Oriental and African Studies, MS 380484.

Representing Home and Empire

Discourses of proximity and distance helped to shape representations of the 'mutiny' in newspapers and in parliamentary debates as a crisis of imperial domesticity on two connected scales: first, between Britain and India and, second, the place of British homes in India. Representing home and empire on these two scales drew upon the intertwined discourses of domestic, national, and imperial power, honour, and prestige. Such discourses not only influenced contemporary reports and popular consciousness of the 'mutiny,' but also influenced future debates about imperial rule and colonization in India.³⁰ Domestic imagery represented the 'mutiny' as an uprising not only against British homes in India but also against the permanence of British rule in India.

The deaths of British officials, their wives and children prompted the *Bengal Hurkaru*, an Anglo-Indian daily newspaper, to state that 'This is not a mere local outbreak, it is a great crisis, a crisis unprecedented in the history of British India...It is now a question of empire.'³¹ By September, Karl Marx described the British forces in the north western provinces of Bengal as increasingly isolated 'amid a sea of revolution'³² against capitalist imperialism. But the extent to which the 'mutiny' represented an imperial crisis was open to question, not least in early parliamentary debates. While the Liberal British government under Palmerston was anxious to contain the threat posed to imperial rule by describing the uprising as a military mutiny, Disraeli described the 'mutiny' as a rebellion of national proportions that threatened British rule in

³⁰ I will discuss debates about imperial rule and colonization in India in the years following the 'mutiny' in Chapter 5.

³¹ *Bengal Hurkaru*, 12 June 1857.

³² Marx, op. cit., 76.

India.³³ For many commentators, the 'mutiny' was an imperial crisis that was best represented by images of domestic defilement that raised doubts both about the permanence of British rule in India and the possibility of reconstructing future British homes in India.

Several commentators used domestic imagery to represent the imperial crisis as a civil war, revealing the inseparability of national and imperial power, honour, and prestige. In June 1857, the Earl of Ellenborough argued in the House of Lords that 'It is as much the duty of the Government to protect our empire in India as it would be to protect the county of Kent, if attacked'³⁴ and, in the following month, the *Times* declared that 'a civil war is upon us.'³⁵ In similar terms, the *Illustrated London News* reported that:

Our house in India is on fire. We are not insured. To lose that house would be to lose power, prestige, and character - to descend in the rank of nations, and take a position more in accordance with our size on the map of Europe than with the greatness of our past glory and present ambition. The fire must be extinguished at any cost.³⁶

Here, domestic imagery vividly conveys the threat posed to British ownership of India as well as the inseparability of national and imperial power, honour and prestige that depended on such ownership. Other commentators used domestic imagery to represent a more personalized, embodied threat to British homes in India. For example, in May 1857, the *Bengal Hurkaru* also represented the severity and immediacy of the imperial crisis in domestic terms:

³³ As shown, most notably, in the three hour speech Disraeli made in Parliament on 27 July 1857.

³⁴ Earl of Ellenborough, 29 June 1857, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates: Third Series*, London, Cornelius Buck, Vol. CXLVI, 518. Lord Ellenborough had been Governor General in India from 1842 to 1844 and had been President of the Board of Control four times between 1828 and 1858. Metcalf, op. cit.

³⁵ *Times*, 27 July 1857.

³⁶ *Illustrated London News*, 4 July 1857.

when mutinies interfere only with the security of our Indian Empire - when they merely lower in the eyes of the world the national name - the consequences are comparatively trifling. The Government is aroused sooner or later, and more troops settle the matter. But when mutinies break out in our domestic establishments - enter our houses, and penetrate even to our wardrobes - it is plain that something must be done. We can bear up against a dishonoured name, but not a discoloured shirt. We can bear a stain upon our characters, but a stain upon our cravats becomes a momentous consideration.³⁷

This, I think, suggests that while some uprisings threatened the *security* of the Indian Empire, the present 'mutiny' threatened the *Indian Empire* itself. The domestic images of 'houses,' 'wardrobes' and 'cravats' seem to stand for British rule in India and, while 'comparatively trifling' mutinies could be contained, the scale and severity of the current 'mutiny' represented a challenge to the very basis of British rule. In effect, the *Bengal Hurkaru* described the 'mutiny' as an uprising that threatened both the permanence of British homes and the permanence of British rule in India.

In August, the *Times* published a letter that graphically represented the destruction of a British home in India. In a letter from Neemuch in June, the wife of an officer in the Bengal army wrote that:

Our house, like all others, is a ruin, a shell, without one article left us. Our beautiful books, either torn or burnt; our furniture broken up, chopped in pieces, or carried off; not a cup, plate, or glass left; carpets torn up, or carried away; not a single garment of any kind; our silver dishes gone; doors, windows smashed; trinkets and curiosities, of which I had a goodly store, all taken away or destroyed...We have now nothing left.³⁸

Such an inventory of domestic destruction and loss represented the imperial conflict in direct and vivid terms to the British public by conveying the threat to British homes and British rule in India through a description of domestic defilement. A similar image appeared in *Punch* in June 1857. As Plate 4 shows, the Indian 'mutiny' not only threatened British homes in India, but this

³⁷ *Bengal Hurkaru*, 11 May 1857.

³⁸ *Times*, 7 August 1857.

threat both to imperial domesticity and to imperial rule more broadly was represented in embodied ways by the fate of a terrified and defenceless white wife and mother. With a baby at her breast and a young child playing next to her, the British woman is depicted at the centre of domestic and familial calm that has just been shattered by the invasion of two Indian insurgents. Her vulnerability is further compounded by the absent presence of her husband whose portrait hangs on the wall behind her. The box labelled 'England' on the *chaise longue* suggests that national and imperial power is similarly vulnerable alongside the child. One Indian is about to seize the child and is armed with a sword while the other brandishes a flaming torch. The rebels, represented in menacing ways, appear set to destroy the woman, her children, and the home itself. But the presence of the Indian insurgents is the only indication that the home is in India. Otherwise, the furniture and decorative interior appear quintessentially British, without even a visible cord for the ceiling fan known as a *punkah* that would have undoubtedly cooled the room. As a result, the Indian rebels are shown to be invading not only a British home but they also appear to be threatening British rule in India. In both cases, the presence of a defenceless British wife and mother embodies the severity of this threat to domestic, national, and imperial power, honour and prestige. The fate of British women in India discursively embodied the 'mutiny' as a crisis of imperial domesticity that had implications not only for the presence of British homes in India but also for the security of British rule in India.



Plate 4: Domestic Defilement during the 'Mutiny.'

Source: *Punch*, June 1857.

Representing Women

In newspapers and parliamentary debates during the 'mutiny,' representations of women in Britain often served to convey the extent of suffering at home, but, most often, British women were represented as victims of the 'mutiny' in India. In Parliament, Lord Portman described the case of a widowed mother to illustrate the extent of suffering at home. Of her four sons, one had died in the Crimean War, and one had died, one was injured, and one was still fighting before Delhi. As he said, 'Cases like this are rife among us. She is able to bear her anxiety with patient submission to the will of God. How many poor women, wives, mothers, sisters less educated have but little consolation that can lessen their sorrow.'³⁹ Not only were the sufferers at home represented in exclusively female terms, but the ability of women to cope with such trials through their Christian faith seemed to be class specific.

As well as representing the extent of suffering 'at home,' women in Britain were also represented as either recipients or providers of relief, again in class specific ways. On the one hand, the government provided three shillings and sixpence a week for the wife and children of each soldier who had been sent to fight in India. Although this allowance was more generous and more widely available than parish relief, it remained insufficient. A garrison chaplain from the Isle of Wight wrote in a letter to the *Times* that the wives of soldiers were supplementing this minimal allowance by knitting socks and selling them for sixpence a pair. As he said, 'It has been proved that soldiers' wives are not all worthless and idle; they can and will work...The eagerness of the women to obtain the work is excessive.'⁴⁰ On the other hand, middle and upper class women in Britain were often represented as philanthropic heroines, raising and administering relief funds not for the wives of soldiers 'at home,' but for the British women and children who had survived the fighting in India.

³⁹ Lord Portman, 3 December 1857, Hansard op. cit., Vol. CXLVIII, 17.

⁴⁰ Letter from W. F. Hobson in the *Times*, 14 August 1857.

In the nineteenth century, many middle and upper class women came to be increasingly involved in philanthropic work. Feminine discourses of moral and maternal virtue facilitated the activities of women not only within but also beyond the home through philanthropic organisations and fundraising activities: 'From their domestic citadel, women could make forays to spread that tenderness and purity, thought to be the essence of female character, through society.'⁴¹ The philanthropic work of women was represented as an extension of the domestic sphere, enabling leisured middle and upper class women to act individually and collectively in appropriately feminine ways beyond the home. But other commentators have suggested that such transgressions beyond the private sphere into more public areas of philanthropy and social policy could provide important channels for radical political activity by women.⁴² The pervasive Christian culture in the nineteenth century arguably meant that 'Christianity confirmed what nature decreed: women had a rightful and important place in the charitable world.'⁴³ For many women, philanthropic activities were legitimated as part of a Christian as well as a feminine mission that could extend beyond the home. But the philanthropic expression of Christian femininity was restricted to women of the leisured middle and upper classes who had sufficient time, inclination, and their own or their husband's money.⁴⁴ Such philanthropic work served to reinforce class disparities between those dispensing and those receiving aid by reinforcing a class hierarchy that highlighted 'the generosity of the rich and the inadequacies of the poor.'⁴⁵ In

⁴¹ F. K. Prochaska, Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980, 7

⁴² J. Rendall, 'Friendship and Politics: Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-91) and Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829-1925),' in S. Mendus and J. Rendall, eds., Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century, Routledge, London, 1989.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁴ Baroness Angela Burdett-Coutts was the prime example of an independently wealthy philanthropist in the nineteenth century. See E. Healey, Lady Unknown: The Life of Angela Burdett-Coutts, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1978 and C. B. Patterson, Angela Burdett-Coutts and the Victorians, John Murray, London, 1953, Chapter 9: Philanthropy.

⁴⁵ B. Harrison, 'Philanthropy and the Victorians,' Victorian Studies, 9, 1966, 353-374.

1857-1858, however, it was frequently stressed that the relief funds raised in India and in Britain during the 'mutiny' were designated to help *all* classes of British women and children in India. While middle and upper class women were largely responsible for raising relief funds, they did so to help all British sufferers in India. Although a clear class disparity existed between the work of soldiers' wives and the fundraising activities of leisured women in Britain, the recipients of relief in India were seen to cut across all ranks of British society. The victims of the 'mutiny' were clearly seen to include middle and upper class British women.

The *Times* reported that a relief committee had been established in India 'for the immediate relief of the many ladies and families of all classes known to be crowded in the different river steamers then on their way to Calcutta for refuge; nearly all were utterly destitute, without clothing or means of common support.'⁴⁶ The *Illustrated London News* similarly stressed that relief was available to all British women and children, describing 'the agonising privations and sufferings which had been, and which [it was] feared were still being, undergone by the wives, and widows, and children of all ranks in India, from the officers through all the various grades of society, down to the tradesmen and shopkeepers, who had lost their all in this terrible visitation.'⁴⁷ In Britain, although a committee to raise funds for victims of the 'mutiny' had been set up by the Lord Mayor of London, it was his wife, the Lady Mayoress, who came to be most prominently associated with its work. By September, 'several ladies' had formed district committees to collect funds under the presidency of the Lady Mayoress and had succeeded in raising £36,000.⁴⁸ Although the organisation of such relief funds involved 'ladies,' their supporters were located in all classes throughout the country: 'Everywhere, and among all

⁴⁶ *Times*, 26 August 1857.

⁴⁷ *Illustrated London News*, 29 August 1857.

⁴⁸ *Times*, 1 September 1857.

classes, the warmest sympathy for the sufferers, and indignation at the atrocity of the outrages, have been manifested.⁴⁹

Such representations of feminine philanthropy 'at home' provided a stark contrast to the more prevalent images of British women as victims of the 'mutiny' in India. Reports of their deaths and suffering represented the vulnerability of such women at the heart of an imperial conflict. In September, the *Illustrated London News* reported that

We hear with pain, but not perhaps with horror, of the deaths of our brave officers and soldiers slain by the mutineers, for it is the soldier's business to confront death in all its shapes; but when we read of the atrocities committed upon our women and children the heart of England is stirred; and the sorrow for their fate, great as it is, is overshadowed by the execration which we feel for their unmanly assassins, and by the grim determination that Justice, full and unwavering, shall be done upon them.⁵⁰

Representing British women as victims in the 'mutiny' served to legitimate masculine retaliation against their 'unmanly assassins.' The so-called 'heart of England' was effectively stirred by representing British women as displaced and dishonoured, enabling British vengeance to appear all the more virile in the face of Indian emasculation.⁵¹ Such representations of Indian emasculation revolved around discourses of honour. By committing 'atrocities' against British women, the masculine honour of Indian men was not only irrevocably disputed but also served to bolster the masculine honour of British men as the brave and gallant defenders of British women. Many accounts represented atrocities perpetrated against British women in lurid detail. A letter from an 'Anglo-Bengalee' printed in the *Times* stated that 'Our ladies have been dragged naked through the streets by the rabble of Delhi. Quiet ministers of the gospel have been

⁴⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 19 September 1857.

⁵⁰ *Illustrated London News*, 5 September 1857.

⁵¹ See M. Sinha, Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995, for further discussion.

murdered. Their daughters have been cut into snippets and sold piecemeal about the bazaar.⁵² The *Illustrated London News* painted 'a ghastly picture of rapine, murder, and loathsome cruelty worse than death'⁵³ while *Blackwoods Magazine* described 'Horrors, such as men have seldom perpetrated in cold blood, outrages on women and children, atrocities and cruelties devilish in their kind - murder, treachery, rapine, mutiny - have been the expression of their rebellion.'⁵⁴ As Jenny Sharpe has shown, other accounts invoked the ultimately unrepresentable rape of British women through hints and innuendoes.⁵⁵ By appearing to set the limits of representation such accounts could speculate about what existed beyond such limits, as shown by a report in the *Times* in August:

There are some acts of atrocity so abominable that they will not even bear narration....We cannot print these narratives - they are too foul for publication. We should have to speak of families murdered in cold blood - and murder was mercy! - of the violation of English ladies in the presence of their husbands, of their parents, of their children - and then, but not till then, of their assassination.⁵⁶

Sharpe argues that 'a discourse on rape...helped to manage the crisis in authority so crucial to colonial self-representation at the time.'⁵⁷ Through a focus on their 'deflowered' bodies,⁵⁸ representations of British women came to legitimate British retaliation and heroic vengeance. As the *Illustrated London News* asked,

⁵² *Times*, 8 August 1857.

⁵³ *Illustrated London News*, 22 August 1857.

⁵⁴ *Blackwoods Magazine*, December 1857.

⁵⁵ J. Sharpe, 'The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-Insurgency,' *Genders*, 10, 1991, 25-46, and Sharpe 1993 op. cit. Also see Paxton op. cit. for discussion of the fictional representation of British women as victims of the 'mutiny' in the years after 1858.

⁵⁶ *Times*, 6 August 1857.

⁵⁷ Sharpe 1993 op. cit., 67.

⁵⁸ *Times*, 8 August 1857.

what do those who cry out for mercy to such wretches say of the murder of helpless babes and unoffending women? and of the almost incredible indignities and cruelties committed upon English ladies - cruelties so horrible that their mere mention is almost an offence in itself?⁵⁹

Unlike Jenny Sharpe, I am focusing on the embodiment of imperial domesticity by British women rather than representations of the rape of British women both during the conflict and after 1858. As such, I am focusing on representations of British women as wives and mothers and images of domestic defilement at a time of conflict. Clearly, in many contemporaneous accounts, images of domestic defilement were epitomised by images of the rape of British wives and mothers. Sexual violence against women on an individual and a systemic level continues to be a feature of war,⁶⁰ and sexual violence against women, both in

⁵⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 8 August 1857.

⁶⁰ See, for example, C. Enloe, Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990, and J. J. Pettman, Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics, Routledge, London, 1996. As Pettman writes, 'Reports from Bosnia and Herzegovina estimate the numbers of women subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence is between 20,000 and 35,000.' Pettman, op. cit., 101. In 1993, a United Nations Security Council resolution was passed that established the first War Crimes Tribunal to investigate rape and sexual assault. This War Crimes Tribunal examined these crimes in the former Yugoslavia and was followed, in 1994, by another War Crimes Tribunal to investigate rape and sexual assault in Rwanda. But a number of legal problems limited the effectiveness of these tribunals. For example, a tribunal could only cover those offences that were already regarded as crimes, and, in 1992, rape and sexual assault were not counted as war crimes. Also, rape and sexual assault could not be classified as a Crime Against Humanity because this label refers to systemic and planned offences against sections of the civilian population rather than individuals. Since then, rape and sexual assault in the former Yugoslavia have been defined as part of genocide. C. Chinkin, 'War Crimes Tribunals - or, who would be a Woman,' paper at the Amnesty International Southampton Group Meeting, 10 March 1997. In light of the horrific levels and experiences of rape in war and peace, the materiality of rape seems a more important consideration than its metaphorical significance. A 'rape script' has been used to represent the processes and effects of imperial expansion and capitalist globalization, as discussed in Blunt and Rose, op. cit. and J.K. Gibson-Graham, The End of Capitalism (as we knew it): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996, Chapter 6. The term 'rape script' is from S. Marcus, 'Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention,' in J. Butler and J. Scott, eds., Feminists Theorize the Political, Routledge, London, 1992, 385-403. I agree with the caution expressed by Sara Suleri who writes

war and peace, often remains invisible, unreported, unwritten, or disbelieved. I am troubled by references in Sharpe and elsewhere⁶¹ to 'unsupported' accounts referring to the rape of British women in the 'mutiny', because such references echo discourses of doubt that persist not only historically but also today. Furthermore, Sharpe legitimates her discussion by stating that to doubt that British women were victims of sexual violence is to doubt that Indian women were similar victims: 'Upon characterizing the stories of sexual violence as fictions, I do not wish to suggest that no English woman was raped - that is, to perform the reverse of colonial accounts that denounce the rumors of British soldiers raping Indian women.'⁶² In Sharpe's account, it only appears to be legitimate to consider British women as victims of the 'mutiny' because Indian women were also victims. In contrast, I suggest that it is legitimate to focus on representations of the fate of British women during the 'mutiny' because such representations reveal the internal contradictions that can begin to destabilize and fracture imperial discourses of power, authority and knowledge. While I am not denying the horrific fate of many Indian women during the 'mutiny' and during British imperial rule in India over a longer time period, the purpose of this current study is to examine the ways in which British women discursively embodied imperial domesticity. During the 'mutiny,' representations of domestic defilement that were embodied by the fate of British women revealed the immediacy and the severity of the conflict that threatened not only British homes but also British rule in India.

In the 'mutiny,' imperial discourses of masculine vengeance revolved around domestic defilement and its embodiment by British women in India. But such discourses were not

that 'The geography of rape as a dominant trope for the act of imperialism...has been in currency for too long for it to remain at all critically liberating.' Suleri, *op. cit.*, 17. I would advocate a material rather than metaphorical discussion of rape, but I would resist the discourses of doubt perpetuated by Jenny Sharpe.

⁶¹ For example in S. Mills, 'Colonial Domestic Space,' paper presented at the Imperial Cities: Space, Landscape and Performance Conference, Royal Holloway, University of London, 3 May 1997.

⁶² Sharpe, 1993, *op. cit.*, 67.

uncontested. Turning to articles that appeared in two British journals that were addressed to a specifically female readership - the *Englishwoman's Review* and the *Lady's Newspaper* - I will consider divergent representations of British women as victims of the 'mutiny' that were addressed explicitly to British women at home. Women's periodicals, novels, and conduct books discursively produced and reproduced the appropriate behaviour and aspirations of bourgeois femininity. Two transformations in the history of such writings can be identified: the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century was marked by books constructing the ideal of a domestic woman, replacing courtesy literature that portrayed aristocratic behaviour as the ideal to which both men and women should aspire; then emerged, in the nineteenth century, a 'beauty system' whereby women came to be represented as objects requiring improvement to aspire to the ideals of bourgeois femininity.⁶³ From the late eighteenth century onwards, the rise of periodicals addressed to female readers provided influential arenas for the production and dissemination of bourgeois and feminine discourses that revolved around the appearance and behaviour of women. As Margaret Beetham suggests, 'Like the nineteenth century middle-class home, the woman's magazine evolved during the last century as a 'feminised space.'⁶⁴ Indeed, the rise of bourgeois feminine domesticity over the nineteenth century and the identification of reading as a leisured, private activity, meant that middle class women at home were increasingly targetted as readers of periodicals, conduct books, and novels. And yet the 'feminised space' of such magazines was inherently unstable and ambivalent. At the same time as asserting their female readership, such publications represented and repeated discourses of bourgeois femininity to which their readers were still aspiring: 'Throughout its history, the woman's magazine has defined its readers 'as women.' It has taken their gender as axiomatic. Yet that femininity is always represented in the magazines as fractured, not least because it is

⁶³ N. Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1985, and N. Armstrong and L. Tennenhouse, eds. *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays in Literature and the History of Sexuality*, Methuen, New York, 1987.

⁶⁴ M. Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914*, Routledge, London, 1996, 3.

simultaneously assumed as given and as still to be achieved.⁶⁵ Just as the capitalist rise of print media helped to bind a national 'imagined community',⁶⁶ so the rise of publications specifically addressed to women helped to bind an 'imagined community' of middle class female readers. As divergent representations of British women in India during the 'mutiny' suggest, such an imagined community, gendered subjectivity, and the 'feminised space' of women's periodicals were all fractured, unstable, and ambivalent.

Building on her erroneous assumption that the *Englishwoman's Review* was 'the only women's newspaper published at that time',⁶⁷ Vron Ware develops an argument that serves to essentialize representations of British women in the 'mutiny' for women readers in Britain. By comparing reports in the *Englishwoman's Review* with those published in the *Lady's Newspaper*, I suggest that such representations both of and for British women were more complex and ambivalent than Ware suggests. The *Englishwoman's Review (and Drawing Room Journal of Social Progress, Literature and Art)* was published from 1857 to 1859 and was, according to Beetham, a 'proto-feminist' journal that sought 'to address the women of England from the women's point of view'.⁶⁸ Although it identified the lack of occupation for middle class women as a pressing social problem, the *Englishwoman's Review* refused 'to prate of women's rights,' and rather redefined 'rights' and 'occupation' in more feminised terms as 'usefulness and kindness'.⁶⁹ Unlike the *Englishwoman's Journal*, which was published from 1858 until 1864 and addressed women's rights in the law, education, and employment, the *Englishwoman's Review* covered political news only to the extent that women could shed their feminine 'softening

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁶⁶ Anderson, op. cit..

⁶⁷ Ware, op. cit., p.39.

⁶⁸ *Englishwoman's Review*, 1, 1857, cited by Beetham, op. cit..

⁶⁹ Ibid..

influence.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the resolutely bourgeois character of the *Englishwoman's Review* was reflected by its refusal to publicise more aristocratic interests such as fashion and the London Season.

In August 1857, the *Englishwoman's Review* reported that 'The details of the sufferings and barbarities endured by English women and children almost surpass imagination, foul and cruel murder not being the worst of the evils inflicted upon the helpless victims in the various stations of the Bengal presidency.'⁷¹ As Ware writes,

the paper adopted the tone of the aggrieved victim, giving full encouragement to the brave men who survived to avenge their sex. Accounts of dead children, of rooms filled with blood, matted hair, mangled toys, rotting clothes, would all have had a particular impact in the pages of a woman's paper which aimed to reinforce the conventional female role in the domestic sphere.⁷²

In its coverage of female victims in the 'mutiny' and its calls to avenge their suffering, articles in the *Englishwoman's Review* closely resembled those that appeared in more mainstream newspapers with largely male readers such as the *Times* and the *Illustrated London News*. But, at the same time, another newspaper that was addressed to female readers interpreted events in India in markedly different ways. Although the *Lady's Newspaper* reflected the same domestic concerns as the *Englishwoman's Review*, its interpretation of events in India was very different. Unlike the *Englishwoman's Review*, the extensive coverage of the 'mutiny' in the *Lady's*

⁷⁰ Beetham, op. cit.. Also see Burton 1994, op. cit., and J. Rendall, 'A Moral Engine? Feminism, Liberalism and the *Englishwoman's Journal*,' in J. Rendall, ed., Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914, Blackwell, Oxford, 1987, 112-170, for further discussion. The *Englishwoman's Journal* merged with the *Alexandra Magazine* and, from 1866 until 1910, was known as a second *Englishwoman's Review*. These periodicals were associated with the middle class, liberal feminism of the 'Langham Place Circle.' Beetham, op. cit..

⁷¹ *Englishwoman's Review*, 8 August 1857.

⁷² Ware, op. cit., 40.

Newspaper included several vehement protests *against* 'the war cry' "'For the Ladies and the Babies!'"⁷³

The *Lady's Newspaper and Pictorial Times* was published from 1847 until it merged with the *Queen* in 1863. Its diverse contents included weekly embroidery patterns, fashion plates, and fiction, alongside home and international news and editorials: 'Fashion, the Work-Table, Festive Meetings, Striking Events, the Court and Fashionable Assemblies and a consecutive novel of interest...all the great interests of society [including] Emigration and the Amelioration of the poor...the best in Art, Science and Literature.'⁷⁴ But its coverage of the 'mutiny' came to eclipse all other stories in the *Lady's Newspaper* in 1857 because 'Every other matter is just now of secondary importance. The magnitude of the atrocities and the immensity of the stake have united to secure the public mind, and it is satisfied only with what has reference to the great rebellion.'⁷⁵ In August, the *Lady's Newspaper* pleaded that

If there is a political necessity for wholesale butchery, let it not be done in the name of woman; if the women and the children of our country have been the victims of the heathen, it is not so we would have them avenged; if we cannot raise these barbarians to our own light, let us not sink into their darkness; if we sicken with horror at their atrocities, let us not follow in their blood-stained footsteps.⁷⁶

Both the *Englishwoman's Review* and the *Lady's Newspaper* supported the reassertion of British rule in India and both did so by focusing on the place of British women away from home. The *Englishwoman's Review* followed the lead of other newspapers in its calls for heroic vengeance for the fate of British women. In the context of masculine discourses of honour, heroism, and revenge, the prestige of the British army and its success in reestablishing British rule were

⁷³ *Lady's Newspaper*, 29 August 1857.

⁷⁴ *Lady's Newspaper*, 1851, cited by Beetham, op. cit., 91.

⁷⁵ *Lady's Newspaper*, 19 September 1857.

⁷⁶ *Lady's Newspaper*, 29 August 1857.

inextricably linked to its ability either to protect or to avenge British women. But in contrast, the *Lady's Newspaper* argued that mercy rather than vengeance should guide attempts to reassert British rule in India.

The *Lady's Newspaper* framed its arguments for mercy in terms of racial differences between the British and Indians and in terms of gender differences between British men and women. In August, it stated that 'We are wrong in judging these dusky children of the sun by the same rules that would be just and right with home communities. We are a Christian, they are a heathen, nation.'⁷⁷ In these terms, the *Lady's Newspaper* supported its claims for the superiority and enlightened nature of British rule and its desire for Christian mercy rather than 'heathen' vengeance to guide the reestablishment of such rule. Moreover, the *Lady's Newspaper* called upon the moral influence of British women in terms that both reflected and also reproduced discourses of bourgeois, Christian femininity. As the *Lady's Newspaper* stated,

Especially let every woman use the privilege of her gentle but resistless influence in both asking and claiming mercy for these perishing people, to save them from the trampling down of the hoofs of vengeance...[L]et the voice of woman's pity penetrate wherever father, brother, husband, son, or relative may wield a weapon in this warfare, and let the word that it carries be 'Mercy, and not Vengeance!'⁷⁸

Here, the moral influence of British women is simultaneously 'gentle' but strong, and is most effectively exerted in their familial, domestic relations. Just as nineteenth century philanthropic work has been interpreted as an extension of the domestic, familial sphere, so the *Lady's Newspaper* identified philanthropic work as an appropriate channel for expressing the moral, merciful influence of British women:

A committee of ladies, those invaluable agents of mercy, are ready to administer such earthly comforts as the unfortunate sufferers may require. Of course the Lady

⁷⁷ Ibid..

⁷⁸ Ibid..

Mayoress is as the head of this committee. The service rendered by this lady cannot be too highly eulogized: she is at home what Miss Nightingale was abroad.⁷⁹

Both in their familial, domestic sphere, and through the philanthropic extension of this sphere, the female readers of the *Lady's Newspaper* were positioned as Christian, feminine, and bourgeois 'agents of mercy' and moral responsibility. By October, the *Lady's Newspaper* reflected that:

We believe that our Journal was the first to lift up an imploring, a protesting voice against the wild, passionate, indignant clamour of the nation for an overwhelming retribution. We assume no merit in the act, for it was simply natural that women, especially the women of England, to whose heart the sorrow comes the nearest, should intercede to stay the fury of the Avenger. Happily, victory has not been given to our arms in India until we have had time for our passions so to cool that we may use it with an equitable moderation.⁸⁰

Christian mercy is represented in explicitly feminine terms as a 'natural' characteristic of women. The calm, pity, and compassion apparently displayed by British women clearly contrasts with the passion and fury of their male avengers.

Although the *Lady's Newspaper* condemned calls for vengeance in the name of British women and children, it fully supported the reassertion of British rule in India. However, unlike the *Englishwoman's Review*, the *Times*, and the *Illustrated London News*, the *Lady's Newspaper* asserted that British imperial rule should not be regained at the expense both of the moral superiority of Britain as a Christian nation and of the moral influence of British women more

⁷⁹ *Lady's Newspaper*, 3 October 1857. The following week, the *Times* reported that the Lady Mayoress had travelled to Southampton 'for the purpose of searching out any cases of distress that might exist among the passengers, and administering relief to them with her own hand.' *Times*, 8 October 1857. For an account of the ideological significance of popular perceptions of Florence Nightingale in the nineteenth century, see Chapter 6 in M. Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988.

⁸⁰ *Lady's Newspaper*, 17 October, 1857.

specifically. But by October 1857, the *Lady's Newspaper* reported the fall of Delhi as a source of feminine as well as national pride:

There is something in that fact that stirs even the heart of woman; for who glories so highly in the national honour, whose heart burns so warmly at the telling of noble deeds, as those of the wives, the mothers, the countrywomen of the heroes who have done them?⁸¹

The *Lady's Newspaper* represented its readers and other British women as moral guardians of familial, national, and imperial honour. Through its coverage of the 'mutiny,' discourses of moral influence shaped the newspaper's representations of bourgeois, Christian femininity. The British women readers of the *Lady's Newspaper* were positioned as exercising a Christian moral influence both on a domestic and an imperial scale. Not only did the domestic, familial sphere of middle class women extend beyond the home to include philanthropic work, but it also extended across imperial space to influence the conduct of soldiers and officers in the 'mutiny.' While the *Englishwoman's Review* followed other newspapers in its calls for vengeance against the deaths and suffering of British women in India, the *Lady's Newspaper* argued for feminine mercy rather than masculine vengeance. While the *Englishwoman's Review* cited the fate of British women to legitimate vengeance against Indian insurgents, the *Lady's Newspaper* contended that such vengeance would compromise the Christian integrity of British imperial rule. Representations of the 'mutiny' in terms of domestic defilement and its embodiment by British women were common across newspapers addressed both to male and female readers. But as the divergent interpretations of the *Englishwoman's Review* and the *Lady's Newspaper* suggest, the material effects of such representations were contested. Despite their different interpretations of domestic defilement and its embodiment by British women in India, both the *Englishwoman's Review* and the *Lady's Newspaper* were united with other newspapers in their attempt to maintain and to bolster the inviolability both of British women and of British imperialism in India.

⁸¹ *Lady's Newspaper*, 31 October, 1857.

British Women at Cawnpore

In the mid nineteenth century, most of the British population at Cawnpore lived in cantonments that spread for six miles along the River Ganges, as shown in Figure 4. In these cantonments,

Hundreds of bungalows, the residences of the officers, stand in the midst of gardens, and these interspersed with forest trees, the barracks of the troops, with a separate bazaar for each regiment, and the canvas town of the tented regiments...On the highest ground in the cantonments stand the church and the assembly rooms, in another part a theatre, in which amateur performances were occasionally given, and a cafe supported by public subscription. In the officers' gardens, which were among the best in India, most kinds of European vegetables thrived.⁸²

In April 1857 Louise Chalwin, the wife of a veterinary surgeon in the 2nd Bengal Light Cavalry, wrote to her sister that 'I find the society in this station very pleasant and sociable,'⁸³ and described balls and dinners, and the social success of her unmarried friend Isabel White who, at the last ball, 'might have had three or four partners for every dance, and all the best in the room.'⁸⁴

⁸² M. Thomson, The Story of Cawnpore, Richard Bentley, London, 1859. Captain Mowbray Thomson wrote that he and Lieutenant Delafosse were the two male survivors of Cawnpore, who, together with two soldiers who subsequently died, had escaped by boat on June 27.

⁸³ Letter from Louise Chalwin to her sister Maria, 11 April 1857. MSS.Eur.B.344, India Office Library.

⁸⁴ Letter from Louise Chalwin to her sister Maria, 30 April 1857. Louise Chalwin and Isobel White had been friends in Taunton, Somerset, and travelled to India together in 1855.

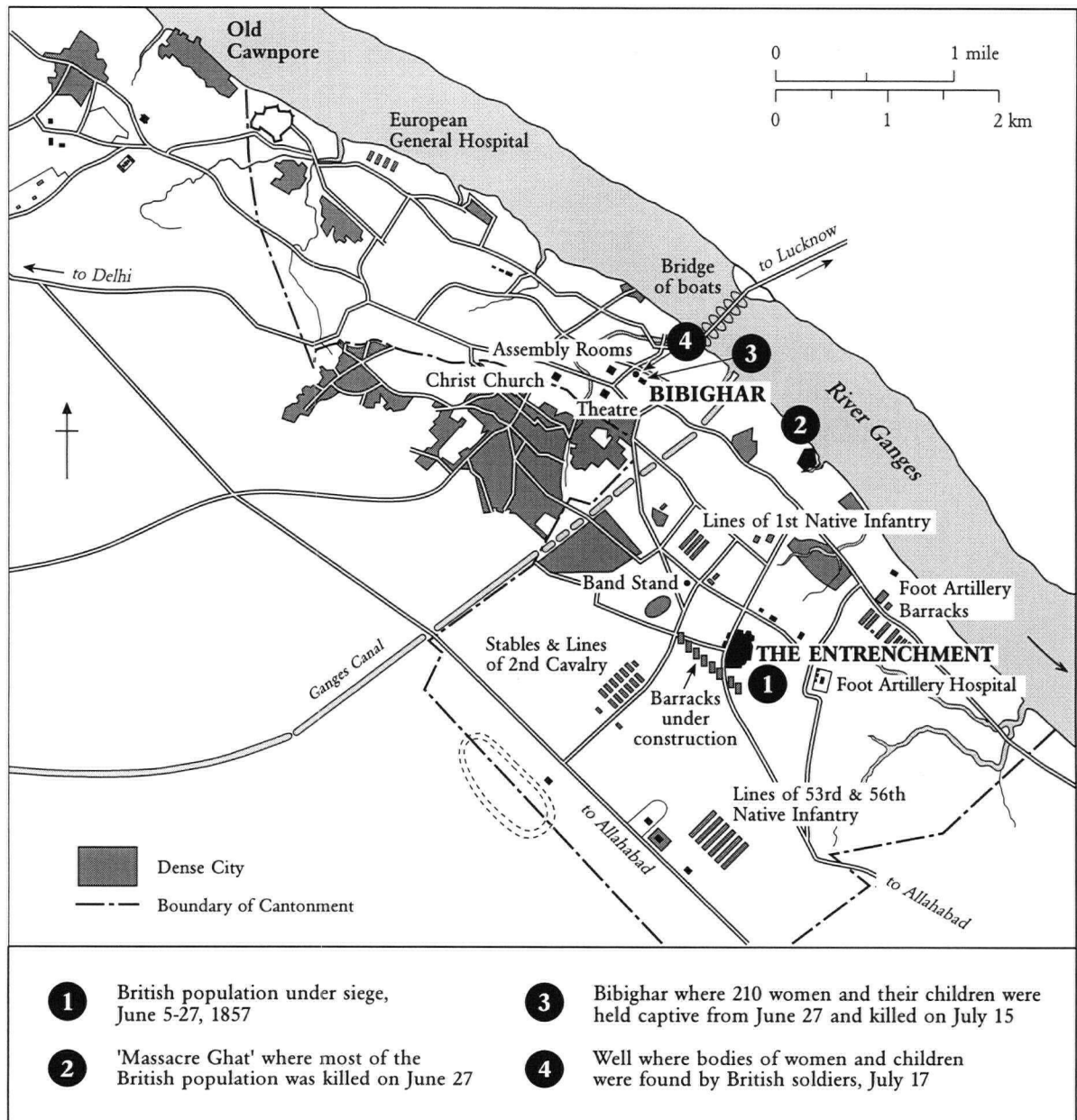


Figure 4: Map of Cawnpore, 1857

Source: G. Trevelyan, Cawnpore, Macmillan & Co., London, 1886, 2nd edition

Visiting Cawnpore after the 'mutiny,' William Howard Russell found it impossible to imagine the 'exaggerated relief of an English garrison-town and watering-place' that had been characterized by

The solemn etiquette, the visits to dinner, the white kid-gloves, the balls, the liveries...the millinery anxieties of the ladies, the ices, and Champagne, and supper...The little and big flirtations, the drives on the road - a dull, ceremonious pleasure - the faded fun of the private theatricals, the exotic absurdities of the masonic revels, the marryings and givings in marriage...the sense of security.⁸⁵

But the British sense of both domestic and imperial security at Cawnpore was shattered in June 1857.

Following the mutiny of the 2nd Cavalry regiment at Cawnpore on June 5, the British population lived under siege in entrenchments for three weeks under the command of General Wheeler. After accepting terms of release, most of this population was killed on June 27 at the River Ganges. The surviving 210 women and their children were kept as prisoners until July 15 when, because of the approach of the British army, they were also killed.⁸⁶ Representations of the fate of British women and children as victims of the 'mutiny' reached their peak in accounts of events at Cawnpore.

⁸⁵ Russell, op. cit., 36.

⁸⁶ Nineteenth century accounts of events at Cawnpore include J. Shepherd, A Personal Narrative of the Outbreak and Massacre at Cawnpore, during the Sepoy Revolt of 1857, Methodist Publishing House, Lucknow, 1894 (4th edition), Thomson, op. cit., and G. Trevelyan, Cawnpore, Macmillan, London, 1886 (2nd edition). For a more recent debate, see R. Mukherjee, 'Satan let loose upon Earth': The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857,' Past and Present 128, 1990, 92-116, B. English, 'Debate: The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857,' Past and Present, 142, 1994, 169-178, and Mukherjee's reply 178-189. Also see A. Ward, Our Bones are Scattered: The Cawnpore Massacres in the Indian Mutiny of 1857, John Murray, London, 1996.

In the middle of August, Earl Granville rose in Parliament to dismiss rumours of 'a dreadful massacre' at Cawnpore as a fabrication.⁸⁷ By the first week of September, however, such rumours had been confirmed and news of events at Cawnpore had come to dominate newspaper reports about the 'mutiny.' Such reports focused on the deaths of British women on the orders of Nana Sahib, who was represented in dehumanized and often demonic terms.⁸⁸ So, for example, the *Illustrated London News* reported that

in the annals of infamy the name of Nana Sahib will for the future stand conspicuous as that of the most ruthless and treacherous scoundrel who ever disgraced humanity. The murder of the garrison of Cawnpore, and of the wives and children of the English who had the misfortune to rely upon the word of this person, is, perhaps, the most melancholy episode in the rebellion.⁸⁹

Other newspaper accounts represented the Nana Sahib in more explicitly bestial and demonic terms. For example, he was described as a 'fiend'⁹⁰ and the *Lady's Newspaper* described the Nana Sahib and other rebels at Cawnpore as 'dastardly sleuth-hounds' and went on to ask 'Are the fiends who can coolly perpetrate such atrocities human?'⁹¹

However, at this stage, reports of events at Cawnpore were still based more on rumour than on first hand information. For example, the *Illustrated London News* speculated on three scenarios: that all British residents of Cawnpore had been killed at the same time; that British women and children had been sold 'by public auction' and had been subjected to 'the highest

⁸⁷ Earl Granville, 14 August 1857, Hansard op. cit., Vol. CXLVII, 1624.

⁸⁸ The popularity of such representations was not confined to newspapers. Metcalf cites Trevelyan when he writes that 'Even at home...a favourite amusement on a wet afternoon for a party in a country house was to sit on and about the billiard table devising tortures for the Nana,' Metcalf op. cit., 290.

⁸⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 5 September 1857.

⁹⁰ *Englishwoman's Review* and *Illustrated London News*, 19 and 26 September 1857.

⁹¹ *Lady's Newspaper*, 19 September 1857. See Sharpe op. cit. 1993 for further discussion of the implications of such dehumanization.

indignities' before being killed; or that they were being held prisoner.⁹² As the British soldiers who entered Cawnpore on 17 July discovered, the last of these scenarios had been closest to the truth. Letters home and other eyewitness accounts by several of these soldiers were printed in British newspapers and came to represent the fate of British women and children at Cawnpore in vivid detail to a wide audience. The apparent authenticity and immediacy of such eyewitness accounts centred on the fate of British women at Cawnpore. In many ways, representations of British women at Cawnpore came to embody the severity and immediacy of the threat to British rule in India. Such representations were inseparable from often detailed written and visual images of the Bibighar - or 'House of the Ladies'⁹³ - where British women had been held prisoner and died.

Because they were based on the direct observation of eye-witnesses, an increasing number of newspaper reports and illustrations gained authority and legitimacy in their representations of the Bibighar.⁹⁴ Such eye-witness observations were often recorded by British officers and soldiers who had reached Cawnpore the day after the remaining British women and children had been killed. The same officers and soldiers then fought their way to Lucknow, and came to be identified as the first 'relief' of Lucknow in September. While their accounts vividly represented the fate of British women and children to the British public, and resulted in subsequent calls for vengeance, the eye-witnesses themselves had already enacted their own

⁹² *Illustrated London News*, 5 September 1857.

⁹³ As Sherer wrote, 'this appellation does not mean the "ladies' house" as indicating the spot where the ladies were killed; the building had the name previous to the Mutiny. It was understood to have been a dwelling provided by a European for his Indian mistress.' J. W. Sherer, Daily Life During the Indian Mutiny: Personal Experiences of 1857, Legend Publications, Allahabad, 1910, 78. The building also came to be known as 'the Slaughter House.'

⁹⁴ Parallels, and differences, clearly exist with the status of scientific knowledge acquired through direct observation, often 'in the field.' However, representations of the fate of British women in the Bibighar were more vivid, impassioned, and have been interpreted as sensationalist, unlike the detached objectivity often assumed to buttress scientific credibility. See Rose, *op. cit.*, for further discussion.

revenge before their writings and drawings were reproduced in India and Britain. At this stage, before the arrival of the *Times* correspondent William Howard Russell in 1858, the reporters of the conflict were those men who were most closely embroiled within it. Written and visual representations of the Bibighar were inseparable from subsequent punishment and brutality inflicted on Indians both at Cawnpore and elsewhere during the 'mutiny.' Although the first soldiers and officers to reach Cawnpore saw the bodies of British women and children, later eye-witnesses were only able to view the room where they were held captive and killed. While the fate of British women and children continued to be made vividly clear, the evidence of this fate was increasingly sought in the Bibighar as a site of domestic defilement. The limits of representation meant that British women were imagined in their violent absence from the Bibighar.

The first British soldiers to arrive in Cawnpore found the bodies of British women and children in a well. As one soldier wrote, 'I saw it, and it was an awful sight. It appears from the bodies we saw, that the women were stripped of their clothes before they were murdered.'⁹⁵ Another soldier described the same scene in more graphic terms, writing that 'the [women] having been stripped naked, beheaded, and thrown into a well; the [children] having been hurled down alive upon their butchered mothers, whose blood yet reeked on their mangled bodies.'⁹⁶ Such horrific images of blood, butchery, and dismemberment came to dominate other accounts not only of the well but also of the Bibighar. Looking down the well confirmed the view of another soldier that 'the women were so ill-treated that death, even such a death, must have been very welcome to them.'⁹⁷ Following the suppression of the 'mutiny,' an investigation into events at Cawnpore considered the veracity of widespread claims that British women had been raped before they were killed. Colonel Williams, Commissioner of Police in the North Western

⁹⁵ *Englishwoman's Review*, 19 September 1857.

⁹⁶ *Illustrated London News* and *Lady's Newspaper* 19 September 1857.

⁹⁷ *Illustrated London News* and *Englishwoman's Review*, 26 September 1857.

Provinces, interviewed sixty three witnesses and concluded that 'The most searching and earnest inquiries totally disprove the unfounded assumption that at first was so frequently made and so currently believed, that personal indignity and dishonour were offered to our poor suffering countrywomen.'⁹⁸ In his widely printed account of events at Cawnpore, Nujoor Jewarree, a spy in the 1st Native Infantry, answered the question 'Were any of our women dishonoured by the Nana or his people?' in the following way:

None that I know of, excepting in the case of General Wheeler's youngest daughter, and about this I am not certain...As they were taking the mem-Sahibs out of the boat a sowar (cavalry man) took her away with him to his house. She went quietly, but at night she rose and got hold of the sowar's sword. He was asleep; his wife, his son, and his mother-in-law were sleeping in the house with him. She killed them all with the sword, and then she went and threw herself down the well behind the house.⁹⁹

Stories about Judith Wheeler had been circulating since September, when, for example, the *Englishwoman's Review* printed and emphasized in italics the heroic account that 'Miss Wheeler, the daughter of Sir Henry Wheeler, they say, killed five of these fiends with a revolver before they could get near her.'¹⁰⁰ As Jenny Sharpe has shown, myths of Judith Wheeler centred on her feminine and moral virtue as she defended her honour to the point of death.¹⁰¹ Her feminine and moral strength was enhanced rather than undermined by killing several Indians before killing herself. Moreover, by being represented as throwing herself down a well, her death came not only to reflect but also to avenge the deaths of other British women at Cawnpore in the name of feminine honour and moral fortitude.

⁹⁸ Quoted in G. W. Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny*, Volume 1, Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh, 1904, xi, and Shepherd, op. cit., 158.

⁹⁹ *Illustrated London News* and *Englishwoman's Review*, 10 October 1857.

¹⁰⁰ *Englishwoman's Review*, 19 September 1857. This was also printed - but not in italics - in other newspapers, such as the *Illustrated London News*.

¹⁰¹ Sharpe 1993 op. cit. As Sharpe also shows, popular stories about Judith Wheeler often cited conflicting evidence, and the veracity of such stories came to be questioned by, for example, Trevelyan.

The infamous well was soon covered and made into a grave for the British women and children who had died at Cawnpore.¹⁰² Rather than describe the bodies of British women and their children, eyewitness accounts came instead to focus on the place where they had been imprisoned and died, describing its location, design, and interior in great detail. An account published in September, for example, recorded that

I have been to see the place where the poor women and children were imprisoned and afterwards butchered. It is a small bungalow close to the road. There were all sorts of articles of women and children's clothing, ladies' hair evidently cut off with a sword, back combs &c. There were also parts of religious books. Where the massacre took place it is covered with blood like a butcher's slaughter house.¹⁰³

The details of this description were both reinforced and extended by an account published in October:

I have seen the fearful slaughter-house...The quantities of dresses, clogged thickly with blood, children's frocks, frills, and ladies' under-clothing of all kinds, also boys' trousers, leaves of Bibles, and of one book in particular which seems to have been strewn over the whole place, called 'Preparation for Death;' also broken daguerreotype cases only, lots of them, and hair, some nearly a yard long; bonnets all bloody, and one or two shoes.¹⁰⁴

The remnants and relics described and often collected by British soldiers visiting the Bibighar memorialised both the loss and the Christian femininity of British women who had been killed at Cawnpore. Moreover, descriptions of their hair and blood represented the fate of British women and children in viscerally embodied ways.

¹⁰² *The Englishwoman's Review*, for example, printed a letter on 3 October 1857 written by General Neill in which he wrote that 'The well of mutilated bodies - alas! containing upwards of two hundred women and children - I have had decently covered in and built up as one large grave.'

¹⁰³ *Illustrated London News and Englishwoman's Review*, 26 September 1857.

¹⁰⁴ *Illustrated London News and Englishwoman's Review*, 10 October 1857.

While the bodies of British women were inscribed as victims of the 'mutiny,' the place where they died was inscribed to resemble both a shrine and a museum that was visited and continually re-inscribed by British soldiers as they fought their way towards Lucknow. The re-inscription of the Bibighar took literal forms, with British soldiers writing on the walls. There was considerable speculation at the time that the British women imprisoned in the Bibighar had themselves written on the walls, but, as William Howard Russell stressed in his diary in February 1858:

One fact is clearly established; that the writing behind the door, on the walls of the slaughter-house, on which so much stress was laid in Calcutta, did not exist when Havelock entered the place, and therefore was not the work of any of the poor victims. It has excited many men to fury - the cry has gone all over India. It has been scratched on the wall of Wheeler's entrenchment, and on the walls of many bungalows. God knows the horrors and atrocity of the pitiless slaughter needed no aggravation.¹⁰⁵

The Bibighar, and the relics and writings found inside, incited British soldiers to new levels of brutal retaliation and punishment. While representations of the fate of British women in India had fuelled public demands for vengeance long before events at Cawnpore had become known, such demands were exacerbated by the graphic detail contained in eyewitness accounts. In a similar way, the brutality of British soldiers had already reached extreme levels before events at Cawnpore had become known, but was further exacerbated by visiting or imagining the Bibighar. As the *Englishwoman's Review* reported in September 1857, 'No power on earth can resist the fury of their charge, and they give no quarter.'¹⁰⁶ More specifically, the punishments devised by General Neill at Cawnpore plumbed new, notorious depths of cruelty. As the *Illustrated London News* reported in September,

¹⁰⁵ Russell, op. cit., 35.

¹⁰⁶ *Englishwoman's Review*, 19 September 1857.

General Neill was compelling all the high-caste Brahmins whom he could capture...to collect the bloody clothes of the victims, and wash up the blood from the floor, a European soldier standing over each with a 'cat,' and administering it with vigour...The wretches, having been subjected to this degradation, which includes loss of caste, are then hanged, one after another. The punishment is said to be General Neill's own invention, and its infliction has gained him great credit.¹⁰⁷

The Bibighar was the object of visual as well as textual representations. Again, British women as victims at Cawnpore were imagined only through their violent absence, as shown by the engraving of the exterior of the Bibighar that was published in the *Illustrated London News* in January 1858 (Plate 5) and the illustration that appeared in Forrest's history of the 'mutiny' (Plate 6). An engraving in the *Bengal Hurkaru* depicted the interior of the Bibighar and featured a British soldier gazing upon blood-stained walls, hats, bibles, and shoes (Plate 7). To reinforce the violent absence of British women from the scene, a caption accompanying the engraving stated that 'The floors were slippery with blood and the walls daubed with it. The courtyard was soaking, and in dragging the bodies across it the sand and blood had formed a sort of red paste.'¹⁰⁸ This, and the similar illustration by Sir Richard Sawkey (Plate 8), depicted British soldiers in the Bibighar. By placing British soldiers rather than British victims in the Bibighar, such images helped to reclaim and reinscribe a space that had been desecrated in the eyes of imperial rulers and had arguably housed the desecration of imperial rule.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ *Illustrated London News*, 26 September 1857. See Hibbert, op. cit., for further discussion.

¹⁰⁸ *Bengal Hurkaru*, 25 November 1857.

¹⁰⁹ For similar visual representations of the Bibighar, see C. W. Crump, A Pictorial Record of the Cawnpore Massacre: Three Original Sketches Taken on the Spot, Henry Graves and Co., London, 1858, and T. Moore, Cawnpore and Lucknow During the Mutiny of 1857-8: Diary, Sketches, Photographs and Plans, Additional Papers 37151, British Library, the Maps and Plans accompanying Moore's Diary, Additional Papers 37152 British Library, and Twenty-Six Coloured Views accompanying Moore's Diary, Additional Papers 37153 British Library.

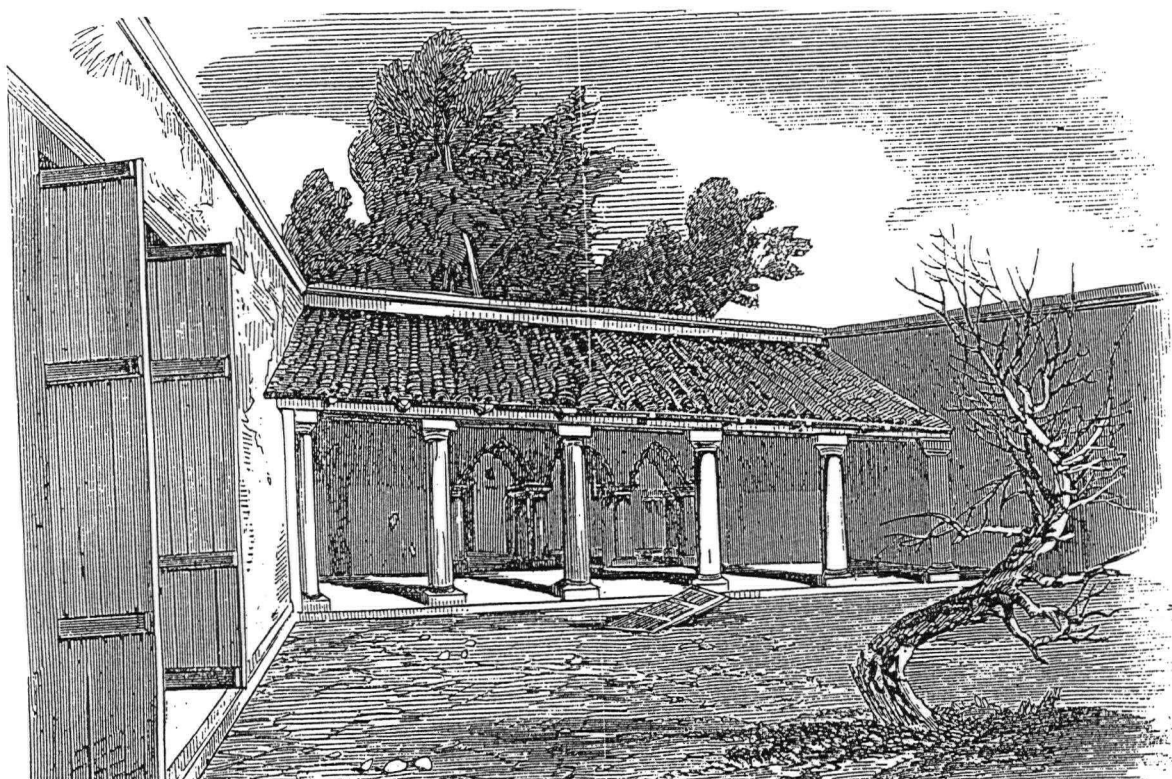


Plate 5: Exterior of the Bibighar, Cawnpore, 1858

Source: *Illustrated London News*, 23 January 1858.

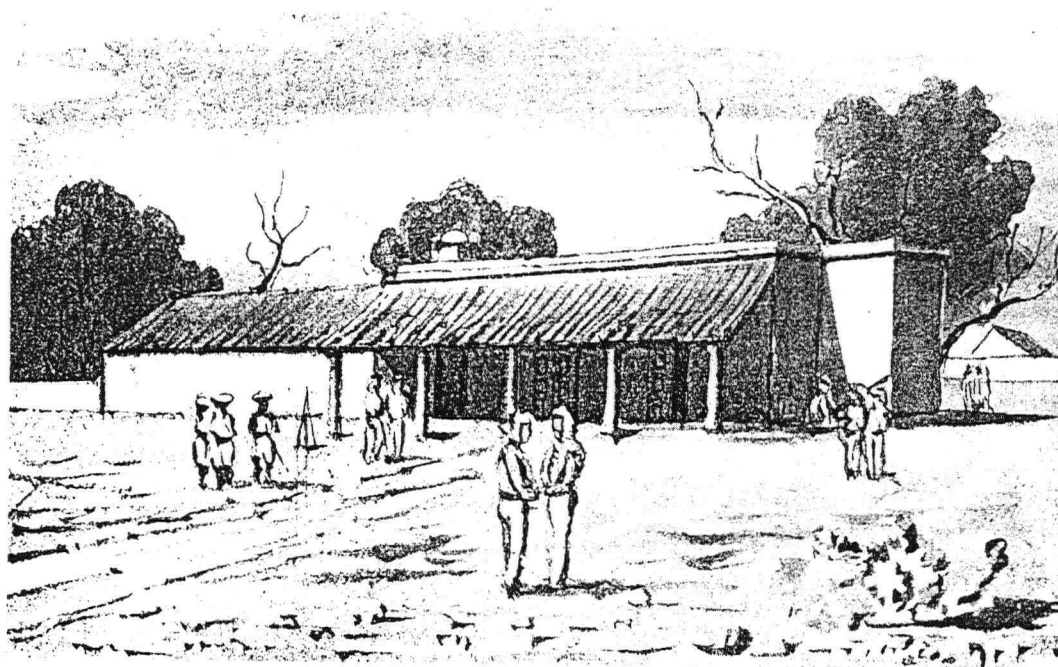


Plate 6: Exterior of the Bibighar, Cawnpore, during the 'Mutiny.'

Source: Forrest, op. cit., 476.

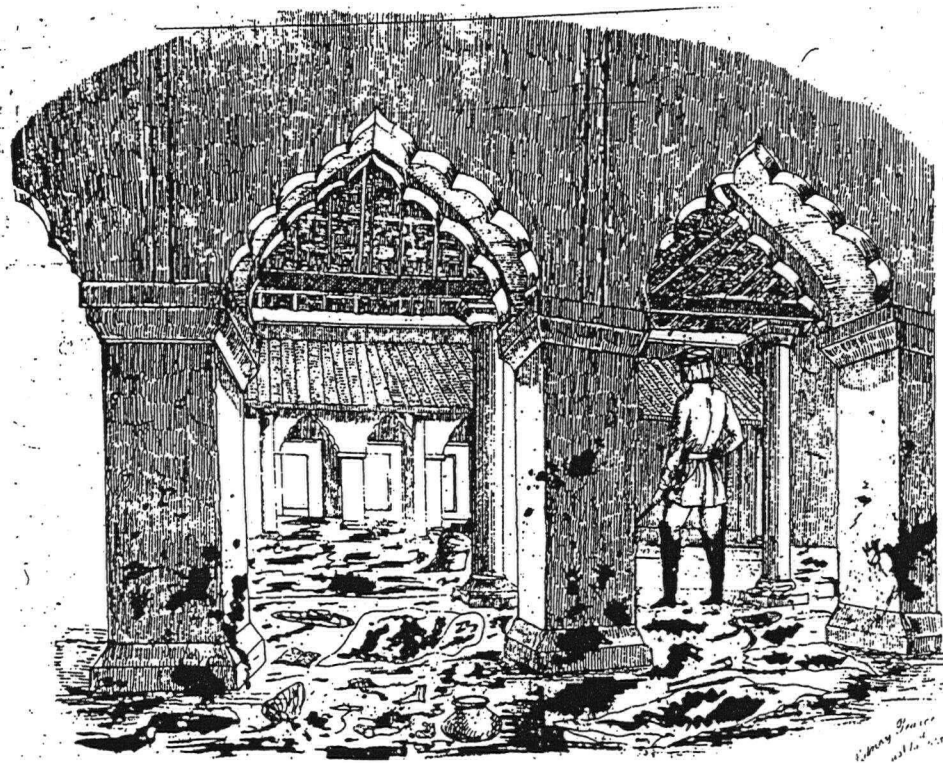


Plate 7: Interior of the Bibighar, Cawnpore, 1857.

Source: *Bengal Hurkaru*, 25 November 1857.

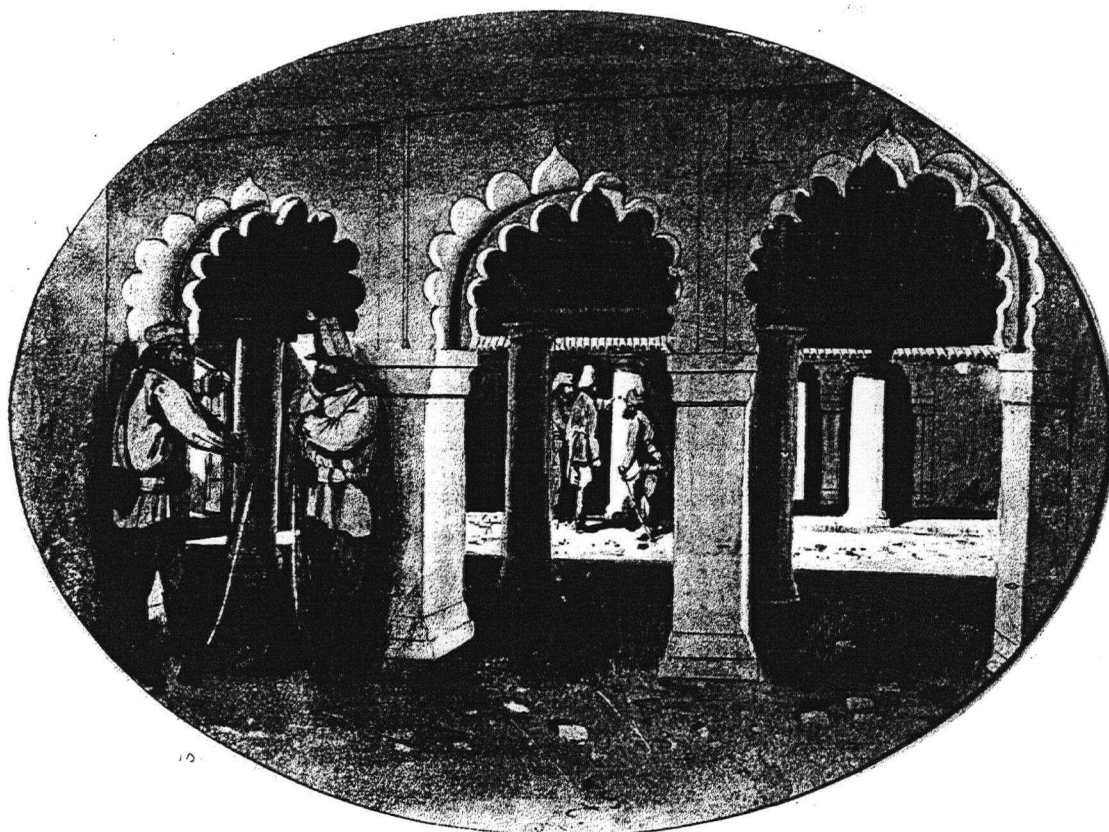


Plate 8: Interior of the Bibighar, Cawnpore, during the 'mutiny.'

Source: Illustration by Sir Richard Sawkey, WD 133, India Office Library.

The absence of British women from images of the Bibighar suggest the visual as well as textual limits of representing their fate. Such limits of representation were breached by a painting exhibited at the Royal Academy in the summer of 1858, which caused a public outcry because of its content and its public display. A number of paintings in the summer exhibition took as their subject the recently suppressed 'mutiny,' and paintings by Edward Armitage, Edgar George Papworth, Joseph Noel Paton, and Abraham Solomon reflected popular interest that continued to focus on the place of British women in the 'mutiny.'¹¹⁰ One of these paintings - 'In Memoriam' by Joseph Noel Paton - depicted British women, children, and an Indian nurse or ayah at Cawnpore as they were approached by an armed sepoy. The *Illustrated Times* described 'the ferocity glaring in the eye, and bristling in the beard, of that advancing sepoy, with his blood-spotted legs, and his clenched musket.'¹¹¹ In contrast, the calm expression of the white woman in the centre of the painting was seen to represent 'more than Roman virtue,' 'Christian resignation,' and 'Christian fearlessness even in the very shadow of death.'¹¹² However, to represent British women at Cawnpore was to represent their imminent death to British viewers. The painting came to be known as 'The Massacre at Cawnpore,' and the *Illustrated London News* bitterly condemned its content and its display, describing to its readers that 'There, in that miserable murder hole, crouch the helpless English women and children of Cawnpore. Terror, anguish, despair on every face...The subject is too revolting for further description...The picture is one which ought not to have been hung.'¹¹³ In response to the controversy that 'In Memoriam' had caused, Paton changed the title and subject of the painting. Crucially, Paton moved its location away from the unrepresentable fate of British women at Cawnpore to the rescue of

¹¹⁰ P. Harrington, 1993, British Artists and War: The Face of Battle in Paintings and Prints, 1700-1914, Greenhill Books, London.

¹¹¹ *Illustrated Times* 8 May 1858 cited by Harrington op. cit.

¹¹² *The Art Journal*, 1858, and the *Times* 1 and 22 May 1858, cited by Harrington op. cit.

¹¹³ *Illustrated London News*, 15 May 1858, cited by Harrington op. cit. Indeed, as Harrington also writes, the Hanging Committee at the Royal Academy had debated whether to exhibit the painting.

British women at Lucknow. He painted kilted Highlanders over the figures of the advancing sepoys, and retitled the picture 'In Memoriam: Henry Havelock' (Plate 9).¹¹⁴ Furthermore the engraving made of the revised painting in 1859 was 'Designed to Commemorate the Christian Heroism of the British Ladies in India during the Mutiny of 1857.'¹¹⁵ While representations of British women as victims at Cawnpore fuelled impassioned cries for vengeance, the fate of British women in the Bibighar could be represented only through their absence. British women who survived the siege of Lucknow were similarly represented only through their absence until they were rescued and living in a place of imperial and domestic security. In ambivalent ways, the British women who survived the siege of Lucknow were represented as heroines rather than victims.

¹¹⁴ General Havelock died of dysentery in November 1857 after the evacuation of the Lucknow Residency, which will be discussed below. See Dawson, 1994 and 1995, *op. cit.*, for more on representations of Havelock as an imperial hero.

¹¹⁵ Harrington *op. cit.* The engraving was made by Alexander Hill of Edinburgh after the painting had been re-exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1859.

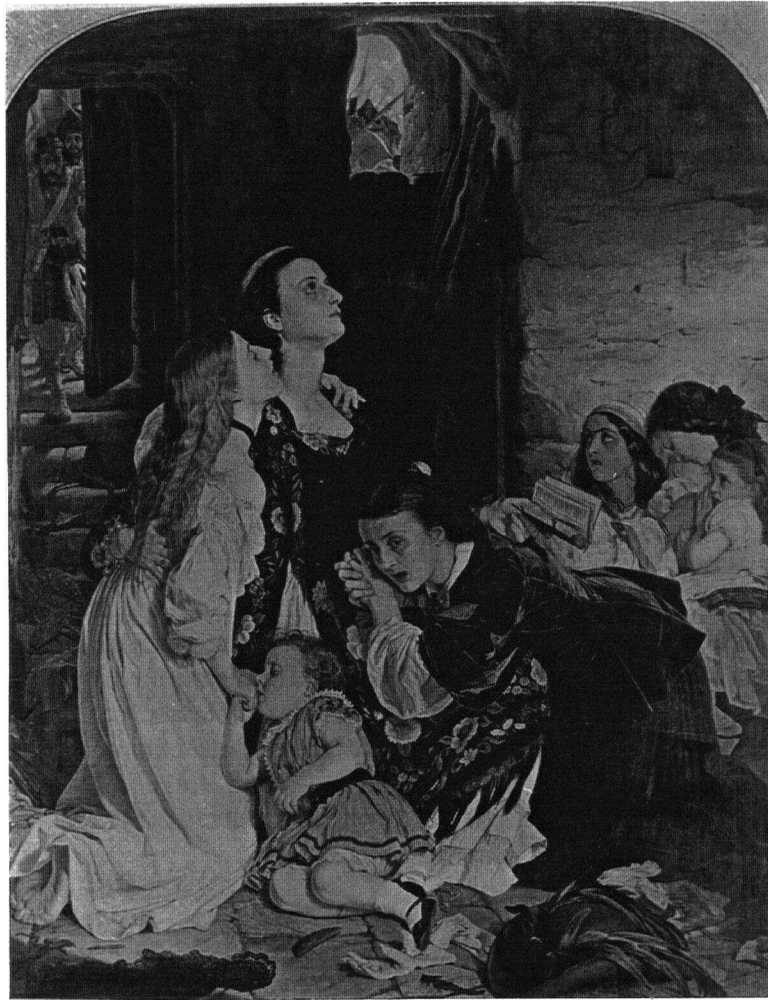


Plate 9: 'In Memoriam: Henry Havelock,' by Joseph Noel Paton

Source: Harrington, op. cit..

British Women at Lucknow

Together with the rest of the British population in Lucknow, 240 women lived under siege in the Residency compound from June to November 1857. The Residency compound was located in the centre of the 'native city' (Figure 5) and consisted of thirty three acres of land around the Residency building, which included 'a large number of bungalows, houses, small palaces, and fortified gates.'¹¹⁶ The majority of the British women who lived under siege were married to soldiers, but sixty nine 'ladies' - including Francis Wells, Mrs Dashwood, and Mrs Lewin - were related to officers or officials.¹¹⁷ In September, an unsuccessful 'relief' provided reinforcements, which provided the subject for the revised and relocated 'In Memoriam.'¹¹⁸ Forces sent from Britain, under the command of Sir Colin Campbell, relieved Lucknow for the second time on November 17. This was followed by the evacuation of Lucknow, first by the injured, and then by British women and children. This evacuation was followed by the withdrawal of all British troops from Lucknow by November 23, although fighting continued until Lucknow was recaptured by the British in March 1858.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ From the Introduction by M. Edwardes in M. Germon, Journal of the Siege of Lucknow: An Episode of the Indian Mutiny, edited by M. Edwardes, Constable, London, 1957, 17.

¹¹⁷ M. Innes, Lucknow and Oude in the Mutiny: a Narrative and a Study, A. D. Innes and Co., London, 1895. Estimates of the numbers under siege at Lucknow vary. Innes states that there were 3000 people under siege, of whom 1392 were Indian and 1608 were British and others of European descent. Innes also estimates that there were 1720 combatants and 1280 non-combatants.

¹¹⁸ Despite its lack of success, the date of the first 'relief' - September 25 - came to be known as Lucknow Day in the years following the 'mutiny' and was marked by an annual dinner of survivors. Arthur Dashwood, who was born during the siege, wrote that annual commemorative dinners continued until 1913. A. F. Dashwood, 'Untimely Arrival at the Siege of Lucknow,' *The Listener*, 2 December 1936, reprinted in C. Brydon, The Lucknow Siege Diary of Mrs C. M. Brydon edited and published by C. de L. W. fford.

¹¹⁹ C. Hibbert, The Great Mutiny: India 1857, Penguin, London, 1978.

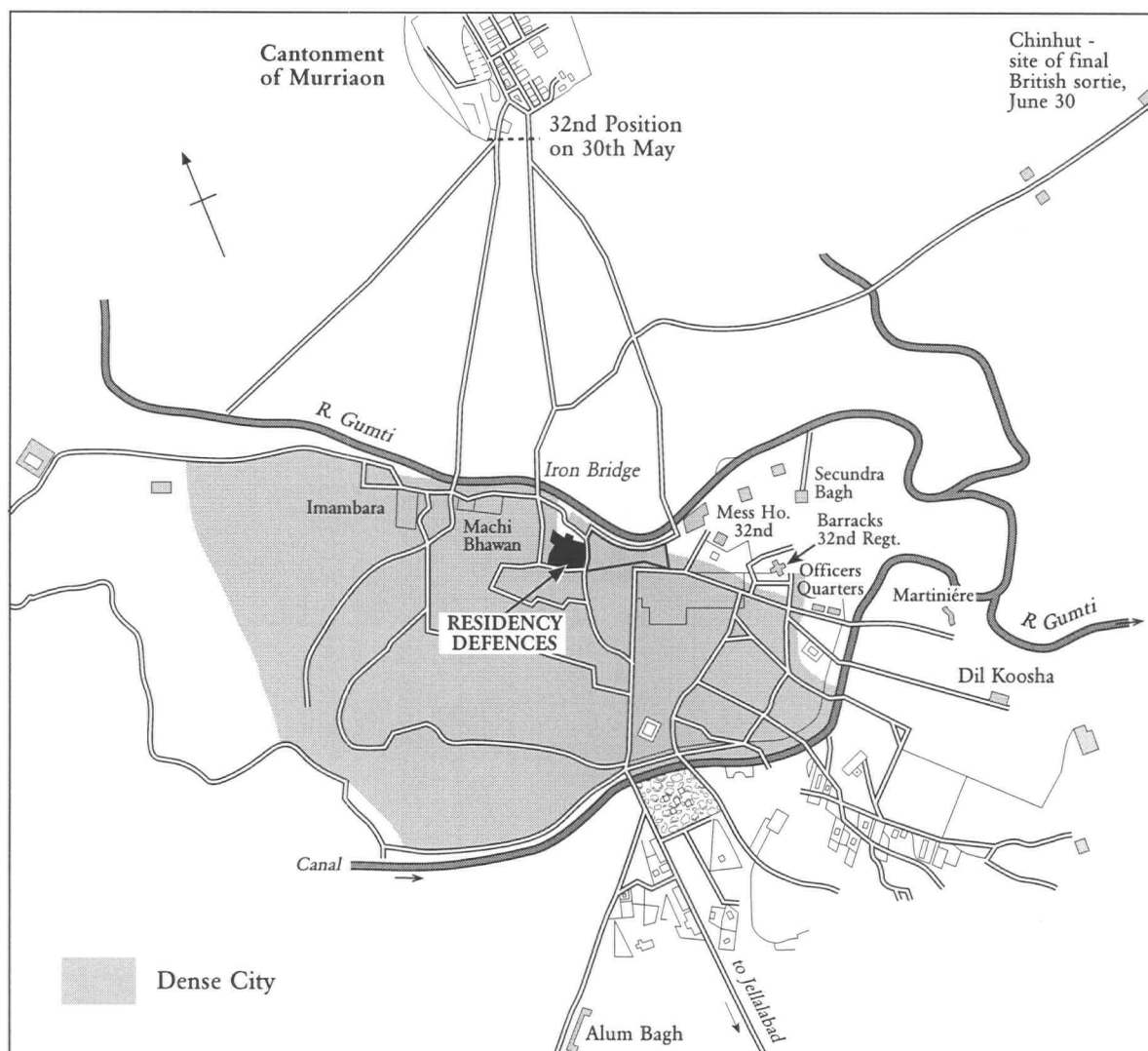


Figure 5: Map of Lucknow, 1857

Source: Innes, op. cit.

In marked contrast to the reactions to 'In Memoriam' that focused on the inappropriate depiction of British women at Cawnpore, reactions to a painting that featured British women escaping Lucknow were strangely placeless. 'The Flight from Lucknow' by Abraham Solomon was also exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1858 (Plate 10). With biblical allusions to the flight of Mary and Joseph to Egypt, Solomon's painting depicts a group of women and children fleeing a group of burning buildings. Two white women at the front seem particularly out of place. They are dressed in expensive, highly decorative clothes, with one supporting and leading the other whilst looking anxiously back. They are followed by an Indian ayah, holding a sleeping white child, who is followed by another child, leading more women on. While the painting conveys a clear sense of escape, danger, and anxiety, it also suggests a degree of comfort, care, and protection both between the white women and between the ayah and white child. In contrast to reactions to 'In Memoriam,' 'The Flight from Lucknow' came to be appreciated in generic rather than place-specific terms. Solomon's painting came to be known as 'The Flight,' and its specific reference to Lucknow was often obscured. A critic in the *Athanaeum* wrote that 'Some English ladies are escaping from some Indian massacre,' while a critic in *The Art Journal* agreed that 'The scene is India, and the fugitives are a party of our countrywomen flying in terror from a burning city.' As the latter critic continued, 'Any episode of this kind cannot be far from the truth, since these flights have occurred too frequently.'¹²⁰ In this section, I focus on the ambivalent place of British women as survivors of the siege of Lucknow and their role as 'heroines' rather than victims of the 'mutiny.'

¹²⁰ *'The Solomon Family of Painters,' Exhibition Catalogue*, The Geffrye Museum, London, 1985, 56. Thanks to Adrienne Avery-Gray at The Museum and Art Gallery of Leicester and Louise West at The Geffrye Museum for their help.

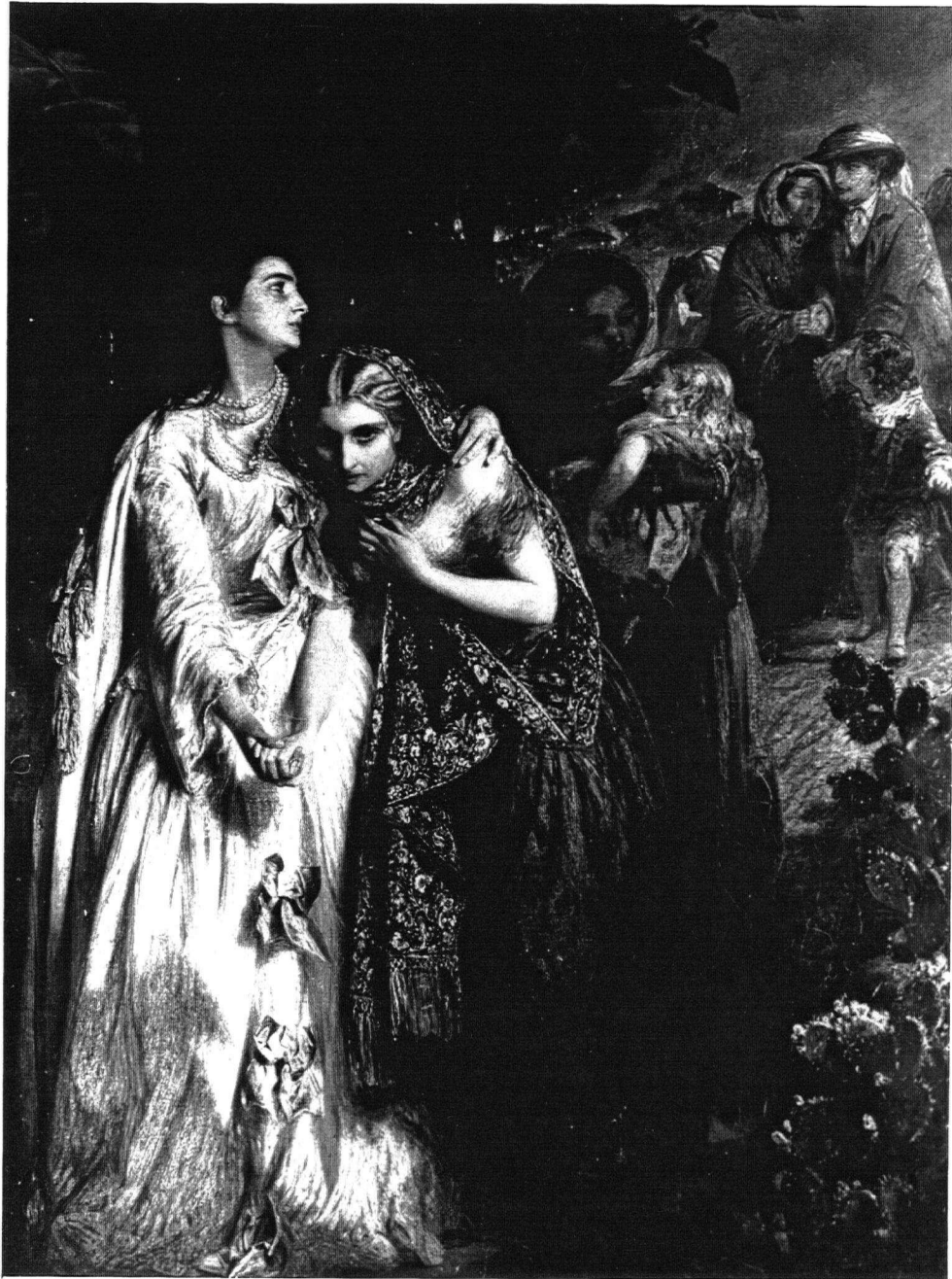


Plate 10: 'The Flight From Lucknow' by Abraham Solomon

Source: The Museum and Art Gallery of Leicester.

Unlike the detailed accounts of British women as victims at Cawnpore, newspaper reports remained largely silent about the place of British women living under siege at Lucknow. While British women were surviving the hardships of life under siege, it was impossible to represent them as either protected by British rule or avenged by British retaliation. Such women thereby occupied an ambivalent but largely invisible place at the centre of the imperial conflict. However, following their evacuation in November, representations of British women who had survived the siege increased as they travelled closer towards Calcutta. British women were represented as 'heroines' only once they had travelled a safe distance away from Lucknow and were resident in a place of imperial and domestic security.

Before news of the first 'relief' in September had been received in Britain, there were few representations of life under siege at Lucknow. The occasional newspaper reports to express anxiety about the siege often did so by focusing on the place of British women at Lucknow. In September, for example, the *Englishwoman's Review* quoted a letter from Lucknow that described 'the most painful consideration' as

the number of ladies and women and helpless people who have fled for protection to the fort, and are now here. Upwards of two hundred of these poor creatures are crammed into this narrow place, where it is impossible to describe their sufferings. Death would be indeed a happy release to many of them, and it is enough to melt the heart of the hardest soldier to witness their cruel privations, while it is wonderful at the same time to see the patience and fortitude with which they are enabled to endure the unparalleled misery of their position.¹²¹

The *Bengal Hurkaru* expressed its concern for the safety of the British population under siege by focusing on the sufferings of British women in class specific terms, asking 'How many tender ladies nursed in the lap of luxury have given in to toils and anxieties of which their previous existence could have given them not the faintest notion?'¹²² These two accounts were, however,

¹²¹ *Englishwoman's Review*, 12 September 1857.

¹²² *Bengal Hurkaru*, 30 September 1857.

unusual in their representation of life under siege. Most reports focused instead on the need to save British women at Lucknow from the fate of British women at Cawnpore. For example, the *Times* followed its account of Cawnpore by asking 'Are we to have a repetition of those dreadful scenes at Lucknow? God forbid! But we cannot but feel very great anxiety for the safety of this long-beleagured party.'¹²³ Although it stressed that rumours that Lucknow had fallen were likely to be untrue, the *Times* still speculated that

a catastrophe at Lucknow, similar to that of Cawnpore, would be far more horrible, because the garrison is larger, and the number of ladies and children far more extensive. Up to the present time, we repeat, there is no ground for apprehension on this score.¹²⁴

It was arguably more noble for British women to be killed by British soldiers than to risk the fate suffered by British women at Cawnpore. For example, as Sir Charles Napier stated in Parliament,

Before...so horrible a tragedy should be committed with innocent women and children as was enacted at Cawnpore, he trusted General Havelock would have sufficient courage to place them on his magazine and blow the whole of them up. No English General ever would permit women, still less his own countrywomen and their children, to be so outraged if he himself had the means of terminating their lives at once.¹²⁵

¹²³ *Times*, 30 September 1857.

¹²⁴ *Times*, 1 October 1857. In addition, Karl Marx wrote that 'we must now expect to hear of the capture of the place by starvation, and the massacre of its brave defenders with their wives and children.' *New York Daily Tribune*, 13 October 1857, reprinted in Marx and Engels op. cit.. The *Illustrated London News* identified the two main threats to the British population at Lucknow as starvation and the presence of 'that ineffable villain' Nana Sahib. *Illustrated London News*, 3 October 1857.

¹²⁵ Sir Charles Napier, 10 October 1857, Hansard op. cit., Vol. CXLVIII, 507.

News of the first 'relief' of Lucknow on September 25 was published in British newspapers from November 14. At first, the 'relief' was represented in heroic terms as British women had been saved from death and dishonour. The dangers posed to British women immediately before the 'relief' were described in ways that bolstered the heroism of their rescue. For example, the *Lady's Newspaper* stated that 'The rebels had extended their mines within reach of the fortress, and had General Havelock been delayed a few more hours the people of England would probably have had to deplore another slaughter, perchance more sickly than that of Cawnpore.'¹²⁶ Despite such heroic representations, it was clear that the 'relief' merely provided reinforcements rather than rescue. As the *Times* reported, 'While we must regret that it should be necessary to leave those unhappy women and children once more in their dreary confinement, it is yet reassuring to be able to point out that the trial is but for a short time, and that the danger is far from menacing.'¹²⁷ As one way of minimising the dangers posed to British women at Lucknow, reports focused on the place of Brigadier Inglis not only as the commander of the defence of Lucknow but also as a brave defender of his wife and children. The *Times*, for example, wrote that 'This officer, whose wife (the daughter of Sir F. Thesiger) and three children are shut up with the little force in the Residency, has, we believe, had the chief command during the greater part of the siege.'¹²⁸ The *Illustrated London News* printed an engraving of the Inglis family in late November (Plate 11), and, in December, the Earl of Derby praised Inglis 'who, with all the anxieties attendant upon the presence of his wife and children,

¹²⁶ *Lady's Newspaper*, 14 November 1857.

¹²⁷ *Times*, 14 November 1857.

¹²⁸ *Times*, 16 November 1857. John Inglis assumed command of the defence of Lucknow after the death of Sir Henry Lawrence on 4 July 1857. Inglis was born in Nova Scotia in 1814 and served in the 32nd Foot from 1833 until his death in 1862. In 1851, he married Julia Thesiger, daughter of the first Lord Chelmsford who had left his family estate in St Vincent to study law in London and who became Lord Chancellor in 1858. Julia Inglis published two accounts of the siege of Lucknow, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. *Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. XXIX, 1892, and Vol. LVI, 1898, Smith and Elder and Co., London.



Plate 11: Colonel John Inglis, Julia Inglis, and two of their three Children

Source: *Illustrated London News*, 28 November 1857.

has nevertheless so nobly fulfilled the duties of his perilous position as commandant of the garrison.¹²⁹ Such representations of the Inglis family at Lucknow helped to domesticate the ongoing crisis. British women and children, as represented by Julia Inglis and her children, were now seen to be protected by British men acting as their gallant defenders on domestic as well as national and imperial scales.

The Residency at Lucknow was relieved more successfully on November 17, and the first reports of this event were published in Britain from December 24.¹³⁰ It was only once British women had been evacuated from Lucknow that their lives under siege could begin to be represented. For example, in mid January, the *Lady's Newspaper* printed a General Order by Sir Colin Campbell and the Narrative of the Defence of Lucknow by Brigadier Inglis. In the former, Campbell wrote that 'The preserving constancy of this small garrison, under the watchful command of the Brigadier, has, under Providence, been the means of adding to the prestige of the British army and of preserving the honour and lives of our countrywomen.'¹³¹ In the latter account, Inglis described 'the patient endurance and the Christian resignation which have been evinced by the women of the garrison. They have animated us by their example.'¹³² The daily dangers of life under siege were described for the first time with, for example, the *Lady's Newspaper* reporting that 'It was by no means an easy matter to move the ladies out of the place in which they had so long borne up against privations and danger with more than heroic

¹²⁹ Earl of Derby, 8 December 1857, Hansard op. cit., Vol. CXLVIII, 317.

¹³⁰ On 24 December, the *Times* stated that news of the relief had been sent by telegram from Lucknow on November 19 and arrived at Alexandria on December 19 and Malta on December 23.

¹³¹ General Order from Sir Colin Campbell, 21 November 1857, quoted in *The Lady's Newspaper*, 16 January 1858.

¹³² 'Brigadier Inglis's Narrative of the Defence of Lucknow,' 26 September 1857, quoted in *Lady's Newspaper*, 16 January 1858.

fortitude,'¹³³ while the *Illustrated London News* stated that 'The privations endured by the heroic garrison, and particularly by the ladies, were fearful.'¹³⁴ As these examples suggest, it was only possible to represent the evacuated women as survivors and as heroines once they had travelled away from Lucknow, where they had been out of place, under threat, and suffering privations and dangers.

Newspaper reports about such women increased as they travelled closer to the safety of Allahabad and Calcutta. Both of these places were a safe distance away from Lucknow that offered both imperial and domestic security. The first steamer to arrive in Calcutta in January 1858 was welcomed with Royal salutes, a red carpet, an official welcoming party, and a crowd of onlookers on the quay, reflecting 'the deep but cordial sympathy of the whole European population.'¹³⁵ The Lucknow 'heroines' were represented in person for the first time by Anglo-Indian and British newspapers, which reported, for example,

The black dresses of most of the ladies told the tale of their bereavement, whilst the pallid faces, the downcast looks, and the slow walk, bore evidence of the great sufferings they must have undergone both in mind and body. The solemn procession thus passed on, and was handed into carriages which conveyed them to their temporary home.¹³⁶

Many British women found their temporary homes in Calcutta with friends or relatives or in houses provided by the Lucknow Relief Committee. It was possible to represent these women as 'heroines' because they were living not only in a place of imperial but also a place of domestic security. Far away from the dangers of Lucknow, the evacuated British women could finally be

¹³³ *Lady's Newspaper*, 16 January 1858.

¹³⁴ *Illustrated London News*, 9 January 1858.

¹³⁵ *Lady's Newspaper*, 20 February 1858.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

represented as 'at home' both in the capital of British India and also in an appropriately feminine domestic sphere.

One effect of representing such women as 'heroines' in the imperial and domestic security of Calcutta was to divert public attention away from the fighting at Lucknow that continued for the next four months. In a short period of time, however, the status of Lucknow heroines became open to question. For example, William Howard Russell wrote in his diary about meeting a woman evacuated from Lucknow and living in a temporary home in Calcutta. He was shocked to hear that 'there was a good deal of etiquette about visiting and speaking in the garrison! Strange, whilst cannon-shot and shell were rending the walls about their ears - whilst disease was knocking at the door of every room, that those artificial rules of life still exercised their force.'¹³⁷ Another commentator who represented the British women evacuated from Lucknow in more critical ways was Friedrich Engels. By this time, it was clear that the 'mutiny' had not led to the revolution against capitalist imperialism that Marx and Engels had anticipated. In an article for the *New York Daily Tribune* in April 1858, Engels wrote about the withdrawal from Lucknow to an intrenched camp at Cawnpore, from where Campbell based his campaign to recapture Lucknow. Before continuing with this campaign, however,

he had another task to perform before he thought it safe to move - a task the attempting of which at once distinguishes him from almost all preceding Indian commanders. He would have no women loitering about the camp. He had had quite enough of the 'heroines' at Lucknow, and on the march to Cawnpore; they had considered it quite natural that the movements of the army, as had always been the case in India, should be subordinate to their fancies and their comfort. No sooner had Campbell reached Cawnpore than he sent the whole interesting and troublesome community to Allahabad, out of his way.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Diary entry for 30 January 1858 in Russell, op. cit., 14. See Chapter 4 for discussion of daily life and social relations among the British living under siege at Lucknow.

¹³⁸ F. Engels, 'The Capture of Lucknow,' in the *New York Daily Tribune*, 30 April 1858. Reproduced in Marx and Engels, op. cit., 122-3.

In this article, Engels not only questioned the status of the 'Lucknow heroines' but also the status of an army that would, without Campbell's leadership, be subservient to their wishes. Finally, in 1859, an article in the *Calcutta Review* was also critical of Lucknow heroines, stating that 'it is humbling to reflect that some of the Lucknow ladies have since been polking to the tune of the 'Relief of Lucknow.' The fact is, great trials do not alter the character; they only manifest and to a certain degree modify it.'¹³⁹ British women who had survived the siege of Lucknow were, by now, no longer automatically ascribed the status of 'heroine.' For these women, their role as heroines was only possible once they had been evacuated, but this role remained unquestioned for only a short period of time. Once the political expedience of representing the evacuated women as heroines had disappeared, so too did their status.

Conclusions

The 'mutiny' of 1857-8 represented a crisis on both imperial and domestic scales and this crisis was often embodied by representations of British women away from their British and Indian homes. In this chapter, I have focused on the ways in which the crisis away from 'home' was represented in Britain in two connected but often contradictory ways. First, representations of the 'mutiny' in Britain centred on national and imperial power, the place of British homes in India, and ambivalent discourses of proximity and distance between Britain and India. Here, the use of domestic imagery, debates about the causes and implications of the 'mutiny,' and the flow and nature of private information that shaped popular consciousness in Britain of events in India all suggest that the 'mutiny' was perceived as a crisis in domestic as well as imperial terms both within Britain and with reference to British homes in India. Second, British women in many ways came to embody the conflict through representations of their deaths and suffering. The place of British women in the 'mutiny' was most significant in both strategic and symbolic terms at Cawnpore and Lucknow. The deaths of British women in the Bibighar at Cawnpore exacerbated calls for vengeance and brutal retaliation in line with masculine, national, and

¹³⁹ 'Englishwomen in the Rebellion,' *Calcutta Review*, 33, 1859, 108-126, 115.

imperial discourses of honour and prestige. But the British women who survived the siege of Lucknow occupied an ambivalent place as 'heroines' rather than victims of the 'mutiny.' It was only possible to represent their lives under siege once they had travelled away from the dangers of Lucknow towards the imperial and domestic security of Calcutta. Moreover, once the political expedience of representing such women as heroines declined, so too did their status. Chapter 4 focuses on writings by several British women who survived the siege of Lucknow to examine the ways in which domesticity and imperialism were intertwined in complex and often contradictory ways during the 'mutiny.' The British women who survived the siege of Lucknow occupied an ambivalent place at the centre of a crisis of imperial domesticity.

Chapter 4

Inscribing Imperial Domesticity British Women Living Under Siege, 1857-1858

Introduction

While Chapter 3 focused on representations *of* British women during the 'mutiny,' this Chapter turns to representations *by* British women at Cawnpore and Lucknow. The few surviving accounts by British women of events at Cawnpore take the form of letters written home and a memoir published in 1913 by Amelia Bennett who, like Judith Wheeler, had been saved by a sowar at the River Ganges on June 27.¹ Just as a greater number of British women survived the siege of Lucknow, so too did a greater number of written accounts recording their experiences. As a result, this Chapter largely focuses on writings by British women who lived under siege at Lucknow. A number of the sixty nine British 'ladies' recorded their daily life under siege in diaries and letters, some of which were subsequently published.² These accounts both challenged and reinforced imperial representations of the 'mutiny' by describing daily, domestic life in an imperial combat zone. As their letters and diaries reveal, British women at Lucknow inscribed a crisis of imperial rule on a domestic scale. By living through the siege, and by recording their daily lives, British women at Lucknow represented a crisis of imperial domesticity. But unlike

¹ Surviving letters were written by the following British women at Cawnpore: Louise Chalwin, Mss.Eur.B.344; Emma Ewart, Mss.Eur.B.267; and Emma Larkins, Home Miscellaneous Series 814, 302-324, India Office Library. Amelia Bennett, née Horne, published two accounts of her escape from Cawnpore in 1913: A. Bennett, 'Ten Months' Captivity after the Massacre at Cawnpore,' *Nineteenth Century*, LXXIII, 1212-1234, and LXXIV, 78-91, 1913.

² Katherine Bartrum, Adelaide Case, Katherine Harris, Ann Ellen Huxham, and Julia Inglis published their diaries about Lucknow and Inglis also published a letter for private circulation. Unpublished accounts include a diary kept by Fanny Boileau and letters written by Frances Wells to her father. Diaries written by Maria Germon and Colina Brydon were unpublished in their lifetimes, but subsequently published for the first time in 1957 (Germon) and 1978 (Brydon).

representations of domestic defilement that were often embodied by representations of British women, the survival of many British women at Lucknow and the subsequent publication of several diaries about their daily life under siege, revealed not only a crisis of, but also the reinstatement of imperial domesticity.

Diaries are distinctive not only because of their autobiographical content but also because they describe a period of time, often one day, in narrative space.³ Diaries can impose order and systematization on everyday life. But diaries can also record new experiences beyond the everyday, as shown by travel diaries that represent people and places far from home. Furthermore, diaries have been described as sanctuaries, suggesting a textual space both central to but also separate from daily life. Diaries can provide an escape and textual freedom from confinement and captivity, helping a diarist to imagine and to inscribe different worlds and different times, in the past or the future.⁴ Diaries have also been represented as a textual confessional, serving as a private, perhaps secret, narrative of thoughts and feelings. But diaries are not necessarily private, as a diarist may be conscious of the documentary value of their writings and may be recording events for a wider, future readership than themselves alone. The diaries kept by several British women living under siege at Lucknow represent the monotony as well as the dangers of life under siege, the documentary as well as autobiographical importance of such narratives, and the spatial as well as social positioning of such women. Although the private nature of many diaries may suggest the feminised space of such narratives, the publication of several diaries by British women who survived the siege of Lucknow, and the

³ See, for example, R. Blythe, ed., *The Penguin Book of Diaries*, Penguin, London, 1989, and T. Mallon, *A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries*, Ticknor and Fields, New York, 1984, for further discussion and examples. There are also important links with other autobiographical writings. See the discussion in Chapter 2 for more on autobiographical narratives and decentred subjectivities.

⁴ The most famous diary written under such circumstances is Anne Frank's diary, depicting her life in forced captivity as a Jew in Holland after the Nazi invasion in the Second World War. A. Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, Doubleday, New York, 1967.

publication of diaries kept by men such as Sherer and Russell undermines any essentialised interpretation either of gender or of narrative space. Instead, in materialist terms, the spatial confinement of British women under siege, and the monotony of their domestic lives, clearly contrasted with the place of British men in the defence of Lucknow, whether posted on the fortifications as soldiers or volunteers, or working in a professional capacity as doctors or chaplains. The disparity between the lives of British men and British women under siege at Lucknow is reflected in the record of daily, domestic life in the diaries kept and subsequently published by British women.⁵

A number of connections exist between diary narratives and representations of travel. First, the words 'diary,' 'journal,' and 'journey' all originate from the Latin for 'daily,' referring either to a daily record or a day's travel.⁶ Writing a diary thus represents the travel over the course of a day, recording events and change over time in narrative space. Second, diaries and representations of travel both relate observational detail and the self-referentiality of the author. As Thomas Mallon suggests, 'No form of expression more emphatically embodies the expresser: diaries are the flesh made word.'⁷ Focusing on the diaries written by white, middle class, married British women under siege at Lucknow reveals the embodiment of the imperial crisis on a domestic scale. Furthermore, such an embodied presence and survival of the siege of Lucknow clearly contrasts with the limits of representation discussed in Chapter 3, when British women could only be represented as absent from the place of their death at Cawnpore and during their

⁵ British women under siege at Lucknow were more likely to write diaries of their experiences than they were to sketch because of their spatial confinement and the dangers of life under siege. Although I have found no references to British women sketching during the siege, both Maria Germon and Katherine Harris describe Charlie Dashwood, brother-in-law of Mrs Dashwood, who was introduced in the Interlude. Towards the end of the siege, Charlie Dashwood was hit by shot while he was sketching in the Residency compound and subsequently died on the evacuation in late November. Germon, *op. cit.*, and Harris, *op. cit.*.

⁶ Blythe, *op. cit.*.

⁷ Mallon, *op. cit.*, xvii.

lives under siege at Lucknow. Third, both diaries and representations of travel can simultaneously assert and undermine authorial authority by relating eyewitness accounts and observational detail as well as more personal, often emotional content. The journey of self-discovery that is often implicit or explicit in self-referential travel accounts parallels a day's journey recorded in diaries. As Andrew Hassam writes,

In much the same way as the diarist uses public or cultural codes to mitigate the split between narrating self and narrated self, he or she can also fall back on an analogy between a geographical journey and a spiritual journey: the traveller can view the journey as destined towards a place in which narrator and actor are reconciled in a visionary self-presence.⁸

The diaries written by British women at Lucknow represent not only their daily lives under siege but also their forced travel away from their Indian homes and their evacuation and travel away from Lucknow towards the safety of Allahabad, Calcutta, and home to Britain.

The diaries by British women at Lucknow were written to record their daily lives both for themselves and for their families and friends at 'home' in Britain. As Katherine Harris, the wife of a chaplain, wrote,

I have kept a rough sort of journal during the whole siege, often written under the greatest difficulties - part of the time with a child in my arms or asleep in my lap; but I persevered, because I knew if we survived you would like to live our siege life over in imagination, and the little details would interest you; besides the comfort of talking to you.⁹

⁸ A. Hassam, 'As I Write': Narrative Occasions and the Quest for Self-Presence in the Travel Diary,' *Ariel*, 21, 1990, 33-47, 41.

⁹ Katherine Harris wrote this in a letter to her family from Allahabad on 14 December 1857, which was then included in the Preface of her published diary: K. Harris, *A Lady's Diary of the Siege of Lucknow*, John Murray, London, 1858, iii.

On their publication in 1858, the diaries of Katherine Harris, Katherine Bartrum, and Adelaide Case reached an audience beyond the family and friends for whom they had been initially intended.¹⁰ Both Katherine Bartrum and Adelaide Case were widowed during the siege of Lucknow. Colonel Case of the 32nd Regiment was killed in the unsuccessful battle of Chinhut in June 1857, which marked the beginning of the siege of the Lucknow Residency, while Dr Bartrum of the Bengal Medical Service died as part of the first 'relief' forces to reach Lucknow in September 1857. Each author was keen to explain her reasons for publication, and stressed that publication had been suggested by friends. Katherine Harris wrote that 'As no lady's diary has hitherto been given to the public, the friends of the writer have thought that it might interest others, beyond the family circle, to communicate additional information on a subject in which the British nation feels so deep an interest.'¹¹ Although Adelaide Case had kept a diary 'for the perusal of my relatives in England, and with no view whatever to publication,'¹² she did, in the event, publish her diary in 1858, stating that she hoped to supplement official despatches about Lucknow with her account of daily life. As she said, 'I have not attempted, by subsequent additions, to produce effect, or to aim at glowing descriptions, but have given it as it was written, in the simple narrative form, which the dangers and privations of the siege alone permitted,'¹³ suggesting that her diary entries could most effectively convey the immediacy and authenticity of her experiences. In a similar way, Katherine Bartrum wrote that her diary represented her personal experiences of daily life and domesticity under siege, stating in self-deprecating tones that:

¹⁰ K. Bartrum, A Widow's Reminiscences of the Siege of Lucknow, James Nesbit and Co., London, 1858; A. Case, Day by Day at Lucknow: A Journal of the Siege of Lucknow, Richard Bentley, London, 1858; and K. Harris op. cit.. Ann Ellen Huxham - wife of a Captain in the Indian Army - published A Personal Narrative of the Siege of Lucknow as an undated pamphlet. Although she published a letter to her mother for private circulation in 1858, Julia Inglis did not publish her diary until 1892.

¹¹ Harris, op. cit., iii.

¹² Case, op. cit., iii.

¹³ Case, op. cit., iii-iv.

It is not the wish of the writer of this little Volume, any more than it is in her power, to draw, in glowing colours, a picture of sights and scenes through which it has been her lot to pass, but merely, at the desire of her friends, to give in simple truthfulness a detail of those domestic occurrences which fell immediately under her own observation during the siege of Lucknow.¹⁴

As she continued, she also published her diary 'to show how wonderfully she was protected in perils and dangers of no ordinary kind, and how, when called to drink deeply of the cup of human sorrow, the arm of the Lord was her stay, a 'rock of defence in the day of trouble.'¹⁵

In contrast, although Julia Inglis published a letter to her mother in 1858 for private circulation, she did not publish her diary of the siege of Lucknow until 1892. Thirty three years after the 'mutiny,' she justified the publication of her diary because 'a thoroughly clear and accurate account has not been given.'¹⁶ In particular, Julia Inglis described three stages of the siege of Lucknow: the defence under Sir Henry Lawrence and Brigadier Inglis; the reinforcements commanded by Generals Havelock and Outram; and the relief by Sir Colin Campbell, now Lord Clyde. She sought to correct what she perceived as the popular elision of the first two stages of the siege, and hoped that her diary would serve as a clear and accurate account of 'each day's events' at Lucknow. Julia Inglis' diary was supplemented by notes written by Colonel Birch, her husband's aide-de-camp at Lucknow, and she claimed that she was avoiding 'as much as possible all personal allusions.'¹⁷ Unlike the other published diaries by British women at Lucknow, Julia Inglis aimed to present a more authoritative account of the defence as well as daily, domestic life under siege. As the wife of Brigadier Inglis who, from

¹⁴ Bartrum op. cit..

¹⁵ Ibid..

¹⁶ Inglis, 1892, op. cit., vi.

¹⁷ Ibid., vii.

early July was in command of the defence of Lucknow, Julia Inglis was in a position to record strategic as well as personal information.

Representations of domestic life by British women at Lucknow reveal the ways in which domesticity and imperialism were entwined in complex and often contradictory ways during the 'mutiny.' The 'domestic occurrences' described by Katherine Bartrum and other women diarists during the siege of Lucknow are centrally important in examining the imperial conflict. Moreover, the eyewitness accounts of British women diarists at Lucknow, claiming to represent events 'in simple truthfulness,' offer a stark contrast to the eyewitness accounts of the fate of British women at Cawnpore. While British women at Lucknow inscribed a crisis of imperial domesticity on a household scale during the siege, their survival and the publication of several diaries following the suppression of the 'mutiny' refocused attention on the possibility of reconstructing British homes and British rule in India. I begin, however, by discussing the few surviving accounts by British women at Cawnpore.

Leaving Home

For British women at Cawnpore, leaving their homes was one of the earliest and clearest threats to their sense of both domestic and imperial security. In letters to her sister, Emma Ewart wrote that from late May, her husband, Lieutenant Colonel John Ewart of the Bengal Army, had been sleeping in barracks to show his confidence in the sepoys under his command. The magistrate and collector of Cawnpore, Mr Hillersdon, brought his wife to stay with Emma Ewart, but when he was called away one night, the two women moved into the European barracks, where 'we found a number of refugees [from cantonments] in a state of great alarm of course, but for the most part composed and resigned.'¹⁸ From then on, and until her last letter of June 1, she described spending days at home and nights in the barracks, writing that 'As long as we can live

¹⁸ Letter from Emma Ewart to her sister Fanny, 27 May 1857. MSS.Eur.B.267, India Office Library.

in our house during the day we suffer but little comparatively - we may be shut up at any time.'¹⁹ Louise Chalwin also described spending nights in the barracks and time during the day at home, where 'we sit in fear and trembling all the time.'²⁰

From June 5, the British population was confined to entrenchments. As Amelia Bennett wrote,

We were now entirely deprived of the comfort of our homes, and little did we dream what this trifling discomfort was to be the awful prelude to. We were all assembled in the barracks, with our bag and baggage, looking like so many travellers bound for a far country. Alas! how many of us thus assembled *did* journey to that far country from which no traveller returns; but ah! God, how horrible was the mode by which most of them travelled!²¹

Several British women returned home to fetch 'requisites for housekeeping,' but when General Wheeler learnt of this, he forbade such 'recklessness.' Amelia Bennett wrote that 'On the following day, on our sending our servant to our bungalow to fetch some chairs, &c., that we needed, he returned to tell us that the house was occupied by a native, who had made himself perfectly at home in it!'²² For British women such as Amelia Bennett, being forced to leave home signalled not only the disruption of imperial domesticity but also the reversal of imperial power relations on a domestic scale.

The latest date on a surviving letter written by a woman at Cawnpore was June 9. In it, Emma Larkins wrote 'let this be a warning to your Government never again to place British

¹⁹ Ibid..

²⁰ Letter from Louise Chalwin to her sister Maria, 29 May 1857.

²¹ Bennett June 1913 op. cit., 1214.

²² Ibid., 1215.

officers and men in such a pitiable condition,'²³ and included affectionate messages to her son and three daughters in Britain. This letter was taken to Calcutta by her ayah who escaped from Cawnpore. After being challenged to prove her identity, Emma Larkins' ayah fled in distress, leaving the letter, which was subsequently authenticated. Emma Larkins' last letter home reached Britain a year and nine months after it was sent and after she herself had died.

* * * * *

Following the arson attack on the Wells' bungalow in April 1857, unrest intensified in Lucknow and throughout Oudh for the rest of the month and into May. On May 16, the wives and children of British soldiers were moved from barracks to the Residency compound in the city. At the same time, eleven 'ladies' and fifteen children of the 32nd Regiment were invited to stay in cantonments in the house of Sir Henry Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of Lucknow. Plates 12 and 13 depict a typical bungalow in cantonments at Lucknow that the wives of officers left in May 1857. Julia Inglis recorded May 17 as 'the day we left our house and gave up all domestic comfort and happiness'²⁴ and she and Adelaide Case stayed with Sir Henry Lawrence until May 25 when all women and children at Lucknow were sent to the Residency because an uprising seemed imminent. Maria Germon, the wife of a Captain in the Indian Army, stayed at home in cantonments until May 25, and, while her husband was on duty in the city, she lived alone, armed with an Afghan knife and guarded by two sepoys at her door.²⁵ On May 25, she began her day by arranging flowers as usual but soon learnt, to her 'astonishment,' that all women and children had to leave cantonments for the Residency.

²³ Letter from Emma Larkins, 9 June 1857. Home Miscellaneous Series 814, 302-324.

²⁴ Inglis 1858, op. cit., 2.

²⁵ As she wrote on May 19, 'Captain Wilson complimented me on remaining in my house all alone during the panic and Charlie is pleased with my having done so.' Germon op. cit., 23.

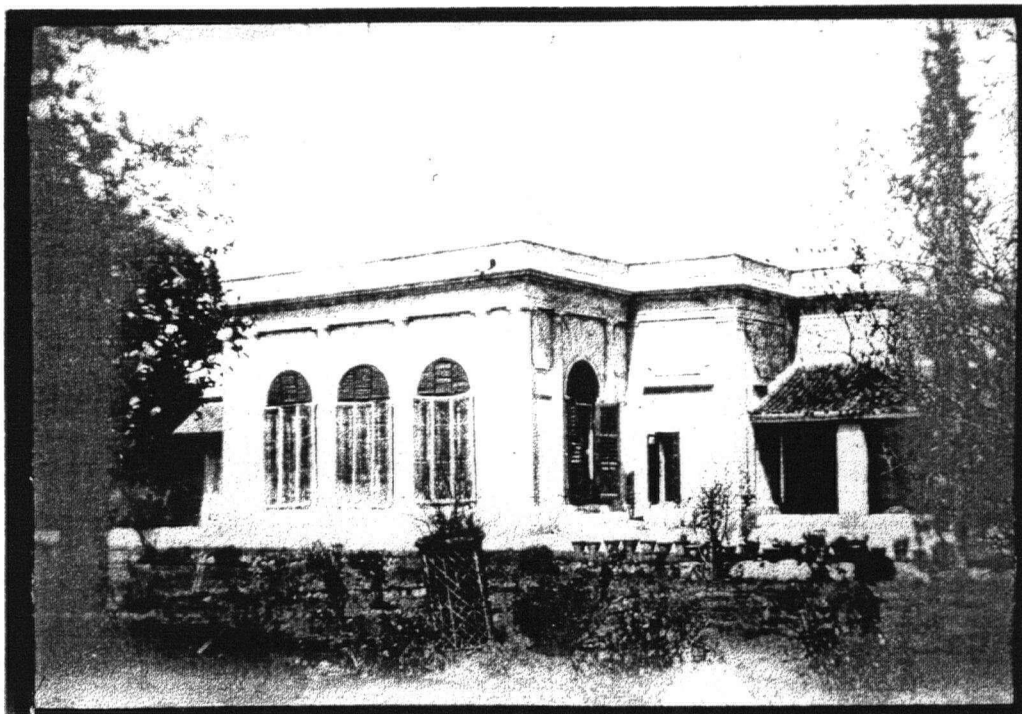


Plate 12: Captain Hayes' Bungalow in Cantonments, Lucknow, 1856-7

Source: Lucknow Album, Photo 269 no.21, India Office Library

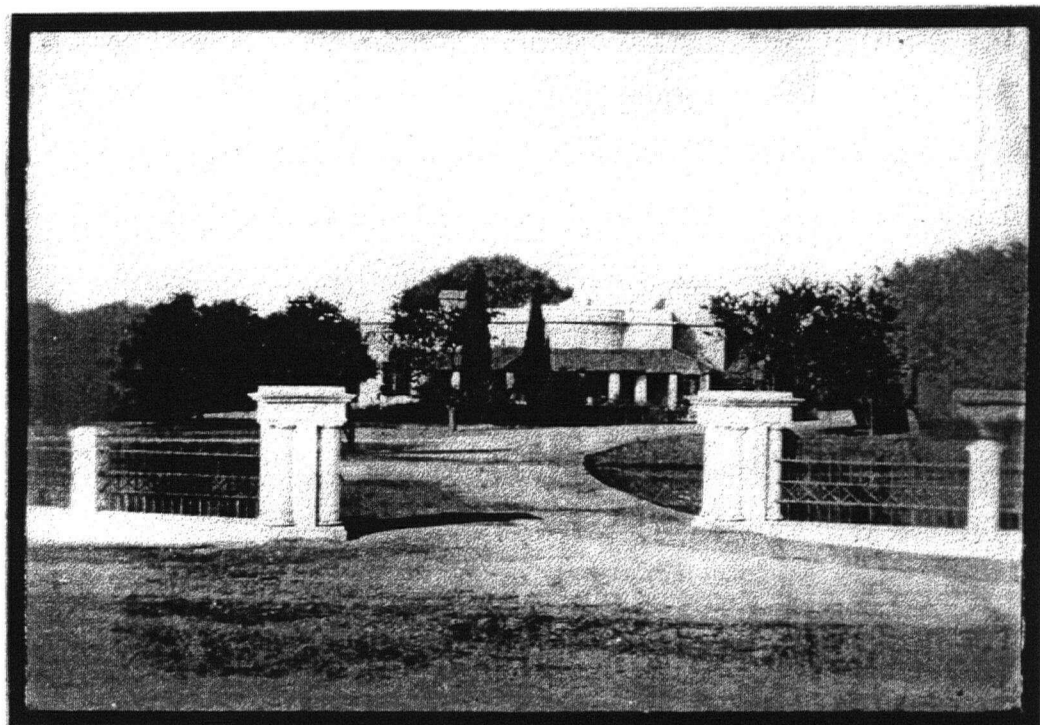


Plate 13: Captain Hayes' Compound in Cantonments, Lucknow, 1856-7

Source: Lucknow Album, Photo 269 no. 20, India Office Library.

Travelling to the city with her neighbours, the Barwells, Maria Germon described

innumerable coolies with beds and baggage of all descriptions - carriages and buggies all off to the Residency with ladies and children - such a scene - when we drove up to the Residency everything looked so warlike - guns pointed in all directions, barricades and European troops everywhere - such a scene of bustle and confusion.²⁶

Ann Ellen Huxham, the wife of a Captain in the Indian Army, also moved from cantonments to the city Residency, and wrote that 'Little did we think we should never see our snug comfortable home again.'²⁷ Maria Germon visited her home in cantonments on May 30 and wrote that 'I little thought it was my last sight of the pretty garden or the home where I had spent so many happy hours.'²⁸ The following day, Captain Germon passed a number of burning bungalows on his way to the native city, but, according to Maria,

he fancied that ours would escape (ours for that night did and was not even looted owing to Charlie's orderly telling the party of the 48th who came to burn it that there was a *Havildar's* [Indian non-commissioned officer] party inside who would fire instantly and they pressed on to the next - this man got 100 Rupees afterwards from Sir Henry for this).²⁹

British women also travelled to the Lucknow Residency from outlying stations in Oudh. Fanny Boileau, for example, travelled from Secrora to Lucknow after an uprising on May 28. Katherine Bartrum was one of a population of ten Europeans who lived at the military station of Gonda, eighty miles from Lucknow. For the last eight months, she, her husband, and their baby son had lived

²⁶ Ibid., 27.

²⁷ Huxham, op. cit.

²⁸ Germon op. cit., 30.

²⁹ Germon, op. cit., 33.

the peaceful and retired life of an Indian officer's family in an up-country station. Visits from friends had been few and far between, and there had been little to mark the lapse of time but the welcome arrival of letters from England, which told of the joys and sorrows of those we loved at home.³⁰

But this quiet and peaceful life was shattered by the 'mutiny.' On June 7, an order was received from Sir Henry Lawrence that 'the ladies and children from the out-stations should be sent into Lucknow immediately for better security,'³¹ and Katherine Bartrum 'took one last look round the house which had been to me such a happy home, that the thought of sorrow reaching me there had seldom crossed my mind.'³² Her husband travelled with her as far as Secrora, but then Katherine Bartrum, Fanny Boileau and other women and children from Gonda and Secrora travelled under a sepoy guard for two days until they reached Lucknow.

In Lucknow, until June 1, Maria Germon, Adelaide Case, and Julia Inglis visited their husbands in cantonments during the day. Adelaide Case wrote about her visits to cantonments with Julia Inglis and the dangers of leaving the Residency:

People say we are foolish to persist in going to the camp in the present state of things; but so long as our husbands do not forbid our going out, we shall continue to do so, for I think we would both risk almost any danger for the sake of that one happy hour, which always appears so very short! Oh, how loth we always feel to return to the Residency again!³³

Julia Inglis also described these daily visits and the threats that lay beyond the Residency compound:

³⁰ Bartrum op. cit. Katherine Bartrum was married to Robert Bartrum of the Bengal Medical Service and had a young son.

³¹ Ibid., 10.

³² Ibid., 11.

³³ Case, op. cit., 13-14.

These visits were a great treat to us; but we were obliged to return to the city before dusk, and even with this precaution I do not think our driving down each day by ourselves was very prudent. There were a great many ill-looking men about; and I was always very glad when we had re-crossed the iron bridge dividing us from cantonments. I was the coachman, and drove at a pretty good pace.³⁴

It was against orders to stay away from the Residency for longer than two hours in the morning and evening, and Colina Brydon, Maria Germon, Ann Ellen Huxham and Julia Inglis all recorded the close escape of Mrs Bruere, who had stayed overnight.³⁵ On June 1, Adelaide Case wrote that she and Julia Inglis had visited cantonments in the evening and felt uncomfortable on their journey back to the Residency. As she wrote,

We fancied the people we saw looked fierce and sullen. Mrs Inglis drove a fast trotting horse, neither of us spoke, but she urged him on. I cannot express how thankful we felt when we drew up at the door of the Residency, and alighted in safety. It is really surprising that we did so, for the mutiny in cantonments broke out that very evening, showing how rebellious the prevailing spirit must then have been.³⁶

Because of the rising in cantonments, British women were now confined to the Residency compound. After the defeat of British forces at the battle of Chinhut on June 30,³⁷ the Residency was surrounded and the five-month siege of Lucknow had begun.

³⁴ Inglis 1892, op. cit., 18.

³⁵ Ann Ellen Huxham wrote that 'one lady had remained in cantonments against orders, and had a very narrow escape, for she and her children passed the night in a dry ditch.' Huxham op. cit.. Julia Inglis wrote on May 31 that 'Mrs Bruere, wife of the colonel of the 13th Native Infantry, had a narrow escape. She was spending the night in cantonments contrary to orders, and while the mutineers were entering her house, some of the faithful Sepoys of the regiment got her out at the back, and hid her in the dry bed of a [stream] until the morning.' Inglis 1892, op. cit., 22-23.

³⁶ Case op. cit., 15.

³⁷ The husband of Adelaide Case, Colonel Case of the 32nd Regiment, was killed at Chinhut.

Living Under Siege

During the siege of Lucknow, British women lived in a number of different houses and other buildings in the Residency compound that were known as 'garrisons,'³⁸ and were largely confined indoors for the duration of the siege. The militaristic term used to describe the places where British women lived during the siege reflects their location at the heart of an imperial conflict. In this context, the representations of daily, domestic life under siege were inseparable from the constant threat both to imperial and domestic life at Lucknow. Within the Residency compound, the location of different women reflected their social status, which was usually derived from the status of their husband but sometimes from the status of their father or brothers. It is unsurprising that the women who wrote diaries during the siege were married or otherwise related to officers or officials because of the higher literacy rates within this class. Their diaries vividly convey living in different houses and rooms in the Residency compound.

For most of the siege, British women diarists lived in the houses of officials, the Begum Kotie, or rooms in Brigade Square. These locations are mapped in Figure 6 and the Residency compound itself as it appeared before the siege is depicted in Plate 14. Fanny Boileau, Maria Germon, and Katherine Harris lived in Dr and Mrs Fayrer's house. For most of the siege, Katherine Bartrum and Francis Wells lived in the Begum Kotie while Adelaide Case and Julia Inglis lived in rooms in the Brigade Square. On May 25, Maria Germon recorded life at the Fayrer's as a pleasant house party, writing that

our party here is a very agreeable one - we meet at *chota hazree* and then after dressing, breakfast at ten - then have working, reading and music (there are some good performers amongst our party), *tiffin* at two, dine at half-past seven and then the Padre reads a chapter and prayers and we retire.³⁹

³⁸ Bartrum, op. cit..

³⁹ Germon, op. cit., 28. *Chota hazree* means 'little breakfast' and refers to early morning tea, and *tiffin* means lunch.

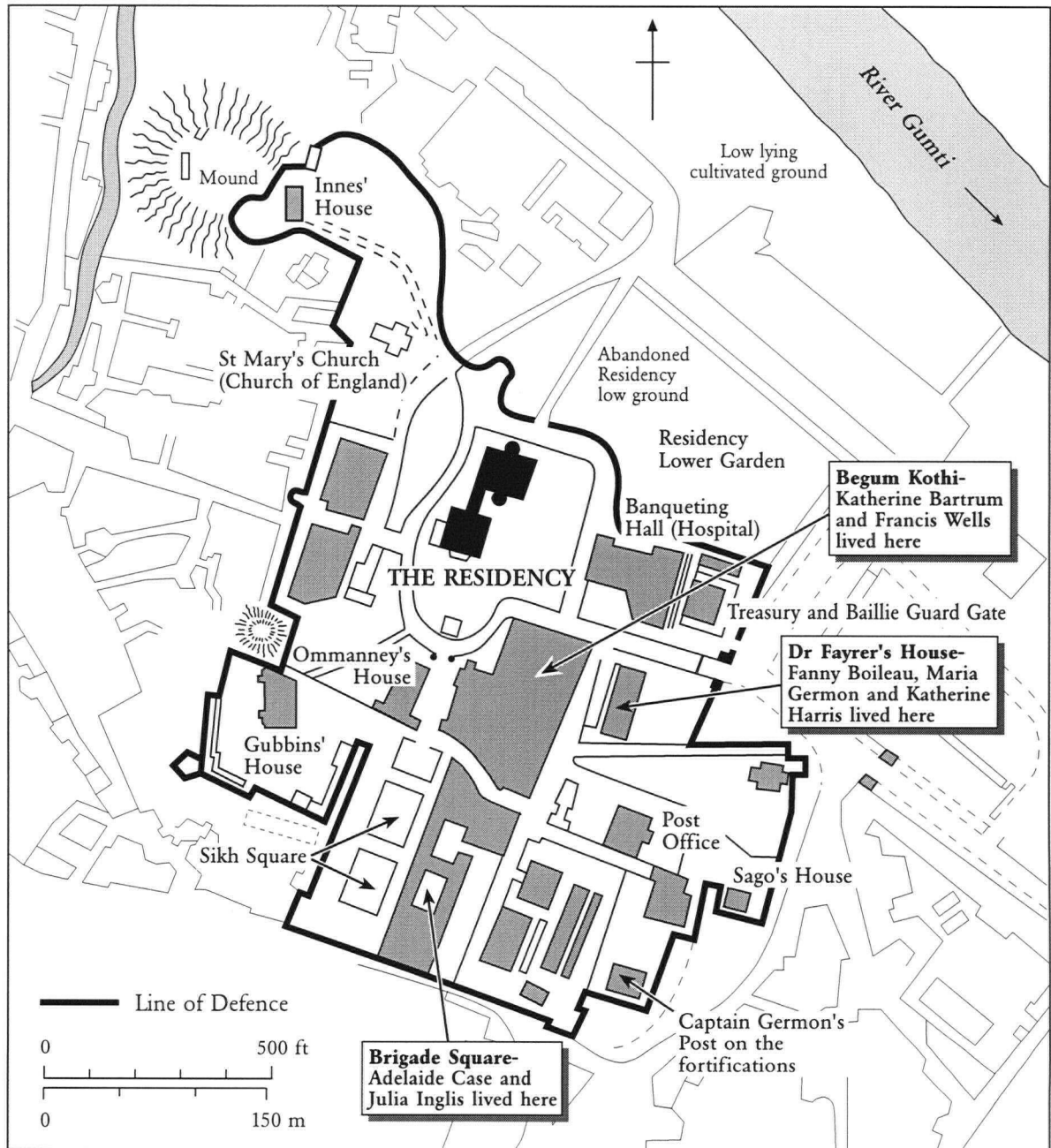


Figure 6: The Residency Compound, Lucknow, 1857

Source: E. H. Hilton, *The Tourists Guide to Lucknow*, Murray & Co., Lucknow, 1916, 9th edition and the *Illustrated London News* 20/3/1858

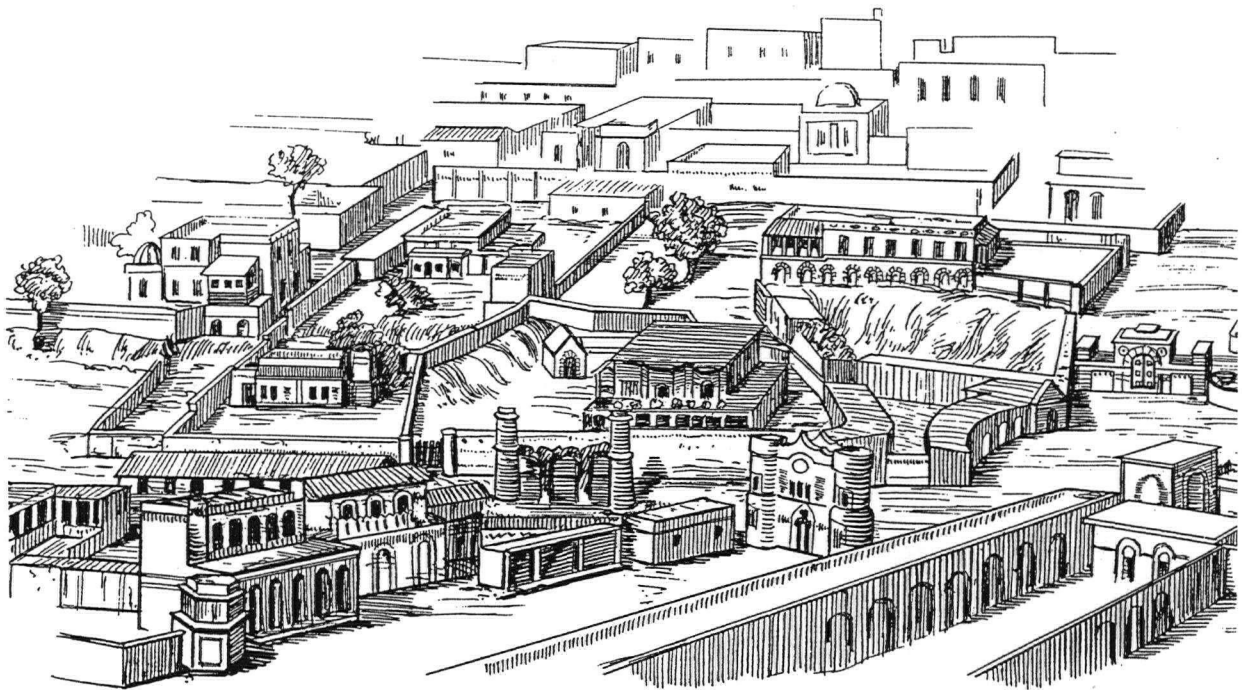
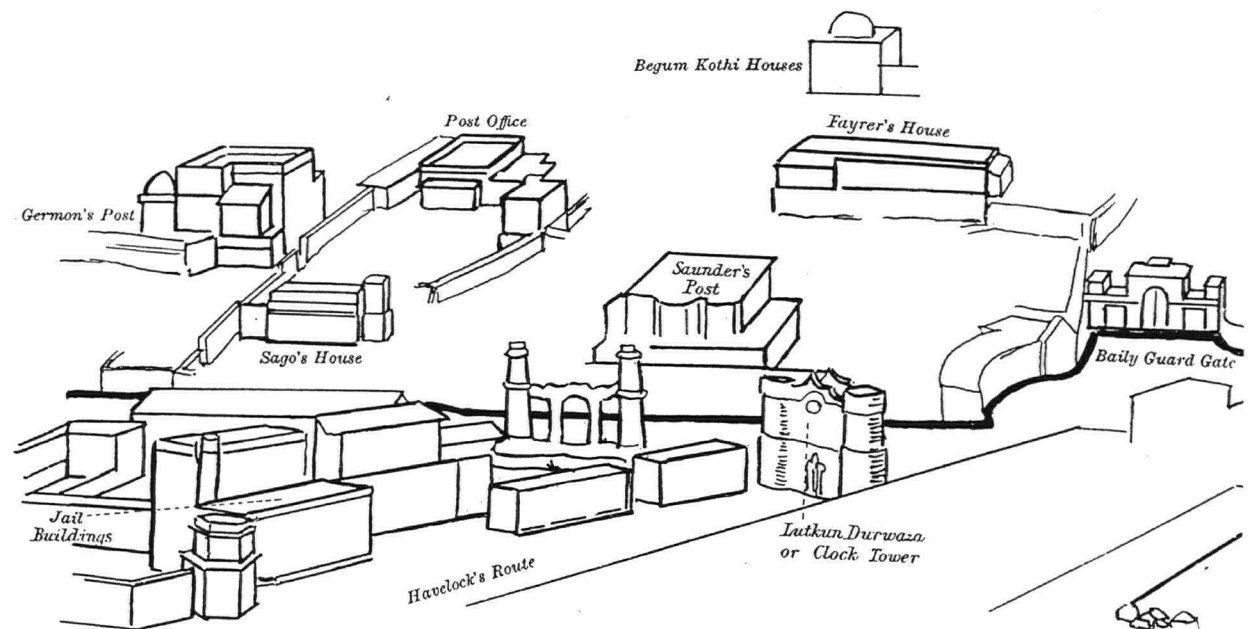


Plate 14: View of the Residency Compound at Lucknow from Moore's Model

Source: Innes, op. cit..

Two days later, the wife of the 'Padre,' Katherine Harris, described Dr and Mrs Fayrer as 'our host and hostess' and noted that 'The piano has been going on today a good deal; several of those here sing and play well; I think I shall go and listen.'⁴⁰ She was also concerned that 'It must be a tremendous expense to those kind Fayrer's entertaining such a lot of people.'⁴¹ But on May 31, all British women in the Residency compound were ordered to move to the Residency House because an uprising was expected in the city and, although the building itself was thought to be structurally weak, its central location on higher ground was thought to be the safest in the compound. Plates 15 and 16 represent the Residency House before and after the siege of Lucknow. Julia Inglis noted that 'To add to our uneasiness, we were told not to crowd too much together, as the building was not very strong, and it was feared would not stand so great a pressure.'⁴² On the same day, Maria Germon wrote that they were told 'not to congregate too many in one part as it was not safe - every room in the upper storey was crammed, we could hardly get room to put down our bundles.'⁴³ According to Julia Inglis, the Residency House 'was filled with women and children; all seemed very crowded and uncomfortable.'⁴⁴ The wives of officers and officials occupied the upper storeys, with six to eight in each room, and several slept on the roof to escape the 'hot babel.'⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Harris, op. cit., 27.

⁴¹ Ibid., 28.

⁴² Inglis 1892, op. cit., 24.

⁴³ Germon, op. cit., 34.

⁴⁴ Inglis 1892, op. cit., 17.

⁴⁵ Germon op. cit., 35.

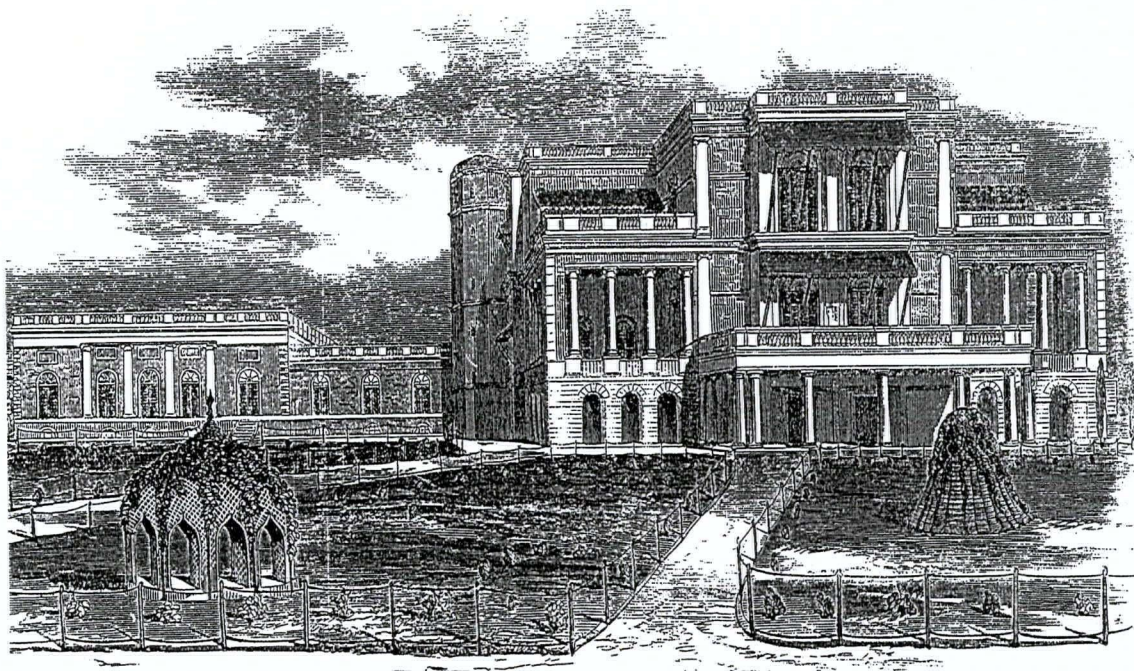


Plate15: The Residency House at Lucknow before the siege

Source: *Illustrated London News*, 20 March 1858



Plate 16: The Residency House at Lucknow after the Siege

Source: Mecham, op. cit..

As Adelaide Case wrote,

The view from the top of the Residency is truly beyond description beautiful, and in the early morning, when the sun begins to shine on the gilded mosques, and minarets, and towers, it is like a fairy scene. The whole of this vast city spread before one, and on all sides surrounded by beautiful parks and magnificent trees, forms a panorama which it would be difficult to see equalled in any other part of the world.⁴⁶

Katherine Harris also described the 'wonderful' view, writing that 'I never saw a more beautiful panorama - the whole of Lucknow spread out below us, with its innumerable fine buildings, gardens, gilded domes, and tall minarets - it was an enchanting sight, and the air so fresh and lovely.'⁴⁷ In both descriptions, a panoramic gaze over Lucknow not only facilitated but also contributed to representations of the city as a magical, other worldly place. In contrast, Maria Germon juxtaposed a distant with a closer view, writing that

The panorama of Lucknow from the top of the Residency is splendid and down immediately below us in the compound we could see the grey guns and all the military preparations, all every instant expecting an attack and firing going on in the distance....I shall never forget the night, the moon and stars were so brilliant overhead, looking so peaceful in contrast to the scene below.⁴⁸

Such a panoramic view of Lucknow was only available to those 'ladies' who lived in the upper storeys of the Residency House. The social and spatial marginalization of the wives of British soldiers were inseparable, as they lived in the *tykhana*, a large underground room beneath the Residency House (and shown on the left of Plates 15 and 16). These women remained largely invisible and unrecorded in representations of the siege, except when they were visited by the wives of officers such as Adelaide Case and Julia Inglis with clothes and food, or

⁴⁶ Case op. cit., 20-21.

⁴⁷ Harris op. cit., 27.

⁴⁸ Germon op. cit., 34-35.

when they were employed as servants. While they were living in the Residency House, Adelaide Case wrote that

Our evenings are usually spent on top of the house, and sometimes Mrs Inglis, Carry [Case's sister], and I go down into the Ty Khana, and see the women of the regiment, and any other poor creatures who may have been brought in there from different stations in the district. Mrs Inglis never goes down empty-handed. She is kind and considerate to every one, and often takes down some pudding or soup, which may have been at dinner, to a poor sick boy. A little tea, sugar, or any old clothes we can find to take with us to them is always very gratefully received, and it cheers their spirits to talk to them a little.⁴⁹

In her description of the Residency House, Maria Germon wrote that

I never witnessed such a scene - a perfect barrack - every room filled with six or eight ladies, beds all round and perhaps a dining table laid for dinner in the centre, servants thick in all the verandahs. Lots of the 32nd soldiers and their officers, and underneath all the women and children of the 32nd barracks.⁵⁰

Describing her visit to the Begum Kotie on June 18, Katherine Harris wrote that she had gone

to see the poor women who came in from Seetapore, and gave them a few old dressing gowns and things of mine I thought would be useful, as they had lost all of their own clothes...They were very cheerful, and seemed quite to have got over their troubles. It is wonderful how little that class of people seem to feel things that would almost kill a lady.⁵¹

As this suggests, any common experience as British women living under siege was lost in the face of class difference.

⁴⁹ Case op. cit., 23.

⁵⁰ Germon, op.cit., 28.

⁵¹ Harris op. cit., 56.

At the beginning of June, Katherine Bartrum wrote that 'My husband always consoled me with the promise that should things come to the worst he would destroy me with his own hand rather than let me fall into the power of those brutal Sepoys.'⁵² At Lucknow, Adelaide Case and Julia Inglis wrote that 'several of the ladies had poison at hand' to take if insurgents entered the Residency compound.⁵³ Julia Inglis wrote that the question of whether such self-destruction was justifiable had been widely discussed and that 'I said what I feel now, that it could not be right, and that I thought, if the time of our trial came, our God who sent it would put it into our hearts how to act.'⁵⁴ While Julia Inglis placed her Christian faith in knowing how to act if Lucknow fell, Adelaide Case saw the fate of herself and other 'ladies' at Lucknow as wholly in the hands of a Christian God. As Adelaide Case wrote,

Some of the ladies keep laudanum and prussic acid always near them. I can scarcely think it right to have recourse to such means; it appears to me that all we have to do is, to endeavour, as far as we can, to be prepared for our death, and leave the rest in the hands of Him who knows what is best for us.⁵⁵

In August, Maria Germon wrote that 'The future is a perfect blank, we are not able even to give a surmise as to what our fate may be - but we have all made up our minds never to give in, but to blow up all in the entrenchments sooner.'⁵⁶ Generally, however, British women diarists wrote about their survival on a daily basis by focusing on the hardships of living under siege in

⁵² Bartrum op. cit., 10.

⁵³ Inglis 1892, op. cit., 101.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 100.

⁵⁵ Case, op. cit., 118. Laudanum refers to a tincture of opium, while prussic acid was a highly poisonous liquid.

⁵⁶ Germon, op. cit., 75. Maria Germon reiterated this three weeks later, writing that 'everyone agrees that blowing ourselves up is our only plan in case our reinforcements do not come in time.' Ibid., 85.

domestic terms. As the writings of British women at Lucknow suggest, domestic and imperial disorder were intimately connected.

At the beginning of the siege, while their Indian servants remained, there was some continuity not only of home life but also of imperial rule from the perspective of British women diarists. Within a few days, however, most of the diarists recorded the desertion of their Indian servants in tones of great indignation. The only exceptions to this are the accounts by Adelaide Case and Julia Inglis who shared rooms in the Brigade Mess and whose servants remained with them throughout the siege. As Julia Inglis wrote, 'Our faithful servant, Curruk, was a great comfort to us; he was quite indignant if we appeared frightened, and would not allow that there was any danger of the enemy getting in. I am sure he kept all the other servants together, and in good spirits.'⁵⁷ But in contrast, and reflecting the accounts of most women diarists, Katherine Harris described the desertion of Indian servants in mid June:

our bearer [main servant], who has been with us almost ever since we came to India, and to whom James has been most kind, walked off, taking with him all his goods and chattels, and one of our punkah coolies to carry his bundle. We did not find out he was gone till some hours after his departure. A khitmutgar [butler] of Mrs Boileau's, who had been sixteen years in her husband's service, walked off today in the same manner. People's servants seem to be deserting daily. We expect soon to be without attendants, and a good riddance it would be if this were a climate which admitted of one's doing without them; but if they all leave us, it will be difficult to know how we shall manage. Their impudence is beyond bounds: they are losing even the semblance of respect. I packed off my tailor yesterday: he came very late, and, on my remarking it, he gave me such an insolent answer and look, that I discharged him then and there; and he actually went off without waiting, or asking for his wages.⁵⁸

For women like Katherine Harris, the desertion of household servants epitomised the imperial crisis on a domestic scale because previously established codes of loyalty and respect had been disrupted. As a result, the paternal benevolence that she attributed to her husband James was

⁵⁷ Inglis 1892, op. cit., 96.

⁵⁸ Harris, op. cit., 46-47.

also destabilised. For the first time, many British women such as Katherine Harris had to make tea, clean, wash their clothes and, occasionally, cook, although the wives of British soldiers were usually employed for this purpose. As Katherine Bartrum wrote in June, 'All our servants have deserted us, and now our trials have begun in earnest...how we are to manage now, I cannot tell.'⁵⁹ By the next day, however, she wrote:

We have found a woman who promises to cook for us once a day, and brings us hot water for breakfast and tea; if she will only make my baby's food, I shall be able to manage tolerably well. My time is fully occupied in nursing, and washing our clothes, together with cups and saucers, and fanning away the flies...I have taken it upon myself to keep the room somewhat neat and clean...even if I afford [my fellow-sufferers] amusement by giving them occasion to call me the servant-of-all-work.⁶⁰

Katherine Bartrum went on to write that even as the necessity of doing domestic work suggested the severity of the imperial crisis, it could also offer a diversion from the conflict. As she wrote,

In one way it was almost a blessing to have no servants, because it gave us so much occupation that we had less time to dwell upon our troubles and anxieties concerning those absent from us; and many a smile was drawn forth at the very absence of the comforts and even the necessities of life.⁶¹

In a similar way, Maria Germon recorded in her diary on July 3 that

When we awoke we found all our servants had bolted excepting my kitmatgur and Mrs Barwell's and one or two ayahs - the Fayrer's had not one servant left, so we were obliged to get up and act as servants ourselves and do everything except the cooking - even to wash up plates and dishes &c, and perhaps it was a good thing, it kept our thoughts from dwelling on our misery.⁶²

⁵⁹ Bartrum op. cit., 21.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 22.

⁶¹ Ibid., 23.

⁶² Germon op. cit., 58-59.

In late July, Katherine Harris, who also lived in the Fayrer's house, wrote that 'I am now head nurse as well as housemaid, and find plenty to do, which keeps my thoughts from dwelling too much on the misery and horror that surround us.'⁶³

For women such as Katherine Bartrum, Maria Germon, and Katherine Harris, imperial power was challenged most directly in a domestic sphere. By employing Indian servants, constructions of the racial superiority of British women enabled them to share in imperial power on a domestic scale, establishing what Rosemary Marangoly George has called their 'empire in the home.'⁶⁴ However, by having to do domestic work themselves, constructions of racial superiority were destabilized and the basis of imperial legitimation was threatened in the very areas - home and daily life - on which it had previously relied. In his history of the 'mutiny,' Sir John Kaye wrote that 'our women were not dishonoured, save that they were made to feel their servitude'⁶⁵ and, as Jenny Sharpe argues, 'the rebels had unsettled a colonial order to the degree of reversing its hierarchy of mastery and servitude.'⁶⁶ But such a reversal was clearly gender and class specific as it was only middle-class women - the sixty nine 'ladies' - who were made to feel an unaccustomed servitude. If British men had been positioned in this way, imperial self-legitimation would be completely compromised and, for the wives of British soldiers, who made up the majority of British women at Lucknow, such servitude was nothing new.⁶⁷ As it was, domestic and imperial power relations were both challenged and reinforced through the ambivalent place of British women who survived the siege of Lucknow.

⁶³ Harris, op. cit., 89.

⁶⁴ Marangoly George op. cit.

⁶⁵ J. Kaye, A History of the Sepoy War in India 1857-8, vol. 2, W. H. Allen, London, 1876, 354.

⁶⁶ Sharpe 1993, op. cit.. Also see S. L. Blake, 'A Woman's Trek: What Difference does Gender Make?' Women's Studies International Forum, 13, 4, 1990, 347-355.

⁶⁷ See Trustram op. cit., for further discussion.

Maria Germon and Katherine Harris returned to the Fayrer's house from the Residency building on June 1. They were joined there by Fanny Boileau on her arrival in Lucknow in June. Adelaide Case and Julia Inglis remained in the Residency Building until June 30, when, after 'a miserable day in a hot close room almost underground' with the wives and children of soldiers in the tykhana, they moved to rooms in the Brigade Square.⁶⁸ On her arrival in Lucknow on June 9, Katherine Bartrum lived in the Begum Kotie and remained there until August 8, when she moved to the Ommaney's house. The diaries written by these six women represent daily life in different places in the Residency compound throughout the siege of Lucknow. In particular, their diaries reveal the different experiences of these women as wives, widows, and mothers; the different places in which they lived; the establishment of daily routines under siege; and their representations of imperial and domestic disorder. Not only did class help to shape the experiences of daily, domestic life under siege for British women, but the location and nature of their living quarters within the Residency compound and their roles as wives, widows, and mothers also influenced their experiences of daily, domestic life under siege.

Domestic Life Under Siege

According to Katherine Harris, Dr and Mrs Fayrer were 'quite a young couple' who had 'one cherub of a baby boy 11 months old, who is the plaything of us all - he is the image of Murillo's St John the Baptist in the National Gallery.'⁶⁹ During the siege of Lucknow, their house was occupied by 'an immense party of unprotected females.'⁷⁰ In June, before the majority of Indian servants left the Fayrer's house and service, a total of one hundred and ten Indians and Europeans lived there, including eleven 'ladies,' six children, and three British men.⁷¹ This

⁶⁸ Inglis 1858, op. cit., 14.

⁶⁹ Harris, op. cit., 27.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 21.

⁷¹ Ibid., 41.

number included Katherine Harris and her cousin Emmie Barwell; Maria Germon, who had lived in the bungalow next to Mrs Barwell in cantonments; and Fanny Boileau and her three children. The 'male portion of the community'⁷² was comprised of Fr. Harris, Dr Fayrer and Dr Partridge. While Captain Germon and Captain Barwell were part of the defence of the Lucknow Residency and were posted on the fortifications, Colonel Boileau was in command of British and loyal soldiers outside Lucknow. In June, at the beginning of the siege, Katherine Harris walked round the Residency compound with her husband James, and described the fortifications as 'wonderfully strong...[T]he engineers say we can hold out against any number as long as provisions last, and long before they are expended we hope for relief.'⁷³ Four months later on October 1, after the first 'relief' of Lucknow, Katherine Harris walked round the compound with James for the first time since June and was shocked by the 'terrible destruction [that] has been wrought by shot and shell on all the buildings round. The Residency I should never have recognised: it is quite a ruin. This house is so riddled with balls at the back and one side, you could scarcely put a pin's head between them.'⁷⁴

When the siege of Lucknow commenced, the British women and children living in the Fayrer's house moved downstairs to the underground tykhana:

No sooner was the first gun fired than the ladies and children were all hurried downstairs into an underground room...damp, dark, and gloomy as a vault, and excessively dirty. Here we sat all day, feeling too miserable, anxious, and terrified to speak, the gentlemen occasionally coming down to reassure us and tell us how things were going on.⁷⁵

⁷² Ibid., 41.

⁷³ Ibid., 35.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 130-131.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 75.

The British women and children slept fully dressed on mattresses on the floor, 'fit into each other like bits in a puzzle, so as best to feel the punkah.'⁷⁶ The British men slept upstairs in a long room on the side of the house least exposed to the bombardment. Each morning, the women rolled up their mattresses and piled them against the wall. As Katherine Harris continued, 'We have only room for a very few chairs down there, which are assigned to invalids, and most of us take our meals seated on the floor, with our plates on our knees. We are always obliged to light a candle for breakfast and dinner, as the room is perfectly dark.'⁷⁷ In the evening, the women were able to sit on the verandah for half an hour to 'breathe a little fresh air,'⁷⁸ but otherwise they lived in close confinement. As Katherine Harris wrote,

our rest is much disturbed; what with the frequent night attacks of the enemy, the crying and illness of the poor children, the rats and mice which run over us, the heat, and the sleepiness of the punkah coolie, unbroken sleep is a luxury we have long been strangers to. We take it in turns to watch during the night for an hour each; mine is the second watch, from ten to eleven....I don't exactly know what is gained by these night watchings, except that we are all very nervous, and are expecting some dreadful catastrophe to happen, so that the rest go to sleep more easily, if one of the party is known to be awake.⁷⁹

Although Maria Germon wrote on July 16 that 'I rebelled against watching - we had quite a fight about it during the day,'⁸⁰ it was not until August 9 that Katherine Harris recorded that 'We have by mutual consent given up the night watchings. I suppose we are grown braver, so we voted there was no necessity for any one to keep awake, and composedly resign ourselves to the arms of Morpheus.'⁸¹ A week later, the British women and children moved upstairs to sleep in the

⁷⁶ Ibid., 81.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 81.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 82.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 90.

⁸⁰ Germon, *op. cit.*, 64.

⁸¹ Harris, *op. cit.*, 97-98.

dining room. Although she had been sleeping on chairs for her last three nights in the tykhana to escape rats, Maria Germon was opposed to moving upstairs where they could, for the first time, sleep on *charpoys*, or Indian bedsteads. As she wrote, 'I fought against sleeping in the dining room as I considered it dangerous but being the only one I was obliged to give in.'⁸² In contrast, Katherine Harris wrote that 'The tykhana is so damp, every one is ill, and the dining room is *tolerably* safe.'⁸³ Maria Germon felt the lack of privacy in the Fayrer's house most acutely when she was unwell and had to remain in bed for several days. As she wrote, 'Dr Fayrer told me on no account to stir from bed - there I was in the dining room all open to the public, our gentlemen passing and repassing the door, but there was no help for it - it was the only room we could have a punkah in.'⁸⁴

Throughout the siege, the Fayrer's house was under constant fire and, although the British women living there escaped injury or death, they were living in a place of persistent danger. In September, just before the first 'relief,' Maria Germon wrote that

As we were talking in the evening I ventured to say I thought we had never passed a single hour day or night since the siege began without some firing. I was immediately laughed at and told not five minutes even. If this ever reaches my dear ones at home they will wonder when I tell them that my bed is not fifty yards from the eighteen pounder in our compound - only one room between us and yet I lie as quietly when it goes off without shutting my ears as if I had been used to it all my life, eighty days of siege life does wonders.⁸⁵

In July, Katherine Harris recorded that two eighteen pound shells landed in the room that she and Emmie Barwell used to sleep in. But her closest escape was in October, when 'a bullet when through the leg of the chair I was sitting on; it just glanced upwards and struck me on the side,

⁸² Germon, op. cit., 80.

⁸³ Harris, op. cit., 100.

⁸⁴ Germon, op. cit., 95.

⁸⁵ Germon, op. cit., 94-95.

but having expended its force on the chair, I was not hurt.⁸⁶ A week later, an eighteen pound shell came through the room that she was now sharing with Emmie Barwell: 'It broke the panel of the door, and knocked the whole of the barricade down, upsetting everything. My dressing table was sent flying through the door, and if the shot had come a little earlier, my head would have gone with it.'⁸⁷ Daily life under siege in the Fayer's house was marked by many discomforts as well as dangers. Such discomforts included the heat of an Indian summer, illness, boils, ulcers, head lice (or 'Light Infantry' as Maria Germon called them), rats, mice, and limited food supplies. Throughout the siege, British women living at the Fayer's house were occupied by unaccustomed domestic duties that had to be performed despite the discomforts and dangers of life under siege.

During the siege, Christian observance helped British men and women to endure the discomforts and dangers through which they were living. After the death of Fr. Polehampton on July 20⁸⁸, Fr. Harris was the only chaplain at Lucknow during the siege. The diary kept by Katherine Harris reveals not only her own Christian faith but also reveals the importance of Christianity among the British at Lucknow more generally by describing the duties of her husband during the siege. On May 17, Katherine Harris attended the city church while she was still living in cantonments. She was disappointed at the poor attendance, writing that '[I] am sorry to say the people congregated at the Residency did not come. I believe the Meerut massacre began as people left church, so, perhaps, this had some effect in keeping them away, but there really was no danger to them, as the church is within the Residency compound, and there are 150 Europeans on guard.'⁸⁹ Four days later, she attended the Residency church again,

⁸⁶ Harris, *op. cit.*, 144.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁸⁸ Harris, *op. cit.*, 86. Fr. Polehampton was hit by shot while he was shaving in the hospital.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

but was one of only three people in the congregation. She was deeply troubled by the way in which British people appeared to be turning away rather than towards the church at a time of need and by the way in which a previously sacred space was now perceived as a space of danger. As she wrote, 'It does seem so very strange, and frightens one more than anything; for it seems almost daring the Almighty to show us how utterly useless all our human means of defence are, by thus trusting to them, and neglecting to seek Him who alone can succour us.'⁹⁰ Her concerns continued during the siege, when she came to believe that the unrest was a punishment inflicted on British rulers by God. At the end of June, Katherine Harris reported a conversation at dinner about the cause of the 'mutiny' and expressed her belief that it represented divine retribution for British policies in India that had included the annexation of Oudh and the discouragement of Christian evangelism:

--- was speaking at dinner today of the iniquity of the annexation of Oud[h], and thinks the tribulation we are now in is a just punishment to our nation for the grasping spirit in which we have governed India; the unjust appropriation of Oud[h] being a finishing stroke to a long course of selfish seeking our own benefit and aggrandisement. No doubt it is a judgement of God, and that we have greatly abused our power; and, as a Government, opposed the spread of Christianity; while individually, by evil example and practices, we have made our religion a reproach in the eyes of the natives. God grant that this heavy chastisement may bring all to a better mind!⁹¹

In light of her Christian devotion, Katherine Harris' description of the 'mutiny' as 'a just punishment...of God' conveys her despair. But in the religious observance of herself and her husband throughout the siege, Katherine Harris sought not only comfort but also forgiveness for the British people at Lucknow and the British nation at large. Prayers and readings from the Bible were held every morning and evening in the Fayrer's house and elsewhere in the Residency compound. For safety and because the Church itself was being used to store supplies, James Harris held four or five services every Sunday in different parts of the compound: 'this

⁹⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁹¹ Ibid., 60. Neither Fanny Boileau nor Maria Germon reported this conversation.

house, the brigade mess, the Tye Khana of the Residency, the hospitals, &c. Besides visiting the sick and burying, he administers the Holy Communion at one place or another every Sunday, taking the different houses in turn.⁹² In August, Katherine Harris wrote that 'Emily and Mrs Fayrer came out to church, and lay on two sofas, looking very interesting invalids. Mrs Polehampton, Mrs Barber, and Mrs Lewin came to the service. It was very affecting to see so many newly-made widows assembled together; with Mrs Dashwood and Mrs Halford there were five in the same room.'⁹³ Writing about the same service on August 23, Maria Germon recorded in her diary that

I always try to get some clean things to put on on Sunday as one way of recognizing the day - service at the Brigadier Mess at noon and in our house at 3pm...it was an affecting meeting, so many new lost friends - poor Mrs Polehampton was sobbing all the time - Mrs Lewin had lost both husband and child.⁹⁴

As well as conducting services, James Harris usually conducted five or six funerals a night, although, soon after the first 'relief' on September 27, he conducted twenty-five funerals in one evening.⁹⁵ Bodies were lowered into mass graves next to the church and, whenever possible, they were sewn up in their bedding 'as there are no people and there is no time to make coffins.'⁹⁶

⁹² Ibid., 111.

⁹³ Ibid., 103.

⁹⁴ Germon, *op. cit.*, 83.

⁹⁵ Harris, *op. cit.*, 126.

⁹⁶ Harris, *op. cit.*, 87. As Katherine Harris wrote, even though he conducted funerals at night, 'he is exposed to a hot fire the whole time. I feel so terribly heartsick and anxious till I see him come back again safe.' Ibid., 83. In a letter written from Allahabad on December 17 after the evacuation of Lucknow, James Harris wrote that 'My duties...were never-ceasing; and the trying part of all was that we got so little rest though so sorely fagged...I had slept in my clothes (rolled in a rug on the ground) for more than six months, and subject often times to be roused two or three times in the night by a general call to arms, when an assault was either made or threatened by our fiendish foes. In our small and open position no soul was safe from shot, shell, or

Captain Germon was posted on the Residency defences, but tried to visit his wife Maria every day in the Fayrer's house (see Plate 17 for a photograph of the Germons that was taken in Lucknow before the 'mutiny'). As Maria Germon noted on June 21, 'He is always sleeping at some gate or other but he looks better than would be expected.'⁹⁷ During the siege, Maria sewed a flannel shirt for Charlie⁹⁸ and wrote, in August, that 'I mended a pair of Charlie's unmentionables with a piece of Mr Harris's habit presented for the purpose.'⁹⁹ But unlike other women at Lucknow, Maria Germon did not wash Charlie's 'unmentionables' or his other clothes; as she wrote in October, 'Mrs Pitt told me her husband sent her all his dirty linen to wash and she had to do it without soap. I think he might manage that for himself, Charlie always washes his own.'¹⁰⁰

After the first 'relief' in September, British women were able to move more freely about the Residency compound and Maria Germon, accompanied by Dr Partridge, visited Charlie's post for the first time.

musketry fire....I buried some five hundred during the siege.' His letter was published at the end of his wife's diary. Harris, *op. cit.*, 200-201. He also described their material losses as a result of the 'mutiny': 'It is not a time to speak of losses, though ours have been heavy indeed - everything gone but a few clothes: carriage, horses, furniture, books, all. Our losses could not be repaired at the least under 1,200 pounds. I grieve for my books: they are things one gets to love from old associations.' Harris, *op. cit.*, 201.

⁹⁷ Germon, *op. cit.*, 48.

⁹⁸ As Katherine Harris wrote, 'All the officers have had their white jackets, trousers, and cap-covers dyed slate or mud-colour, partly to save the washing and partly because that colour is so much less prominent a mark for the enemy. They look such queer figures.' Harris, *op. cit.*, 65-66. There were, however, rare exceptions. Julia Inglis quoted Captain Birch writing that 'Some of the refugees from the neighbouring stations presented a most ragged appearance. One officer, whose clothes had been torn in the jungle, cut the cloth off the Residency billiard-table, and donned a suit of Lincoln green.' Inglis 1892, *op. cit.*, 70.

⁹⁹ Germon, *op. cit.*, 84.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.



Plate 17: Captain Charlie Germon and Maria Germon

Source: The Lucknow Album, India Office Library

As she wrote,

I...was perfectly thunderstruck to see it such a mass of ruins, not a portion on either side of it that is not riddled with round shot and bullets - the verandah all knocked down, it is impossible to tell there had been one. There are large pieces of masonry lying about - from the outside you would not think this house at all habitable and even the centre room Charlie occupies has immense holes in the walls made by round shot...I enjoyed a cup of tea with him - of course without milk or sugar [because of rationing] but it seemed Paradise to be alone with him again. He gave me a beautiful manuscript worked in small green and white beads on pink and gold paper - Dr Fayrer said, no doubt, by the ladies of the Court.¹⁰¹

Despite the evident dangers of his position, Maria Germon was able to enjoy being alone with her husband for the first time since the siege of Lucknow began. From this point, Maria continued to visit Charlie, even though 'Everyone thinks it very dangerous my going to his house but his room is tolerably safe, at all events as safe for me as him and it is so delightful to have a nice chat together for we know not how soon we may be parted.'¹⁰² Maria Germon took pleasure in the prestige that her husband gained as part of the defence of Lucknow. Sitting on the veranda at the Fayrer's house before breakfast on October 26,

Colonel Napier came up and chatted with me...[and said] 'I understand your husband has been acting extremely well throughout the siege' - I had no idea then that he even knew my name amongst so many ladies. I, of course, said I was pleased to hear such praise but I went down to breakfast as happy as a queen - to think that my dear boy was duly appreciated and to hear his praise from such high quarters. His position has been a most dangerous one - a very exposed outpost as the walls show.¹⁰³

Later that day, Charlie gave Maria a cashmere shawl that he had bought in an auction of property and she recorded the day as 'one of the bright days of the siege.'¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 103-104.

¹⁰² Ibid., 112.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 111.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 111.

Neither Maria Germon nor Katherine Harris had children of their own. But, in the Fayrer's house, they lived as part of an extended family that had been brought together at a time of strife and was dominated by women and children. For most of the siege, Katherine Harris and other women in the Fayrer's house came to act as proxy mothers, performing domestic roles to which they were personally unaccustomed but to which, as women, they were seen, and saw themselves, as ideally suited. While the 'mutiny' was represented as a crisis of imperial domesticity, British women at Lucknow performed and represented a range of new domestic roles, whether as servants or as proxy mothers, throughout the siege. Writing on June 20, Katherine Harris seems exasperated as she recorded that 'Every child in the house is at this moment screeching, and we are all distracted: both the poor little Dashwoods are ill and wearing their mother out; they will go to no one else, so one cannot help her with them. I never heard such a chorus of squalling in my life.'¹⁰⁵ In mourning for her husband, who had died of cholera on July 9, and in an advanced stage of pregnancy, Mrs Dashwood was increasingly unable to cope with her sons Ally, aged two, and Herbert, aged ten months. Katherine Harris wrote that 'Mrs Dashwood is very poorly, and quite unequal to the charge of her children; so I am now head nurse as well as housemaid, and find plenty to do, which keeps my thoughts from dwelling too much on the misery and horror that surround us.'¹⁰⁶ The following week, on August 2, Katherine Harris wrote that

Poor little Bobbie Fayrer is very ill; I never saw such a sad change as there is in him from the lovely cherub of a child he was some time since; he is now quite a skeleton, and looks like a little old man. All the children are very bad; the want of fresh air and exercise, and the loss of their accustomed food, have made them all ill.¹⁰⁷

On the same day, Katherine Harris wrote that she had been trying to wean Herbert Dashwood because his wet-nurse was threatening to run away as well as 'declaring her milk is gone.' As she

¹⁰⁵ Harris, *op. cit.*, 59.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

wrote, 'I feed him with thin arrowroot and sago mixed with a little milk, but he dislikes the change very much, and I fear it does not agree with him, for he has had diarrhoea, and now it has turned to dysentery.'¹⁰⁸ Seventeen days later, Ally Dashwood was suffering fever and dysentery 'and his life seems hanging on a thread.'¹⁰⁹ But it was his younger, weaker brother Herbert who died, at three o'clock in the morning:

One could not grieve; he looked so sweet and happy; the painful look of suffering quite gone, and a lovely smile on his dear little baby face. We closed his pretty blue eyes, and crossed his little hands over his breast, and there he lay by his mother's side till daylight; then she washed the little body herself, and put him on a white nightgown, and I tied a lace handkerchief round his face, as she had no caps. Charlie Dashwood [her brother-in-law] came over to see her, and we left her quiet with him and the dead baby till 11, when I was obliged to go in and ask her to part with it. She let me take it away, and I sewed the little sweet one up myself in a clean white cloth, and James carried it over to the hospital to wait there for the evening burials.¹¹⁰

On August 31, twelve days after Herbert's death, Mrs Dashwood gave birth to a third son, who was the second baby to be born in the Fayrer's house in August. Emmie Barwell had given birth to a son a fortnight earlier than expected on August 9. As Maria Germon wrote on that day, 'Mrs Helford [is] very angry at being turned out of her room to give place to the baby. Mrs Dashwood, who is expecting her confinement, had a fainting fit - a nice commotion in addition to a sharp attack with heavy firing from some of the guns close to us.'¹¹¹ Mrs Roberts, 'a very nice 32nd woman' and 'a copper-coloured individual of the name of Scott' were employed as nurses for Percy Barwell¹¹² and, on September 1, a soldier's widow was engaged as a nurse

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 94. See Chapter 5 for further discussion about the employment of Indian wet-nurses.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 102.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 101-102.

¹¹¹ Germon, *op. cit.*, 77.

¹¹² Harris, *op. cit.*, 97 and 98.

for Arthur Dashwood.¹¹³ As well as conducting funerals, James Harris also conducted baptisms and, in September, Katherine Harris stood as a proxy godmother for the two babies born in the Fayrer's house.¹¹⁴ Katherine Harris was also acting as a proxy *mother* for Ally Dashwood, writing that 'I have the sole charge of little Ally Dashwood, and now he is getting better, but is not well enough to play about, nor ill enough to lie down as he used to do; I seldom have him out of my arms, and feel rather as if he *must* be my own child; he is getting such a darling.'¹¹⁵ A month later, Mrs Dashwood and her baby Arthur moved to a private room in the Ommaneys' house, leaving Ally in the loving care of Katherine Harris because '[Mrs Dashwood] is anything but strong, and one child is quite enough for her to take care of at present.'¹¹⁶ In a similar way, Miss Schilling nursed Bobbie Fayrer because his mother was ill. As Katherine Harris wrote,

the poor little fellow has found a most devoted nurse in Miss Schilling; and if he lives, humanly speaking, the Fayrer's will owe their child's life to her unremitting care and attention. She watches him night and day, and never leaves his crib for a minute. The poor child is not allowed to be moved or lifted up. The only fear is Miss Schilling getting ill herself from over-fatigue and anxiety.¹¹⁷

Unlike Katherine Harris and Maria Germon, Fanny Boileau had three children of her own: a baby named Ina, Brandram aged five, and Anna, who was seven in November 1857.

¹¹³ See A. Dashwood, 'Untimely Arrival at the Siege of Lucknow,' in Brydon, op. cit., for an account, written in 1936, by Arthur Dashwood. In it, he describes his nurse as the widow of a British soldier, killed at Lucknow, who subsequently married another soldier. He met his nurse many years later in Britain, visited her on her birthdays, and attended her funeral.

¹¹⁴ The baptism of Percy Barwell was held on September 6 and the baptism of Arthur Dashwood was held on September 27, the same date that James Harris conducted twenty-five funerals.

¹¹⁵ Harris, op. cit., 109.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 140.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 102. As Maria Germon wrote on August 17, 'Mrs Fayrer with her little boy Bobby very ill - he looks a perfect skeleton - as for Mrs Dashwood's baby, you can count its bones - they are all just covered with skin. It is a terrible time for poor children, they pine for the want of fresh air.' Germon, op. cit., 80-81.

Unlike Harris and Germon, her brief diary entries recorded the death of a member of her family. In September, her diary entries all focused on the illness and death of Ina, who had been suffering ulcerated sores and diarrhoea since the beginning of the month. On September 12, she wrote that her sister-in-law had come from another house in the Residency compound to comfort her, but that her husband, 'the only one who could comfort is, alas, I know not where.'¹¹⁸ But, as she continued in pain, 'Oh, George, darling, thank God you are spared the agony that I have gone through during the past two days.'¹¹⁹ Ina died at five o'clock in the morning on the following day. As her mother recorded, 'I cannot write it, but I thank a merciful God who softened the blow, and took her gently, quietly, while she slept....poor Brandram feels it deeply, more so than Anna...Oh dear, I am weary, weary.'¹²⁰ As Katherine Harris wrote,

Poor little Ina Boileau died in the night; she was so very ill all yesterday, we knew she could not live; her poor mother, who had been watching her all night, had fallen asleep quite exhausted, and when she awoke she found the poor child quite cold in her arms; her cry of anguish woke us all; poor creature! she is distracted, and reproaches herself with having gone to sleep; but of course she could not help it, and she would not allow any one else to watch with her.¹²¹

The death of Ina Boileau was not recorded by Maria Germon. At Arthur Dashwood's birth, Maria Germon had been charged with lighting the fire and boiling the kettle, but throughout the siege of Lucknow, her domestic duties in the Fayrer's house did not include nursing and she rarely mentions children in her diary. Most of the Indian servants in the Fayrer's house 'bolted' overnight on July 2 and, as Maria Germon noted two days later, 'Firing had been going on all night and it continued all day, but we were so engaged in kitchen duties we scarcely

¹¹⁸ Boileau, *op. cit.*.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*.

¹²¹ Harris, *op. cit.*, 110-111.

noticed it.'¹²² The following day she wrote that 'The firing was still incessant - after breakfast Mr Harris arranged all our duties as up to this time I, Mrs Anderson and Miss Schilling were the only ones who had done anything.'¹²³ As Katherine Harris recorded, 'Work was portioned out, to each of us who are strong enough to do any, by James this morning. My share is to act housemaid, and keep the rooms we inhabit tidy and clean: I am also to nurse...any sick or wounded who may be brought to this house.'¹²⁴ Within a month, however, Katherine Harris wrote that her domestic duties had increased:

I have undertaken, in addition to my other work, to wash up the cups and saucers for the early tea; and I find every hour of the day fully occupied. It is a great comfort to have so much to do, and to feel oneself of some little use, and helps one to keep one's spirits much better than would otherwise be possible under the circumstances.¹²⁵

In mid July, Maria Germon recorded her daily routine, which was dominated by performing domestic duties under constant danger. As she wrote:

Rose a little before six and made tea for all the party, seventeen - then with Mrs Anderson gave out attah, rice, sugar, sago etc for the day's rations. While doing it a six pound shot came through the verandah above, broke down some plates and bricks and fell at our feet. Mrs Boileau and some children had a very narrow escape - they were sitting in the verandah at the time but no one was hurt. I then rushed at the bheestie [water-carrier] who was passing and made him fill a tin can with water which I lugged upstairs then bathed and dressed. It was about half past eight when I was ready so I went to the front door to get a breath of fresh air - at nine down again to make tea again for breakfast which consisted of roast mutton, chupattees, rice and jam. I then sat and worked at Charlie's waistbands till nearly dinner time when I felt very poorly but it passed off.¹²⁶

¹²² Germon, *op. cit.*, 59.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹²⁴ Harris, *op. cit.*, 81.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹²⁶ Germon, *op. cit.*, 65. Mrs Boileau did not record this near escape in her diary.

By late August, as the siege continued and provisions were diminishing, stricter rations were imposed throughout the Residency compound. By now, men had a daily allowance of twelve rather than sixteen ounces of meat and women had a daily allowance of six rather than twelve ounces.¹²⁷ In early October, Maria Germon 'was made mistress of all the provisions' in the Fayrer's house¹²⁸ and was busy for the remainder of the seige receiving and distributing rations that continued to decrease. After the first 'relief,' Maria expressed her anxiety about provisions for the whole compound and wrote that 'famine is too horrible to contemplate.'¹²⁹ Horses that were valued at less than 150 Rupees were shot to preserve the grain supplies for human consumption, and, on October 18, the residents of the Fayrer's house had sparrow curry for dinner to supplement their rations: 'Dr Fayrer had shot 150 sparrows for it - most pronounced it very delicious but I could not be induced to taste it.'¹³⁰ A week later, rations were reduced again, 'to fourteen ounces of wheat a day for a man and no grain for dal for any one and a smaller portion of rice. We have only fourteen ounces of rice a day for our whole party, so that we can only have it at dinner now.'¹³¹

Although Maria Germon was responsible for managing the food stores in the Fayrer's house and for making tea for the residents, she did not have to cook because Mrs Need, a servant employed by Mrs Boileau, had been engaged for this purpose. As Mrs Boileau noted on August 30, 'Our remaining two khitmaghars, who had up to this stayed by us, bolted this morning, and the ladies had to do the cooking with the help of my European woman, Mrs

¹²⁷ Ibid., 84.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 105.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 107.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 108.

¹³¹ Ibid., 111.

Need.'¹³² Two days later, she noted that Mrs Need was now in charge of cooking for the 'garrison' as a whole: 'I gave up my European servant for the cooking department and have sole charge of the children again.'¹³³ As Katherine Harris wrote,

Our only two kitmughars ran away last night, and great was the dismay in the household this morning when their desertion was discovered. No one to light the kitchen fire or boil the kettle for tea; we began to think some of us should be obliged to turn cooks, not at all a desirable office in such melting weather; but happily a friend indeed turned up in Mrs Need, a woman of Mrs Boileau engaged some time ago to take care of her children, who volunteered her services in the kitchen. The new *chef de cuisine* served us up such a capital breakfast and dinner, we began to think the departure of the kits rather a good thing than otherwise, especially as we shall be saved paying them a large amount of wages due for the last two months.¹³⁴

But Maria Germon's account reflects Mrs Boileau's unwillingness to give up her sole claim on Mrs Need: 'Great scrimmage with Mrs Boileau about her European servant being allowed to cook for us - we carried our point - the cooking establishment now consists of Mrs Need slightly assisted by Mannel and two little boys from the Martinière school - the latter are useful in the washing up departments.'¹³⁵ The following day, the Martinière school boys were taken from the Fayrer's to perform other duties elsewhere in the compound and 'there was a great scrimmage about washing up plates and dishes.'¹³⁶ But, as Katherine Harris recorded the next day, 'James engaged Mrs Weston, the sexton's wife, a half-caste, to come and help in the kitchen, and wash up plates and dishes.'¹³⁷ After the first 'relief' of Lucknow, it was possible to employ more servants. As Katherine Harris noted, 'James has got me a bearer, who relieves me of the dusting,

¹³² Boileau, op. cit..

¹³³ Ibid..

¹³⁴ Harris, op. cit., 104-105.

¹³⁵ Germon, op. cit., 87. Fifty boys from the Martinière School at Lucknow lived under siege in the Residency compound.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 88.

¹³⁷ Harris, op. cit., 107.

and now we have our Madras man and the B[arwell]s have got a kit there is no need for ladies to wash up cups and saucers, so I only superintend the general work and see that it is properly done.'¹³⁸

The Fayrer's house was strategically significant in the defence of Lucknow. Sir Henry Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of Lucknow, died in the Fayrer's house in July after being shot in the Residency building. Maria Germon wrote that 'we were all inexpressibly touched and grieved to hear poor Sir Henry had been mortally wounded.'¹³⁹ After receiving Holy Communion from Fr. Harris, 'Sir Henry then sent for several whom he fancied he had spoken to harshly in their duty and begged their forgiveness and many shed tears to think the good old man would so soon be taken from us, our only earthly hope in this awful crisis.'¹⁴⁰ As Katherine Harris wrote, 'James says he never met with such a humble-minded Christian, or attended a more truly beautiful and edifying death-bed...I shall never forget the miserable feeling of despair which seemed to take possession of us, as if our last hope were gone.'¹⁴¹ Katherine Harris nursed Sir Henry until he died peacefully on the morning of July 4. In her final words on his death, Katherine Harris wrote that 'About 12 the smell became so offensive I was obliged to ask James to have the body carried outside, so he called some soldiers to help carry the bed into the verandah.'¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Ibid., 140-141.

¹³⁹ Germon, *op. cit.*, 57.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 57.

¹⁴¹ Harris, *op. cit.*, 77.

¹⁴² Ibid., 79.

The Fayrer's house was also strategically significant in the first 'relief' of Lucknow because it was the first 'garrison' reached by the British forces and was used as the base for one of the commanders of these forces, Sir James Outram. Fanny Boileau wrote that

They poured in and ours being the first house the compound was full. I leant against the pillars of the verandah with a bursting heart, straining my eyes to see if I could find out my darling husband; meanwhile the Highlanders crowded round me and many were the hearty blessings and greetings we got the rough soldiers shaking my hand as if they would have wrung it off, with their hearty 'God bless you, Missus, we're glad we've come in time to save you and the youngsters.' They took the children up and seemed much shocked to see their state of emaciation...the tea-table in the Tyekhana was soon beset by officers and ourselves, asking and answering questions; one of our first being whether Queen Victoria was still alive or not.¹⁴³

Similarly, Katherine Harris wrote that

Never shall I forget the moment to the latest day I live. It was most overpowering...we heard a very sharp fire of musketry quite close by, and then a tremendous cheering; an instant after, the sound of bagpipes, then soldiers running up the road, our compound and verandah filled with our *deliverers*, and all of us shaking hands frantically, and exchanging fervent 'God bless you's' with the gallant men and officers of the 78th Highlanders...the state of joyful confusion and excitement is beyond all description. The big, rough-bearded soldiers were seizing the little children out of our arms, kissing them with tears rolling down their cheeks, and thanking God they had come in time to save them from the fate of those at Cawnpore. We were all rushing about to give the poor fellows drinks of water, for they were perfectly exhausted; and tea was made down in the tykhana, of which a large party of tired thirsty officers partook, without milk or sugar, and we had nothing to give them to eat. Every one's tongue seemed to be going at once with so much to ask and tell, and the faces of utter strangers beamed upon each other like those of dearest friends and brothers.¹⁴⁴

Maria Germon described the house filled with soldiers and officers as 'the most exciting scene I ever witnessed,' with men crowding in and a bagpiper standing on a chair to play.¹⁴⁵ Maria Germon thanked God for 'deliverance from the horror of famine which was staring us in the

¹⁴³ Boileau, op. cit..

¹⁴⁴ Harris, op. cit., 119-120.

¹⁴⁵ Germon, op. cit., 98.

face'¹⁴⁶ but, the following day, expressed her concern that 'strange to say none had brought any provisions.'¹⁴⁷ Soon after her initial euphoria at the 'relief,' Katherine Harris wrote that 'The disappointment is severe at finding the force which has arrived, instead of being strong enough to relieve, will in a manner increase our difficulties, by giving us treble more mouths to feed out of the scanty provisions left us. All at present is dire confusion and dismay, and faces in garrison longer than ever before.'¹⁴⁸

Despite her anxiety as the siege continued, Maria Germon wrote a long description of her sixth wedding anniversary on October 21. This description contrasts with her usual accounts of a daily, domestic routine under constant danger by portraying her marriage to Charlie and rare moments alone with him as a sanctuary during the siege. As such, her account provides a detailed and vivid impression of the reaffirmation of a loving marriage during the imperial conflict. This reaffirmation was inscribed in explicitly domestic terms. While Maria completed her usual domestic chores and sewed gifts for Charlie, Charlie himself obtained extra rations and made some 'sugar cakes.' For one day during their constant bombardment under siege, Charlie and Maria Germon were able to recreate a private space of marital, domestic bliss on their anniversary:

I got up at half-past six and had a cup of tea and a chupattee and then went to my *godown* [storeroom] and received and weighed the attah brought in from grinding and gave out the wheat for the next day, also our daily rations of attah [ground corn], rice, grain, onions and salt and spices. I then went and bathed and dressed and washed three pocket handkerchiefs, etc etc. At ten had breakfast, afterwards finished putting the Subadar's [Indian officer's] coat together for him to try on, then cut out and made a black silk neck-tie for Charlie...I then read till dinner at four. It was composed of stewed meat, a little rice and dal and a chupattee and toast and water. After dinner Charlie came for me as we were to spend the rest of the day together. I carried over a cup and saucer, teaspoon and wine-glass, the Subadar's coat and a book I had

146 Ibid., 97.

147 Ibid., 98.

148 Harris, op. cit., 123.

borrowed for Charlie. I found he had got a pint bottle of champagne, his rations for four days from the Brigade Mess (as sherry and port were all out). He would finish drinking it to our 'noble selves' and to our dear ones at home and he had made me with his own hands some sugar cakes, the remains of some sugar I had indented for when I was ill - he had not been very successful but they were very sweet coming from his dear old hands. He then went and begged a little milk from one who possessed that luxury. I had two lumps of sugar given me as a present and having a little cocoa left of days gone by I set to work and made us each a cup which we thoroughly enjoyed. Charlie pronounced it capital and I enjoyed it much with the little cakes. We then chatted cosily till half past seven thinking of the grand dinner we had eaten at the Barrackpore hotel that night six years ago and comparing it with our half rations in a battered garret. But I don't think it made either of us discontented, only thankful that our lives had been so mercifully preserved through such awful scenes. No one can see the battered condition of Charlie's house, an outpost, without feeling that he had been almost miraculously preserved. He walked home with me and about half past eight I went to bed.¹⁴⁹

* * * * *

Unlike the dangers and domestic hardships of life at the Fayrer's house, the two most senior 'ladies' at the siege of Lucknow lived in safer and more private quarters in the Brigade Square. Adelaide Case, the wife of Colonel Case, lived with her unmarried sister, Caroline Dickson, Julia Inglis, the wife of Colonel Inglis, and the Inglis' three young children, for the duration of the siege. After being forced to spend a day in the tykhana at the Residency House, Brigadier Inglis had a room prepared in the Brigade Square for his wife and children, Adelaide, and Caroline. The room was located in a central position in the Residency compound,

in a square surrounded by other enclosures, and the walls being high it was considered to be about the safest place. The room is just large enough to contain us three ladies and the three children. It is a most bare-looking place. Colonel Inglis had the place whitewashed. It looks like a room where provisions or something of the kind had been kept. We have a bathroom, where the grain for the goats is kept.¹⁵⁰

As Julia Inglis wrote, their location was safer than most in the Residency compound. Unlike the constant firing endured at the Fayrer's, she wrote that 'We have been in a partiular safe place

¹⁴⁹ Germon, op. cit., 109-110.

¹⁵⁰ Case, op. cit., 51.

during the siege, though bullets have fallen very near us, and an occasional round shot and piece of shell has found its way into our court.'¹⁵¹ But even though its location was safer than that of Dr Fayrer's house, the Brigade Square was also dangerous and frightening. In August, Adelaide Case described her position under siege:

An attack is going on while I am writing, and I cannot help thinking what would be the feelings of any lady suddenly transported from quiet, peaceful England to this room, around which the bullets are whizzing, the round shot falling, and now and then a loud explosion, as if a mine were blowing up, which I think is almost worse than all the sharp and fast fire of the musketry.¹⁵²

Julia Inglis described the relative privacy as well as the relative safety of their quarters:

Our room, which really formed part of a native gaol, was very small, hardly more than a verandah, about twelve feet by six feet, with no doors nor windows, only arches; but we put up screens and curtains, which gave us a certain amount of privacy; and we had an outhouse attached, which we used as a bathroom, a great luxury...The inhabitants of our court consisted principally of half-caste clerks and their families. In the next square to us lived a good many of the ladies, who were all together in a large room, and very uncomfortable. The officers of the native regiment had also their mess room there. On the other side of us was a square occupied by Sikhs of the 71st Native Infantry, and some Christian drummers and their wives. Our courtyard was considered the safest of the three. We had two wells in it, and an abundance of good water.¹⁵³

Within their room, Adelaide Case slept on one of two sofas, while Julia Inglis, Caroline Dickson, and the three children slept on mattresses on the floor. During the day, the mattresses were rolled up 'and we try to make our little room look as neat as we can, for it is used as a drawing room, as well as for a sleeping apartment.'¹⁵⁴ As well as the security and privacy of their accommodation, both Adelaide Case and Julia Inglis recorded that they were living more

¹⁵¹ Inglis, 1858, op. cit., 20.

¹⁵² Case, op. cit., 148.

¹⁵³ Inglis, 1892, op. cit., 52-53.

¹⁵⁴ Case, op. cit., 78.

comfortably than most people in the Residency compound because of the loyalty of most of their Indian servants. As Caroline Dickson wrote in her sister's diary, 'At Dr Fayrer's they have not a room which is safe, and they have no servants left, so they have to do everything themselves.'¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, their rations were supplemented by the plentiful stores that John Inglis had acquired before the siege began, which included 'hermetically sealed provisions, arrowroot, sugar, and, most fortunately, food for our goats, so that the children have never been deprived of their milk. We had daily rations of meat, flour, rice, tea, and salt, and managed to live most comfortably, considering the circumstances. We had no luxuries, but we were in want of few necessities.'¹⁵⁶

The day, June 30, that Adelaide Case and Julia Inglis moved from the Residency House to the Brigade Square, was also the date of the British defeat at Chinhut, which marked the final sortie of British forces and the beginning of the siege of Lucknow. Julia Inglis, who had been ill in bed with smallpox, 'posted myself at the window, from whence I could see our poor soldiers returning - a most mournful sight. They were straggling in by twos and threes, some riding, some on guns, some supported by their comrades. All seemed thoroughly exhausted.'¹⁵⁷ Among the one hundred and twenty British casualties at Chinhut was Adelaide's husband, William. Julia Inglis was with her when she heard the news of his death: 'John came in, he was crying; and, after kissing me, turned to Mrs Case, and said, 'Poor Case!' Never shall I forget the shock his words gave me, or the cry of agony from the poor widow. Mrs Polehampton took her into her room and tried to tranquillize her.'¹⁵⁸ For a week after her husband's death, Adelaide Case did not write her diary, but a record of events was kept by her sister Caroline in the form of a

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 100.

¹⁵⁶ Inglis, 1858, op. cit., 17.

¹⁵⁷ Inglis, 1892, op. cit., 45.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 45.

letter to her cousin Gabrielle. This letter was subsequently published as part of Adelaide's diary to provide a continuous record of daily life. Caroline described her late brother-in-law in fond terms:

You should have lived with him to know his many good and noble qualities. I mourn for him as for a very dear brother. I miss his cheerful face and merry laugh, and if I miss him, what must it be to dear Adelaide. The army, too, has lost in him a brave and gallant officer. He had a warm heart and a fine temper. He was beloved by all who knew him, and his servants, whom he had all the time he was in India, were much attached to him, and have proved themselves faithful by remaining with us now.¹⁵⁹

Expressing her own grief, Adelaide Case wrote that 'My poor heart is so weary and sad, that I feel truly desolate and lonely now in the world; and well indeed may I feel so, having lost one who was truly every thing to me.'¹⁶⁰ But even in the depths of her grief, Adelaide Case expressed her gratitude for the Inglis' acceptance of her and Caroline as part of their family: 'It is impossible to tell you how kind Colonel and Mrs Inglis have been to us. They have insisted on our considering ourselves as part of their family, and in such times as these how doubly valuable are kindness and sympathy?'¹⁶¹

On July 9, Adelaide Case wrote that 'Colonel Inglis brought me yesterday my dear William's Bible, Prayer Book, and a little 'Companion to the Altar,' which I had given him. It was entirely shot through by a ball. These, with another Prayer Book, were the only things of his saved.'¹⁶² The day after the death of Colonel Case, and during 'heavy firing,' Julia Inglis described the comfort she derived from her Christian faith. As she wrote,

¹⁵⁹ Case, *op. cit.*, 45.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 87.

We sat trembling, hardly able to breathe, when Mrs Case proposed reading the Litany, and came with her sister and knelt down by my bedside; the soothing effect of prayer was marvellous. We felt different beings, and, though still much alarmed, could talk calmly of our danger, knowing that we were in God's hands, and that without His will not all the fury of the enemy could hurt us. The firing soon slackened.¹⁶³

Just as in the Fayrer's house, daily prayers and readings from the Bible were an important part of life under siege for Adelaide Case and Julia Inglis. Recounting their 'pretty regular life' in July, Julia Inglis wrote that 'John breakfasted and dined with us every day, and managed to read the psalms and prayers with us in the morning, which was a great comfort, and prepared us for each day's trials; but beyond this I saw very little of him, unless the firing was particularly heavy, when he would just look in after it was over to show he was all right.'¹⁶⁴ The importance of Christian observance was marked on national as well as a personal scales, linking the British population under siege at Lucknow with British residents elsewhere in India and 'at home.' On October 4, Julia Inglis recorded that 'This day was appointed as the day of humiliation for the mutiny throughout India. We had service at twelve, and the Holy Communion administered. There were a very large number of communicants.'¹⁶⁵

Following the death of Sir Henry Lawrence in early July, Colonel Inglis - by now Brigadier Inglis - was placed in charge of the defence of Lucknow. Her incorporated status through marriage meant that Julia Inglis was now the most senior 'lady' at Lucknow. As her diary reveals, she and Adelaide Case, more than any other British women at Lucknow, were aware of the conflict both at and beyond Lucknow. On September 25, the first 'relief' of Lucknow, Julia Inglis wrote that

¹⁶³ Inglis, 1892, op. cit., 60-61.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 74.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 175.

[General Havelock] shook hands with me, and said he feared we had suffered a great deal. I could hardly answer him; I longed to be with John alone, and he shared my feelings, for ere long he returned to me, and never shall I forget his heartfelt kiss as he said, 'Thank God for this!' Yes, we were safe, and my darling husband spared to me. It was a moment of unmixed happiness, but not lasting. I felt how different my lot was to others'; and, of course, Mrs Case was my first care. She could not but feel what her happiness would have been had her husband been spared.¹⁶⁶

As well as meeting highly ranked officers such as Havelock, Julia Inglis was directly involved in communicating the besieged state of Lucknow by writing letters from her husband's dictation. On October 5 she wrote that 'I was busy all the morning writing letters from John's dictation, which he was writing to Lord Canning etc...I read General Outram's order to our garrison, which was most handsome and gratifying.'¹⁶⁷ Adelaide Case also read General Outram's Order, and noted that she had read Inglis' despatch to Calcutta two days before, which 'gives a very clear and good account of the whole siege,'¹⁶⁸ and which was also likely to have been written from dictation by Julia Inglis. Adelaide Case included a copy of Inglis' Narrative of the Defence of Lucknow at the end of her published diary, because 'it supplies those interesting military details which cannot be looked for in a lady's journal.'¹⁶⁹

The incorporated status of Julia Inglis and Adelaide Case as senior regimental 'ladies' was also reflected by a number of soldiers' wives and other women coming to ask them for food and clothes during the siege. On September 12, Adelaide Case wrote that 'an old Frenchwoman, to whom we had given some clothes before the siege began, came to see us, and asked for some tea and old clothes, if we had any to give her, as she had lost those we had given her; but of course nothing of that kind do we possess beyond what we have for daily use.'¹⁷⁰ Both Adelaide

¹⁶⁶ Inglis, 1892, op. cit., 158-159.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 176.

¹⁶⁸ Case, op. cit., 223.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 332.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 191.

Case and Julia Inglis recorded an affecting visit by a widow, Mrs Beale, whose husband had been an overseer of roads. As Adelaide Case wrote on August 14,

Yesterday afternoon a very respectable looking person, with a little baby in her arms, came to the door of our room, and after asking Mrs Inglis is she was 'the brigadier's lady,' said she had come to beg a little milk for her child, as she was afraid she should lose it if she could not get proper nourishment for it. Her simple story, told in such a genuine honest manner, affected us all, though one hears sad things every day. She said that her little baby was born on the first day of the attack; her husband...was shot through the lungs, and died almost immediately. From grief and fretting she had lost all her milk, and had nothing to give the poor little thing. She told us that she had lost three children...and was very anxious if she could to rear this one, to take it to her friends in England. Mrs Inglis asked her where her home was; she said, in Kent, and that her father is a clergyman there, and her husband's father was an officer in the army. She said she had every thing she wanted but nourishment for her child, and though many in this place are doubtless in the same sad plight, her plain tale, told without the slightest appearance of wishing to excite pity, made an impression on me I shall not easily forget.¹⁷¹

In this account, the class difference between Adelaide Case and Mrs Beale is clearly evident. Even though Mrs Beale was 'a very respectable looking person,' she was clearly of the lower middle classes and the widow of a man who 'had kept a large school in England, but came out to this country to try to make his fortune.'¹⁷² But Julia Inglis was unable to spare any of the milk from her goats: 'It went to my heart to refuse her; but at this time I had just enough for my own children, and baby could not have lived without it. I think she understood that I would have given her some if I could.'¹⁷³ Even though a clear class difference existed between Julia Inglis and Adelaide Case as regimental 'ladies' and Mrs Beale as an overseer's widow and a clergyman's daughter, they were all vulnerable during the siege and the class hierarchy reinforced by middle and upper class Victorian philanthropy could not be reinforced at a time of conflict.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 151-152.

¹⁷² Inglis, 1892, op. cit., 117-118.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 117.

Johnnie Inglis was four years old on July 16, and the occasion caused Julia Inglis to remember his birthday celebrations in the years before the siege of Lucknow. Editing her diary in 1892, Julia Inglis wrote that Johnny's birthday in 1857 was 'a sad one to us all:'

I thought much of the 32nd children, who used to have a dinner and dance on this day, and wondered what their condition was, for I could never believe the report of the Nana's treachery, and little did I dream that on this very day the last scene in this dreadful tragedy was being enacted, and these children with their mothers were being murdered in cold blood.¹⁷⁴

Julia Inglis' position as the wife of Colonel Inglis meant that family celebrations such as her children's birthdays were also regimental celebrations. Part of the 32nd Regiment was stationed at Cawnpore, and Julia Inglis learnt of their fate with the first 'relief' of Lucknow in September. On September 25, she wrote that 'Mrs Roberts, a sergeant's wife in the 32nd, came to tell us that the account of the Nana's treachery and the Cawnpore massacre was but too true. One of the survivors had come in, and his accounts were most fearful. This alone was enough to cloud our joy at being relieved, and at the same time to remind us of what might have been our fate.'¹⁷⁵

Unlike the children at the Fayrer's house, Julia Inglis' children had greater freedom and better health throughout the siege of Lucknow. Writing in late October, Julia Inglis stated that 'Johnnie and Charlie are at this time looking as well and strong as I could wish to see them. Baby is miserably thin and puny; I was obliged to wean him when I was taken ill, and the poor little man has not thriven since; I hope when we get out, and are able to give him a change of nourishing food he will pick up.'¹⁷⁶ In August, Julia Inglis wrote that her baby was growing thinner everyday, but that 'Johnny's rosy cheeks, which he never lost, excited great

¹⁷⁴ Inglis, 1892, op. cit., 76.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 160.

¹⁷⁶ Inglis 1858, op. cit., 18.

admiration.¹⁷⁷ She encouraged his friendship with loyal Sikhs of the Native Infantry, hoping that this would ensure his safety if the defence of Lucknow was unsuccessful. As she wrote,

he passed most of his time in the square next to us with the Sikhs, who were very fond of him, and used to give him chappatties (native bread), though they could not have had much to eat themselves, poor men! I used rather to encourage this friendship, as I thought if things came to the worst they might be the means of saving his life. We had a swing on the tree near our door, which was a great amusement, and altogether the children did not seem to feel the confinement very much.¹⁷⁸

Indeed, Julia Inglis also described the ways in which her sons' games reflected the conflict in which they were living. In early September, she wrote that

Johnnie's quick ears detected immediately when a bullet fell, and he would run to it and pick it up whilst it was still warm. It was curious to see how the children's plays and amusements harmonized with what was going on around us. They would make balls of earth, and, throwing them against the wall, would say they were shells bursting. Johnnie fell down one day, and getting up very dusty, said: 'They'll say I have been mining.' He often asked, 'Is that the enemy or us firing?' They slept soundly in the midst of the heaviest cannonading, and never appeared frightened.¹⁷⁹

* * * * *

Katherine Bartrum, who had travelled to Lucknow from Gonda, lived with her baby son in the Begum Kotie for the first two months of the siege of Lucknow, and then moved to the Ommaney's house like Mrs Dashwood and her baby. The Begum Kotie was located in the square next to the Brigade Square, but consisted of one large, crowded room that was shared by many women and children in contrast to the seclusion and privacy enjoyed by Adelaide Case and Julia Inglis. On her arrival at the Begum Kotie, Katherine Bartrum described it as 'a most uninviting looking place, so dirty, having neither a punkah to cool to air or a scrap of furniture

¹⁷⁷ Inglis, 1892, op. cit., 134.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 134-135.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 144.

to set it off, but we had to make the best of it.¹⁸⁰ Mrs Clark, with whom Katherine had travelled from Gonda, remained in the Residency House. As Katherine Bartrum wrote,

I scarcely knew anyone in Lucknow at that time, and the few I did know were members of other garrisons, so that we never met. Who can describe the trouble and anxiety of that period? I was then left for the first time to take care of myself...I was entirely without servants, and thrown amongst a crowd of strangers, too much taken up with their own trials and anxieties to heed another.¹⁸¹

A punkah was put up during the day and, that night, fifteen women slept 'packed close together, so that each might feel [its] benefit.'¹⁸² Except at night, the communal room was divided into portions to demarcate space for each woman and her possessions:

each person taking a corner for herself, which she henceforth looked upon as her own property, where she stowed away her bed and other valuables, principally consisting of a single change of linen, for those who, like myself, had fled from the district, not being able to save anything, were indebted to the kindness of many in Lucknow, who promptly and willingly gave their clothes, and supplied other comforts to those who came in as fugitives from the out-stations.¹⁸³

Like Maria Germon, Katherine Bartrum described her daily, domestic routine under siege. After washing and dressing their children, tidying the room, and breakfast, the women in the Begum Kotie spent the rest of the day 'employed in various domestic matters, and in endeavouring to keep ourselves cool.'¹⁸⁴ In the evenings, by candlelight, sitting on their mattresses, drinking weak tea, and gathered round a chair that served as a tea-table, the women in the Begum Kotie talked about their memories of life in Britain:

¹⁸⁰ Bartrum, *op. cit.*, 16.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

we talked together of bygone days, of happy homes in England where our childhood had been spent, bringing from memory's stores tales to cheer the passing hour, and thinking of loved ones far away: of the father that knew not as yet that his child was a captive in a foreign land: of the bright band of sisters and brothers who formed the household circle: but most of all of the husband fleeing perhaps for his life, whose heart was with his wife and child in their captivity, and who might even then be coming to their rescue - and many were the prayers sent up to heaven that such might be the case.¹⁸⁵

The domestic significance of the 'mutiny' is encapsulated here on several scales. Not only did British women like Katherine Bartrum miss their happy homes and families in Britain, but they were acutely anxious about the fate of their husbands. Not only did British soldiers seek vengeance for the fate of their countrywomen, but they also sought to rescue their own wives and children from captivity at Lucknow. The conflict itself was represented in familial and domestic as well as national and imperial terms, reflecting the pain, grief, and suffering of the British women living under siege at Lucknow.

Katherine Bartrum lived a confined life under siege. As she wrote on June 30, 'I knew but little of what went on outside our room. We dared not venture out on account of the shot and shell which were flying thickly about, and I found enough to do indoors in the care of my baby and the constant drudgery of household work.'¹⁸⁶ A week later, she stood by the door with her baby, 'looking out into the courtyard at a little girl playing with a round shot, when she was struck in the head and killed instantly. It gave me such a shock that I fainted away at the time.'¹⁸⁷ By this time, two women within the Begum Kotie had died, one from cholera, and one from smallpox. Katherine Bartrum's baby was also ill and, on July 31, 'Dr Wells told me my child was dying; he was so ill he would take no notice of me.'¹⁸⁸ She herself became ill the following

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 24.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 27.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 30.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 35.

day, and, feeling 'as if I should go out of my mind if we stayed in that room any longer,'¹⁸⁹ she and her baby moved to share a room with another woman in the Ommaney's house. Here, she had to cook for the first time, and felt that she was 'terribly stupid at it. I am generally thinking more of baby than the dinner when I have to prepare it: however there is a prospect of my having sufficient opportunity for improving in this matter before the siege is over.'¹⁹⁰

On September 25, Katherine Bartrum described 'the noise, the confusion, and cheering, were almost overwhelming,' as the first 'relief' force entered Lucknow. She was told that her husband would reach Lucknow with the artillery the following morning, so, the next day, she 'was up with the daylight, and dressed myself and baby in the one clean dress which I had kept for him throughout the siege until his papa should come.'¹⁹¹ She watched for her husband for most of the day, 'full of happiness,' and climbed to the top of the Residency building to look out for him. But by September 27, she was 'Still watching for my husband, and still he came not, and my heart was growing very sick with anxiety.'¹⁹² Her worst fears were realised when Mrs Polehampton came to tell her that Dr Bartrum had been killed and to comfort her in her distress. As Katherine Bartrum wrote, 'she had passed through the furnace herself and could feel for others whom the storm had smitten down...her quiet, heartfelt sympathy was very precious in that first hour of desolation.'¹⁹³ In her grief, Katherine Bartrum described her baby as 'doubly dear to me: all I had left to make life endurable.'¹⁹⁴ In the days that followed the news of her husband's death, Dr Bartrum's two servants brought Katherine 'his sword, pistol, and instrument

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 36.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 37.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 44.

¹⁹² Ibid., 45.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 45-46.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 46.

case'¹⁹⁵ and remained with her for the rest of the siege. She described them as 'a great comfort to me, they relieve me of the very hard work, and yet I have still plenty to do.'¹⁹⁶ She was also visited by Dr Bradshaw, who had been with her husband when he died. As she wrote, 'It made me almost forget my sorrow to hear him spoken of in such high terms of praise. His was a glorious death: coming to the rescue of his wife and child, he fell at his post doing his duty.'¹⁹⁷ For Katherine Bartrum, her husband's duty as part of the British forces attempting to relieve Lucknow was a duty that was familial and domestic as well as national and imperial.

Travelling Away

On November 17, British women diarists recorded their shock at learning that they were to be evacuated from Lucknow the following day. Leaving the Residency compound, British women and children were evacuated east to Secundra Bagh and the Dilkusha Palace and on to Cawnpore, Allahabad, and, by January 1858, to Calcutta (Figures 7 and 8). Katherine Harris wrote that 'We were astounded this morning after prayers by the news that *tomorrow night* this place is to be evacuated. We are all to leave it, with only as much of our wordly goods as we can carry in our hands. I feel utterly bewildered.'¹⁹⁸ In the event, their departure was delayed by another day because of the need to evacuate the sick and wounded first. In their diverse representations of the evacuation, British women recorded joy, regret, and anxiety at leaving Lucknow.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 47.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 50.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 47.

¹⁹⁸ Harris op. cit., 160. Inglis described herself as 'thunderstruck' (Inglis 1892 op. cit., 197) and Germon described the news as 'like a thunderbolt' (Germon op. cit., 119).

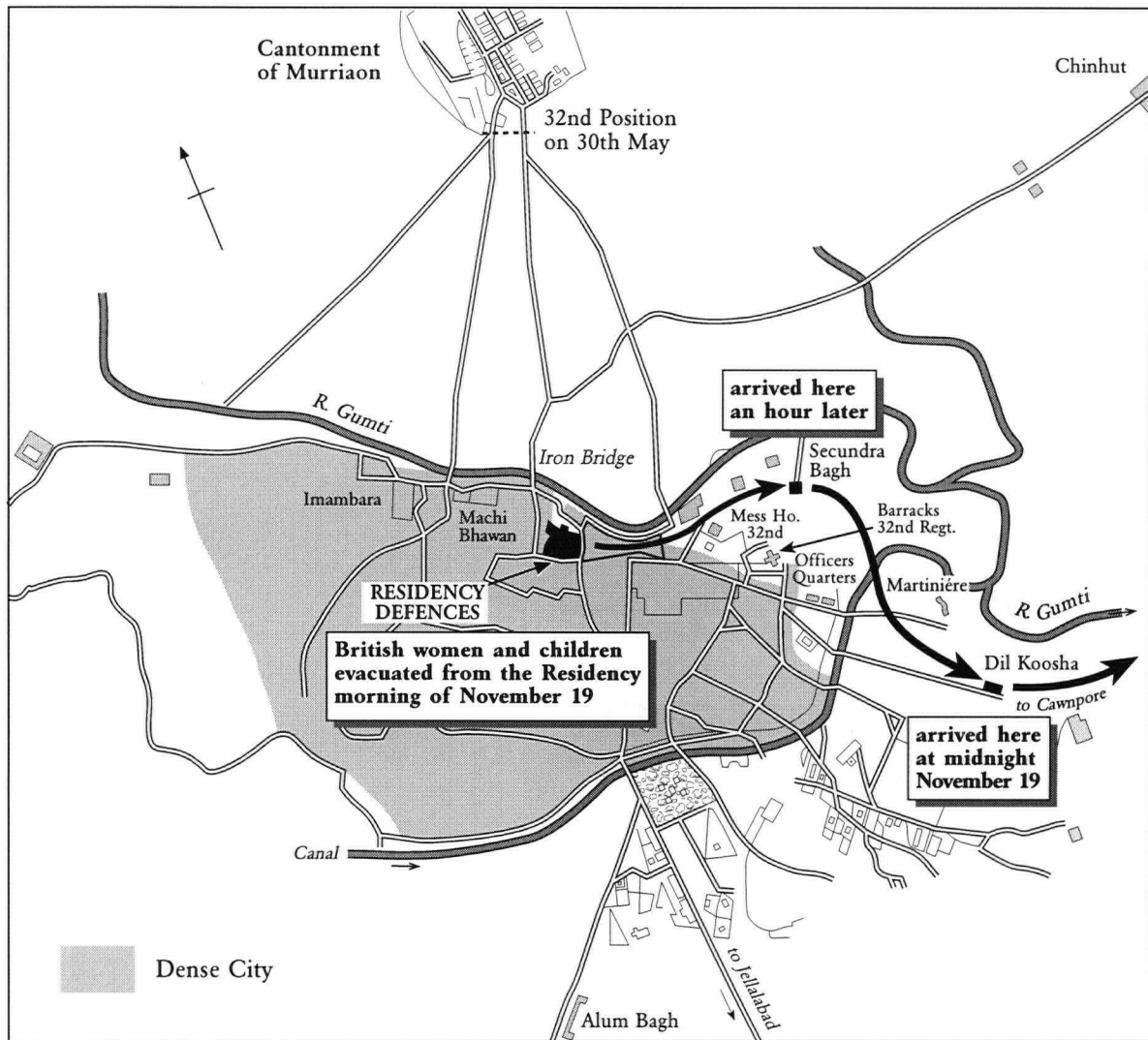


Figure 7: Evacuation route of British women and children from Lucknow, 19 November, 1857

Source: Innes op. cit.

Katherine Harris expressed her surprise and concern at the evacuation: 'It seems such an extraordinary step, after holding the garrison for so long; no one ever dreamed for a moment of such a measure as evacuating Oud[h] now. I trust it is all for the best. If we live to reach Calcutta, we shall be in a state of destitution.'¹⁹⁹ Julia Inglis also wrote about the strategic implications of the evacuation, perceiving her place at Lucknow as part of the British defence: 'We were...truly grieved to think of abandoning the place we had held so long with a small force, now that it seemed to us we could have driven the enemy completely out of Lucknow, reestablished our supremacy, and marched out triumphantly.'²⁰⁰ In contrast, rather than perceive herself as part of an heroic Lucknow defence, Ann Ellen Huxham wrote of her 'deep feelings of joy and gratitude'²⁰¹ at being saved by other heroic defenders. As she left the Residency compound, 'many of our dear good soldiers who were standing there on duty and who had risked their lives for us, accosted us with kind words such as 'God bless you, we are so glad to have saved you,' and as we passed onwards we thanked them heartily.'²⁰²

In their accounts of leaving Lucknow, however, most British women wrote about the material, domestic concerns of how to pack and transport their 'worldly goods' rather than the strategic implications of the evacuation. Whilst some women were told that one camel per person would bear their possessions, others were told that they could only take what they could wear and carry. Colina Brydon, for example, was able to take all her possessions except her harp, although three days after leaving Lucknow she had procured a carriage and sent four servants back, 'through a good deal of firing,'²⁰³ to fetch it. Other women made bonfires of their

¹⁹⁹ Harris op. cit., 160-1.

²⁰⁰ Inglis 1892, op. cit., 197.

²⁰¹ Huxham op. cit.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Brydon op. cit., 69.

property to prevent it falling into rebel hands,²⁰⁴ and sewed their valuables into their clothes. Maria Germon, for example, sewed her mother's fish knife and fork into her skirt, filled her pockets with her jewellery and journal, and wore a bag with her lace sewn up inside. Leaving Lucknow, and parting from Charlie who remained as part of the defence, Maria Germon also wore as many clothes as possible, including 'four flannel waistcoats, three pairs of stockings, three chemises, three drawers, one flannel and four white petticoats, my pink flannel dressing-gown skirt, plaid jacket and over all my cloth dress and jacket.'²⁰⁵

In their diaries, most British women wrote about the personal logistics of packing and leaving Lucknow rather than the strategic implications of the evacuation. Furthermore, as they left Lucknow, few British women commented on the areas of fighting through which they travelled. Adelaide Case was the only woman to record her impressions of Lucknow as she left the city:

The scene of ruin, devastation, and misery which presented itself to our eyes when we got out I *never, never* shall forget. To describe it would be impossible; but the horrors of war presented themselves with full force in the mass of shattered buildings and dilapidated gateways through which we passed.²⁰⁶

In their accounts of leaving Lucknow, however, most British women appear largely detached from 'the horrors of war.' This detachment became most clearly apparent as, after walking for an hour, they assembled in the large, walled garden that surrounded the two-storied house,

²⁰⁴ Inglis 1892, op. cit.

²⁰⁵ Germon op. cit., 120-1. As Germon continues, she mounted her pony 'with great difficulty,' assisted by her husband and Captain Weston, who, with a large party, 'were in fits of laughter.' Ibid., 121. Once she had left the Residency, she had to dismount at one point to lead her pony through a trench and needed the assistance of three men and a chair to remount. Because of these difficulties, she chose to ride rather than walk through other dangerous parts of the route.

²⁰⁶ Case op. cit., 288-9.

Sikandar Bagh, which had been the site of heavy fighting three days before.²⁰⁷ The advancing British forces had killed over a thousand Indians, whose bodies had been barely covered with soil by the time the evacuated women arrived. Despite this, Julia Inglis was the only diarist to comment on the proximity of one of 'the horrors of war,' writing that 'Nearly 1200 of them had been cut to pieces, no quarter being asked or granted. Their bodies had just been covered over with earth, and it sickened me to feel they were so near us.'²⁰⁸ Other women diarists described Sikandar Bagh as the place where they ate 'a regular feast' of bread and butter, beef, and chicken. For the British women evacuated from Lucknow, these 'long untasted luxuries' provided the first experience of freedom since living under siege.²⁰⁹

Representations of the crisis by British women began to change, however, when they reached the Dilkusha Palace - a hunting lodge that stood in an extensive deer park (Plate 18) - at midnight on November 19 and received letters from Britain that had been accumulating for the past five months.²¹⁰ In their writings about leaving Lucknow, letters from home prompted British women diarists to an unprecedented level of self-reflection about the imperial crisis.

²⁰⁷ Sikandar Bagh had been built by Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. P.J.O. Taylor, 'Empire and the Pursuit of Aesthetics,' The Taj Magazine: Lucknow, 23, 1, 1994, 42-53.

²⁰⁸ Inglis 1892, op. cit., 200.

²⁰⁹ Harris op. cit., 163. As Ann Ellen Huxham wrote, 'We felt rather folorn until our attention was directed to a splendid feast, spread under some trees, consisting of cold beef and chickens, and bread and butter, luxuries to which we had been strangers for many months. I don't think we ever enjoyed any meal in our lives so much as that *al fresco* supper.' Huxham, op. cit.

²¹⁰ The Dilkusha Palace had been built by Nawab Saadat Ali Khan. Taylor op. cit. Letters were dated up to September 18 and Frances Wells, for example, received nineteen. Frances Wells to her father, Dr Fox, from Allahabad, 12 December 1857.

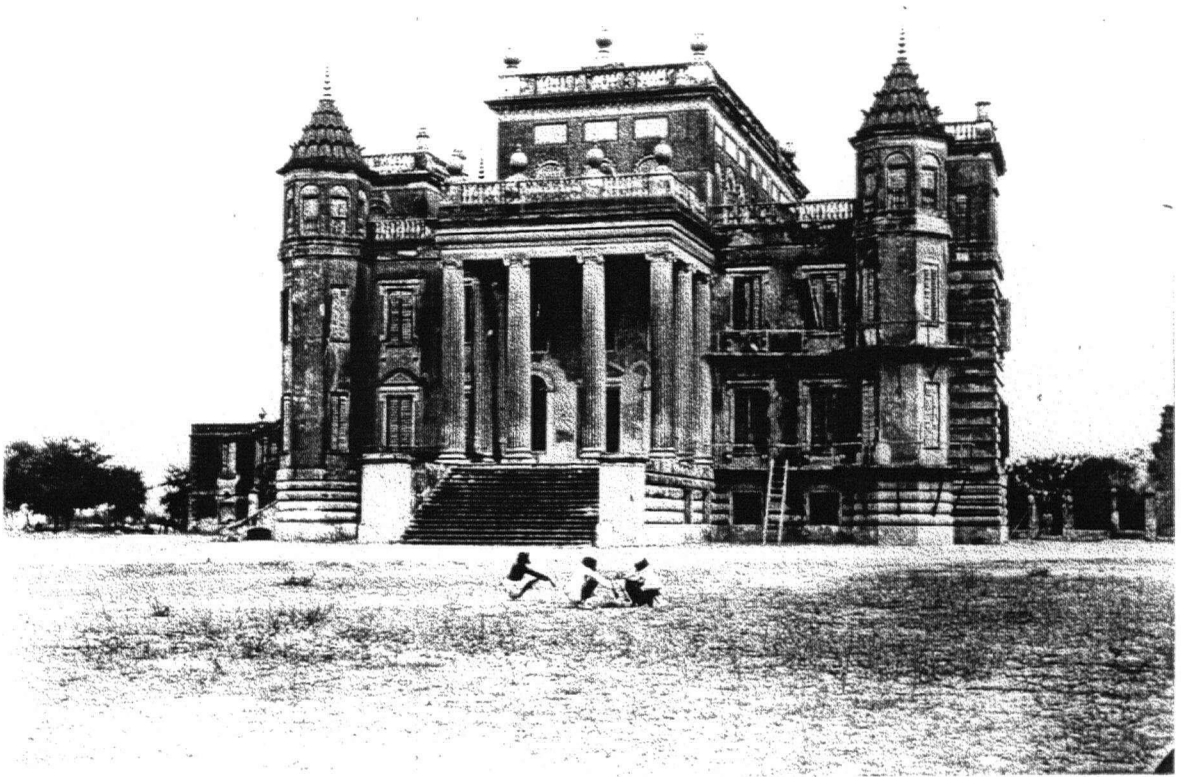


Plate 18: The Dilkusha Palace, Lucknow

Source: Photo 25.2 neg.B.4313, India Office Library

Katherine Bartrum received letters from her husband before his death in September, and from his mother who did not know of his death, prompting her to write 'How changed the scene from this day three years ago, when all looked so bright and fair; now I am alone, and there are few in this strange land to care for me.'²¹¹ Letters from home made British women aware for the first time of public as well as familial concern about their place at the centre of an imperial crisis. Adelaide Case wrote that 'The anxiety of England is heartrending to think of, and public sympathy seems indeed to be bestowed upon us to the very highest degree,'²¹² while Julia Inglis reflected on the imperial as well as personal implications of the crisis: 'how many, many sad hearts and homes there must be in England just now; and really at present one cannot see an end to our troubles. The whole of Bengal is such an unsettled state that no one can tell when or where a fresh disturbance may break out.'²¹³

The hasty evacuation of British women and children from Lucknow, followed by the withdrawal of all British forces, suggest that even after the second 'relief,' British women continued to be at the centre of an imperial crisis. However, their representations not only of such an imperial crisis but also their place within it were often ambivalent. Most British women wrote about leaving Lucknow in personal and domestic terms that seem largely detached from the imperial, strategic context in which they were living and travelling. For example, whilst they were all concerned with packing and transporting their material possessions and the dietary luxuries of freedom, few British women wrote about the destruction of Lucknow and the recent battle at Sikandar Bagh. However, on receiving letters from home, they began to represent their position in different ways, describing the crisis in imperial as well as domestic terms as they came to perceive themselves as the centre of both public and familial concern. While such self-

²¹¹ Bartrum *op. cit.*, 57.

²¹² Case *op. cit.*, 294.

²¹³ Inglis 1858, *op. cit.*, 29-30.

reflective representations were triggered by receiving letters from Britain, they were further extended by visiting Cawnpore.

The journey to Cawnpore was slow, hot, and dusty. As Maria Germon wrote, 'Never shall I forget the scene - as far as the eye could search on all sides were strings of vehicles, elephants, camels, etc. The dust was overpowering,'²¹⁴ while Katherine Bartrum recorded that the confusion of the march was 'perfectly indescribable.'²¹⁵ Cawnpore continued to be a site of conflict and, as they crossed the River Ganges at night and in silence on November 30, the sound of gunfire was clearly audible. Despite being closely besieged for five months, Katherine Harris wrote that 'I never, during the whole siege, more thoroughly realised such an extreme sense of nearly-impending danger, and how very close death might be: one felt as if the very next instant perhaps might be one's last. I shall never forget crossing that river.'²¹⁶

In contrast to their previous detachment from the conflict and the places through which they travelled, Cawnpore and the events that had taken place there represented the first place and the first conflict that most British women described on their journey away from Lucknow. As Julia Inglis wrote, 'My feelings on entering Cawnpore were indeed most painful. The moon was bright, and revealed to us the sad spectacle of ruined houses, trees cut down, or branches stripped off, everything reminding us of the horrors that had been enacted in the place, and making us feel thoroughly miserable.'²¹⁷ Julia Inglis and other British women had learnt of events at Cawnpore from the first 'relief' force that reached Lucknow in September.

²¹⁴ Germon *op. cit.*, 127.

²¹⁵ Bartrum *op. cit.*, 58.

²¹⁶ Harris *op. cit.*, 178.

²¹⁷ Inglis 1892, *op. cit.*, 214.

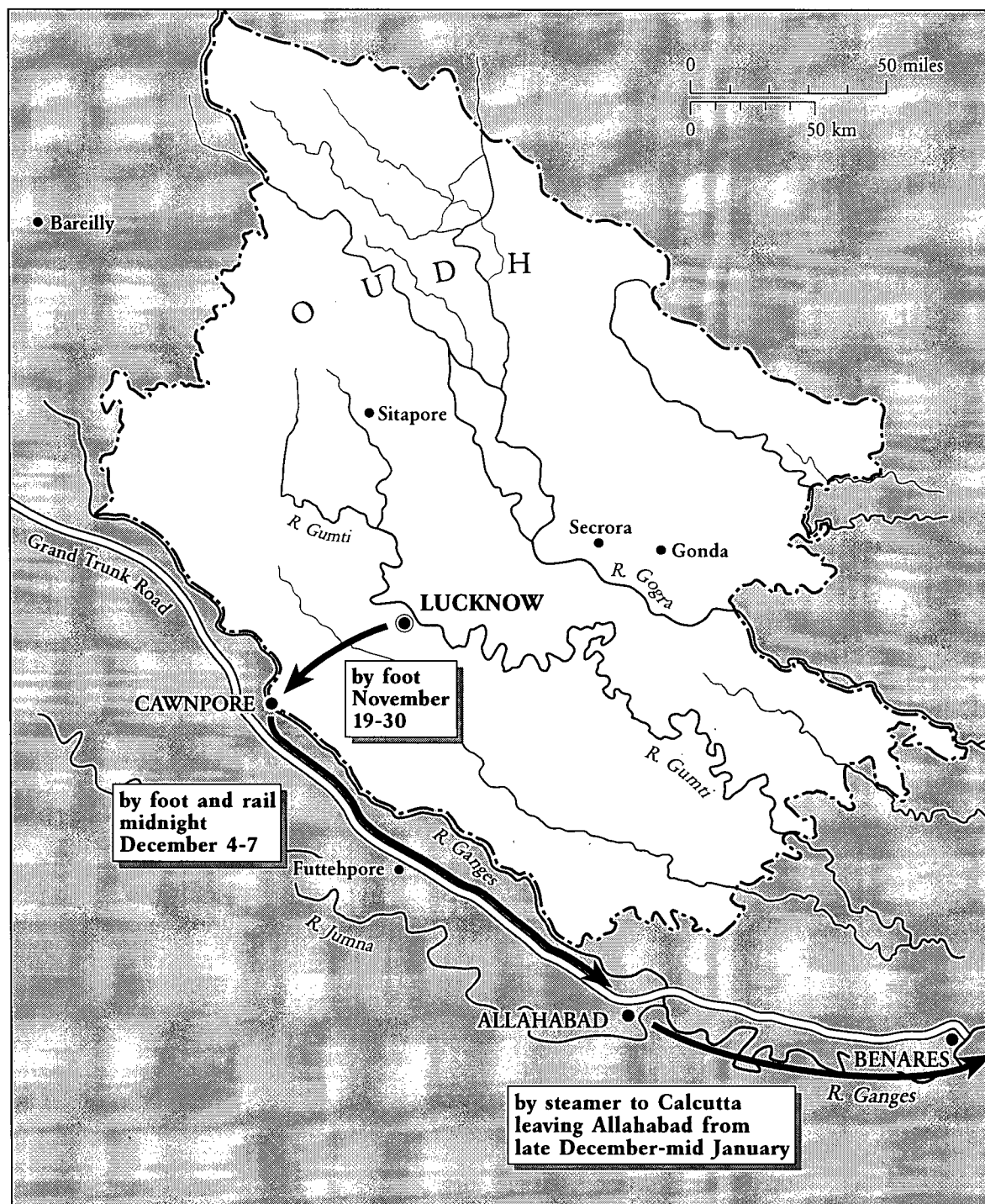


Figure 8: Evacuation route of British women and children from Lucknow, November 1857 - January 1858

Source: Innes op. cit. and Pemble op. cit.

In their diary entries at that time, British women at Lucknow recorded their responses in ways that echoed representations in newspapers and subsequent histories by focusing not only on the deaths of British women and children but also on the place where they had died. As Julia Inglis wrote, 'I believe in the annals of history no records could be found of a deed of such unexampled atrocity as murdering in cold blood so many defenceless women and children. My very heart sickens at the thought.'²¹⁸ Similarly, Maria Germon wrote that 'They say the place where the murders took place was a horrible sight - not a soldier left it with a dry eye.'²¹⁹ The violent consequences of British soldiers travelling through Cawnpore and visiting the place where British women and children died have been well documented and already discussed in Chapter 3. But little attention has been paid to the accounts written by British women who visited Cawnpore on their journey away from Lucknow.

The British women evacuated from Lucknow stayed in Cawnpore until the night of December 3, staying either in tents or in the Artillery Barracks. Whilst there, Colina Brydon, Adelaide Case, Katherine Harris, and Julia Inglis visited the entrenchments where the British population had lived for three weeks under siege (Plate 19), but were unable to visit the house where British women and children were later killed as it had by now been recaptured by Indian insurgents. Their visit to the entrenchments, however, marked a turning point in their writings about leaving Lucknow. Unlike their diary entries in September while they were living under siege and fearing the same fate suffered by British women at Cawnpore, their accounts about visiting the entrenchments reflect a simultaneous recognition not only of the extent of the imperial crisis but also their own place as survivors.

²¹⁸ Inglis 1858, op. cit., 23.

²¹⁹ Germon op. cit., 98-9.

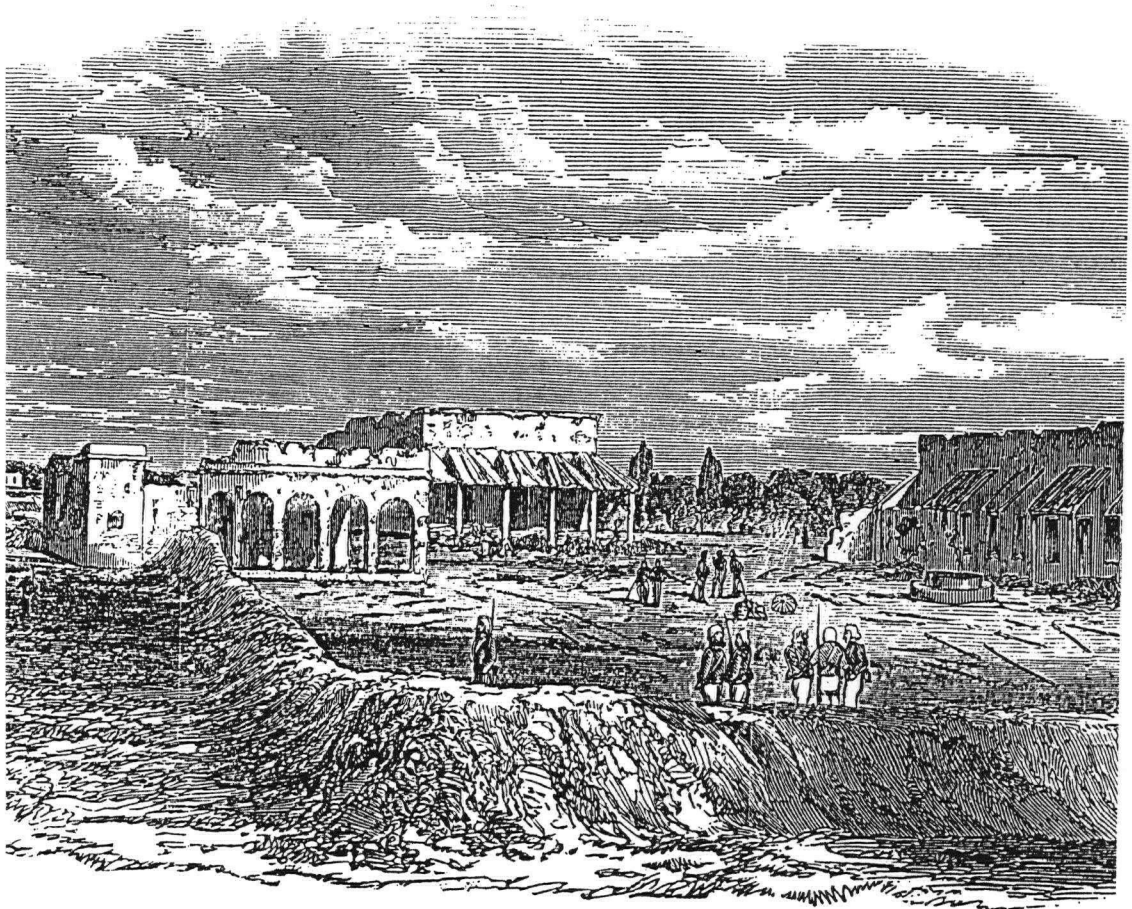


Plate 19: The Entrenchments at Cawnpore after the Siege

Source: *Illustrated London News*, 24 October 1857.

As Adelaide Case wrote,

I could not have believed, had I not seen it, that their abode had been so wretched...The intrenchment is scarcely even a good-sized ditch, and yet, at times, it was safer for the poor ladies to take their chairs and sit there than to remain in the miserable building which scarcely afforded a shelter from the sun.²²⁰

Julia Inglis also commented on the paucity of the defences, but, unlike Case, found that seeing such a sight made it no easier to comprehend, writing that 'As I looked, I thought how small were the troubles and trials of Lucknow in comparison. The agony and miseries these poor creatures must have suffered defies even imagination to conceive.'²²¹ John Inglis remained at Cawnpore to command the station, and Julia did not see him again until May 1858. Their parting was painful:

I felt truly wretched; he walked some little way with us, and then put us into the carriage, and the last sad farewell was spoken. We had shared so much anxiety and peril together that it was hard to leave him as I did, weak and worn with constant mental anxiety and hard bodily labour; but I knew when we were once safe he would be far happier, and this was my comfort.²²²

In a letter to her mother written in November, Julia Inglis wrote that 'You know how intensely I love my own darling John, and I have been so accustomed to depend entirely on him for everything that I feel like a child without him, though I have been gradually weaned lately.'²²³

²²⁰ Case op. cit., 314.

²²¹ Inglis 1892, op. cit., 218.

²²² Ibid., 219.

²²³ Inglis, 1858, op. cit., 29. Brigadier Inglis was appointed a Major-General in March 1858 and had to give up his command of the 32nd Regiment, which he had joined in Quebec in 1832. He expressed his regret at leaving the regiment 'in which the best and happiest years of his life have been passed,' and stated 'his sincere conviction that it is owing to the admirable conduct, discipline, and steadiness of the officers and men under the most trying circumstances that the rank and honours conferred on him are mainly due.' Inglis, 1892, op. cit., 229. The Indian soldiers who had remained loyal to their British officers during the siege of Lucknow were incorporated with the 32nd Regiment that was renamed the 'Regiment of Lucknow.' Before

Travelling away from her husband in Cawnpore, Julia Inglis expressed her love for him, and his paternal love and care for her. But as she travelled to Allahabad, Calcutta, and back to Britain without him, her distance and independence from this paternal love and care necessarily increased.

Visiting Cawnpore marked a turning point for British women travelling away from Lucknow. Once they received letters from family and friends at Dilkusha Palace, they learnt how their situation had been represented at 'home,' and they began to describe their place at the heart of an imperial crisis. However, it was only once they saw the destruction of the city and the entrenchments at Cawnpore that they began to represent both the conflict and the places through which they travelled in less detached ways. In particular, touring the entrenchments not only caused them to reflect on the fate of other British women in the 'mutiny,' but also, for the first time, to represent themselves as survivors, travelling away from the confinement of both Lucknow and Cawnpore. Katherine Harris, for example, kept a page from a Bible as a 'relic' of touring the entrenchments at Cawnpore and, the next day, wrote that 'We breathe more freely now we are out of that mournful place, Cawnpore; and as the whole road between it and Allahabad is lined with our troops coming up country, I trust it is pretty safe.'²²⁴

leaving India in April 1858, Inglis visited the women and children of the 32nd Regiment with Mrs Cowper, an officer's wife, 'to wish them goodbye.' Inglis, 1892, op. cit., 230.

²²⁴ Harris op. cit., 183-4.

Reconstructing Home and Empire

The British women evacuated from Lucknow reached the safety of Allahabad on December 7, travelling the last forty miles by train. As Katherine Harris wrote, 'it seemed delightfully home-like and natural to be once more on a railroad,'²²⁵ and, after 'an almost overpowering' welcome from soldiers at the station,²²⁶ the British women diarists all wrote about living in Allahabad in terms of settled and familiar domesticity. Most of the diarists stayed at Allahabad for six weeks until they could travel by steamer to Calcutta and, during that time, lived in tents belonging to the Governor General that were erected in the grounds of the fort. In marked contrast to their descriptions of Cawnpore, British women described their temporary home in picturesque terms, with Katherine Harris writing, for example, that 'our camp is really very pretty, beautifully pitched in a square, with the large dining tent in the centre, on a lovely piece of turf, with trees all around.'²²⁷ The tents themselves were described as spacious and luxurious, affording privacy for the first time since the siege of Lucknow began. For Maria Germon, 'It was a great luxury to be quite by oneself after the many months we had been herded together,'²²⁸ while Katherine Harris shared a room with only her husband for the first time since May 24.²²⁹

Most British women wrote favourably about the prospect of spending time in a peaceful place. As Katherine Harris wrote, 'The luxurious feeling of rest and peace and safety here is perfectly indescribable; one can scarcely realise it or know what to make of it after the excitement, anxiety, and turmoil of the last six months.'²³⁰ Living in the security of Allahabad

²²⁵ Ibid., 187.

²²⁶ Bartrum, Germon, and Inglis all described their welcome at Allahabad in this way.

²²⁷ Harris op. cit., 189.

²²⁸ Germon op. cit., 134.

²²⁹ Harris, op. cit.

²³⁰ Harris, op. cit., 189.

led many women to reflect not only on the alienation and dangers of their lives under siege but also on their desire to be at home again. At the same time, the reconstitution of imperial domesticity took different forms, such as entertaining guests for meals and attending church. Maria Germon wrote that 'It was such a luxury to lie in bed and have chotahazree brought to me after having had to make it for a large party';²³¹ and the Harris' entertained Mr Schilling for dinner on December 10, when 'We luxuriated in a table-cloth, and presented such a wonderfully civilized appearance he was quite struck.'²³² Katherine Harris wrote that one hundred people took Holy Communion at a service in the garrison chapel at Allahabad on December 13, 'where all the Lucknow refugees attended and returned public thanks to God for our merciful deliverance'²³³ and, on Christmas Day, she noted that 'The services of the Church are all we have to remind us of this joyful season.'²³⁴

For the first time since leaving Lucknow, class differences among British women became increasingly evident. It was only once they were living in safety at Allahabad, with enough Indian servants to reestablish an imperial hierarchy on a domestic scale, that the diarists began not only to represent but also to reconstitute their class position in relation to other British women. The class differences between women were spatially as well as socially inscribed, with the luxurious tents of the 'ladies' contrasting with the crowded barracks where the wives and widows of soldiers lived. Katherine Harris helped to distribute 'shoes, stockings, pocket handkerchiefs, combs, and hair brushes' that had been sent from Calcutta by Lady Canning, the wife of the Governor-General, to the 'ladies' of Lucknow.²³⁵ In contrast, three days later,

²³¹ Germon, *op. cit.*, 135.

²³² Harris, *op. cit.*, 191.

²³³ Harris, *op. cit.*, 193.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 196.

²³⁵ Harris, *op. cit.*, 189.

Katherine Harris toured the barracks and collected names of soldiers' widows who would each receive a black dress, noting that 'Some of the poor things are in great distress, having come out of Lucknow with only the clothes they wore.'²³⁶

While living in Allahabad, the time and security enabled familiar routines and class relations to be reestablished. In the hierarchical structure of an army regiment, this was most clearly apparent in the contact between Julia Inglis and the wives and widows of the 32nd Regiment.²³⁷ On Christmas Day, as well as entertaining four people for dinner, Inglis wrote that 'I also gave the women and children who were left of the 32nd a dinner. It was anything but a festive sight to me. There were now only seventeen women, and nearly all were widows, and every child present had lost one or both parents.'²³⁸ Katherine Harris had helped to set up a school for these and other children whom, when she visited the barracks, she had found 'running about wild,'²³⁹ and Julia Inglis asked to teach the children from the 32nd Regiment on Sundays. Writing in May 1857, before she knew Julia Inglis personally, Katherine Harris had referred to the regimental school of the 32nd Regiment, noting that 'Mrs Inglis took great pains with it, and had the children at her own house on Sundays. It is such a rare thing in this country to find ladies interesting themselves about the poor women and children; but the Inglises, from what I hear of them, must be excellent people.'²⁴⁰ Describing meeting the children of the 32nd Regiment for the first time since the siege began, Julia Inglis wrote,

The first time was very trying, as the remembrance of all that had happened since I last saw them, and the thoughts of their companions who had died so terrible a death,

²³⁶ Ibid., 192.

²³⁷ See Chapter 2 and Trustram *op. cit.*, for more on the social gulf between the wives of officers and officials.

²³⁸ Inglis 1892, *op. cit.*, 224.

²³⁹ Harris, *op. cit.*, 192.

²⁴⁰ Harris, *op. cit.*, 16-17.

quite overcame all the children, and it was some time before I could continue speaking to them.²⁴¹

Not only did the security of Allahabad enable British women diarists to reestablish imperial domesticity, but this took place in class specific ways. Most notably, writers such as Katherine Harris and Julia Inglis wrote about their contact with the wives, widows, and children of British soldiers in terms of visits, hospitality, and teaching, with such contact helping to reconstruct their own class as well as gendered subjectivity.

Other women, however, found it impossible to reconstruct imperial domesticity while living in Allahabad. Sitting in the garden of the house where she was staying in cantonments, Katherine Bartrum mourned her lost home and her past life of happy domesticity:

The scene around is very pretty, but it brings so vividly before me our dear little bungalow at Gonda that it makes my heart very sad in thinking of the days that are no more. We wander through the deserted houses around, most of which have been burnt to the ground...The scene of desolation which the place presents is very sad: so many happy homes having been utterly destroyed in the past year.²⁴²

Living in the security of Allahabad, away from the dangers of Lucknow and Cawnpore, enabled British women such as Katherine Harris and Julia Inglis to reconstitute imperial domesticity and the class hierarchy on which it depended. However, for women such as Katherine Bartrum, whose husband had been killed at Lucknow and who was travelling away from her home in India for the last time, imperial domesticity could only be remembered as a happy past that was painfully distant and irretrievably lost.

²⁴¹ Inglis 1892, op. cit., 224.

²⁴² Bartrum op. cit., 61.

The first steamer left Allahabad shortly before Christmas with 'all the widows and sick ladies' on board,²⁴³ including Adelaide Case and her sister Caroline Dickson. As Julia Inglis wrote, Adelaide Case 'never seemed thoroughly to realise her great sorrow until she came out of Lucknow, and then it was as if the blow had just struck her; she became thoroughly prostrate, and had no energy or wish to move. I was very thankful when I saw her on board the steamer, though she and Miss Dickson were sad losses to me.'²⁴⁴ Julia Inglis, and most of the British women evacuated from Lucknow, began the three week journey to Calcutta in mid January, and described their progress as slow, crowded and, at times, hazardous.²⁴⁵ Katherine Bartrum travelled through familiar places on her last journey away from her Indian home, writing about Dinapore, for example, that

Every spot here reminds me of bygone days, when we were stationed at this place for seven months, when everything shone so brightly around me. Here my darling child was born. Saw Mr Burge, the chaplain, but most of those whom we knew here have returned home.²⁴⁶

Julia Inglis met Katherine Bartrum for the first time on the journey from Allahabad to Calcutta. She recounted Katherine Bartrum's 'very sad' history in her diary, and wrote that

All they [Katherine Bartrum and other women from Gonda and Secrora] ate was cooked by their own hands, and they even had to collect and chop wood to make their fires, and each had a young baby to attend to. These poor women must indeed have endured great hardships; at the same time, I cannot understand how, surrounded as

²⁴³ Inglis 1892, op. cit., 227.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 223-224.

²⁴⁵ The shallow water meant that the steamers often ran aground. Maria Germon described 'a narrow escape' when the steamer she was travelling on collided with another boat: 'There was a cry 'save the women and children' and we were dragged up on top of the paddle-box by our arms - however, our boat did not go down or some must have gone down with her. Captain Fox of the Charles Allen [another steamer] afterwards told me he expected to see us go down and thought the poor creatures who had escaped Lucknow only to meet with another horrible death.' Germon, op. cit., 135-136.

²⁴⁶ Bartrum op. cit., 63.

they were by others who were certainly better off, a little help was not given them. I fancy they could never have made known their destitute condition, for, with few exceptions, I believe a very kind spirit pervaded the garrison, and many noble and self-denying acts of charity were performed.²⁴⁷

For her part, Katherine Bartrum recorded that 'Mrs Inglis was so kind to me today and made me some arrowroot for baby, who is far from well.'²⁴⁸

Unlike Katherine Bartrum, most British women wrote little about their journey down the Ganges and their memories of past, happy homes in India. Instead, most British women focused on their arrival in Calcutta and on the domestic and imperial security of the last place where they stayed in India before travelling home to Britain. Ann Ellen Huxham stayed with her sister in her 'beautiful home' and Julia Inglis wrote that, 'Finding myself once again in a comfortable house, with all the appurtenances of civilization around me, made me feel quite strange.'²⁴⁹ While letters from 'home' that the British women received at Dilkusha Palace had suggested the extent of the imperial crisis for the first time, contact with 'home' through the Lucknow Relief Committee helped British women to reconstitute imperial domesticity. Funds provided by the Lucknow Relief Committee enabled women like Maria Germon to stay in 'luxurious style' and also contributed towards clothing, a passage back to Britain, and some compensation for lost goods and property. The domestic and imperial security of Calcutta, epitomized by the comfort of the 'temporary homes' in which British women stayed, were directly supported by the British public. As Katherine Bartrum wrote,

I can never feel sufficiently grateful for the universal kindness and sympathy I received during my short stay in Calcutta. The hand of friendship was held out even

²⁴⁷ Inglis 1892, op. cit., 226.

²⁴⁸ Bartrum, op. cit., 62.

²⁴⁹ Huxham op. cit., and Inglis 1892, op. cit., 227. Julia Inglis stayed with Sir Charles Jackson, the chief justice, and his wife.

by strangers, and everything was done to alleviate our sorrow and distress. Most nobly did England respond to the cry of the widow and the orphan.²⁵⁰

Travelling and writing home from Lucknow, British women diarists came not only to represent but also to reconstitute imperial domesticity on different scales. Once they had arrived in Calcutta, and stayed in temporary homes with friends, relatives, or provided by the Lucknow Relief Committee, such women could begin to reconstruct their ideas of home not only in Calcutta but also in Britain.

Travelling Home

Of the British women diarists who survived the siege of Lucknow, only Katherine Bartrum and Julia Inglis wrote about leaving Calcutta and returning to Britain. Katherine Bartrum left Calcutta on the Himalaya on February 12, travelling round the Cape for the health of her baby (Plate 20). Mrs Polehampton, another widow from Lucknow, was travelling on the same ship:

She was with me in my heaviest sorrow, and is a bright example for me; her patient submission to the will of God, and her holy triumph in her husband's happy death, were something strange to witness; I would that I could be like her. Her principal reason for going in the Himalaya is that she may be with the sick and wounded who are returning home in that vessel.²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ Bartrum op. cit., 65. As discussed in Chapter 3, women in Britain, following the example of the Lady Mayoress of London, played particularly significant philanthropic roles raising funds for the Lucknow Relief Committee.

²⁵¹ Bartrum, op. cit., 68.

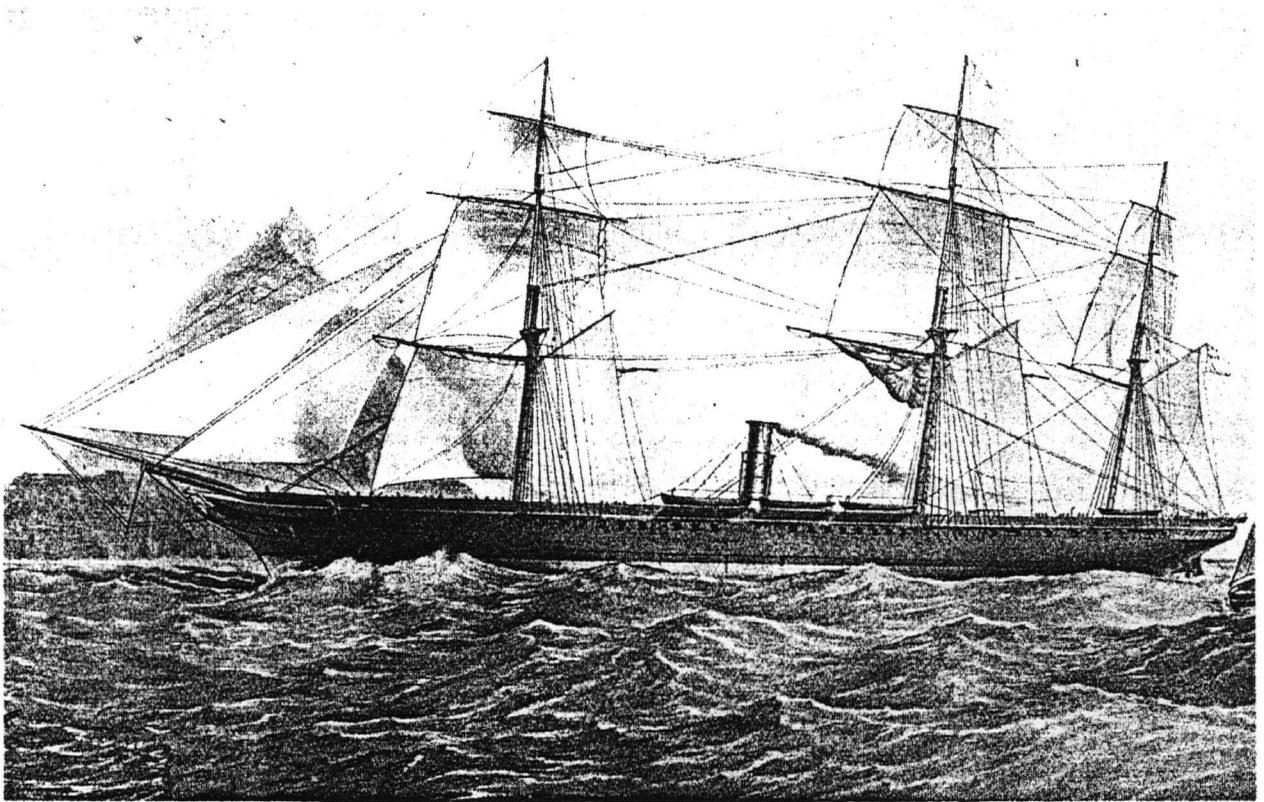


Plate 20: Steamship Himalaya, Built 1853

Source: Cable, op. cit..

But the day before leaving India for the last time, weakened by the siege of Lucknow and the journey to Calcutta, Katherine Bartrum's baby son died. She wrote that

when he was dressed in his little night dress and laid upon the bed, he looked so perfectly happy, that for him I could not mourn, and of myself I dared not think...I had his likeness taken, as he lay in the peaceful slumber of death, his little hand enclosing a sweet white rosebud and a lock of his mother's hair...For two short years had he been mine, the object of unceasing care, and then he closed his eyes for ever on this weary world of sin and sorrow.²⁵²

After his funeral, Katherine Bartrum mourned the loss of her son more acutely:

Now I could realise that he was gone from me for evermore, when I went back and found no joyous baby welcome, no little arms to clasp my neck; but there lay the dress he last had worn, the little hat and shoes, and the toys about the room; but where was baby? 'All Thy waves and Thy storms have gone over me.'²⁵³

In her final diary entry on February 12, 1858, Katherine Bartrum wrote of her departure from India, leaving the bodies of her husband and son behind, and placing her only hope for the future in her Christian faith: 'Sailed from Calcutta and bade farewell to the land where all I best loved had found a resting place. 'And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is even in Thee.'²⁵⁴

* * * * *

Julia Inglis left Calcutta with Adelaide Case and Caroline Dickson on February 10. Ten miles from the coast of Trincomalee Ceylon, their steamer hit a rock and had to be abandoned. The first of seven lifeboats was launched with Julia, her three children, Adelaide, and Caroline aboard. But their boat soon began to take in water:

²⁵² Ibid., 70-71.

²⁵³ Ibid., 72.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 72.

I must confess I did not see a chance of making land in safety. We had some wine, which we mixed with water, and gave to the men; but they were very desponding, and seemed to have lost all heart. I myself baled for a little while just to encourage them; and this, giving me something to do, cheered me up. The waves were very high, and each one looked as if it would swamp us. Johnnie was delighted when they broke over the boat, and his merry laugh sounded sadly in my ears, for I quite thought that a watery grave awaited each one of us.²⁵⁵

Soon, however, their distress signals were seen by another boat and the passengers were hoisted on board. Despite their fears that the crew were pirates, the British passengers were fed, made comfortable, and taken to Trincomalee. Here, Colonel Weare, who had been John Inglis' subaltern in the 32nd Regiment, took Julia Inglis, Adelaide Case, Caroline Dickson, and several other 'ladies' to his house, 'where we were most kindly received by his wife.'²⁵⁶ Most personal property on the ship, including the diaries of several women, was lost. Adelaide Case wrote that her friends in Britain had persuaded her to publish her diary because 'but few journals had survived the siege of Lucknow and the wreck of the steamer which conveyed us from India.'²⁵⁷ While continuing their journey by another small, crowded, and uncomfortable steamer, Julia Inglis wrote that 'We were all busily employed in making up articles of wearing apparel, having lost everything in the wreck. I had to make one day what the children wore the next; fortunately it was hot weather, and the less clothing they had the better pleased they were.'²⁵⁸ Arriving in Suez, Julia Inglis learnt that her father had become Lord Chancellor in the new Conservative government led by Derby. This, together with the earlier news that her husband had been knighted because of his command of the defence of Lucknow, meant that 'good news seemed to be pouring in upon me.'²⁵⁹ From Suez, Julia Inglis crossed the desert in sixteen hours, partly by rail, and parted with Adelaide Case and Caroline Dickson at Alexandria. As she wrote,

²⁵⁵ Inglis, 1892, *op. cit.*, 234.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 237.

²⁵⁷ Case, *op. cit.*, iii.

²⁵⁸ Inglis, 1892, *op. cit.*, 238.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 239.

they were a great loss to me. We had lived together, since our trouble commenced, upon the most intimate terms of friendship, cemented, as I may truly say, by mutual kindness; for if, as they say - and I am too pleased to hear it to deny it - I was enabled during that sad time of bereavement to be of some comfort to them, I myself owe them much gratitude for their unvarying kindness to me and my children; the cheerfulness with which they submitted to innumerable inconveniences and annoyances; and, above all, the noble example they set me of unselfishness, Christian fortitude, and resignation. They are, and ever will be, two of my best and truest friends.²⁶⁰

Ten days later, Julia Inglis arrived in Southampton, seven years after she had left for India. Reaching home, 'I was welcomed by all dear to me. The past seemed forgotten; and had John only been with me, my cup of joy would indeed have been filled to the brim.'²⁶¹

Conclusions

Diaries written by a number of the British women who survived the siege of Lucknow reveal the ways in which such women experienced an imperial crisis in domestic terms. Representations of the crisis by British women at Lucknow both challenged and reinforced imperial representations of the 'mutiny' by describing everyday, domestic life during the conflict. Initially, leaving their Indian homes marked the earliest and one of the clearest threats to domestic and imperial power and security not only because of the disruption of domestic life but also because of the reversal of imperial power relations on a domestic scale. British women were vulnerable in the 'mutiny' not only because of the distance from 'home' in Britain but also because of their alienation from their Indian homes. In their accounts of living under siege, the diaries kept by British women reveal the ways in which spatial constraints dictated their daily lives; the importance of class as well as gender in influencing everyday life under siege; and, finally, the domestication of the imperial crisis on a household scale. For British women at Lucknow, imperial power was challenged most directly in a domestic sphere and the mutual imbrication of domestic and

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 239.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 239.

imperial disorder was most vividly represented by the desertion of Indian servants soon after the siege commenced.

After the second relief and the evacuation of Lucknow, British women not only represented but also began to reconstitute imperial domesticity as they travelled away from the dangers of Lucknow and Cawnpore towards the safety of Allahabad and Calcutta. In the first few days after leaving Lucknow, they continued to represent their domestic concerns about what to wear and pack and seemed in many cases to be detached not only from the imperial conflict but also from the places through which they passed. It was only once they received letters from home that most of the diarists evacuated from Lucknow began to represent the extent of the imperial crisis. Once they reached Cawnpore, there was a simultaneous recognition not only of where fighting had taken place but also of their own place as survivors of the conflict. Soon afterwards, arriving in Allahabad, many women could begin to reconstruct imperial domesticity in class as well as gender specific ways. Such a process of reconstruction continued when the British women arrived in Calcutta and lived in temporary homes financed from Britain. Here, the activities of the Lucknow Relief Committee represented the domestic management of an imperial crisis, facilitating and supporting the reconstitution of imperial domesticity embodied by British women travelling and writing home from Lucknow.

As Chapters 3 and 4 have shown, the 'mutiny' was a crisis of domesticity and imperialism that was embodied by British women in India. As their writings reveal, British women who survived the siege of Lucknow represented a crisis of imperial domesticity. But the survival of many British women and the subsequent publication of several diaries about daily life under siege reveal not only a crisis of but also the reinstatement of imperial domesticity as British women travelled away from Lucknow to places of domestic and imperial security. The publication of several diaries representing daily, domestic life under siege suggest not only the defilement but also the reconstitution of imperial domesticity. In this way, such diaries helped to represent the possibility of reconstructing British homes and British rule in India. Chapters 5

and 6 turn to the post-'mutiny' reconstruction of imperial domesticity in India, focusing on the ambivalent place of British women living in India after 1858 on two connected scales: first, on a household scale, as British women reconstructed empires in the home as well as homes in the empire; and, second, on a seasonal scale, as British women travelled to hill stations in Northern India. Before doing so, however, I return to Francis Wells' letters to her father that she resumed writing in Allahabad in December 1857 to explore her descriptions of life under siege and her return home to Britain.

Interlude

Travelling Home

The Letters of Francis Wells, 1857 - 1858

After seven months' silence during the siege of Lucknow, Francis Wells resumed her correspondence with her father from the safety of Allahabad in December 1857. In her final letters from India, she described her life under siege, her desire to be back in Britain, and her anticipation as she travelled 'home.' Unlike the published diaries discussed in Chapter 4, the candid letters of Francis Wells were, at several points, critical of the British defence of Lucknow and daily life under siege.

Francis, Walter, and their son Walter survived the siege of Lucknow, but George died on July 13. Francis was only able to communicate this news to her father five months later, when she wrote that 'My darling Georgie died...of water on the brain: poor little angel I have grieved for him bitterly, but quite see now that he was taken away in mercy for he must have starved: I had no food suitable for him and no milk, and it would have been harder to see him (as I saw other children) pine away to a skeleton and then die.'¹ For the first three months of the siege, the Wells' lived in the Begum Kotie with Katherine Bartrum. Three guns were within fifty yards and 'they used to batter us incessantly night and day: we had four hundred round shot into the room besides all that fell outside.'² They were also under threat from mines, and, when one of the walls collapsed, they moved to the Brigade Mess. Like most of the British 'ladies' at Lucknow during the siege, Francis Wells had to perform unaccustomed domestic duties when her Indian servants left the Residency. As she wrote to her father,

¹ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 12 December 1857.

² Ibid..

I can assure you all this has made me very independent, as almost every servant ran away the first day and we have had to do almost everything for ourselves. I have learnt to wash, starch and iron clothes and to cook tolerably besides every kind of household work. My ayah did not leave me but she was wounded in the stomach and since then has had a baby so has not been of much use to me.³

Francis herself suffered from fever during the siege and, lamenting her lack of privacy like Maria Germon, wrote that 'you cannot imagine the misery of being ill in bed in a large room with fifty others, gentlemen, ladies and children all together without even a curtain between our beds.'⁴ Her husband Walter fared less well, suffering fever and diarrhoea, scurvy, and several broken ribs from falling through a hole in the floor of the hospital. Walter travelled to Allahabad and eventually back to Britain with Francis because he was on sick leave from his duties as a regimental surgeon. As well as suffering ill health, the siege also left the Wells' in a destitute state. As Francis wrote in December,

we cannot afford any more losses as we have lost everything we have in the world, carriages, horses, buggy, tents, piano, furniture and the whole of our clothes: when the siege began I had one old muslin dress, and my husband positively begged an old black skirt which I wore all through the siege. I have two very ragged old night-gowns, I bought a little flannel from a soldier to make myself a flannel petticoat, and I got two pairs of stockings from the relief fund: but I fancy there are few people so utterly destitute for everything as we are.⁵

Walter confirmed these losses in monetary terms when he wrote to his father-in-law a week later: 'We have lost everything not even clothes to wear but I have managed to save the plate. I estimate my loss by the Mutiny and Siege at between eight and nine thousand Rupees and with the loss by the fire will make up Rs 10,000 or £1000. Thankful to God are we that our lives have been preserved.'⁶

³ Ibid..

⁴ Ibid..

⁵ Ibid..

⁶ W. Wells to Dr Fox, 18 December 1857.

Writing to her father, Francis Wells was highly critical of Brigadier Inglis. Although she thought that his despatches provided 'on the whole a pretty fair account of the siege,' she described him as

a man universally detested throughout the garrison by all ranks: and his mention of the names of officers has excited great indignation: many of those whom he has praised never did a single thing the whole time and some of those that worked the hardest are omitted entirely because they were not favourites: he disliked the 48th and left them out entirely.⁷

As she continued, 'My husband says he shall write a book about the siege setting forth the selfishness of human nature and well he may do so for indeed we have seen enough of it during the last six months.'⁸ Needless to say, if Walter did write such a book, it was never published.

On their journey away from Lucknow, Francis Wells, like Julia Inglis, recorded the fate of more than one thousand Indians who had been killed at Secundera Bagh the day before the evacuees from Lucknow arrived. She reported that Sir Colin Campbell had insisted that the bodies were buried as women and children were halting there and that, as a result, 'the bodies were only just covered with earth and the smell was dreadful.'⁹ By the time that they arrived in the security of Allahabad, Francis Wells was longing to return to Britain, taking her son Walter 'home' for the first time. Describing her son, she wrote that he 'speaks English perfectly and knows all his large letters, but I have found it difficult to teach him during the siege, I was always so overwhelmed with work.'¹⁰ In her next letter, Francis wrote that 'I flatter myself he

⁷ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 12 December 1857.

⁸ Ibid..

⁹ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 2 January 1858.

¹⁰ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 12 December 1857.

*looks almost like an English child: he is full of going to England.'*¹¹ But, on their journey to Calcutta, Francis confided in her father that 'his Papa spoils him so dreadfully that I fear he will be quite ruined: he is getting to be very disobedient and has contracted a bad habit of going to his Papa for whatever I refuse him...I hope when I come home that you will uphold my authority.'¹²

*In Allahabad, Francis Wells imagined home in Britain as a pastoral haven, writing 'How I shall enjoy home after all this, the sweet roses and birds and above all the peace and quiet.'*¹³ In their destitute state, 'Mrs Williamson has written most kindly offering us a home in her house but I do not think we shall live permanently with anyone, only pay visits: I think it is better to be independent. I am quite tired of chumming with people, we have never been alone since the 25th of last May and even now have only half a tent.'¹⁴ She was anxious that her father should meet their ship at Southampton because 'I have set my heart on seeing your beloved face the moment we reach the English shore,'¹⁵ but she was uncertain where she and Walter would stay when they first arrived in Britain: 'we shall of course pay you a visit when we arrive but my husband intends to travel about and not be long stationary at one place. I do not quite know how we shall manage on arrival, for of course I want to come first to Brislington and he to Cheltenham, so I think we had better compromise the matter and go one to one place and one to the other.'¹⁶

¹¹ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 2 January 1858.

¹² F. Wells to Dr Fox, 15 January 1858.

¹³ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 2 January 1858.

¹⁴ Ibid..

¹⁵ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 21 February 1858.

¹⁶ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 8 March 1858.

While they were staying in Calcutta, the Wells' visited Barrackpore, the station where they had spent their first year in India. As Francis wrote, 'the place is looking as lovely as ever but our old house was burnt in the mutiny there. I am looking forward with such delight to the prospect of coming home and seeing you all once again.'¹⁷ Both the Wells' first and last bungalows in India had been destroyed by fire in the 'mutiny.' For Francis and Walter, travelling home from Lucknow now, unequivocally, meant travelling home to Britain.

Francis and Walter Wells - now with their young son - left India five years after they had arrived. Travelling by the overland route across the desert from Suez to Alexandria, they left Calcutta on March 9, reached Malta one month later, and arrived in Southampton on April 18. In the final stage of their journey home, and in her final letter to her father from her sojourn in India, Francis expressed her desire to reach Britain as quickly as she could: 'How I am longing to see you again, the time seems interminable.'¹⁸ When Francis and Walter Wells did arrive home, the event was reported in the *Bristol Times*:

*On Monday last, the inhabitants of Brislington were not a little affected and excited by the return of Dr and Mrs Wells the latter a daughter of Dr Francis Fox, and child from India. They were amongst the little heroic band who bore the perils and awful anxieties of the long siege of Lucknow; and the welcome of a lady - who, when in her father's home, was much loved by all - was for this reason, we need hardly say, the more touching. The bells rang on their arrival, and the neighbours in their regard and respect for the family, and pleasure again at beholding those who had passed through so fiery an ordeal, raised a triumphal arch, better earned than many a festive honour nowadays conferred. Dr and Mrs Wells, we are happy to learn, are in good health; but those who remember the fair young girl that a few years ago left their village a soldier's bride, could trace in the same countenance the wearing effects of painful anxiety, long watching and ceaseless danger, sustained within the 'fire lapped wall' of the Residency, where the brave Lawrence found a glorious grave.'*¹⁹

¹⁷ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 21 February 1858.

¹⁸ F. Wells to Dr Fox, 8 March 1858.

¹⁹ *Bristol Times*, 24 April 1858.

With her husband and her surviving son, Francis Wells had travelled home from India to the safety of her father's home. Far from their destroyed bunaglows in Lucknow and Barrackpore, and the dangers and discomforts of life under siege, Francis and Walter Wells were hailed as heroic survivors of the imperial conflict. Having lived through the imperial crisis that was often represented in terms of domestic defilement that was, in turn, often embodied by representations of British women and children, Francis, her husband and her son were welcomed home not only by their own families but also by their neighbours and by the 'imagined community' of imperial Britain at large.

Chapter 5

Imperial Domesticity

British Women at Home in India after 1858.

Introduction

This Chapter focuses on the reconstruction of imperial domesticity on a household scale by British women living in India after 1858. The main sources for this Chapter include a number of housekeeping books written for, and usually by, British women at home in India, as well as a range of memoirs and oral histories by and about British wives of civil servants and army officers. Rather than perpetuate notions of the household as a static site that merely confined the imperial roles of British women in India to a reproductive, domestic sphere, I examine more complex connections between domesticity and imperialism. To do so, I focus on the mobility of households in India, the coexistence of ideas of home in Britain and in India, and the ambivalent place of British women travelling between their imperial homes. I am concerned with the ways in which spatial discourses of home and empire were negotiated and represented on different scales, and in often ambivalent ways, through imperial travel by white women between Britain and India.¹ Such women performed contested roles as wives and mothers who travelled to and lived in India as home- and empire-makers. Rebecca Saunders has written that 'Fostering the cult of the home was only one way in which wives and mothers eased the tensions and contradictions of Anglo-Indian life.'² In contrast, I argue that imperial domesticity *exacerbated* the tensions and contradictions of Anglo-Indian life and that such tensions and contradictions were discursively embodied in ambivalent ways by British women at home in India.

¹ I develop this argument to address travel *within* India in Chapter 6.

² R. Saunders, 'Gender, Colonialism, and Exile: Flora Annie Steel and Sara Jeannette Duncan in India,' in M. L. Broe and A. Ingram eds., Women's Writing in Exile, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1989, 304.

This Chapter focuses on the reconstruction of imperial domesticity after 1858 in three contexts. First, I examine the reconstruction of imperial domesticity within the spatial limits of civil lines, cantonments, and compounds. Then, within a compound, I examine relations between British women and their Indian servants to explore the reconstruction of imperial domesticity on a household scale. Finally, I consider the often conflicting roles of British women as wives and mothers. The age profile of the British official élite in India from 1858 to 1939 was highly distinctive. As British officials and their wives usually returned to Britain on retirement, there were few British residents aged over sixty. Moreover, British children of the official élite tended to remain in India only until they were up to seven years old. Then, because of the climate and risks of disease, young children were usually sent to school in Britain until they returned to India at eighteen.³ The racial anxieties of raising British children in India focused both on the employment of Indian wet-nurses and also on the choice between an Indian ayah, a British nurse or nanny, or a Eurasian nurse or nanny. British and Eurasian nurses and nannies occupied a contested place within the homes managed by the wives of British officials after 1858.

During the 'mutiny' of 1857-8, Elizabeth Johnston was in the process of writing a novel entitled 'The Rose and the Lotus; or, Home in England, and Home in India.' Her novel was published in 1859 and in the preface she described 'that terrible mutiny...which has so desolated our happy Indian homes.'⁴ Throughout the 'mutiny,' she continued, 'I could find no heart to write of Home in India, while every mail brought fresh tidings of horror and bloodshed.'⁵ However, by

³ I discuss the separation of children and parents in greater detail in Chapter 6.

⁴ E. Johnston, The Rose and the Lotus; or, Home in England, and Home in India, Bell and Daldy, London, 1859, v. The novel was published anonymously 'by the wife of a Bengal civilian.'

⁵ *Ibid.*, v.

the time that her book was published, the 'mutiny' had been suppressed and she was keen to advocate the reconstruction of British homes in India. As she wrote,

Home in India! People scorn the idea, or laugh at it as something preposterous, and no doubt there are many to whom India is a land of exile from all that are nearest and dearest to them. But there are others (and by far the greater number) who are surrounded by those they love [who] live in comfort, if not in luxury...Surely it would be much happier for us to look upon India as our *home*, and not to shut our eyes to the blessings which surround us.⁶

The popular aversion to the idea of reconstructing home in India was similarly criticised by William Howard Russell who wrote that 'one great and distressing result of the violent shock which the mutiny has given to the whole of the social relations of India, is a deep dislike to the country and to its inhabitants, which is evinced by a constant cry for 'Home!''⁷

An illustrated account by George Atkinson, a Captain in the Bengal Engineers, attempted both to reinscribe and to depict the homes and lives of British men and women who lived in India just after the 'mutiny.' Published in 1859, Atkinson's account was entitled Curry and Rice on Forty Plates; or, The Ingredients of Social Life at 'Our Station.'⁸ With its vignettes and forty sketches of the mythical up-country station of Kabob, Atkinson's humorous book presented caricatured images of British men and women, their Indian servants, and their Indian homes. But this account was published just one year after the suppression of the 'mutiny,' and at a time when a parliamentary Select Committee was addressing questions of settlement and colonization in India.⁹ As such, it represented an influential attempt to imagine British homes in India. In

⁶ Ibid., 169.

⁷ Russell, op. cit., 202.

⁸ G. F. Atkinson, 'Curry and Rice,' on Forty Plates; or, The Ingredients of Social Life at 'Our Station' in India, John B. Day, London, 1859.

⁹ Evidence presented to the Select Committee on Settlement and Colonization in India will be discussed below.

contrast to representations of domestic defilement during the 'mutiny,' Atkinson's book helped to domesticate imperial rule in India and to imagine the reconstruction of imperial domesticity. British women played central roles in the reconstruction of imperial domesticity and the establishment and maintenance of British homes in India, and the importance of British women is both reflected and reproduced in Curry and Rice, on Forty Plates. Indeed, the title page represents a British woman in India in a much more prominent way than her husband (Plate 21). Outside a bungalow, a white woman is already mounted on her horse, while her husband is largely obscured as he prepares to mount his more restless steed. An Indian *syce* or groom is helping to calm his horse, while another *syce* lightly holds the reins of the woman's docile grey. The latter *syce* gazes up at his serene mistress who is watching her husband's endeavours. Here, a British woman in India is not only the central focus on Atkinson's title page, but she is also represented as a calm and controlled figure with a submissive horse and a loyal servant. Such an image helped to dispel memories of British women in the 'mutiny,' whose fate often resulted in the most vivid representations of the conflict and whose own writings often represented the desertion of servants in ways that epitomised a crisis of imperial domesticity. By representing a generic station in a humorous way, Atkinson's textual and visual account helped to reconstruct images of imperial domesticity and the place of British women and British homes in India.

Atkinson began his book by describing and depicting Kabob, before focusing on a number of its inhabitants and social events. The British population of Kabob lived in spatially as well as socially demarcated parts of the station. While soldiers and officers lived in cantonments, the barracks of the former contrasted with the bungalows of the latter. Moreover, the size of an officer's bungalow and the compound in which it stood varied according to rank 'as orthodoxy had originally designed it, under the fond but fanciful delusion that subalterns had small and field officers great requirements.'¹⁰

¹⁰ Atkinson op. cit.. Atkinson's book had no page numbers.

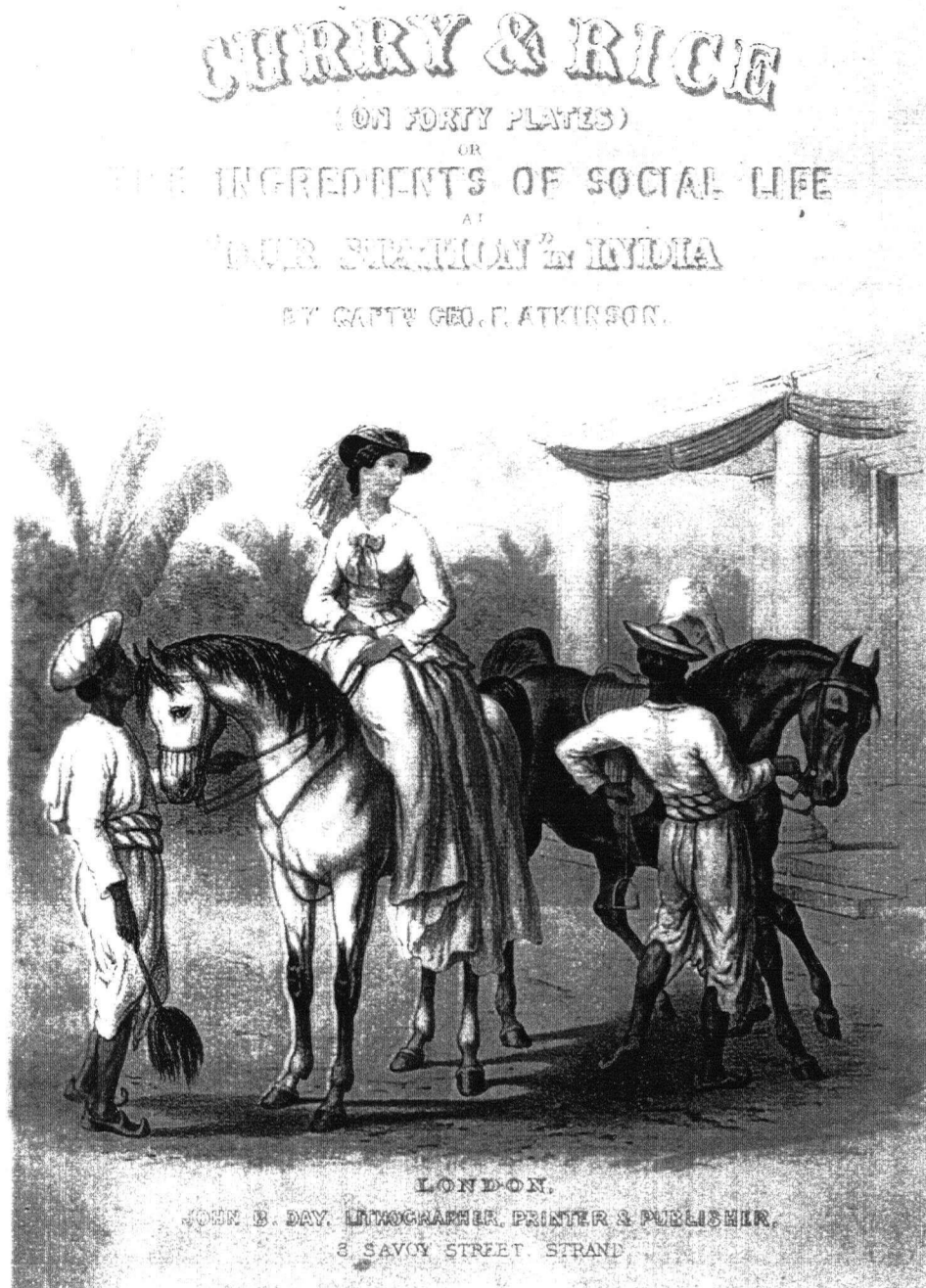


Plate 21: The Title Page of Curry and Rice, on Forty Plates

Source: Atkinson, op. cit..

The bungalows were made of mud, whitewashed, and thatched, with shutters on windows and doors and a wide veranda for shade. The Church was similarly whitewashed, but with a classical portico and a small spire: 'a regular protestant building! protesting against everything architectural, aesthetic, ornamental, or useful; designed and built according to a Government prescription'¹¹ (Plate 22). Beyond lay the assembly room and theatre, hospitals, a racquet court, burial ground, and bandstand for the regimental band to entertain residents of Kabob. Civilians lived in a separate part of the station away from cantonments and the native city, in an area known as 'civil lines.' As well as bungalows for British civil servants and their wives, the civil lines also housed the Law Courts, the Treasury, and the Government Botanical Garden. In Kabob, Atkinson represented the separation between a British military and civilian élite that was reflected and reproduced in the built environment of cantonments and civil lines. Clearly, an 'imagined community' of British residents in India was not only demarcated along class lines but also between military and civilian officials. Although the hierarchical structure of both the army and the civil service was similar, the two groups that comprised an imperial aristocracy lived in separate parts of stations and cities, just as they had done before the 'mutiny' brought the two groups into close proximity and alliance.¹² By gaining the status of their husband's rank on marriage, British wives of army officers and civil servants were incorporated into this imperial hierarchy and helped to reproduce it in domestic and social life through their household management and entertaining.

¹¹ Ibid..

¹² Military and civilian officials and their wives mixed to a greater extent in hill stations, which were not spatially and socially organised in terms of demarcated cantonments and civil lines. See Chapter 6 for further discussion.

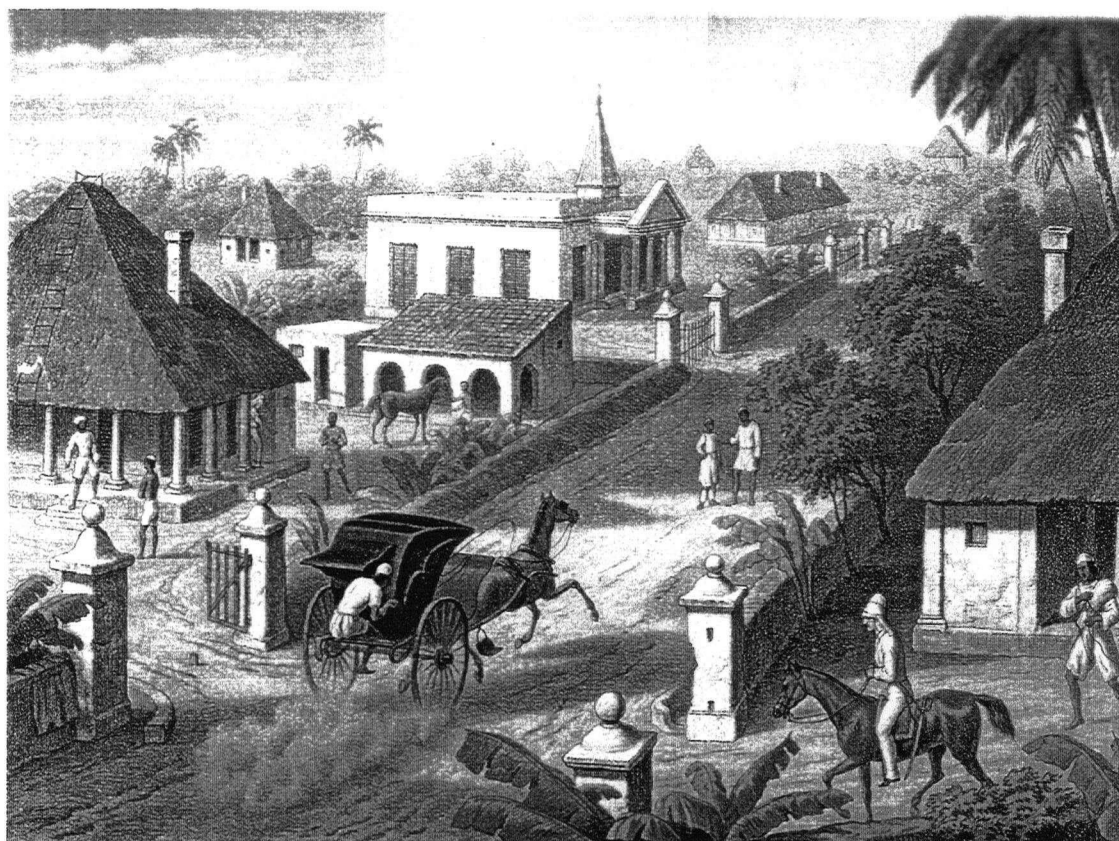


Plate 22: The Station of Kabob

Source: Atkinson, op. cit..

In Curry and Rice, on Forty Plates, Atkinson focused on British women as well as men living in Kabob. The wife of the judge was the most senior 'lady of Kabob,' gaining status from the elevated civilian rank of her husband. Atkinson depicted Mrs Turmeric as ambitious for her husband, miserly, but as 'a good old soul, [who] would be positively miserable without a grievance, and if all things went absolutely smooth.'¹³ Moreover, her grievances were particularly located on a domestic scale: 'It is currently reported that old Turmeric's generous hospitality goes sadly against her grain, and that her abilities as a household financier and domestic manager are exquisitely unique, personally supervising with a detective's skill the operations of the kitchen, and not scorning to assist in the manipulation of puddings, pastry, and the like.'¹⁴ In the sketch accompanying his description of Mrs Turmeric, Atkinson depicted her in her storeroom, observing different stores being weighed (Plate 23). The presence of five servants attested to her domestic power, as did the clearly visible keys that suggested that her storeroom was usually locked and that she was the manager of the household, its servants, and its supplies.

Following Mrs Turmeric on a civilian hierarchy, Atkinson described Mrs Chutney, the wife of the magistrate and collector of Kabob (Plate 24). As the niece of a Lieutenant-General, she had travelled to India on 'connubial spec.,' in search of a husband, 'but she hung fire as an unprofitable investment for many a long and weary day, till she manoeuvred Fitznoodle in the meshes of matrimony, and secured the "£300 a year, dead or alive," of the enamoured civilian.'¹⁵ Now she lived in Kabob, not only with her husband, but also with an unmarried friend Carry Cinnamon, on her own 'connubial spec..'

¹³ Atkinson, op. cit..

¹⁴ Ibid..

¹⁵ Ibid..

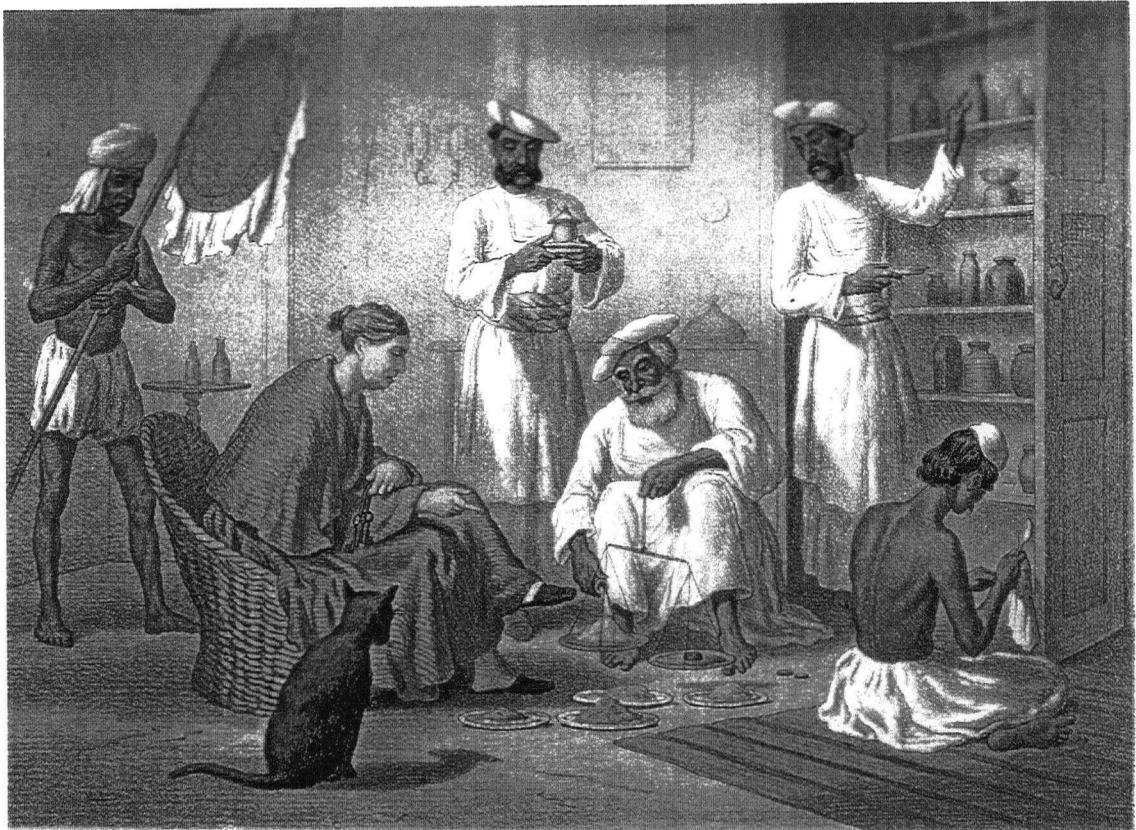


Plate 23: Mrs Turmeric, the Judge's Wife

Source: Atkinson, op. cit..

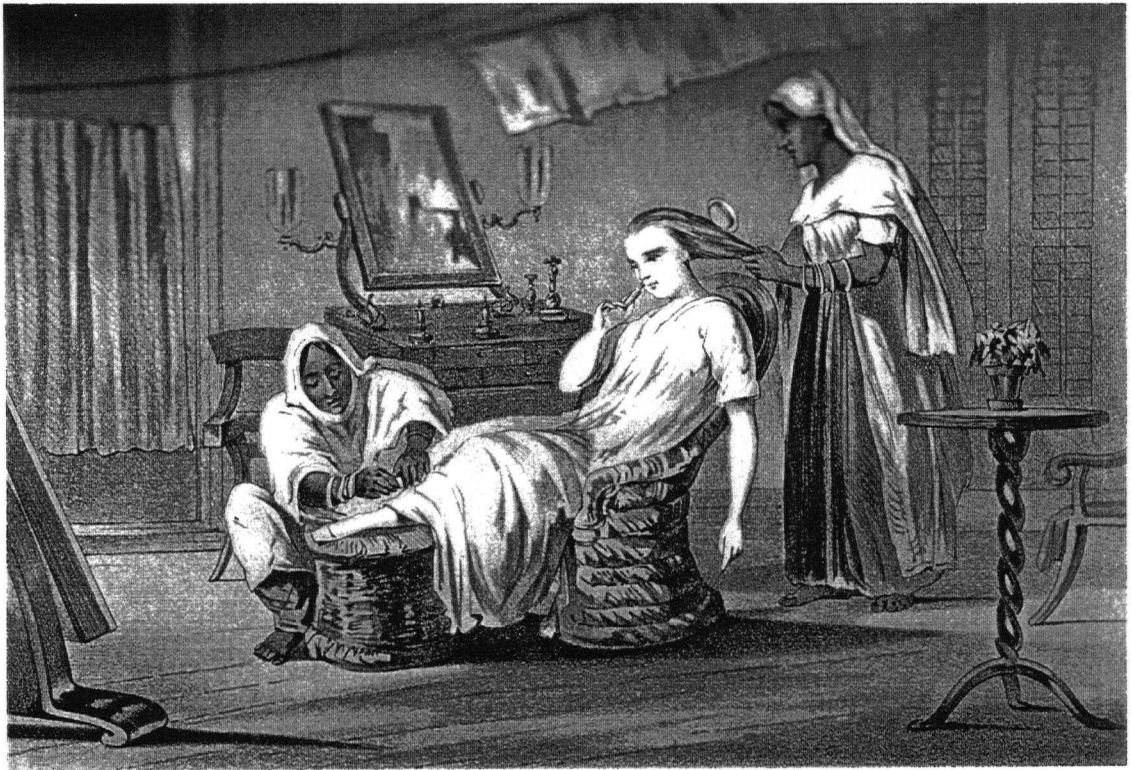


Plate 24: Mrs Chutney, the Magistrate's Wife

Source: Atkinson, op. cit..

As Atkinson wrote, '[Mrs Chutney] has got no family, and hates children, of course; but she cultivates pets, and the society of handsome Subs, and, with her, nothing is so charming as to have a lapful of spaniels and a train of A.D.C.'s. Little Charley Bhooker is a huge favourite; while as for Joey Choosner, he is her established satellite; - you always see a dozen of her boys, as she calls them, embroidering her carriage at the Band.'¹⁶ She amused herself by singing in the Church choir and hosting dinner parties twice a week: 'Yes, Mrs Chutney is great fun, cruelly vain, cruelly silly, but ready to join in anything that will afford amusement. She has got an awful liver, they say, and exists only on excitement, which is somewhat limited at 'Our Station.'¹⁷ In his sketch, Atkinson represented Mrs Chutney in her dressing room, in listlessly vain repose, sitting before a full length mirror as one ayah massaged her leg and as another brushed her hair (Plate 24). In her room, the hurricane lamps on her dressing table and the punkah suspended from the ceiling were typical features of British homes in India.

In Atkinson's book, the Colonel's wife, Mrs Capsicum, was the most senior military 'lady.' She was characterised as 'the absolute, if not the acknowledged, commandant of the gallant Blazers,' who, if asked about military matters, will provide 'a detailed narrative of all that is going on in 'Our Regiment.'¹⁸ As well as having children of her own, one of whom was a cadet at college, Mrs Capsicum also offered maternal advice to young officers. She was also described as 'a dashing dresser...always revelling in gorgeous array,'¹⁹ and was pictured instructing a number of tailors on her veranda, wearing a highly fashionable crinoline (Plate 25).

¹⁶ Ibid..

¹⁷ Ibid..

¹⁸ Ibid..

¹⁹ Ibid..



Plate 25: Mrs Capsicum, the Colonel's Wife

Source: Atkinson, op. cit..

Moreover, she and her husband were prodigious entertainers, hosting frequent small parties rather than 'wholesale entertainments, when large batches of the community are 'knocked over' at a single discharge.'²⁰ Instead, their smaller dinner parties represented 'a never-failing source of generous, open-hearted sociability' and were occasions when 'The gallant Colonel cracks his jokes with an extra gush of humour, while Mrs Capsicum makes glad the fleeting hours, presiding at the piano.'²¹

Carry Cinnamon, who lived with Mrs Chutney, was described as the most eligible single woman or 'spin' in Kabob. In his sketch, Atkinson portrayed two young 'spins' in a carriage, surrounded, and considerably outnumbered, by eligible young ensigns (Plate 26). Although 'not a really good feature does Carry possess...she wins all hearts; for she is so gentle and so pleasing; admirably educated, plays nicely on the piano and harp; has not much voice, but great taste; never affects Italian, although she does understand it; but she will sing you a simple ballad if you really wish it; and I am much mistaken if you would not like to hear it again.'²² Indeed, one of Atkinson's last vignettes described the marriage of Carry Cinnamon and Captain Cheeny. In contrast, the three other 'spins' in Kabob were described in less flattering terms and remained unmarried. The doctor's daughter and the sister of the civil surgeon were described disparagingly in terms of appearance, the former because she resembled her mother and the latter because of her Eurasian ancestry: 'Nine-and-twenty are the summers she has seen; with a few thousand rupees of her own, and a temper to match, she is decidedly eligible. She calls herself a brunette, and prides herself on her Spanish descent, which is about true, considering that Grandmamma Goley was indigenous, and powerfully tinctured with the blood of a Hindoo.'²³

²⁰ Ibid..

²¹ Ibid..

²² Ibid..

²³ Ibid..



Plate 26: 'Spins' of Kabob

Source: Atkinson, op. cit..

Finally, Bella Clove, the young daughter of an officer, was 'imported...last cold weather' to India from Britain. She was described as having 'plenty of head, and a scarcity of brain; a great adept at slang, and all giggle and gums. Rising sixteen, she has the skittishness of a two-year-old, and will soon entangle some amorous ensign by her rollick and rattle, backed up as it is with those bright hazel eyes, that twinkle so attractively, and that merry laugh.'²⁴

In his book, Captain Atkinson depicted an imaginative geography of a generic up-country station after the 'mutiny' in ways that helped to reinscribe imperial domesticity after 1858. Atkinson described and depicted caricatured individuals living within a generic station, and their domestic and social routines. Kabob was represented at a time of peace, and the only Indians depicted within the book were loyal servants of the British ruling élite. Such textual and visual representations provided a stark contrast with representations of domestic defilement, and its embodiment by British women, that had been prevalent during the 'mutiny.' Atkinson attempted to reinscribe imperial domesticity by representing the mythical station of Kabob. But vivid memories of the 'mutiny' continued to shape imperial imaginations, power, and legitimation after 1858, and were associated with specific places such as Cawnpore and Lucknow. Such places helped not only to evoke heroic memories of victory over conflict and adversity, but also to represent a subsequent period of reconstruction. Many guidebooks and travel accounts described places and events at Cawnpore and at Lucknow in great detail for British visitors. Many of these visitors lived in other parts of India but, from the late nineteenth century, an increasing number visited India from their homes in Britain. As Goswami suggests, the narrative structure of 'mutiny' tours, represented by organised tours and guidebooks for independent visitors, was organised around specific spaces rather than temporal events.²⁵ Guidebooks often included detailed itineraries for visits, maps, and historical as well as contemporary descriptions of Cawnpore and Lucknow, directing visitors to and around specific destinations along distinct and

²⁴ Ibid..

²⁵ Goswami, *op. cit.*.

well worn routes.²⁶ For Goswami, such guide books 'constructed a spatial strategy that retraced the events of the mutiny, along particular spatial and discursive grids. A consequence of this particular form of spatialized narrative is that the complex, conjunctural events of the mutiny are flattened out and mapped onto discrete, geographical units.'²⁷ Moreover, the centrality of such places to a post-'mutiny' imperial imagination marked not only the *inclusion* and identification of British visitors and residents as imperial rulers, but also marked the *exclusion* of Indians and 'the erasure of the historical agency and subjectivity of indigenous society.'²⁸

Writing in 1860, Charlotte Stamper described her horror at learning that her husband's first posting as a Chaplain was to Cawnpore:

Cawnpore! A name of horror and dreadful associations...Cawnpore was then only rising from the horror of the Mutiny. Bungalows or rather the ruined walls of Bungalows all black with burned smoke on every hand, a few only had been repaired while the ghastly Assembly Rooms and 'Murder' *ghat* [quay] still bore the blood marks on the walls. The Well, about which so much was talked, was as it was, or rather very many wells[,] old dry places were still as they had been when the bodies of many many women and children were hurled down them. Now that whole region beside the Assembly Rooms is formed into a lovely garden, while the well itself is a monument in carved stone with Baron Marochettis' figure of an angel in the centre.²⁹

²⁶ See, for example, M. D. Awasthi, Lucknow Guide: A Guide to Places of Interest with a History and a Map, Lucknow Steam Printing Press, Lucknow, 1925 (5th edition), M. A. Beg, The Guide to Lucknow, containing popular places and buildings worthy of a visit with historical notes on the Mutiny of 1857, Royal Printing Press, Lucknow, 1911 (6th edition), W.S. Caine, Picturesque India: A Handbook for European Travellers, Routledge, London, 1891, A. Forbes, Glimpses Through the Cannon-Smoke: A Series of Sketches, Routledge, London, 1880, E. H. Hilton, The Tourists' Guide to Lucknow, Murray and Co., Lucknow, 1916 (9th edition), Lucknow: The Garden of India, G. W. Lawrie and Co., Lucknow, 1928, and H. A. Newell, Lucknow: An Illustrated Guide to Places of Interest with History and a Map, W. Weissenbruch, Brussels, undated 1920s. .

²⁷ Goswami, op. cit., 73.

²⁸ Ibid., 73.

²⁹ Laughton Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

The gardens near the site of the Bibighar extended to fifty acres, while over the well itself, a mound had been raised with an octagonal Gothic wall and iron gates marking an enclosure, which had a white marble statue of an angel at its centre (Plates 27 and 28).³⁰ The inscription over the gates began 'Sacred to the perpetual memory of a great company of Christian people, chiefly women and children, who near this spot were cruelly murdered by the followers of the rebel Nana Dhundu Panth of Bithur.'³¹ This memorial site was closely guarded as well as bounded, with the iron gates remaining locked and the keys held by a custodian. Moreover, access to the memorial gardens was restricted to British rather than Indian visitors. The gardens and memorial were partly funded by a fine levied on the city of Cawnpore after the suppression of the 'mutiny' in 1858 and the gardens were maintained by an annual grant of £500 from the Government.³² In 1875, the Government also financed the building of a Gothic memorial Church at Cawnpore (Plate 29) on the site of the entrenchments at a cost of more than £20,000, and visitors were advised to climb to the top of the belfry to view the cantonment and battle-lines.³³ As Goswami suggests, such memorials at Cawnpore codified a national-imperial memory of the 'mutiny' that focused on the fate of British women and children and an avenging Christian militarism. Although the Bibighar, the well, and Wheeler's entrenchments were themselves no longer visible, the location of the memorial gardens, statue, and Church at each of these sites commemorated the fate of British women and children and the masculine heroism of British victors in suppressing the 'mutiny' in place-specific ways.

³⁰ Caine, *op. cit.*, 270-271.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 271.

³² *Ibid.*, 271.

³³ Goswami, *op. cit.*.

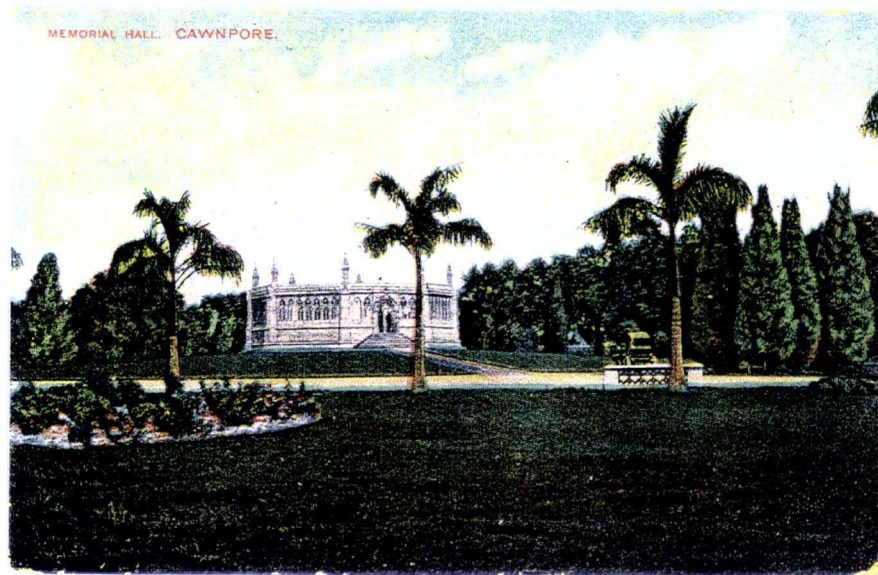


Plate 27: A Postcard of the Memorial Well, Cawnpore, from the 1920s

Source: Author's Collection

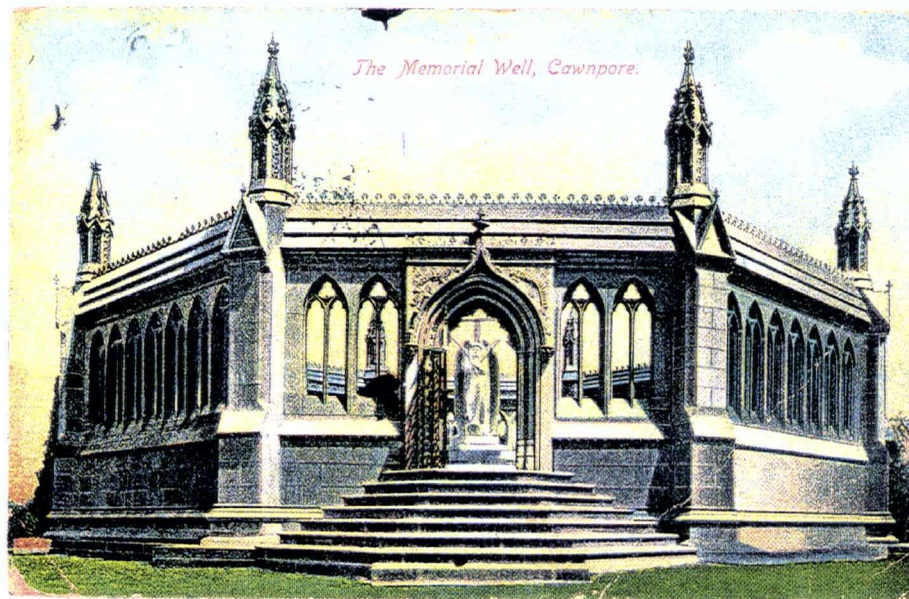


Plate 28: A Postcard of the Memorial Well, Cawnpore, from the 1920s

Source: Author's Collection

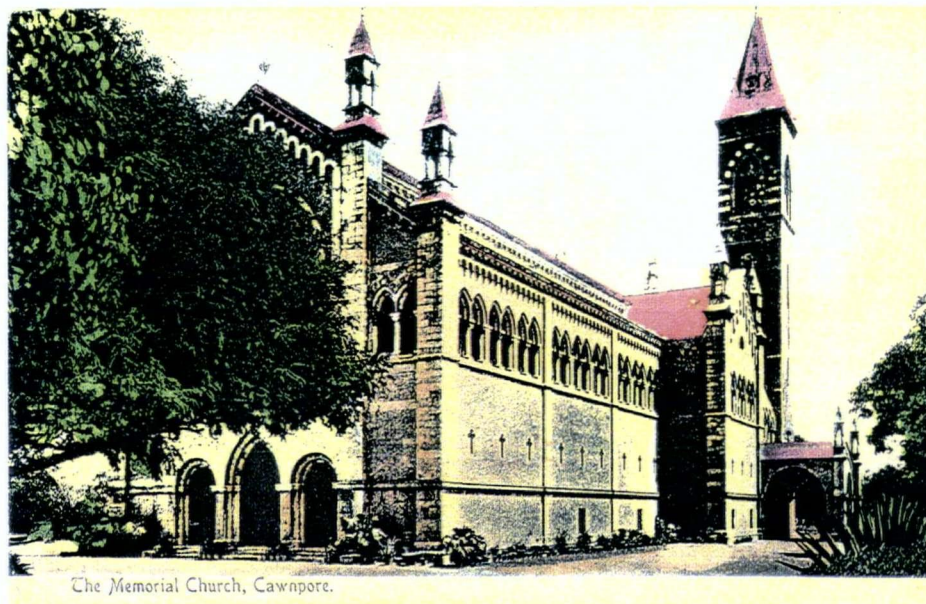


Plate 29: A Postcard of the Memorial Church, Cawnpore from the 1920s

Source: Author's Collection

While British soldiers fighting their way towards Lucknow in July 1857 and British women evacuated from Lucknow in November 1857 had visited key sites in Cawnpore, future visitors toured memorials that not only located these sites but also commemorated the fate of British women in children in Christian and imperial terms.

Unlike Cawnpore, the damaged buildings in the Residency compound at Lucknow were themselves preserved as a memorial to British fortitude and victory. Visitors were first directed to a museum that housed Moore's model of the Residency as it was before the 'mutiny' (Plate 14), which served to stress the defensive difficulties of the siege as well as the amount of damage sustained during the siege and in subsequent fighting. Visitors could also buy postcards of the ruined Residency, consuming the imperial spectacle and sending it on to vicarious travellers (Plates 30 and 31). At several key sites within the compound stood inscriptions and memorials to loyal Indian soldiers and British soldiers and officers. Within the graveyard, visitors viewed Sir Henry Lawrence's grave and its epitaph to a man 'who tried to do his duty,' as well as the graves of twelve women, eight children, and two thousand officers and soldiers killed at Lucknow. Then, visitors were advised to climb to the top of the Residency tower for a panoramic view just as Adelaide Case, Julia Inglis, and Maria Germon had done at the beginning of the siege, although now the view below was of the graveyard rather than guns and preparations for the siege. In his guidebook to 'Picturesque India,' published in 1891, W. S. Caine wrote that

The Residency is of course the spot which, more than any other object of interest in Lucknow, attracts the British tourist. Apart from their romantic history, the ruins and surrounding garden form a beautiful picture. It is impossible for the most callous to wander unmoved through its pathetic cemetery, gay with flowers and shadowed by feathery bamboos. Every inscription brings to mind some fresh incident of the awful defence and relief of Lucknow.³⁴

³⁴ Caine, *op. cit.*, 279.

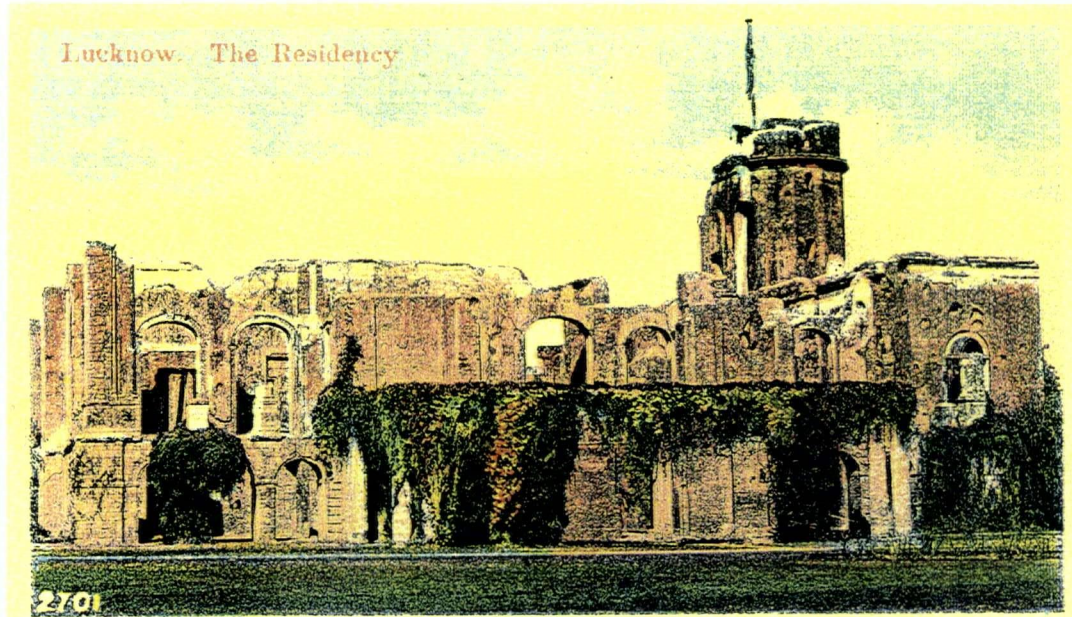


Plate 30: A Postcard of the Lucknow Residency from the 1920s

Source: Author's Collection

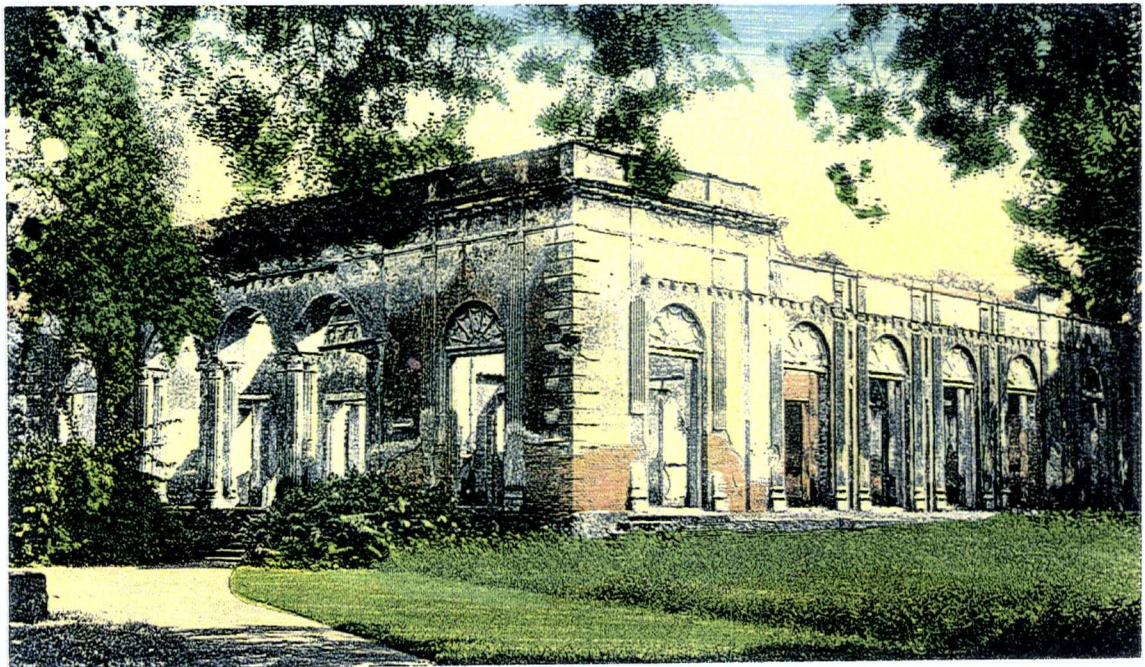


Plate 31: A Postcard of the Fayrer's House, Lucknow, from the 1920s

Source: Author's Collection

Not only did the ruined buildings of the Residency memorialise the British population who had lived under siege and the British soldiers and officers who had recaptured this crucial site in 1858, but they also came to be represented as part of a picturesque as well as an imperial imagination. Following Suleri, such picturesque representations were distinctively gendered, enabling British women to view, sketch, and write about places in India in aesthetic ways. Suleri describes 'the feminine picturesque' as a dual discourse that is both obedient in its sentimentality and minority status and yet subversive, lending 'a new violence to fragility.'³⁵ Unlike Cawnpore, the success of the second 'relief' force in evacuating the British population from Lucknow meant that the site could be represented in aesthetically pleasing terms. While the memorials at Cawnpore commemorated the fate of British women and children and an avenging Christian militarism, the ruins of the Lucknow Residency commemorated a more glorious imperial memory of British, Christian, and heroic fortitude and victory.

Many British women who lived in India after 1858 visited Lucknow and other places that continued to shape imperial memories of the 'mutiny.' For example, Alice Lawrence, the great granddaughter of Sir Henry Lawrence, described her visit to the Lucknow Residency in 1922 in a letter to her future husband, Hopetoun Stokes of the Indian Civil Service. As she wrote,

I have been to the Residency, and it is quite wonderful, much larger than I had expected, and a wonderful red colour - there is a great peace about it, and a simple grandeur that is most impressive. I wandered all about it by myself one evening, just to get a general impression of it, but I mean to go and work out the different buildings more accurately another time...the main block of the Residency itself stands, and the banqueting hall which was used as a hospital, and Dr Fayrer's house, where Sir Henry Lawrence was taken after he was wounded...there is a feeling of quiet power and endurance about the place, quite unlike the quick changing of the East - it is an oasis -

³⁵ Suleri, *op. cit.*, 78. Also see M-L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Routledge, London, 1992, for discussion of landscape representations by male and female travel writers in terms of 'science' and 'sentiment.'

on the one hand quite unlike the glamour of the East and on the other unlike the aggressive westernism of the civil lines.³⁶

On her first visit to the Lucknow Residency, Alice Lawrence walked around the compound alone and avoided its Indian custodian, a retired soldier who had remained loyal to the British at Lucknow during the siege. But on a subsequent visit to Lucknow in August, Alice Lawrence walked around the compound and 'had a long chat with the old soldier who is caretaker there - a regular old character - He gave me his views on the present political situation and things in general. He is bound up in the place, knows every stone and rock of it, and was much interested to know when I told him my name.'³⁷ Unlike the exclusion of Indians from the 'mutiny' memorials at Cawnpore, the caretaker of the Residency compound at Lucknow was himself an Indian. But as the Indian custodian had remained loyal to his British officers and to British rule in India more generally during the 'mutiny,' his presence at the Lucknow Residency, speaking with and guiding visitors around key sites, served to reinforce imperial memory, power, and legitimation for many years after 1858.

When Nancy Vernede lived in Lucknow as a child in 1923, a typical day would include a visit to the Residency, which was 'oozing with atmosphere (strangely very peaceful) where we played among the ruins.'³⁸ Interviewed more than fifty years later, she remembered that 'Lucknow was so filled with atmosphere, and ghosts, and everything romantic and exciting, I think perhaps it's my spiritual home in a way, lovely place.'³⁹ In different ways, imperial

³⁶ Letter from Alice Lawrence to Hopetoun Gabriel Stokes, 12 March 1922. Stokes Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge. In a similar way, Yvonne Fitzroy, the secretary to the Vicereine, Lady Reading, wrote in her diary of her visit to the Lucknow Residency in 1923 that 'Of all the India I have seen this is the most eloquent and the most poignant.' MSS.Eur.E.316/8 Reading Papers, India Office Library.

³⁷ Letter from Alice Lawrence to Hopetoun Gabriel Stokes, 3 August 1922. Stokes Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

³⁸ N. Vernede, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

³⁹ N. Vernede, Plain Tales Transcripts, MSS.Eur.T.69, India Office Library.

memories of the 'mutiny' were marked by different memorials in Cawnpore and Lucknow. In other places, with less resonant sites than the Bibighar, the well, and the entrenchments at Cawnpore and the Residency compound at Lucknow, the bungalows⁴⁰ where British women lived were evocative of the 'mutiny' and came to represent the reconstruction of imperial domesticity after the conflict. Iris Portal, for example, lived in Meerut in 1928 and wrote that

Some of the officers' bungalows had plaques on gates 'Here lived Captain and Mrs So-and-So who were murdered with their three children, May 10th 1857.' It seems strange to remember that I never felt any qualms about these plaques, in fact no one seemed to notice them at all, or even mention them...Those bungalows in Meerut, with the same dusty gardens, the same wells, the same crumbling walls which had ineffectually sheltered long-dead memsahibs on a hot May morning, seventy or eighty years before, did not disturb me.⁴¹

Colonization and Settlement

The 'mutiny' had important implications not only for the destruction of British homes in India but also for their reconstruction after 1858. In constitutional terms, following the transfer of the government of India from the East India Company to the British Crown, a parliamentary Select Committee was appointed to consider the prospects of colonization and settlement in India.⁴² Although the terms 'colonization' and 'settlement' were sometimes used interchangeably, more often they denoted distinct concepts. As David Arnold writes,

Settlement signified the right of individual Europeans to reside in India and to hold land in their own name. Planters were the principal example of this. Settlers were

⁴⁰ As Anthony King writes, 'The bungalow, both in name and form, originated in India...from the Hindi or Mahratti *Bangla*, meaning 'of or belonging to Bengal.' A. King, The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984, 14.

⁴¹ Memoir by Iris Portal, Song at Seventy, Portal Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁴² The East India Company had maintained strict controls on the number of British people living in India to ensure the security of its commercial monopoly. See D. Arnold, 'White Colonization and Labour in Nineteenth Century India,' The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 11, 1983, 133 - 158.

thought of as men of capital, who brought to India their financial resources and entrepreneurial skills. Their number was always expected to remain relatively small....Colonization, by contrast, connoted the establishment, whether through direct immigration from Britain or the allotment of land to British soldiers discharged in India, of substantial numbers of Europeans for whom India would become a permanent home. Without capital of their own, with no more than basic farming skills or crafts to contribute, they were to live by their labour on the land.⁴³

A number of witnesses called by the Select Committee argued that colonization was essential to maintain the security of British rule in India. Major General Tremenheere stated in April 1858, for example, that 'It is very important that some plan should be devised to increase the number of the English in India. As a nation, we are too small a body there; and this perhaps, as much as any other cause, has led to the recent attempt to exterminate our rule.'⁴⁴ Major General Tremenheere had spent twenty five years in India with the Bengal Engineers from 1830 to 1855. His view was supported by George MacNair who argued, in May 1858, that 'the safety and stability of the country depends much upon more Europeans being settled there. It would also tend much to the improvement of the natives, and to the prosperity of the country.'⁴⁵ MacNair was an indigo planter who had spent twenty years in Lower Bengal, returning to Britain for only six months in 1854.

Indeed, the development of hill stations and the increased ease of travel and communications both within India and between Britain and India arguably facilitated colonization and, more specifically, the presence of British women in India on which colonization relied. Most importantly, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 meant that it was

⁴³ Ibid., 134. Arnold fails to examine the gendered implications of nineteenth century debates about British colonization and settlement in India, which provide the focus of my account.

⁴⁴ Evidence from Major General Tremenheere, 15 April 1858, *Four Reports from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India), 1857-8, VII, 10.*

⁴⁵ Ibid..

possible to travel from London to Calcutta in little more than two months.⁴⁶ By the 1920s, new transport technologies had further reduced the journey from Britain to India to a period of between three and five weeks.⁴⁷ Within India, there was a rapid expansion of the railway network in the years following the 'mutiny.' In 1857, the Indian Government had constructed 300 miles of railway, which carried two million passengers and 253,000 tons of goods. By 1887, the railway network had been extended to more than four thousand miles and carried 95.5 million passengers and more than twenty million tons of goods over the course of the year, and a further 2,500 miles of railway track were also under construction.⁴⁸ In the years after 1858, it became easier to travel both from Britain to India and also within India itself. The extension of the rail network facilitated the growth of hill stations, on which the health and happiness of British women in India was seen to depend.⁴⁹

The presence of British women as wives of colonists and settlers was seen as a crucial way to ensure the security of British rule in India. Although opposed to colonization, the *Calcutta Review* reassured its Anglo-Indian readers that 'So long as we have Christian Officers as well as Christian women we do not fear for India.'⁵⁰ In 1858, James Martin, a surgeon in the Bengal Army, argued that British soldiers should marry British women because when they married Indian women, 'it spoils the soldier; he becomes domesticated in Indian habits; he volunteers to remain in India when his regiment comes home; he becomes an old Indian, in fact,

⁴⁶ D. Headrick, The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century, Oxford University Press, New York, 1981.

⁴⁷ K. Platt, The Home and Health in India and the Tropical Colonies, Bailliere, Tindall and Co., London, 1923.

⁴⁸ *Memorandum on Some of the Results of Indian Administration during the past Thirty Years of British Rule in India, 1887: Parliamentary Papers, 1189 LVIII.1.*

⁴⁹ The development of hill stations is the focus of Chapter 6.

⁵⁰ 'Englishwomen in the Rebellion,' *Calcutta Review*, 1859, 108-126, 126.

an indolent man and too much domesticated in India.⁵¹ Another witness agreed that British women would ensure imperial as well as domestic security in India. Ralph Moore, a doctor who had lived in the North Western Provinces from 1824 to 1858, argued that every British soldier stationed in India should be accompanied by his British wife. As he said, 'I believe that if that were carried out, and an attempt to colonise properly originated and carried on, we should be able to hold India by means of independent European settlers, with very few troops indeed; in fact, I think mutiny or revolt would be impossible.'⁵²

But such calls for colonization went largely unheeded by the Select Committee and the British government. Rather than promote colonization, the government instead followed 'a policy of conciliation and cooption,'⁵³ which included the reorganization of the army in India, the reform of the police service, the growth of the Indian Civil Service, and the assurance of land holding rights and the tolerance of religious observance for Indian subjects. As the Royal Proclamation of 1 November 1858 claimed:

We desire no extension of Our present territorial Possessions...We shall respect the Rights, Dignity, and Honour of Native Princes as Our own...We declare it to be Our Royal Will and Pleasure that none be in any wise favoured, none molested or disquieted by reason of the Religious Faith or Observances; but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the Law...We know, and respect, the feelings of attachment with which the Natives of India regard the Lands inherited by them from their Ancestors; and We desire to protect them in all Rights concerned therewith, subject to the equitable demands of the State.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Evidence from James Martin, 15 April 1858, *Four Reports from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India), 1857-8, I*, 25. See Chapter 2 for further discussion of the regulation of sexual behaviour by British soldiers in India.

⁵² Evidence from Ralph Moore, 24 March 1859, *Report from the Select Committee - Colonization and Settlement (India), 1859, IV*, 259.

⁵³ Arnold op. cit., 146.

⁵⁴ *Proclamation, by the Queen in Council, to the Princes, Chiefs, and People of India (published by the Governor General at Allahabad, November 1st, 1858); Parliamentary Papers, 1876, LVI.117.*

The establishment of permanent British homes in India remained unusual and largely confined to tea and indigo planters and their families. Unlike other parts of the British Empire such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the lack of land for colonists and the large Indian population meant that there were few opportunities for colonization and settlement by British labourers and artisans.⁵⁵ The *Calcutta Review* argued that India should remain a British conquest rather than a British colony, and suggested that the latter 'should be planted in a *new*, and, if possible, an unpeopled, or a thinly-peopled country.'⁵⁶

Although an increasing number of British homes were established in India after the 'mutiny,' these were more likely to exist on a temporary rather than a permanent basis, housing the British 'aristocracy' of civil servants and army officers. The antagonism between British settlers (particularly planters) and British civil servants was a notable feature of the evidence presented to the parliamentary Select Committee. John Marsham, who had spent more than thirty years in Bengal and had established the first Indian newspaper there in 1818, described an unbridgeable social gulf between these 'two classes.' As he said, 'there are six hundred civilians in the Bengal Presidency, and they occupy the position of the aristocracy in this country...everything resolves itself into a question of caste in India.'⁵⁷ Alexander Forbes also described civil servants as an aristocracy, and recounted the hostility between civil servants and settlers. He had lived in Lower Bengal for sixteen years, working as an indigo and tea planter, a factory owner, the secretary to the Dacca Bank, and the editor of the Dacca News, and stated

⁵⁵ As Arnold shows, however, there were important exceptions. In particular, he writes that 'Europeans...did succeed in establishing themselves in certain areas of skilled employment in a way that can be compared with the white labour aristocracy of southern and east Africa. The most striking, though by no means the solitary, example of this is to be found on the Indian railways.' Arnold op. cit., 148.

⁵⁶ 'Colonization in India,' *Calcutta Review*, 29, 1858, 163-188, 180.

⁵⁷ *Four Reports from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India), 1857-8, VII*, 193.

that 'whatever complaint [such as drunkenness] is brought against civilians it is not punished with dismissal, but with mere removal...When a man fails as a collector or a commissioner, he is made a judge.'⁵⁸ Unlike British officials, Lady Beatrix Scott, the wife of a civil servant, remembered tea planters as 'a much more permanent European population than we were and in consequence their homes were much more homelike.'⁵⁹ Women like Scott who were married to British officials occupied an ambivalent and temporary place at home in India after 1858.

British Women at Home in India

The place of British women at home in India was the subject of ongoing debate that centred on the presence of British women in India, the reconstruction of British homes in India, and the coexistence of homes in Britain and India. These debates were often discursively embodied by British women travelling between Britain and India. Moreover, such women also embodied paradoxical discourses of proximity and distance between ideas of home in Britain and in India. The increased ease of transport and communications between Britain and India contributed to the increasing number of British women travelling to set up home in India. But both the improved links between Britain and India and the increasing number of British women living in India partly as a result of these links were represented in ambivalent ways. While enhanced connections were recognized as an important way to increase the accessibility and contact between Britain and India, they were also thought to threaten the nature of imperial rule that was often represented in paternalistic terms. In 1858, an article in the *Calcutta Review* listed 'the increased facilities and greater frequency of communication with England - the greater prevalence, and improved character of English female society in India - the increase of matrimony' among other examples of the 'hourly' improvements taking place in Anglo-Indian

⁵⁸ *Report from the Select Committee - Colonization and Settlement (India), 1859, IV, 157.*

⁵⁹ Memoir by Lady Beatrix Scott, *Indian Panorama*, 1951. Scott Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

life.⁶⁰ But an undesirable effect of such improvements was thought to be a growing indifference to India and Indians. As the article continued,

We are thus reduced to the embarrassing conclusion that the improvement of Anglo-Indian society is identical with the estrangement of its members from the people of the country; that the tastes and pursuits of civilised life are incompatible with any degree of sum or interest towards our Indian fellow-subjects; that the more respectable we become, the more antagonistic we must grow towards the indigenous races; and that the love of our country and our country's ways, means the hatred of India and the Indians.⁶¹

By 1885, another article in the *Calcutta Review* focused on the place of British women in India and lamented the domestic decline of Anglo-Indian life. This decline was seen to be embodied by British women who were increasingly able to travel between their homes in Britain and in India. As the article argued,

In former days, however great the longing might be for Home and for the dear Home faces, for the fresh, health-giving breezes of the moors, or the cosy fireside, for the sound of a mother's loving voice, or the kindly touch of a father's hand, however great the longing might be, it had to be fought against and conquered, if not entirely (for it is very hard to overcome the home-sickness of the home-loving English-woman) - at least sufficiently so, to prevent its assuming a chronic form. But now it is different; there is no tedious voyage of three or four months between the Indian and the English home, and Anglo-Indians have gradually become imbued with the idea that 'going home' is the cure for all evils; and so the feeling of home-sickness is not fought against as it used to be.⁶²

⁶⁰ 'The India Question,' *Calcutta Review*, 30, 1858, 355-382.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 382.

⁶² 'Englishwomen in India,' *Calcutta Review*, 80, 1885, 137-152, 137. In this article, it was assumed that the parents of the eponymous women lived in Britain rather than in India. See Chapter 6 for further discussion of the differences perceived to exist between women born of British parents in India rather than in Britain, and the implications of such differences for domestic and imperial reconstruction after 1858.

'Home' is shown here to coexist on different scales and in different places, most notably between as well as within Britain and India. More than this, though, the article also suggests that imperial homes in India were being *threatened* by their increased proximity to home in Britain, and that these issues were an exclusively female preserve. The ambivalence of home coexisting in two countries centred on the figure of the British woman travelling from Britain to reconstruct homes in India.

British women travelled to India in increasing numbers. As an article in the *Calcutta Review* stated in 1886, they 'now come in scores; and as facilities for travel increase, means of communication multiply, and our picked men elect India as the scene of their career, so must their wives, daughters and sisters follow in larger numbers.'⁶³ The growing presence of British women in India prompted a number of questions in the *Calcutta Review*. One of these questions - 'Do the circumstances of their Indian homes tend to the development of that which is noblest and best in them?'⁶⁴ - reflected the contested place of British women at home in India. Some commentators argued that the place of British women as imperial home-makers exacerbated racial segregation and antagonism in India. It was claimed that British women living in India had helped to create a separate sphere of exclusively British domestic, social, and moral life. For example, Wilfred Scawen Blunt wrote in 1885 that

the Englishwoman in India during the last thirty years has been the cause of half the bitter feelings there between race and race. It was her presence at Cawnpore and Lucknow that pointed the sword of revenge after the Mutiny, and it is her constantly increasing influence now that widens the gulf of ill-feeling and makes amalgamation daily more impossible.⁶⁵

⁶³ J. E. Dawson, 'Woman in India - Her Influence and Position,' *Calcutta Review*, 83, 1886, 347-357, 347.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 348.

⁶⁵ W. S. Blunt, *Ideas about India*, Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., London, 1885, 47.

Christine Bremner, writing about a month spent travelling in Northern India, claimed that

It is to be feared that great as are the benefits Anglo-Indians derive from the presence of English ladies, their advent has helped to widen perceptibly the breach between the governors and the governed. In the first half of the century, when Deputy-Commissioners, Agents and Collectors crossed the seas for twenty years or even a life-time at a stretch, they lived in their lonely district in fellowship and amity with the natives.⁶⁶

In social terms, the growing 'gulf of ill-feeling' between British and Indian populations was often attributed to the presence of British women in India. Memories of the fate of many British women in the 'mutiny' continued to shape a discourse of chivalrous protection in which ideas of racial and gendered identity and propriety were intimately connected.⁶⁷ Kenneth Ballhatchet writes, for example, that 'As wives [British women] hastened the disappearance of the Indian mistress. As hostesses they fostered the development of exclusive social groups in every civil station. As women they were thought by Englishmen to be in need of protection from lascivious Indians.'⁶⁸ Such examples of gendered and racial exclusivity were also spatially inscribed. The gendered as well as racial 'gulf of ill-feeling' was often articulated in explicitly spatial terms between, for example, British enclaves of the home, club, cantonment, and civil lines, and Indian harems, bazaars, and the 'native city' that existed beyond such limits. For many commentators, the place of British women at home in India came to epitomize the social and spatial distance that was thought to underpin increasing racial tension and hostility between British rulers and their Indian subjects. However, the employment of Indian servants within British homes in India challenged the notion that these homes were exclusively British spaces.

⁶⁶ C. Bremner, A Month in a Dandi: A Woman's Wanderings in Northern India, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co., London, 1891.

⁶⁷ See Sharpe 1993, op. cit., and Suleri op. cit., for further discussion of the ways in which memories of the unrepresentable rape of British women continued to influence ideas of racial as well as gender difference. Their emphasis on gendered representations in such accounts contrasts with other discussions of racial and sexual hybridity, as shown by Young, op. cit..

⁶⁸ Ballhatchet op. cit., 5.

Other commentators saw British women as essential not only to reproduce legitimate imperial rulers, but also to reproduce the social, moral, and domestic values legitimating imperial rule. At the beginning of her book, The Englishwoman in India, Maud Diver stressed this imperial importance by quoting Count von Konigsmark:

'What would India be without England, and what would the British Empire be without Englishwomen? To these women are due the gratitude not only of their country but of the civilised world. Fearlessly the woman of British birth looks into the eye of danger. Faithfully and with willing sacrifice she upholds the standard of the King-Emperor - the standard of culture and of service to humanity.'⁶⁹

Diver went on to discuss the domestic roles of British women in India as maid, wife, mother, hostess, and housekeeper. She also discussed the work of British women in medicine, education, and missions, before focusing on several Indian women as 'pioneers.' However, the majority of books written to advise British women living in India focused exclusively on imperial domesticity within the home. Since the eighteenth century, conduct books had become gendered in increasingly explicit ways.⁷⁰ Unlike other books about travel, a number of accounts were written specifically for female travellers and concentrated on the need to fulfil feminine rather than scientific expectations in terms of appearance and conduct.⁷¹ More usually, though,

⁶⁹ Diver op. cit., quoting 'Die Engländer in Indien' by Count von Konigsmark.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 3 for further discussion about historical changes in the gendered nature of conduct books.

⁷¹ See Blunt op. cit., for discussion of the gendered nature of travel handbooks. Books written for women travellers include L. C. Davidson, Hints to Lady Travellers at Home and Abroad, Iliffe, London, 1889, and H. M. L. S., A Few Words of Advice on Travelling and Its Requirements Addressed to Ladies, Thomas Cook, London, 1878, fourth edition. The behavioural focus of these books contrast with the scientific focus of, for example, D. W. Freshfield and W. J. L. Wharton, Hints to Travellers Scientific and General, Royal Geographical Society, London, 1893, seventh edition, and F. Galton, The Art of Travel; or, Shifts and Contrivances Available in Wild Countries, John Murray, London, seventh edition.

conduct books focused on the place of women in the home, both reflecting and reinforcing ideas of feminine domesticity.⁷² In this section I focus on those accounts written for British women travelling to reconstruct homes in India to examine the ways in which bourgeois discourses of feminine domesticity were translated across imperial space and the extent to which such accounts helped to reproduce imperial domesticity in India.⁷³

Household books for British women living in India were particularly important from the 1890s to the 1920s, when several books were reprinted in many editions. The increased number and popularity of such books reflected the growth of publications that were specifically addressed to women, including periodicals and novels as well as housekeeping handbooks.⁷⁴ Moreover, as the number of British women travelling to India increased, so too did the demand for guides both to life in India and to domestic life more specifically. But some publications were more successful and influential than others. For example, there was only one edition of the periodical *The Bungalow: A Paper for Anglo-Indian Homes*, which was published in 1896 and described itself as 'a ladies paper that will devote itself to the interests of Anglo-Indian Homes.

⁷² See, for example, Anon., *A Wife's Home Duties: Containing Practical Hints to Inexperienced Housekeepers*, Bell and Daldy, London, 1859, Anon., *The Lady at Home and Abroad: Her Guide and Friend*, Abbott, Jones, and Co., London, 1898, and C. P. Gilman, *The Home: Its Work and Influence*, McClure, Phillips, and Co., London, 1903.

⁷³ Such accounts include the only edition of *The Bungalow: A Paper for Anglo-Indian Homes*, 1, 1, 1896; A. F. James, 'Housekeeping and House Management in India,' in *The Lady at Home and Abroad*, op. cit.; A. C. Wilson, *Hints for the First Years of Residence in India*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1904; F. A. Steel and G. Gardiner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, William Heinemann, London, 1907, fifth edition (first published 1898); Diver op. cit; I. O. R. [E. G. Hart], *The Bungalow Beautiful*, Higginbotham and Co., Madras, 1909; "Chota Mem" [C. Lang], *The English Bride in India: Hints on Indian Housekeeping*, Higginbotham and Co., Madras, 1909; C. F. Deighton, *Domestic Economy*, Higginbotham and Co., Madras, 1912; and K. Platt, *The Home and Health in India and the Tropical Colonies*, Bailliere, Tindall and Co., London, 1923.

⁷⁴ Beetham, op. cit..

There will be every month articles on 'The Home: how to beautify it'...., Indian Cookery..., 'Lessons in Home Dressmaking,' Gardening, 'The Toilet,' Fashions, etc.'⁷⁵ The only edition of this periodical included breakfast and dinner menus for one week that reflected elaborate and exclusively British rather than Indian tastes. For example, a suggested breakfast for Tuesday included 'kidneys in tomatoes, fried sausages, cold beef with salad, Swiss eggs,' while dinner on the same day included 'Royal soup, pigeons in aspic, roast hare with liver sauce, potatoes and turnips, cheese fritters, stewed apples with whipped cream.'⁷⁶ The periodical also hoped to include regular competitions for its female readers. The first two to be advertised, with prizes of ten rupees each, were for an original story of Indian life and for the most interesting description of a local event. From the 1890s until the 1920s, books and pamphlets on imperial domesticity in India proved to be more successful than this short-lived journal devoted to the same subject.

In 1898, a volume was published in London that was entitled The Lady at Home and Abroad: Her Guide and Friend and subtitled 'Consisting of articles contributed by the pens of expert lady writers on all subjects of interest and fact in the daily life and duties of matron, wife and maid.'⁷⁷ The book aimed to provide 'a collection of thoroughly practical papers which cannot fail to be of use and interest to women of almost any class.'⁷⁸ And yet, despite its title, only one chapter out of twenty one in this volume explicitly addressed homes away from Britain. Between chapters on 'Ladies' Sports' and 'Legal Matters,' this book included a chapter by Agatha James on 'Housekeeping and House Management in India.' James expressed her disdain for books that had been published by authors who had only briefly visited in India. In contrast, her chapter drew on her years of residence in India, claiming authority from her own

⁷⁵ *The Bungalow: A Paper for Anglo-Indian Homes*, 1, 1, 1896.

⁷⁶ Ibid..

⁷⁷ Anon., 1898, op. cit..

⁷⁸ Ibid., v.

direct experience of housekeeping and house management away from Britain. As she wrote, there was 'still room for suggestion and hints to ladies going out for the first time, with housekeeping in prospect, in a strange land.'⁷⁹ James addressed her chapter to women who were new not only to India but also to their domestic duties as wives. As she wrote, 'At first, ladies strange to the country and its ways find considerable difficulty in managing their housekeeping, more especially if they are newly-married and not experienced housewives.'⁸⁰

According to Christina Bremner, 'any woman can keep house in England, but only women of superior breeds who shine physically, mentally, morally and socially should attempt it in India.'⁸¹ In similar terms, an article in the *Calcutta Review* in 1885 stated that 'the difficulties of housekeeping in India are no doubt considerably greater than in Europe.'⁸² In contrast, Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner wrote that 'Housekeeping in India, when once the first strangeness has worn off, is a far easier task in many ways than it is in England' and stated that 'Economy, prudence, efficiency are the same all over the world.'⁸³ Steel and Gardiner were authors of the most well-known and influential housekeeping guide for British women living in India. Their book was first published in 1893 and, by 1907, had been reprinted in its fifth edition. Twenty five years after it was written, M. Dench was given a copy of this guide by her husband on their marriage in 1918 and found it invaluable: 'Dear old Flora Annie, I came to rely on her for all matters of household concern. She was a knowledgeable Mem who had turned her years in India to good account. Every aspect of keeping house was covered.'⁸⁴ Steel

⁷⁹ James, op. cit., 364.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 373.

⁸¹ Bremner op. cit., 47.

⁸² 'Englishwomen in India,' *Calcutta Review*, 80, 1885, 137-152, 139.

⁸³ Steel and Gardiner op. cit., 1 and 5.

⁸⁴ Dench Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

and Gardiner drew on their own experiences of life in India and, in later editions, supplemented this experience with answers to a questionnaire that they had sent to other British women in India. Little is known about Grace Gardiner, but Flora Annie Steel was a well-known author of Anglo-Indian novels. She had married a member of the Indian Civil Service in 1867 and lived in the Punjab from 1868, where she advocated education for Indian women, became the first inspector of girls' schools, and, in 1884, became a member of the Provincial Education Board.⁸⁵

According to Maud Diver,

Women like Mrs Steel...would seem to be as rare as they are admirable. Here was a civilian's wife doomed to spend most of her Indian career in ugly little up-country stations, where Europeans were scarce, and social resources at a very low ebb; a state of things calculated, in ordinary circumstances, to produce the languid, fretful type of femininity, not unknown to travellers on P and O steamships. Yet it is probable that Mrs Steel's seemingly monotonous life teemed with vivid, active interests, and that she was a total stranger to that deplorable state of mind known among pleasure-hunters as 'boredom.'⁸⁶

As Lady Anderson recalled, Flora Annie Steel's 'active interests' could also extend into areas less suited for a memsahib in India:

Her husband was - long ago - the Deputy Commissioner of Muzaffargarh. Once my husband was looking through old Government files on the District Office - and he showed me a file in which (to his mingled astonishment and disapproval!) an order about some local controversy actually SIGNED by the lady - not by her husband, the DC! I felt I was being shown how NOT to be an 'Administrator's Wife.'⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Flora Annie Steel was best known for her novel about the 'mutiny,' F. A. Steel, On the Face of the Waters: A Tale of the Mutiny, Macmillan, New York, 1911. See her autobiography, F. A. Steel, The Garden of Fidelity, Macmillan, London, 1929, D. Patwardhan, 'Flora Annie Steel: A Lover of India,' Indo-British Review, 5, 3, 1972, 44-54, and V. Powell, Flora Annie Steel: Novelist of India, Heinemann, London, 1981, for further details.

⁸⁶ Diver, op. cit., 78-79.

⁸⁷ Lady Anderson, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

Despite this transgression, Steel and Gardiner provided invaluable advice for several generations of memsahibs by writing 'a practical guide to young housekeepers' who were new not only to India but also new to their domestic responsibilities as married women.⁸⁸ Such a comprehensive guide was deemed necessary not only because of the novel conditions of life in India, but also because of the need to teach and to value domestic skills more generally. As Steel and Gardiner wrote, 'It is the fashion nowadays to undervalue the art of making a home; to deem it simplicity and easiness itself. But this is a mistake, for the proper administration of even a small household needs both brain and heart.'⁸⁹

Ideally, published advice on imperial home-making would be supplemented by advice from British women already living in India. Anne Campbell Wilson had lived in the Punjab with her husband who was a deputy-commissioner, magistrate and collector, and published a housekeeping guide in 1904 to provide information that she was often asked by new arrivals to India. As she wrote, 'I have so frequently been called upon to 'mother' our young friends, and begged to help them to buy their own pots and pans, their stores and their necessities, that it occurred to me it might be of some use, if I furnished those who propose to come to India with information as to what they will require when they arrive there.'⁹⁰ Like other handbooks, Wilson addressed her book to readers who were new not only to India but also to domestic management, aiming to dispel 'the natural ignorance of the novel conditions of life in India, which exists amongst those whose experience has hitherto been of life at home, and who even there have been accustomed, like those fortunate beings who live in fairy palaces, to find everything done by invisible hands.'⁹¹ In this and other housekeeping guides, Wilson's readers

⁸⁸ Steel and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, vii.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹⁰ Wilson, *op. cit.*, 7.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

were not only female, usually newly-married, but also middle class, leaving British homes where servants had been employed to embark on their married life and the household management of considerably more servants in India.

Five years later, under her pen-name "Chota Mem" or 'junior memsahib,' C. Lang addressed her book specifically to 'The English Bride in India.'⁹² In it, she wrote that published advice on imperial home-making would ideally be supplemented by advice from British women already living in India. Figure 9 represents the provincial boundaries of British India at this time. As Lang reassured her readers, 'you are sure to find kind ladies in your regiment, or at any rate, one, if not several really kind-hearted women in the station. My advice is get to know one of these as soon as possible - she will be the greatest help to you.'⁹³ Her book seems to be most clearly addressed to the wives of officers who enjoyed incorporated status according to their husband's rank within the regiment. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 2, the structure of a regiment was not only hierarchical but also appeared to be familial, incorporating wives of officers as bourgeois 'ladies' who, in the feudal hierarchy of regimental life, aspired both to aristocratic conduct and to feminine domesticity. In 1909, an army officer published a twenty six page pamphlet entitled The Bungalow Beautiful, or Some Hints on How to Make an Indian House Pretty and Comfortable.⁹⁴ It was highly unusual for a man, not least an army officer, to write a housekeeping guide for British women living in India. Writing under the pen-name I. O. R., Captain E. G. Hart dedicated his pamphlet 'To my mother - who understands the art to perfection,' clearly positioning imperial domesticity within a feminine realm of influence and interest. Although the tone and content of his account was similar to the accounts written by British women, it differed in one important area. Unlike other accounts, Hart also wrote about

⁹² 'Chota Mem,' op. cit..

⁹³ Ibid., 1.

⁹⁴ I. O. R. [Hart], op. cit..

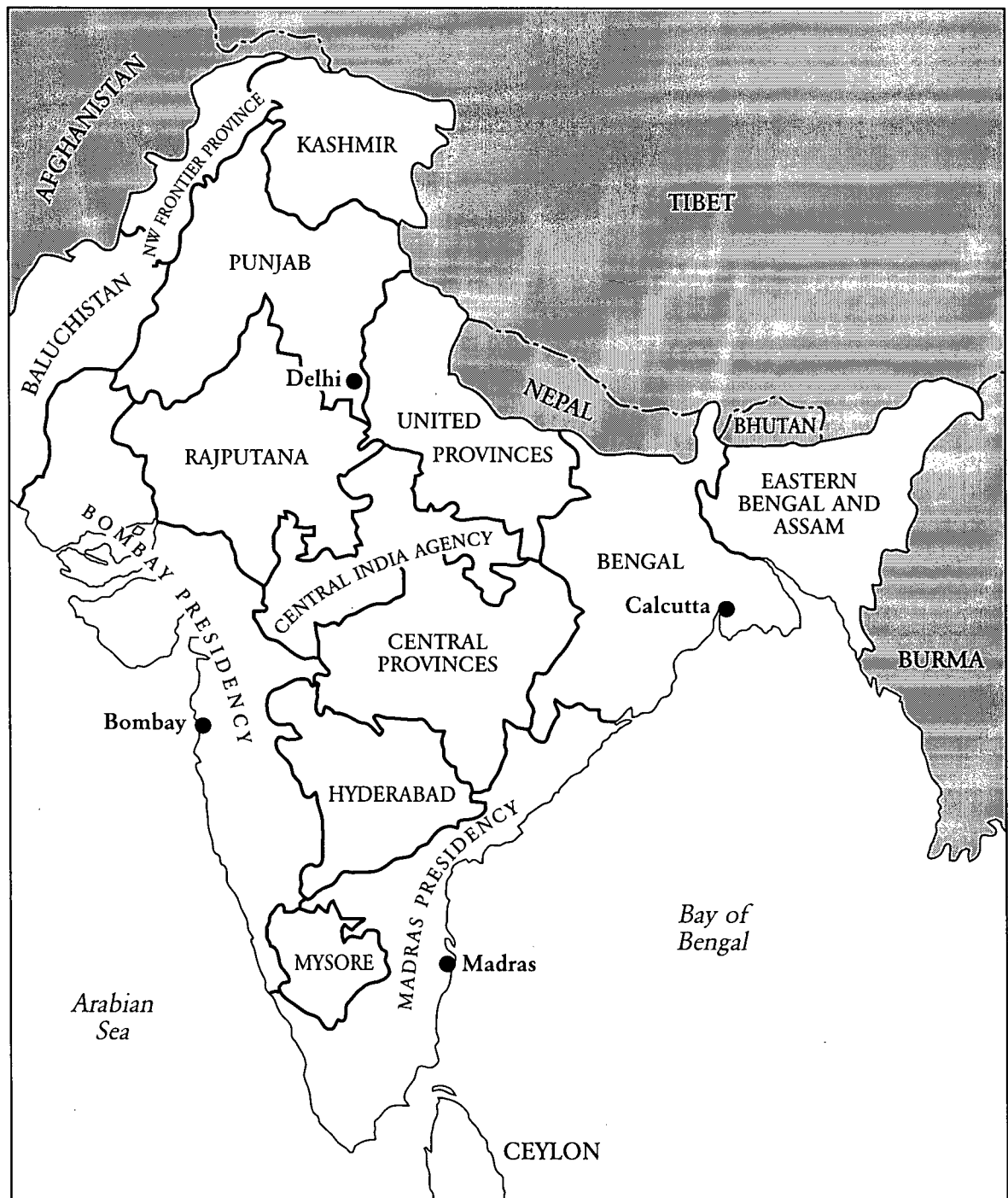


Figure 9: The Provincial Boundaries of British India in 1909

Source: D. Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1996

the benefits of successful housekeeping in India for the British husband as well as the British wife. As he concluded, 'It is hoped that this short essay may help the ignorant and inexperienced new-comer to the East to make her home and life out here more enjoyable, and whilst her husband may not always express his approval in words, the effect on his temper will probably more than compensate for the worry and bother that it may bring her.'⁹⁵ Despite its challenges, Hart stressed the importance of imperial domesticity in not only helping a newly-married woman to enjoy her life in India, but also in cultivating and ensuring her husband's good temper. Even though her husband might not praise his wife's domestic capabilities, Hart implies that if his guide was followed, such praise would be assured.

Unlike the previous handbooks, two volumes that were published in 1912 and 1923 were written by British women with professional rather than solely personal qualifications and experience, reflecting an increasingly scientific approach to domestic economy, health, and household hygiene. Catherine Deighton, whose book Domestic Economy was published in Madras in 1912, had been a teacher of domestic economy for the London County Council, held diplomas in cookery, laundry work, and housewifery, and had written several earlier books, including Practical Housewifery, The Hospital in the Home, and Our Village Laundry Class. Only one chapter of her book explicitly addressed domesticity in India, focusing on the cleanliness of Indian bungalows. Her other chapters considered a range of subjects such as hygiene, food, nursing, and needlework, which were clearly thought to transcend national and imperial boundaries. In contrast, Kate Platt, a similarly qualified professional, addressed her book on the home and health to women living in India and other tropical colonies.⁹⁶ Platt had been a former principal at the Lady Hardinge Medical College and Hospital for Women in Delhi, and drew on her managerial as well as medical knowledge in her account. The three parts of her book addressed social and domestic conditions, the child in health and sickness, and

⁹⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁹⁶ Platt, op. cit..

tropical diseases. The first part of her book was explicitly directed to British women without friends or relations to provide first-hand information about imperial domesticity in India. As she wrote,

It is very desirable that a woman should have some knowledge of the surroundings of her new home and of the ever-recurring domestic problems connected with it; also of possible emergencies and the best means of meeting them. If her destination is an isolated station, far away from the conveniences of Western civilisation, there may be no one at hand from whom she can obtain advice or help in case of need; consequently she will be thrown on her own resources.⁹⁷

Reconstructing home on a household scale in India was a constant preoccupation for the British wives of civil servants and army officers who would usually expect to move at least every two to three years. Homes for British women in India were temporary not only because they tended to retire to Britain, but also because they moved many times throughout their lives in India. Furthermore, many women travelled seasonally, often spending the hot season in hill stations and often accompanying their husbands on winter tours of duty. Kate Platt described the British population in India as a 'floating one' and reassured her readers that 'a Home is something portable and does not depend on location.'⁹⁸ Margery Hall moved sixteen times in eight years, which 'made for shallow and transient relationships.'⁹⁹ Mrs E. Lermitt moved twenty four times in ten years, while Cynthia McKillop moved seventeen times in eighteen years.¹⁰⁰ According to Beatrix Scott, 'It certainly added variety to life, but did not breed obsession with

⁹⁷ Ibid., vi.

⁹⁸ Platt op. cit., 64.

⁹⁹ Memoir by Margery Hall, And the Nights were more Terrible than the Days, Hall Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁰⁰ E. Lermitt and C. McKillop, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

any particular home. Fortunately we had learned to fit ourselves quickly into a house.'¹⁰¹ Victoria Bayley agreed that 'It's amazing how quickly houses lose their atmosphere and...how quickly one can turn the next house into a home.'¹⁰²

For British women, learning to turn a house into a home drew upon the experiences of other British women as imperial home-makers, either as writers of published accounts or as mentors. Imperial domesticity depended on skills that were learnt and then reproduced over space and time as British women reconstructed home on a household scale many times and in many different places over the course of their lives in India. Such skills suggested the importance of imperial as well as domestic responsibilities for British women who were new not only to housekeeping but also to India. Once such skills had been acquired and put into practice, Steel and Gardiner wrote that an Anglo-Indian home should represent

that unit of civilisation where father and children, master and servant, employer and employed, can learn their several duties. When all is said and done also, herein lies the natural outlet for most of the talent peculiar to women...We do not wish to advocate an unholy haughtiness; but an Indian household can no more be governed peacefully, without dignity and prestige, than an Indian Empire.¹⁰³

Establishing and maintaining imperial domesticity was seen to be an important preserve of British women that enshrined both imperial and domestic roles and responsibilities. Not only did imperial power relations underpin the domestic roles of British women but also, at the same time, the feminine 'dignity and prestige' displayed on a domestic scale were likened to the successful exercise of imperial rule. As Rosemary Marangoly George has shown, 'Time and

¹⁰¹ Memoir by Lady Beatrix Scott, Indian Panorama, 1951, Scott Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁰² Memoir by Victoria Bayley, One Woman's Raj, 1976, Bayley Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁰³ Steel and Gardiner op. cit., 7 and 9.

time again, the colonial discourse, especially the texts written by women, represent the management of Empire as essentially 'home management' on a larger scale.¹⁰⁴ In George's terms, British women helped not only to reconstruct homes in the empire but also empires in the home, which, in turn, helped to reflect and to reproduce imperial power relations that existed beyond as well as within a domestic domain.

Civil Lines, Cantonments, and Compounds

Throughout India, except in the smallest, most isolated stations of the rural *mofussil* or up-country, British civilians lived in civil lines and British officers lived in cantonments, both of which were located at a distance of usually two to four miles from the 'native' city. The major cities of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras had originated as European settlements, with a European spatial pattern and architecture to which the residential needs of Indians had had to adapt.¹⁰⁵ But beyond these major cities, European areas had developed around civil stations and cantonments. In other places, where military cantonments had been located at a further distance from existing settlements, 'native' towns and cities often developed alongside. But in both cases, 'there had developed two separate and unequal urban settlements, one 'European,' the other, the 'native city.'¹⁰⁶ Such racialised distancing reflected concerns for security, an authoritative division between the settlements of rulers and ruled, as well as the racial anxieties of British rulers about health and hygiene. As Kate Platt wrote, 'the state of sanitation is such that diseases when introduced spread with incredible rapidity. It is not without reason that the European residential quarter is built at a considerable distance from the fascinating but dangerous native

¹⁰⁴ George op. cit., 108.

¹⁰⁵ King, op. cit..

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 42.

city.¹⁰⁷ After 1858, the spatial ordering of cities such as Cawnpore and Lucknow returned to their pre-'mutiny' pattern, with the 'imagined community' of a British official élite located in two areas that were clearly distinct from the 'native' city that, for Platt, appeared to offer a seductive threat as a distant, unknown site of desire. For Trevelyan, writing in 1894, the distance between British civil lines and cantonments and the 'native' city represented a gulf between west and east:

An Indian station consists of two parts: the cantonments of the Europeans and the native city and bazaar. The west and east are far apart, separated by a waste common, fields or gardens...There is no bond of union between the two, in language, faith or nationality. The west rules, collects taxes, gives balls, drives carriages, attends races, goes to church, builds its theatres...and drinks its pale ale...The east pays, takes in the shape of what it eats grown on taxed land...sits in decaying temples, haunts its rotting shrines, washes in failing tanks, and drinks its semi-putrid water. Between the two is a great gulf; to bridge it over is the work reserved for him who shall come to stabilitate our empire in the East.¹⁰⁸

Within each separate part of a settlement, Trevelyan went on to contrast the spacious order of the British 'station' and the residential density and apparent disorder of the 'native' city:

The European station is laid out in large rectangles formed by wide roads. The native city is an aggregate of houses perforated by tortuous paths...The Europeans live in detached houses, each surrounded by walls enclosing large gardens, lawns, out-offices. The natives live packed up in squeezed-up tenements, kept from falling to pieces by mutual pressure. The handful of Europeans occupy four times the space of the city which contains tens of thousands of Hindoos and Mussulmen.¹⁰⁹

In similar terms, Sara Mills describes the differences between civil lines and 'native' settlements, writing that

¹⁰⁷ Platt, *op. cit.*, 29. See Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, for further discussion about the ways in which the redevelopment of Lucknow after the 'mutiny' was informed by urban health and sanitation policies that drew on racist discourses of disease and uncleanness.

¹⁰⁸ Trevelyan, 1894, 2-11, quoted in King, *op. cit.*, 42.

¹⁰⁹ Trevelyan, 1894, 2-11, quoted in King, *op. cit.*, 43.

In contrast to what were seen as the sprawling accretions of the crowded 'native' town, the civil lines were generally planned with mathematical precision on a grid-plan, including strategically placed grand public buildings which dominated the cityscape and were easily viewed from a range of vistas, and wide, straight avenues which gave ease of access and visibility.¹¹⁰

Although Mills does not specify the size of station to which she is referring, her description relates most closely to larger urban areas rather than smaller stations like Atkinson's fictional Kabob. But if a station housed both civilian and military officials, the spatial separation of civil lines and cantonments remained the norm despite its size and even if, as in Kabob, public buildings were limited to a Church, Assembly Rooms, Treasury, and Law Courts. The clearest exception to this spatial ordering was the structure of hill stations, where British civilian and military officials lived in close proximity to each other even though they were still separate from, and usually located at higher elevations above, the 'native' city and bazaar.¹¹¹

This Chapter focuses on administrative and military centres that were smaller than the large and rapidly growing urban centres of Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras. There are two reasons for such a focus. First, I trace imperial domesticity on a household scale in traditional or 'classical' bungalows rather than in newer flats that were increasingly built in large, more densely built up cities from the early twentieth century. According to King, 'It was the 'classical' Anglo-Indian bungalow of civil station and cantonment which became, in these years, the symbol of the new European political and cultural presence in India.'¹¹² Unlike the bungalows built of mud, with a thatched roof, which Atkinson had depicted in Kabob (see Plate 22), bungalows housing British civilian and military officials increasingly came to be built with a flat roof in a 'classical style' (see Plate 12 and Figure 10).

¹¹⁰ Mills, 1996, op. cit., 137.

¹¹¹ Hill stations provide the focus of Chapter 6.

¹¹² Ibid., 42.

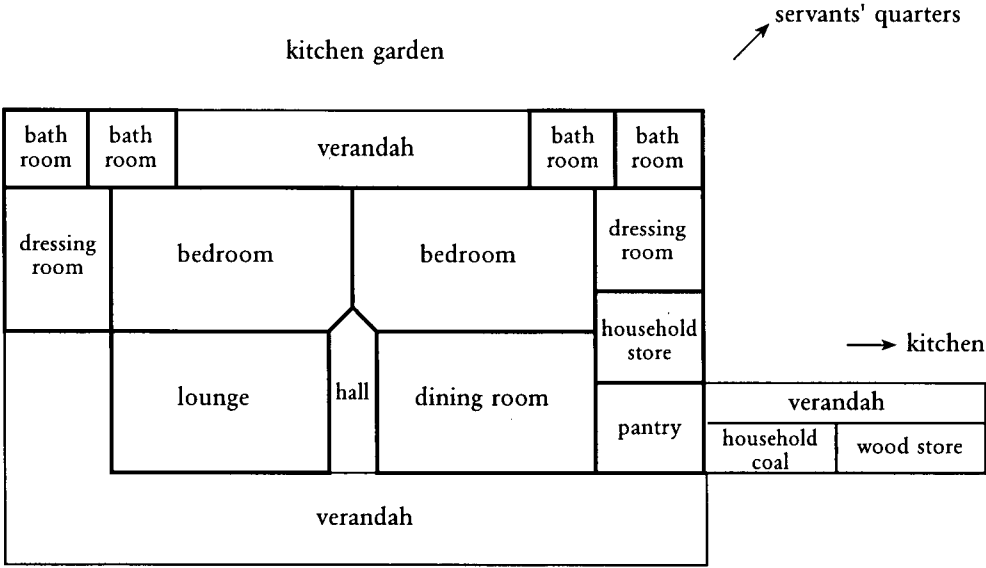


Figure 10: A plan of a 'Classical' Bungalow

Source: Berridge Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge

As King argues, the establishment of the Public Works Department in 1854 led to the development of an 'engineering vernacular' or 'Military Board' style that came to standardise dwellings for civil servants and army officers.¹¹³ Second, I refer to a range of stations of varying sizes to reflect the mobility and transience of the British official *élite* whose members expected to move many times over the course of their lives in India. Indeed, memoirs and other accounts written by British women who lived in India between 1858 and 1939 reflect an almost placeless sense of home that travelled with them both seasonally as they visited hill stations and over the course of their lives in India. Representing many different homes in India, the writings of such women and their descriptions of bungalows, servants, and a daily routine often appear more continuous than distinct over space and time. Also, in many memoirs and other accounts, the British wives of army officers and civil servants reflected on the similarities of their own and their mother's imperial domesticity in different places and at different times in India. In this section, I discuss the ways in which a British 'imagined community' of an official *élite* was spatially and socially split between civilian and military communities by focusing on the incorporation of British wives into these two strictly hierarchical organisations. Then I turn to imperial domesticity on a household scale by focusing on the management by British women of their bungalows and compounds.

Describing the civil lines in Aijal, Beatrix Scott, the wife of a civil servant who lived in India from 1911 until 1939, wrote that 'There were pink and red rambler roses along the fences and well-kept gardens round the offices, the treasury, the Magistrate's Court, etc. and the Club - an oasis of tidiness and cultivation in the middle of the wilderness.'¹¹⁴ In similarly picturesque terms, Victoria Bayley, who was also married to a civil servant and who lived in India from 1933 until 1946, described the civil lines in Lahore: 'Government houses were all set in sizeable gardens with a lawn of coarse grass, a bed or two of cannas, with luck a jacaranda tree or a

¹¹³ Ibid.. I will discuss the form and layout of 'classical' bungalows in greater detail below.

¹¹⁴ Scott Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

golden mohr, and purple bougainvillea climbing up the verandah, a blaze of colour against the cream-coloured stucco of most bungalows.¹¹⁵ Describing her life in the same civil lines in 1930, M. Dench remembered that 'This was not unlike an English suburban estate, except that the houses were further apart and the compounds larger than the average suburban garden, and it lacked the suburban atmosphere; none of the inhabitants veiled their lives behind muslin curtains and there was no feeling as in England of being island-bound.'¹¹⁶ The order and homogeneity of civil lines and cantonments were likened to suburban estates in Britain, although each bungalow was detached and set in a spacious compound and the lives of residents were thought to be less confined.

Describing her life in India in 1860, Charlotte Stamper wrote that 'In those days India was India, not suburbia adapted to a warm climate.'¹¹⁷ The lives of British women married to army officers and civil servants, and living in cantonments or civil lines, reflected and reinforced professional hierarchies and protocols in domestic terms. Rather than a single, homogenous 'imagined community' of a British official élite in India, differences were perceived between military and civilian officials and their wives. As Christine Bremner wrote in the 1890s, 'It is commonly reported that the civilians and the military will not mingle at some stations, each looking down on the other with lofty contempt.'¹¹⁸ While Rosamund Lawrence believed that military and civilian officials were alike - 'ICS was very much like a soldier, the soldier was very much like an ICS'¹¹⁹ - a clearly defined social protocol dictated that civilian officials were senior to military officials of a similar rank and that the British wives of civilians

¹¹⁵ Bayley Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹¹⁶ Dench Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹¹⁷ Laughton Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹¹⁸ Bremner, *op. cit.*, 25.

¹¹⁹ R. Lawrence, *Plain Tales Transcripts*, Mss.Eur.T.39, India Office Library.

were thus senior to their military counterparts. According to M. Ravenscroft, whose father was an officer in the Gurkha Regiment and who lived in India from 1890 to 1917, 'We were considered a very much lesser breed, the Military you see, the others were the heaven born.'¹²⁰ The Civil List, or 'Blue Book,' ranked civil servants in order of precedence, and this hierarchy was domestically as well as professionally reinforced by British wives as well as their husbands. As Nancy Vernede recalled about her life in India in the 1930s that

For some reason, I don't know why, the ICS were supposed to be the sort of senior service, and it could be rather difficult, because if you were a young bride, married to a civilian, you officially were senior to...someone old enough to be your grandmother, who was perhaps, just as...in every way, just as good or better, more worldly than oneself, but it was just simply because you were ICS that you were the...so-called Senior Lady. And you were taken into dinner by the host and of course if there were two or three ICS in the same party, naturally the senior one would be the senior lady, and she'd go in with the host...10.30 was the magic hour when the senior lady, whoever happened to be on the right hand side of the host, had to then get up and say, well, she must go home now, and until she'd done that no-one could move...sometimes the senior lady wouldn't realize. She'd be new to India and didn't realize that she was supposed to make the move and everyone would hang on and on and on and people would get sleepier and sleepier until someone had to pass them the hint.¹²¹

Kathleen Griffiths also remembered the rigidity of this dinner party protocol, recalling that 'as a bride and a newcomer [in the early 1920s] I found this terribly difficult to begin with. However one learns very very quickly. But I have seen irate memsahibs...be extremely annoyed if they thought they were put in their wrong places at a dinner party'¹²² (see Plate 32 for an illustration of a dinner party in Kabob, which shows the scale and formality of such entertaining).

¹²⁰ M. Ravenscroft Transcribed Interview, MT34, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹²¹ N. Vernede, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.69, India Office Library.

¹²² K. Griffiths, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.32, India Office Library.

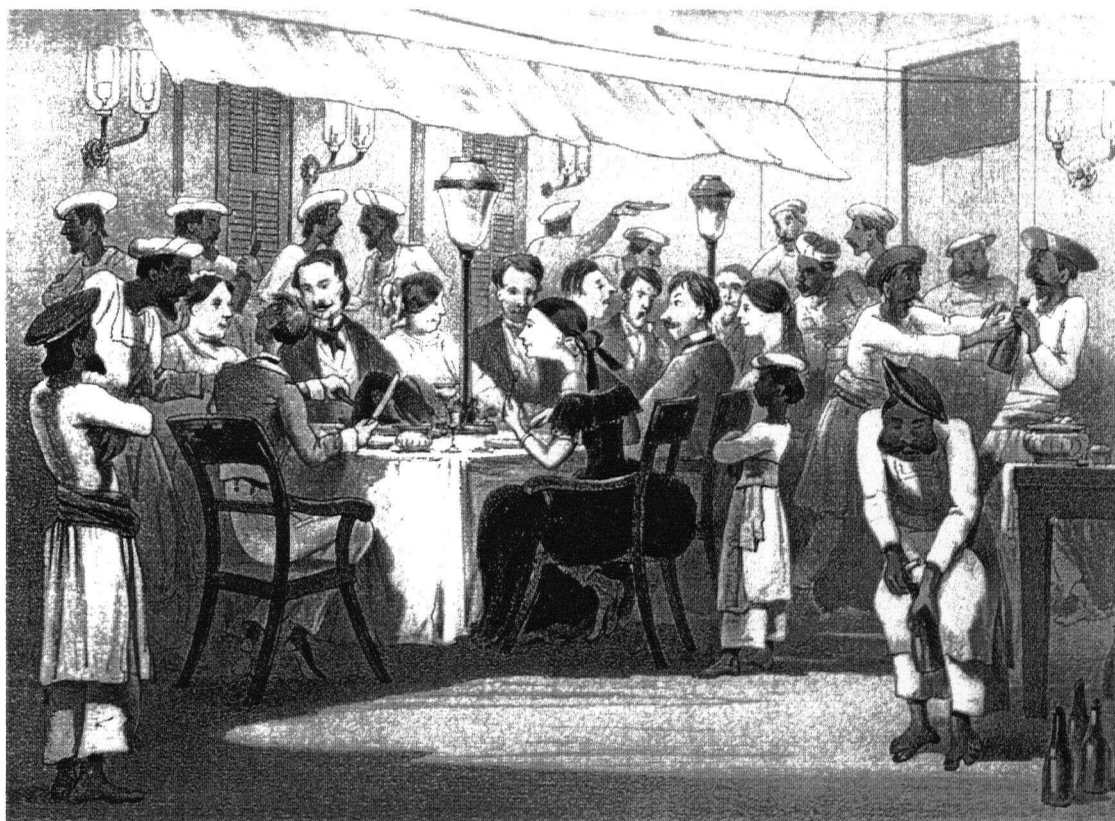


Plate 32: A Dinner Party at Kabob

Source: Atkinson, op. cit..

A similarly rigid protocol existed in military as well as civilian life and was reproduced in cantonment social life. When the Brigadier's wife of her husband's regiment was staying in Britain, Decima Curtis found herself to be the senior 'lady.' As she recalled,

We went out to dinner, and when the ladies left the table, the white haired mother of our AC stood aside and ushered me to the door. I naturally stood back, but she said 'Oh but you are the senior lady, and must go first.' I understood my predecessor had laid stress on this, but I said I hadn't been brought up to push ahead of my elders, and that when we met at a party she must go first and this comfortable arrangement lasted my time.¹²³

For Mary Cotton, 'We always considered the ICS rather dull and we thought that the army officers were very much more amusing and gay than the ICS.'¹²⁴ But within cantonments, British wives often expressed their boredom with the monotony of daily life. Describing her life in Mooltan as the wife of an army Captain in 1868, Ann Munro wrote that 'There has been so much dissipation on the Station lately that I am rather weary of it, and am not going to a picnic which takes place today. I don't care for croquet and get very tired with the glare etc - so think I am best at home. Since I last wrote I have been to a Ball, an evening party, amateur theatricals, a children's picnic, and to dine again at the Kaye's - so you see have no longer lack of amusement, only one gets tired always meeting the same people.'¹²⁵ Although over time tennis came to be favoured over croquet, the daily life for the British wives of military and civilian officials continued to follow similar routines. Frances Smythe found cantonment life dull for British wives: 'Their children were at school at home probably, or else with the Nanny. And they had this unending round of socials, tennis, dancing and so forth and so on. And however flighty a woman may be it really is not quite enough.'¹²⁶ Similarly, Iris Portal described

¹²³ D. Curtis, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹²⁴ M. Cotton, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.19, India Office Library.

¹²⁵ Stock Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹²⁶ F. Smythe, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.62, India Office Library.

cantonment life in a small station: 'I think small cantonment life was the problem, and a pattern grew up, of what to do. There was a great deal of bridge playing in the mornings, and then there was as much sport as you chose to join in with, I mean, whatever it was that appealed to you, in the afternoon, and the Club in the evening, and the social functions naturally revolved within a small circle, you met the same people over and over again, until you moved to your next station.'¹²⁷

As the daughter of a resident in a native state, Vere Birdwood experienced a very different life in cantonments when she married an officer in the Bengal Lancers. The British and Indian cavalry regiments were at the top of a military hierarchy, with their officers often the wealthiest and seen to be the most glamorous in the army. According to Iris Portal, 'the real snobs were the British Cavalry. They were...richer than anybody else, which was a great point, and...they always got the best houses in the cantonment...And they were awfully nice and friendly, mostly, but did tend to keep among themselves because they were able to live a kind of life that the rest of us couldn't always keep up with.'¹²⁸ But Vere Birdwood found life as the wife of a cavalry officer to be restricting and monotonous. According to Birdwood,

life in either a British or an Indian Cavalry Regiment was considered extremely smart, quite wealthy...[and] though there wasn't an awful lot of money about, the whole atmosphere was one of superiority, they felt superior and in certain social respects they were superior, but the life itself was excessively boring, trivial, claustrophobic, confined, and totally male oriented, totally[. T]he army wife was not expected to do anything or to be anything except as a decorative chattel or appendage to her husband, nothing else was required of her whatsoever, she was not expected to be clever, it didn't even matter really if she was beautiful as long as she looked reasonable and dressed reasonably and didn't let her husband down by making outrageous remarks at the dinner table.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ I. Portal, *Plain Tales Transcripts*, Mss.Eur.T.53, India Office Library.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*.

¹²⁹ V. Birdwood, *Plain Tales Transcripts*, Mss.Eur.T.7, India Office Library.

For Birdwood, such a military life in cantonments was placeless and detached from Indian life of the 'native city': 'we could in fact have been anywhere in the world, I mean any military station...in Africa, in Jamaica, in Hong Kong wherever, it was exactly the same. As a man I think it was an almost perfect life...But for their wives it was a very different matter...I think I was untypical...the great majority of the wives loved every minute of it...I simply didn't fit in.'¹³⁰ Vere Birdwood found the restrictions of regimental as well as cantonment life confining and resented the lack of privacy that resulted from the familial organisation of a regiment. Most importantly, any scandal had to be kept within the regiment itself rather than known beyond it. So, for example, if an officer or soldier owed debts, funds would be found within the regiment to prevent a court case. Similarly, moral codes were constructed along regimental lines for married women and officers. According to Birdwood, 'Every facet of your life was known,' and, as a result, 'there was also virtually no immorality whatsoever, because of the extraordinarily communal life which we lived.'¹³¹ In particular, the moral conduct of married couples was exemplary within, but not necessarily beyond, the confines of a regiment. As Birdwood continued, there was a strong unwritten rule

that regimental officers could have little affairs with wives of other regiments, but it was very much frowned upon that it should ever happen with a wife in your own regiment. And so strongly was this law obeyed that in a frontier station when the husband was away campaigning, it was generally considered wise for the wife left behind to have a young officer who may have been on regimental duties to sleep overnight in the bungalow as a guard. And as far as I know this privilege, if you can call it that, was never abused ever. But it might well have been had he been guarding the wife of someone in another regiment.¹³²

¹³⁰ Ibid..

¹³¹ Ibid..

¹³² Ibid..

Daily life for the British wives of civilian and military officers followed similar routines. Margaret Ackland, the wife of a Major in the army, listed the regular pattern of her daily activities in India:

Early morning tea. Breakfast, cook's shopping list. Menus for the day. Then inspect kitchen and Pantry. Check drinking water etc, inspect meat and fish. Lunch. Tennis or golf in the pm. Visit club in the evening with husband. We entertained a good deal. Dinner parties of eight or out to dinner. Bridge etc. Life was very full.¹³³

Such a daily routine was similar to those of most British wives of civilian and military officials, only tending to vary if young children were still living in India before being sent to school in Britain. Mary Henry, the wife of a Brigadier, recalled her daily routine in the following way:

6.30 tea in bed; husband on parade; children go riding or for a walk - perhaps go with them. 8.30 husband returns for breakfast. Leaves 9.30. Orders to cook and go through bills. Orders to house servants, give out linen, inspect kitchen, stables, garden. Lessons to children or play. 1.30 or 2 lunch; 2/2.30 to 4.30 rest. Husband back about 5.30. Golf or tennis. To club until dinner at 8. Read or talk. One or two dinner parties a week.¹³⁴

Although, according to Vere Birdwood, most British women enjoyed their domestic and social life in India, she was not alone in feeling restricted and confined within cantonments. As the daughter of an officer in the RAF, E. Lermitt lived in India from 1935 when she was nineteen. As she remembered:

The life in the Cantonment was so suburban, you wouldn't believe it was possible. Tennis parties, dances, shopping in the town, picnics at beauty-spots, church parades, after-Church drinks on the mess verandah, evening drinks ditto, moonlight strolls - so genteel, so totally cut-off from any contact with actual 1936 events that were shaking up Europe that I found it hard to accept the fact and spent a great deal of my time in the Cantonment bookshop...The close community of the Cantonments was stifling to

¹³³ M. Ackland, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹³⁴ M. Henry, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

me. I did not play tennis, liked only quick waltzes, hated being flirted with and felt my time was passing in idleness when I wanted to see and know so much.¹³⁵

Living in Cawnpore in the 1930s, Rosemary Montgomery felt similarly isolated within her bungalow and cantonment life from events in India as well as in Europe. As she wrote in a letter to her parents in Britain in 1932,

I'm afraid my housekeeping chat must bore you and you will think I'm interested in nothing but my husband, garden and home and indeed it is about the only things I think about in Cawnpore, combined with the ever thrilling pasttime of making plans. Still I read the *Times* daily and the local rag as well and am surprised to read what a stormy place we are supposed to be living in.¹³⁶

As well as focusing on domestic subjects in her letters home, Rosemary Montgomery also included several drawings of her bungalow in Cawnpore (Figures 11 to 13). This bungalow was of the classical style that was prevalent throughout stations in India away from large cities and hill stations. As Anne Campbell Wilson wrote, 'An Indian bungalow in the plains is a square, one-storied, flat-roofed house, with a pillared verandah at each side,'¹³⁷ which was designed with many windows and doors to facilitate a through draught and with a wide verandah for shade. According to Maud Diver, 'an Indian bungalow is as exquisitely simple in construction as an English house is complex. It is not built to please the eye of man, but to shield his body from a merciless sun.'¹³⁸

¹³⁵ E. Lermitt, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹³⁶ Montgomery Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹³⁷ Wilson op. cit., 28.

¹³⁸ Diver, op. cit., 61.

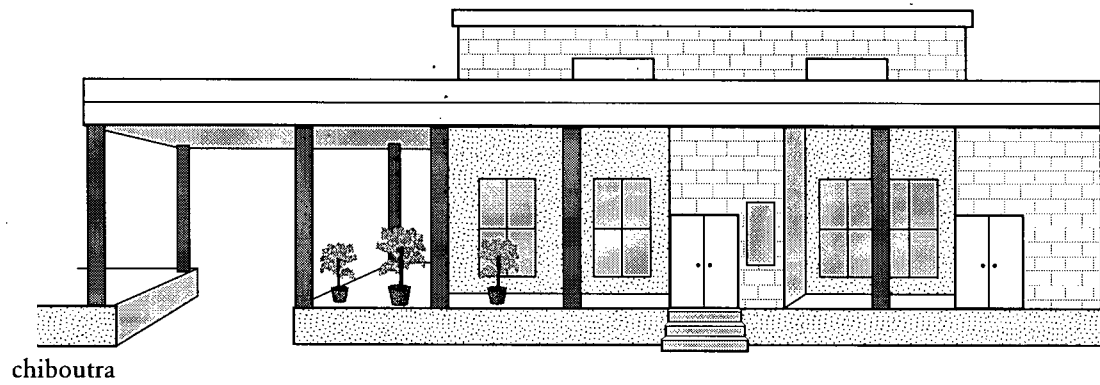


Figure 11: A 'Classical' Bungalow in Cantonments, Cawnpore, 1932

Source: Montgomery Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge

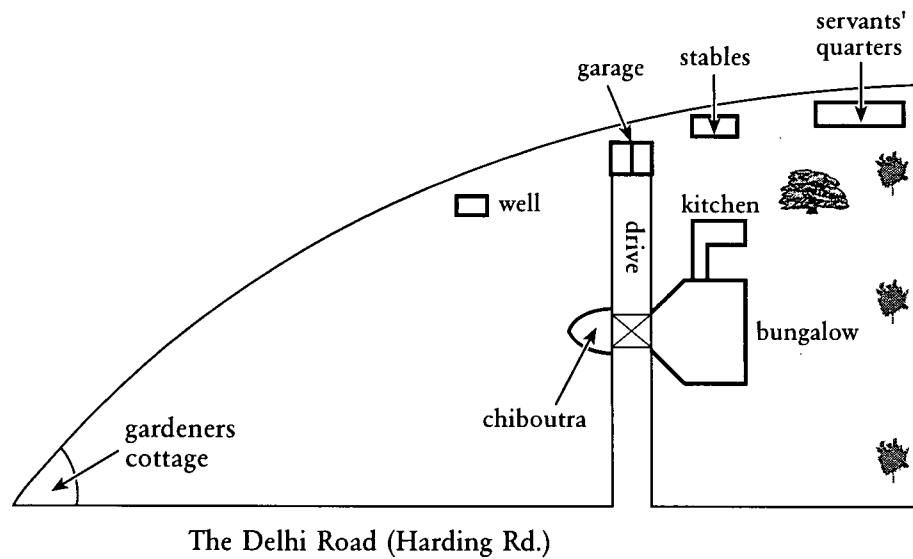


Figure 12: Plan of the Montgomery's Compound, Cawnpore, 1932

Source: Montgomery Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge

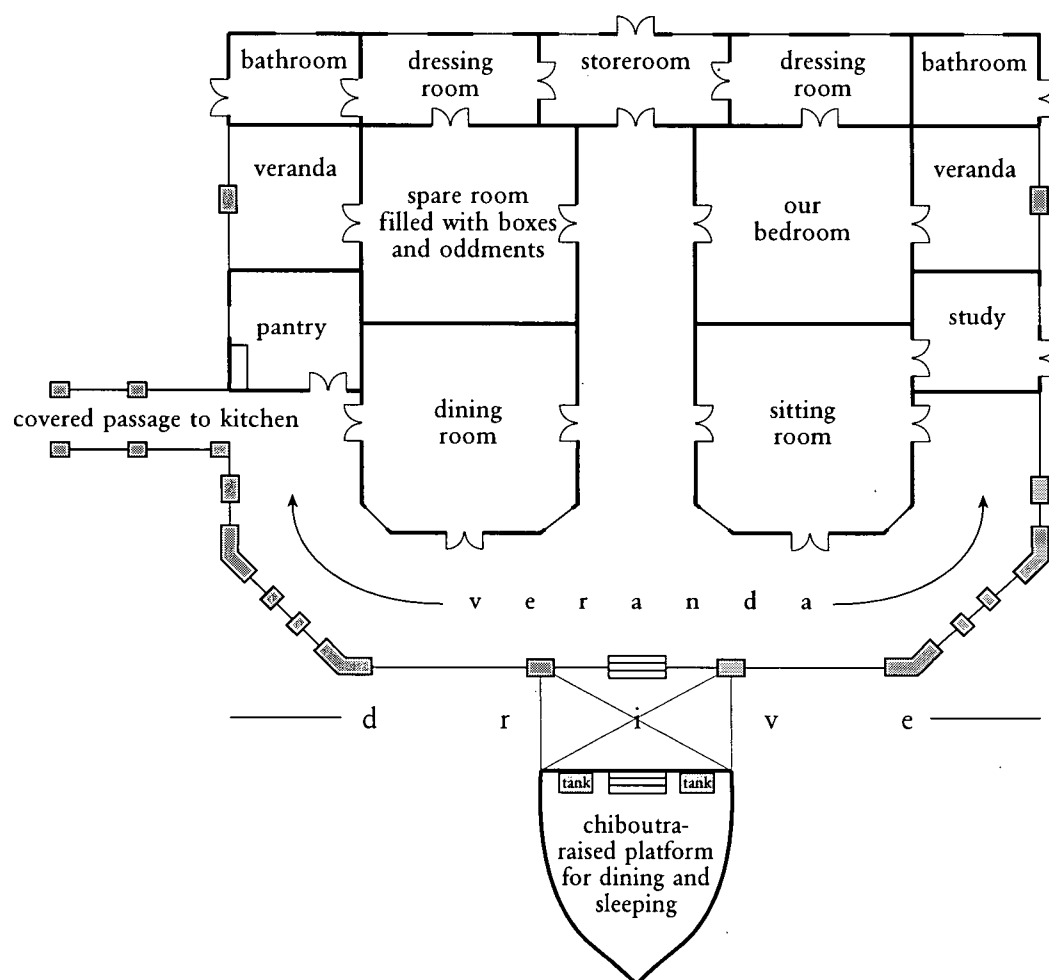


Figure 13: Plan of the Montgomery's Bungalow, Cawnpore, 1932

Source: Montgomery Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge

As Agatha James wrote, 'The usual arrangement of a bungalow is to have the sitting-rooms, drawing-room and dining-room in the centre with bed, dressing and bathrooms on each side; the rooms all opening through each other from verandah to verandah, thus enabling you to have a thorough draught through the bungalow at will.'¹³⁹ Describing the civilian bungalows that she lived in in India, Patricia Hyde wrote that they were 'all on the same floor, facing North with good verandahs, large drawing room and dining room, three bedrooms, dressing rooms, and bathrooms and an office. Servants' quarters some distance away in the compound also kitchen, therefore 'hot case' (with small charcoal burner...) on back verandah for serving to dining room. Good high ceilings...with windows.'¹⁴⁰ By the 1920s, particularly in cities, 'the old, roomy, almost palatial bungalows set in a large compound, with spacious, well-proportioned rooms and wide verandahs'¹⁴¹ were being increasingly replaced by smaller houses and flats. I am focusing on the British wives of civil servants and army officers who lived in civil lines and cantonments in up-country stations and cities such as Cawnpore and Lucknow, where bungalows remained the norm, unlike the larger cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras.

An important duty of British women married to officials was to make their Indian bungalows as 'homelike' as possible. In an article on 'Our Homes in India,' the only edition of *The Bungalow: A Paper for Anglo-Indian Homes* described the unprepossessing appearance of bungalows that seemed far removed from homes in Britain: 'An Indian bungalow, the very name conjures up a vision of bare white walls, rooms with endless doors, and verandas with cane lounge chairs and little tables, at first sight a most hopeless place to make beautiful, - but it will be found really much easier and cheaper than furnishing and decorating a house in the 'old

¹³⁹ James, op. cit., 369.

¹⁴⁰ P. Hyde, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁴¹ Platt, op. cit., 17.

country."¹⁴² As Captain Hart wrote in his pamphlet on 'how to make an Indian house pretty and comfortable,' 'The Englishwoman fresh to the East finds such a difference in her Indian home from the houses she has been used to in England, that at first she almost despairs of ever being able to make her bungalow look homelike.'¹⁴³ Hart went on to criticize those British women who failed to maintain domestic standards within their Indian homes, writing that

the Anglo-Indian housewife is often content to lapse into a style of living amidst surroundings that she would hardly deem good enough for a housemaid at Home. How often do we not see, up-country at any rate, curtains strung from nail to nail by a not over-taut string; pictures awry with dirty glasses and chipped frames; walls covered with nails and nasty little bits of string attached thereto...and a hundred other lesser, but scarcely less annoying eyesores. The belief that most of these evils are due to an ignorance of how to cure them rather than an innate complaisance with dirt and untidiness, traits that have never been amongst the characters of the Briton, has led the writer to the compilation of the few hints he here publishes.¹⁴⁴

This suggests that it was the responsibility of the British woman at home in India to maintain domestic as well as imperial standards along the lines of class and nationality. Moreover, the failure to maintain such standards is here attributed to ignorance rather than class or national culpability. The advice contained in this and other household guides sought to dispel such ignorance by teaching British women their imperial as well as domestic responsibilities in reconstructing British homes in India.

Following the advice contained in a number of household guides, many British women attempted to make their Indian homes as familiar as possible. It was impractical to transport furniture from Britain to India or indeed to own much furniture at all because of the frequent moves between stations. As a result, furniture was usually hired in each new location, and

¹⁴² *The Bungalow: A Paper for Anglo-Indian Homes*, 1, 1, 1896.

¹⁴³ I. O. R. [Hart] op. cit., 1.

¹⁴⁴ I. O. R. [Hart] op. cit., 3-4.

'Chota Mem' included four pages in her book that listed the furniture that should be hired for a bungalow with a drawing-room, dining-room, study, double bedroom, a single spare bedroom, dressing-room, and three bathrooms. According to Margery Hall,

The custom was that one hired furniture at so much a month from the furniture wallah in the bazaar; added one's own personal possessions and curtains; and there was a home. Some of these homes of senior people were splendidly impressive, filled with precious things collected all over the Indian Empire and home...Other houses looked awful...It all depended on the woman, as it does the world over.¹⁴⁵

In 1972, describing her life in India from 1904 to 1946, Deborah Dring recalled that even though she and her army officer husband hired most of their furniture, 'we always had the basis of a house which we took with us from place to place. That table was one. Been all over India.'¹⁴⁶ Within a bungalow, the only Indian rather than British furnishings tended to include punkahs on ceilings, mosquito nets around beds, and commodes in bathrooms.¹⁴⁷ Unlike British homes at the time, a bathroom was provided for each resident and visitor in a bungalow. As Kate Platt explained,

This provision of a bathroom for each individual is not the extravagant luxury that may be imagined, for except in the larger stations, the sanitation is of a primitive type. It is a shock to the newcomer to find that the commode-system is almost universal. Properly supervised, it is satisfactory and most suitable to the climate, far more so than the water-carriage system.¹⁴⁸

Agatha James advised British wives to take a range of possessions other than furniture from Britain in an attempt to make an Indian bungalow as homelike as possible:

¹⁴⁵ Hall Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁴⁶ D. Dring, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.28, India Office Library.

¹⁴⁷ Commodes came in at least two designs: a 'cavalry pattern' with open sides of the frame for an officer wearing spurs, and an 'infantry pattern,' which was wooden all round. Agnes Moffatt, Transcribed Interview, MT35, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁴⁸ Platt, op. cit., 19.

Furniture would, of course, be much too heavy and bulky to buy, but china, breakfast, tea, and dinner services, glass, lamps, *plated* goods, spoons and forks, tea and coffee pots, hot water, milk and cream jugs should be bought at home (silver should never be taken; it is certain to be stolen sooner or later, and is a harassing possession at the best of times), plate brushes and powder, knives, carving and ordinary, house and table linen, cretonne for curtains and furniture coverings in the piece, art muslins, lace curtains, pretty coloured materials for small table covers, brackets, mantelpiece boards, etc., with a stock of brass-headed nails. These things can, of course, be bought in India, but are double the price they would be in England and inferior in quality...Such articles, if bought at home, can be sent out (if not taken with you) from London direct from the shops at which they are bought.¹⁴⁹

Steel and Gardiner similarly advised against transporting furniture from Britain to India, writing that 'the safe transplantation of the necessities of life, such as husband, children, books, and a piano, is generally sufficient strain on the nerves.'¹⁵⁰ Unlike the extensive British goods listed by Agatha James, Drusilla Harington Hawes believed that 'we would have been wiser to furnish and live like Indians, instead of making frantic efforts to create English homes out of Indian bungalows...But this was unthinkable in the days of the Raj...Yet we would only have been reverting to the habits of our eighteenth century ancestors who, on the whole, were more successful as imperialists than we became later.'¹⁵¹ More typically, Beatrix Scott had arrived in India in 1910 cherishing 'a suburban desire for a pretty little home whose carpets and curtains matched,' and described her house in the civil station of Aijal where

With the usual nostalgia the Briton has for his home surroundings the living rooms had been furnished with as near an attempt to the English country home as could be accomplished...There were chairs upholstered in rose strewn chintz, soft grey carpets blushing with rosebuds, creamy curtains appliqued with big loose-leafed roses, and when later I unpacked my own pictures and household treasures I quite liked my home.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ James, op. cit., 367-368.

¹⁵⁰ Steel and Gardiner, op. cit., 28.

¹⁵¹ Harington Hawes Papers, Mss.Eur.C.553, India Office Library.

¹⁵² Scott Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

Writing in the 1970s, describing her life in India fifty years earlier, Mrs Parry wrote that

Our existence in the bungalow resembled life at home...It was a charming bungalow most comfortably arranged. When we were alone in the evening after dinner, if the picture of the drawing room could have been televised...it would have disclosed a prosaic vision of two people sitting by the fire reading in a room which might have been in a country house anywhere in England...On the walls there were various prints of favourite 'Old Masters' which added to the homelike appearance, and of course there were large vases of flowers. The spaniels sat at our feet gazing into the fire with typical Cocker Spaniel expression. Even the pressure lamps did not give our position on the map away, as their staring white light was veiled by circular pink silk shades.¹⁵³

Finally, Vere Birdwood remembered that 'once you stepped inside the home, you were back in Cheltenham or Bath or wherever.'¹⁵⁴

Although British women were often able to make the interior of their bungalows 'homelike,' the compound in which their bungalows stood proved harder to domesticate. As Kate Platt wrote, 'The compound or enclosure surrounding the bungalow may be of considerable extent, containing the flower garden, often a tennis court, stables, sometimes a vegetable garden, and the servants' quarters.'¹⁵⁵ Plate 33 represents servants working in a compound in Kabob, drawing water from a well and tending the garden. According to Scott and Gardiner, 'the garden is not merely a convenience or a pleasure, it is a duty' because its cultivation helped to make an Indian bungalow 'homelike.'¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Memoir by Kapi, People and Places in Assam, Parry Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁵⁴ V. Birdwood, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.7, India Office Library.

¹⁵⁵ Platt op. cit., 25.

¹⁵⁶ Steel and Gardiner op. cit., 145.

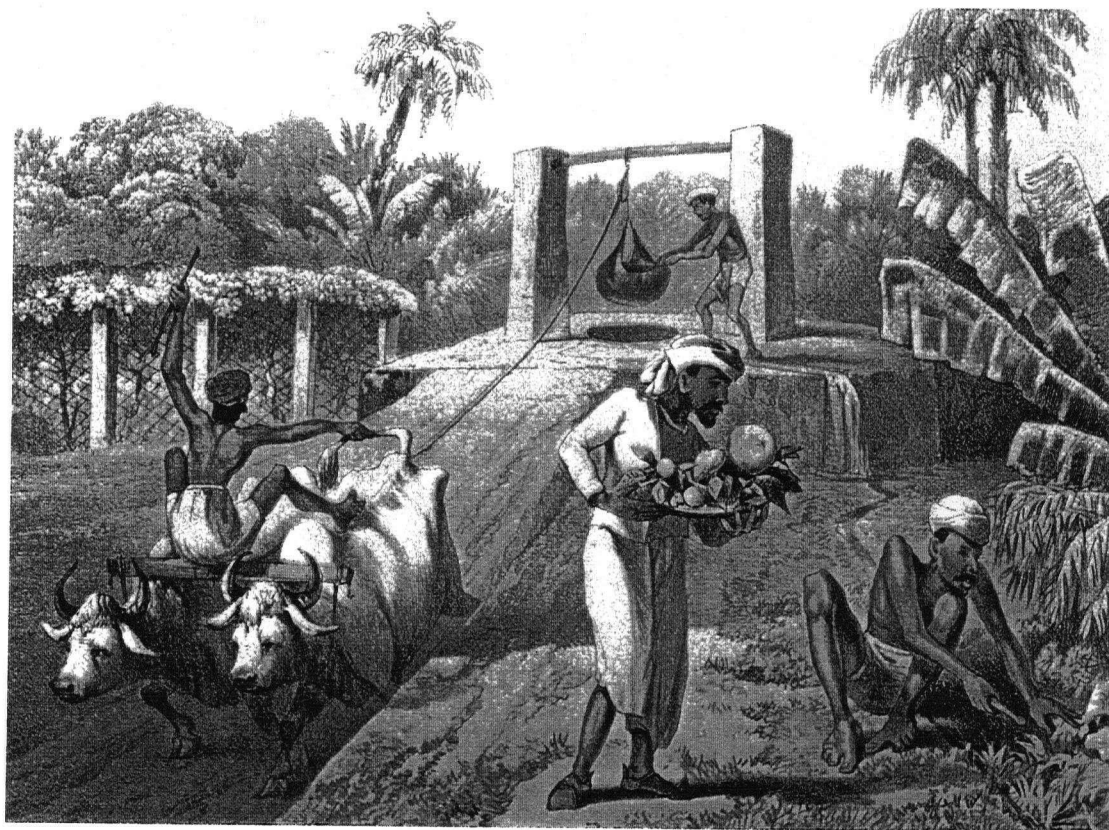


Plate 33: A Compound in Kabob

Source: Atkinson, op. cit..

'Everybody,' according to Deborah Dring, 'tried to make a garden. I think the point of having a garden was because you wanted to be surrounded with something that wasn't just dust and dead leaves.'¹⁵⁷ In many imperial contexts, gardens came to represent the domestication of untamed landscapes of imperial conquest.¹⁵⁸ But, in India, domesticating imperialism through the cultivation of a garden came rather to represent the transience of British imperial domesticity. As Vere Birdwood recalled, 'In the army we never stopped moving [and] because of this there was a feeling of impermanence, for instance, flowers grew very beautifully in the North of India but you knew when you planted some daffodil bulbs that you'd never see them come up.'¹⁵⁹

The compound came to represent the imperial as well as domestic power of British women at home in India in other, more tangible ways. Compounds were racially demarcated to house Indian servants and their families at a distance from the bungalow where British officials lived. As Kate Platt wrote, 'The [servants'] dwellings usually consist of single rooms, built in a long row, or round the sides of an enclosure. To each servant is allotted one or more of these rooms, which are of the simplest possible construction.'¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, the *mehtar* or sweeper, who came from the lowest caste of untouchables, lived either at one end of the row, separated by a partition, or in a separate building some distance away. Kate Platt also wrote that a bungalow would be ideally located on high and dry ground and that 'Indian dwellings and servants' houses

¹⁵⁷ D. Dring, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.28, India Office Library.

¹⁵⁸ See Schaffer op.cit. and Kolodny op. cit. for further discussion of the feminized domestication of untamed imperial landscapes. Also see B. Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*, Batsford, London, 1986; M. Hoyles, *The Story of Gardening*, Journeyman Press, London, 1991; M. Morris, "'Tha'lt be like a blush-rose when tha' grows up, my little lass": English cultural and gendered identity in *The Secret Garden*,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 14, 1996, 59-78; Preston op. cit.; and S. Wrede and W. H. Adams, *Denatured Visions, Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1991, for accounts of the gendered and cultural significance of gardens.

¹⁵⁹ V. Birdwood, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.7, India Office Library.

¹⁶⁰ Platt, op. cit., 44-45.

should be at a safe distance. Indian servants often have their families with them; their ways of living are not ours, and for hygienic reasons, especially in malarious and unhealthy districts, close proximity is not desirable.'¹⁶¹ She reiterated this point later in her account, writing that 'It is picturesque to see the bonny brown babies rolling in the sun, for the children are winsome and often beautiful; but Indians have their own ways of living, and in malarious and unhealthy districts especially, their houses may be centres of infection.'¹⁶² According to Beatrix Scott, 'As the servants live within the precincts of the garden the health of one's family depended quite considerably on the welfare of the people working for them. It was disconcerting, for instance, to find the *dhobi's* [washerman's] mother in an advanced stage of smallpox lying on one's unwashed sheets, or to find that an epidemic of mumps or measles was going strong in the *masolchi's* [scullion's] family.'¹⁶³ Such domestic and imperial distancing drew upon and extended fixed ideas of racial difference in terms of health, hygiene, and behaviour.¹⁶⁴

The racial distancing of the compound reproduced on a household scale the racial distancing of British cantonments and civil lines from the 'native' city. British women living in India were seen to exercise power and authority within but usually not beyond the spatial limits of the compound. Handbooks advised British women to inspect their servants' quarters on a regular basis, whereby they both breached and yet reinforced imperial and domestic divisions constructed along racial lines. Victoria Bayley wrote that 'A convention I always found embarrassing was the inspection of servants' quarters. The memsahib was expected to see that go-downs were clean and neat and the various wives and children reasonably flourishing. To me it always seemed an intrusion of privacy and unpleasantly patronising. Actually, I doubt if the

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 21.

¹⁶² Platt, op. cit., 44.

¹⁶³ Scott Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁶⁴ See 'Soft-Soaping Empire' in McClintock op. cit. for further discussion that focuses on the commodification of such racist perceptions of difference.

servants resented it and the women in purdah probably enjoyed it.¹⁶⁵ The inspection of their servants' quarters helped to establish the imperial and domestic power and authority of British women at home in India. Moreover, the exercise of such power and authority was couched in distinctively gendered as well as racial terms. J. E. Dawson wrote, for example, that 'Great scope for all that is most loveable and best in woman may be realized within her own compound. Her dominion is a conglomerate not of individuals as in England, but of families.'¹⁶⁶ In particular, Dawson advocated a feminine interest in the health and education of the families living within the compound. Exercising her gendered and racial power and authority over this familial dominion would, Dawson argued, help a British woman to feel more at home in India. As she wrote, '[It] will add a zest to domestic administration, and will tend to weld into one community the servants of our families, giving to them and us a bond of kindly feeling and good will, that we are quite sure would go far to reconcile many an English lady in India to the unhomelike surroundings of her domicile.'¹⁶⁷ The domestic and imperial roles of British women were clearly intertwined as British women reconstructed imperial domesticity on a household scale.

Household Management

In the late nineteenth century, it was estimated that the smallest British household in India would require ten to twelve servants while larger households would require up to thirty, and until the 1930s it was still common to employ up to a dozen servants.¹⁶⁸ In comparable households in Britain over the same period, it was unusual to employ more than three to five

¹⁶⁵ Bayley Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁶⁶ J. E. Dawson, 'The Englishwoman in India - Her Influence and Responsibilities,' *Calcutta Review*, 83, 1886, 358-370, 365.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 365.

¹⁶⁸ J. E. Dawson, 'The Englishwoman in India: Her Influence and Responsibilities,' *Calcutta Review*, 83, 1886, 358-370.

servants.¹⁶⁹ The high number of servants employed was usually attributed to the caste divisions of domestic labour. Agatha James, for example, wrote that 'In India one has to keep an absurd number, three or four at least to do the work of one, because of caste, which interferes with work sadly.'¹⁷⁰ Beatrix Scott visited South Africa in 1937 and was surprised to find that only two servants were employed to look after a 'spacious beautiful bungalow and garden...When I remembered the number of servants it would have taken to run a house like this in India I was rather staggered, and thought perhaps there was something to be said for domestics without religious and caste scruples.'¹⁷¹

Servants occupied an ambivalent position, 'both valued and feared,'¹⁷² within the home. James Clifford suggests that servants were the 'domesticated outsiders of the bourgeois imagination,'¹⁷³ implying that the presence of servants of a lower class helped to reaffirm the bourgeois identity not only of the home itself but also of the family whom they served. In similar terms, it is possible to argue that Indian servants were the domesticated outsiders of a

¹⁶⁹ See Chapter 2 for further discussion of domesticity in Britain over this period. My account is not structured as a comparison between domesticity in Britain and in India. Rather, I am focusing on imperial domesticity in India in three contexts: the spatial structure of cantonments, civil lines, and compounds; domestic management on a household scale; and raising British children up to the age of seven in India. The majority of British women whose memoirs and oral histories I cite lived in India for most of their adult life, as shown by the significance of household guides that were addressed to British women who were newly married as well as new to housekeeping in India. Such women would not have experienced the same domestic responsibilities until they returned to Britain on their husband's retirement. The reconstruction of domesticity when such women returned to Britain after living for many years in India is the subject of Georgina Gowans' PhD. research at the University of Southampton, which is entitled 'Geographies of Home and Empire: British Women Leaving India, 1901-1947.'

¹⁷⁰ James, *op. cit.*, 372.

¹⁷¹ Scott Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁷² Foucault 1990, *op. cit.*, 46.

¹⁷³ J. Clifford, The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1988, 4.

British imperial imagination, helping to reaffirm imperial domesticity, the imperial power of the family whom they served and, in particular, the British woman with whom they had closest contact. Ann Laura Stoler argues that 'native servants' occupied a complex place within imperial homes:

Represented as both devotional and devious, trustworthy and lascivious, native servants occupied and constituted a dangerous sexual terrain, a pivotal moral role...[I]t was their very domestication that placed the intimate workings of the bourgeois home in their knowing insurrectionary hands and in their pernicious control.¹⁷⁴

Moreover, Susan Blake has argued that employing 'native' servants could undermine the very basis of imperial rule because ideas about class difference could come to supersede ideas about racial difference. Focusing on the Cape to Cairo travel narrative written by Mary Hall in 1907, she argues that 'the substitution of a sense of class superiority for racial superiority undermines the premises of empire. It transforms the cliché that Africans are childlike from a justification of imperialism to an attitude toward servants. It allows Hall...to acknowledge the social distinctions Africans themselves make and to regard African society as parallel to English.'¹⁷⁵ As Stoler writes, 'racialized Others invariably have been compared and equated with children, a representation that conveniently provided a moral justification for imperial policies of tutelage, discipline and specific paternalistic and maternalistic strategies of custodial control.'¹⁷⁶ In 1879, Mrs Robert Moss King found it difficult to know how to treat her servants when they were ill 'for they have all the foolishness of children and yet have the independence of men.'¹⁷⁷ In 1909, 'Chota Mem' advised her readers to treat their servants with maternal care because of their

¹⁷⁴ Stoler 1995, op. cit., 150.

¹⁷⁵ S. Blake, 'A Woman's Trek: What Difference Does Gender Make?' Women's Studies International Forum, 13, 4, 1990, 347-355, 354.

¹⁷⁶ Stoler 1995, op. cit., 150.

¹⁷⁷ Moss King, op. cit., 33.

childlike qualities: 'Be patient with your servants and treat them more or less like children, remembering they love praise, and don't treat them as if they were machines.'¹⁷⁸ Although this reminded British wives that their servants were human, it did so only to the extent that servants were seen as 'children' rather than equals or merely employees. 'Chota Mem' continued in more explicitly racialised terms: 'Indian servants have an acute sense of justice, so here again they must be treated like children, kindly but very firmly. Their brains are not properly developed and they cannot always see things in the same light as we do.'¹⁷⁹ An effect of representing Indian servants in childlike terms, and representing the parental care, discipline, and wisdom of their white employers, was to fix immutable differences between rulers and ruled on a household scale. According to Platt in 1923, the best Indian servants were those who accepted the parental rule of their white employers. As she wrote, 'There is no more faithful and devoted servant than the Indian when he has definitely 'adopted' his master and mistress, and identified himself with the family. 'You are my mother and father,' is an expression often used by the Indian to his master or mistress - often perhaps without sincerity. But it does express the attitude of the good Indian servant towards a just and kind employer.'¹⁸⁰

Describing her life as a civilian's wife from 1877 to 1882, Mrs Robert Moss King wrote that she managed a household with thirty two servants, whose total monthly wages amounted to almost two hundred rupees. As she wrote, 'For this cost you could hardly keep five servants at home, and, however good those five might be, their goodness would not extend to being in thirty two places at once. So that on the whole you get far more comfort from your Indian than from your English servants.'¹⁸¹ By 1904, Anne Wilson suggested that any British household in

¹⁷⁸ 'Chota Mem' [Lang]. op. cit., 55.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 56.

¹⁸⁰ Platt, op. cit., 31-32.

¹⁸¹ Moss King, op. cit., 32.

India would require a minimum of six servants, although most households of military and civilian officials employed at least ten: a bearer or *Khitmagar*, who was the senior servant and acted either or both as a butler and valet; a cook; a water carrier or *bheestie*; a groom or *syce*; a grass-cutter; and, finally, a sweeper, who came from the untouchable caste and who did the menial work of cleaning the floors and commodes of the bungalow. In 1909, 'Chota Mem' wrote that each British household in India required at least ten servants, whom she listed as an ayah, two boys, a cook, a cook's helper, a sweeper, a water carrier, a washerman, a groom for each horse, and a gardener.¹⁸² Other servants that were often employed included a second bearer, two servants to work the punkahs, and a tailor, the last of whom should, according to Steel and Gardiner, be given at least eight hours of steady sewing per day.¹⁸³ The wages paid to these servants varied not only over time but also from place to place. In the Punjab, Wilson advised that if one man was employed as a bearer and a cook, he would earn up to twenty rupees a month, while two men would earn twelve to fifteen rupees each. The groom, or each groom for each horse, would earn seven rupees, while the grass-cutter and water carrier would each earn six rupees.¹⁸⁴ The sweeper would also earn six rupees a month, and two more if he also looked after the dog's food. It was estimated in 1904 that the rent of a bungalow in an up-country station would range from fifty rupees a month in Bombay to between sixty and eighty rupees a month in the Punjab and the North Western Provinces. At the same time, the cost of house servants for a married British couple was estimated to range from seventy four rupees a month in Madras to ninety two rupees in Bombay and Bengal.¹⁸⁵

182 'Chota Mem' [Lang], op. cit..

183 Steel and Gardiner, op. cit..

184 Wilson, op. cit., 32.

185 Ibid..

The highest ranking servants, usually a bearer, often remained in the employment of the same British couple for many years, but other servants were usually employed at each station, bearing 'chits' from previous British employers as references. The duties of a bearer included looking after the British husband's clothes and boots, dusting the drawing room, supervising the lamps, and looking after other servants in the compound.¹⁸⁶ A bearer primarily served his British master, and his duties extended beyond the compound because 'he waits on him in hotels or clubs, and accompanies him on his visits to his friends. It must therefore be one of your first endeavours in India to secure his services.'¹⁸⁷ Often, a bearer had been employed by a British man before his marriage and remained in his service for many years, initially helping a British wife to learn the duties of different servants in a household. For Mrs Christian Showers-Stirling, her bearer 'was worth his weight in gold and helped me through the early days of running a house in India. He had been sometime with [my husband] before I married and I think approved of me.'¹⁸⁸ One bearer, Sadar Khan, remained with the Dench household for twenty five years and, as well as learning from the housekeeping handbook written by Steel and Gardiner, M. Dench was grateful that 'Sadar was detailed to initiate me into the methods of India-style housekeeping.'¹⁸⁹ Similarly, Isabel Gross looked back with great affection on her bearer: 'He was with my husband before we married, and stayed with him until 1947 - eighteen years altogether. He was utterly honest, also loyal, trustworthy and devoted.'¹⁹⁰ The employment of the same bearer for many years led to a sense of continuity that helped to ease the transient nature of British official life in India. Moreover, this sense of continuity could also connect British and Indian families over different generations. For example, when Antonia Hutchinson

¹⁸⁶ 'Chota Mem' [Lang], op. cit..

¹⁸⁷ Wilson, op. cit., 32.

¹⁸⁸ Showers Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁸⁹ Dench Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁹⁰ I. Gross, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

returned to India to marry an army officer in the 1930s, 'my mother's old Bearer came down to Bombay to meet me, bringing his son to join our household - this was unexpected and unrequested by me.'¹⁹¹

The status of a bearer was seen to increase in line with his master's status, incorporating the highest ranking Indian servants into military and civilian hierarchies on a household scale. As Platt wrote in 1923, 'Any...honour to his sahib is honour to himself, and he rejoices in promotions and dignities. Incidentally he expects to rise himself correspondingly, but that is only just!...However, a servant of the old type, and such still exist, is willing to share the adversity as well as the prosperity of his master's family.'¹⁹² When Iris Portal returned to India in 1918 after seven years at school in Britain, she was met at Bombay by her father's bearer Gokal. As she remembered, 'I was glad to see old Gokal, he gave me a sense of continuity. As my father ascended the ladder of his service Gokal became grander and grander with him.'¹⁹³ According to Vere Birdwood, 'servants were excessively conscious of their master's status and would willingly take a job at slightly lower pay with a higher placed official.'¹⁹⁴

The only female servant likely to be employed within a British household was an ayah. While a bearer acted as a valet for his British master, an ayah acted as a maid for her British mistress. An ayah often nursed young children, but British or Eurasian nurses or nannies increasingly came to be employed in this capacity from the late nineteenth century.¹⁹⁵ An ayah's

¹⁹¹ A. Hutchinson, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁹² Platt, *op. cit.*, 32.

¹⁹³ Portal Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁹⁴ V. Birdwood, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.7, India Office Library.

¹⁹⁵ The employment of British and Eurasian nurses and nannies is the subject of the next section.

daily duties included bringing early morning tea to her mistress, preparing the bathroom, tidying the bedroom, and mending clothes, bringing her into more intimate contact with a British wife than any other servant. Moreover, 'If a lady guest comes to the house without a servant, the ayah of the house should attend to her wants exactly as if she were a mistress.'¹⁹⁶ Although the bourgeois wives of British officials might not have been used to a lady's maid in Britain, 'Chota Mem' stressed the importance of employing an ayah in India even if there were no young children in the household:

You may think and say, 'I have never been used to a maid at home, and can quite well manage without one out here,' but do let me advise differently. I said the same myself, but was always very glad my husband insisted that I should have one. The ayah is a most useful servant and if she is willing and clever will be a tremendous help to you, and you must own it is nice to have one woman in the house. It is such a comfort when you come in hot and tired to have her to take your shoes and clothes off, and put out what you want to wear, to brush, and fold up your things, and generally look after them. At home you have, as a rule, only yourself and clothes to look after, but when you marry, it is a very different thing, with a house and a husband and one hundred other things.¹⁹⁷

Ayahs frequently came from the sweeper caste and were often married to the sweeper working within the British household. But an ayah's unique position as the only female servant in the household enabled her to transcend the limits of her lowly caste. According to Steel and Gardiner, 'Being the only woman-servant in the house, the ayah should be treated with consideration and respect. Whether she be a sweeper or not, it should be generally understood that you hold her to be the equal of any other servant in the house.'¹⁹⁸ Similarly, Platt wrote that 'See that your ayah is treated with respect by the other servants, even if she be the sweeper caste,

¹⁹⁶ Steel and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 86.

¹⁹⁷ 'Chota Mem' [Lang], *op. cit.*, 61-62.

¹⁹⁸ Steel and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 87.

and make them understand that you hold her to be equal to the others.'¹⁹⁹ Maud Diver advised British women to be cautious of their intimacy with ayahs, writing that

[a British woman] should never forget that the woman from whom little of her social and domestic life is hid, judges her conduct by Eastern standards, and communicates those judgements without reserve to an admiring circle of listeners over her evening hookah. For the ayah is a born-bred gossip; her tongue is a stranger to the golden fetter of truth; and without risk of serious misstatement, it may almost be said that the unscrupulous chattering of her and her kind has done more to darken understanding and confirm countless misconceptions than any of the ways and works of Englishwomen themselves.²⁰⁰

Unlike this unsympathetic tone, many British women were close to their ayahs, and this affection was often reciprocated. When she left India for the last time, Antonia Hutchinson recalled that 'my Pathan ayah came to Bombay with us and when we paid her off on the quayside she threw the money into the sea and covered her head and wept.'²⁰¹

With the frequent exceptions of bearers and ayahs, Indian servants were often represented as inferior to their British counterparts.²⁰² For example, in her diary about her life in India from 1877 to 1882, Mrs Robert Moss King noted that 'I do not say that any Indian servant can equal a thoroughly excellent, devoted, well-educated English one, for, owing to the different national characteristics, I think they hardly could. It is not that they are less faithful or devoted...[b]ut there is not the same high moral standard.'²⁰³ Immutable racial differences in

¹⁹⁹ Platt, *op. cit.*, 64.

²⁰⁰ Diver, *op. cit.*, 86-87.

²⁰¹ A. Hutchinson, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

²⁰² See Davidoff, 1974 *op. cit.*, and Davidoff, 1995, *op. cit.*, for discussion of the work of servants within British households.

²⁰³ Moss King *op. cit.*, 130. Moss King employed thirty two Indian servants.

physical and behavioural terms were also identified by Anne Campbell Wilson who wrote that 'Infinite patience is needed, and one must never forget that an Indian's physical power of sustained effort is not so great as that of a European...What we are apt to call laziness and stupidity on their part might more justly be recognized as the inborn inertness and physical weakness of their race.'²⁰⁴ Finally, Kate Platt associated Indian servants with the 'unchangeable East' and advised her British readers that 'Too much must not be expected from them; they find it very difficult to change their ways of doing things, and innovations must be very cautiously introduced.'²⁰⁵

In contrast, Agatha James wrote that 'From my own experience I think Indian natives make excellent servants. Naturally there are, as at home, good and bad specimens, but I cannot agree with the wholesale denunciation of natives which one often hears.'²⁰⁶ Beatrix Scott also wrote that 'Indian servants were sometimes good and sometimes bad - like servants of any other nationality.'²⁰⁷ James went on to suggest that such a 'wholesale denunciation' was due to the British rather than the Indian character because 'from long experience at home and abroad I have learned to look on fault-finding with servants as a national failing of the English.'²⁰⁸ In many accounts, the conduct of Indian servants was seen to depend on the appropriate behaviour of the British housekeeper. The main domestic and imperial responsibilities of British women at home in India were usually related to their contact with Indian servants. Some commentators suggested that British women needed to be aware of racial differences between themselves and their Indian servants, and that such an awareness would help to maintain their feminine as well

²⁰⁴ Wilson 1898 op. cit., 37.

²⁰⁵ Platt op. cit., 37.

²⁰⁶ James op. cit., 372.

²⁰⁷ Scott Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 372. "Chota Mem" suggested that her readers 'make it a strict rule not to talk of servants and housekeeping when you go out in the afternoon.' "Chota Mem" op. cit., 7.

as racial superiority. For example, Maud Diver wrote that 'It is the failure to recognize and allow for the racial differences between Eastern and Western standards of conduct, which causes so many Anglo-Indian women to live out their lives in a state of continual causeless irritation and suspicion, degrading to themselves and disheartening to those who serve them.'²⁰⁹ In contrast to Platt, Diver went on to write that 'we ought rather to marvel at his surprising adaptability than to complain because he cannot change his skin at our bidding, which is, in plain terms, what certain irate unthinking Englishwomen seem to expect of him; ignoring the fact that their own ignorance of the man and his language, coupled with a chronic attitude of antagonism, are not calculated to help matters forward.'²¹⁰

For some British women at home in India, perceptions of racial difference rendered their servants invisible which, in turn, facilitated their own transgressions beyond what would normally be deemed appropriately feminine behaviour. For example, Frances Smythe thought that 'part of the menial attitude towards the servants was that they didn't exist...if a servant saw you in bed with somebody else it was immaterial, he was nobody.'²¹¹ In a similar way, Margaret Rouse stated that 'Some people treated them as if they could not see or hear or feel. I knew one woman who sat stark naked when giving her daily orders to the cook or bearer.'²¹²

In an attempt to prevent such transgressions, domestic handbooks focused on the appropriate behaviour of British women in their management of Indian servants. Imperial domesticity on a household scale depended on maintaining standards that were constructed in gendered as well as racial terms. Kate Platt, for example, stated that 'a weak, negligent, or harsh

²⁰⁹ Diver op. cit., 65.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 65.

²¹¹ F. Smythe, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.62, India Office Library.

²¹² M. Rouse, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

mistress will rarely be successful with her staff and the running of the household.'²¹³ In their consideration of 'Duties of the Mistress,' Steel and Gardiner asked 'How are we to punish our servants when we have no hold on their minds or bodies? - when cutting their pay is illegal, and few, if any, have any sense of shame. The answer is obvious. Make a hold.'²¹⁴ Although Steel and Gardiner wrote that 'the whole duty of an Indian mistress towards her servants is neither more nor less than it is in England,'²¹⁵ they proceeded to show that such 'duty' was imbued with racial as well as gendered assumptions and implications. For a British woman to 'make a hold' over her Indian servants involved constructing and maintaining a position of power and authority within the household. As Maud Diver advised, 'a little human kindness, tempered with justice, will transform [Indian servants] into devoted slaves, who will spare no pains to uphold the honour of her house and table.'²¹⁶ The 'human' kindness to which Diver refers serves to reinforce ideas of racial difference between a British mistress and her Indian servants. More than this, however, the devotion of her 'slaves' is seen to uphold not only the feminine and domestic honour of a British woman at home in India, but also the racial and imperial subjugation on which such domestic honour relied. Furthermore, it was, according to Diver, imperative that British women at home in India should maintain their domestic and imperial status by transcending the usual limits of femininity. As she wrote,

if a woman wills to keep house successfully in India, she must possess before all things a large tolerance and a keen sense of justice, rare feminine virtues both, even in these days. She must train her mind to look upon petty falsehoods, thefts, and uncleanness not as heinous offences, but as troublesome propensities, to be quietly and firmly checked.²¹⁷

²¹³ Platt op. cit., 37.

²¹⁴ Steel and Gardiner op. cit., 4.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 7.

²¹⁶ Diver op. cit., 68.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 70.

Learning Hindustani or Urdu was seen as the best way for a British woman to 'make a hold' over her Indian servants. British households that employed only English-speaking servants were often regarded with disdain by the British official élite. For Iris Portal,

I was brought up by my mother and father to think that you must never have an English speaking servant....[my father said that] if you, as an educated woman, can't speak the language of a man who is illiterate you really are not fit to employ him. He said, you should not require a simple Indian to speak your language when you can perfectly well learn to speak his...And it was thought among those of us who thought we knew about India that English-speaking servants were not very trustworthy, but I don't honestly think that...was necessarily true.²¹⁸

Learning Hindustani or Urdu was thought necessary to ensure the respect of Indian servants towards the authority of a British wife. As Maud Diver wrote:

A fair command of the language should stand in the front rank of her attainments; so shall she save both time and temper, and reap the respect of the entire compound. Surely no sight could be more pitiful and ludicrous than that of a woman who has given place to wrath, and is powerless to put it into words: nor can such an one ever hope to keep a retinue of a dozen servants under control.²¹⁹

As Diver continued, 'the wise woman - whatever her linguistic capacity - will never lose her temper when dealing with natives. It will avail her nothing nor will it impress the delinquent one whit. This is one of the few domestic items she may safely leave to her husband.'²²⁰ Kate Platt also stressed the importance of learning an Indian language. As she wrote, 'A wise woman will...make a serious effort to learn Hindustani...It is not a difficult language, and the expenditure of a little trouble and time each day has a very ample reward. True, many of the

²¹⁸ I. Portal, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.53, India Office Library.

²¹⁹ Diver op. cit., 71-72.

²²⁰ Ibid., 72.

servants speak English of a kind, and almost all of them understand it. To know nothing of the language is a great handicap, however, in dealing with them.'²²¹

A distinction was drawn, however, between the simplified 'Memsahib's,' 'Kitchen,' or 'Servant's' Hindustani or Urdu that was sufficient for household management, and the more fluent and polite language for communicating with educated Indians beyond the household. As Isabel Gross recalled, 'I became fluent enough to talk to, and be understood by, the servants. But it was a different matter when I had, on occasion, to talk to educated Indians, when I felt very ashamed of my 'servants' Urdu'.²²² E. Lermitt similarly wrote that 'Kitchen Urdu was considered sufficient, but after ten years I was pretty good and could understand most conversations and make myself understood with a reasonable degree of politeness.'²²³ Usually, however, 'All that was required was sufficient of the language to make oneself understood by the servants.'²²⁴ Lady Anderson studied Urdu with the wife of a pleader in her husband's court and passed the 'Memsahib's Urdu Exam' which was rewarded with a prize of one hundred rupees.²²⁵ Many British women learnt Hindustani or Urdu to establish their imperial and domestic power and authority but the simplified form that they learnt was largely restricted to communicating with their servants. Moreover, unlike the polite form necessary for communicating with educated Indians beyond the home, 'kitchen' Urdu or Hindustani was usually limited to issuing orders and to berating their servants. Learning a rudimentary form of Urdu or Hindustani was seen as an important way in which to establish and maintain imperial domesticity on a household scale.

²²¹ Platt, *op. cit.*, 54.

²²² I. Gross, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

²²³ E. Lermitt, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

²²⁴ Bayley Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

²²⁵ Lady Anderson, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

Through their management of Indian servants, British women at home in India helped to reconstruct imperial domesticity on a household scale. Nancy Vernede described her Indian servants as 'Faithful and devoted and part of the family [who followed] their own code of honesty (not always quite ours).'226 Kathleen Griffiths remembered that

you could leave your jewellery, your money, your bungalow wide open, and nothing would ever be taken from it. But as regards their little prerequisites in the way of food or making a little bit on their bazaar, all this was taken as part of their daily life...But their devotion and honesty to you personally was absolutely amazing.²²⁷

Domestic handbooks advised British women to allow such daily 'prerequisites' up to a limit. As Kate Platt wrote, 'A capable housekeeper keeps herself informed of the current prices, finds out the percentage allowed by experienced neighbours, and allows a similar increase...A mistress who is firm and just, but not mean, is more respected and gets better served than one who lets her servants take advantage of her.'228 Although Indian servants were seen to follow a 'different code of honesty' to their British rulers, British housekeepers were advised to exercise their domestic and imperial power and authority in ways that set limits to but did not completely overturn the daily 'prerequisites' of their servants. The 'justice' exercised by British women in India was seen as a necessary way of establishing imperial domesticity. But such representations of 'justice' followed Indian rather than British codes of practice. By helping to domesticate imperial rule in India on a household scale by exercising 'justice' with respect to an Indian 'code of honesty,' British women were positioned in ways that undermined constructions of racial difference that underpinned imperial rule.

²²⁶ N. Vernede, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

²²⁷ K. Griffiths, Plain Tales Transcript, Mss.Eur.T.32, India Office Library.

²²⁸ Platt op. cit., 49.

The cleanliness of the bungalow was also represented in ambivalent and often contradictory ways as a domestic duty of British women in India. Although Indian servants and their families lived at a distance from the bungalow in part because of perceptions of racial differences in terms of health and hygiene, the same Indian servants were employed to keep the bungalow clean and hygienic. It was the duty of a British wife to supervise such work and her domestic and imperial authority was seen to depend on the success of such supervision. As Catherine Deighton wrote,

Unless the mistress of the house sees that her servants do the work allotted to them, her bungalow will not be kept clean and fresh, and if she does not know how things should be done, her servants will pay even less heed to her orders for they will soon find out that their mistress does not know how things should be done and they will do as little as they possibly can.²²⁹

Here, the domestic as well as imperial authority of British women at home in India was seen to depend on the respect paid to them by their Indian servants. The imperial domesticity embodied by British women seems thus to rest on consensual rather than confrontational codes of conduct which, in turn, required British women to learn rather than merely assume their domestic as well as imperial duties. Once a British woman had learnt such duties, it was then her responsibility to instruct her Indian servants. As Captain Hart wrote, for example,

Servants are too often blamed for being dirty and untidy when they are not properly equipped to be anything else. If there is a place for everything, sufficient and suitable cleaning materials be given them, there is no reason why, after a few lessons, they should not be just as clean as English servants in this respect. It may be noted here that if proper English pattern brooms and brushes be provided, house servants can be made to sweep out the house, and the customary, but filthy habit of making the sweeper do it, can be abolished. If there is any objection, ask them whether they sweep out their own homes, or whether a sweeper does it. No native would ever dream of allowing a sweeper inside *his* house, and despises us for doing so.²³⁰

²²⁹ Deighton op. cit., 40.

²³⁰ I. O. R. [Hart], op. cit., 21-22.

The place of British women in establishing and maintaining imperial domesticity on a household scale was ambivalent, with their own domestic standards frequently being seen to fall below the domestic standards of their Indian servants. Likening the homes of British women to the homes of their Indian servants and, moreover, finding the former rather than the latter to be lacking in standards of cleanliness, undermined constructions of racial difference on which the exercise of imperial power and authority relied. Both the domestic and the imperial status of a British housekeeper again appears to depend on consensual rather than confrontational notions of respect. Furthermore, British women at home in India were represented as needing to learn how to gain rather than merely assume the respect of their Indian servants.

Raising British Children in India

Children occupied an ambiguous place within British households that was contested in racial, class, and gendered terms. As Stoler has shown, anxieties about the dangers of employing wet-nurses were long-established in Europe as well as in colonized places. Within Europe, medical discourses focused on the risks of a baby absorbing the 'personality traits' of a nurse that threatened to dilute aristocratic and bourgeois blood with working class breastmilk.²³¹ In the seventeenth century, a French doctor believed that breastmilk 'had the power to make children resemble their nurses in mind and body, just as the seed makes them resemble their mother and father.'²³² Two centuries later, similar discourses of danger continued to revolve around threats to class status as child 'experts' expressed their belief that 'the blood of the lower-class wetnurse entered the body of the upper class baby, milk being thought to be blood frothed white.'²³³ For the British official élite in India, such embodied anxieties were articulated in terms of racial as

²³¹ Stoler, 1995, op. cit..

²³² Quoted by Stoler, 1995, op. cit., 145-146.

²³³ L. Demause, 'The Evolution of Childhood,' History of Childhood Quarterly: The Journal of Psychohistory, 1, 1974, 536, quoted by Stoler, 1995, 146.

well as class differences. By the time that the fifth edition of their book was published in 1907, Steel and Gardiner wrote that Indian wet-nurses were rarely used and that bottle feeding was becoming increasingly widespread. As they wrote, among British women in India 'opinion is very strong against it, only to save life or in the case of very delicate children is it recommended.'²³⁴ But the opinion of the authors themselves differed from the majority of their correspondents. As Steel and Gardiner wrote,

The horror of wet-nurses universally expressed, even by missionary ladies, in the answers received from their correspondents, have impressed the authors so deeply that they feel bound to call special attention to it. No good purpose would be served by quoting the actual expressions used, but it must surely rouse surprise and regret that even those who profess to love the souls of men and women should find the bodies in which these souls are housed more repulsive than those of a cow or a donkey or a goat? The milk of all these, it is true - to the shame of humanity be it said - is free from a certain specific contagion; but it is a contagion from which, alas! the West is no more immune than the East. Therefore the objection cannot be on this ground. What remains, therefore, but race prejudice to account for the fatuity lest the milk of a native woman should contaminate an English child's character, when that of the beasts which perish is held to have no such power? The position is frankly untenable. Therefore if the Western woman is unable to fulfil her first duty to her child, let her thank Heaven for the gift of any one able to do that duty for her.²³⁵

Racial anxieties about the care of British children continued beyond infancy. The 'race prejudice' lamented by Steel and Gardiner was frequently aired in debates about whether Indian, British, or Eurasian women should be employed to care for British children. According to Kate Platt in 1923,

The Indian ayah has many good points; she surrounds her charges with an atmosphere of love and devotion and has infinite patience. They make a charming picture - the fair-haired English child and the swarthy-faced ayah with her voluminous white draperies, tinkling silver bangles, and gay scarlet coat, as she sits soothing him with magnetic touch, crooning an old-world lullaby. Taking into consideration her home surroundings, her entire lack of training in European customs and the great difference of her outlook on life, it is wonderful that she is as satisfactory as she is found to be,

²³⁴ Steel and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 166.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 176.

but too much should not be expected of her. Her standard of truth and sincerity is as much her own and differs from ours as much as her standard of personal cleanliness. The training in obedience, straightforwardness, and self-control, so essential to a child in the earliest years of life, is not to be obtained from her.²³⁶

Platt went on to write that 'children left to the care and companionship of native servants run a serious risk of acquiring bad habits, of becoming unmannerly, and of developing in undesirable ways.'²³⁷ One of these 'undesirable' developments was, according to Platt, that if British children spent most of their time with an ayah, they would be likely to speak an Indian language earlier and better than English:

children left much with ayahs and the other servants learn to speak Hindustani earlier and more fluently than their mother tongue. It is not uncommon on board ship to come across children who literally have to learn English during the voyage, while their tongues wag merrily in Hindustani. It is fortunate that most mothers do not neglect their children to this extent, for in leaving them to pass the main portion of the day in the companionship of ayah and bearer, they are losing an opportunity of character-formation which can never come again.²³⁸

And yet, Indian servants were discouraged from speaking English to the children under their care. For Nancy Vernede, 'my parents always told the servants they must speak to us in their own language, partly so that we could learn the language, and partly because they didn't want us to keep the accent.'²³⁹

According to Victoria Bayley, both British and Eurasian nannies were a 'luxury quite beyond our means,'²⁴⁰ and her ayah, Mary, helped her to care for her children. As she wrote in her memoir, 'I never regretted having to do without [a nanny], thanks to Mary, except during

²³⁶ Platt, *op. cit.*, 138.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 141-142.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 138-139.

²³⁹ N. Vernede, *Plain Tales Transcripts*, Mss.Eur.T.69.

²⁴⁰ Bayley Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

times of illness. How one longed then to have a nanny who would share the bad nights instead of an ayah who trotted off to her quarters, a free woman, once the children were in bed.'²⁴¹ But, as she continued,

I met very few nannies that I would have wanted in the house. Many had spent years in India, passed from one household to another, expecting the servants to wait on them hand and foot and often tyrannising over the entire family. There was much keeping-up-with-the-Joneses in the shape of other nannies. I knew one household where chocolate biscuits, a great luxury from England, had to appear at elevenses for nanny and her friends although they never appeared on the family tea-table! It was pathetic really, as it was such temporary status and security, unfitting the nannies for any other sort of life.²⁴²

As Iris Portal remembered, 'The question of Nanny or ayah was always much discussed, and it was thought snob to have a Nanny. I suppose I clung to one. The influence of our Nanny had been so strong, I could not imagine a Nursery without one...As seen by modern eyes the Nanny question seems positively Victorian, but to us it was the normal way to live.'²⁴³ Kate Platt believed that a British nanny could raise children in ways that an ayah could not. She wrote that children would be raised as future members of the British official élite if they were placed in the care of 'a judicious English nurse or governess who realizes the importance of education in obedience, self-control, self-dependence, and truthfulness, who teaches them courtesy and consideration towards servants, and habits of orderliness.' But Steel and Gardiner cautioned British mothers about the class of British women employed as nannies. As they wrote,

We learn also that as a rule the class of English servants who go out to India are not the best, require waiting upon, and are not always reliable...for children out of arms, a *good*, well-principled English nurse was essential. However good native servants may be, they have not the same up-bringing and nice ways, knowledge, and

²⁴¹ Ibid..

²⁴² Ibid..

²⁴³ Portal Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

trustworthiness of a well-trained English nurse. Besides, native servants seldom have as much authority over a child.²⁴⁴

When she lived in India from 1877 until 1882, Mrs Robert Moss King appointed a British nurse who was the widow of a sergeant: 'She tells me she has had numbers of offers, and it is from no false sentiment regarding the dear departed that she remains a widow, but from the difficulty of finding anyone who at his death would leave her such a good pension as the late lamented sergeant did! Their ideas are eminently practical!'²⁴⁵ Over time, an increasing number of young British women travelled to India to work as nannies. Indeed, Kathleen Griffiths travelled to India in 1922 to work as a governess, but met her future husband, a civil servant, on board ship while watching the sunrise at Port Said. They became engaged 'a few days later under a full moon on the Red Sea...[m]uch to the interest and delight of many people on board ship. This was quite a romance.' She worked for eighteen months before marrying, and lived in India until 1947. But in more usual cases, British women who travelled to India remained single for a longer period. As Steel and Gardiner advised their readers, 'Ladies...who employ English nurses [must] accept the responsibility which undoubtedly is attached to bringing them away from their home and friends.'²⁴⁶ Similarly, Kate Platt acknowledged that 'Girls far away from home and country are often desperately homesick, and in a small station the life of the nurse and nursery governess may be a very lonely one.'²⁴⁷ In an attempt to alleviate their homesickness and loneliness, Dorothy Best helped to establish a club at the YMCA in Simla for young British nannies:

They were rather lonely out there as they did not fit in with the Government social structure or with the Indian people. Many of them came from fairly simple family backgrounds at home and they badly needed somewhere to spend their free time. We

²⁴⁴ Steel and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 166-167.

²⁴⁵ Moss King, *op. cit.*, 55-56.

²⁴⁶ Steel and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 167.

²⁴⁷ Platt, *op. cit.*, 137.

invited some soldiers over from the Hampshire Regiment who were in camp not far from Simla. They were selected by their Commanding Officer and rode over to join in some of our activities and in Dances. They added to the life of the Club and certainly enjoyed themselves...On some Sundays the girls and I hiked right up into the hills and sometimes spent a night in a little shack we had up there. It was a very happy club and meant a lot to the girls concerned.²⁴⁸

Other British nannies worked closer to their homes in India. For a short period before she married, E. Lermitt worked as a nursery governess to the seven year old daughter of a Major in the army, not far from her parents' home in the RAF lines. But her movements were confined to cantonments: 'I had precise instructions where to go and where not to go, for example I was not to call at my mother's bungalow in the RAF lines. This prohibition I never forgot for its needless unkindness. My mother used to come to the point where I had to pass and we always had a few words of affectionate greetings.'²⁴⁹ As a 'freelance' nanny, she felt isolated from professionally trained nannies who had come to India from Britain. When she took her charge to play in the grounds of the club or a park 'I used to read, because I always had a book in my pocket after the first few days of humiliating silence from the Norland and Princess Christian nurses (in their special uniforms) who disliked freelances. My mother made me white pique dresses to wear which were not so starchy as the grey dresses and white aprons and peculiar headgear of the nannies.'²⁵⁰

British nannies usually maintained a distance from Eurasian nannies. As an exception to this, however, Decima Curtis has written that 'Nanny had numerous Eurasian Nanny friends, and when we had a good garden, all her friends brought their children to it, and so our children had others to play with. But Nanny was a freak in that way as any English Nanny deserted her

²⁴⁸ D. Best, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

²⁴⁹ E. Lermitt, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

²⁵⁰ Ibid..

when they found she had Eurasian friends.'²⁵¹ Just as Indian wet-nurses were often thought to pose a threat to the racial purity of British babies, Eurasian nannies were often thought to pose a threat to the racial and imperial power of British children because of their accent. According to Platt, 'the Eurasian accent is very infectious and small children quickly adopt it.'²⁵² As Elinor Tollinton recalled,

That we should grow up having adopted the particular chi-chi accent of the people who had lived a long time in India, was a particular dread of my Mother, so we enjoyed frequent changes of nurse. It was even arranged that Norcy [an architect who lived with them] would go to the station to meet the new nanny armed with [a month's pay], a box of chocolates, magazines, and the return fare; if on alighting her first words were spoken in the dreaded accent Norcy would arrange her return by the next train.²⁵³

But other British women were happy to appoint a Eurasian nanny for their children. Evelyn Battye remembered her nannies as 'marvellous and devoted children's nurses, even more valuable than the faithful ayahs, as they gave the children their first lessons.'²⁵⁴ Audrey Baylis employed a Eurasian nanny for eleven years, met many of her friends and relations, and returned to India three times to visit her once she and her family had returned to Britain.²⁵⁵ Other experiences were less successful. While she lived in India, Isabel Gross appointed two Eurasian nannies to help to care for her children: 'one young, and quite satisfactory and nice; the other much older, disagreeable, and neglectful of the children. She would sit in the garden in a deck-chair and read her Bible, with no idea where the children were. As this was up on the Frontier, they might quite well have been kidnapped, as those things did happen up there.'²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ D. Curtis, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

²⁵² Platt, *op. cit.*, 137.

²⁵³ Tollinton Papers, Mss.Eur.D.1197, India Office Library.

²⁵⁴ E. Battye, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

²⁵⁵ A. Baylis, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

²⁵⁶ I. Gross, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

Finally, Betty Loch remembered her 'charming' Eurasian nurse who looked after her three children. However, 'I remember despairingly attempting to make her take some thought for her own future. It was no good - any little money she had, she 'invested' in pink satin dancing shoes or lipstick hoping to attract a husband out of the fast thinning ranks of British soldiers all on their way out of India. She had not succeeded by the time I left India.'²⁵⁷

Conclusions

In an attempt to challenge notions of the household as a static site that confined the imperial roles of British women in India to a reproductive, domestic sphere, I have examined more complex connections between domesticity and imperialism that were embodied by British women at home in post-'mutiny' India. Spatial discourses of home and empire were negotiated and represented in ambivalent ways as an increasing number of British women travelled to set up homes in India after 1858. However, following the recommendations of the parliamentary Select Committee on Settlement and Colonization, such homes for wives of officials were more likely to remain temporary than become permanent. The place of British women at home in India was the subject of intense debate that addressed not only the presence of British women in India but also addressed the reconstruction of British homes in India and the coexistence of ideas of home in Britain and in India. Some commentators argued that the place of British women at home in India exacerbated racial segregation and antagonism. Other commentators, however, maintained that British women at home in India played essential roles in domestic as well as imperial reconstruction, reproducing the social, moral, and domestic values that legitimated imperial rule.

Housekeeping guides were influential in promoting and advising the translation of feminine domesticity over imperial space and revealed the complex and often contradictory

²⁵⁷ B. Loch, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

roles of British women at home in India. Although many critics continue to posit the racial and gendered exclusivity of British homes in India, the employment and management of and daily contact with Indian servants suggests that British women exercised imperial and domestic power and authority on a household scale. The appropriate behaviour of British women in their management of Indian servants was constructed in gendered as well as racial terms and, as shown by advice concerning household justice and cleanliness, representations of such behaviour could undermine ideas of racial difference that informed imperial self-legitimation. Raising British children in India was also the site of racial anxieties that centred on language, behaviour, and appropriate care. The roles of British wives and mothers were often in conflict. In Chapter 6, I consider the family separations that characterised the lives of an imperial aristocracy in India. Many British women had to choose whether to remain in India with their husbands or return to Britain with their children. But those British women who remained in India were also likely to spend several months of each year away from their homes and husbands in India as they travelled to hill stations during the hot season.

Chapter 6

Domestic and Imperial Mobility Separations and Seasonal Travels after 1858

Introduction

The reconstruction of imperial domesticity in India after 1858 was not only marked by mobility between different homes in India and retirement to Britain, but also by mobility that led to separations between British women, their children, and their husbands. The domestic and imperial roles of British women married to army officers and civil servants were often in conflict. Such women usually had to choose whether to return to Britain when their children were sent 'home' to school or to remain with their husbands in India. Even then, most British women spent at least part of the 'hot season' in hill stations, and were often separated from their husbands, working on the 'plains,' for several months at a time. Seasonal travel by British women to hill stations was seen as vital for the reconstruction of imperial domesticity and the maintenance of British imperial rule in India. And yet, such travels challenged ideas about the domestic and imperial roles of women. The reconstruction of imperial domesticity in India was both dependent on and yet destabilized by separations and seasonal travels on two scales: first, between Britain and India and, within India, between the 'hills' and the 'plains.'

Hill stations were a uniquely imperial form of urban development.¹ From the 1820s onwards, British rulers in India established approximately sixty five urban settlements at

¹ King 1976a op. cit.. and A. King, 'Culture, Social Power and Environment: The Hill Station in Colonial Urban Development,' *Social Action*, 26, 3, 1976b, 195-213. Hill stations were established throughout South and South East Asia in, for example, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines, and Japan. See J. E. Spencer and W. L. Thomas, 'The Hill Stations and Summer Resorts of the Orient,' *The Geographical Review*, 38, 4, 1948, 637-651.

elevations from four to eight thousand feet above sea level in India.² As Figure 14 shows, hill stations were clustered in four main regions: in the lower Himalayas, accessible to Delhi and Calcutta; in the north east of India, closer to Calcutta; near Bombay; and in the southern Nilgiri Hills, accessible to Madras. Simla, in the lower Himalayas, was the oldest, largest, and best known hill station in India and, from 1864 until 1939, served as the summer capital of British India. Hill stations attracted more temporary than permanent residents from March or April until October or November each year. Seasonal travel to Simla took two main forms: first, the migration of officials in the central imperial and the Punjab Governments; and, second, the migration of British women. Life for British women married to civil servants and army officers usually involved frequent moves and extensive touring, and travelling to hill stations was for many an important part of the yearly circuit. But this travel was different because married women - so-called 'grass widows' - often went to hill stations alone while their husbands remained at work on the 'plains.' Unlike other places in India, the number of British women resident in hill stations in the hot season equalled and often exceeded the number of British men. Moreover, literary representations of British women at hill stations have provided some of the most enduring and stereotypical images of memsahibs.³ In his collection of stories, Plain Tales from the Hills, Rudyard Kipling wrote about the social excess and marital transgressions of British women in hill stations such as Simla. His most infamous character in these stories was Mrs Hauksbee, who not only seduced single men on leave but also attempted to seduce a married man whose wife was also spending the hot season in the same hill station.

² D. Kennedy, The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996. As Kennedy writes, however, 'sufficient questions can be raised about particular places to make a definitive list all but impossible.' Ibid., 10.

³ Kipling's characterization of Mrs Hauksbee and other memsahibs in Simla provide the most notable examples of such representations. Kipling op. cit..

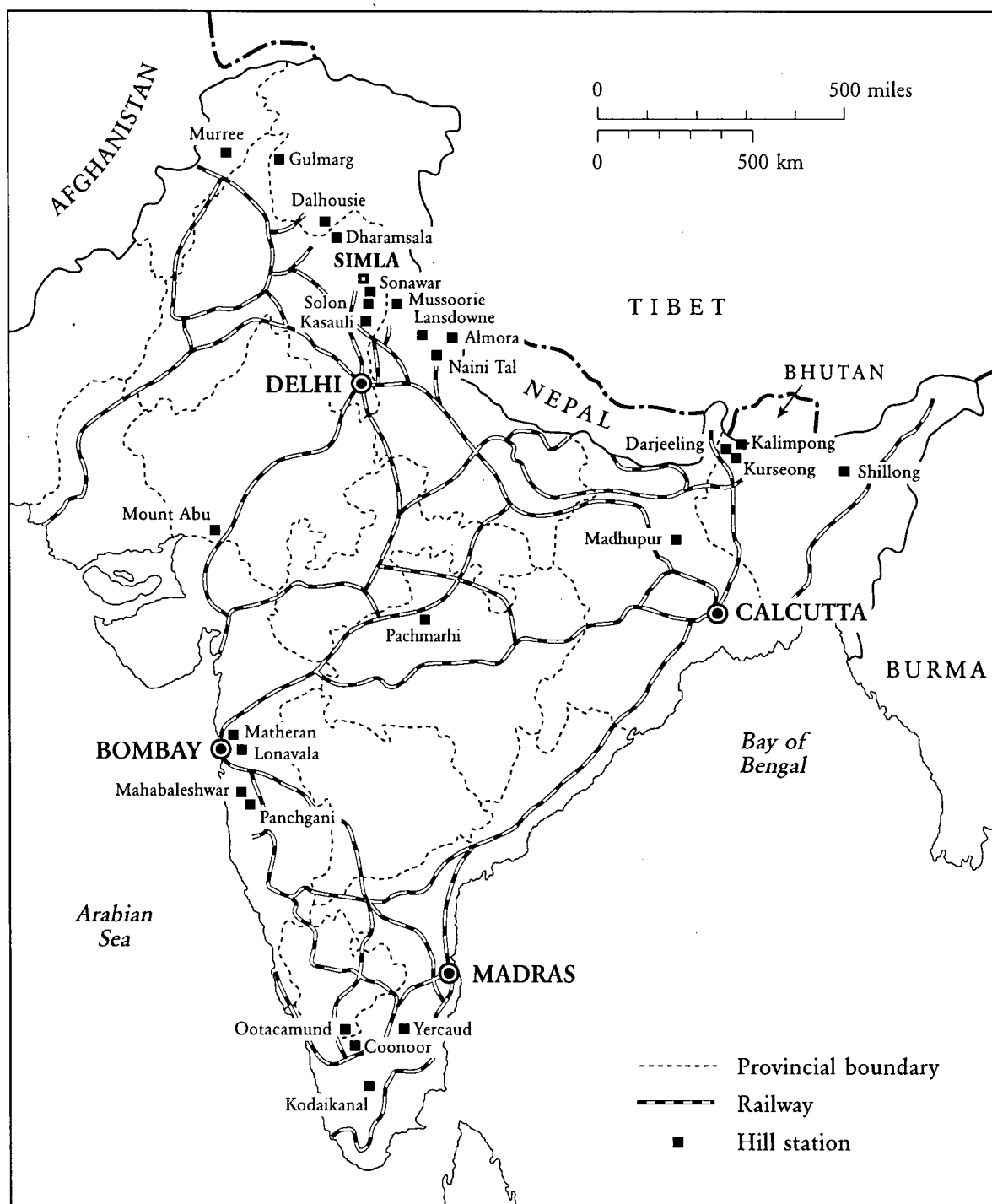


Figure 14: Hill Stations in British India

Source: Kennedy, op. cit.

The number and activities of British women in hill stations rendered them far more visible than women remaining on the plains, whom Maud Diver described as 'unrecorded heroines [who] are a nation without a history. At all events...their history rarely supplies effective material for fiction, and in consequence their existence has almost come to be doubted on this side of the ocean.'⁴

In this Chapter, I examine the conflicting and often contradictory roles of British wives and mothers in India. Such women were usually separated from their husbands for several months each year and from their children for several years at a time. Such separations and seasonal travels were deemed necessary by the parliamentary Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement to maintain British imperial rule in India. And yet, such separations and seasonal travels reveal a number of tensions that destabilized the exercise and legitimation of British imperial rule. Moreover, such tensions were discursively embodied by British women and their ambivalent roles as wives and mothers in the reconstruction of imperial domesticity in India after 1858. Drawing on evidence presented to the Select Committee, housekeeping guides, and oral histories by British women who had lived in India, I examine the significance of separations and seasonal travel to hill stations after 1858. Hill stations were represented as the most suitable location for British colonization partly because the 'hills' were seen to provide a healthier environment than the 'plains,' particularly for British women and children up to the age of seven. Most British children of the imperial aristocracy were sent to school in Britain from the ages of seven to eighteen, and British women had to decide whether to return to Britain or to remain in India. But even if they chose to remain in India, such women were usually separated from their husbands for several months each year as they travelled to hill stations. Hill stations were often represented as enclaves of British social and cultural life in India that most closely reconstructed ideas of home. But the seasonal travels of British women to hill stations not only reproduced but also destabilized ideas of home and empire that were thought to be most clearly reconstructed in

⁴ Diver op. cit., 21.

places like Simla. Connections and tensions existed between domestic, social, and imperial life during the hot season at Simla and were discursively embodied by British women travelling away from their Indian homes.

Hill stations are beginning to attract an increasing amount of critical attention.⁵ Despite an early attempt to identify and to map hill stations throughout Asia,⁶ it was not until the 1970s that hill stations came to be studied both in generic terms as a distinctively imperial urban form⁷ and also in terms of their individual characteristics.⁸ More recently, increasingly critical accounts have examined the place of hill stations in the maintenance and legitimation of imperial power and authority in India. Judith Kenny, for example, has focused on nineteenth century discourses of race and climate and suggests that hill stations helped to naturalize the separation of rulers and ruled in India. As she writes, 'In the summer capitals of the Raj, the relative isolation of the hill station afforded the British a stage with 'homelike' qualities on which to define their difference and to confirm, in appropriately British terms, their identity as rulers of India.'⁹ But Kenny largely overlooks the gendered as well as racial construction of difference in the maintenance and legitimation of imperial power and authority. Indeed, by stating that 'Nostalgia for home is quite

⁵ Hill stations also continue to be represented as popular travel destinations. See, for example, G. Wright, The Hill Stations of India, Passport Books, Lincolnwood, Ill, 1991.

⁶ Spencer and Thomas op. cit..

⁷ King 1976a and b op. cit..

⁸ Studies of individual hill stations include N. Mitchell, The Indian Hill-Station: Kodaikanal, the University of Chicago, Department of Geography, Research Paper No. 141, 1972; P. Barr and R. Desmond, Simla: A Hill Station in British India, The Scholar Press, London, 1978; J. H. Wright, In Their Own Image: Nuwara Eliya, A British Town in the Heart of Ceylon, Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1988; and R. Bhasin, Simla: The Summer Capital of British India, Viking, New Delhi, 1992.

⁹ J. Kenny, 'Climate, Race, and Imperial Authority: The Symbolic Landscape of the British Hill Station in India,' Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 85, 4, 1995, 694-714, 696. Also see J. Kenny, "'Discovery" of the Hills: British Environmental Perceptions and the Indian Hill Station of Ootacamund,' National Journal of Indian Geography, 37, 1-2, 108-117.

natural among expatriates,'¹⁰ Kenny serves to naturalize ideas of home and the "'homelike" qualities' of hill stations rather than to interrogate their complex and contradictory basis as well as their significance in both gendered and racial terms. In his extensive study of the cultural history of hill stations, Dane Kennedy argues that British hill stations in India were paradoxical places where 'the British endeavoured at one and the same time to engage with and to disengage from the dominion they ruled.'¹¹ Kennedy stresses the importance of seasonal travel by British women to hill stations. He interprets the significance of gendered travel to hill stations in terms of a public / private divide, arguing that 'Only the hill stations created the conditions where the balance between public and private could be restored and a sense of community could be sustained.'¹² In an otherwise eminent and erudite account, Kennedy confines imperial power and subjectivity to a static and fixed spatiality of public and private spheres and an unquestioned British community of rulers. Such a static depiction of gendered and imperial spaces belies the mobility of British women travelling often alone and in unusually large numbers away from their homes to stay in hill stations and the often conflicting roles of British wives and mothers. Sara Mills conveys a similarly fixed, static, and singular sense of gendered and imperial space by identifying hill stations as 'The one space which seemed to be more clearly designed as a separate zone'¹³ for British women living in India. Moreover, Mills is plainly wrong in her assertion that 'The hill station [sic] was built with the *sole aim* of providing protection and leisure opportunities for British women; there was usually only a small military presence, and often no administrative functions.'¹⁴ Hill stations developed when and where they did for a range of reasons, and became particularly important in British India after 1858.

¹⁰ Kenny 1995 op. cit., 714.

¹¹ Kennedy op. cit., 1.

¹² Ibid., 227.

¹³ Mills 1996 op. cit., 138.

¹⁴ Ibid., 138. Emphasis added.

At Home in the Hills

Emily and Frances Eden spent six years in India from 1835 while their unmarried brother, Lord Auckland, was Governor General. Isabella Fane accompanied her father, General Sir Henry Fane, to India in the same year on his appointment as Commander-in-Chief in Bengal, and remained there until 1838. All three of these women wrote about visiting Simla. As their letters and diaries written in the 1830s,¹⁵ and as several paintings from the 1840s and the early 1850s attest (Plates 34 - 36), white women had travelled to Simla and to other hill stations before 1857. Plates 34 to 36 all depict white women travelling with Indian servants but otherwise alone, borne in *jampans* which, before the extension of the railway network, were the main means of transportation to hill stations. As such, these paintings are unusual in their depiction of white women travelling unaccompanied by white men. And yet, the seasonal travels to hill stations by British women were seen as necessary to ensure their health and happiness in India. Despite these early representations of white women travelling to hill stations, such women travelled to hill stations in increasing numbers after the 'mutiny,' not only because of the increasing ease of transport, but also because of the increasing importance of hill stations in maintaining British rule in India after 1858. Debates about colonization in India often focused on the development of hill stations not only to support a growing British population in India but also, more specifically, to sustain the increasing presence of British women living in India on which colonization relied.

¹⁵ See, among other writings, E. Eden, Up the Country: Letters from India, Virago, London 1983 (first published 1866), J. Dunbar ed., Tigers, Durbars and Kings: Fanny Eden's Indian Journals 1837-1838, John Murray, London, 1988, and J. Preamble, ed., Miss Fane in India, Alan Sutton, Gloucester, 1985. See Robinson 1991, op. cit., for further biographical details.



Plate 34: The Mall, Simla, 1848

Source: Watercolour by H.A. Oldfield, India Office Library



Plate 35: Combermere Bridge, Simla, 1846

Source: G.P. Thomas, Simla, 1846 in Barr and Desmond, op. cit..

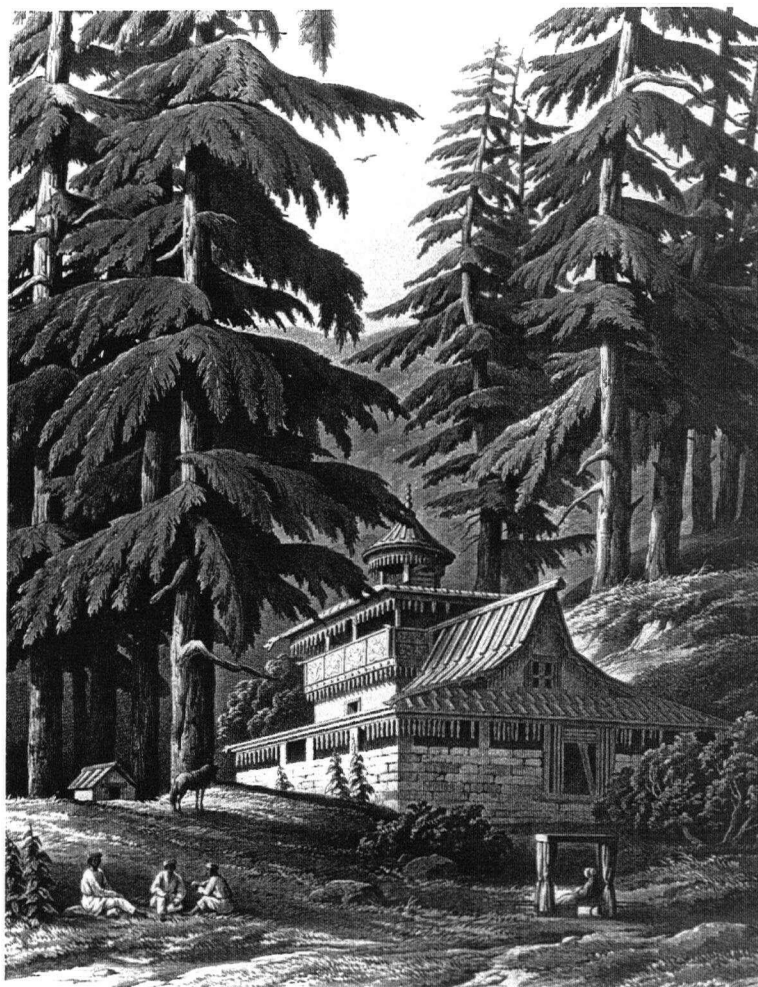


Plate 36: A Temple near Simla, 1852

Source: W.L.L. Scott, Views in the Himalayas, 1852, in Barr and Desmond, op. cit..

Indeed, the parliamentary Select Committee appointed in 1857 was instructed to consider the prospects of colonization and settlement 'especially in the Hill Districts and Healthier Climates.'¹⁶ Discourses of degeneration postulated connections between health, climate, race, and gender, and underpinned the growing importance of hill stations for British women and young British children living in India after 1858.

Nineteenth century discourses of degeneration were explicitly spatial. As McClintock writes, 'In this view, certain races in certain places were seen to be originally, naturally and inevitably degenerate.'¹⁷ Discourses of degeneration also helped to produce imperial power in Britain as well as in India, and several critics have focused on such discourses as distinctively European. Stoler contrasts discussion of degeneration in terms of bourgeois empowerment with a focus on the social anxiety manifested by the transgressive nature of degeneracy.¹⁸ As she argues, the latter perspective translates most clearly to an imperial context where discourses of degeneration applied not only to colonized 'others' but also to those among the colonizers constructed as 'other' because of their class, sexual, or other differences from an imperial aristocracy. In this way, discourses of degeneration shaped imperial power *among* the British as well as between British rulers and the Indian ruled. As she writes, 'Notions of degeneracy registered dissension among Europeans and basic uncertainties about who would be granted that privileged status.'¹⁹ In this Chapter, I am focusing on the wives of British civil servants and army officers who were largely assured of their 'privileged status.'

¹⁶ *Four Reports from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India), 1857-9.*

¹⁷ McClintock op. cit., 49. Discourses of degeneracy came to inform and be informed by the 'science' of eugenics. See Metcalf op. cit., and Young op. cit., for further discussion.

¹⁸ Stoler op. cit., with reference to Foucault op. cit., and D. Pick, *The Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848 - c.1918*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

¹⁹ Stoler, op. cit., 32.

Discourses of degeneration were represented in gender, class, and sexual as well as racial terms, as shown by the regulation of imperial motherhood within Britain²⁰ and by representations of, for example, the Irish, Jews, the working class, prostitutes, and domestic servants as degenerate.²¹ McClintock argues that discourses of domestic degeneracy revealed the inherent contradictions in an imperial hierarchy. Such discourses of domestic degeneracy revealed imperial contradictions within India as well as in Britain. As Stoler writes, degeneration 'was not a 'European' disorder or a specifically colonial one, but a 'mobile' discourse of empire that designated eligibility for citizenship, class membership, and gendered assignments to race.'²² In imperial India, discourses of degeneration were inscribed in terms of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Moreover, because of environmentally determinist ideas that linked health, climate, and degeneration, such discourses were also spatially distinct between the 'hills' and the 'plains.' Not only were discourses of degeneration themselves mobile, but they were also invoked to legitimate the mobility of middle class British women away from their Indian homes. British women travelled to hill stations, often for several months at a time, to escape the risks of physical and mental degeneracy believed to exist on the plains during the hot season.

Much of the evidence presented to the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement suggested that hill stations would provide the most conducive location for British colonists and settlers in India. Exploiting the elevated location of hill stations was seen as a way to prevent physical and mental degeneration on the plains. Hill stations were thought to be located above the 'fever range' of 4,500 feet and their temperate climate was thought to be more suited to European habitation.²³ As Emily Eden wrote from Simla, 'like meat, we keep better here.'²⁴

²⁰ Davin op. cit..

²¹ McClintock op. cit..

²² Stoler 1995 op. cit., 32.

²³ Although, as Kenny 1991 shows, such views were also contested. She quotes, for example, Sir Richard Burton who wrote that 'we demi-Orientals, who know by experience the dangers of

Although British colonization of India was ultimately thought to be unsustainable,²⁵ the prospect of colonizing the mountain ranges of India continued to be mooted over the course of the nineteenth century. For example, Major-General Newall proposed the development of military colonies in established hill stations, writing in 1882 that

the idea has sometimes occurred to me that haply in this fair land may arise the homes of a happy Anglo-Saxon population; perchance in times to come of cheerful English homesteads amidst the orchards and sheepwalks of the north; or the tea and coffee gardens of the south in which the Indian veteran might cultivate his plot of land, and rear a healthy family, his robust sons growing up the future defenders of the State.²⁶

In 1900, Sir Joseph Fayrer suggested that 'there is good reason to believe that in the vast mountain ranges and tablelands of India the physical and climatic conditions necessary for the preservation of health and perhaps even for the permanent colonisation of the European will be found to exist to a much greater extent than has hitherto been supposed.'²⁷ Dr Fayrer was the same doctor whose home in the Residency compound at Lucknow had accommodated Fanny Boileau, Maria Germon, and Katherine Harris during the siege. In the case of Simla, Fayrer wrote that 'the climate is beneficial in ordinary malarial diseases...[but] it is unsuitable in dysenteric, hepatic, cardiac, or lung complaints. Hill diarrhoea is not infrequently seen and

mountain air in India, only wonder at the man who first planted a roof-tree upon the Neilgherries.' R. Burton, Goa and the Blue Mountains: Or, Six Months of Sick Leave, Richard Bentley, London, 1851, 270. There is an extensive literature on tropical medicine and imperial anxieties about health. See, for example, D. Arnold, 'Touching the Body: Perspectives on the Indian Plague,' in Guha and Spivak, op. cit., 391-426, and D. Arnold, Colonizing the Body, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993.

²⁴ E. Eden op. cit., 129.

²⁵ As discussed in Chapter 5.

²⁶ Major-General D.J.F. Newall, The Highlands of India: strategically considered, with special reference to their colonization as reserve circles military, industrial, and sanitary., 2 Volumes, Harrison and Sons, London, 1882, Volume 1, 15.

²⁷ Sir J. Fayrer, 'An Address on the Hill Stations of India as Health Resorts,' The British Medical Journal, 1, 1900, 1393-1397, 1394.

requires special precautions.'²⁸ Despite such risks, he concluded by stating that all hill stations between four and eight thousand feet 'are of exceeding benefit to Europeans, for here they are placed above those morbid influences which determine the forms of tropical disease and in an atmosphere not too rarified to be prejudicial.'²⁹ Early debates about British colonization and settlement stressed the importance of seasonal travel by British women and young children to hill stations during their temporary rather than permanent colonization of India. Much of the evidence presented to the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement from 1857 to 1859 described the imperial and gendered importance attributed to hill stations in the post-'mutiny' reconstruction of British rule in India.

Several witnesses called by the Committee argued that it was impossible to raise a third generation of British colonists and settlers on the plains of India. As James Martin stated in 1858, the 'value of European life' would be greatly increased by moving settlers and soldiers to mountain ranges because 'on the plains I believe that the value of European life never can be high.'³⁰ Witnesses focused on the mental as well as physical degeneration that was thought to result from living on the Indian plains. Major General Tremenheere argued that 'I think you could not reckon upon raising a population in the plains from the European soldier with any success whatever. By keeping them in the plains they grow up generally lanky, degenerate looking men.'³¹ Robert Baikie was asked whether it was possible for Europeans to be raised on the plains of India without degenerating and answered 'Decidedly not in the plains; my belief is,

²⁸ Ibid., 1397.

²⁹ Ibid., 1397.

³⁰ Evidence from J.R. Martin, 15 April 1858, *Four Reports from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India)*, 1857-8, I, 21.

³¹ Evidence from Major-General G.B. Tremenheere, 15 April 1858, *Four Reports from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India)*, 1857-8, I, 12.

that they would die out in the third generation.'³² Baikie was speaking as a doctor who had spent seventeen years in the Madras Presidency and seven years living in the Neilgherry Hills. Captain Ouchterlony was similarly adamant that the families of British colonists would degenerate on the Indian plains. As he said, 'even if children were reared to maturity, their constitutions would be enfeebled, and their 'Saxon energy' impaired, and I believe that their progeny resulting from the intermarriages of colonists would be found deteriorated in all English or European attributes.'³³ He reiterated his point later in his testimony, asserting that 'I think that no parent who had any regard for his children would attempt to bring them up to maturity in the plains of India.'³⁴ Ouchterlony had lived in India from 1834 until March 1857 and had served in the Corps of Engineers in the Madras Presidency. His and others' concerns about degeneracy among British colonists contrast with Kennedy's claim that 'The specter of degeneration lay less in the threat of physical extinction than in the prospect of miscegenation and the loss of racial identity.'³⁵ For British rulers in India, degeneracy was thought to result both from the physical and mental threats of the Indian climate as well as intermarriage with Indians and Eurasians. Moreover, unlike Kennedy's argument, such intermarriage was effectively thought to result in the physical extinction of a white, British imperial aristocracy.

Tremenheere described the children raised in the Lawrence Asylum at Mount Abu as 'just as robust and [who] eat as much beef as children in England.'³⁶ In similar terms, Paterson Saunders described the existence of a third generation of Europeans living in hill stations in the

³² Evidence from R. Baikie, 22 April 1858, *Four Reports from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India)*, 1857-8, 54.

³³ Evidence from Captain J. Ouchterlony, 10 June 1858, *Four Reports from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India)*, 1857-8, 2.

³⁴ Evidence from Captain J. Ouchterlony, 15 June 1858, *Four Reports from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India)*, 1857-8, 33.

³⁵ Kennedy, *op. cit.*, 33.

³⁶ Tremenhreere *op. cit.*, 12.

Himalayas and said that 'I have seen the children in the hills, and I think they are as healthy as the children in this country.'³⁷ Saunders had spent twenty two years as an indigo planter in the North Western Provinces. But even though it was deemed advisable for young children and women to spend the hot season at hill stations away from the heat of the plains, it was thought preferable for children over the age of seven to be sent to Britain for the sake of their health and education. In his evidence to the Select Committee, A. C. Bidwell claimed that British colonization and settlement in India was impracticable because of the climate and risks of disease. Bidwell had worked as a civil servant in India from 1830 until 1856, spending three years in Britain during that period. In his career, he rose to become a collector, the secretary to the Board of Revenue, and the Commissioner of Revenue. As Bidwell stated,

A third generation of Europeans born in India, does, it is said, not exist. Of course a residence in mountainous districts would, to a certain extent, remove the English settler from liability to the attacks of diseases so prevalent in the plains, while it would impart a vigour to his constitution calculated to lessen the liability to attacks on visits to the plains; but there are other considerations, such as the impossibility of procuring, even in the hills, such an education for his children in England affairs, a desire to remove his children from the demoralising influence of intercourse with the domestics of the country, to make them acquainted with the advanced civilisation of England...which would impel the settler to return to England with his family as soon as his circumstances would permit. His sons, and perhaps his daughters, may return to the land of their birth, but not to settle, to make a competency, and return to England as their father did before them.³⁸

It was not until the recommendations of the Lee Commission were accepted in 1925 that military and civilian officials were entitled to four first class return passages during their career between India and Britain on P and O ships.³⁹ By travelling second class or by cheaper lines, the

³⁷ Evidence from P. Saunders, 21 March 1859, *Report from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India)*, 1859, IV, 245.

³⁸ Evidence from A. C. Bidwell, 20 July 1858, *Four Reports from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India)*, 1857-8, 157.

³⁹ Dench Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge and I. Portal, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.53, India Office Library.

four free passages could be stretched to six and a half.⁴⁰ Children under three travelled free. These free passages were usually used by British wives visiting their children in Britain during summer holidays, and, from 1925, the number of British wives spending the hot season at Indian hill stations began gradually to decline. And yet, significant numbers of British women still visited hill stations for several months each year, and the life that they enjoyed there was similar to that of previous generations of British women living in India.

Transgressing Home and Empire

The lives of middle class, married British women in India were usually marked by long separations from their children. The domestic roles of memsahibs as wives and mothers were often in conflict, with British women having to decide whether to stay in Britain with their children or in India with their husband. In his testimony to the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement in India, Josiah Wise described the mental as well as physical degeneration of second and third generation settlers in India. Wise himself had lived in India for more than thirty years as a proprietor and manager of indigo plantations in Dacca. As he said, 'I do not think [that children born in India] are equal to those born in [Britain], and those that are sent home to this country have all the benefits of an invigorating climate, education, and associations so beneficial to develop the[ir] mental and physical powers.'⁴¹ Although a number of children were sent to school in hill stations, the majority of children born to civilian and military officials were sent to school in Britain, usually from the ages of seven to eighteen. Often as soon as their children were born, British mothers like Francis Wells began to dread the moment of separation. According to Victoria Bayley, 'I remember thinking to myself that once the children were at school in England, one would never feel a whole person again, in India

⁴⁰ A. Moffatt, Transcribed Interview, MT35, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁴¹ Evidence from J.P. Wise, 13 May 1858, *Four Reports from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement*, 1857-8, 62.

always longing for the children, in England longing for one's husband.'⁴² British mothers who were married to civilian and military officials had to decide whether to remain in India with their husbands or to resettle in Britain with their children.

In 1871, Charlotte Stamper decided to leave her children in Britain and to return to India to remain with her husband. As she wrote, 'some Mothers think it is their duty to stay with their children and let the husband go back alone. It did not appear so to the writer. It is useless to write of the wrench.'⁴³ In 1900, Anne Wilson wrote a letter to her mother from Marseilles, on her journey back to India after leaving her eight year-old son Jack in Britain. As she wrote, 'It is over now. The channel has been crossed and sunny France traversed, and now the ship will soon be on her way to take us to the other end of the world.'⁴⁴ On her last night in London, she had seen a boy like Jack with his mother: 'Then something touched those elemental depths which, thank Heaven, are not often moved. A sense of anguish of a thousand mothers, who pay for India with their babies, like birds dropped from the parent nest before their wings have learnt to fly, swept over a lonely woman, and there, in the sight of all that happiness, she wept.'⁴⁵ As she continued,

One thing you must promise me. If you ever hear Anglo-Indian women called shallow and frivolous, if they ever seem to others to be vain pursuers of the empty bubble of an hour, will you remember there may be another side to the shield? I know that there is an alternative, to shirk no suffering, the strength to endure, and that strange possession, peace. Only do not let any one be too hard on them. It may be cowardice, or it may be their own kind of courage, that makes them shut their ears to baby voices, or turn their eyes from haunting baby faces, to be resolutely gay.⁴⁶

⁴² Bayley Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁴³ Laughton Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁴⁴ A. Wilson, Letters from India, Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh, 1911, 203.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 204.

After leaving him in Britain for the last time in 1909, Anne Wilson wrote to her seventeen year-old son Jack that 'there is distinct consolation in knowing that my twentieth voyage will be my last, and that all three of us will now be in one country and have but one home.'⁴⁷

In the 1920s and 1930s, memsahibs faced the same decision of whether to stay with their children in Britain or their husband in India. In the 1920s, M. Dench found that

The separation from children was the worst aspect of life in India, a far greater hazard than disease. Children were apt to fret at first and they invariably grew away from their parents. Parents fretted and felt deprived. Many mothers could not face parting with their children and settled down at home. The abandoned husband sometimes turned elsewhere for companionship and the marriage could break up on the jagged rocks of choice: Who needs me most, my husband or my children? In my case the answer was simple, though not easy. The children were well cared for at school, but [my husband] was inclined to forget mealtimes altogether unless I was present to literally shout in his ear at appropriate intervals. I could imagine him dwindling to a skeleton in no time if he was left permanently alone.⁴⁸

M. Dench's son Michael went to nursery boarding school in Britain from the age of five and returned to India for three years when he was eleven. For his mother, leaving him at school was 'the hardest thing I had ever done...Next day I walked through Kensington Gardens and all the mothers and nurses seemed to be calling 'Michael.'" Similarly reflecting on the pain of separation, A. Moffatt recalled that

The worst thing to my mind about being stationed in India was the inevitable parting with one's children. When they reached the age of six or seven one really had to leave them in England for the sake of their health as well as education. One had the choice, a heartbreaking one, of staying with one's husband in India or leaving him to stay with one's children in England. I chose the former as I felt that no-one could look after one's husband while hard though it was, one's children could be left with grandparents though this was also very hard on the children. One of my daughters has told me how she used to cry every night for weeks after I had left her. I left my boy when he was six and a half and the girls at intervals after. It nearly broke my heart.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 413.

⁴⁸ Dench Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

When they were all three at home I used to manage to get home for the summer holidays every year.⁴⁹

In their advice to British wives and mothers in India, Steel and Gardiner wrote that 'the decision to set the claims of the husband above those of the children is a wise one.'⁵⁰ In 1909, Maud Diver addressed the difficulties of having to decide between 'the rival claims of India and England; of husband and child. Sooner or later the lurking shadow of separation takes definite shape; asserts itself as a harsh reality; a grim presence, whispering the inevitable question: 'Which shall it be?' A question not lightly to be answered: if indeed, in generalised form, it can be answered at all.'⁵¹ As she stressed to her readers in Britain, 'Love him as she may, it costs more for a wife, and still more for a mother, to stand loyally by her husband in India, than the sheltered wives of England can conceive.'⁵² Diver also wrote that the pain of such a decision by a British wife and mother could be considerably eased by her husband. As she wrote,

There remains also the man himself, who may greatly help or hinder her in her bitter hour. Mere selfishness apart, some men are unquestionably more dependent on their wives than others: some again will be jealous of their very children, and will stoutly refuse to see why they and their comfort should be sacrificed to a 'woman's fad': while, on the other hand, there are always cheerful souls who in no way object to an occasional spell of bachelor life, though the wives of such are not often as grateful as they might be for this amiable idiosyncrasy, - simplify matters how it may. Happily, however, there do exist men and women whom love has so triumphantly incorporated that each is ready as the other to face any sacrifice marriage may demand of them. And verily they have their reward!⁵³

⁴⁹ A. Moffatt, Transcribed Interview, MT35, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁵⁰ Steel and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 204.

⁵¹ Diver, *op. cit.*, 37-38.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

Although Diver remained neutral in her advice, she stressed two important points. First, Diver advised that a woman should return to Britain with her young children to see that they were settled, either with their extended family or at a nursery boarding school. Second, she recommended that a woman should be separated neither from her husband nor her children for longer than three or four years at a time. Like Anne Wilson, she stressed the pain of such separations to those readers who might be critical of British women living in India: 'Think of it, English wives and mothers, and let the thought keep the door of your lips when you are tempted to sit in judgement on the Anglo-Indian woman and all her works!'⁵⁴ As she continued,

One after one the babies grow into companionable children; one after one England claims them, till the mother's heart and house are left unto her desolate. Empty nurseries, empty verandahs; only the haunting music of small footsteps and clear voices still troubles and glorifies her dreams. Yet in all likelihood she will continue to dance and ride and entertain with undiminished zest. Heartlessness? Frivolity? In a few cases, possibly, but in the most the sheer pluck of the race that has a prejudice in favour of making the best of things as they are, and never whimpering over the inevitable.⁵⁵

Many British wives and mothers living in India had themselves been separated from their parents as children. Iris Portal spent her first six years in India but was then sent to school in Britain from 1911 until 1918. As she remembered, her early life in India came to an end 'with the violent and abrupt contrast faced by every British child transferred from East to West in those long ago days of the British Empire in India...We were taught to be very proud of our parents' share in the Empire, and to feel that we were doing our bit by being left behind.'⁵⁶ While she was at school in Britain, India 'was a land of promise, as something I would go back to. I found, as I think many children who grew up in India in my generation certainly did, that England was

⁵⁴ Ibid., 41-42.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁵⁶ Portal Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

dull, drab and cold, I don't mean so much climatically as in atmosphere.'⁵⁷ When she left her own daughters at school in Britain in 1938, Iris Portal experienced the pain of separation again: 'After I had said goodbye I crept back to their playing field and watched them running about, from the concealment of some bushes, tears on my cheeks.'⁵⁸ For such children at school in Britain, India seemed like a distant world. As Frances Smythe recalled, when she was growing up in Britain, 'I don't [think] I ever gave India another thought, my life was in England my school was in England, of course the war came and I didn't see my parents for a very long time, but when they came back on leave they were like beings from another world, because it wasn't my world.'⁵⁹

For Helen Greenfield, 'I suffered the usual traumas of parting from one's child but, bearing in mind my own childhood away from my parents, (even though I was with my grandfather) I tried to alleviate matters, choosing a school where every boarder had parents serving abroad so the children stayed together for the holidays. However painful it was one felt it was the best plan for the child's future and safe guarding its health.'⁶⁰ H. Nicholson described such separations as 'the worst part of life in India,'⁶¹ Pamela Mills wrote that 'parting with [my children] was terrible, the one disadvantage of life in India,'⁶² while Linda Sanderson endured

⁵⁷ Ibid..

⁵⁸ Ibid..

⁵⁹ F. Smythe, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.62, India Office Library.

⁶⁰ H. Greenfield, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁶¹ H. Nicholson, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁶² P. Mills, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

such separations 'with great sadness but a wife should be with her husband.'⁶³ Although other British women in India also experienced the pain of separations, they believed that this was a natural and inevitable part of their imperial life. Being separated from her children was, for Renée Perry-Keane, 'the natural thing...I was sent home to boarding school, and was parted from my parents for six years,'⁶⁴ and Isobel Pridmore described such separations as 'Sad - but accepted as the 'usual pattern' having been through it myself a generation earlier.'⁶⁵ M. Ravenscroft also saw the separation from her children as natural, remembering that 'You'd got to face it. I suppose it was terrible when it was happening but like children you sort of forget after a while. But I think much more of the anguish of the parents, it must have been absolutely awful.'⁶⁶ M. Ravenscroft had been taken 'home to England' by her mother when she was five and her brother was three. Her mother stayed for two years, until her father came to Britain on leave and they returned to India together. For the seven year old M. Ravenscroft, 'That was the parting I can remember most about' and she did not see her mother for another three years.⁶⁷ Mrs Christian Showers-Stirling saw her children for the first time for three years in 1912. As she wrote, 'They were very sweet to me - but I don't think really remembered me.'⁶⁸ Similarly, although Beatrix Scott had seen her daughters two years earlier, when they returned to India

⁶³ L. Sanderson, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁶⁴ R. Perry-Keane, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁶⁵ I. Pridmore, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁶⁶ M. Ravenscroft, Transcribed Interview, MT34, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁶⁷ Ibid..

⁶⁸ Showers Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

aged seventeen and eighteen in 1930, 'They were a shock to their father who had not seen them since 1924. The children he had left then were now on the verge of womanhood.'⁶⁹

The separations endured by British women in India were not only restricted to leaving children at school in Britain. When she was nineteen, Iris Portal left India with her mother to spend a year in Britain. As she recalled, her father wept at dinner the night before his wife and daughter left. For Iris, 'It was the first acute parting of my adult life, to be repeated with different individuals and in different places again and again, the penalty of empire.'⁷⁰ Iris Portal's last separation was from India itself in 1943, which she described as a bereavement. Reflecting on a lifetime of separations, Iris Portal wrote that

All partings are a presage of death, a preparation for it, and each one carries away something of one's heart, so that, perhaps, when the final parting comes it will be easy because there will not be very much heart left. I said goodbye to India in the jungles of those western rocks and screes, the suburbs of Bombay were impersonal. My tears dried up as I made ready to pay, pack and follow as so often before.⁷¹

Other separations occurred within India as well as between India and Britain. Many wives of civil servants accompanied their husbands on winter tours of duty around their district and province, but many wives of army officers were separated from their husbands when they were on military tours of duty. As a result, British women married to military officials experienced more separations from their husbands than British women married to civilian officials. As Deborah Dring recalled, 'My husband and I were always separated,' because, as an officer, and eventually Major-General, in the Indian Army, he was frequently posted to the North West frontier. For her,

⁶⁹ Scott Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁷⁰ Portal Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁷¹ Ibid..

It was jolly lonely. You know, there were times when one's husband was away for days anyway on end, weeks on end...I once worked out that in thirteen years we'd only spent three whole years together. At times I used to get rather bored and fed up. Especially when it happened when your child or children were in England. As long as one had child or children one could always find something to do, or amuse them, amuse yourself. But once they went to England, they were in England, your husband was in some place where women were not allowed to go, life did become rather dreary at times. That was why I think I liked to come home and be in England.⁷²

But for military and civilian wives alike, annual separations were common during the hot season. At this time of year, it was more often British wives rather than husbands who left home as they travelled to cooler hill stations away from the heat of the plains.

Steel and Gardiner advised British wives and mothers that if it was impossible to send their children to school in Britain, they should be sent to a hill station. As they wrote, 'the proper course is to send the elder children away under a responsible nurse or governess, or to school, and for the mother to stay down with her husband for as long as she can. His risks, his discomforts, are infinitely greater than those run by the chicks in a healthy climate, and most mothers at home have to send their children to school.'⁷³ But Kate Platt sounded a note of caution about the suitability of hill stations for British children. In hill stations, she wrote,

they may have more social life than is good for them. The innumerable parties, dances, and elaborate entertainments for children, which are a striking feature of fashionable hill stations, make the children blasé and dissatisfied with simple pleasures; and they become over-tired and excited. Further, they are apt to acquire infectious diseases, which are always prevalent in centres occupied by a floating population of children coming from all parts of the country. No doubt the companionship of other children is good, especially in the case of an only child. Most children love acting, dancing, and singing, all of which are natural and healthy instincts, very strongly developed in some. There should, however, be strict moderation in the number of social functions which a child is allowed to attend.⁷⁴

⁷² D. Dring, *Plain Tales Transcript*, Mss.Eur.T.28, India Office Library.

⁷³ Steel and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 204.

⁷⁴ Platt, *op. cit.*, 142-143.

Although young British children and their mothers were thought to be safer in the healthier climate of the 'hills,' Platt discerned the risks of infection from within the British community itself. Indeed, the close proximity of the wives and children of military and civilian officials made hill stations socially as well as spatially unique.

Most domestic handbooks agreed that a woman's main domestic responsibility was to remain with her husband in India rather than her children when they were sent to Britain. But such domestic handbooks also stressed the importance of seasonal travel by British women, usually away from their husbands, during the hot season. Such seasonal travel to hill stations was deemed necessary for the good health of British women in India, and travelling away from a home and husband in India for several months a year was seen as preferable to returning to Britain for several years at a time. According to Steel and Gardiner, such a seasonal relocation was the only way to prevent a loss of sleep and damage to the nervous system that would result from spending the hot season on the plains. As they continued, 'the constant talking about the heat is so depressing, that the mere thought of being able to get cool by a trip to the hills makes us better able to endure it while it lasts, taking away, as it does, the feeling of hopelessness which generally sets in about July or August.'⁷⁵ These authors also suggested that a woman's domestic responsibilities could extend over space, writing that 'a good wife can do much to keep her husband's home in the plains comfortable during her annual visit to the hills: she can make wise arrangements before leaving, and can even send him weekly bills of fare, lists of servants' wages, &c.'⁷⁶ For Steel and Gardiner, the location and design of a house rented for several months in a hill station was of vital importance for good health. As they wrote,

it is either for the protection or the improvement of health that the home is broken up: the selection of a suitable house is therefore all-important. Too often houses are taken for us which are antagonistic to healthy conditions. There are houses on ridges,

⁷⁵ Steel and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 194.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 193.

houses on banks, houses in valleys, houses by the roadside. Homes that bear sweet names, such as 'Moss Grange' and 'Ivy Glen,' awaken early poetical memories; our spirit soars as we read of the 'Eagle's Nest,' 'The Crag,' or 'The Highlands,' whilst 'Sunny Bank' and 'The Dovecote' open out a vista of quiet restfulness. But old stagers know there is nothing for it but to go up and see for oneself, and trust to no one. As a rule, we do not recommend ridges [because of the risk of cholera]...Banks should be avoided, especially if the walls of the back rooms are built up against them without any space between [because of landslips]...A house in a valley is too shut in; good air is a necessity. Nor, unless you wish all the community to see your rooms being turned out, should you choose a wayside cottage.⁷⁷

Although British women travelled to hill stations away from the health risks of their Indian bungalows on the plains, Steel and Gardiner wrote that the gothic and tudor-revival style houses that often characterised hill stations, with their picturesque names reminiscent of distant, remembered homes in Britain, could also pose risks to life and health. As Steel and Gardiner suggested, it was the responsibility of a British wife in India to ensure that her summer home in the 'hills' was conducive to good health, safety, and privacy, none of which were assured by their aesthetically familiar architecture and design. Plates 37 and 38 represent British women and their servants in front of two rented summer homes in Simla that were designed in a gothic-revival style. In contrast to the 'classical' bungalows on the 'plains,' such homes, and their cultivated gardens, were reminiscent of homes in Britain. Plate 39 shows Barnes Court in Simla, which was the residence of the Commander-in-Chief and was built as an imposing tudor-revival style house unlike official residences in the 'plains.'

⁷⁷ Ibid., 194.



Plate 37: A Gothic-Revival House in Simla

Source: India Office Library.



Plate 38: A Gothic-Revival Bungalow in Simla

Source: India Office Library

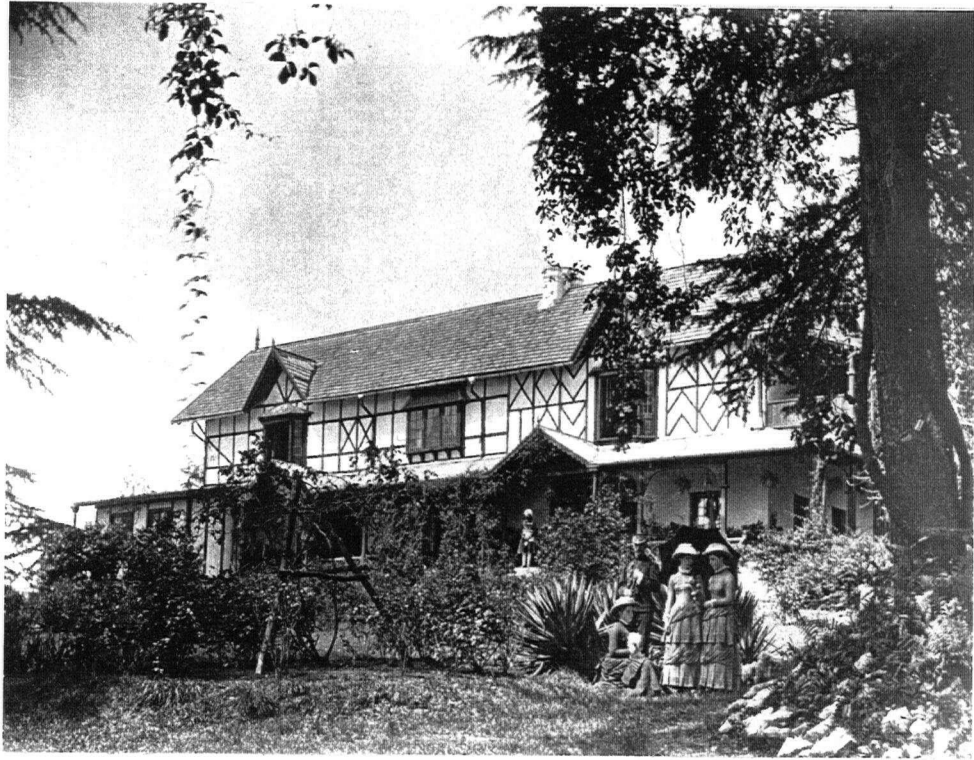


Plate 39: Barnes Court, Simla

Source: India Office Library

Other commentators were more critical of British women travelling away from their husbands and their Indian homes to spend several months in a hill station. In 1844, the *Calcutta Review* claimed that 'Many a household wreck have the hills of Simlah and Mussoorie looked down upon, within these last few years; many the record of misery and guilt which might be inscribed in the huge dark volume of the Annals of Separation.'⁷⁸ In 1886, the *Calcutta Review* lamented the break-up of British homes in India by British women spending part of the year in hill stations. Such seasonal separations led, according to the *Calcutta Review*, to 'semi-estrangement, or at least indifference' because

Husband and wife have learnt to seek their pleasures apart. A 'home' if it can bear the name, whence the presiding genius of home - the wife and mistress is absent half the year is at best a hollow pretence. The taking for 'better and worse' has on one side become a broken compact. To take for the better, viz, the cool weather - to forsake for the worse, the hot - has become the order of the day.⁷⁹

Here, the reconstruction of British homes in India is seen to depend on a British wife translating feminine discourses of domesticity over imperial space. And yet, the seasonal travels of such women to hill stations, which were seen as necessary for their health and for the temporary colonization of India, were seen to undermine imperial domesticity. As the *Calcutta Review* suggested, the Christian sacrament of marriage was seasonally vulnerable to separations and a growing distance between husband and wife.

In 1909, Maud Diver quoted the following verse by Kipling:

Jack's own Jill goes up the hill,
To Murree or Chakrata;
Jack remains, and dies in the plains,

⁷⁸ 'The English in India: Our Social Morality,' *Calcutta Review*, 1844, 290-336, 334.

⁷⁹ J. E. Dawson, 'Woman in India: Her Influence and Position,' *Calcutta Review*, 1886, 347-357, 352.

And Jill remarries soon after.⁸⁰

Diver described married life in India as 'a life hedged about with dangers, difficulties, and hardships rarely dreamed of in our placid English homes,'⁸¹ and wrote that 'If Jill's conduct is not always as exemplary as it might be, it is certain that her life and surroundings are not always of the most elevating description.'⁸² Moreover, Diver praised the small minority of British wives who chose to remain with their husbands on the plains during the hot season: 'Jill is not always wafted hillward by the first whiff of hot air from the dread furnace to come. She does, on occasion, stand by her husband, through bitter and sweet, through fire and frost; and what such a standard of wifehood costs the brave women who live up to it, only the wives of India know.'⁸³ During the hot season, bungalows on the plains would be shut up from nine or ten o'clock in the morning, and British women would remain inside for the rest of the day. When she remained on the plains during the hot season, Carol Hyde would be joined for brunch by her husband, who then returned to work while she rested, read, or embroidered. After tea at four and after her husband had come home, 'At five the house, then like an oven, would be opened up and we'd emerge for tennis at the Club.'⁸⁴ As Steel and Gardiner wrote,

it is almost worth going to India to experience the pleasures of getting to the hills; especially when one has undergone a captivity in a shut-up house, the slightest fall in the temperature being only 'mitigated misery,' the night a series of moanings and tossings, the only relief an evening drive in the scorching blast of a furnace, with a parched earth below and a sky of brass above. To leave all this behind, and to be hurried along past murmuring streams, green grass, lovely flowers, and shady trees is indeed refreshing. The life-giving breeze fans the wan and hollow-eyed children, and our physical and mental energies are awakened. We feel our hearts bound at the sight of the distant snows, and the sweet smell of the pines and wild flowers; and they re-

⁸⁰ R. Kipling, quoted in Diver, *op. cit.*, 20.

⁸¹ Diver, *op. cit.*, 20.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸⁴ C. Hyde, Questionnaire Answer, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

echo a glad alleluia: 'I will lift mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help' - and health! Yes, whether you can get away for six weeks or six months, there is an escape from the furnace of the fiery plains, and well for those who can take advantage of it!⁸⁵

For Maud Diver, marital loyalty and fidelity went hand in hand and were best represented by the minority of British women who remained with their husbands on the plains all year round. In contrast, those British women who travelled to hill stations away from their homes and husbands on the plains risked not only domestic disruption but also marital breakdown. Unlike the 'brave women' who remained by their husband's side, 'the grass widow in the Hills has pitfalls more definite to contend with; and perhaps the two most insidious are amateur theatricals and the military men on leave. It is hardly too much to say that one or other of these dominant factors in Hill station life is accountable for half the domestic tragedies of India.'⁸⁶ The seasonal travel by the British wives of civilian and military officials was thought to threaten domestic security in India. But more than this, their travel was also thought to threaten imperial rule because of the uneasy coexistence between social and official life in places such as Simla that came to be represented as a place of frivolity and excess. The British women who travelled to Simla discursively embodied several contradictions at the heart of imperial rule. Hill stations were seen as necessary for maintaining a healthy, racially pure British population in India and, in particular, the presence and health of British women in India on which imperial rule relied. But at the same time, the seasonal travel of British women to Simla away from their husbands and homes on the plains was also seen to threaten not only domestic security but also the legitimacy of imperial rule.

⁸⁵ Steel and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 203.

⁸⁶ Diver, *op. cit.*, 23-24.

The Development of Hill Stations

According to Nora Mitchell, Indian hill stations developed when and where they did for a number of reasons that included altitude, microclimate, terrain, scenic beauty, accessibility, political constraints and strategic importance.⁸⁷ Many hill stations originated as sanatoria, offering a temperate place of recuperation away from the heat of the plains for soldiers and civil servants of the East India Company. From these origins, hill stations often developed into recreational centres and military and administrative centres during the hot season. As such, Mitchell suggests that many hill stations in India developed for the imperial aristocracy to recover from or to prevent ill health and that such hill stations soon became multi-functional, but on a largely seasonal basis. Hill stations in the Himalayas were particularly important in strategic terms as they were close to, but also at a safe distance from, the contested North Western Frontier. These hill stations were themselves defensively secure, located on mountainous terrain and usually surrounded by hill states that enjoyed good relations with British rulers. For these reasons, hill stations came to be increasingly important as official as well as social centres after 1858, as epitomised by the growth and importance of Simla.

Simla was the first hill station developed by the British in India. Land at Simla was obtained by the British in the 1819 Nepalese Peace Treaty in compensation for the cost of restoring law and order in the mountainous frontier after the two year Gurkha Wars.⁸⁸ Simla then grew rapidly for several reasons: strategically, it offered a central vantage position for controlling Northern India, which was seen to be particularly important after the 'mutiny'; also, when there were difficulties on the North West Frontier, Simla was close enough for supervision but also distant enough for safety. After the 'mutiny,' Simla also provided a distance for the central government not only from pressure groups in Calcutta but also from the imperial government in London. Simla was defensively secure, surrounded by friendly hill states and the Punjab and, at

⁸⁷ Mitchell, *op. cit.*.

⁸⁸ Wright, *op. cit.*.

over seven thousand feet, its mountainous terrain made it safe from any large scale attack, as shown in Plate 40. Like other hill stations, its temperate climate led to the development of Simla to ensure the good health of, in particular, British women and young children.⁸⁹

The first European-style house was built in Simla in 1822 and by 1830 there were more than thirty houses. Although there were more than one hundred houses in Simla by 1841, its most rapid growth occurred after the 'mutiny' and, by 1881, there were 1,141 houses in Simla.⁹⁰ Although the imperial government had moved to Simla on an informal basis before 1864, the Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, proposed that this move should be formalised and threatened to resign if his proposal was not accepted. As well as its climate, beauty, and strategic importance, Simla was also accessible by road from Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, and Lahore, and offered more accommodation than other hill stations. The efficient despatch of government business was thought to offset the cost of moving the central Government to Simla from March or early April until October or November each year.⁹¹ In effect, the Government was in residence at Simla for a longer period each year than it was in Calcutta or, from 1911, in Delhi. From 1864 until 1939, 'The 'Simla exodus' from Calcutta, as soon as the hot weather fairly sets in, is the great Anglo-Indian event of the year, the whole of the Government departments transferring their offices to this beautiful hill station.'⁹²

⁸⁹ Bhasin, op. cit..

⁹⁰ Caine, op. cit., 146.

⁹¹ E.J Buck, Simla Past and Present, The Times Press, Simla, 1925, second edition.

⁹² Caine, op. cit., 146.

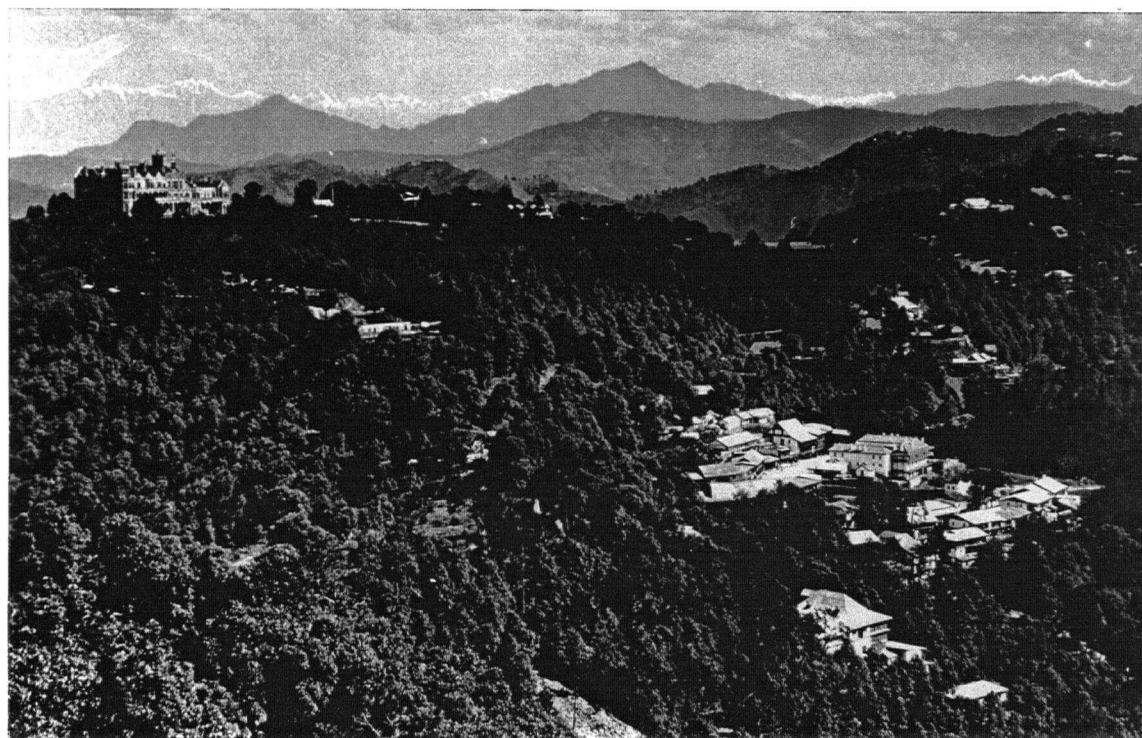


Plate 40: Simla, with the Viceregal Lodge on Observatory Hill

Source: India Office Library

In 1936, Victoria Bayley described this annual 'event':

It was always an amazing sight to watch the migration of the Government of India and Punjab Secretariat offices and officials. There was an endless stream of coolies climbing up from the station, performing extraordinary feats of strength, leather straps round their foreheads to take the weight of loads that most men could scarcely have lifted off the ground, let alone carry up steep hills.⁹³

The journey to Simla became considerably easier when a railway line was extended to Kalka, fifty eight miles below, in 1891. In 1903, the extension of the railway from Kalka to Simla made the hill station more accessible not only the the Government, but also to other visitors. In 1925, it took thirty six hours to travel from Calcutta, thirty eight from Bombay, ten from Lahore, and seven from Delhi.⁹⁴ According to Barr and Desmond, 'From the time of the railway's opening, the world of Simla became ever more open, more public, more casual.'⁹⁵

But there was also considerable opposition to Simla as the summer capital of British India. Writing in 1917, Robert Knight described the seasonal migration of the Government as 'objectionable (1) because it involves a wasteful and useless expenditure of public money, (2) because it dislocates the work of government, and (3) lastly, but most important of all, because by removing the Government from all contact with public opinion, it induces a wholesale demoralisation and loss of tone in the administration.'⁹⁶ Relocating the Government to Simla distanced it not only from pressure groups in Calcutta and the imperial government in London, but also distanced it from the Indian population. Within Simla itself, there were strict regulations on the numbers of Indians able to visit and to buy property. According to Bhasin, 'Every [Indian] person coming into Simla was questioned and registered. Indian princes were discouraged, and

⁹³ Bayley Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

⁹⁴ F. Harrop, Thacker's New Guide to Simla, Thacker and Co., Simla, 1925.

⁹⁵ Barr and Desmond, op. cit..

⁹⁶ R. Knight, The Statesman, 1917, quoted by Buck, op. cit..

they finally had to seek prior permission of the Political Department to visit the Summer Capital - except those chiefs who belonged to the Simla Hill States.⁹⁷ Although, by the 1880s, a number of Indian Princes had bought property in Simla for their own occupation and for commercial reasons, Pamela Kanwar has shown that within a few years, 'although no formal order was passed, permission to buy houses was withheld administratively.'⁹⁸ This practice was formalised in the early 1890s and 'a Simla visit became one of the techniques, together with gun salutes and procedures at official receptions, manipulated to inculcate a habit of deference to Imperial authority.'⁹⁹ By 1907, Indian Princes owned only seven houses in Simla.

Within Simla, a clear spatial division existed between the British 'station ward' and the Indian 'bazaar ward.' In administrative terms, these two wards were divided for the municipal election in 1882.¹⁰⁰ But over a longer period, these two areas of Simla were racially distinct as enclaves for British and Indian residents. As Kanwar stresses, the British population of Simla was always considerably outnumbered by the Indian population. In September 1889, there were 3,400 Europeans and Eurasians and 20,779 Indians living in Simla, and in August 1898, there were 4,126 Europeans and Eurasians and 29,048 Indians.¹⁰¹ Between 1898 and 1914, the population of Simla was monitored more closely than ever before, with summer censuses taken in 1898, 1904, 1907, 1911, and 1914 in addition to the census for the whole of India that was held each decade.¹⁰² The 'station ward' included the higher reaches of Simla, with more than four hundred privately owned cottages and villas that were occupied or rented each summer

⁹⁷ Bhasin, op. cit., 97.

⁹⁸ P. Kanwar, 'The Changing Profile of the Summer Capital of British India: Simla 1864-1947.' *Modern Asian Studies*, 18, 1984, 215-236, 221.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 221.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid..

¹⁰¹ *Report of the Simla Extension Committee 1898*, 33, quoted in Kanwar, op. cit., 224.

¹⁰² Kanwar, op. cit., 227.

season, as well as a number of hotels for British visitors. Staying in Simla in 1905, Anne Wilson wrote that

In every Hill Station we have so far been successful in finding some home from which we could look out on the Himalayas and beautiful scenery. From our verandah at this moment we see the near ranges of hills covered with crimson rhododendrons and topped by gigantic pines, and beyond these, far-away peaks crowned by everlasting snows or wreathed in mist. At dawn or sunset, by moonlight or in thunderstorms, they are indescribably beautiful. I am sure it is a mental rest for tired workers, including their wives, to witness such beauty and to be alone with Nature sometimes, and away from the varied crowds in which one is too often immersed.¹⁰³

The Viceregal Lodge at Simla was built on a higher peak on Observatory Hill. As shown by the postcard in Plate 41, the Viceregal Lodge symbolised imperial power and authority not only by its location but also by its ornate design as a 'heavy, mullioned Victorian cum Tudor affair in a yellowy grey stone, [and] inside rather fine with a great central hall reaching the whole height of the house.'¹⁰⁴ In 1931, Rosemary Montgomery spent three days as a guest at the Viceregal Lodge and wrote to her parents that she and her husband 'had lovely rooms that reminded us of home. The house is all furnished like a big country house and is extremely comfortable and really very pretty.'¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Wilson, 1911, op. cit., 320.

¹⁰⁴ Reading Papers, Mss.Eur.E.316/8, India Office Library.

¹⁰⁵ Montgomery Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

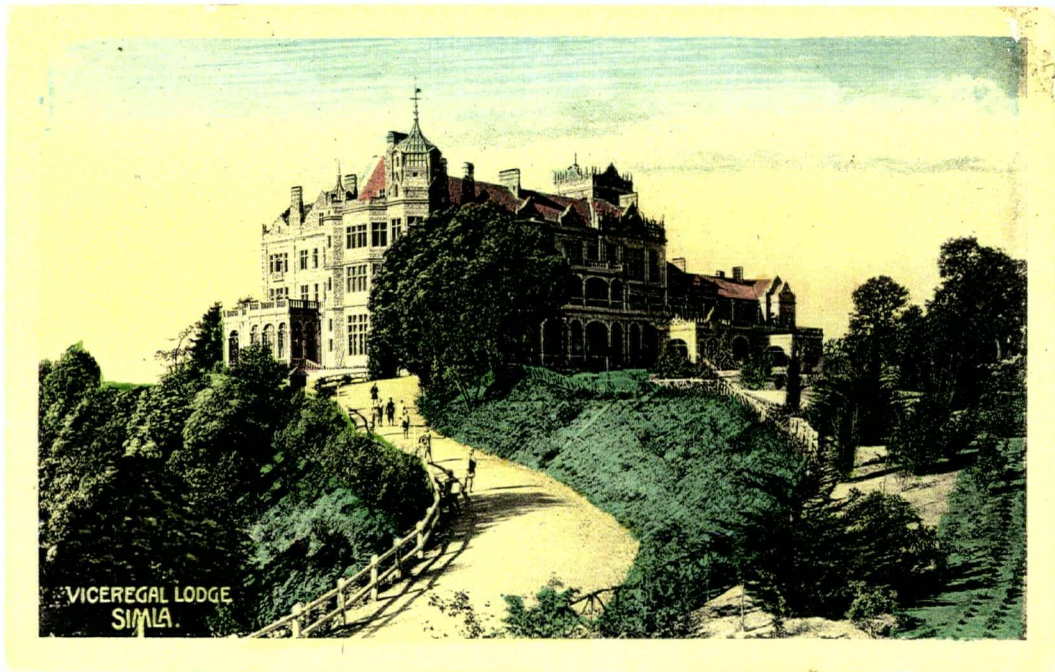


Plate 41: A Postcard of the Viceregal Lodge, Simla, from the 1920s

Source: Author's Collection

From the early nineteenth century, the 'bazaar ward' had developed on central land that later came to be known as the quintessentially European Ridge. As Kanwar shows, a Deputy Commissioner proposed the removal of the bazaar from its central location in 1861: 'My idea is to give Simlah as much an European tone as possible...I look forward to the gradual removal of the Bazar at Simlah which is at present occupied by natives and to substitute European traders in their stead, in improved buildings.'¹⁰⁶ But it was not until an outbreak of cholera and a fire in 1875 that the Indian shops were moved to lower slopes and the Mall came to be flanked by European shops, the Gaiety Theatre, and an imposing Anglican Church along the Ridge, as shown in Plate 42. According to M. Dench, 'The most important shops and hotels are on the Ridge, which stretches from the turreted stone castle of the ex-Viceregal Lodge to Christ Church where the St George's Cross flies on Sundays and holidays.'¹⁰⁷ Unlike other stations in India, going to Church 'was rather a parade if you were in a place like Simla...[T]he Viceroy and his wife would go. The Governor of the Punjab would go and the ADCs. And, well, lots of people went just because they liked going to Church. But it was a parade.'¹⁰⁸ The location of the Mall, its imposing Anglican Church, and the 'parade' of attending Church each Sunday represented the display and reaffirmation of Christian imperial power in India.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted by Kanwar, *op. cit.*, 221.

¹⁰⁷ Dench Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁰⁸ S. Corfield, *Plain Tales Transcripts*, Mss.Eur.T.17, India Office Library.

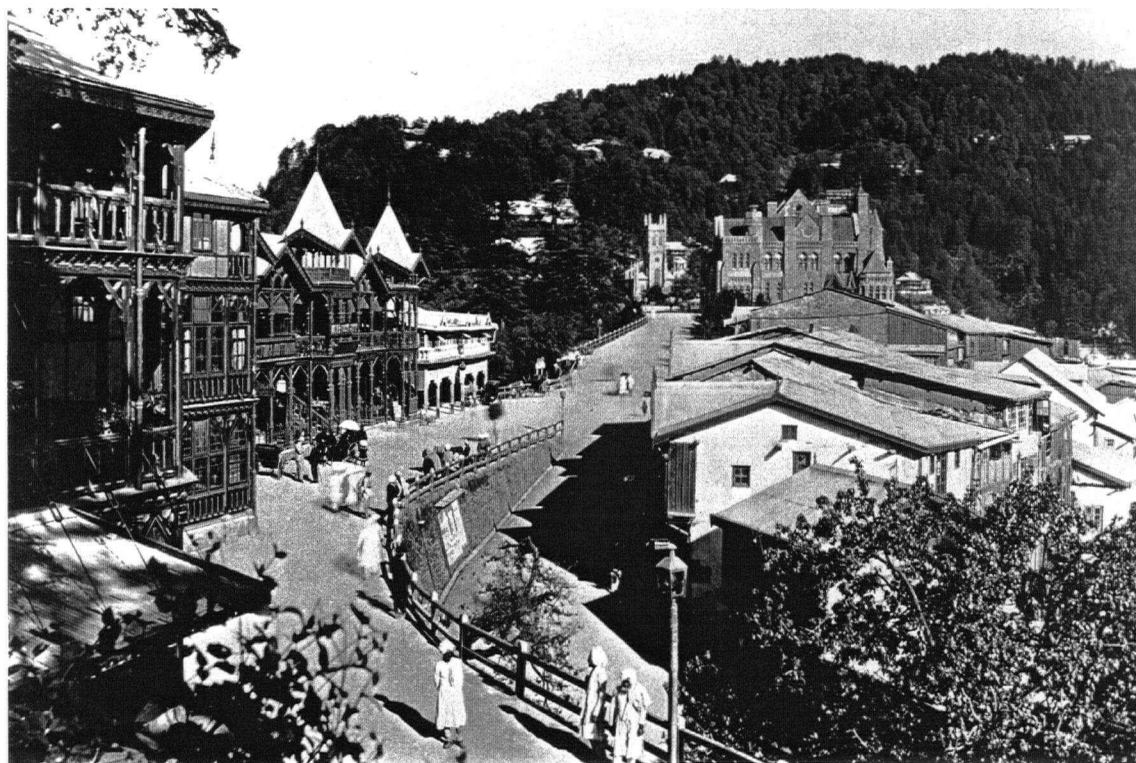


Plate 42: The Ridge, Simla

Source: India Office Library

For Victoria Bayley, 'The Mall was the great meeting place where one strolled, probably in a hat or at least with a parasol and gloves, doing a little mild shopping or having a cup of coffee at the Green Room, the club over the theatre. Above the Mall was the dignified grey stone church, below, the bazaar with its huddle of wooden shacks and corrugated iron.'¹⁰⁹ Olive Crofton observed the buildings and people on the Mall as an exuberant and other-worldly performance:

Simla seemed to us then like the setting of a musical comedy. The mock-Elizabethan style gabled buildings in the Mall, the gaps between opening onto views of spectacular beauty, glimpses of apparently bottomless blue valleys and ridge upon ridge of still bluer hills with their peaks hidden in the golden clouds. In the Mall itself a perpetual crowd went by, Ladies in rickshaws dressed up to the nines, civilians in tail coats and white topees, red tabbed Staff officers, lobster *chaprassies* [clerks], black trousered hillmen and hillwomen with *kiltas* [baskets] full of flowers or bales of grass on their backs. One sometimes caught oneself wondering when the play would begin!¹¹⁰

When she first visited Simla in 1936, Victoria Bayley was unprepared for its beauty:

no one had given me a picture of the beauty of the views from Simla, snow mountains, range upon range of them, magnificently white, endless stretches of green valleys, and at night, the ramshackle buildings and dirt and dust of the bazaar forgotten, the twinkling of lights like fire-flies. Houses were tucked away among the steep pine-covered slopes that slid down from the fingers of ridges topped by Jakko, the highest point, where houses gave up the unequal struggle and left the summit to the brown monkeys and the sacred monkey temple.¹¹¹

M. Dench also described the beauty of Simla at night, when the lights of the station ward on the ridges and slopes of the mountains were clearly visible. As she travelled from Kalka, 'Simla could be seen in glimpses far above, strung in rows of diamonds, row upon sparkling row, spanning the darkness of the sky like an empress, or should it be a courtesan, displaying her

¹⁰⁹ Bayley Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹¹⁰ Crofton Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹¹¹ Bayley Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

jewels.'¹¹² But Iris Portal described the location and beauty of Simla in terms of enclosure and claustrophobia:

[Simla] wasn't a flat plain on the top of a mountain. It was plastered against the side of one of the lower ranges of the Himalayas, and you came up and found yourself on these ledges, one ledge above the other. The only flat place was Annandale, the racecourse, which had been almost artificially made, you had to go down immensely steep hill to get to it and up again. You were shut in when you got down there...[T]here was a little piece of flat ground up by the Church, again, almost artificial, otherwise nothing but narrow paths everywhere, narrow roads, and these appalling drops, these precipices, which frightened me a good deal, particularly riding.¹¹³

For Iris Portal, 'You were constantly looking over an edge of some kind or up at a great towering hill, and if you take a community and jam them on to this series of ledges at eight thousand feet you will get a claustrophobic and enclosed society.'¹¹⁴

Like other stations and cities in India, areas of British and Indian residence were clearly demarcated, with the exception of household servants who lived in their employers' compound in the civil lines or cantonment. But unlike other stations and cities, the British population did not live in spatially and socially demarcated civil lines and cantonments. Rather, the civilian and military officials and their wives lived in closer proximity to each other than anywhere else in India. According to Bhasin, 'To have created the defensive security of other stations with their 'civil lines' and cantonments, would have totally defeated the purpose of Simla as an idyll of retreat with its aura of 'Home.'¹¹⁵ Like other hill stations, Simla was represented as a place that was more like home than other places in India, and has been described as 'an eastern version of 'Home,' the placebo for the homesick Briton. For most, the bazaar and the Indian functionaries

¹¹² Dench Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹¹³ I. Portal, Plain Tales Transcript, Mss.Eur.T.53, India Office Library.

¹¹⁴ Portal Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹¹⁵ Bhasin, op. cit., 100.

were an excrescence that had to be endured. But then there were the snows and breezes, a landscape that loosely resembled the highlands of Scotland; flowers and trees and gardens and cottages that were so very British.¹¹⁶ According to Anthony King, 'As the civil station was a cultural response to the indigenous city, so the hill station was a social response to the colonial settlement on 'the plains.'¹¹⁷

Hill stations such as Simla were socially and culturally as well as environmentally and strategically significant. In many ways, hill stations were constructed as a home away from home, with the exaggeration of the familiar both despite and yet because of its juxtaposition with the unfamiliar that this implies. Hill stations were likened to resorts in Britain such as the Isle of Wight, Brighton, and Scarborough. King traces similar reasons that led to the development of seaside resorts in Britain and hill stations in India during the nineteenth century, writing that 'for a particular social class in the metropolitan society, a model of 'dual residence' emerged comprising a permanent, usually winter, residence in the town and a temporary location, ostensibly for health but in reality equally for social-recreational reasons, in a 'resort.'¹¹⁸ The mountain views were often compared to Scotland and written about and painted in line with Romantic and picturesque fashion, which often served to domesticate an imperial gaze in distinctively gendered ways. Visiting in the 1890s, Christina Bremner wrote that

Simla is beautifully situated, covering many hill sides with picturesque villas and bungalows. Bright gardens, splendid deodars, scarlet rhododendons, romantic walks, and wonderfully handsome public buildings are its chief charms...[The Glen is reserved] for lovers of the picturesque. I spent a happy day in pleasant society in the glen, a real Scottish glen, with lovely ferns and creepers.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 96.

¹¹⁷ King, 1976a, op. cit., 165.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 161-162.

¹¹⁹ Bremner, op. cit., 56-57.

Rosemary Montgomery described Simla as 'a pretty place, slightly reminiscent of Switzerland but perched all along the ridge of the hill - pretty bungalows and lovely gardens with quite good shops both native and European.'¹²⁰ Unlike 'classical' bungalows on the 'plains,' European-style houses were rented for the season, as shown by a number of tudor and gothic revival houses in Simla. (Plates 37 - 39), and their names such as 'Moss Grange,' 'Ivy Glen' and 'Sunny Bank' evoked memories of Britain as home. Steel and Gardiner reassured their readers that 'Do not be alarmed at the dirty state of the house at the beginning of the season - it is English people's dirt, not entirely natives.'¹²¹ Amongst many other things, Steel and Gardiner advised British women that 'Carpets for the sitting-rooms and all curtains must be taken, piano, small tables, comfortable chairs, nicknacks, ornaments...chair backs, tablecovers, something to cover the mantelpiece, and possibly a few pictures.'¹²² They suggested that a 'lady,' three or four children, and an English nurse would require eleven camel loads of luggage to set up temporary home in the hills.

The houses rented for British women in hill stations such as Simla were usually furnished in minimal ways. Occupying a house for a season was, for many British women, evocative of previous residents and suggested the timelessness of places like Simla. According to M. Dench, who visited Simla in 1930,

[The drawing room] was furnished in the Victorian manner, as were all hill-houses furnished for letting. Whatnots and small occasional tables were dotted about, and voluminous chairs, in which the springs had long subsided, were covered with faded chintzes. On the bookshelves were ancient novels, side by side with well-thumbed copies of Blackwoods, and invariably there were numbers of the *Illustrated London News* showing events at the turn of the century. There was an eerie feeling about the rooms, as though those who had lived there had left a ghostly touch on books and furniture. If any house was left vacant for even one season the monsoon rain saw to it

¹²⁰ Montgomery Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹²¹ Steel and Gardiner, op. cit., 195.

¹²² Ibid., 199.

that everything became mildewed and this added to the smell of decay. Once I took shelter from a heavy storm in a bungalow which had long since been empty and the front door had lost its latch and swung in the wind. It was an ideal setting for a murder story, or a tale of haunting, and I was scared out of my wits when an inside door slammed with a noise like a thunderclap.¹²³

Describing a hot season spent at Simla in 1923, Iris Portal similarly recalled the timelessness of British life there: 'sights and sounds were very familiar, because at that period that Simla, the traditional Simla, had hardly altered. The Simla that my mother had known as a young woman was very much the same, the life was not entirely the same, because private entertaining was dying out.'¹²⁴ By the 1920s, the only private parties took place in the houses of the Viceroy, the Commander-in-Chief, and the Governor of the Punjab. Increasingly, dances were held at the Cecil Hotel or in the annex of the United Services Club, but in other ways, British life in Simla continued in almost timeless ways. For Victoria Bayley, who spent the hot season in Simla in the 1930s, 'I like to think that but for the vanished chaperones and modern dress, I had seen a Simla that could have been ten, twenty or thirty years before.'¹²⁵

Hill stations such as Simla were spatial and social enclaves for the British middle classes in India. According to Nora Mitchell,

the hill station represented a British enclave of sophisticated urban activity where the British could live for some months in the company of other Europeans of similar backgrounds and pursue the type of cultural activities which had belonged to their homeland, whether this pertained to sports such as tennis, hunting and golf; to musical and dramatic entertainments; or to the social activities found in the European towns of their day.¹²⁶

¹²³ Dench Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹²⁴ I. Portal, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.53, India Office Library.

¹²⁵ Bayley Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹²⁶ Mitchell, *op. cit.*, 55.

Such hill stations 'symbolized the British belief that they could govern by example and by the sheer strength of their culture. Hill stations gained a niche in the colonial consciousness, for the British molded and formed the Indian landscape to create a symbolic sanctuary in the image of the metropolitan country.'¹²⁷ Moreover, important rites of passage were often staged in hill stations, such as childbirth, marriage, and burials, which served to repeat and to reinforce the shared, middle class culture of British rulers in India. Hill stations, especially Simla, became famous social centres that were noted for events such as picnics, dances, fancy dress parties, tennis, and amateur dramatics. Taken in the hot season of 1886, Plates 43 and 44 represent an amateur production of the *Mikado* at the Gaiety Theatre and a group of visitors in fancy dress. Such social events helped to reassert the identification and legitimation of British rulers in India.¹²⁸

Domestic, Social, and Imperial Life

According to Maud Diver, 'In a hill station - more especially in Simla - [the social atmosphere] is irresistably infectious.'¹²⁹ As she continued, in Simla, 'frivolity reaches its highest height, and social pleasures are, to all appearances, the end and aim of every one's existence. Yet here, in the midst of this throng of busy idlers, the great task of governing the Empire must go forward, come what may.'¹³⁰ The social reputation of Simla and its role as the summer capital of British India were often seen to be in conflict. In his guide to Simla, Edward Buck distinguished between official and social life, and referred to the two communities as 'the bees' and 'the butterflies.'¹³¹

¹²⁷ Wright, op. cit., 109.

¹²⁸ Kennedy, op. cit..

¹²⁹ Diver, op. cit., 23.

¹³⁰ Diver, op. cit., 24.

¹³¹ Buck, op. cit..



Plate 43: The Cast of the *Mikado* at the Gaiety Theatre, Simla, 1886

Source: India Office Library



Plate 44: Visitors in Fancy Dress, Simla, 1886

Source: India Office Library

Yvonne Fitzroy, secretary to the Vicereine, Lady Reading in the 1920s, was critical of 'Little jealousies, little snobberies, sometimes big ones, amongst which it is a strain to steer clear. Lovely as this place is I am sure we shall all be happier at Delhi. Delhi is at least Indian, this European, and on the whole - outside officialdom - of rather a suburban temper.'¹³² Both Buck and Fitzroy described a distance between social and official life in Simla. But other commentators were critical of the *connections* between social and official life in Simla. Simla's reputation for social frivolity was attributed to the presence of British women, and was thought to undermine the image not only of British society in India, but also of the effectiveness of the imperial government. Maud Diver quoted a correspondent from Simla who wrote that

'Simla...would be a far more favourable seat for Government, and its energies and faculties would find fuller development there, if the social current were far less strong...No doubt the greater part of the pleasure-seeking and holiday-making is done by the ladies, but a very large share in it is visibly taken by the men; and we are disposed to believe that the extreme backwardness of Anglo-Indian society in recognising the modern advance in the intellectual and social position of women is due to the frivolity of the overwhelming majority of Anglo-Indian women, who are not only devotees of fashion themselves, but do their utmost to divert the energies of the men from work (which they cannot share) to pleasure and frivolity likewise.'¹³³

This vividly represents the ambivalent place of British women in India, which was perhaps most evident in their travels to Simla. These women are described as travelling away from home as pleasure-seeking holiday-makers, suggesting their frivolous transgression away from their husbands and homes on the plains. The implications are seen as serious and two-fold: first, serving to undermine the position of British women in India by falling behind what the writer terms the modern advancement of women in Britain; and second, by distracting male government officials from the work of empire. Overall, the connections and contradictions

¹³² Reading Papers, Mss.Eur.E.316/8, India Office Library.

¹³³ Diver, op. cit., 25.

between domesticity and imperialism came to be epitomized by the seasonal travel of British women and imperial officials to Simla.

British women travelling to Simla during the hot season were usually the wives or daughters of the imperial aristocracy of civilian and military officials. But their lives in Simla differed, reflecting the ability of married women to transgress their imperial domesticity while the behaviour of unmarried women was closely regulated by imperial and domestic codes of conduct. According to an article in *The Pioneer* in the 1890s,

The groove into which Anglo-India is forced by circumstances in the plains becomes narrower still in the hills. There, where every advantage of climate is combined with every imaginable beauty of nature, with few housekeeping cares, with many luxuries, with a constant flow of amusements which few save in the richest society at home can attempt to enjoy incessantly - there discontent breeds and jealousy and scandal dominate.¹³⁴

In similar terms, Iris Portal described 'the proximity, the closeness, the claustrophobia, [that] made you attach far too much importance to things that didn't matter in the least.'¹³⁵ As she also said, 'there was always a great deal of social life...We were always meeting the same people. There's no doubt that everybody knew rather too much about everyone else's affairs, and that it was a staple topic of conversation.'¹³⁶ Indeed, such affairs often took the literal form of liaisons between married women and men on leave in the hills. While unmarried women had to be in a party with at least one married woman present, married women themselves were able to spend time alone with men. According to Iris Portal, her married chaperone

might be only a few years older than oneself, and probably very promiscuous, or certainly not terribly moral or virtuous, that didn't matter a bit, provided she was married. And so one was dependent on the friendship of...some bright young married

¹³⁴ Quoted by Barr and Desmond, op. cit..

¹³⁵ I. Portal, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.53, India Office Library.

¹³⁶ Ibid..

woman who would fix up parties for one with one's favourite friends, or one's parents...the married woman had an edge on one because they could go out alone with a man and they could give parties as they pleased. And they very often did pinch the most attractive young men against whom one had no defence. One had no defence against these women, because we were so simple...we didn't know anything much, compared to them, anyway.¹³⁷

Similarly, Vere Birdwood remembered that, while she lived in Simla in the 1920s and 1930s,

there was no question of any bad or wild behaviour, there were a few liaisons, they were generally between married women, who were up there without their husbands, and some young officers...but the...unmarried girls, we were still really very much brought up in an atmosphere of innocence, and a strong sort of Edwardian morality, if a young officer wanted a bit of fun, he would take off to a married woman not to a girl.¹³⁸

According to Frances Smythe, such liaisons occurred because of boredom and the separation of married women from their husbands: 'People were bored...you'd get a nice man who was on leave for two months at the time your husband wasn't there. And you set up a flirtation and that may have led to something more serious, or it may not. But that was how it all was. It was very much due to separation I think.'¹³⁹

Many young, unmarried women travelled to India and came to be known as the 'fishing-fleet,' suggesting their search for an eligible husband. Such women had either been born in India and sent to Britain for their health and education, or were travelling to India for the first time, usually to stay with friends or relatives. Returning to India once she left school, Nancy Vernede described herself as 'a member of the so-called...fishing fleet, [but] I don't quite honestly think that my one idea was to fish for a husband, it was mostly what we all went back to do...very

¹³⁷ Ibid..

¹³⁸ V. Birdwood, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.7, India Office Library.

¹³⁹ F. Smythe, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.62, India Office Library.

often our parents' home was out there and we wanted to see a different country.'¹⁴⁰ Deborah Dring similarly recalled returning to India with a friend to live with their parents and, like most of the 'fishing-fleet,' soon meeting her future husband.¹⁴¹ Unlike Iris Portal and Deborah Dring, who had both been born in India, Victoria Bayley was invited to spend the winter of 1933 with her married cousin in Lahore when she was twenty-one. As she wrote,

I felt I was drifting, not knowing where I was going...I furiously denied that I was going out to join the 'fishing fleet' of girls who were sent to India husband-hunting. I swore that nothing would induce me to spend my life out there - and meant it. Brave words. As events turned out, Vernon and I became engaged over Christmas week, a month after I had arrived and four days after we had met.¹⁴²

Similarly, Margery Hall travelled to India for the first time as an adult and met her future husband at her first dinner in the Cecil Hotel at Simla. As she wrote in her memoir, "I'm not the FISHING FLEET" said I furiously. It's true too. I wasn't. I've got a job and I'm going home to it.' 'OK,' they agreed, 'you're the only girl in Simla not in the fleet - certainly the only one,' still poking fun at me.'¹⁴³ Unlike her own experience of travelling to India as an adult, Margery Hall was critical of the usual practice for women who had been born in India to return as soon as they had finished school. As Hall continued,

I think that the system of girls going straight out to India from school was a very bad one. Many were married within a year. Not so much in Simla where there was a dearth of young men, but certainly in other places where there was a dearth of young women. Where could a girl from school learn anything about housekeeping, or cooking, or life, indeed anything, from the tight little society in which she found herself. A far worse sort of provinciality or suburbanity really than any at home.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ N. Vernede, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.69, India Office Library.

¹⁴¹ D. Dring, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.28, India Office Library.

¹⁴² Bayley Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁴³ Hall Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid..

In 1909, Maud Diver compared the lives of young women of a similar age and class in Britain and India. She compared the life of a Colonel's or Commissioner's daughter in India with the life of a doctor's daughter in a large country town in Britain. The life of an unmarried woman in Britain was seen as much quieter than the life of her counterpart in India. As Diver wrote:

The English girl will have her 'coming out' ball - a ponderous affair, whereat men are far from plentiful, and an inexperienced girl may be thankful to secure partners at all, without much regard to their age or attainments. She will be admitted to the privilege of paying 'calls,' will play a certain amount of tennis in the summer, dine out on rare and solemn occasions, and dance some half a dozen times a year. These mild delights will, in all probability, make up the sum total of her social life. In a garrison town she may dance oftener and with more congenial partners; she may multiply tennis and croquet-parties. But at best her social pleasures are rarely more than a side issue in her life; and, if she be a girl of intelligence and resource, she will in time find her main interest in one of three spheres, - the intellectual, the domestic, or the religious, - and so learn to come at happiness through the channel of utility. Her intercourse with men of her own age and standing is, as a rule, comparatively rare; and her attitude towards them tends to become either wholly indifferent, frankly independent, or over-zealous to attract and please.¹⁴⁵

In contrast, a young woman travelling to India, whether returning to the land of her birth or travelling to India for the first time, found herself in a much freer and more exciting social world, which began on the voyage to India and continued unabated on arrival:

From the day she sets foot on the outward-bound steamer, she finds herself in a freer, lighter, lazier world than she has ever dreamed of. All that seems to be required of her is to pass her time as pleasantly as possible; not a difficult achievement, one may be sure, amid surroundings wholly new and interesting. In three weeks she will have come into friendly contact with more varied types of men and women than her home-staying friend will be likely to run across in twice as many months; and, if she be possessed of any natural aptitude, she may acquire a fair preliminary knowledge of Anglo-Indian ways and manners before she sets foot on Indian soil.

Arrived at her destined station, she 'comes out' in good earnest. A ceaseless flow of 'callers' and 'calling' makes havoc of her mornings; tennis, riding, and garden-parties claim her afternoons; and dances and dinners reduce to a minimum her few invaluable hours of rest. It is no rare thing for a girl to go to twelve or fourteen dances

¹⁴⁵ Diver, *op. cit.*, 12-13.

in a single season - dances whereat partners are young, eager, and plentiful, - dances rendered doubly delightful by the all-pervading air of genial informality which appeals, with peculiar keenness, to young minds and hearts newly released from the restraint of schoolroom life. Save for arranging a wealth of cut flowers...an Anglo-Indian girl's domestic duties are practically nil. Intellectual pasttimes, in the form of lectures, concerts, or pictures, are not within her reach, and religious work is left to those who have given up their lives to it. All things conspire to develop the emotional, pleasure-loving side of her nature, to blur her girlish visions of higher aims and sterner self-discipline.¹⁴⁶

Before assuming the domestic duties that marriage implied, the life of an unmarried woman in India was represented as a full round of social events in the company of many eligible men. Such social events reached their peak during the hot season at hill stations and there were more married and unmarried British women there than elsewhere in India.

In 1923 and 1924, soon after her return to India from Britain, Iris Portal recalled that 'I never thought at all about doing anything except amusing myself,' and remembered dancing on twenty-six consecutive nights.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, she found Simla 'enormously romantic,' and described that 'Coming home from dances, very often the current boyfriend used to walk by the side of the rickshaw, murmuring sweet nothings and holding hands over the side of the hood, but nothing much more than that.'¹⁴⁸ The parties hosted by the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief were the most important social occasions in Simla: 'they gave the best parties, they had the best bands, they had the best dance floor, they had the best food. You met all the most interesting people at those kind of parties, and if you were young and you wanted to get on you...wanted to go to them.'¹⁴⁹ The other highlight of the social season in Simla was the annual Black Hearts Ball that was held in the annex of the United Services Club, with the squash court serving as a ballroom. As Yvonne Fitzroy wrote in 1921,

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 14-16.

¹⁴⁷ I. Portal, Plain Tales Transcripts, Mss.Eur.T.53, India Office Library.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid..

¹⁴⁹ Ibid..

The [Black Hearts] have been going strong for some thirty years, they are the very selectest bachelors (but not the same ones all that time) and they have - dark secrets. They are in fact simply smothered in mystery. They are initiated - received - address each other as Brother - wear round their necks black hearts on scarlet ribbons - hearts that are in fact lockets and contain -----??? Personally I believe - nothing. I think they wear them merely as a topic of conversation and to arouse passionate curiosity in the female breast. But it annoys them terribly if you tell them so. They wear moreover - at their balls - ordinary evening clothes, kneebreeches and a scarlet cape with a large black heart on the left side. They have also the most elegant wasitcoat buttons, more black hearts, tiny ones...The Grand Master of the Order alone wears a chain of office and a heart of Gold! Those who have fallen from grace - and this hardly requires the explanation - have been married - are still admitted to the Brotherhood though sadly - and their cloaks have turned white. This would seem to suggest a certain lack of excitement in the paths of domestic virtue...Anyway this symbol of matrimony is less becoming.¹⁵⁰

The annual Black Hearts Ball was an occasion for bachelors of the brotherhood to return the hospitality that they had enjoyed both from 'grass widows' and while they lived on the plains. Both Yvonne Fitzroy and Iris Portal described their ball of 1924 as particularly memorable. The two sets of dancers were comprised of married and unmarried women. The Viceroy danced in the top set of unmarried women, with one partner for the evening and Iris Portal was chosen as Lord Reading's partner. Yvonne Fitzroy described the ball exceeding 'all previous experience even of the famed hospitality of that Order...After five dances the Cotillion was ushered in in verse (and darkness) and then the lights revealed Mrs Coldstream as the Queen of the Revels being escorted up the ball room by four Black Hearts. The Cotillion itself was ingenious, very pretty and extremely gay. The favours wonderful and straight from Paris.'¹⁵¹ At this and other dances, despite the need for unmarried women to be escorted by a married companion, secluded and private places were provided away from the gaze of other revellers. According to Iris Portal,

we had a curious convention at all Indian dances, for the British in India, where sitting-out places were constructed, known as *kala-juggas*...'a black or dark place' and these were coy little sort of sheltered-off places where you were allowed to disappear

¹⁵⁰ Reading Papers, Mss.Eur.E.316/8, India Office Library.

¹⁵¹ Ibid..

and whisper, or otherwise, with your partner, and it was such a curious business - there you were, you were not allowed to go to the party unless you were chaperoned, but your chaperone never pursued you into the kala-jugga. It was understood that once you disappeared into the kala-jugga you were left alone, but, of course, you never were there very long because the next dance started, and we always had programmes and if you were very attached to someone you booked three or four dances at a time but not more as a rule.¹⁵²

Conclusions

The seasonal travels of British women to hill stations such as Simla reflected both the reconstruction and also the instability of imperial domesticity in India after 1858. It was usually agreed that the main domestic duty of a wife was to remain with her husband in India rather than return to Britain with her children. And yet, such women would usually expect to be separated from their husbands for several months each year as they travelled to hill stations. In hill stations such as Simla, the tensions between domestic, social, and imperial life were discursively embodied by British women travelling away from their homes and husbands on the plains. Although the conduct of unmarried women was closely regulated, married women or 'grass widows' often enjoyed a greater license to transgress their domestic roles in hill stations than at home on the plains. Simla acquired a reputation as a place of frivolity and excess, usually because of the activities of British women far from home. But at the same time, Simla also served as the summer capital of British India from 1864 until 1939, and was thus an important centre of imperial government and administration. The domestic transgressions of British women, and the connections and tensions between social and official life in Simla, epitomised the ambivalent place of British women at home in India after 1858. According to Maud Diver, Simla had become known as a social centre because of the activities of earlier generations of women. For British women travelling to Simla in the early twentieth century, she claimed that their activities were influenced by the irrefutable reputation of Simla itself. As she wrote,

¹⁵² I. Portal, *Plain Tales Transcripts*, Mss.Eur.T.53, India Office Library.

That the 'Simla woman' (by which is meant not all women in Simla, but the typical devotee of Simla society) *is* frivolous, and free and easy both in mind and manners, is a truth which her most ardent admirer could not deny. One plea, at least, may be put forward in her defence - namely, that if former generations of her type helped to make Simla what it is, the tables have now been turned, and it is Simla which makes - or rather mars - the woman of today. Moreover, in a country where men and women are constantly thrown together under conditions which tend to minimise formalism and conventional restraint, where leave is plentiful and grass widows - willing and unwilling - abound, it is scarcely surprising that the complications and conflicting duties of married life should prove appreciably greater than they are elsewhere.¹⁵³

Although the 'complications and conflicting duties of married life' assumed an exaggerated form in hill stations, they were not restricted to such seasonal separations between British wives and their husbands. The very presence of British wives in India was a contested one, with some commentators claiming that British women were necessary for the maintenance of imperial rule while other commentators claimed that the resulting domestic and social distance from Indians served to destabilise imperial rule. Moreover, the domestic roles of British women as wives and mothers were often in conflict, with British women having to decide whether to remain in India with their husbands or to return to Britain with their children. But, even if British women chose to remain with their husbands in India, they were likely to spend at least part of each year in a hill station. Such separations and seasonal travels reflected the contradictions that destabilized imperial domesticity. Although such separations and seasonal travels were deemed necessary for the maintenance and legitimation of imperial rule in India and the successful exercise of imperial domesticity on which such rule relied, they were also thought to threaten the basis both of imperial domesticity and imperial rule more broadly. Hill stations such as Simla were sites of transgression for British women travelling away from their husbands and homes in India. The tensions between domestic, social, and imperial life in Simla epitomised the contradictions that fractured imperial domesticity even as it was reconstructed after 1858. The reconstruction of imperial domesticity in post-'mutiny' India was both dependent on and yet destabilized by the separations and seasonal travels of British women.

¹⁵³ Diver, *op. cit.*, 26-27.

Chapter 7

British Women Travelling Home and Empire

Conclusions

This study has focused on the British wives of civil servants and army officers who lived in India from 1857 to 1939 to examine the translation of feminine discourses of bourgeois domesticity over imperial space. British women travelled to India in increasing numbers from the early nineteenth century. The wives of civilian and military officials belonged to a British élite in India and lived there on a long-term, but usually a temporary, basis. Many of these women were themselves born in India and sent to Britain for their health and education between the ages of seven and eighteen. Many others were born in Britain and moved to India as adults, either as single or newly-wed women. The majority of such women would expect to move to Britain on their husband's retirement, and there were few British residents in India who were aged over sixty.

Although an imperial aristocracy was comprised of both civilian and military officials and their families, an 'imagined community' of British rulers in India was spatially and socially divided. In most stations, civilians lived in civil lines while military officers lived in cantonments, and clear social hierarchies existed within and also between each group of the official élite. As 'incorporated wives,' British women played important domestic and social roles in maintaining and reproducing such hierarchies. But such spatial and social divisions among British rulers in India were also transcended. First, the 'mutiny' of 1857-8 brought the wives of British civil servants and military officers into close contact, as shown by events at Cawnpore and the siege of Lucknow. Second, after the suppression of the 'mutiny' and the reconstruction of British rule in India, hill stations became important destinations for the seasonal travels of women. During the hot season each year, British wives of civil servants

and army officers travelled away from their husbands and homes on the 'plains' and lived in much closer proximity to each other than elsewhere.

The period of this study has spanned the 'mutiny' of 1857 to 1858 and the subsequent period of imperial rule up to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. In Chapters 3 and 4, I examined the 'mutiny' as a domestic and imperial crisis by focusing on the strategic and symbolic significance of British women at Cawnpore and Lucknow. Representations both of and by British women during the conflict revealed the ways in which British women came to embody imperial anxieties and their domestic articulation. Chapter 3 examined representations of the imperial conflict in Britain by focusing on newspaper reports and parliamentary debates. Such representations often depicted the 'mutiny' in terms of domestic defilement, which was, in turn, embodied by the fate of British women. The deaths of British women at Cawnpore exacerbated calls for vengeance and brutal retaliation in line with masculine, national, and imperial discourses of honour and prestige. But the British women who survived the siege of Lucknow occupied an ambivalent place as 'heroines' rather than victims of the 'mutiny.'

A number of British women kept diaries recording their daily life under siege at Lucknow, which provided the focus for Chapter 4. As their writings reveal, British women who survived the siege of Lucknow represented the spatial constraints of life under siege; the importance of class as well as gender in influencing everyday life under siege; and, finally, the domestication of the imperial crisis on a household scale. Representations both of and by British women during the 'mutiny' depicted an embodied crisis of domesticity and imperialism. But the survival of women diarists at Lucknow, and the subsequent publication of several of their diaries, suggested not only the defilement but also the reconstitution of imperial domesticity and helped to represent the possibility of reconstructing both British homes and British rule in India.

In Chapters 5 and 6 I considered the place of British women in the post-'mutiny' reconstruction of imperial domesticity on two scales: first, home and empire-making on a household scale; and, second, seasonal travel by British women to hill stations in North India. In Chapter 5 I examined the spatial limits of civil lines, cantonments, and compounds, before turning to imperial domesticity on a household scale. Housekeeping guides helped to promote the translation of feminine domesticity over imperial space and were addressed not only to women who were new to India but women who were also new to their domestic responsibilities as wives and household managers. I then turned to the employment of Indian servants and examined the advice given to British women in gendered as well as racial terms. Advice concerning household justice and cleanliness could undermine ideas of racial difference that informed imperial power and authority both within a household and beyond. Raising British children in India up to the age of seven was also an important, and contested, part of imperial domesticity. Racial anxieties about childrearing revolved around language, behaviour, and appropriate care by mothers, Indian ayahs, and British or Eurasian nannies and nurses.

Chapter 6 examined the separations and seasonal travels that characterized life for the British wives of civil servants and army officers in India. It was usually agreed that a woman's main domestic responsibility was to remain in India with her husband rather than return to Britain with her children. But such women usually travelled to hill stations for several months each year during the 'hot season.' The tensions between domestic, social and imperial life were discursively embodied by British women travelling to places such as Simla, away from their homes and husbands on the 'plains.' Simla was the summer capital of British India from 1864 until 1939 but its imperial importance was seen by many commentators as compromised by the frivolity and excess associated with British women who had travelled away from home. Although the conduct of unmarried women was closely regulated, married women or 'grass widows' often enjoyed a greater license to transgress their domestic roles in hill stations than at home on the plains.

Three questions have informed my research: First, how were cultures of domesticity and imperialism intertwined in complex and often contradictory ways over space? Second, did imperial rule, and the travel that it necessarily implied, challenge or reinforce the notion that 'there's no place like home'? Third, how and why were places both like and yet unlike 'home' produced by British women living in India? Throughout my study, I have explored different ways in which imperialism and domesticity were closely intertwined in contested and ambivalent ways. British homes in India and the presence of British women as wives and mothers within such homes were closely tied to the maintenance and legitimation of imperial rule. Depictions of domestic defilement, and its embodiment by the fate of British women, represented the threat posed by the 'mutiny' to British rule in India. Several British women who survived the siege of Lucknow wrote diaries in which they represented a crisis of imperial domesticity on a household scale. For many of these middle class diarists, the imperial crisis was epitomized by the desertion of Indian servants soon after the siege began. And yet, the evacuation of British women from Lucknow and their arrival in the domestic and imperial security of Allahabad and Calcutta enabled many diarists to begin to reconstruct imperial domesticity away from the conflict.

Following the suppression of the 'mutiny,' a Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement was appointed to examine the prospects of British colonization in India. Although British *colonization* was deemed impracticable, the reconstruction of *imperial* rule was seen to depend on the presence of British wives and mothers in India. But the place of British women and British homes in India was contested. Some commentators argued that British wives and mothers were necessary for the reproduction of legitimate imperial rulers as well as the legitimacy of imperial rule. But other commentators claimed that the presence of British wives and mothers would lead to spheres of exclusively British social and domestic life that would provoke racial antagonism between rulers and ruled. The Select Committee advocated that children over seven should be sent to Britain for their health and education and that hill stations should be developed to ensure the health of British women and their younger children

in India. The reconstruction of imperial domesticity in post-'mutiny' India was both dependent on and yet destabilized by the separations and seasonal travels of British women.

The refrain that 'there's no place like home' is inherently ambiguous, suggesting not only the impossible quest of discovering or reproducing home from a distance, but also that the prior existence and location of a unique, originary home is elusive. Throughout my study, I have examined the coexistence of ideas of home on household, national, and imperial scales. In an attempt to challenge notions of the household as a static site that confined the imperial roles of British women in India to a reproductive, domestic sphere, I have examined more complex connections between domesticity and imperialism. Imperial power not only relied on imaginative geographies of 'other' places, but also on imaginative geographies of 'home' that were mobile and mobilized on several, coexisting scales. Rather than view imperial domesticity in terms of public and private space, I traced the contested and ambivalent place of British homes in India. Unlike accounts that posit the racial exclusivity of British homes in India, I explored discourses of imperial domesticity in relation to the employment and management of Indian servants. Moreover, I examined the mobility of British women and British homes in India, both during the 'mutiny' and from 1858 until 1939. Many British women were forced to leave their homes in Cawnpore and Lucknow. After the 'mutiny,' the British wives of civilian and military officials expected to move at least every two or three years and usually travelled to hill stations during the 'hot season.' British women often travelled back to Britain with their young children, and families were often separated between Britain and India for many years at a time.

Places both like and yet unlike 'home' were produced by British women who lived in India from 1857 to 1939. As they travelled to and within India, such women came to translate feminine discourses of bourgeois domesticity over imperial space. As a result, such women discursively embodied imperial domesticity. But representations of imperial domesticity were contested and often contradictory and were embodied in ambivalent ways by British women

who travelled to set up imperial homes in India. During the 'mutiny,' images of domestic defilement were embodied by the fate of British women. After the 'mutiny,' the place of British women and British homes in India was a central, contested part of debates about British rule. The domestic roles of British wives and mothers were often in conflict, with British women having to decide whether to return to Britain with their children or to remain in India with their husbands. Even then, if British women remained in India, they expected to spend several months at a hill station.

Discourses of imperial domesticity were contradictory, revealing fractures that destabilized imperial power and legitimation in British India. Not only was British domesticity in India inseparable from the exercise of imperial rule, but British imperialism in India was also shaped by discourses of home and domesticity. As the debates about the presence of British women and British homes in India have revealed, such discourses were contested between 1857 and 1939. For British women at home in India, not only were their domestic roles as wives and mothers often in conflict, but they also travelled away from their homes and husbands on the 'plains' to hill stations. Although such separations and seasonal travels were deemed necessary for the maintenance and legitimation of imperial rule in India and the successful exercise of imperial domesticity on which such rule relied, they were also thought to threaten the basis both of imperial domesticity and imperial rule more broadly. Hill stations such as Simla were sites of transgression for many British women and the tensions between domestic, social and imperial life in Simla epitomised the contradictions that fractured imperial domesticity even as it was reconstructed after 1858.

In an attempt to move beyond essentialist representations of both spatiality and subjectivity, I have focused on the mobile, embodied subjectivities of memsahibs who lived in India from 1857 to 1939. Notions of spatialised subjectivities and ambivalence stress the need to locate a position from which to destabilize essentialist representations of space and subjectivity as well as the metanarratives of imperial power and the production of imperial

knowledge. While imperial histories have often neglected the roles played by British women in India, revisionist accounts have often reproduced stereotypical and / or celebratory accounts of memsahibs. In contrast, I examined the ambivalent basis of imperial and gendered stereotypes and conceptualised spatialised subjectivities in terms of embodiment, critical mobility, and material performativity. The discursive inscription of bodies, homes, and empires should be grounded and located in material terms, but in terms that resist confinement and fixity. By tracing notions of critical mobility, it becomes possible to resist grounded confinement, infinite transgression, and aspatial metaphors of travel. Focusing on the discursive embodiment of imperial domesticity by British women, I explored the material performativity of a range of domestic and imperial roles in gender, race, and class specific terms.

The performance of *Home, Sweet Home* at the opening ceremony of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in May 1886 reflected and reproduced the sentiments of a British imperial imagination in its own highly sentimental way. But its performance must have seemed both poignant and paradoxical because whilst the sentiments of the song conveyed domestic nostalgia and loss, the Exhibition sought to encourage imperial domesticity far away from 'home.' As the Prince of Wales stated, one of the aims of the Exhibition was to represent India as a location for 'legitimate and natural' homes for British subjects. As this study has shown, domesticity and imperialism were intertwined in complex and often contradictory ways both during the 'mutiny' of 1857 to 1858 and from 1858 to 1939. 'Legitimate and natural' homes for British subjects in India depended on the presence of British wives and mothers. And yet, many commentators claimed that the presence of British women undermined the basis of imperial rule. During the 'mutiny,' images of domestic defilement were embodied by the fate of British women and British women who survived the siege of Lucknow were represented as 'heroines' in ambivalent ways. Several British women kept diaries during the siege of Lucknow and, while they represented the conflict as a crisis of imperial domesticity, they represented the reconstruction of imperial domesticity as they were evacuated away from Lucknow. After 1858, although British colonization was deemed impracticable, the

maintenance of British imperial rule was seen to depend on an increasing number of British women reconstructing British homes in India. While imperial domesticity on a household scale was reproduced by the employment and management of Indian servants, the advice given to memsahibs concerning household justice, cleanliness, and raising British children in India often represented a more contradictory and contested terrain. Finally, the domestic and imperial roles of British women as wives and mothers were often in conflict. Memsahibs were often separated from their children for several years at a time when they were sent to school in Britain. On a seasonal basis, memsahibs were often separated from their husbands for several months at a time when they travelled to hill stations. Imperialism and domesticity were intertwined in complex and contradictory ways that were discursively embodied in ambivalent ways by British women travelling to and living in India from 1857 to 1939. Although the Prince of Wales called for the establishment of 'legitimate and natural homes' for British subjects in India, the place of British women and British homes in India revealed contradictions at the heart of imperial rule by reproducing and yet destabilizing imperial rule on a domestic scale.

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