Educating Seeta
The Anglo-Indian Family Romance
and the Poetics of Indirect Rule

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that I remember him for all the years of encouragement, faith, and love that enabled me to write it.


I. Interracial Marriage and Colonial Domesticity

In late eighteenth-century India, Colonel Claude Martin (1735–1800) of the East India Company Army, who, like other Europeans in Lucknow, lived with many Indian wives or concubines, writes about his ward and later wife, Lise:

My faithful girl called Boulone, or Lise, who has been most faithfully attached to me, and never had the smallest room to complain of her since I acquired her, which was when she was about nine years old, having brought her up, and educated her as my own child, with the most strictest, decent, and accomplished eastern education, having learned her to read and write Persian, and be strict in her religion, to which I found she was strictly adhered, as also to the purest virtue from a woman to her husband. Having always looked on her as such, and I have loved her as the most chaste virtuous wife. (qtd. in Archer 291)

As a romance narrative—regardless of the quality of his prose—this passage is striking for the smooth transition Martin makes from his relationship with a young girl of nine to his perception of her as his most loving wife. Lise was one of the many children that Claude Martin adopted whose Indian mothers remained in India while the fathers...
returned to Europe. She was purchased from his friend Carrière who had given her asylum when she fled from her father, Nawab Fazl Khan Bahadur, who had already killed her elder sister. She lived with Martin and grew so attached to him that when he offered to arrange a marriage for her a few years later, she insisted that she wanted to stay with him. She became his bibi¹ and later the mistress of his household.² Lise’s history and Martin’s comments about her encapsulate vividly the tropes in which colonial relationships between British men and Indian women were represented. Lise is educable, docile, devoted, and loyal, in other words, the ideal colonial subject. In a manner reminiscent of the sexual economy of the Victorian novel, she is both daughter and wife. She is rescued from her evil father by a benevolent Englishman. His roles as guardian, protector, husband, and colonizer share the same paternalism, making it easy for him to inhabit all these roles at once. Here, then, is a vignette of the perfect wife and subject around whom is built the romance of empire.

_Educating Seeta_ makes the case that representations of such interracial relationships in the tropes of domestic fiction create a fantasy of liberal colonial rule in nineteenth-century British India. British colonials in India were preoccupied with appearing as a benevolent, civilizing power to their British and colonial subjects. They produced a vast archive of writing, which includes memoirs, official and private correspondence, and histories, in which they confronted their anxieties about their motives for colonial rule. I expand the definition of “family romance” to include not only interracial love between an English man and an Indian woman, but also political conflict represented as domestic drama featuring Indian women who appear in many roles: as widowed queens who act like recalcitrant daughters; as wives who bring domestic felicity but also usurp the English household; as heroic and rebellious natives; and as compliant and educable subjects. I argue that these seemingly disparate representations of Indian women all have the structure of a family romance,³ a romance that portrays the permutations of interracial domesticity as a political allegory of indirect colonial rule. This Anglo-Indian⁴ family romance—as I will call it here—thus becomes a particularly appropriate _literary_ narrative that enables British writers to justify colonial rule as positive, educative, and benevolent. Two concepts, thus, become central to this study: first, that domestic fiction provides the tropes in which liberal British fantasies about India are represented, and second, that the presence of Indian women signals sites of crises in these fantasies.
The nature of British rule in India was a significant factor in shaping the form and structure of these literary-political fantasies. This was a system of “indirect rule” which was marked by policies that fostered rule by proxy rather than direct military takeover of Indian states, a concern with social and educational reform, and a consequent paternalism that stemmed from a belief in the superiority of British culture. Romances written in the context of this relationship between the British and Indians encode a political fantasy of creating through a process of benevolent rule, native subjects acculturated to European values who welcome colonial rule and ally themselves with British interests. The Englishman who is husband, teacher, father, and often benevolent administrator represents colonial patriarchy. The domestic Indian woman, whose docility represents political subservience, is the ideal native subject whose compliance can be won through a process of European education. However, this same woman becomes threatening when she assumes domestic or political power. Educating Seeta explores representations of colonial paternal authority in the Anglo-Indian romance and threats to this authority in the form of conflict in the family.

British portrayals of Indian women as compliant subjects do not remain uncontested even in their own writing: either the contradictions of colonialism defeat these narratives or the presence of Indian women who are active historical subjects forces colonial writers to confront the limits of their liberal desires. Thus Indian women in these romances point to another important aspect of the form: the fact that the hopes and desires of British administrators, writers, and travelers are not completely realized in these narratives. This failure to complete its allegory of successful colonial rule takes many narrative forms: ideological contradictions pointed out by Indian subjects; the inability of a British writer to carry through a narrative trajectory; and the power that Indian women assume in the home and outside that gives the lie to the “rescue” fantasy in which they are passive victims saved by Englishmen. Hence, given that the romance narrates the impossibility of neat conclusions, it seems more appropriate to describe it as a failed romance—one that does not reach its desired culmination. It is thus always marked by recognition of its failure even though it tries to seduce us into believing in the benevolence of colonial rule.

The death of the Indian woman in many of these romances, signaling that interracial love is not socially viable, is an instance of such narrative failure. For instance, in Flora Annie Steel’s On the Face of the Waters, Zora dies early, setting the English hero, Jim Douglas, free to
love an Englishwoman. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, for instance in the Orientalist idealization of the Indian woman in Maud Diver’s *Lilamani*, in which interracial marriage between Neville Sinclair and Lilamani heralds a new understanding between cultures with the ultimate goal of “civilizing” other cultures into European ways of life. Even Kipling, that canonized recorder of Anglo-Indian life, was unable to give us a full-length study of an interracial relationship. In most of his short stories, such relationships are unconsummated and end tragically. Anglo-Indian romancers also seem reluctant to represent mixed-race children. When they do enter the picture, they are depicted with the same fear and horror that greeted miscegenation among white and black populations in nineteenth-century America. Despite these narrative failures, however, Anglo-Indian romancers do make a foray into imagining mixed households and interracial marriages. They execute a variety of formal explorations, which often surprise readers into confronting unorthodox outcomes about the possibilities of mixed race sociality.

A primary strategy of these romances is to chart British confrontation with a new, unfamiliar, and unprecedented cultural and political world and strive to make it familiar and coherent by domesticating protest, opposition, and hybridity. They thus stay anchored in the colony, and even those that end tragically force the reader to recognize the consequences of a culturally mixed space. They refigure adventure and domestic fiction by engaging with racial difference, interracial desire, and miscegenation. In this respect they can be distinguished from the conventions of Victorian fiction in which race, gender, and geography are all neatly aligned to provide domestic closure, which is based on the exclusion and elimination of such differences. *Educating Seeta* thus argues that interracial romances in British India are more than simple love-stories; they express and contest class, gender, and racial ideologies formed during the colonial encounter.

This versatility of the Anglo-Indian romance in incorporating both colonial desires and their disruptions can be attributed to its foundation in representations of domestic life which has a wider range of reference to the social-political world than the language of romance usually suggests. In invoking “the domestic,” I refer to a complex web of ideas and historically specific meanings usually associated with the middle class. Domesticity is embedded in a matrix of other discourses—social, political, legal, and sexual—that are particularly significant in a study of the romance plot of heterosexual marriage. We now have a rich and substantial scholarship that shows that the relation of the domestic
The Poetics and Politics of Anglo-Indian Romance

sphere to the outside world of business and politics, and to definitions of gender and self, has been in flux throughout the nineteenth century.\(^8\) However, the conceptual centrality accorded to domestic ideology in the Victorian era has only recently been transferred to the English household in the colonies. When Victorian domesticity is recreated in the colonies, the British home comes to signify culture, nation, class, and race. The domestic functions of surveillance and management come to acquire a particular urgency in the colonies and appear, in effect, to be an extension of imperial governance. Commenting on the advice given to English housewives by Maud Diver in *The Englishwoman in India* (1909), Rosemary George points to the language of “state-craft and diplomacy” in which housewives are urged to aspire to the role of “the politically astute leader who holds the reins of empire in his hands” (George 51). Similarly Steel and Gardiner in their *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1890) write, “We do not wish to cultivate an unholy haughtiness; but an Indian household can no more be governed peacefully, without dignity and prestige, than an Indian Empire” (qtd. in George 51). George comments, “Time and again, the colonial discourse, especially the texts written by women, represent the management of empire as essentially ‘home-management’ on a large scale. There are doors to be locked, corners to be periodically dusted, rooms to be fumigated and made free of pests, children (i.e., “natives”) to be doctored, educated, clothed, disciplined, accounts to be kept, boundaries redrawn and fences mended” (George 51). The English home thus reinforces the allegorical structure of the relationship between domestic life and politics in both of which natives are in a position of tutelage to British men and women.

The other side of the English household in the colonies was the Indian domestic space, which, to British eyes, appeared to be a baffling network of intrigue, mobility, and diffuse power. In a groundbreaking study of slavery and kinship in an upper-class eighteenth-century Bengal household, Indrani Chatterjee shows how indirect rule, domestic life, ownership of land, and ideas about gender were all interconnected and that these ideas were being worked out in the confused mess created by the struggle between fluid ideas of kin in Indian households and the more rigid notions of family in English law. The division of the household into the women’s quarters or ‘harem’ and the outer public space did not map onto English notions of private and public because though Indian women were secluded, matriarchs often wielded considerable political power by controlling access to young women of reproductive age and hence lineage and inheritance.\(^9\) Matriarchs also
gave advice to ruling princes or regent, negotiated political alliances, and used their diplomatic skills and wealth for political ends. This politically active function of women was routinely looked upon with suspicion by British colonial administrators. The customary ability of mothers to adopt successors and create lineages by marrying off their wards came into direct confrontation with the economic and territorial designs of the East India Company.

In response to these confusing networks of kinship and sociality, colonial ideology tried to impose a rigorously policed notion of the domestic in Anglo-Indian culture as a way of consolidating class and racial status. Anglo-Indian romances, however, register the struggle over domestic space which unsettles Victorian notions of gender, culture, and class. They combine realist conventions of representing domesticity with fantasy, history, and the forbidden subject of interracial mixing. Rejecting the language of sexual pathology, “encounter,” or a feminized Orient, they thus offer an alternative focus on colonial experience by mixing historical, political, and legislative dilemmas into their domestic dramas. Unlike adventure fiction, these romances record the disruptive presence of Indian wives and rebellious subjects who resist being cast as passive female bodies ruled by masculine colonizers. Instead, these romances show that interracial domesticity encodes differing modalities of power for both British colonial and Indian subjects, a joint negotiation of social and political position, and an engagement with the possibility of a mixed cultural life.

Interracial domesticity thus provides us a way to understand the processes of collaboration, assimilation, and a seemingly nonviolent negotiation of cultural intermixing between the two populations. As Ann Stoler has convincingly shown us in her work on the Netherlands Indies, colonial social life was central to the construction of bourgeois ideology. She argues that domestic ideologies, which were central to bourgeois life, were about much more than just sex. They encompassed a wider range of desires and yearnings, which were encoded within a larger range of colonial relations than the repressive model of sexuality would suggest. The importance of racial intermixing was that “the changing density and intensity of métissage’s discursive field outlines the fault lines of colonial authority: in linking domestic arrangements to the public order, family to the state, sex to subversion, and psychological essence to racial type, métissage might be read as a metonym for the biopolitics of empire at large” (Stoler, “Tensions” 199). Similarly Durba Ghosh has argued in her study of the family and sex in colonial India, that “interracial sexual relationships were a crucial and constitutive part
of early colonial state formation and governance in British India, laying the foundation for the colonial social order” (Ghosh “Sex and The Family” 2). She emphasizes the importance of studying the family unit in colonial culture because it echoes patriarchal authority in other colonial institutions such as the courts, the military, and the church (Ghosh “Sex and the Family” 4).

Until the recent wave of colonial cultural studies, most historians ignored interracial romances between European colonizers and native women as a marginal and colorful byproduct of colonialism that did not teach us much about colonial society. One reason for this neglect could be that interracial love, and its corollary, the possibility of miscegenation, while it has always existed in colonial societies, has also been proscribed in official ideologies of most such societies. In the case of colonial India particularly, the absence of discussion about interracial relationships could be because such relationships were visible largely in the last two decades of the eighteenth century.12

Given official disapproval of such relationships in India, it is not surprising that the women involved were rendered invisible in the colonial archive. It was feminist scholars who used the tools of interdisciplinary inquiry to prise open the archive in order to catch a glimpse of women’s lives during colonialism and to argue that the politics of gender are constitutive of colonial culture. For instance, even though Indian women appear frequently in late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British writings as faithful wives, rebellious queens, and ideal colonial subjects, their fragmentary presence made them inconsequential to most colonial literary studies.13 Feminist projects of recovering the voices of these women have produced some of the most exciting and productive studies of South Asian colonial culture. Whether it was Gayatri Spivak’s reading of the silence of the queen-as-figurehead in her essay “The Rani of Sirmur” or Lata Mani’s (1959) work on the Sati (self-immolating widow), such studies have offered new methods and theories of reading silences and absences in the colonial archive.

If historical accounts have been slow to recognize the significance of interracial desire, literature, on the other hand, seems obsessed with it. In inverse relation to the decline in interracial relationships, literary writing about them increased substantially through the late nineteenth century. Robert Young reminds us that miscegenation and hybridity are the foundational narratives of most Victorian and modern fiction. “English experience,” he writes, “is characterized by a sense of fluidity and a painful sense of, or need for, otherness” (Young 2). This crossing over into otherness is often accomplished through the medium of interracial
desire in “the Brontës, Hardy or Lawrence . . . (the irresistible, transgressive Heathcliff is of mixed race), Haggard, Conrad (not only The Secret Agent, but also of course in Heart of Darkness, the imbrication of the two cultures within each other, the fascination with the ‘magnificent’ African woman, and among many other novels, his first, Almayer’s Folly, the story of an inter-racial marriage), James, Forster, Cary, Lawrence, Joyce, Greene, Rhys” (Young 2–3). As a counterpoint to Young’s view that the English novel compulsively invokes the other in erotic, sexual terms, I argue, however, that the ultimate rejection of the alien Other is equally a distinctive strategy of the English domestic novel. While desire for the Other has frequently been depicted in high Victorian and modern fiction, it is invariably portrayed as futile, unconsummated, and tragic. Canonical English fiction describes interracial romance as reified and dream-like, merely a projection of English anxieties rather than transformative of English fictional conventions. Young recognizes the subterranean nature of such desire when he calls it “the soft underbelly of that power relation” that was colonial rule (Young 175). As long as English writers describe such desire in the language of repression and projection, they deny, repress, and eventually expel it.

In fact, Victorian novelists have generally distanced themselves from a concern with colonialism, international trade and commerce, and the consequences at home of cultural exchange abroad. Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said, in their much-celebrated interventions, brought the insights of colonial and postcolonial studies to bear on a reading of the seemingly insular domestic novel. Their insight that colony and metropole, the international division of labor, and the histories of colonialism and oppression are constitutive of the aesthetic conventions of the novel, have been brilliantly followed through in studies of nineteenth-century fiction.

However, while recognizing the mutual imbrication of colony and nation has been a necessary move in colonial studies, it is equally important to study the gestures of repudiation and banishment of the colonial by the domestic English world. Even if astute critics mine the domestic for its connections with the colonial through metaphor, in the end the colonies are occluded for a return to English civility in the home. As Clara Tuite points out, in Jane Austen’s Mansfield Park, for instance, “colonial critique is subordinated to and chastised by the impulses of domestic drama,” and ultimately, “the world of the colonies is represented or subsumed by the terms of representation of the other world of the domestic” (Tuite 104). This subordination of the colonial to the domestic English suggests to me that the canonical nineteenth-
The nineteenth-century novel does not allow us to explore the possibilities of interracial romance, banishing it either to the margins of the text or refusing it admission into the narrative altogether. This is where the Anglo-Indian romance comes in as a necessary supplement to the Victorian novel. In all its manifestations in literary texts, histories, and other colonial writing, it enables an exploration of interracial romance, and through that, colonial sociality.

The contributions of the Anglo-Indian romance to our understanding of Victorian culture are evident in recent studies that show how events in England and India refracted, impacted, and transformed perceptions of Victorian England and the colonies simultaneously, and that the domestic and political were intimately related. Gayatri Spivak, Jenny Sharpe, Dierdre David, Nancy Paxton, Sara Suleri, John McBratney, Parama Roy, Siraj Ahmed, and others have focused specifically on the fact that Britain’s Indian experience had profound ideological and formal consequences for English literature. For instance, the divorce debates in England were seen as a kind of revolt, while the Indian Revolt of 1857 was imagined as a marriage gone wrong. A similar conceptual and linguistic osmosis characterized discussions about the Rani of Jhansi who was read as counterpoint or double of Queen Victoria. The fear of an unruly woman on the throne is projected onto the Rani of Jhansi articulating a similar latent British fear about Queen Victoria (Jerinic 127). British writers considered good government masculine and entirely separate from domestic influence, but issues related to sexuality and domesticity spilled into the public world of government. Debates related to adoption, property, and customary rights did not stay confined to the private sphere but assumed a political significance.

_Educating Seeta_ combines literary methodologies for reading textual silences with a new Historicist understanding that cultural concepts circulate in different guises through all contemporary texts. The texts chosen for analysis were all written by British subjects in India, and this specific site of the production of colonial ideology is as significant as the fact that these are “English” texts that try to produce English cultural forms and values. The focus on textual production follows the example of colonial discourse analysis, but with a difference. While studies of the rhetoric of Britain’s colonial experience in India have emphasized the role of native and colonial elites in jointly forging colonial culture, and have explored the aesthetics and politics of collaboration, complicity, and shared guilt, I stay committed to the notion that a colonial will drove and attempted to structure the agendas of imperial control, and that these were neither incidental nor accidental.
A focus on the “detail of cultural facticity” (Suleri 13) can reveal not only complicity but also show how the larger narratives of empire were locally and variously contested, overwhelmed, modified, seized, and redeployed, or superseded. Thus, while remaining sensitive to class compacts and the role of elites, I am equally interested in uncovering resistance to colonial agendas, whether they involve the efficient functioning of colonial government or the organization of a home. I argue, therefore, for the special function of literary texts in articulating these agendas and revealing their limits and conclude that literary narratives were alibis for the “benevolence” and “high civility” of empire. However, equally important to this study are those documents and writings (letters, memoirs, histories) that place literature in the larger context of colonial experience and hence bring the particularity of literary agendas to light.

In *Educating Seeta*, I emphasize contradictions embedded in the project of “civilizing” Indians which, methodologically, is also the place from which to recover those native voices that inhabit the interstitial spaces in the colonial archive. I resist, therefore, a view of colonial power and surveillance that is seamless and all-encompassing. This emphasis is what distinguishes my argument from, for instance, Anindya Roy’s discussion of the same historical moment in his *Civility and Empire* in which he links civility to civic virtue and civil identity. Roy sees civility as representing a particular ethos that secured “those powerful ideologies of modern citizenship that came to be linked to Britain’s status as an emerging imperial power” (Roy 10). Roy’s argument lays out in great detail both the social spaces that are controlled by colonial rulers and the fact that disciplinary regimes manifest themselves by “defining and monitoring the social behavior of colonial subjects” (Roy 12). But even though he gestures towards the contradictions that mark the terrain on which colonial rule establishes itself, these contradictions do not assume a large or threatening presence in the relentless march of colonialism. Against this perspective, I present the inherently fractured and incomplete project of British colonial rule, and the insertion of unruly colonized natives into this terrain as presenting insurmountable problems. I read the fracture of colonial civility as productive moments of protest against colonial power and as places where British colonials recognize the impossibility of their projects. When I analyze a “successful” interracial marriage, it is to note the messiness of cultural exchange rather than the disciplining of native bodies by English discourses. A study of colonial culture through the romance makes possible a dual focus on the aspirations and failures of British colonial rule.
II. Indian Women in Colonial Texts

The recurrence of the Indian woman in colonial writing and her interpellation as the ideal native subject has two distinct but related sources in colonial history. The first is the fact that the woman question was central to Orientalist, Utilitarian, and Evangelical writings on Indian history. In Utilitarian accounts of Indian history, the best known being James Mill’s History of India, Hindu society is described as in a state of degeneration, an index of which is the condition of its women, who then require British protection and intervention. In Orientalist constructions of a “golden age” of Vedic civilization, most prominently in the work of Orientalist scholars such as Henry Colebrook (1765–1837) and William Jones (1746–94), founder of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Hindu woman had a privileged place. Conflating Hindu with Indian culture, they believed that ancient Hindu society had been advanced because it allowed its women considerable social freedom. Following eighteenth-century notions that the index of a civilized culture was the freedom it allowed its women, Orientalist scholars concluded that the low status of women in contemporary Hindu society was a visible sign of its fallen state. This belief supported the idea that natives who were originally noble and civilized had to be educated as citizens of a modern state. In idealizing the status of women in ancient India, the Orientalists ignored internal social hierarchies which oppressed women of lower classes and castes; nevertheless, their work drew the attention of reformers and administrators to an ideal drawn from Hindu culture for the respect and social status accorded to Hindu women.

The second historical reason for the prominence of the Hindu woman in the colonial imagination can be traced to the famous legislation of 1829 against the practice of Sati (widow immolation), which provided protection to widows of upper-caste Hindus from the practice of forced immolation on the funeral pyres of their husbands. This legislation was preceded by furious debates in England and India which recreated vivid images of helpless women oppressed by heathen obscurantism. The fascination with Sati also meant that the upper-caste Hindu woman came to stand in for all Hindu women, in complete disregard of the contestations within customary practice and the fact that there was a lower incidence of Sati among women of lower castes. The Sati controversy thus easily leant itself to a rescue fantasy in which the Indian woman at the mercy of abominable heathen customs is rescued by the benevolent Englishman. Margery Sabin describes this narrative of the saving of a Sati by British officers as “an old pattern of romance: the Hindu widow
is the touching female victim of enchantment; the British rescuer has
the heart, if not always the power, of a chivalric hero. . . . More honour
than burden the mission of civilization in the early nineteenth century
offered a modern arena for noble deeds” (Sabin, “Suttee Romance” 3–4).
Colonial administrators and politicians, the main actors in this drama,
perceived the heroic potential in the acting out of their political and
administrative missions in rescuing the Indian woman from oppressive
social customs.

I argue here that this scenario changes by the mid-nineteenth cen-
tury when the romance evolves into a distinct form to articulate the
concerns of a changing colonial ideology moving away from the idea
of “rescue.” With the development of indirect rule, India was no longer
a mythical world but an administrative challenge; a land not of fabled
riches but of economic hardship; a scene not for noble deeds but for
mercantile gains and strategic political games. At this historical con-
junction “the failed family romance” became particularly appropriate
as a representation of colonizer/colonized relations, as a fable about
cultural assimilation, and as a fantasy about ideal political subjects.
_Educating Seeta_ intervenes in this discussion with the argument that it
was not only the Sati that became familiar to British audiences. Images
of high-caste, aristocratic widows deprived of their estates or prevented
from adopting a son haunted the liberal British imagination as evi-
dence of the depredations of colonial rule and thus a taint on British
honor and virtue. This connection was most famously established in
Edmund Burke’s impassioned Parliamentary address in 1788 seeking
the impeachment of Warren Hastings.23 In his attack on Hastings, Burke
described the evils of colonialism in images of sexualized assault on
high-born women, particularly the Begums of Oudh.24 Burke’s exposé
of the fate of such women is only part of the story, however. The other
version has its greatest exemplar in the life of the widowed Rani of
Jhansi. She asserted her right to adopt an heir and refused to cede her
kingdom to the East India Company. She was fatally wounded in the
ensuing battle against British forces and commemorated as a hero and
rebel by Indians. The Mutiny of 1857, prompted in part by popular
sympathy for the Rani, turned this encounter into legend. Other Indian
women rulers waged equally persistent if less visibly heroic battles
against British authority. In literary fantasies, Indian women in political
or domestic roles either present a direct political threat to English power
or to the English household and ultimately to imperial power.25

The challenges of working with the fragmentary appearance of the
Indian woman in the archive have produced crucial methodological
and theoretical insights for historical and literary studies of the colonial period. In *Reading the East India Company Archive*, Betty Joseph exhorts postcolonial critics to “show why the domain of women’s agency has been excluded from mainstream accounts and demonstrate, at the same time, how women are put together as subjects and objects of various discourses for the ruses and deployments of colonial power” (Joseph 4). As a corrective to the common notion that women are excluded from the colonial archive, Joseph points out that they are, in fact, found everywhere, though “in a fragmented and dispersed way” (Joseph 93). As Joseph explains, such appearances of the figure of the woman not only provide “historical articulations of the discursive networks and their relationship to each other, but also makes woman, in her role as constitutive exclusion, a deconstructive lever for revealing how various sites and arenas of history are repressed at various moments” (Joseph 4). Following a similar strategy, *Educating Seeta* uncovers the inscription of women both as an alternative history of colonial social relations, and as a trace of their acts of assertion and protest.

This discussion of the silencing of the Indian woman was pioneered by Spivak in “The Rani of Sirmur” in which a widowed Indian queen of an annexed state in nineteenth-century India is “suddenly managed by a young white man in her own household” (267). Declaring that “there is no romance to be found here,” Spivak exposes the expedient use of religious ideologies for political purposes by both colonial and native patriarchy when the Rani’s fate is determined by a British representative in conjunction with native scholars (should she commit Sati on her husband’s funeral pyre or should she continue as figurehead of the state?) (Spivak, “Sirmur” 267). Spivak’s reading of the colonial moment in which the Rani is discovered maps out not only the complex interrelations between colonial authority and a patriarchal regulation of the lives of the native aristocracy but also the instrumentality of the queen, who appears in the record only when she is required to facilitate colonial rule.

In presenting a cast of women characters from colonial history who are neither completely silent nor objects of rescue, I interrogate Gayatri Spivak’s comment about the absence of romance derived from a similar moment in colonial history. I would argue that in making her point, she generalizes from a colonial record that provides numerous counterinstances of women of ruling families caught in legal, political, and administrative confrontations with the East India Company, who actively protested against the imposition of British law on their lives. Instead of a record of silences, I uncover a proliferation of romance narratives,
those of the East India Company as *paterfamilias* and the women rulers as their obedient daughters. The misogynist images of incompetent queens or queen mothers, ill-advised regents, and helpless widows who are trained into compliance by the Company are the obverse of the romance in which the upper-class Indian woman is saved and educated by a sympathetic Englishman. So while my approach to the representation of Indian women draws on the insights of feminist literary critics and historians, particularly the idea that the fragmentary appearance and extreme marginality of Indian women marks the fissures and faultlines of colonial legislation, administrative organization, and gender and domestic ideologies, I turn to a different kind of material from that which forms the basis of the studies mentioned above. In the literary romances, letters, memoirs, and political correspondence discussed here, Indian women appear as major actors. Whether it is fiction, political correspondence, or personal letters, each of these appearances express British colonial anxiety about the limitations and contradictions of liberal colonialism.

Highlighting the participation of women in colonial history is an ongoing critical endeavor, judging by the predominance and visibility of men in such histories. Françoise Vèrges, for instance, bases her study of colonial family romance in the French colony of Réunion Island on Lynn Hunt’s concept of the French family romance.26 Vèrges defines “family romance” as “a fiction created by the *colonial power* that substituted a set of imaginary parents, La Mère-Patrie and her children the colonized, for the real parents of the colonized, who were slaves, colonists, and indentured workers . . . ” (Vèrges 3–4; emphasis in original). La Mère-Patrie, a single entity, replaces the two parents of the colonized and brings the promise of rule among equals against the local tyrants. In her study of the anticolonial debates around métissage, most of which emphasized assimilation and full admission into the promise of the French Republic for the freed brothers of Réunion Island, Vèrges concludes that the liberal promise of equal French citizenship fails when racial and cultural difference prevents the métis population from attaining that goal. Significantly, in a study devoted to colonial politics cast as family drama, Vèrges deals exclusively with “the band of brothers.” As she acknowledges in the epilogue to her book, “the history of Réunion’s women remains to be told, and this study has not given them their due” (Vèrges 249).

Like Vèrges, I explore interracial romance as a fiction created by the colonizers, as a promise of a benevolent regime which produces happy assimilated and loyal families. Like Vèrges, I also argue that the colonial
patriarch in British Indian writing establishes kinship with the natives through tutelage and patronage. The East India Company in colonial India becomes “Ma-Baap” or “Mother-Father,” a single entity which represents political and familial authority. The romance thus becomes an allegory of colonial relations in which racial and cultural difference is absorbed and domesticated. *Educating Seeta* traces a similar narrative of failure when the promise of a happy conclusion to an interracial marriage or complete citizenship for an Indian subject under liberal British rule is thwarted time and again. The significant difference is that the focus of *Educating Seeta* is on colonized women who appear as obedient daughters and wives in heterosexual, domestic narratives. *Educating Seeta* concerns itself not only with a literary narrative produced by British colonials to justify the benevolence and success of colonial rule, but also with Indian women as actors. I point out how this narrative, once available, was deployed rhetorically and politically by colonized women to resist being incorporated into British colonial narratives. In my chapters on the widowed queens of Indian states, for instance, I show how the language of familial civility is used by them to demand their rights as subjects of the East India Company, and when that fails, to reject the romance of liberal rule altogether. The idea of romance thus is mobile and multivalent. It disrupts any conception of linear and absolute power, showing instead the space of struggle and negotiation both among British colonials and their Indian subjects.

Indian women become actors in these texts not because they are reflecting a state of historical empowerment. They are present precisely because I am arguing that both in history and in literary texts an excess of signification, of meaning, attaches to the figure of the Indian woman. I have tried to move back and forth between her historical presence and her appearance as a literary figure. By doing this, I hope to trace the trajectory of colonial desire, and also its disruptions when the figure of the Indian woman appears. Instead of being defeated by the fragmentary, seemingly incoherent inscription of the Indian woman, an exploration of interracial romance brings to light not only these women but also colonial ideologies and alternative historical narratives.

**III. The Poetics and Politics of Romance**

I identify four romance narratives in colonial writing; some overlap with others, but all involve the home and interracial domesticity. The
first and most common is the “rescue” story. Company officials who adopt young native girls, either to provide them refuge against oppressive cultural injunctions or from political persecution, marry these girls when they reach adolescence. The introduction begins with an example of such a relationship between Claude Martin and Lise. This narrative of rescue attaches to most interracial romances, even those that ultimately become more complex records of domestic partnership between an English man and Indian woman. In many cases, the adolescent Indian girl is not a ward of the Englishman, but is rescued at an extremely young age from her natal family and incorporated into a covert interracial romance. Among the most famous of such partnerships are those between James Achilles Kirkpatrick and Khair-un-nissa and William Gardner and the daughter of the Nawab of Cambay. The power of this colonial narrative is evident in the fact that even though in both cases the rescue narrative encapsulates very little of the subsequent life of these couples, both men feel compelled to narrate their connection to these women as originating in a benevolent act of rescue. The persistence and reach of rescue narratives has made it seem that they were the only kind available in which British colonials could present their encounter with India. Jyotsna Singh points out that “the tropes of discovery, civilization, and rescue . . . have survived beyond the classic colonial era and continue to color our perceptions of the non-Western world” (Singh 5). Gayatri Spivak famously noted that white men rescuing brown women from brown men was the foundational fantasy on which civil society was based in colonial India. Educating Seeta goes beyond this obvious narrative to show the further development of colonial stories of rescue into domestic tales; it also explores the political desires that underpin these fantasies.

A second kind of nineteenth-century interracial romance is usually in the high Orientalist mode and does not dwell on either the contribution of the Indian companions to the creation of a syncretic upper-class culture, the role of such alliances in the acquisition and management of political power, or the process by which they were justified in private and political circles. Such exercises in Orientalist fiction include Sydney Owenson’s The Missionary: an Indian Tale (1811), Maud Diver’s Lilamani (1911), and Philip Meadows Taylor’s Seeta (1872). The women in these novels, melancholy, “idealized,” exotic beauties who represent not only the glories of Hindu culture but also its repressive aspects, are rescued by Englishmen. The attempt to match two glorious civilizations flounders when the inevitable racial differences are confronted. Maud Diver’s trilogy, of which Lilamani is the first part, is unusual in taking
the story through many generations. Most such interracial stories come to an unhappy end before their authors confront the question of mixed children.

In the third form of interracial romance, British writers represent interracial relationships through a “scandal,” which makes the private life of a British man the subject of an official and public discussion. In such cases, different versions of the romance collide, overlap, and are in turn contradicted in the private correspondence of the men. The self-representations of British men, their defense of themselves, and their search for an appropriate narrative in which to record their lives, shows the contradictions of this version of the family romance when confronted with official British ideology.

Educating Seeta offers a fourth version of the romance, which focuses on the specific conditions of indirect rule in which British representatives supervise the organization of the households and estates of widowed queens of Indian states. Though they are not domestic partners in the usual sense, the queens and British representatives create the kinds of domestic dramas that constitute the Anglo-Indian family romance. In histories of the annexation of Indian states, conflict about household expenses becomes central to the relationship between women heads of state and British Residents. The resulting negotiations about domestic life make political relations of dependency and subservience rather than blood relationships significant.

The book is divided into two parts consisting of two chapters, each of which begins with a historical introduction to the context of interracial romances. The first part includes two chapters: the first studies the epistolary record of an interracial romance between an Englishman, William Linneaus Gardner, and his aristocratic Muslim wife, Mah Munzalool nissa Begum; the second chapter focuses on Bithia Mary Croker’s early twentieth-century romances, which represent interracial relationships at a time when official proscriptions against them were really strong. Both chapters explore British representations of mixed domesticity; the construction of class, racial, and national identity in the mixed household; and the place of the Indian woman in this literary-political domain. By focusing on the mixed household as either a place of intense social negotiation or of a gothic, traumatic discovery, I show that interracial domesticity is a nodal point for the cultural and political negotiations of Britain’s Indian experience. Mixed households contest the values of English domesticity and reconfigure interracial relationships away from the predictable tropes of rescue and discovery to an exploration of how class and social power were acquired by colonial elites.
The second part discusses inscriptions of indirect rule in fictional and nonfictional writing in nineteenth-century India. Here again, my dual emphasis is on exploring the nature of British colonial fantasies and their failures when contested by Indian women. Chapter 3 discusses the annexations of the central Indian states of Satara, Sambhalpur, Nagpur, and Jhansi, foregrounding the role played by the queens in political negotiations with the British. I analyze the preoccupations of historians of this period in which, though Indian women are pervasive, they are often silenced. The trope of a benevolent colonial state in search of good daughters appears in historical writings of the period as well as its literary texts. Chapter 4 takes another episode from this history, this time located in a south Indian state, and shows the relationship between Philip Meadows Taylor’s political dealings with the Queen of Shorapur and his literary writings. Such a study is less concerned with causality or simplistic translation of the historical record into a literary fantasy; rather it seeks common tropes and narratives in which the British colonial experience in India was being imagined and recorded and identifies the manner in which literary texts sought to transform the messiness of historical, political struggle into idealized and sentimental narratives.

By juxtaposing a literary and historical chapter in each of the two sections in Educating Seeta, I am suggesting that they draw on similar narratives, techniques of emplotment, and cultural fantasies. This relationship between literature and history has been theorized at length by Hayden White, who argues that both literature and history depend on specific devices of emplotment and figures of speech to weave their narratives. The primary material of history is unstructured and chaotic, and historians, as much as writers of creative fiction, shape their work into culturally recognizable narratives. White’s theories were a response to the bourgeois realistic conventions of historical writing which, he argued, incorrectly assumed the priority of ‘facts’ and convinced readers of these facts through the aesthetic conventions of realism. His arguments, which pushed for an understanding of historical writing through the laws of representation, have continued to produce questions about the status of ‘reality’ or referentiality in such writing.29

White’s theories have been criticized by both literary critics and historians for establishing an absolute parity between literary and historical narratives. In responding to his critics, especially in the debate about revisionist histories of the Holocaust, White has moved towards giving historical writing its own priorities which delimit and circumscribe its concerns in a manner different from those found in literary
narratives. Particularly useful for my argument is the view derived from White’s later work that referential considerations are important in historical texts because they affect the system of signification and the codes of representation in such texts. One consequence of this is that “historical narrative thus seems unable to fully utilize the full effect of the fictionalization that it purportedly performs” (Pihlainen 54). The fact that histories follow events documented in many different genres of writing, and that they deal with events that happened to particular people, keep them committed to a certain set of conventions which might not follow the rules of literary emplotment. So even though the literary and the historical seem to be one continuous narrative, I argue that while literary texts idealize their characters, narrative outcome, and plot, historical texts seem committed to documenting a variety of colonial experiences without forcing it into the formal or predetermined closures of literary narratives. For instance, the literary idea of the Indian damsels-in-distress rescued by the dashing English knight turns out to be inadequate for capturing all the features of Gardner’s domestic life. His historical record of the social, political, and material details of his mixed household grow and overwhelm the rescue story with which his relationship with his wife began.

In their propensity to dwell in realms of fantasy and speculation, romances suggest utopian resolutions of insurmountable class, caste, familial, or religious antagonisms. I borrow this concept of romance as an allegory of political struggle from Doris Sommer’s study of nineteenth-century Latin American fiction, in which she shows how “erotic and romantic rhetoric organizes apparently nonviolent national consolidation during periods of internecine conflict” in Latin American history (Sommer, “Irresistible Romance” 76). In Sommer’s foundational fictions, desire for an ideal nation is not merely parallel to romantic desire, it creates the conditions in which romantic desire can flourish so that one constitutes the other. It thus has a performative function, acting to seduce and persuade the reader that romantic reconciliation is a model for political alliances in the future. Anglo-Indian romances are similarly marked by a desire for harmonious reconciliation and new alliances. Early in my discussion, I introduced the idea of ‘failure’ of the Anglo-Indian romance. Following Doris Sommer’s complex and very relevant argument about how allegory operates in the world of the nineteenth-century Latin American “national” novels, it would be possible to connect this failure to the structure of allegory itself. Sommer is interested, however, in celebrating the “incredible measure of their success” (“Allegory” 81) as erotic-political allegories rather than their failures. Further,
by coining the word “dialectical-allegories” to describe the “collusion between passion and patriotism” (“Allegory” 80), Sommer points to a lack in the critical vocabulary in which we discuss the novel and the romance today. In showing us the limits of our current understanding of allegory, Sommer forges a new connection between desire, politics, and narrative that she considers as relevant to our modern appreciation and enjoyment of literature as it was in its nineteenth-century Latin American context.

Sommer’s infusion of a dialectical view of history into allegory is highly suggestive for my analysis of the Anglo-Indian romance. I am going to argue, however, that both British colonial history in India and the presence of Indian subjects in the texts analyzed in Educating Seeta make the failure of the allegory a more significant theoretical category than the successes that Sommer celebrates in the Latin American context. This discussion of failure and allegory requires a brief review of Sommer’s argument and Walter Benjamin’s writings on allegory. Taking up Paul de Man’s reading of Rousseau’s Julie, Sommer argues against his point that those who pass “‘from individual passions such as love, to the collective and social dimensions of the state’ are, or should be, . . . embarrassed” (Sommer, “Allegory” 69). For Sommer, the supersession of love and politics by a nondialectical religious experience does not work. It assumes a dimension of stable knowledge that she resists. In contrast to this, Benjamin matches allegory and dialectics and attempts to “salvage allegory for historical narrative” (Sommer 63). Instead of a transcendent and immanent level of reality, Sommer’s definition of reality is more interested in Benjamin’s categories of nature and history. Benjamin argues that allegory is not merely a double narrative in which the mundane stands transparently for another transcendental reality. Rather, it incorporates within it a dialectical relationship between two levels of signification. As Sommer points out, Benjamin associated allegory with a melancholic sense of the distance between sign and referent, and hence with an inescapable recognition of failure. In his essay “Allegory and Trauerspiel” in The Origin of German Tragedy, he writes:

Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the facies hippocratica of history as a petrified, primordial landscape. Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face—or rather in a death’s head. (Benjamin 168)
The philosophic association between history, decay, and human nature that Benjamin considers central to the allegory provides a conceptual template for our understanding of the incommensurability of interracial romance and liberal politics, their failure to mesh together seamlessly that is encoded in the Anglo-Indian romance. Instead of a tale that ends happily ever after, bringing together the domestic and the political, this allegory marks the impossibility of such a culmination. In confronting the difference between history and its idealized representation, as between sign and referent, the Anglo-Indian romance is allegorical in precisely the way that Benjamin describes it.

Temporal distance between the referents and the illusion of completeness both lead to the failure of perfect correspondence between the two parts of an allegory. The illusion of complete correspondence is recognized as an illusion and temporal distance serves to emphasize the spaces between narratives rather than show their perfect cohesion. As Stephen Melville writes, “Allegory has a way of insisting on this problematic—on the uncertainty, at every moment, of the relation between a given present or claim to presence and the narratives—stories and histories—by which it is traversed and in which it should figure” (Melville 81). Even if allegory were the perfect literary figure for the texts I analyze, interracial romance narratives always show the impossibility and uncertainty of claims to British benevolence. In the case of British colonial narratives, allegory is meant to suggest the larger political narrative of benevolent colonialism. In doing that it is actually writing that other narrative, seducing us into believing it exists. In that sense, its role is performative in the way Sommer suggests. However, once you consider them ‘fictional compensations,’ they inscribe their own failure because they stand in for events, conciliations, conclusions that don’t really happen. Certainly, Benjamin’s idea of dialectics would explain how the centrality of Indian women to legislative and social reform made them ideal citizens, both stories mutually constructing each other, contiguous and coextensive. However, historical events in colonial India fail to achieve the perfection of allegorical form precisely because they are in excess of that literary structure. Allegory, in this case, marks the difference between history and its idealized representation.
The ideology of romance presents love as the exceptional case which defies official rules governing social and sexual intermixing in any culture. The subversive potential of the exceptional case opens up many possibilities for arguing for the transformative potential of love plots, their questioning of received social norms, and their Utopian projection of possibilities in a world that denies them. I will return to the possibilities of romance later, but first I want to emphasize the importance of reading the romance as a record of social and political history. I return to William Dalrymple’s *White Mughals*, a recent study of a romance set in eighteenth-century India, in which he presents interracial marriage as embedded in the political, social, and cultural relations of ruling British officials with the native aristocracy in the South Indian state of Hyderabad, though it is ultimately set apart from its context and in defiance of the governing social assumptions of that period. Surrounded by political intrigue, imperial ambition, and jostling for social power are the two lovers, the aristocratic Khair-un-nissa and James Kirkpatrick, British Resident at Hyderabad. Dalrymple’s objective in his account of this late-eighteenth-century romance between an Englishman and his Indian wife, is to celebrate the synthesis of cultures, and the possibility of romance that crosses racial and cultural boundaries. He paints a picture of the tragic, sad, and ultimately wronged Khair-un-nissa betrayed by the perfidy of one Englishman, as much as she
was loved and honored by Kirkpatrick. Against the backdrop of the aggressive policy of annexations instituted by Lord Wellesley, the racist premises that drove Company policy, and the uncultured approach of British officials to Indians in general, he shows the greatness of Kirkpatrick and the nobility of his love for Khair-un-nissa. In Dalrymple’s account, the colonial context is more complex than segregated British and Indian cultures would suggest. In his introductory remarks, he points out that “the Kirkpatricks inhabited a world that was far more hybrid, and with far less clearly defined ethnic, national, and religious borders, than we have been conditioned to expect, either by conventional Imperial history books written in Britain before 1947, or by the nationalist historiography of post-Independence India, or for that matter by the postcolonial work coming from new generations of scholars, many of whom tend to follow the path opened up by Edward Said in his pioneering Orientalism” (Dalrymple xlii). The romance, however, works ultimately to expose the colonial context in which it took place as close-minded, prejudiced, and driven by bigoted racial and cultural assumptions.

Dalrymple’s declared objective in the subtitle of his White Mughals is to flesh out a tale of “love and betrayal in eighteenth-century India.” His remarkable archival work in many languages provides a rich context in which to understand the story of Khair-un-nissa. But it is a tragic tale, and the early picture of Khair-un-nissa as someone who actively sought out Kirkpatrick and declared her love for him, gives way to a picture of a lonely young woman, who after the untimely death of Kirkpatrick is victimized by both her enemies at the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad and intolerant British officials. She is unable to return to Hyderabad to be with her mother nor does she have any desire to become a part of Anglo-Indian society in Calcutta, which, in any case, would have been hostile towards the Indian spouse of a British colonial official. At this difficult juncture in her life, she becomes entirely dependent on the friendship and patronage of Henry Russell, first assistant to James Kirkpatrick at the Residency at Hyderabad, and later Resident himself. This part of the story revolves around Russell’s kindness to Khair and his eventual betrayal of her. In her final days, we see Khair as a betrayed lover, who pines away at the age of twenty-seven.

By keeping the focus on the idea of romance Dalrymple is able to highlight the nobility of Kirkpatrick even as he foregrounds political intrigue, social ferment, and economic enterprise in the background of this great romance. However, what stands out at the end is surely not the wonder of such an interracial romance taking place at all, but rather
the impossibility of it. Structurally, politically, and socially, everything is ranged against Kirkpatrick and Khair-un-nissa once the marriage is accomplished. After Kirkpatrick’s untimely death, Khair-un-nissa is unable to access the support of her family because of the enmity of a faction of the court of Hyderabad. When Henry Russell offers her his protection and in fact enters into a relationship with her, it causes a second round of consternation among British officials. Thomas Sydenham, Kirkpatrick’s successor as Resident at Hyderabad, was courteous to Russell and Khair, but reluctant to grant Khair protection were she to return to Hyderabad with Russell. Sir George Barlow, senior member of Wellesley’s Council, “was horrified by the new development” particularly because of its possible political consequences. He claimed a recent rebellion by Sepoys at Vellore had been caused by their anger at “the connexion of native women with European officers” (Dalrymple 433). Given that Kirkpatrick and Khair-un-nissa’s relationship had already left a trail of acrimonious discussions, accusations, and defenses, the situation could hardly be expected to improve after his death. The narrative highlights the intense cruelty of both British colonial and Hyderabad officials towards a woman who, in Dalrymple’s narrative, has fortune, beauty, and courage: all the attributes of a heroine of romance.

Writing about her life in Calcutta after Kirkpatrick’s death, Dalrymple comments, “There is absolutely no question of Khair-un-nissa being some sort of powerless ex-concubine: this is a beautiful, charismatic Mughal noblewoman behaving according to her rank, with a pair of senior British officials running around to do her bidding” (Dalrymple 425). Far from being a helpless damsel in distress, Khair-un-nissa took charge of the social and organizational aspects of her family in Hyderabad, which at this point consisted of her mother and her grandmother. Henry Russell was very responsive to her and accommodated most of her requests about communicating with her family and the court in Hyderabad. It is certainly true that Khair had the confidence and presence of someone who belonged to an upper-class family, and probably never thought of herself as a mere concubine but as someone who brought social power and privilege to the marriage. But her marriage to Kirkpatrick involves for her a loss of power and social standing. She is ultimately bereft of the networks of social influence that she would have had as an aristocratic Muslim woman. Further, her story highlights the continuing prejudice against mixed marriages in colonial India, both in the British community and in the courtly society of Hyderabad. The romance between her and Kirkpatrick thus becomes an exception rather than representative of relations between the communities. The
exceptional nature of this romance suggests, however, the Utopian possibilities of crossing over, of bridging cultural divides, of feeling and commitment that grow despite official and social ideologies.

For another instance of the provocative, inflammatory, and ultimately Utopian potential of the romance, I turn now to an episode from contemporary India. In a thematically appropriate segue, this episode pertains to a contemporary cinematic rendering of the life of another Mughal, the sixteenth-century emperor Akbar, in a movie entitled *Jodha Akbar*, which was released in India in February 2008. Akbar is widely regarded in popular mythology and historical accounts as the most tolerant and liberal among Mughals. The expansion of his empire over large parts of India was accompanied by an inclusive and liberal view of religion. To add to this egalitarian mix was the fact that he married a Hindu princess from among the clans of Rajputs, rulers of small states and principalities in Central India, and among the strongest opponents of the Mughals. This marriage of alliance, which, in folklore was a happy one, elevated his Rajput wife to a position of great influence, especially after she became the mother of the heir to his throne. Historians quarrel with popular accounts and cinematic representations over her name—Jodha Bai—which they argue was incorrectly given to this particular princess when in fact there is more evidence to suggest that it belonged to her son Jahangir’s wife. Regardless of the controversy over the actual name and identity of this Hindu princess, the movie, filmed as a lavish period piece with celebrity actors in the lead, has enjoyed tremendous success at the box office. The supposed distortion of history, however, has aroused the ire of right-wing Hindu groups in large parts of North and Central India. They have called for a ban on the movie; subsequently a ban was imposed in a few states. The matter went up to the Supreme Court which lifted the ban on screening the film in some places, though it remains in place in many Indian states.

From some of the comments made by the protesting groups, it is easy to conclude that the real issue is not the correct name of the princess involved in the story, but the idea of love between a medieval Muslim prince and a Hindu princess recreated on the screen in sensuous detail. This has offended the sensibilities of a population engorged on a diet of violent Hindu-Muslim conflict during the past two decades. Their anger at the misrepresentation of history was further aggravated by the filmmaker Ashutosh Gowariker’s insistence that the film was based on his historical research on the cities of Delhi, Jaipur, and Agra, important sites of the Mughal empire. Gowariker explicitly mentions the absence of any stories about Jodha Bai in all the historical writing
about Akbar, which then inspired him to make her the focus of his film about the life of the Mughal emperor.  

Responding to the furor over the historical accuracy of the events in the film, historians have pointed out that she is not present in any of the Persian chronicles about Akbar’s reign. They do, however, agree that the historical record confirms that Akbar married a Rajput princess of the kingdom of Amer, though her name was not Jodha. From the historian’s point of view, this projection of an egalitarian, proto-feminist Jodha is as anachronistic as the emphasis on Hindu-Muslim harmony. In sixteenth-century India, Rajputs often contracted marriages with Muslims, and many of these were, as in other parts of the medieval world, ways of making political alliances, negotiating peace, or acknowledging the sovereignty of the ascendant power. Hindu-Muslim differences would not have stood out as much as they are made to in the film rendering of this particular interreligious marriage. Caste, clan, and lineage were much more important in the medieval world than distinct religious identities. It is important to remind ourselves that many of the identities that we privilege in the modern world were created by colonial regimes. The reification of caste and religious identities was in large part caused by colonial taxonomies which were then funneled into modern political constituencies. In that sense, it is a point well taken that it is our great need to highlight differences and resolve them in romance narratives in order to restore sanity to our conflicted world, but that these differences were not the primary categories in which identities were recognized in the world of Jodha and Akbar.  

In a strange convergence between left-wing academic historians and Hindu groups, the concern with the accuracy of the historical record has dominated much of the controversy around the movie. It is even more ironic that Hindu groups concerned with the accuracy of historical facts have been mired in controversy in India and the United States over the revision of school history textbooks that, according to them, portray Hindu culture and religion in a negative light. Sometimes going against the work of academic historians, the community has sought to take charge of the version of Hindu history which will be handed down to their children, thereby making it transparent that all versions of history have a political and ideological position.  

Jodha Akbar appears in my concluding remarks because it is once again a strong reminder of the power of a romance plot to suggest possibilities of social and political alliance and unanticipated networks of desire, which make up the immense unknown possibilities of human connection and commitment. While those concerned with an accurate
rendering of the history of glorious Rajput kingdoms protest that Akbar’s wife had a different name, others see the film as reflecting political and social concerns of contemporary India. They have been content to forgo the quibble over Jodha’s real name to celebrate the secular and nonsectarian vision of the film and its portrayal of the romance between religious groups that have been murderously hostile to each other in contemporary India. In language that evokes Doris Sommer’s conception of the romance as an allegory of political reconciliation, the sociologist, Shiv Viswanathan celebrates the film’s “romance of unity and integration. . . . There is a passion and power in this unity (in diversity), which is what contemporary India needs.”

The Danish anthropologist Stine Simonsen Puri reads another kind of cultural lesson in the recreation of this medieval Hindu-Muslim romance. For her, it is an example of how a negotiation of identity can happen while opening oneself to another culture. Jodha insists on having her own Hindu temple and on following Hindu festivals and ceremonies while living in the house of her Muslim husband at the same time that she participates in the cultural life of his extended household.

This romance appeals to the popular imagination just as nineteenth-century interracial romances did to their vast audiences. The director of Jodha Akbar admitted, despite his earlier claims to historical accuracy, that he ultimately based his depiction of Jodha on “popular usage.” The legend of Jodha Bai has become attached to Akbar in the popular imagination, and Hindi films depicting that era of Indian history have perpetuated the idea of a romantic, companionate marriage between the two. It could well be that the reason none of the Persian chronicles of Akbar’s times mention Jodha is that they were operating within their own conventions of recording what was considered significant history, and women did not figure in it. It is the achievement of modern historiography and theory that we can interrogate archival and recorded history and bring such absences to light.

The controversy over bringing to cinematic life a neglected figure from history in an interreligious romance demonstrates not only the discontents of contemporary sectarian politics but also the Utopian possibilities of romance. As Sharmishta Gooptu points out in her review of Jodha Akbar, historical anachronisms apart, the significance of this contemporary rendering of a romance lies in “its power to make the past relevant to the present through the mechanics of pleasure and the imagination” (Gooptu 2). The creation of romance fantasies thus does important cultural and political work. Readers of Anglo-Indian romances thrived on vicarious transgressions of racial boundaries
and the pleasures of imagining an unconventional domestic life. These romances set up complex patterns of identification and rejection in their representation of cultural difference and racial otherness. The function of the romance is thus not just critical, but also creative. Romances that traffic in history are compelling and subversive because they present alternative possibilities of social, political, and cultural connection that both excite and disturb us. This is why a complex engagement with different forms of romance not only enriches our understanding of the nineteenth-century colonial world, but is as urgent and necessary an enterprise for our contemporary globalizing, multicultural world, preoccupied as it is with matters of “difference.”
NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. A word commonly used to refer to an Indian wife, mistress, or companion of a European man in colonial India.

2. See Llewellyn-Jones, Rosie, A Very Ingenious Man: Claude Martin in Early Colonial India.

3. The term “family romance” usually recalls Freud’s concept that refers to a childhood dream of class mobility in which the child replaces through fantasies of adoption his or her parents with others who are wealthier and more powerful than they. See Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, The Language of Psycho-analysis 160.

4. “Anglo-Indian” is a term used to describe the British community in colonial India. It was only in the census of 1911 that the Government of British India made it the official term for “Eurasian” or person of mixed white and native Asian descent.

5. Kipling is reported to have been working on such a full-length study entitled “Mother Maturin.” His other short stories on the subject of interracial love are “Beyond the Pale,” “Yoked to an Unbeliever,” and “Lispeth.” See McBratney, Imperial Subjects, Imperial Space: Rudyard Kipling’s Fiction of the Native-Born 51 and 182.

6. In other colonial contexts, racially “other” women have been studied through the thematics of sexual pathology (the Hottentot Venus), the misogynist tropes of a threatening and voracious femininity (the Yahoo woman), or as victims of social barbarism (in harems in Near and Middle Eastern cultures, for instance). Sander Gilman, in his “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature,” discusses the fascination with the Hottentot Venus in nineteenth-century England. The Yahoo woman appears in Book IV of Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels. For a discussion
of representations of native women in this and other eighteenth-century texts, see Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature*; Felicity Nussbaum *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives*; and Shirley Samuels, *Romances of the Republic*.

7. Davidoff and Hall describe, for instance, the “flexible make-up and permeable boundaries” of the family. See their *Family Fortunes*.

8. Mary Poovey writes that “the middle-class ideology we most often associate with the Victorian period was both contested and always under construction; because it was always in the making, it was always open to revision, dispute, and the emergence of oppositional formulations” (*Uneven Developments* 3). Elizabeth Langland in *Nobody’s Angels* makes the case that “with the rapid increase of wealth generated by the industrial revolution and the consequent social upheavals, status became a fluid thing, increasingly dependent upon the manipulation of social signs” (26).


10. See Chatterjee 102. Another example of the active role that a woman tried to play in the administration of her estate is the case of the Rani of Burdwan, who, though ultimately defeated by the Company, resisted, protested, intrigued, and won a few rounds of the battle between her faction and advisors appointed by the Company. For a detailed account of this struggle, see John R. McLane, *Land and Local Kingship in Eighteenth-Century Bengal* 223–66.

11. In “Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures,” Stoler writes that by the early twentieth century “local women who had been considered protectors of men’s well-being, were now seen as the bearers of ill health and sinister influences; adaptation to local food, language, and dress, once prescribed as healthy signs of acclimatization, were now sources of contagion and loss of (white) self” (56). In her other essays, Stoler shows how concubinage in many European colonies acquired a different political charge in different periods of colonial history. Initially local women were seen as important sources of knowledge, inexpensive managers of the colonial household, and a means of sexual release. See also Stoler’s “Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender, Race, and Morality in Colonial Asia.”

12. Commenting on the social life in British India between 1786 and 1793, Mildred Archer writes that in that period many of the older Company servants lived settled lives with unofficial Indian wives or bibis. See her *India and British Portraiture* 50–51. The only other instance of official “management” of such relationships in India was in the case of brothels for soldiers posted in Northern India. See Kenneth Ballhatchet’s *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj*, in which he claims that the British made a distinction between the proclivities of the lower and upper classes and hence “provided” for the soldiers whose sexual desires required official management through the setting up of brothels and lock hospitals, i.e. hospitals set up for the treatment of syphilis. See Ballhatchet 10–39.

13. A notable exception is Nancy Paxton’s *Writing under the Raj*. Sangeeta Ray notes in *Engendering India* that the Indian woman disrupts the Victorian family romance, but does not pursue this idea any further. In *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, Jenny Sharpe notes the absence of the Indian woman in allegories of sexual and racial violence. Although Sharpe “makes a case
for the figure of woman being instrumental in shifting a colonial system of meaning from self-interest and moral superiority to self-sacrifice and racial superiority” (7), thereby touching on the concept of “benevolent colonialism,” her project is a study of the “the place of the colonial text in a feminist recovery of European women’s history” (8; my emphasis). Kate Teltscher devotes an entire chapter to representations of Indian women in her *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India 1600–1800*, but her focus is on Orientalist conceptions of highly sexual harem women or Hindu women engaged in horrific heathen practices.

14. John McBratney points out, for instance, that in Kipling’s few interracial romances, the Indian woman is figured as an engulfing, destructive presence that has to be rejected so that the integrity of the British empire can be preserved (*Imperial Subjects* 71).


17. The challenge of such work is to be interdisciplinary at a particular site of empire. The methodological and theoretical challenges of interdisciplinary colonial studies have been admirably met in a recent anthology such as *A New Imperial History*, the originality of which lies in the fact that it draws from scholars who work in many different disciplines, asking questions and covering areas of colonial studies that fall between lines of disciplinary inquiry or that had never found a place in canonized fields of research. Kathleen Wilson, in her introduction to the volume, points out that “empire affected the most quotidian as well as the most momentous aspects of everyday life, cultural production, sociability and identity . . . “ (21). Moving beyond the concerns of history alone, these scholars also take up “the role of representation in enabling, mystifying, and contesting British imperial power” (18–19). By studying different kinds of representation—whether it is the colonial epistle or colonial self-presentation through attire—the essays in this volume construct a microhistory of empire that relies for its narratives on “competing fragments” of history and cross-disciplinary debates.

18. For an extended discussion of this idea, see Karen Chase and Michael Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy* 181–200.

19. By the term “Orientalist,” I mean the group of philologists, historians, and linguists, primarily at the Asiatic Society, founded in Calcutta in 1784 by Warren Hastings. The other prominent members of this group were William Jones, who “discovered” the golden age of Hindu civilization; H. T. Colebrook; William Carey; H. H. Wilson; and John Prinsep. See David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*. The main assumptions of this Orientalist history were that in ancient Hindu, Vedic civilization, literature and the arts flourished, society was affluent and peaceful, women occupied a place of honor in social and familial structures, and the hegemony of Brahmanic culture prevailed. The subsequent decline in the social status of women is indicative of a general social decline.

20. See Uma Chakravarti, “Whatever Happened to the Vedic *Dasi*?: Orientalism, Nationalism, and a Script for the Past,” in *Recasting Women* 27–87. Chakravarti argues that “it is no wonder that the Vedic dasi (woman in servitude), captured, subjugated, and enslaved by the conquering Aryans, but who also represents one
aspect of Indian womanhood, disappeared without leaving a trace of herself in nineteenth century history” (28). This disappearance of the female slave allowed the Orientalists to make sweeping claims about the high status of all women in that period.

21. For a study of the legal and cultural history of Sati in colonial India, see Lata Mani, “Contentious Traditions” 126, and “Production of an Official Discourse on Sati in Early Nineteenth-Century Bengal.” Mani’s work constitutes the single largest contribution to an understanding of Sati as embedded in colonial discourses of government, legal history, and social reform. In her analysis of parliamentary papers and official documents, Mani points out that one of the main assumptions that informed the debates on Sati was “the hegemonic status accorded by colonial officials to brahmanic scriptures in the organization of social life” (“Production” 91).

22. Uma Chakravarti points to a classic and influential example of this preoccupation with the upper-caste Hindu widow. In Henry Colebrook’s first research article, “On the Duties of the Faithful Hindu Widow,” published posthumously in Asiatic Researches in 1894, “predictably, the focal starting point was the ritual of Sati” (Chakravarti 31). Speculating on the impact of this article on the European readers of the journal, she says:

For many decades thereafter a reference to Hindus appears to have evoked the image of a burning woman as recorded by Max Muller almost eighty years later. Whatever other research Colebrook engaged himself with in reconstructing the ‘glories’ of the ancient Hindus, an unintended consequence of his essay on the ‘faithful’ Hindu widow was to add the weight of scholarship to the accounts of travelers and other lay writers whose descriptions of burning women came to represent an integral part of the perception of Indian reality. Colebrook’s account of Sati highlighted an ‘awesome’ aspect of Indian womanhood, carrying both the associations of a barbaric society and of the mystique of the Hindu woman who ‘voluntarily’ and ‘cheerfully’ mounted the funeral pyre of her husband. (Chakravarti 31)

23. Warren Hastings (1732–1818) was Governor of Bengal from 1772 and the first Governor-General of the British territories in India from 1774 to 1785. He was impeached for corruption in 1787, but acquitted in 1795. For a discussion of the trial of Warren Hastings, see Frans de Bruyn, “Edmund Burke’s Gothic Romance: The Portrayal of Warren Hastings in Burke’s Writings and Speeches on India”; Sara Suleri, The Rhetoric of English India 49–74; and Siraj Ahmed, “The Theater of the Civilized Self: Edmund Burke and the East India Trials.”

24. In “The Theater of the Civilized Self,” Siraj Ahmed argues that passages about the cruelty to women in Burke’s speeches to British Parliament show that in Burke’s view “the establishment of colonial rule in British India reverses the narrative of civil society” (37).

25. Sara Suleri warns readers against positing a simple gendered alterity in the colonized landscape (Rhetoric 16). Her dissatisfaction with the gendering of colonized land stems from her conception of the colonial relation in the metaphor of rape. I argue for the rich metaphoric potential of the Indian woman in heterosexual romances.
26. In her study the French Revolution, Lynn Hunt argues that “the French had a kind of collective political unconscious that was structured by narratives of family relations. . . . The revolutionary family romances were not neurotic reactions to disappointment—as in Freud’s formulation—but creative efforts to reimagine the political world, to reimagine a polity unhinged from patriarchal authority” (Hunt xiii).

27. Jyotsna Singh in Colonial Narratives, Cultural Dialogues identifies “the tropes of discovery, civilization, and rescue” as defining the language of colonization, and, in fact, surviving beyond that era (5). She also describes this motif as one of the primary “strategies and themes” of British colonialism together with “discovering, civilizing . . . and cataloguing the Indian empire” (4).

28. Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” 297. Spivak is referring to the British abolition of the practice of Sati, which for them became an index of the state of Indian society at that time.

29. Intellectual historians have also been hard put to establish the exact value of the tropes in which White has suggested that history is conceptualized. These are the tropes of Romance, Tragedy, Comedy, and Satire. The priority of these tropes in organizing historical thinking has been the subject of much debate. As Wulf Kansteiner asks, “should the tropes be considered as preconceptual figures of thought which already determine the initial processing of the material, or are they more adequately described as master concepts which only guide the writing process proper, the actual emplotting of the facts?” (281). See Wulf Kansteiner, “Hayden White’s Critique of the Writing of History.”

30. See Kalle Pihlainen’s compelling exposition on the literature-history debate that arose from Hayden White’s writings in “The Moral of the Historical Story,” especially 51–57. I am indebted to this essay for its description of the trajectory of White’s ideas.

PART I

1. Another side of interracial sexual commerce, which was also considered equally disruptive, is represented by organized prostitution in the regimental brothels. As Kenneth Ballhatchet has shown, these were attached to army barracks and were regulated to provide the soldiers easy access to women, who were kept under the surveillance of the state so that disease could be prevented or contained. See Kenneth Ballhatchet, Race, Sex, and Class under the Raj 14.

2. Mildred Archer’s India and British Portraiture presents a detailed picture of the social history of the Presidencies in the late eighteenth century. See especially 51.


5. Thomas Williamson in East India Vademecum. Quoted in Archer, India and British Portraiture 51.

7. P. J. Marshall points out that “in most morphologies of colonies, India is portrayed as the classic ‘colony of exploitation’ by contrast with ‘colonies of settlement,’ such as Australia” (29).


9. Spear gives the exact numbers: “In 1678–79, there were 74 Company’s servants in Madras; only six were married and had their wives with them. One of the wives was English, one Dutch, two English half-castes, and two Portuguese. In addition, there were six widows and two unmarried ladies in the settlement and sixteen other Europeans in white or black town” (Nabobs 13).

10. S. C. Ghosh points out that the total number of marriages even after 1757 was very low. He takes his evidence from Bengal where between 1757 and 1800, 1 in 4 writers (junior clerks in the Company), 1 in 10 cadets, 1 in 15 to 1 in 45 of the other ranks, and 1 in 8 of nonofficial Europeans married (Social Condition 59).

11. S. C. Ghosh presents the following figures: in 1756, there were 671 European men to 80 women, in 1810, 4000 European men to 250 European women in Bengal (Social Condition 53).

12. David Kopf in British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance describes late-eighteenth-century Orientalists as existing in a “cross-cultural vacuum” (15). Even though relations between the two communities were marked by a certain freedom and informality, the British in India at that time “were alien freebooters longing to return home shouldering their bags of riches” (15).

13. See Ronald Hyam, Empire and Sexuality 117. For disparaging attitudes towards Eurasians, see Ballhatchet 96–122.


15. Durba Ghosh comes to this conclusion from the wills of British men in which they make provisions for their dependents. See Ghosh 118.

16. The word comes from “nawab,” a Muslim aristocrat usually attached to the court or a member of a ruling family. This was adopted into English as “nabob” in the eighteenth century.

17. Perceval Spear dismisses hybridity by saying that smoking hookahs (hubble-bubble pipes) and chewing pan (betel leaf) did not suggest that the English community was coming closer to the mainstream of Indian life (The Nabobs 2).

18. See Nikos Papastergiadis, “Tracing Hybridity in Theory” 259, for this argument.


CHAPTER ONE

1. All letters will henceforth be cited by their dates.

2. Although the original manuscript of the Gardner Papers in the Oriental and India Office Collections in the British Museum are illegible, there is a typed transcript of these letters in the National Army Museum in London. My chapter is based on a reconstruction of the original manuscript with assistance from this typed manuscript.


5. Lionel Gardner’s *The Sabre and the Spur* is the only complete biography of William Linneaus Gardner. The Gardner family to this day sends one son from each generation to lead the army corps set up by William Linneaus. Lionel Gardner lives in Chandigarh in North India.


7. See Dalrymple 180–90.


11. See Roslyn Jolly, “Stevenson’s ‘Sterling Domestic Fiction,’ The Beach of Falesà,” in which she argues that Stevenson’s representation of interracial marriage between the English Wiltshire and the Polynesian Uma calls into question the separation between adventure and domesticity, romance and realism, and between races.

12. Robert Young’s *Colonial Desire* has excellent discussions of the influence of three works on ideas about racial mixing and its consequences for culture: Robert Knox’s *The Races of Men* (1850), Count Gobineau’s *Essay on the Inequality of Races* (1853–55), and Edward Long’s *History of Jamaica* (1774). See *Colonial Desire* 14–17, 99–109, and 150–51, respectively.

13. Compare this with Dalrymple’s speculation about Khair-un-nissa’s views on similar issues: “Khair-un-nissa, one can presume, would have insisted on all the basic traditional ceremonies being performed for her children . . . nor does James seem likely to have opposed his children being brought up as Muslims (340).

14. Also spelled as Begum Samru, and known as Zeb-un-nissa and Joanna Nobilis Somers. She lived from 1750–1836 and was the ruler of the small principality of Sardhana in North India. Aditya Behl writes that “she drew freely on European and Indian models of behaviour and legitimation of authority,” and was part of “a distinctively mixed culture that she helped create in northern India.” See Aditya Behl, “Articulating a Life, in Words and Pictures: Begum Samru and *The Ornament of Histories*” 100. See also Michael Fisher, “Becoming and Making ‘Family’ in Hindustan.”

15. Dalrymple, 496.


CHAPTER TWO

1. For studies of the imperial theme in Victorian domestic fiction, see Gayatri Spivak, Patrick Brantlinger, Susan Meyer, Dierdre David, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan,
and Jenny Sharpe. But while studies of canonical authors such as Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, and W. M. Thackeray have taken this injunction very seriously, literature generated in the colonies has not been studied with the same urgency.

2. My argument is influenced by Roslyn Jolly’s study of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Beach of Falesa*, which, she argues, is a hybrid genre in which Stevenson rejects the values and generic properties of the colonial adventure to adopt the “feminine realm of domestic fiction.” She shows that his representation of interracial marriage between the English Wiltshire and the Polynesian Uma calls into question the separation between adventure and domesticity, romance and realism, and between races. See R. Jolly, “Stevenson’s ‘Sterling Domestic Fiction,’ *The Beach of Falesa*” 463. Other texts that have been discussed in these terms include H. Rider Haggard’s *She* and *King Solomon’s Mines*, and Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness*. See Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* 240–48.

3. Most studies of Anglo-Indian domesticity focus on the “women’s sphere” as constituted by *memsahibs* or wives of British civil servants. See Rosemary George, *The Politics of Home*; Alison Sainsbury, “Married to the Empire: The Anglo-Indian Domestic Novel”; and Margaret Stieg, “Indian Romances: Tracts for the Times.” A recent exception is Nancy Paxton’s *Writing under the Raj*. A second set of writings on Anglo-Indian culture also focus on the role of white women in India. These include Barbara Ramusack’s “Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies” and Antoinette M. Burton’s “The White Woman’s Burden: British Feminists and ‘The Indian Woman,’ 1865–1915.”

4. Paxton explores stock Indian figures such as evil queens, dancing girls, and intriguing residents of the *zenana* or harems who can be seen as the antithesis of the self-immolating and faithful Sati. However, in her reading of interracial marriages Paxton focuses more on literary narratives about relationships between “New Women” and Indian men than on the dynamics of relationships between Englishmen and Indian women.

5. All references to these two novels are from Bithia Mary Croker, *The Company’s Servant: A Romance of Southern India*. Leipzig, Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1908 and *In Old Madras*. Leipzig, Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1913. Page numbers follow cited text.

6. As Abena Busia has argued, *Heart of Darkness* is posited on the silencing of the African woman, and hence the erasure of miscegenation. See her “Miscegenation as Metonymy: Sexuality and Power in the Colonial Novel.”

7. For a descriptive account of this genre see Margaret Stieg and Alison Sainsbury.


10. The founder, Baron Tauchnitz, described as a “fervent Anglophile,” is said to have declared that “As a German-Saxon it gave me particular pleasure to promote the literary interest of my Anglo-Saxon cousins, by rendering English literature as universally known as possible beyond the limits of the British Empire” (Todd and Bowden vii).

11. On its frontispiece, Croker’s *In Old Madras* declares: “The Copyright of this Collection is purchased for Continental Circulation only, and the volumes may therefore not be introduced into Great Britain or her Colonies.”
12. See Stoler, “Making Empire Respectable.” Anna Davin and Hanneke Ming also argue that interracial marriage and its management were central to colonial cultures in Africa and Southeast Asia, respectively. See A. Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood” and H. Ming, “Barracks Concubinage in the Indies, 1887–1920.”

13. Alison Sainsbury traces the English heritage of the Anglo-Indian romance to “the ‘domestic novel,’ focused on women’s activities in the home, the sentimental novel, with its defence of virginity, and the gothic novel, whose ‘exotic’ settings betoken threat” (163).


15. See John Sutherland’s introduction to The New Nineteenth Century: Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction. Also see Lyn Pykett’s “Afterword” and articles by Toni Johnson-Woods and Gail Turley Houston in Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context. Another collection which emphasizes reader response and underscores the fact that such fiction could both endorse and subvert ideological norms it represents, is Feminist Readings of Victorian Popular Texts.

PART II

1. Though there was no unified notion of the colonial State in India at least in the first half of the nineteenth century, the policies of the East India Company on most issues were directed by uniform principles and in effect functioned as a form of state power.

2. For a detailed discussion of these debates see C. C. Elridge, England’s Mission.

3. See Lata Mani, Contentious Traditions; Gauri Viswanathan, Masks of Conquest; and Minalini Sinha, Colonial Masculinity.


5. Paramountcy changed and evolved as a policy through the nineteenth century. Though the groundwork for annexations was laid by Governors-General Cornwallis (1786–1793) and Richard Wellesley (1798–1805), I am concerned mainly with the tenure of Dalhousie (1848–1856). After Dalhousie’s aggressive annexations, which were perceived by some to have caused the revolt of 1857, Queen Victoria announced in 1858 that the earlier treaties and agreements with the native princes would be honored by the British government which took over direct administration of India, thereby ending the rule of the East India Company. Annexations did not really stop after 1858, and as Ian Copland points out, 1890–1914 was a period of the reconstruction of Paramountcy. See his The British Raj and the Indian Princes.

6. Sri Nandan Prasad points out in Paramountcy under Dalhousie that as a political equation, Paramountcy was unique to India and unlike other such political
relationships, such as the Romanization of subordinate states in Imperial Rome or, closer home, the feudal relationship between the Mughals and their vassals.

7. See Michael Fisher’s *Indirect Rule in India* 30. This is the most detailed study of the Residents as part of a coherent system of governance in India.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Other works of this kind would include two works by J. W. Kaye, *The Administration of the East India Company: A History of Indian Progress* (1853) and *A History of the Sepoy War in India* 1857–58. See also Edwin Arnold, *The Marquis of Dalhousie’s Administration of British India*. Nineteenth-century observers such as Charles Jackson, member of the Governor-General’s council in his *A Vindication of the Marquis of Dalhousie’s Indian Administration* (1865), and William Lee-Warner in his *The Protected Princes of India* (1894), both defend Dalhousie’s policy of annexation. Later historians question the legality and wisdom of these annexations and point to the injustice perpetrated on the widows of the deceased kings as a consequence of these annexations, although they do not make a simplistic connection between Dalhousie’s doctrine of lapse and the Revolt of 1857. M. A. Rahim’s *Lord Dalhousie’s Administration of the Conquered and Annexed States* (1963) makes an admirable case for this point of view. B. D. Basu’s *The Story of Satara* (1922) is cast as a eulogy of the dead king in which the condition of the hapless widow is used as an emotionally charged instance of the ruthlessness of the colonial regime. None analyzes the strategies by which the queens negotiated their right to power and personal property with the East India Company, a process that questioned Victorian ideologies of gender.

2. See Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India*, especially 128–29 for this point. Travers notes “these [land] disputes suggest both how the political revolutions of recent years had contributed to an unsettled environment for land rights, and also that female landholders may have been especially vulnerable to attacks to their rights” (128).

3. It is important to note here that this dispute happened at a time soon after the passing of the Regulating Act of 1773 by which British Parliament sought to reorganize and regulate the affairs of the Company and restrain its excesses. A new five-man Supreme Council was nominated and for the first time a Crown court, the Supreme Court, presided over by British judges, would sit in Calcutta and have jurisdiction over ‘His Majesty’s subjects in India.’ The supervisory function of the Council inevitably created tensions with the Company government of Bengal, which saw the members of the Council as meddlesome outsiders. See Travers 143–80.

4. See a detailed discussion of this case in Travers 191–200.

5. This is a point famously made by Lata Mani in her discussion of the self-immolating widow or Sati. She argues that the debates around the abolition of Sati demonstrated most dramatically the centrality of the “native woman” to the definition and exercise of patriarchal authority, both British and Indian. The Sati, who evoked both horror and admiration in England, became a poignant image for the need for enlightened British rule which would save the Hindu widow from a
horrible fate. East India Company policy, on the other hand, dictated restraint and caution in dealing with such socio-religious controversies.

7. See Prem Chowdhry, “Customs in a Peasant Economy” 316.
8. See note 9, Introduction.
9. Banka Bai was to be given Rs. 120,000; the eldest Rani Rs. 50,000; and each of the remaining RANIS Rs. 25,000. Appa Sahib’s widow was to be given Rs. 10,000 and the other women Rs. 20,000 as annual life pensions (qtd. in Rahim 249).
10. Rahim does not mention how this petition was received or whether the Rani was given back some or all her personal property. This, to me, is also indicative of the fact that British negotiations with these women have been relegated to the margins of history and do not inform social and cultural histories of this period.
11. In his edited collection The Politics of the British Annexation of India, Michael Fisher includes three letters written by the Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi to the Marquis of Dalhousie protesting against the annexation of Jhansi. All references to these letters are from this edition.
12. Joyce Lebra-Chapman offers a detailed account of the birth of the legend of the Rani which refers to British and Indian reports of the Rani’s last battle. See The Rani of Jhansi 114–17.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. This was edited and completed by his daughter in 1874.
2. Henry Reeve was a prominent writer on foreign affairs for The Times, and encouraged Taylor to write on India for the same newspaper. Taylor’s letters to him were written between 1840 and 1849. In these letters, Taylor allows himself the license of close friendship to comment freely on Indian politics, and the foibles of Indian administrators and politicians.
3. For other discussions of this novel, which discuss the complexities of Mead-ows Taylor’s colonial relationship with him, see Patrick Brantlinger, Rule of Dark-ness 86–90; Javed Majeed, “Meadows Taylor’s Confessions of a Thug: The Anglo-Indian Novel as a Genre in the Making”; Parama Roy, “Discovering India, Imagining Thuggee”; and Mary Poovey, “Ambiguity and Historicism: Interpreting Confessions of a Thug.”
4. I am not proposing here that Taylor’s literary work simply reflects his public life, even though he invites us to make that assumption when he claims in his introduction to Seeta that this novel is based on an incident that took place in his district court.
5. Title given to the Muslim ruler of Hyderabad.
6. Taylor seems to have been an Orientalist of the old school who developed a taste for Indian literature and respect for indigenous knowledge. David Kopf, discussing the process of acculturation of the British, writes that late-eighteenth-cen-tury Orientalists existed in a “cross-cultural vacuum” (15). Even though relations between the two communities were marked by a certain freedom and informality, the British in India at that time “were alien freebooters longing to return home shouldering their bags of riches” (15). In his view, the establishment of the College
of Fort William in 1800 inaugurated a period of acculturation, when a network of social relationships developed between Englishmen and Indians as a result of a “merging of interests between the two communities” (7). See David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*. This new spirit is best expressed in a letter by Warren Hastings to Nathaniel Smith, Chairman of the East India Company, in 1784:

> Every accumulation of knowledge and especially such as is obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise a dominion founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the state . . . it attracts and conciliates distant affections; it lessens the weight of the chain by which the natives are held in subjection; and it imprints on the hearts of our own countrymen the sense and obligation of benevolence.

Quoted in O. P. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India’s Past 1784–1838*.

7. Messalina was the wife of Claudius, fourth emperor of Rome. She was put to death for her political crimes and sexual profligacy (*Oxford Classical Dictionary*).

8. See *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* 190 for a brief history of the name.

9. I quote from a conversation between Brandon and his friend Mostyn in which they discuss the relative merits of an Indian and an English wife. Referring to their ancestors, the eighteenth-century Orientalists who had lived happily with Indian wives or concubines, they conclude that even in the present time of racial segregation, an Indian wife had much to recommend her.

10. An epic in Sanskrit which narrates, in the manner of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the battles, travails, and ultimate destruction of two princely families and their descendants, many of whom are heroes renowned for their martial valor.

11. Gauri Viswanathan, “Currying Favor” 85. An extended version of the argument of this essay is included in her comprehensive *Masks of Conquest*.

12. T. B. Macaulay in his famous minute on Education in India recorded on 2 February 1835 said, “We must at present do our best to form a class of people who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.”


14. The mild, effeminate Hindu was an idea that also dominated legislative history in colonial India, giving rise to the idea of the effeminate ‘Bengali babu’ who lacked the ‘manly’ qualities of a good administrator. For an extensive treatment of this subject, see Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*.

15. The Revolt of 1857 was caused by a complex set of interrelated discontents with the East India Company. It is impossible to summarize all the issues that caused the revolt in different states in North and Central India, but historians agree that both Hindus and Moslems of different classes participated in the uprising. The grievances of the supporters of the rebellion were both economic and cultural. While the native elite were desperate to get back political power and the privileges attached to independent states, the peasants were restless and dissatisfied with the
pressures they had to cope with after the British introduced a new revenue settlement. The Sepoys in the army were angered by rumors that the cartridges they used were greased with cow or pig fat. For outlaws who existed on the peripheries of the law, this was an occasion for plunder and looting. It was thus a complex medley of grievances among many different economic and social constituencies that prompted the armed uprising called the Sepoy Revolt. For different perspectives on the Revolt of 1857 see Ainslee T. Embree’s *1857 in India*; William Kaye’s *A History of the Sepoy War in India 1857–58*; and Eric Stokes and C. A. Bayly, *The Peasant Armed: the Indian Revolt of 1857*. See also Gautum Chakravarty’s *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination*, in which he argues that Kaye is thus able to ascribe both the sepoy insurgency and its ultimate containment to the superiority of English administration and its liberal reform of Indian society.

**CONCLUSION**

5. Quoted in Joshi 1.
7. Syed Firdaus Ashraf points out that Jodhabai is not mentioned in Abul Fazl’s *Akbarnama*, Abdul Qadir Badayuni’s *Mutakhabutawarikh*, or Nizamuddin Ahmed’s *Tabqat-i-Akbari*. See his “Did Jodhabai really exist?”
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