

**Laying History at the Foot of the Throne: History Writing in the Aftermath of 19th-Century
Revolts in the British Empire**

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Abstract

In this thesis, I study British history writing in the aftermath of 19th-century revolts in the British Empire, specifically the Indian Uprising of 1857-8 and the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865. These revolts were cataclysmic and called into question notions of race, empire, and history. I will analyze the British histories written in the aftermath of each revolt and also study the two revolts in a comparative framework. Throughout the thesis, I will study historians' narrative strategies, modalities of writing, and worldviews. A key part of my analysis will be about how race was employed by British historians as an explanatory variable to analyze revolts in the British Empire. As we shall see, a major revolt would force British historians and Britons writ large to return to historical knowledge and history writing. It would compel them to reexamine the palimpsest to discern where things had gone wrong. As they sought explanations for these revolts, they inevitably ran into a morally charged question: were all humans in the Empire equal to one another?

Résumé

Dans cette thèse, j'étudie l'écriture de l'histoire britannique au lendemain des révoltes du XIX^e siècle dans l'Empire britannique, en particulier le soulèvement indien de 1857-1858 et la rébellion de Morant Bay de 1865. Ces révoltes ont été cataclysmiques et ont remis en question les notions de race, d'empire et d'histoire. J'analyse les histoires britanniques écrites au lendemain de chaque révolte et j'étudie également les deux révoltes dans un cadre comparatif. Tout au long de la thèse, j'étudie les stratégies narratives, les modalités d'écriture et les visions du monde des historiens. Une partie importante de mon analyse porte sur la façon dont la race a été utilisée par les historiens britanniques comme variable explicative pour analyser les révoltes dans l'Empire britannique. Des révoltes majeures ont obligé les historiens britanniques et les Britanniques en général à revenir à la connaissance historique et à l'écriture de l'histoire. Elles les ont obligées à réexaminer le palimpseste pour discerner où les choses ont mal tourné. En cherchant des explications à ces révoltes, ils se sont inévitablement heurtés à une question à forte charge morale : tous les humains de l'Empire étaient-ils égaux les uns aux autres ?

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Introduction: History on the Eve of Revolt

I. Looking Back at The Other Side of Rebellion

Eastern minds have long memories. The English memory is more easygoing and brief than any other national memory, which is why we are so amazed when we find that other people remember hangings or shootings that are quite fifty years old.¹

Edward John Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal*

While writing his 1925 book *The Other Side of the Medal*, Edward John Thompson (1886-1946) was hoping to revisit events that had taken place in India almost seven decades before. He declared the Indian Uprising of 1857-58² as “the one episode when we really were guilty of the cruellest injustice on the greatest scale.”³ A Methodist missionary with extensive contacts with notable Indian personalities, Thompson was hoping to mediate Indian opinion on colonial rule (including the memory of the Mutiny) to the British public, which he felt had become indifferent to Indian affairs.⁴ Thompson pointed towards a critical engagement with history as the direction of salvation for British rule. Specifically, he targeted the British histories written about the Uprising, which he felt had cumulatively poisoned British attitudes towards India. In this light, the Amritsar Massacre of 1919 was the latest consequence of such dehumanizing attitudes.

So thorough a job he felt he had done that, in the preface to the American edition of his book, Thompson wrote that “I have not heard a dog bark in defence of the accepted ‘histories’ of the Mutiny.”⁵ The historiographical demolition job was complete as far as he was concerned. Profound

¹ Edward John Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1926), 48.

² I prefer the term ‘The Indian Uprising’ over ‘The Mutiny’ or ‘The First War of Independence’ in this thesis. The former implies that the revolt was simply a military mutiny with no civil or popular backing. The latter is a characterization of the revolt as the expression of a unified Indian nationalist movement which would eventually achieve independence from Great Britain in 1947. By using the term ‘The Indian Uprising’, I hope to focus on the revolt without affirming any of these labels and their associated political agendas. As numerous historians have shown, the revolt belies such simple characterizations.

³ Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal*, 31.

⁴ Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal*, 15.

⁵ Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal*, 6.

reflection on one's nation's history, including its crimes, was essential. Indeed, in urging Britons to feel some remorse and sorrow at their country's actions during the Indian Uprising, Thompson believed that "if my own people brought are ever to acknowledge a wrong that they have done in the past, they will be doing what no people has done yet, in the history of the world."⁶ Expiating the sins of a nation was another way for that nation to be at the forefront of universal progress. Historical reckoning was an exercise a great nation ought to be engaged in. As Priya Satia writes in her 2020 book *Time's Monster: How History Makes History*, "Guilty conscience had long been an integral part of the pursuit of empire."⁷

At the same time, Thompson believed that history was a distinctly British preoccupation. He believed that "Indians are not historians: and they rarely show any critical ability. Even their most useful books, books full of research and information, exasperate with their repetitions and diffuseness, and lose effect by their uncritical enthusiasms. Such solid highways to scholarly esteem and approval as indexes and bibliographies are almost unknown to them. So they are not likely to displace our account of our connection with India."⁸ Important as history writing was to the fate of the British Empire in India, it was a pursuit that Indians weren't predisposed towards, according to Thompson. For him, Indians, by virtue of their apparent lack of critical thinking and ignorance of bibliographies, were not historians and, therefore, could not displace the hegemonic British account of the Indian Mutiny, let alone the larger history of the Empire in India. Thompson's is among the frankest admissions of the link between power and knowledge in the annals of empire. As we shall see throughout this thesis, it was not unique.

⁶ Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal*, 6.

⁷ Priya Satia, *Time's Monster: How History Makes History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2020), 105.

⁸ Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal*, 29-30.

I will study British history writing in the aftermath of 19th-century revolts in the British Empire, specifically the Indian Uprising of 1857-8 and the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865. These revolts were two of the most consequential ones in the British Empire in the second half of the 19th century. They instigated disarray and reassessment throughout the Empire, especially the metropole. They were watershed moments when questions about race, empire, and history were pondered profoundly. In their aftermath, Britons turned to historical knowledge and history writing. History offered a means to reexamine the palimpsest to discern where things had gone wrong or where the causes of the revolts lay. As British historians navigated the violent cataclysm of 19th-century revolts, they inevitably ran into an immensely consequential ethical question: were all humans in the Empire equal to one another?

In this introductory chapter, I will sketch some of the relevant ideational and historiographical context in which 19th-century British histories of the Indian Uprising and the Morant Bay Rebellion were written. Particularly, I will parse out important ideas about the importance of history and history writing through the works and ideas of two major historians, William Robertson and Thomas Macaulay. Through the example of Robertson, I will explore two key themes of this thesis. First, how the Scottish Enlightenment influenced British history writing from the late 18th century onwards. Second, how revolts in the Empire subverted historians' worldviews or their particular understanding of how history worked. Robertson's thoughts on American independence from Britain illustrate how radically transformative and destabilizing revolts could be not just in the realm of politics but also in the abstract realm of historical thinking. This was because revolts called into question historians' sense of the connection between the past and the present.

In the case of Thomas Macaulay, I will analyze his critique of and recommendations for historians in his famous essay "The Task of the Modern Historian." The ideas penned in this

essay will be useful in analyzing the histories written in the aftermath of the Indian Uprising and the Morant Bay Rebellion, especially vis-à-vis affective appeals to a British readership. Moreover, I will argue that Macaulay's *The History of England* exemplified a prevalent historical worldview whereby time was seen as linear, progressive, and universal. Through such a worldview, the notion of a people's 'improvement' became essential to historical, political, and racist thinking. Through histories like Macaulay's, Britons were championed as the people who were pioneering a trajectory of 'improvement' and 'refinement' that all other colonized and racialized peoples were to follow in the future. A worldview of perceiving the future of the colonies as basically the history of Great Britain's 'improvement' was enshrined. Thus, when the revolts in India and Jamaica erupted, the actions of the colonized were often judged as petulant instances of irrational resistance against the civilizing progress of time.

Next, I will go back in time to briefly trace the development of British historiography on India, from Robert Orme to Alexander Dow to James Mill. This list is by no means exhaustive but it helps us discern important historiographical trends that profoundly shaped history writing in the aftermath of the Indian Uprising. James Mill's *The History of British India* was the most prominent and influential manifestation of what has been called the 'colonial episteme' with respect to British history writing on India. Mill's denunciations of Indians using a civilizational scale that ran from rudeness to refinement was immensely influential in British governance and history writing.

By the time Macaulay rose to prominence as a historian in the middle of the 19th century, an extensive number of histories of the Empire's distant possessions and subject peoples had accumulated. By then, one could find British histories of the peoples of the Americas (e.g. Robertson), the West Indies (e.g. Bryan Edwards), and India (e.g. Mill) which cumulatively allowed thinkers to position all peoples in the Empire on a civilizational scale.

Through history, British intellectuals could determine whether a given people were ‘rude’ or ‘refined.’ Such classificatory practices were not lost on the historians who wrote about the Indian Uprising and the Morant Bay Rebellion in the latter half of the 19th century.

II. Lost to the Empire and to Me—The Enlightenment and Subversion of History

But alas America is now lost to the Empire and to me, & what would have been a great introduction to the settlement of British Colonies, will suit very ill the establishment of Independent states.⁹

William Robertson, 1784.

Edward John Thompson’s arguments about the British penchant and Indian aversion to history emanated from a set of ideas that had congealed into scholarly common sense since the Enlightenment. As Priya Satia reminds us, “History became central to the Enlightenment episteme of ethics, or “moral philosophy,” the branch of philosophy focused on systematizing concepts of right and wrong conduct.”¹⁰ European intellectuals began to write and study history as an imperative scholarly pursuit that would help them understand the world and its peoples. By the time the Indian Uprising erupted, the aspiring historians of the event in the English language could look back at a series of influential historians as ideal practitioners and thinkers of the discipline, including David Hume, William Robertson, Adam Smith, Edward Gibbon, and Thomas Babington Macaulay.

Scholars like Jane Rendall have studied the intellectual legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment and the discourse of orientalism in the writings of its major figures. As Rendall argues, the method of ‘philosophical history’ emerged during the Scottish Enlightenment under Dugald Stewart (1753-

⁹ Robertson quoted in Florence Petroff, “William Robertson’s Unfinished History of America. The Foundation of the British Empire in North America and the Scottish Enlightenment,” *Transatlantica*, 2019, 5. In the endnote for the citation of this letter, Petroff adds that “The British Library identifies Lord Hardwicke as the recipient of the letter, but Jeffrey R. Smitten argues that the recipient is more likely Sir Robert Keith (Smitten, 1990 175, 179).”

¹⁰ Satia, *Time’s Monster*, 14.

1828). ‘Philosophical history’ entailed the application of methods of the natural sciences to study humankind. As Rendall writes:

The starting point was the close interrelationship between all aspects of men’s life within society, between the economy, government, culture, and social life of a people. Secondly, a civilization, by which was implied all these aspects of a society, could be located on an evolutionary scale, a ladder of civilizations running from ‘rudeness’ to ‘refinement.’ Thirdly, the mode of subsistence of a particular society tended to play a critical part in determining the location of a civilization on that scale...Fourthly, progress from one stage to another was slow, undirected, sometimes accidental, but rarely the result of deliberate human intervention.¹¹

In addition to this general paradigm of historical enquiry, most historians of note in British circles had some form of colonial experience in India. Jane Rendall avers that “these writers were prepared to apply a ‘philosophical’ framework to the history, including the ancient history, of Indian civilisations, and to the study of contemporary Indian societies; they shared a common European assumption of superiority.”¹²

Additionally, tracing the multifaceted ways in which the works of Enlightenment intellectuals (especially Adam Smith, Edward Gibbon, Immanuel Kant, and Georg Hegel) shaped the disciplines of ethics (or moral philosophy) and history, Priya Satia concludes that:

the discipline of history, for all its claims to materialism, is also supposed to possess transcendental power. Kant alluded to this. Hegel spelled it out: that the point of the historical discipline is to discover the underlying rational principle behind the empirical records. History has a dual nature, a split self: at once social scientific and humanistic, materialist and metaphysical. As a narrative form, it insists on an empirical foundation but then willfully weaves imaginative truth from it—morphing into myth when fecklessly unmoored.¹³

In a similar vein, Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that “history means both the facts of the matter and a narrative of the those facts, both “what happened” and “that which is said to have happened.” The

¹¹ Jane Rendall, “Scottish Orientalism: From Robertson to James Mill”, *The Historical Journal* 25, no.1 (1982): 43. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00009857>.

¹² Rendall, “Scottish Orientalism: From Robertson to James Mill”, 44. Rendall goes on to mention a series of important Scottish writers on India who were shaped by the historical method of Dugald Stewart, including James Mackintosh, William Erskine, and Mountstuart Elphinstone.

¹³ Satia, *Time’s Monster*, 55.

first meaning places the emphasis on the sociohistorical process, the second on our knowledge of that process or on a story about that process.”¹⁴

As we shall see in the chapters to come, historians writing about the Indian Uprising of 1857 and the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 in the English language would adhere to the disciplinary requirement of empiricism, trying their best to discover and present the ‘truth’ through a meticulous reading, systematic cataloguing, and analysis of historical sources. Simultaneously, however, the task of interpreting history and offering judgements and advice on contemporary moral and political issues was crucial. This is where the transcendental power of history came to the fore. To paraphrase Satia’s comments, the ‘weaving of imaginative truth’ from historical narrative was as vital a part of an historian’s vocation as their commitment to empiricism.

For example, in the preface to the first volume of *The History of America*, William Robertson wrote that:

The longer I reflect on the nature of historical composition, the more I am convinced that this scrupulous accuracy is necessary. The historian who records the events of his own time, is credited in proportion to the opinion which the Public entertains with respect to his means of information and his veracity. He who delineates the transactions of a remote period, has no title to claim assent, unless he produces evidence in proof of his assertions. Without this, he may write an amusing tale, but cannot said to have composed an authentic history.¹⁵

We find Robertson affirming the importance of empiricism here. In adherence to this ethic, he included an extensive catalogue of Spanish books and manuscripts that he consulted in the writing of his eminent text. The catalogue served to concurrently reveal all the Spanish sources Robertson had

¹⁴ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1995), 2.

¹⁵ William Robertson, *The Works of William Robertson. Vol. 6. A Catalogue of Spanish Books and Manuscripts and The History of America, books 1-4* (London: T. Cadell, 1840), Preface. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/the-works-of-william-robertson-vol-6-a-catalogue-of-spanish-books-and-manuscripts-and-the-history-of-america-books-1-4>.

consulted to the readers and leave behind a historiographical trail for future scholars of the subject to follow.

With extensive detail, Robertson's histories charted the emergence of nation-states in Europe and the spread of empires to the 'New World.' Inseparably attached to this approach was the desire to comprehend the intricate workings of history. Robertson planned *The History of America* to capture the rise of the Spanish Empire in the Americas followed by its displacement by the British Empire. The thirteen colonies were expected to be a transplantation of Britain in the New World that helped Britain displace Spain, culminating in a providentially sanctioned unity of empire. However, the American Revolutionary War rendered Robertson's historical vision moot against contemporary political realities. In a letter to Lord Hardwicke dated March 8, 1784, Robertson wrote about the reasons for abandoning the project. One was ill health. The other, however, was the American Revolutionary War's upending of the initial purpose of *The History of America*:

I had written between two and three hundred pages of excellent History of the British Colonies in North America, I long flattered myself that the war might terminate so favourably for G. Britain, that I might go on with my work. But alas America is now lost to the Empire and to me, & what would have been a great introduction to the settlement of British Colonies, will suit very ill the establishment of Independent states.¹⁶

William Robertson's abandonment of his historical project illustrates how he was a historian within a particular temporal, political, religious, racial, and imperial context. Even after meticulous historical research and profound inquiry into the so-called historical laws of progression, a historian could be perplexed by contemporary events. The British Empire's preponderance over the North

¹⁶ Robertson quoted in Florence Petroff, "William Robertson's Unfinished History of America. The Foundation of the British Empire in North America and the Scottish Enlightenment," *Transatlantica*, 2019, 5.

American continent was envisioned as the telos of history by Robertson. This was not the last time a revolt would upend a historian's worldview about the British Empire's 'illusion of permanence.'¹⁷

III. Emerging from the Darkness—Macaulay and the Search for a Perfect History

At length the darkness begins to break; and the country which had been lost to view as Britain reappears as England.¹⁸

Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James II*

This fixed way of thinking has influenced our historians. It causes them, I think, to miss the true point of view in describing the eighteenth century. They make too much of the mere parliamentary wrangle and the agitations about liberty, in all which matters the eighteenth century of England was but a pale reflexion of the seventeenth. They do not perceive that in that century the history of England is not in England but in America and Asia.¹⁹

J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England*

As Catherine Hall, Theodore Koditschek, and the multiple biographers of Thomas Macaulay have recounted, his life was steeped in the reading, writing, and contemplation of history from the cradle to the grave. Hall avers that his historical outlook was “born of an intimate knowledge of the King James Bible and his parents’ Evangelical providentialism.”²⁰ In his 1828 essay “The Task of the Modern Historian”, a slew of eminent historians from Herodotus to David Hume to Edward Gibbon to William Mitford were severely critiqued.²¹ Herodotus was excoriated for writing “his story like a slovenly witness, who, heated by partialities and prejudices, unacquainted with the established rules of evidence, and uninstructed as to the obligations of his oath, confounds what he

¹⁷ Francis G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015).

¹⁸ Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Macaulay's History of England from the Accession of James II. In Four Volumes. Volume One. Introduction by Douglas Jerrold* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1953, originally published in 1848), 5.

¹⁹ J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England. Two Courses of Lectures* (Boston: Egberts Brothers, 1883), 9.

²⁰ Catherine Hall, *Macaulay and Son: Architects of Imperial Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 261.

²¹ Thomas Macaulay, “The Task of the Modern Historian” in *Little Masterpieces: Volume IV (Macaulay)*, ed. Bliss Perry (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1909), 4-7. Originally published in *Edinburgh Review* in May 1828.

imagines with what he has seen and heard.”²² Hume, on the other hand, although “an accomplished advocate”, was considered guilty of giving undue “prominence to all the circumstances which support his case; he glides lightly over those which are unfavorable to it.”²³ The greatest scorn was reserved for William Mitford (1744-1827) and his multivolume *The History of Greece*. Macaulay charged Mitford of distorting facts and cherry-picking evidence to support antidemocratic conclusions.²⁴

Consequently, Macaulay believed that “While our historians are practicing all the arts of controversy, they miserably neglect the art of narration, the art of interesting the affections and presenting pictures to the imagination.”²⁵ The ideal historian ought to meld an adherence to an empirical historical method of enquiry with engaging narrative strategies. Only then could the past be brought to life and made useful in the present since “No past event has any intrinsic importance. The knowledge of it is valuable only as it leads us to form just calculations with respect to the future.”²⁶ Only then could histories be written which “would be received by the imagination as well as by the reason. It would not be merely traced on the mind, but branded into it.”²⁷ Following these prescriptions, Macaulay set about to write a monumental history of Britain, one that would indeed be branded into the country’s popular memory.

Though he did not manage to bring the historical arc of England anywhere near to the intended ending of the 1832 Reform Act, Macaulay succeeded in writing an enduring and extremely popular text. The first volume of *The History of England from the Accession of James II* was published in December 1848 to widespread acclaim. It became a bestseller that was swiftly

²² Macaulay, “The Task of the Modern Historian”, 4.

²³ Macaulay, “The Task of the Modern Historian”, 4.

²⁴ Macaulay, “The Task of the Modern Historian”, 7.

²⁵ Macaulay, “The Task of the Modern Historian”, 8.

²⁶ Macaulay, “The Task of the Modern Historian”, 10.

²⁷ Macaulay, “The Task of the Modern Historian”, 20.

translated into multiple European languages. Subsequent volumes continued to sell copiously. It is estimated that over a million volumes of Macaulay's work were in circulation by the end of the 19th century.²⁸ It was the history of the emergence of a nation read by a nation.

Catherine Hall writes that the text was structured like the New Testament "with its cycle of 'the agony of the constitution followed by deliverance and partial renewal.'"²⁹ Macaulay's history deemed the Magna Carta or Great Charter as the beginning of the English nation. In the 14th century, the nascent English nation endeavored to create an empire in Europe. However, the English nation came into its own through two key paradigm shifts: 1) the dissolution of distinctions between Normans and Saxons and 2) the end of distinctions of masters and slaves in feudal society.³⁰ With the Reformation, the English nation challenged the backwardness of Catholicism. With the accession of James VI, England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland were brought together into the same empire. After the abuse of monarchical power by Charles I, Oliver Cromwell, despite some excesses, made England "the most formidable power in the world."³¹ After Charles II's restoration to the Crown, the discipline of the monarchy declined once again, setting the stage for yet another clash between Parliament and the Crown. Macaulay then critiqued the reign of James II, following that with the ascent of William III to the throne. He wrote that William was invited to England by the Whigs at a time when the nation had come together in 1688. It was through the Glorious Revolution that an enduring balance between the Crown and Parliament was baked into British political life. This was England's "last revolution."³²

²⁸ Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination*, 133.

²⁹ Hall, *Macaulay and Son*, 277.

³⁰ Hall, *Macaulay and Son*, 279.

³¹ Macaulay, *History of England from the Accession of James II*, 104.

³² Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Macaulay's History of England from the Accession of James II. In Four Volumes. Volume Four: Introduction by Douglas Jerrold* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1953, originally published in 1848), 323.

This one paragraph summary does not do justice to the text. However, for the purposes of this thesis, three things are important. Firstly, Macaulay's *The History of England* reified the British Empire as an expression of the incremental attainment of enlightenment, civilization, stability, and freedom over time. He declared that "the history of our country during the last hundred and sixty years is eminently the history of physical, of moral, and of intellectual improvement."³³ For Macaulay, the crucial element in British improvement compared with other nations was the lack of violent revolution. Unlike its European counterparts, Britain seemed to reform without prolonged violent instability. This argument was especially pertinent given the wider revolutionary context in which the text was published in 1848. There is an indomitable sense of optimism in Macaulay's writing when he looks back at the so-called barbaric past of England. He wrote that "no man who is correctly informed as to the past will be disposed to take a morose or desponding view of the present."³⁴ If the present seemed disillusioning, one ought to look back at the past to realize how the present was, in fact, the glorious culmination of a progression of enlightenment, civilization, and freedom over centuries.

Secondly, as Theodore Koditschek argues, for the adherents of the "the Macaulayite Whig and imperial romance", there was a message for subordinated groups within Great Britain and its empire: over time, the glorious story of Britain would spread and embrace them in the universal progression of history.³⁵ In other words, there was no rationale for revolt against British rule. If the English could look at the past and be optimistic about their present, the colonized ought to look to the future to be sanguine about their present. In Koditschek's words, "Yesterday Clive and Hastings.

³³ Macaulay, *History of England from the Accession of James II*, 2.

³⁴ Macaulay, *History of England from the Accession of James II*, 2.

³⁵ Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination*, 146.

Today Macaulay. Tomorrow the remasculinized Indian, West Indian, and African, all English in taste, intellect, and opinion, whatever their color or blood.”³⁶

Finally, Macaulay’s prose was meant to be read by a British audience. The consistent use of the pronoun ‘we’ along with the possessive pronoun ‘our’ is employed throughout. As he writes about the story of the civilizational ascent of ‘our ancestors’, Macaulay’s hypothetical reader is undoubtedly British. This style of history writing would continue in the works of historians we will study in subsequent chapters. Historical writing was safely assumed to be a dialogue between Britons rather than an international audience who, in many cases, were tied to the British Empire as its subjects.

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Macaulay grew up steeped in history as well as empire. His father, Zachary Macaulay (1768-1838), was an eminent evangelical abolitionist who was part of the Clapham Sect. The elder Macaulay had worked as a plantation bookkeeper in Jamaica and served as Governor of British Sierra Leone. In England, he became a prominent abolitionist who helped found the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery and edited the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*. Unsurprisingly then, Thomas Macaulay’s upbringing comprised a profound immersion in the political, social, religious, and imperial affairs of the day. For the purposes of this thesis, suffice it to say, his philosophical and historical outlook encompassed the vastness of the British Empire, from Jamaica to India. He was aware of the situations of the different peoples in the Empire and contemplated Britain’s role with them. One of the most succinct and racist expressions of Macaulay’s trans-imperial worldview is to be found in a poem in a letter he wrote to his sister, Hannah More Macaulay on 21 May 1833:

³⁶ Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination*, 146.

The Niggers in one hemisphere

The Brahmins in the other

Disturb my dinner and my sleep

With ‘Ain’t I a man and a brother?’³⁷

The Indian Uprising and the Morant Bay Rebellion were not the only revolts in the British Empire in the second half of the 19th century. Southern Africa, New Zealand, and Ireland jolted the British Empire with rebellions as well. From one hemisphere to the other, the colonized struggled for a greater degree of freedom and consistently called into question the Empire’s justifications of itself and its violence.

*

Macaulay’s life and writings embody the interweaving of history and historians with race and empire. Before his infamous 1835 Minute on Indian Education, another Scottish historian and thinker had profoundly shaped British perceptions of India. It was James Mill (1773-1836), whose 1817 book *The History of British India* became “the single most influential book among British officials in India, eventually becoming a textbook for candidates for the Indian Civil Service and for the East Indian Company’s college at Haileybury.”³⁸ Mill became the chief examiner at the college and his book “triggered a new approach of governance in British India, grounded in liberal universalist notions—the idea that all races, different as they were, could ultimately be made British in civilization.”³⁹ So influential had Mill become that at a farewell dinner in 1828, before Lord William Bentinck departed for service in India, the latter told the former that “I am going to British

³⁷ Macaulay quoted in Hall, *Macaulay and Son*, 206. Hall’s footnote for the letter reads “TBM to HM, 21 May 1833.”

³⁸ Satia, *Time’s Monster*, 74.

³⁹ Satia, *Time’s Monster*, 74.

India; but I shall not be Governor-General. It is you that will be Governor-General.”⁴⁰ However, Mill’s historiographical pathway was paved by a series of British historians, who had been intimately involved in the conquest and governance of India. They were the first ones to mediate the historical knowledge of India and its peoples to a British readership in the English language. It is to these figures that we now turn.

IV. The Writing of a Historical Canon

History, for the British, has an ontological power in providing the assumptions about how the real social and natural worlds are constituted. History in its broadest sense was a zone of debate over the ends and means of their rulership in India. From the beginning of their largescale acquisition of territorial control and sovereignty, the British conceived of governing India by codifying and reinstituting the ruling practices that had been developed by previous states and rulers. They sought to incorporate, as much as possible, the administrative personnel employed by previous regimes. Thus knowledge of the history and practices of Indian states was seen as the most valuable form of knowledge on which to build the colonial state.⁴¹

Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*

The first official Historiographer of the East India Company Robert Orme (1728-1801) was born in Travancore. Orme lived through the rise of the British Empire in Bengal and was acquaintances with key Company figures like Thomas Saunders (1713-1775), Stringer Lawrence (1698-1775), and Robert Clive (1725-1774).⁴² These men constituted the first generation of British soldiers, administrators, and historians involved in conquering and governing India. Orme’s most enduring contribution to British rule in the Indian subcontinent was his set of writings on the region and its peoples. His essays “A General Idea of the Government and People of Indostan” and “The

⁴⁰ Quoted in Jennifer Pitts, “Legislator of the World? A Rereading of Bentham on Colonies,” *Political Theory* 31, no.2 (2003): 201.

⁴¹ Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 5.

⁴² S.T. Delgoda, ““Nabob, Historian and Orientalist.” Robert Orme: The Life and Career of an East India Company Servant (1728-1801),” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2, no. 3: 363.

Effeminacy of the Inhabitants of Indostan” collectively shaped British perceptions of the peoples of India. Orme was particularly concerned with classifying and categorizing Hindus (whom he called Gentoos) and Muslims (whom he called Moors). He used the binary of polite/rude peoples in his writings. His assessment of Indian Muslims and Mughal rule was expressed in the following passage:

A domineering insolence towards all who are in subjection to them , ungovernable wilfulness, inhumanity, cruelty, murders and assassinations, deliberated with the same calmness and subtlety as the rest of their politics, an insensibility to remorse for these crimes, which are scarcely considered otherwise than as necessary accidents in the course of life, sensual excesses which revolt against nature, unbounded thirst of power, and an expaciousness of wealth equal to the extravagance of his propensities and vices—this is the character of an Indian Moor, who is consequence sufficient to have any character at all.⁴³

In contrast to Muslims, Hindus were generally described as mild, polite, and effeminate. They were “charitable, even to relieving the necessities of strangers: and the politeness of their behaviour is refined by the natural effeminacy of their disposition.”⁴⁴ Orme concluded that Hindus were a “timorous people.”⁴⁵

Robert Orme was a highly consequential early historian of British perceptions about India as a subcontinent with two noteworthy peoples: Muslims, who were diffident, despotic, and licentious; and Hindus who were meek, patient, and effeminate. Among his many notable friends was the already-mentioned historian, William Robertson. The two corresponded with each other while the former was working on the second volume of *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan* and the latter on *The History of America*. Closer than Robertson was the eminent orientalist philologist William Jones (1746-1794). Orme’s career personifies the need of a nascent

⁴³ Robert Orme, *Of the Govt. and People of Indostan (Extracts from the author’s work entitled Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire* (Lucknow: 1971), 17. Originally published in 1805.

⁴⁴ Orme, *Of the Govt. and People of Indostan (Extracts from the author’s work entitled Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire*, 22.

⁴⁵ Orme, *Of the Govt. and People of Indostan (Extracts from the author’s work entitled Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire*, 22.

empire for comprehensive histories of the peoples it had just started ruling over. The correspondence between Orme, Robertson, and Jones illustrates some of the ways in which historical knowledge traveled between the metropole and its many colonies in a myriad of ways.

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In the 1760s, a former East India Company army officer who was learning Persian literally carried Sanskrit and Persian manuscripts with him from India to England.⁴⁶ One of the manuscripts was the *Tarikh-i Firishta* by the 16th century Persian historian Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Astarabadi, more commonly known as Firishta.

In his book *The Loss of Hindustan: The Invention of India*, the historian Manan Ahmed Asif recounts the profound influence that Alexander Dow's 1768 *The History of Hindostan; from the Earliest Account of Time, to the Death of Akbar* exercised on subsequent British historiography of India. Dow's text was "the first comprehensive history of Hindustan in English, and it profoundly changed the practice of history writing in Europe."⁴⁷ It became an immediate bestseller in the continent and was swiftly translated into multiple languages.

Asif writes that "Edward Gibbon's sixth volume of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) and Joseph Priestly's *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit* (1777) both cited Dow's *History of Hindostan* for presenting a political as well as a theological history of Hindustan."⁴⁸ Dow's book was important to the understanding of world history for George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel as well, who believed that "The Hindus have no historical perspective and are incapable of any historiography...Because the Hindus have no history in the subjective sense, they

⁴⁶ Manan Ahmed Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan: The Invention of India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2020), 15.

⁴⁷ Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan*, 16.

⁴⁸ Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan*, 18.

also have none in the objective sense. Precisely because the Hindus have no *historia*, they have no authentic history.”⁴⁹ In Asif’s words, Dow’s translation of Firishta’s history became a comprehensive canonical text about the history of the subcontinent that assisted an array of European thinkers to “write these imagined colonial facts as natural laws of the philosophy of history.”⁵⁰

Dow described the state of India as one of despotism, anarchy, and instability. While “The Emperor is absolute and sole arbiter in every thing”, the control of the Mughal Empire was declining and virtually nonexistent in the empire’s peripheries.⁵¹ Thus, Britain was dealing with “the deplorable condition of a people subjected to arbitrary sway; and of the instability of empire itself, when it is founded neither upon laws, nor upon the opinions and attachments of mankind. Hindostan, in every age, was an ample field for private ambition and for public tyranny.”⁵²

Through the writings of British administrator-scholars like Robert Orme, Alexander Dow, and Henry Miers Eliot, the history of India and its peoples was made available to a British readership that was desperate to know more about the people it ruled over.⁵³ A series of heuristic notions congealed over time, which have come to be collectively known as the ‘colonial episteme.’ For Manan Ahmed Asif:

The colonial episteme arranged the history of India around the notion of ‘five thousand years.’ Within this enduring idea, there were two organizing concepts—that of a ‘Golden Age,’ which featured a majestic Hindu polity and monumental Sanskrit epics and initiated the five thousand years of unchanging Hindu society, and that of medieval Muslim ‘invader’ kings, who pushed India into darkness and maintained their power through despotism. History as a field of knowledge lies at the center of these constructions of the past.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Hegel quoted in Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan*, 20.

⁵⁰ Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan*, 20.

⁵¹ Dow, *The History of Hindostan*, xiv.

⁵² Dow, *The History of Hindostan*, xiii.

⁵³ Orme and Dow were by no means the only important historians of India. For more on the orientalist historians James Tod, John Malcolm, and Mountstuart Elphinstone, see Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination*, 56-98.

⁵⁴ Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan*, 29.

V. Rude Judgements—The Historiographical Legacy of James Mill

Nothing is more common than to pronounce hastily and decidedly on the national character of a nation: Yet how different it is to form a correct judgment on such a subject.⁵⁵

Mountstuart Elphinstone

The colonial episteme in British historical writings on India would take its most pernicious and enduring embodiment in James Mill's three-volume 1817 *The History of British India*. The text was the culmination of around twelve years of research on India and Mill's broader philosophical, moral, imperial, and historical worldview. With the publication of *The History of British India*, fame and fortune were secured for him. In the preface of the book, Mill explicitly stated his intention of writing "a *judging* history."⁵⁶ Succeeding a canon of historical works that abided by the ideals of philosophical or conjectural history, Mill sought to 'judge' and place India on the scale of civilization. He wrote that this aim was not only "an object of curiosity in the history of human nature; but to the people of Great Britain, charged as they are with the government of that great portion of the human species."⁵⁷ To perform such a judgement, he believed that "the whole field of human nature, the whole field of legislation, the whole field of judicature, the whole field of administration, down to war, commerce, and diplomacy, ought to be familiar to his mind."⁵⁸ If the framework of analysis was holistic, so was Mill's denunciation of India and its peoples. It was an unyielding systematic critique of Indian government, tax regimes, religions, literature, jurisprudence, lifestyles, and civilization. The major thrust of the text was proving that Indians were a 'rude nation' in every metric.

⁵⁵ Elphinstone quoted in Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination*, 88.

⁵⁶ James Mill, *The History of British India. Abridged and with an Introduction by William Thomas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 6.

⁵⁷ Mill, *The History of British India*, 225.

⁵⁸ Mill, *The History of British India*, 18.

The Indian form of government was declared primitive in line with the general Enlightenment concept of Asiatic societies associated most often with Montesquieu. Indian government was “monarchical, and, with the usual exception of religion and its ministers, absolute.”⁵⁹ The prevalence of religion in Indian society was to be seen most prominently in how “The priest is a character found among the rudest tribes.”⁶⁰ Through their absolute rule, Indian monarchs stymied developments that had modernized European society: the creation of individual property regimes, the devolution of tax collection to officers, and checks and balances on political rulers through institutions like parliament and the judiciary. In such an outlook, India was far behind the arc of universal political evolution charted by Western European nations.

Next, Hinduism as a religion was lambasted, particularly vis-à-vis its creation stories and use of lofty expressions to invoke deities. Using William Robertson’s work on America, Mill placed Hindu society on the same stage of rudeness as Indigenous peoples in North America: “Even the rude tribes of America, wandering naked in the woods, ‘appear,’ says Robertson, ‘to acknowledge a Divine Power to be the maker of the world, and the disposer of all events. They denominate him the Great Spirit.’ Thus it appears how commonly the loftiest *expressions* are used concerning the gods, by people whose *conceptions* of them are, confessedly, mean.”⁶¹ Hindus, thus, had “never contemplated the universe as a connected and perfect system, governed by general laws, and directed to benevolent ends.”⁶² Mill concluded that “The elevated language, which this species of worship finally assumes, is only the refinement, which flattery, founded upon a base apprehension of the divine character, ingrafts upon a mean superstition.”⁶³ In contrast to his own outlook about there being a providential harmony in the way the world worked, Mill was incensed by the fear of deities

⁵⁹ Mill, *The History of British India*, 57.

⁶⁰ Mill, *The History of British India*, 44.

⁶¹ Mill, *The History of British India*, 147.

⁶² Mill, *The History of British India*, 158.

⁶³ Mill, *The History of British India*, 158.

he found in some Hindu chants and beliefs. Yet again making the case for India's rudeness on the civilizational scale, he averred that "It is natural to a rude and ignorant mind to regard the object of its worship as malignant."⁶⁴

The literature of India was critiqued next. Mill believed that poetry was the mode of expression of a primitive stage of civilization since poetry captured emotions and passions, not complex and critical rational thoughts. For Mill, Indian literature, by which he meant texts associated with Hinduism, had remained stuck in that primitive stage, further substantiating his argument about India's rude state in every aspect of life.⁶⁵ The attacks on Indian literature were particularly aimed against the philo-oriental writings of scholars like William Jones, who had translated works from Sanskrit to English, particularly Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*. Inextricably connected to his critique of Indian literature was Mill's assertion that Hindus had no professional historical texts or discipline. This was further evidence of a rude nation being obsessed with unrealistic fictional poetic epics rather than realistic historical understanding. He claimed that "All rude nations, even those to whom the use of letters has long been familiar, neglect history, and are gratified with the productions of the mythologists and poets."⁶⁶ Moreover, he concluded that "no historical composition existed in the literature of the Hindus; they had not reached that point of intellectual maturity."⁶⁷

Mill had a chapter in *The History of British India* titled "Mohammedan and Hindu Civilization Compared." In this chapter, he endeavored to compare the civilizational position of Muslims and Hindus in the Indian subcontinent in terms of jurisprudence, political formations, arts,

⁶⁴ Mill, *The History of British India*, 168.

⁶⁵ Mill, *The History of British India*, 191.

⁶⁶ Mill, *The History of British India*, 199.

⁶⁷ Mill, *The History of British India*, 199.

literature, moral character, and historical practice. In terms of his assessment of the general character of the two major peoples of India, the following paragraph suffices:

In the still more important qualities, which constitute what we call the moral character, the Hindu, as we have already seen, ranks very low; and the Mohammedan is little, if at all above him. The same insincerity, mendacity, and perfidy; the same indifference to the feelings of others; the same prostitution and venality, are conspicuous in both. The Mohammedans are profuse, when possessed of wealth, and devoted to pleasure; the Hindus are almost always penurious and ascetic.⁶⁸

Mill believed that Muslims were marginally superior to Hindus on one count: history. As a lifelong utilitarian (he had a long friendship with Jeremy Bentham), he believed in evaluating the civilizational value of particular practices through a measure of their utility. Historical writing and record-keeping was a practice of great utility since it helped nations navigate the future. Among the two key texts of Persianate history writing by Muslims in India that Mill lauded was Firishta's history. Not knowing Persian, Mill would clearly have read Firishta's text in translation by another consequential British historian of India: Alexander Dow, another historian who had denounced Indians' ability to be historians 49 years earlier.

James Mill's *The History of British India* has been tirelessly critiqued by scholars of colonialism. For the purposes of this thesis, Mill's text is analytically important in the following ways: 1) It was the culmination of a historical practice known as philosophical or conjectural history that sought to place a particular colonized territory and its peoples on a civilizational scale to determine how best to govern it. 2) Unlike any other historical text, Mill's book consolidated the colonial episteme of studying India's history as an arc of three eras: a golden age of Hinduism, a despotic Islamic age, and an enlightened British age. 3) History writing was enshrined as a practice that only civilized nations did, in fact, could do since the practice was considered to be the outcome

⁶⁸ Mill, *The History of British India*, 326.

of a gradual process of intellectual maturity. This intellectual maturity was thought to not have reached Indians, Jamaicans, and other colonized peoples. In contrast to the colonized, civilized nations were expected to rigorously and empirically study the past to extract valuable lessons for the future. Very often, these valuable lessons centered around elongating the British Empire. From Dow in 1768 to Mill in 1817 to Thompson in 1925, the idea that Indians were not predisposed to be historians held sway (in colonial circles at least). Whichever side of the revolt a historian fell on, it was considered an established practice that only British people were to engage in historical dialogue. The unchallenged usage of the collective pronoun ‘we’ throughout the histories we will analyze testifies to the notion that the colonized were never part of the ‘we.’ They were never thought of as intended readers let alone as historians of their own histories.⁶⁹ 5) Mill, Macaulay, Hume, and Robertson, in addition to the historians we will study in subsequent chapters, wrote in a global, trans-imperial context that they were deeply cognizant of. India and Jamaica were not absent in the historical consciousness of historians of either colony. Race was a concept constructed and employed by historians in a global outlook. If they spoke about one people’s position on the scale of civilization, they were invoking the overall practice that had located different colonized populations for their readers. It is then no surprise that Macaulay was frustrated by the freedom struggles in both Jamaica and India and that Robert Orme and William Robertson read and tracked each other’s historical writings although the former wrote on India and the latter on America.

VI. Structure of the Thesis

⁶⁹ Joanna De Groot, *Empire and History Writing in Britain c. 1750-2012* (Baltimore, Maryland, New York (New York), 2013), 13. As De Groot writes, “One crucial but often unnoticed expression of selection/exclusion in history writing is the frequent use of the term ‘we’ to address readers in a vast number of history texts. While drawing those readers into a relationship with the text, author or subject matter, this usage also asserts or imagines common bonds, which of course ignores or denies the diversity of those readers?”

In this introductory chapter, I have sketched the ideational and historiographical context in which 19th-century British histories of the Indian Uprising and the Morant Bay Rebellion were written. I have also covered some key contours of the British historiography of India until the 1857 revolt. In the next chapter, I will analyze the histories written in the immediate aftermath of the revolt, specifically the works of Alexander Duff, John Bruce Norton, Henry Bowne Minturn Jr., Henry Mead, Charles Ball, Henry Frederick Malcolm, and Robert Montgomery Martin. In Chapter 2, I will study the canonical historical accounts penned by John William Kaye and George Bruce Malleson over the course of three decades. Through these chapters focused on the Indian Uprising, we shall see how race functioned as an axis of difference and as an explanatory variable in British histories of the revolt. The historiographical shadow of scholars like Robert Orme, Alexander Dow, William Jones, James Mill and Thomas Macaulay is palpable in these texts. I will also analyze dissent within the historiography of the revolt by studying how writers like Edward Leckey evinced the dilemmas of writing the history of a cataclysmic revolt scrupulously in a moment of profound political and emotional implications. Such examples of dissent illustrate how colonial epistemes, despite their undoubted prevalence in colonial thought and scholarship, were resisted.

In Chapter 3, I will first sketch the British historiography of Jamaica since its conquest by Britain in 1655 up to the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865, emphasizing the work of Hans Sloane, James Knight, Edward Long, George Wilson Bridges, James Phillippo, and Anthony Trollope. Next, I will examine the accounts of the revolt written by Sidney Levien, John Gorrie, Thomas Harvey, William Brewin, John Gorrie, John Anthony Froude, and Edward Bean Underhill. As with histories of the Indian Uprising, the influence of previous British historians will be evident in terms of racist worldviews, narrative tropes, and modalities of writing. Edward Long would cast as consequential and racist a historiographical shadow on British history writing on Jamaica as James Mill did over British history writing on India. In the aftermath of violent revolt, most British

historians would reaffirm and return to the totalizing denunciations of Black and Brown people that historians like Long and Mill had enduringly baked into history writing.

Chapter 1: When the Past Wasn't Even Past: Initial Accounts of the Indian Uprising

The transactions in Mary's reign gave rise to two parties, which were animated against each other with the fiercest political hatred, embittered by religious zeal. Each of these produced historians of considerable merit, who adopted all their sentiments, and defended all their actions. Truth was not the sole object of these authors. Blinded by prejudices, and heated by the part which they themselves had acted in the scenes they describe, they wrote an apology for a faction, rather than the history of their country. Succeeding historians have followed these guides almost implicitly, and have repeated their errors and misrepresentations.¹

William Robertson, *The History of Scotland*

I. The Initial Accounts of George Crawshay, Alexander Duff, John Bruce Norton, and Robert Bowne Minturn Jr.

One feels as if amid the very throes of the dissolution of empire!²

Alexander Duff, *The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and Results*

The summer of 1857 was full of apprehension and anticipation for people throughout the British Empire. Cabinet members, opposition politicians, colonial officials, administrators, army officers, journalists, and ordinary folk all pondered the fate of Britain's Indian colony with distress. Some were worried about the fragile geopolitical position of the grand British Empire. Others were horrified by the news of 'native barbarism' towards British women and children stationed there. Yet others celebrated what they saw as the harbinger of the end of the British Empire.³ Due to the intricate networks woven together from Ireland to New Zealand through empire, the Indian Uprising

¹ William Robertson and Dugald Stewart. *The Works of William Robertson, vol. 1. The History of Scotland vol. 1.* London: T. Cadell, 1840. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/robertson-the-works-of-william-robertson-vol-1-the-history-of-scotland-vol-1>.

² Alexander Duff, *The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and Results*, 29.

³ Mark Sullivan Hall, "Fenians, Sepoys and the Financial Panic of 1857," in *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857. Volume 3, Global Perspectives*, edited by Marina Carter and Crispin Bates (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013), 87-89. Hall quotes the leading Dublin-based newspaper *Nation*'s column for 4 July 1857:

"[n]ews of the most important character has been received from India...the rottenness spreading from its core has reached the surface, new breaches will open from day to day, till at last the whole [Empire] sinks into irreparable ruin."

The *Belfast Daily Mercury* published a ballad on 2 November 1857:

"The time of England's downfall is at hand. Ireland awake.

Will you be up?

Long live Nana Sahib. Down with England. Hurrah for liberty.

God save the people..."

was, in the apt words of historian Jill Bender, “a moment of intense imperial consciousness.”⁴

Indeed, in September 1857, Benjamin Disraeli termed the uprising to be “in fact one of those great events which form epochs in the history of mankind.”⁵

Unsurprisingly then, the Indian Mutiny quickly became the subject of numerous British memoirs, lectures, sermons, letters, novels, poems, essays, and histories. Among the earliest published writings we can find on the subject is a lecture delivered by then former Mayor of Gateshead, George Crawshay (1821-1896) at the Mechanics’ Institute on 4th November 1857. In the lecture titled *The Immediate Cause of the Indian Mutiny: As Set Forth in the Official Correspondence*, Crawshay argued that the British public was being kept ignorant of the real causes of the revolt that had flared up in May that year. He asserted that the “perverse management” of India, including a blatant disregard for Indian customs and beliefs, provoked the rebellion.⁶ Crawshay explicitly refuted the theory that the revolt was either a well-planned national movement or a Muslim plot against British rule.⁷ Instead, he urged his audience to comprehend the revolt as an expression of mass discontent at the brazen disregard of Indian social and religious practices by colonial policymakers.

In 1858, Reverend Alexander Duff’s (1806-1878) letters from Calcutta to Reverend Dr. Tweedie, Convenor of the Free Church of Scotland’s Foreign Mission Committee, were published in a compilation titled *The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and Results*. The first letter was dated 16th May 1857 and the final one 22nd March 1858. The letters contained Duff’s thoughts as he lived through

⁴ Jill Bender, *The 1857 Indian Uprising and the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 176.

⁵ Disraeli quoted in Christopher Herbert, *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021), 2.

⁶ George Crawshay, *The Immediate Cause of the Indian Mutiny: As Set Forth in the Official Correspondence* (London: E. Wilson, 1857), 26. For a thorough list of publications on the Mutiny, see

Sashi Bhusan Chaudhuri, *English Historical Writings on the Indian Mutiny, 1857-1859* (Calcutta: World Press, 1979).

⁷ Crawshay, *The Immediate Cause of the Indian Mutiny*, 16.

the revolt, from his anxiety at its start to his reassurance at the time of its crushing. Duff's initial letters expressed deep concern at the outbreak of the revolt, comparing the horrors to those of the Black Hole incident a century earlier.⁸ He even reported that all the Europeans in Delhi had been slaughtered by the rebels, a claim he later revised in light of future intelligence reports.⁹ Moreover, the "satanic fury" of the rebels is said to have inflicted atrocities against European women that were "too horrible to be expressed by me."¹⁰

Duff's analysis of the Mutiny's outbreak rested on the theory that a large number of Indians felt that the British government was going to undermine caste strictures and forcibly convert them to Christianity, the case of the greased cartridges being the spark that ignited this fire. Duff also attributed the rebellious sentiment of revolting Indians to the contemporary rumor that British rule was destined to end an exact century after its commencement following the Battle of Plassey in 1757. For Duff, the rumor acquired a widespread constituency since Indians were "an ignorant, superstitious, fanatical people," in whose minds "a strong impression of this sort at last assumes the form of an absolute, undoubted certainty."¹¹ Moreover, he wrote that "Throughout all ages the Asiatic has been noted for his duplicity, cunning, hypocrisy, treachery; and coupled with this—and, indeed, as necessary for excelling in this accomplishment of Jesuitism—his capacity of secrecy and concealment."¹² Thus, in his epistolary account of the revolt, Duff promoted an essentialist understanding of Indians as superstitious and fanatical. These were the very traits Duff had spent his missionary life in India trying to reform through Christianity and 'modern' education under the flag of the British Empire.

⁸ Duff, *The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and Results* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1858), 10.

⁹ Duff, *The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and Results*, 10.

¹⁰ Duff, *The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and Results*, 23.

¹¹ Duff, *The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and Results*, 30-31.

¹² Duff, *The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and Results*, 58.

The Sheriff of Madras John Bruce Norton (1815-1883) wrote his account of the Mutiny in the same year. Titled *The Rebellion in India: How to Prevent Another*, Norton's book studied the Mutiny as a lesson for the future of the British Empire. He was critical of Lord Canning's Gagging Act against the Indian press and wanted to convey the truth about the Mutiny to Britons, something he felt the newspapers and published accounts of the time had failed to do. He wrote that "I venture to predict that every effort, both here and in England will be made to divert public inquiry from the true sources of our misfortune. The mutiny will be purely military...The people will have taken no part in the insurrection. The rebellion will have strengthened our power."¹³ He asserted that "our general policy in India, for the last few years especially, has been tending to bring such a consummation."¹⁴ Norton explicitly rejected the theory that the revolt was merely a mutiny led by disobedient sepoys. Instead, he urged his readers to understand why so many Indians, soldiers and civilians, had revolted so violently against British rule.¹⁵

When it came to discerning the causes of the revolt, Norton excoriated the depredations of Company rule in India. He wrote that the "grasping annexation policy has paved the way for the rebellion now raging in the heart of our empire. As one kingdom after another fell, a sullen silent discontent spread wider and wider over the native mind. The fall of Oude filled up the measure of indignation."¹⁶ Additionally, he lambasted British politicians and colonial administrators for not learning useful lessons from Indian history, something Norton's own book was trying to do. He cited

¹³ John Bruce Norton, *The Rebellion in India: How to Prevent Another* (London: Richardson Brothers, 1857), viii.

¹⁴ Norton, *The Rebellion in India*, 4.

¹⁵ Norton, *The Rebellion in India*, 18. Norton wrote that "The rebellion is wide-spread and contagious. It shows signs of combination. It draws all religions as to a common centre. It has probably one common origin. It is truculent and exterminating; pitiless in its barbarity. It must be no ordinary frame of mind, no ordinary sense of wrong, which can so have banded men together in so desperate an undertaking."

¹⁶ Norton, *The Rebellion in India*, 95.

mutinies from the Bengal Army in Java in 1824 as well as the more recent refusal of the 38th Regiment to fight in Myanmar as instances of simmering resentment before the 1857 Mutiny.¹⁷

Writing in the autumn of 1857, Norton stated that “It is not my intention to write any history of the rebellion.”¹⁸ In addition to the lack of available sources at the time, he did not feel it was his duty to write a history of the event at the time.¹⁹ Even if his account is not avowedly a history, it is nevertheless important. As Priyamvada Gopal argues, Norton’s account of the Mutiny remains important since “he dissented from government policy and practice – well before the insurgency, which, he tells us, he predicted – but because his own conflicted view about the continuance of British rule in India begins to indicate the emergence of an attitude towards the colonized that was neither just paternalist nor simply relativist.”²⁰ Such accounts were rare.

Another early account of the revolt was written by the American shipping magnate, Robert Bowne Minturn Jr. (1836-1889). Minturn wrote about the mutiny as part of a travel memoir titled *From New York to Delhi, By way of Rio de Janeiro, Australia and China*. Upon his arrival, he was shocked at how such a vast subcontinent could have come under the rule of the East India Company in the first place.²¹ Impressed by this supposed feat, Minturn saw the revolt as one more episode of

¹⁷ Norton, *The Rebellion in India: How to Prevent Another*, 21.

¹⁸ Norton, *The Rebellion in India*, 13.

¹⁹ Norton, *The Rebellion in India*, 13. Norton added that “We shall have ample accounts of the horrible particulars from the personal memoirs, the private letters, and published stories of the surviving Europeans, and the connected accounts for which they will doubtless furnish materials conjointly with official records. Then shall be chronicled a glorious though a mournful page in England’s annals; for never have her sons and her daughters shown, respectively, more devotion to duty, or calmer fortitude.”

²⁰ Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2020), 52-3. Gopal further writes that Norton was “a known critic of the East India Company’s courts who would become advocate-general for Madras in 1863 and who had served on the famous Torture Commission of 1855, which investigated claims that agents of the Company had tortured persons in the process of revenue extraction.”

²¹ Robert Bowne Minturn, *From New York to Delhi, By way of Rio de Janeiro, Australia and China. Second Edition* (New York: D, Appleton & Co., 1858), iii. Minturn wrote that, “I believe that posterity, if not the present generation, will admire and wonder at the sagacity and wisdom of a policy which has enabled fifty thousand men (for, until the late difficulties, there have never been more Englishmen in India) to conquer so vast a country, and hold in subjection myriads of men, of most opposite national character, generally civilized, often warlike and defended, in more than one instance, by the science and skill of the art of war as practised in Europe.”

the repeated cycles of subjugation that apparently defined Indian history over millennia. Referring to arguments that posed the revolt as a national revolution by Indians, Minturn retorted that Indians did not possess “a feeling of common nationality.”²² Additionally, he wrote that:

There never has been, and never can be anything of the kind in India, with reference to government. The great mass of the population have stood inactive for centuries, and seen their country invaded; their royal families in chains, or put to the sword; armies of invaders devastating their fields, and robbing their wealth. They have beheld, unmoved, every possible change in the supreme power; they have submitted without a murmur, to the most grinding cruelty and oppression.²³

In Minturn’s book, an American audience found a robust affirmation of the key tenets of the colonial episteme in the British historiography of India: the depravity of India’s Muslim rulers; the inferior civilizational status of Indians; the docility of Indians before foreign invasions; and the lack of a unifying national feeling between India’s various religious communities.²⁴ As already mentioned, the letters of Alexander Duff had also affirmed such sentiments about India and its peoples. Writing about the then-crushed revolt towards the end of his book, Minturn wrote that “It is to be hoped that a few years will see the remains of the last native governments wiped away, and that India will be governed entirely by the beneficent rule of a Christian people; under whom alone civilization can be introduced, the resources of the country developed, and the Hindoos enjoy that peace and freedom to which they are entitled by centuries of oppression and suffering.”²⁵ In Minturn’s analysis, the revolt was the last gasp of Asiatic obstinacy against a beneficent British rule.

²² Minturn, *From New York to Delhi*, 104.

²³ Minturn, *From New York to Delhi*, 217.

²⁴ Minturn, *From New York to Delhi*, 189. Minturn wrote that “every native capital in India is a nursery of the darkest crime, a hot bed of the most disgusting forms of licentiousness ever invented by the depraved passions of man. Should the doom of Sodom descend upon these cities, no one who knows what they are would dispute the terrible justice of the punishment.”

²⁵ Minturn, *From New York to Delhi*, 424.

After the crushing of the revolt, Minturn saw a providentially ordained opportunity to civilize and unite India under British colonial rule.

II. Historical Accounts

Beings of a Superior Clay—Henry Mead’s *The Sepoy Revolt*

The earliest classical historical text on the Indian Mutiny is considered to be Henry Mead’s 1857 *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*.²⁶ A decade-long journalist in India, Mead vehemently opposed the 1857 Gagging Act during the Mutiny. He opposed it as “hypocritical as well as false, and that the men who made it knew in their hearts that they were inflicting needless oppression upon the public in India, and wilfully deceiving the public at home.”²⁷ *The Sepoy Revolt* was written in a journalistic tone and recounted the outbreak of the revolt with a deep understanding of the journalistic scene in India. Mead critiqued the very nature of colonial rule in how it brought out the worst in British character. He contended that “Long residence in India narrows the understanding and strengthens the prejudices of a man, however gifted he may be by nature.”²⁸ The East India Company was particularly excoriated for its extractive and careless rule over India. He argued that the Company was “reserved for a knot of merchants to establish a system of exclusiveness such as the world never saw before, and is not likely to witness again.”²⁹ He further wrote that the Company suffered from “a malady common to savages in certain parts of the world, which is termed ‘earth-hunger.’ It provokes an incessant craving for clay, a species of food which fails to satisfy the appetite, and which impairs the power of digestion.”³⁰

²⁶ S.B. Chaudhuri, *English Historical Writings on the Indian Mutiny, 1857-1859*, 8.

²⁷ Henry Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1857), 191.

²⁸ Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 370.

²⁹ Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 376.

³⁰ Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, iii.

While he critiqued the East India Company for its misrule of India, Mead drew heavily from the racial discourse of his time to explain the outbreak of the revolt with a focus on Indians. He pithily summed up his thesis in the following words: “The origin of the mutiny must be ascribed to various causes: the want of discipline in the Bengal army, and the general contempt entertained by the Sepoys for authority; the absence of all power on the part of commanding officers to reward or punish; the greased cartridges, and the annexation of Oude.”³¹ Mead explored each cause in detail, particularly the issue of the Enfield Rifle’s greased cartridges. He argued that the East India Company government (particularly the Government in Calcutta and the Board of Control) was to blame for not promptly allaying the sepoys’ fears of religious and caste impurity through the use of cartridges greased with pig and cow fat. For Mead, the rumor spread like wildfire due to the supposed essential nature of Indians: “Detach credibility from a lie in England, and, however huge its proportions, it is as harmless as a snake deprived of its fangs. But in India, if you draw the teeth, the virus often remains, and is active and venomous as ever. The Asiatic considers words as mere breath. If a thing is worth having, it is worth lying for.”³²

Thus, in Mead’s historical account, we find a critique of Company rule that has its own racist underpinnings about the essentially gullible and deceptive nature of Indians. These underpinnings were more directly laid out towards the end of the book where Mead assured his readers (undoubtedly assumed to be British):

That narrative of strife and suffering has dispelled for ever the illusion as to the identity of race in the case of the European and Asiatic. It shows that Englishmen are beings made of a superior clay, gifted with the power and instinct of mastery over the dusky tribes of the East. On an occasion where the faculties and force of all concerned were brought into play and

³¹ Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 27.

³² Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 34.

tested to the uttermost, the Hindoo never rose to the level of his opportunities, whilst our countrymen moulded events to their own advantage, and converted mischance into triumph.³³

The Indian Uprising was written as a colossal racial confrontation in which the British were thrust into war from a disadvantageous position and overcame the overwhelming historical tide due to their superiority as a race in contrast to Indians. The crushing of the revolt validated Britons' belief in their racial superiority.

Henry Mead's history of the revolt also expressed a global understanding of colonialism and the issues it posed to Christian moral precepts. In *The Sepoy Revolt*, he wrote that "All over the world there is a never-ceasing contest for mastery, and it will not begin to be ended in our time, unless we are near the latter days."³⁴ It was, therefore, in the supposed inherent depravity of a humanity fallen from heaven that Mead situated the violence of imperialism. Moreover, he critiqued the Peace Society for its pacifism. Opposing the call for universal peace as too narrow a precept, he questioned "Why not organize for the purpose of making all men veritable Christians, instead of mere advocates of peace, which only forms a single clause in the Divine code?"³⁵ The world then, required Christianization more than peace since "Less than the universal practice of Christianity will not suffice to destroy the belligerent feeling...after the lapse of eighteen hundred years."³⁶ Undergirding this worldview was the notion that universal peace would only emerge between Christian peoples.

Mead wrote of colonial and racial domination as merely facts of nature. Speaking of white American settlers of British origins, he wrote:

Well! Do the republicans regard the rights of their neighbors? Are they better in this respect than the nominees of our aristocracy? The Red Indians will not reply in the affirmative, nor

³³ Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 378.

³⁴ Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 232.

³⁵ Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 223.

³⁶ Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 232.

the millions of domestic slaves, nor the Mexicans, nor the Spaniards, nor the weak with whom they have come in contact in any part of the world...If conquest is as bad as robbery from the person, the Americans are worse than the Spartans of old, for they steal universally, with no pretence of a moral end in view. Do we justify aggressive wars then? No! For they are clearly opposed to the genius and precepts of Christianity; but we look upon them as the natural fruits of civilization of the vices or the strength, whichever you please to term it, of the whole European race. As well say to the fire, do not burn the stubble, as to the Englishman, do not subject the Asiatic if you come in contact with him. Their intercourse is sure to end in the mastership of the former; but the result is not the consequence of a dogma—it is the effect of an instinct.³⁷

Henry Mead's *The Sepoy Revolt* has a detailed journalistic account of the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny in the framework of multiple military histories of the event. However, it stands out amongst early English histories of the Indian Mutiny for its detailed musings on the morality of British imperial rule in India and colonialism in the 19th century writ large. Mead demonstrated an acute awareness of the violence used by British-led forces in crushing the revolt. He was also cognizant of the violence inflicted on Indigenous peoples by the American settler state and its annexation of Mexican territory just a decade before the Indian Mutiny. In the transnational context of mid-19th-century colonialism, Mead reconciled his Christian moral precepts with racial and imperial violence through the notions of humanity's inescapable post-lapse depravity, the absence of Christianity in the world, and an ineluctable human instinct to dominate inferior civilizations and races.

An India independent of Britain was simply unthinkable for thinkers like Mead in 1857. What was required rather, in their view, was a normalizing of British domination. He was confident in the abstract long-run and telos of history whereby "The ultimate absorption of every native State is, perhaps, merely a question of time" and "With destiny on our side, we may be surely content to await that appointed hour. It is enough to acquire riches and glory whilst we are advancing the cause

³⁷ Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 230.

of civilization and true religion, without acting so as to raise doubts with regard to the honesty of our motives and the reality of our mission.”³⁸ Mead hoped that “henceforth our rule may be such as to foster in the native mind a love of English domination.”³⁹ In an indirect admission of guilt at the violence and corruption associated with British rule in India, Mead urged himself, his readers, and colonial policymakers to wash their hands off future acts of violence and avarice by trusting destiny. Destiny had ordained Britons to eventually acquire control over the whole of the Indian subcontinent since they were a superior, Christian, and civilized race. Since time and history were on the side of the British Empire, hasty acts of imperial violence could be avoided for the most part.

Honest Tales Speed Best when Plainly Told—Charles Ball’s *The History of the Indian Mutiny*

In 1858, Charles Ball published another monumental history of the revolt titled *The History of the Indian Mutiny: Giving a Detailed Account of the Sepoy Insurrection in India: And a Concise History of the Great Military Events Which Have Tended to Consolidate British Empire in Hindostan*. The extensively-researched two-volume history was 1317 double-columned pages long.⁴⁰ The introductory chapter provided the reader a rundown of the history of European contact with India, the rise of the ill-fated French Empire there, and the eventual ascendance of the British Empire from 1757 onwards. Ball also introduced India to his readers by delineating the main languages spoken in the country, describing its major cities, its agriculture, and its peoples’ dietary habits. Next, he reiterated the colonial episteme when he wrote of Hindus as people who had been

³⁸ Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 219.

³⁹ Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 378.

⁴⁰ Chaudhuri, *English Historical Writings on the Indian Mutiny, 1857-1859*, 69-70. Chaudhuri writes that “The author collected a vast mass of materials of diverse character on the Indian Mutiny, piles of official and unofficial communications of the period, large number of letters, most of the Indian accounts and also a huge number of memorandum, dispatches, orders, excerpts of public documents and significantly enough, nearly all the proclamations issued by the Indian leaders.” Chaudhuri also praises the detail with which Ball wrote about the winter campaigns of the Terai region during the crushing of the Mutiny.

unable to fend off invasions into their country over time.⁴¹ He wrote that “This glorious land has, from the earliest records extant, been periodically the theatre of wars, tyranny, and wretchedness. The native Hindoo race appear for the most part to have been incapable of sweeping back the fierce tide of invasion and conquest that has so frequently broken over it.”⁴² For Ball, then, as for multiple British historians of India, India and its peoples were principally defined by one process: cyclical invasions into the subcontinent and Indians’ inability to hold those invasions off.

Moreover, in Ball’s text, as in other British historians’, there remained an enchantment at the providential nature of the British acquisition of India in the first place. He comprehended this fact through the prevalent racial discourse of his time:

To the innate weakness of the mental and physical nature of the Hindoo populations, and to the impetuous and unstable character of their sometime Mohammedan rulers, we may doubtless attribute the long continuance and progressive enlargement of the British dominion in India; where a handful of European merchants had acquired rule over nearly two hundred millions of human beings, by their enterprise, probity, and wisdom.⁴³

Furthermore, he wrote his account of the revolt with the belief that “the Asiatic races have been unchanged from the beginning of their existence as a people...And not only was the movement itself purely Asiatic in its origins, since every phase in which it developed itself partook of the barbaric nature—wild, impulsive, and reckless.”⁴⁴

On the question of the Indian Mutiny, Ball particularly critiqued British policies against caste strictures and the flagrant aggrandizement embodied in Lord Dalhousie’s annexation of Awadh in 1856. He zoomed into the case of Awadh in particular since it exemplified the indignity of a people

⁴¹ Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny: Giving a Detailed Account of the Sepoy Insurrection in India: And a Concise History of the Great Military Events Which Have Tended to Consolidate British Empire in Hindostan, Volume 1* (London: London Print. And Pub., 1858), 1.

⁴² Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny, Volume 1*, 1.

⁴³ Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny, Volume 1*, 645.

⁴⁴ Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny, Volume 1*, 644.

who had seen Company rule lead to “the sudden prostration of their country, which, by the arbitrary will of strangers, had been reduced from the rank of an independent state to the position of a mere province of Bengal; they knew their king to be a prisoner; their royal family dispersed, and their nobles and chiefs despoiled of wealth and power.”⁴⁵ At the same time, he explained the negative reaction to changes in land tenure following the annexation of Awadh as “sufficient time had not yet elapsed for the enlightenment of the people as to their true interests.”⁴⁶ Ball concluded that the revolt was “the resistance of a whole people to an act by which their nationality was destroyed, and the throne of their king had been shattered into fragments.”⁴⁷

Thus, in Ball’s mammoth historical account, the Indian Mutiny was a national rebellion in which Indians, regardless of religion, had resisted the injustices of foreign rule.⁴⁸ The long history of India was structured by invasions, war, and foreign rule. British rule was the latest burgeoning stage in a long line of regimes which had come into India from the outside. As for Indian disenchantment at British colonial rule, Ball concluded that England could not help but be the enlightening, civilizing colonial power it supposedly was in India. Britain’s supremacy was simply engrained into Britons’ nature. Towards the end of volume 1, he wrote that “England cannot divest itself of its character as a Christian nation, or annul the fact, that its European military and civil establishment compose a Christian population in India.”⁴⁹

In Charles Ball’s writing, we find the typical elements of racial discourse that defined the majority of British historical writings on India, including those related to the Indian Mutiny. The text

⁴⁵ Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny: Giving a Detailed Account of the Sepoy Insurrection in India: And a Concise History of the Great Military Events Which Have Tended to Consolidate British Empire in Hindostan, Volume 2* (London: London Print. And Pub., 1858), 632.

⁴⁶ Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny, Volume 2*, 632.

⁴⁷ Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny, Volume 2*, 632.

⁴⁸ Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny, Volume 1*, 644. Ball wrote that “Those bodies—the Mohammedan and Hindoo worshippers—had, at this juncture, nothing in common but their mutual hatred of Englishmen.”

⁴⁹ Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny, Volume 1*, 647.

followed the usual structure of a Mutiny history in that it introduced the British reader to a long sweep of Indian history in the first chapter in which one was told about the many languages, peoples, religions, castes, kingdoms, and landscapes of India. Added to these details was the formulaic understanding of Indian history as principally defined by foreign invasions, which the domestic populations were docile before. Ball's analysis of the Mutiny's causes points to the supposed essential, irreversible, and non-negotiable nature of different peoples: Hindus were docile, Muslims were scheming, and Britons were civilized. From hereon, each people could not help but be itself. It was in this racial-national schema that Ball explained the start, duration, and conclusion of the Indian Mutiny. He would not be the last British historian to rely on such an explanation of revolt.

After 1317 pages, Charles Ball wrote that he had adhered to the maxim "A honest tale speeds best when plainly told."⁵⁰

Monster Rebellion of a Political Nature—Henry Frederick Malcolm's *India and the Indian Mutiny*

A curious aspect of Mutiny historiography in the English language is the geographical scope of concern for better understanding the events in India that had brought the British Empire to the eve of dissolution. We have already studied the shipping magnate Robert Bowne Minturn Jr.'s account for an American audience. A lesser-known personality, Henry Frederick Malcolm, published his history of the mutiny in Philadelphia in 1858. The book was titled *India and the Indian Mutiny: Comprising the Complete History of Hindostan, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day; with Full Particulars of the Recent Mutiny in India*. Malcolm noted that the mutiny was "of considerable importance to Americans, on account of the many intimate relations existing between Great Britain

⁵⁰ Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny*, Volume 2, 664.

and this country.”⁵¹ In his own words, Malcolm structured his book in the following sections: “a sketch of the Natural History of the country, and a complete Civic and Military History of the various Races and Dynasties which have ruled it from the most ancient times to the present day.”⁵²

In the typical pattern of early Mutiny histories, Malcolm promised all the information on India and Indians that his readers could have asked for in a single volume. The book started with a natural history of India that described the subcontinent’s fertile plains, latitudes, longitudes, rivers, mountains, animals, crops, weather, and climate. Once India’s flora and fauna were described and classified, the author moved towards writing about Indian history with the usual periodization: a Hindu period, a Muslim period, and a European period. As we saw in the introductory chapter, this periodization drew from the colonial episteme that prevailed in British history writing about India.

When it came to explaining the cause of the revolt, Malcolm concluded that “this monster rebellion has been *mainly* of a *political*, and but very *subordinately* of a *religious* character...Brahminical and other influences had doubtless their share in it, but the preponderant central element has been of Mohammedan origin.”⁵³ In his analysis, considerable importance was given to the notion that there was a deep-seated resentment within Indian Muslims at their displacement from power by Company rule, which evolved into a larger cross-religious disenchantment at British rule when the annexation of Awadh took place in 1856.⁵⁴ Thereafter, “it is more than possible that the alleged insult offered by the greased cartridges, and the dread of conversion to Christianity, gave the main impulse that roused the discontented spirit of the troops into mischievous activity.”⁵⁵ For Malcolm, therefore, the Indian Mutiny was a cross-religious revolt

⁵¹ Henry Frederick Malcolm, *India and the Indian mutiny: comprising the complete history of Hindostan, from the earliest times to the present day; with full particulars of the recent mutiny in India* (Philadelphia, J. W. Bradley, 1858), 4.

⁵² Malcolm, *India and the Indian mutiny*, 3.

⁵³ Malcolm, *India and the Indian mutiny*, 438.

⁵⁴ Malcolm, *India and the Indian mutiny*, 334.

⁵⁵ Malcolm, *India and the Indian mutiny*, 344.

against foreign Christian rule that was ignited by the issue of the greased cartridges. Underpinning this revolt was the deep-seated Muslim resentment at being displaced from political power by British rule.

Revolt as an Opportunity for Imperial Salvation—Robert Montgomery Martin’s *The Indian Empire*

Trained as a doctor, Robert Montgomery Martin (1801-1868) became an important imperial figure as a surgeon, naturalist, botanist, administrator, statistician, and historian. His travels took him from Great Britain to Ceylon, Madagascar, Mombasa, Australia, India, Hong Kong, and Jamaica, among others. He was the first Treasurer of Hong Kong and was also part of the Statistical Society of London, the Colonial Society, and the East India Association.⁵⁶ He studied, wrote on, and was concerned about virtually every British imperial possession. As a proponent of efficient imperial rule, he presented a petition to the House of Commons for a reformed colonial administrative department in December 1837.⁵⁷

In 1834, *History of the British Colonies* was published in five-volumes as the self-proclaimed “first Colonial History.”⁵⁸ The text was dedicated to the British King and was one of the first proposals of imperial federation in the 19th century. Martin believed that the British Empire was going through “a momentous state of transition, the fruits of which are yet in the womb of time” and that such a position of preponderance necessitated reform for the future.⁵⁹ As Alex Middleton writes,

⁵⁶ “Robert Montgomery Martin,” *The British Museum*. <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG225097>. Accessed 18 February 2025.

⁵⁷ “Robert Montgomery Martin,” *The British Museum*. <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG225097>. Accessed 18 February 2025.

⁵⁸ Robert Montgomery Martin, *History of the British Colonies. Volume 1: Possessions in Asia* (London: James Cochran & Co., 1834), iii.

⁵⁹ Martin, *History of the British Colonies. Volume 1*, vi.

the *History of the British Colonies* “offered the first comprehensive account of the globe-spanning version of the British Empire which had taken shape in the course of the Napoleonic wars, placing India and Canada under the same umbrella as Malta and Gozo.”⁶⁰ Moreover, Martin fervently believed in the notion that the ever-expanding and preponderant British Empire was the work of providence. The utility of the Empire lay in its value to Great Britain itself, its positive influence in the world, the lack of better alternatives, and divine favor.⁶¹

A year after the Indian Uprising erupted, Robert Montgomery Martin published his three-volume *The Indian Empire: History, Topography, Geology, Climate, Population, Chief Cities and Provinces; Tributary and Protected States; Military Power and Resources; Religion, Education, Crime; Land Tenures; Staple Products; Government, Finance, Commerce*. The second volume studied the Indian Uprising and was dedicated to Queen Victoria. While Martin expressed reverence for the British Empire and its martial heroes during the crushing of the Indian Uprising, his historical account was not dehumanizing or jingoistic like those of Mead and Minturn. For him, the revolt was the violent culmination of inefficient administration, an inability to effectively dispense justice, the exclusion of Indians from government, a disregard towards learning Indian languages, a general British disdain towards Indians, and what he somewhat cryptically called a “neglect of public works.”⁶² This interpretation was systemic and structural in its analysis of colonial rule. It was opposed to seeing the revolt as merely a military mutiny led by a small number of sepoys or as a clash of antagonistic civilizations.

⁶⁰ Alex Middleton, “Robert Montgomery Martin and the Origins of ‘Greater Britain’”, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 49, no. 5 (2021): 834.

⁶¹ Middleton, “Robert Montgomery Martin and the Origins of ‘Greater Britain’”, 844.

⁶² Robert Montgomery Martin, *The Indian Empire: History, Topography, Geology, Climate, Population, Chief Cities and Provinces; Tributary and Protected States; Military Power and Resources; Religion, Education, Crime; Land Tenures; Staple Products; Government, Finance, and Commerce. With a Full Account of the Mutiny of the Bengal Army; of the Insurrection in Western India; and an Exposition of the Alleged Causes. Volume II* (London: The London Printing and Publishing Company, Limited, 1858), 26.

Thus, in the aftermath of the violent uprising and its brutal crushing, Martin felt that the promise of British rule in India had to be urgently redeemed. The termination of Company rule and the commencement of Crown rule offered such an opportunity for a “general and radical reform in our financial and administrative system.”⁶³ When compared with the texts written by other early British historians, Martin offered a familiar history of the Indian Uprising with its monumental and violent challenge to a problematic British imperial regime. The role of providence in raising the British Empire to preponderance was never in doubt either. The corruption and monopolistic depredations of Company rule were chastised by other historians like Henry Mead and Charles Ball as well. The sources he used were not new either, with a careful synthesis of publicly available documents like Parliamentary Papers, Blue Books, newspaper excerpts, military gazettes, official reports, and soldiers’ memoirs.⁶⁴

Where Robert Montgomery Martin’s history writing stands out from other early British historians of the revolt is in its aversion to dehumanizing Indians. As S.B. Chaudhuri writes, “the ‘Empire had not cast its spell over him and the racial complex hardly affected his historical sense.”⁶⁵ Early on in the text, he decried the increasing disdain towards Indians by officials across the colonial administrative hierarchy, emphasizing in particular that “The repeated use of the word “niggers” in recent books of Indian memoirs, and in the correspondence published in the public journals, is itself a painful and significant symptom.”⁶⁶ When it came to writing about British military successes, he did not resort to the argument that Britons were inherently more intelligent or martially gifted than Indians to explain the outcomes of warfare. The ethic of efficiency he espoused in all matters of governance (financial, administrative, judicial or military) did not have a strict racial underpinning.

⁶³ Martin, *The Indian Empire. Volume II*, 504.

⁶⁴ Chaudhuri, *English Historical Writings on the Indian Mutiny, 1857-1859*, 83.

⁶⁵ Chaudhuri, *English Historical Writings on the Indian Mutiny, 1857-1859*, 84.

⁶⁶ Martin, *The Indian Empire. Volume II*, 11.

Indeed, he felt that the multi-racial British Empire could fulfil its providentially appointed role as global hegemon only by spreading this progress throughout its possessions to a multitude of peoples.

Martin was arguably the most widely travelled early British historian of the revolt in India. He also wrote on geographically distant British possessions throughout his lifetime. His worldview encompassed the Empire in all its vastness. The Indian Uprising, then, was one principal episode in the larger drama of empire. As we shall find out in the next chapter, his writings on the West Indies were consequential too.

The Dilemmas of Writing the History of a Revolt—Edward Leckey’s *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed*

It is easy to see, that with all these influences at work, the chances against anything like correct history being attainable at present are almost overwhelming.⁶⁷

Edward Leckey, *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed*

It is important to note that, in a time of mass hysteria and aggressive militarism in British imperial circles, there was still dissent. Priyamvada Gopal’s *Insurgent Empire* has been an invaluable contribution in this respect. We have already seen the indictments of British rule by George Crawshay, John Bruce Norton, and Robert Montgomery Martin. It is also crucial to note that Henry Mead was not the only British thinker who explicitly situated the Indian Uprising in the international politics of his time. The Chartist leader Ernest Jones (1819-1869), for example, urged his working-class listeners and readers to think of international freedom struggles beyond Britain. While Henry Mead was reconciling his Christian morality with the imperial violence inflicted on the Indigenous peoples of America, Mexicans, and Indians, Jones was linking the Indian Uprising to the Polish,

⁶⁷ Edward Leckey, *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed* (Bombay: Chesson & Woodhall Ltd., 1859), xiv.

Hungarian, Italian, and Irish anti-imperial nationalist movements. He wrote: “Was Poland right? Then so is Hindostan. Was Hungary justified? Then so is Hindostan. For all that Poland, Hungary, or Italy sought to gain, for that the Hindu strives.”⁶⁸ Another dissenting voice came from the Positivist philosopher Richard Congreve (1818-1899). Congreve questioned the very ideational foundations of British rule in India by refuting the notion of trusteeship of inferior races. As Gopal writes, “Congreve noted that the rebellion had made one thing abundantly clear...this ‘trusteeship has not hitherto been *recognized*.’”⁶⁹

One of the most fascinating expressions of dissent can be found in a short book titled *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed*. In a time when some of the histories mentioned in this thesis were reprinted multiple times, only 366 copies of this text were printed in Mumbai and it probably was never distributed or read in Britain.⁷⁰ The author of the text was Edward Leckey (1811-1870), about whom we still know very little. Even if Leckey’s text was not widely read at the time, it is important to us as a document that demonstrates a keen awareness of the dilemmas of history writing, a sharp sense of satire, and a thoroughly critical approach to determining the truth about events in the heat of anti-imperial revolt.

In the preface, Leckey urged his readers to understand just “how difficult a matter it is to write a history of the Indian Outbreak. By history is meant a truthful record of facts and events.”⁷¹ Speaking of the collection and use of sources in history writing, he wrote that:

the difficulties of obtaining correct history do not end with the discrepancies of those who supply the original materials. These may be still further vitiated by the writers who undertake to collect and arrange the details thus furnished. These men are of like passions with ourselves; and, unless the habit of controlling those passions has been effectually acquired,

⁶⁸ Ernest Jones quoted in Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent*, 67.

⁶⁹ Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent*, 75.

⁷⁰ Crispin Bates and Marina Cartes, eds, *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857 Documents of the Indian Uprising* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2017), 249.

⁷¹ Leckey, *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed*, xi.

the probability is, that the compilation will be deeply tinged with the religious, professional, national, political, or personal prejudices of the writer.⁷²

Leckey adhered to these guidelines as he critiqued multiple early historical accounts of the Indian Uprising.

The journalist Henry Mead, whose Mutiny history we have already studied, was the first to be critiqued by Leckey. The latter quoted the entire paragraph in *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences* where the former had described a gruesome scene of rebel cruelty in which the British women and children of Fatehgarh were killed with swords and spears while the men were “ranged in line, with a bamboo running along the whole extent and passing through each man’s arms, which were tied behind his back. The troopers then rode round them and taunted their victims, reviling them with the grossest abuse, and gloating over the tortures they were about to inflict.”⁷³ Leckey compared Mead’s account of the Fatehgarh massacre against two others that were available to him and concluded that one should reject Mead’s characterization of the event “except in the single fact that the Futtehghur refugees were slaughtered.”⁷⁴ Scrutinizing the scene in which British men were lined together by a bamboo, Leckey estimated the number of Britons in Fatehgarh through other accounts and came to the conclusion that, at the very least, there were 79 adult males over there.⁷⁵ He then went on to sarcastically argue that a bamboo to hold together this number of people in single file “would have to be 98 feet 9 inches” while “the longest bamboo that India could produce, according to the most eminent botanists, a supposition which is highly improbable,--that bamboo would not have much exceeded 70 feet in length.”⁷⁶ Where the historian Mead had intended his

⁷² Leckey, *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed*, xiii.

⁷³ Leckey, *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed*, 1.

⁷⁴ Leckey, *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed*, 3.

⁷⁵ Leckey, *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed*, 3.

⁷⁶ Leckey, *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed*, 3.

readers to feel rage and humiliation in a cataclysmic time, Leckey insisted on using all possible sources in confirming the facts of a violent event as best as he could.

In the fourth chapter, Leckey refuted the emotionally charged description of rebel violence by the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, who was quoted in the *Evening Mail* as saying “Women and children have been massacred before, but I don’t believe there is any instance on record where children have been reserved in cold blood to be most cruelly and anatomically tortured in the presence of their horrified parents before being finally put to death.”⁷⁷ In contrast, Leckey asserted that “There is not on record, in any published document, a single credible instance of children having ‘been reserved’ by the mutineers, or even by the rabble,” for such atrocious treatment.⁷⁸ Here was another example of Leckey urging his readers to not take the words of any authority figure, historian or aristocrat, at face value. This was part and parcel of a diligent practice of history writing.

III. Conclusion

In the first place, somebody in each era must make clear the facts with utter disregard to his own wish and desire and belief. What we have got to know, so far as possible, are the things that actually happened in the world. Then with that much clear and open to every reader, the philosopher and prophet has a chance to interpret these facts; but the historian has no right, posing as scientist, to conceal or distort facts; and until we distinguish between these two functions of the chronicles of human action, we are going to render it easy for a muddled world out of sheer ignorance to make the same mistake ten times over.⁷⁹

W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*

⁷⁷ Leckey, *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed*, 91.

⁷⁸ Leckey, *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed*, 91.

⁷⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), 722.

In the nineteenth century, on the other hand, race becomes the organizing grammar of an imperial order in which modernity, the civilizing mission and the “measure of man” were framed.⁸⁰

Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*

In this chapter, we have studied the accounts of the Indian Uprising by George Crawshay, Alexander Duff, John Bruce Norton, Henry Bowne Minturn Jr., Henry Mead, Charles Ball, Henry Frederick Malcolm, Robert Montgomery Martin, and Edward Leckey. Most of these historians wrote about race as a principal causal factor which explained the historical outcomes they were living through. In fact, the entire history of the British Empire was framed through the lens of race by many British historians in this time. By the middle of the 19th century, a plurality of disciplines ranging from anatomy to anthropology to physiology had established the importance of race as an indispensable axis of difference. This axis of difference was especially pertinent in the metropole of an empire that spanned from the Caribbean to Australasia. As Nancy Stepan argues, “Races were now seen as forming a natural but static chain of excellence, whether on the basis of nervous organization, skull shape or brain size. The hierarchy of races was believed to correspond to, and indeed to be the cause of, what most people took to be the natural scale of human achievement in the world.”⁸¹ From politicians to scientists to historians, race was a prevalent explanatory component of discourse. As the historian Thomas Metcalfe succinctly writes about the melding of scientific racism with the memory of violent revolt, “Together the new racial thought and the lessons of 1857 reinforced and gave credibility to each other. Cranial measurement and the Kanpur massacre taught much the same thing.”⁸²

⁸⁰ Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 27.

⁸¹ Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982), 46.

⁸² Thomas R. Metcalf, *Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857-1970* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 313.

We have already seen how, even before the rise of scientific racism around the middle of the 19th century, racialist thinking was melded into the practice of conjectural history most enduringly in James Mill's 1817 *The History of British India*. The influence of Mill's sweeping denunciation of every aspect of Indian society was palpable in the histories of the Indian Uprising we have analyzed in this chapter. About the general character of Hindus and Muslims, Mill had written that "The same insincerity, mendacity, and perfidy; the same indifference to the feelings of others; the same prostitution and venality, are conspicuous in both."⁸³ In the aftermath of the Indian Uprising, these stereotypes of mendacity and perfidy were aggravated by the memory of violence into stereotypes of depraved barbarism.

In his 1828 essay, "The Task of the Modern Historian," Thomas Macaulay had called upon historians to engage more meaningfully in "the art of narration, the art of interesting the affections and presenting pictures to the imagination."⁸⁴ This is exactly what historians like Henry Mead, Charles Ball, and John William Kaye (whose work we will study in the next chapter) did when they wrote detailed scenes of native and British violence in their texts. The arts of 'interesting the affections' and 'presenting pictures to the imagination' served to reify racial, religious, and civilizational difference in a substantial majority of British histories of the Indian Uprising. The vivid images of violence inflicted by Indians upon Britons were intended to elicit a sense of hateful, unbridgeable difference. Those of British violence on Indian rebels, on the other hand, served to invoke divine favor and rightful vengeance. The discourse of British civilizational superiority and Asiatic barbarism was seared into British consciousness. Such rhetorical and affective strategies

⁸³ James Mill, *The History of British India. Abridged and with an Introduction by William Thomas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 326.

⁸⁴ Macaulay, "The Task of the Modern Historian", 8.

ensured, to quote Macaulay, that these historical accounts of the Indian Uprising would “not be merely traced on the mind, but branded into it.”⁸⁵

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Having established the importance of race in the writing of British histories of the Indian Uprising, it is equally important to keep in mind Ann Stoler’s argument that “if there is anything we can learn from the colonial ontologies of racial kinds, it is that such “essences” were protean, not fixed, subject to reformulation again and again.”⁸⁶ Additionally, dominant as race may have been in the discourse of the time, its influence was never total or uniform. We have seen how figures like George Crawshay, John Bruce Norton, Robert Montgomery Martin, and Edward Leckey resisted the use of the racist discourse of their time to explain the 1857 revolt in India. The most obscure of these texts is certainly Leckey’s yet it stands out for expressing the issues facing one in writing the history of a revolt, particularly regarding the use of multiple sources to arrive at the truth of a specific violent event. Leckey deconstructed the affective strategies used by historians to produce highly charged emotional responses in their readers. These strategies were consistently employed in the writing of violence inflicted on British women and children. Instead of using the prevalent strategy of claiming that the violence inflicted on Britons was beyond the ability of language to express, Leckey examined the sources and rhetorical strategies used by these historians, often through pointed satire.

What enabled Leckey to consistently challenge British historical writings on the Indian Uprising on the grounds of scholarly objectivity and critical thinking was his refusal to rely on racist tropes about Indian behavior. He was writing at the same time when Duff had written that

⁸⁵ Macaulay, “The Task of the Modern Historian”, 20.

⁸⁶ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 4.

“Throughout all ages the Asiatic has been noted for his duplicity, cunning, hypocrisy, treachery”⁸⁷, Mead had concluded that Britons were “gifted with the power and instinct of mastery over the dusky tribes of the East”⁸⁸, and the American Minturn had denounced the supposed “indescribable moral inferiority of Asiatic races.”⁸⁹ Leckey, in contrast, averred that historical writing required an admittedly difficult but paramount training to keep religious, professional, national, political, and personal biases in check. If we look back to some of the eminent historians whose ideas we have engaged with so far in this thesis, we can conclude that this was no new radical advice in the writing of history. Back in 1777, in the preface to the first volume of *The History of America*, William Robertson had exhorted the importance of “scrupulous accuracy” in history writing since, without it, one could only “write an amusing tale, but cannot said to have composed an authentic history.”⁹⁰ What Leckey’s critique illustrates is just how difficult it was for historians to be scrupulously accurate when they were writing about a cataclysmic event with profound political and emotional implications.

⁸⁷ Alexander Duff, *The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and Results*, 58.

⁸⁸ Henry Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 378.

⁸⁹ Robert Bowne Minturn, *From New York to Delhi*, 275.

⁹⁰ William Robertson, *The Works of William Robertson. Vol. 6. A Catalogue of Spanish Books and Manuscripts and The History of America, books 1-4* (London: T. Cadell, 1840), Preface. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/the-works-of-william-robertson-vol-6-a-catalogue-of-spanish-books-and-manuscripts-and-the-history-of-america-books-1-4>.

Chapter 2: The Most Marvellous Episode of Modern Times¹: The Writing of a Canonical History of the Indian Uprising

The spirit that had sustained Great Britain in her long contest against Napoleon was a living force in India in 1857-8, and produced similar results.²

George Bruce Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*

It was an invention forged above all by war. Time and time again, war with France brought Britons, whether they hailed from Wales or Scotland or England, into confrontation with an obviously hostile Other and encouraged them to define themselves collectively against it. They defined themselves as Protestants struggling for survival against the world's foremost Catholic power. They defined themselves against the French as they imagined them to be, superstitious, militarist, decadent and unfree. And, increasingly as the wars went on, they defined themselves in contrast to the colonial peoples they conquered, peoples who were manifestly alien in terms of culture, religion and colour.³

Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*

I. Supremacy Obscured only for a Little While⁴—John William Kaye's *A History of the Sepoy War in India: 1857-1858*

John William Kaye (1814-1876) returned to England in 1845 after performing his military service in the Bengal Army between 1832 and 1841. In the interregnum of four years, Kaye commenced a promising career as a writer and scholar in India. Most notably, he pioneered the publication of the *Calcutta Review* in 1844. A fellow co-creator of the scholarly journal was Alexander Duff, whose letters had provided one of the most renowned early accounts of the Indian Uprising. In England, Kaye's career took off upon the publication of his books on Afghanistan, including a novel titled *Long Engagements: A Tale of the Affghan Rebellion* and the three volume *History of the War in Afghanistan*. The 1853 *The Administration of the East India Company: A*

¹ Kaye and Malleson, *Kaye's and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 6*, viii. In the preface to this volume, Malleson wrote "In conclusion, I would with great respect lay the last volume of this work before the public as the concluding words of an attempt to describe, faithfully and without prejudice, the most marvellous episode of modern times."

² George Bruce Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857* (London: Seeley & Co., 1891), 409.

³ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 5. Originally published in 1992.

⁴ John William Kaye and George Bruce Malleson, *Kaye's and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 495. The second volume was originally published in 1870. In the final chapter of this volume, Kaye wrote "Again the supremacy of the English race, India, obscured only for a little while, was to be reasserted and re-established."

History of Indian Progress was followed by a series of biographies on colonial officials like Charles Metcalfe (1785-1846) and John Malcolm (1769-1833). As the Indian Uprising came to a close, Kaye published *Christianity in India: A Historical Narrative*. However, all these texts would pale in comparison to the popularity and authority of his *A History of the Sepoy War in India: 1857-1858*.

Conceived as a multi-volume project, Kaye's *A History of the Sepoy War in India* became a canonical historical text due to the depth of its research and its microscopic analysis of the revolt from its start to its end. The depth of research in Kaye's project was due in no small part because the British colonial archive was made available to him unlike it had been for any preceding historian of the Indian Uprising. Charles Canning's (Governor-General of India during the Uprising) documents from his time in India were opened to Kaye's scrutiny by the former's executors in addition to the colonial documents made available by then Secretary of State for India, Charles Wood (1800-1885). Finally, Kaye benefited from his acquaintance with key British figures during the Indian Uprising, including John Lawrence (who would become Viceroy of India from 1864 to 1869), James Outram (celebrated leader of the Relief of Lucknow during the Uprising), and E.A. Reade (Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces during the Uprising).⁵

In 1864, the first volume of *A History of the Sepoy War in India* was published and received such a wide readership that the book had a ninth edition by just 1880. The dedication of the book read "I should have dedicated these volumes to Lord Canning, had he lived: I now inscribe them reverentially to his memory."⁶ The first volume ran over 600 pages and provided a detailed narrative of key events leading up to the Mutiny, such as the defeat of the Sikh Empire, Lord Dalhousie's Governor-Generalship, the annexations under the Doctrine of Lapse (particularly that of Awadh), and

⁵ John William Kaye and George Bruce Malleson, *Kaye's and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), xii. The first volume was originally published in 1864. In the preface, Kaye expressed gratitude to all these figures for allowing him access to the documents under their control.

⁶ Kaye and Malleson, *Kaye's and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 1*, Dedication.

the history of the Sepoy Army. These topics had been written about by previous historians of the Uprising, but no one had explored them in the meticulous depth that Kaye did, especially when it came to the history of the Sepoy Army.

Notably, Kaye differed with previous historians on the characterization of Lord Dalhousie's rule as Governor-General. Acknowledging the negative impact of Dalhousie's annexations on Indian perceptions of British rule, Kaye nevertheless averred that "There was something grand and even good in the very errors of such a man. For there was no taint of baseness in them; no signs of anything sordid or self-seeking...he rejoiced with a noble pride in the thought that he left behind him a mightier empire than he had found, that he had brought new countries and strange nations under the sway of the British sceptre, and sown the seeds of a great civilisation."⁷

In the same vein, Kaye also offered an affirmative analysis of Lord Canning's Governor-Generalship of India. Both Dalhousie and Canning had been excoriated for their disregard of Indian religious sentiments and strictures in preceding Mutiny historiography. For example, Charles Ball in *The History of the Indian Mutiny* had severely critiqued Dalhousie's annexation of Awadh as a principal cause of the Indian Uprising. Kaye pushed against these critiques and sought to contextualize the policies and perspectives of these figures. He endeavored to rehabilitate Dalhousie and Canning as honorable men who had selflessly worked to further Britain's unquestionably enlightened civilizing mission in India. Such an analytical angle implied that there was no malice or avarice in British rule, only benign intentions. The villains were in fact tragic imperial heroes. Indeed, Kaye closed the first volume with an account of Lord Canning's Governor-Generalship. The

⁷ Kaye and Malleon, *Kaye's and Malleon's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 1*, 263.

last paragraph described the onerous challenge to British rule posed by the Mutiny with Canning valorously watching “the manhood of England going out to meet it.”⁸

Published in 1870, the second volume charted the progression of the rebellion in the north-west, upper India, and Punjab, focusing on the key cities that have come to be associated with the events of 1857-59: Delhi, Meerut, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, and Kanpur. The volume ended with the Battle of Najafghar and the Siege of Delhi. Kaye showed that the revolt started off in distant and disconnected parts of British India. From this account, he went on to argue that “in the earlier stages of the War, there was no general design—little co-operation or cohesion.”⁹ However, after the capture of Meerut by the sepoys, the revolt became more general and popular. The mutiny became a widespread rebellion.

Kaye also wrote about the plight of British women who were captured by Nana Sahib’s forces in the lead up to the Kanpur massacres. Invoking the popular rhetoric of the time, he wrote that “As they sat on the ground, these Christian captives must have had some glimmering recollection of their Biblical studies, and remembered how in the East the grinding of corn was ever regarded as a symbol of subjection.”¹⁰ Concurrently, he reassured his readers that the rumors of mass rape were “fictions of an excited imagination, too readily believed without inquiry and circulated without thought. None were mutilated—none were dishonoured. There was nothing needed to aggravate the naked horror of the fact that some two hundred Christian women and children were hacked to death in the course of a few hours.”¹¹

⁸ Kaye and Malleeson, *Kaye’s and Malleeson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 1*, 453.

⁹ Kaye and Malleeson, *Kaye’s and Malleeson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 2*, x. In C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 324, the author writes that Kaye was confident about the state of British intelligence gathering in India until the Indian Uprising forced him to conclude that “this was knowledge merely of the ‘externals of Indian life’, the dry census data of houses, numbers and ‘outward appearances’. Bentinck and Thomason’s statistical movement had told the British almost nothing Indian sentiments, politics and beliefs.”

¹⁰ Kaye and Malleeson, *Kaye’s and Malleeson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 2*, 267.

¹¹ Kaye and Malleeson, *Kaye’s and Malleeson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 2*, 281.

In Kaye's canonical account then, British readers could feel indignant at the treatment of British women at the hands of Indian princes but not irreversibly dishonored. Moreover, Kaye never questioned the framework of the British Empire as a Christian force amid a superstitious and uncivilized people in India. The bodies of British women were not simply inscribed with Britishness, but equally with Christianity. The hardships faced by captive British women during the revolt were written in parallel to a Biblical reference to amplify the resonance of the event for a British readership. In Kaye's account, the reader could find a cyclical binary whereby Great Britain was replaying the role of noble Biblical figures in the 19th century in the face of 'eastern barbarism.' Indeed, considered as a whole, *A History of the Sepoy War in India* had its own heroes, martyrs, saints, saviors, barbarians, trials, and salvations.

The third volume published in 1876 covered the revolt in Bengal, Bihar, the North-Western provinces, Central India, Rajputana, and Awadh (especially Lucknow). In the final section, Kaye provided detailed, quasi-hagiographic sketches of key military personalities on the British side, including Henry Lawrence (1806-1857), Henry Havelock (1795-1857), and James Outram (1803-1863). Lawrence succumbed to injuries sustained during his dogged defense of Lucknow in the summer of 1857. Of him, Kaye wrote that "it is difficult to imagine a purer, a more unselfish, a more blameless, and at the same time a more useful life. He, at least, did not live in vain. Great as were his services to his country, those he rendered to mankind were still greater."¹² About James Outram, who was a key figure in the defense and Relief of Lucknow, Kaye wrote: "Sir James Outram bore the highest character. He was a paladin of the days of chivalry and romance. To a fearlessness which never recognized danger, to a nerve that never trembled, to a coolness that never varied, he added a

¹² John William Kaye and George Bruce Malleeson, *Kaye's and Malleeson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 294. Kaye's version of the third volume was published in 1876.

generosity without stint, a forgetfulness of self rarely paralleled, a love of the soul's nobility for its own sake alone."¹³

This was Kaye adhering to what he believed to be the ideal narrative style and structuring principle of history writing. In his preface to the first volume, he wrote that "If it be true that the best history is that which most nearly resembles a bundle of biographies, it is especially true with when said with reference to Indian history; for nowhere do the characters of individual Englishmen impress themselves with a more vital reality upon the annals of the country in which they live."¹⁴ Through his writing of these individuals, Kaye represented them for his readers as embodiments of Great Britain. These figures were dutiful, honorable, valorous, ethereal, and mythical (he made sure of that). And so was Great Britain. In this discursive framework, any revolt against the Empire was the work of a people who were dishonorable, cowardly, profane, and inimical. In such an imaginary, India served as the site of British heroism and redemption.

Kaye was writing in the aftermath of Thomas Carlyle's deeply influential interventions in the study and writing of history in Britain and Europe, most notably his 1841 lectures which were published in book form as *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. Carlyle fervently believed that "Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here."¹⁵ Throughout history, Carlyle wrote, great men had taken the archetypes of Divinity, Prophet, Poet, Priest, Man of Letters, and Ruler. From this perspective followed a study of history in which every epoch could be studied through the great men in it since they were "the lightning, without which the fuel never would have burnt."¹⁶

¹³ Kaye and Malleeson, *Kaye's and Malleeson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 3*, 349.

¹⁴ Kaye and Malleeson, *Kaye's and Malleeson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 1*, xi.

¹⁵ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Workshop, and the Heroic in History. Edited with Notes and an Introduction by Henry David Gray* (London and Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906), 1. The lectures were delivered in 1841.

¹⁶ Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Workshop, and the Heroic in History*, 13.

Following Carlyle's framework, Kaye's history of the Indian Uprising was written avowedly as "a bundle of biographies" that exemplified the best of British character and manhood.¹⁷

Importantly, Kaye's aim of immortalizing the best of British character through history writing was enabled by the structure of his text. He focused on particular administrative regions and the British officers in charge there to cumulatively compile a complete understanding of the military trajectories of the Indian Uprising. The historian S.B. Chaudhuri writes that such an "episodical" structure "would not only bring into play the various measures adopted by local officers to meet an unexpected crisis but would also highlight the military operations conducted to suppress the movement in a particular region."¹⁸ Consequently, "the history of the Indian Mutiny was turned into a story of the British army."¹⁹

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John William Kaye was unable to complete his history of the Indian Uprising. He died in 1876, the year the third volume was published. Nineteen years earlier, at the hysterical height of the Indian Uprising, an anonymous British writer had published a pamphlet titled "The Mutiny of the Bengal Army", which came to be known as the Red Pamphlet. The document acquired a wide readership for its trenchant analysis of the cataclysmic situation. Speaking of the heroics of British military figures in holding off the revolt, the author had written that "At a future and not very distant occasion I hope to produce a fully detailed narrative of their deeds."²⁰ He would finally get the chance to do that by completing the historical project started by Kaye.²¹

¹⁷ Kaye and Malleon, *Kaye's and Malleon's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 1*, xi.

¹⁸ Chaudhuri, *English Historical Writings on the Indian Mutiny, 1857-1859*, 92.

¹⁹ Chaudhuri, *English Historical Writings on the Indian Mutiny, 1857-1859*, 92.

²⁰ George Bruce Malleon, *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army; An Historical Narrative by One Who Has Served Under Sir Charles Napier* (London: Bosworth and Harrison, 1858), 45.

²¹ Chaudhuri, *English Historical Writings on the Indian Mutiny, 1857-1859*, 113. Chaudhuri writes that "Official or other reasons for entrusting Malleon with the responsibility of undertaking the work have not been disclosed. Malleon says that on the very day on which he returned to England after his retirement from service he was asked to continue and complete Kaye's 'History of the Sepoy War.' But the change in the title of the work from 'Sepoy War' to the 'History of the Indian Mutiny' has not been accounted for."

II. Enter Malleson

The Red Pamphlet

George Bruce Malleson (1825-1898) was the Assistant Military Auditor-General at Calcutta when the Indian Uprising erupted. In July, he anonymously published “The Mutiny of the Bengal Army”, a document that came to be known as the “Red Pamphlet.” In the 1860s, he served as Captain, Major, and Colonel in the Bengal Army. He also served as Sanitary Commissioner for Bengal and Controller of the Military Finance Department. In terms of scholarly output, Malleson contributed to the aforementioned *Calcutta Review*. Before joining Kaye’s endeavor to write a comprehensive history of the Indian Uprising, he had written historical texts on the French Empire in India, the Mughal Empire, Afghanistan, and the British conquest of India.

On 2 July 1857, the Red Pamphlet was anonymously published and attracted a wide readership in colonial circles for its biting insight at the revolt threatening British rule in India at the time. The pamphlet was dedicated “To the Living and the Dead—The Living Earl of Ellenborough and The Dead Sir Charles Napier, Who Both Knew How To Check a Mutiny, To Select Efficient Public Servants, And to Gain the Affections of Those Over Whom Their Sway Extended.”²² Malleson denounced Lord Dalhousie’s Governor-Generalship, particularly the annexation of Awadh. He wrote that Awadh had been a loyal independent Muslim kingdom with a multi-religious population that had supported the British during the Anglo-Afghan War of 1838-1842. Moreover, before the annexation of Awadh in 1856, the King of Awadh was “the sole remaining independent Mahomedan sovereign in India; as such he commanded the veneration and regard of all the members of the Mussulman persuasion.”²³ Most importantly, Malleson wrote that Awadh was one of the

²² Malleson, *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army*, Dedication.

²³ Malleson, *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army*, 11.

principal recruiting territories for the Sepoy Army.²⁴ Thus, the annexation of Awadh created disaffection amongst Indian Muslims writ large and also sowed the same seeds amongst the sepoys of the Bengal Army, who revolted in May 1857.

Furthermore, Charles Canning was criticized for surrounding himself with “vain, ignorant, and incompetent” men.²⁵ Canning himself was described as “a man of excellent disposition, but weak and vacillating to a degree scarcely to be imagined.”²⁶ The Red Pamphlet concluded with the suggestion that more Europeans had to be included in the army and native soldiers deprived of arms.²⁷ It also urged that “it will be necessary, merciless as it may sound to English ears, to hunt down every mutineer. India will not be secure so long as a single man remains alive.”²⁸ Even a cursory comparison of Malleeson’s Red Pamphlet and Kaye’s three volumes of *A History of the Sepoy War in India* yields very different characterizations of Dalhousie and Canning. The 1857 pamphlet had the urgency of facing a freshly erupted revolt and displayed a heightened vehemence at the two key figures of British governance. On the other hand, Kaye was more assured writing some years after the end of the revolt. Malleeson expressed a similar calm when he wrote the preface to the revised third volume of the history: “Called upon, twenty years later, to complete the work which Sir John Kaye had left unfinished, I again approached the subject with a mind absolutely unbiased. I had never looked forward to the prospect of writing a History of the Mutiny.”²⁹ Dalhousie and Canning were still critiqued but with slightly less vehemence. With the benefit of hindsight, Malleeson hoped that “this volume, its predecessors, and its successors may find a

²⁴ Malleeson, *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army*, 29. The author wrote that “the Sepoys were the mainstay of order throughout the country, that they represented the feelings of the entire population of Oudh, of Behar, or Gwalior, the Punjab, Nagpore, and Hydrabad: that so long as they were contented, the people would remain passive, if not altogether satisfied.”

²⁵ Malleeson, *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army*, 15.

²⁶ Malleeson, *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army*, 16.

²⁷ Malleeson, *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army*, 46.

²⁸ Malleeson, *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army*, 46.

²⁹ Kaye and Malleeson, *Kaye’s and Malleeson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 3*, vii-viii.

permanent place on the shelves of those who are desirous of possessing a true record of the events of the great Indian Mutiny.”³⁰

At the end of Malleson’s meticulous editing and writing, the historical project that Kaye had started was thereafter published in six volumes as *Kaye’s and Malleson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*.

Kaye’s and Malleson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8

Following the reverential accounts of British military figures at the close of the third volume, the fourth one chronicled the reconquest of territories lost to the rebels. The first section (Book X) recounted the reconquest of North-Western India (including Delhi), the second one (Book XI) the reconquest of Awadh (especially the ‘Relief of Lucknow), and the third one (Book XII) the efforts to quell the revolt in Orissa, Bihar, Eastern Bengal, Rajputana, and Rohilkhand. In the fifth volume, Malleson wrote of the Mutiny in Central India, Bombay, and the Deccan. The penultimate section (Book XVI) was on the rebel leader Tantia Topi (1814-1859) and Queen Victoria’s 1858 Declaration that ended Company rule in India and initiated official Crown rule.

The final volume (consisting of only Book XVIII) examined non-military aspects of the revolt in regions like Allahabad, Rohilkhand, Agra, and Sindh and the response of Anglo-Indian civilians to the revolt and its aftermath. This was so since Malleson wanted to “place on record the deeds of those Englishmen in India, not necessarily soldiers, who, placed in most difficult circumstances, with no support but that afforded by their own brave hearts.”³¹ The penultimate chapter of this volume ended with Malleson’s verdict on the confident restoration of British rule after the revolt: “It is consolatory to know that the good impressions produced by British rule largely

³⁰ Kaye and Malleson, *Kaye’s and Malleson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 3*, ix.

³¹ John William Kaye and George Bruce Malleson, *Kaye’s and Malleson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 6* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.

predominated over the dislike engendered by British mistakes, and that the foreign race which held supreme power in India could point to an amount of sympathy, of energetic action, of co-operation such as no native ruler of the past, with the possible exception of the illustrious Akbar, could have called forth.”³² The six volumes concluded with the story of Lieutenant Tomkinson, who lost his horse and gun in the chaos of the revolt. “Hungry and destitute”, Tomkinson was provided for and hidden by a Muslim man in the village of Amain. In October 1857, when news reached Amain that the rebels were passing by the village, Tomkinson attempted to stop their movements by himself. However, his attempts were foiled and he was killed. Malleeson concluded the canonical six volume history of the Indian Uprising with the anecdote about Tomkinson with the “hope that a story which paints the devotion to duty of an Englishman, and the kindness and fidelity of a Muhammadan, may be considered as an episode not unworthy to take a place in the History of the Indian Mutiny.”³³

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Through sixteen detailed books in six volumes and a comprehensive 266-page Index, we can find Malleeson’s holistic analysis of the causes of the revolt in Book XVII (in volume 5), which was titled “The Causes of the Mutiny.” Malleeson’s analysis was written principally as a response to John Lawrence’s diagnosis of the cause of the revolt. Lawrence had concluded that “the mutiny was due to the greased cartridges, and to the greased cartridges only.”³⁴ Malleeson pushed back that the greased cartridges were simply a means to flare up the revolt rather than the principal cause of it. As his own diagnosis of the revolt’s causes, he argued that it was the ill-advised British policies of annexation under Lord Dalhousie’s Governor-Generalship that created a widespread discontent that eventually became a revolt in the summer of 1857. This was largely the same argument that

³² Kaye and Malleeson, *Kaye’s and Malleeson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 6*, 169.

³³ Kaye and Malleeson, *Kaye’s and Malleeson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 6*, 175.

³⁴ John William Kaye and George Bruce Malleeson, *Kaye’s and Malleeson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 280.

Malleson had propagated in his Red Pamphlet. Undergirding Malleson's analysis was the notion that "the Western race can gain the confidence of the Eastern only when it scrupulously respects the long-cherished customs of the latter, and impresses upon it the conviction that its word is better than its bond."³⁵ The revolt, then, was the result of an "attempt to govern a great Eastern empire according to purely Western ideas."³⁶

A Destiny to Conquer and to Maintain³⁷—Malleson's *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*

In 1891, George Bruce Malleson published *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*. This was his own condensed 413-page account of the Indian Uprising. The driving force behind the book was a desire to emphasize and analyze the deep-rooted causes of the revolt. Malleson endeavored to convince his readers that "Circumstances had proved to me that extraneous causes were at work to promote an ill-feeling, a hatred not personal but national, in the mind of men who for a century had been our truest and most loyal servants."³⁸ Instead of structuring his text through the administrative regions of British India and the principal military figures in charge of those regions, Malleson wanted to write about historical causes that were unknowingly shaped by individual actions. This was a different structuring principle than what Kaye had practiced. Instead of focusing on individuals, Malleson comprehended the working of historical forces that individuals of the era were not cognizant of but nevertheless shaped by.

The Indian Mutiny had the same general analysis of the Indian Uprising as *Kaye's and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*. In both texts, Lord Dalhousie's annexations, particularly that of Awadh were lambasted in addition to a general indifference displayed by British

³⁵ Kaye and Malleson, *Kaye's and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 5*, 295.

³⁶ Kaye and Malleson, *Kaye's and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 5*, 295.

³⁷ Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*, 410.

³⁸ Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*, viii.

policymakers towards the state of the Sepoy Army.³⁹ The revolt was described as the culmination of a general discontent that found a convenient spark in the case of the greased cartridges of the Enfield Rifle. Undergirding Malleeson's analysis was the same racist understanding of Indians and Britons as distinct races with distinct essences. Speaking of how the sepoys' concerns about the rumors regarding the greased cartridges were unsatisfactorily allayed by British military officers, Malleeson wrote that this was because "Sentiment goes much further than logic with Asiatics."⁴⁰ In terms of civilizational superiority in military strategy, he rhetorically questioned "But what were 4000 Asiatics against one-tenth of their number of Englishmen?"⁴¹

Thus, race remained the key factor of historical analysis for Malleeson and he employed it even more brazenly than he had in *Kaye's and Malleeson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*. So reliant on race was his analysis of the events of the Indian Uprising that he concluded:

It was a question of race. This race of ours has been gifted by Providence with the qualities of manliness, of endurance, of a resolution which never flags. It has been its destiny to conquer and to maintain. It never willingly lets go. Its presence in England is a justification of its action all over the world. Wherever it has conquered, it has planted principles of order, of justice, of good government. And the Providence which inspired the race to plant these great principles, endowed it with the qualities necessary to maintain them wherever they had been planted. Those principles stood them in good stead in 1857...It showed itself equal to difficulties which, I believe, no other created race would have successfully encountered.⁴²

Even more, for the Britons who constituted the 'we' that he intimately wrote to, Malleeson positioned the crushing of the Indian Uprising as the most shining example of the glories of the race in a long historical sequence. He harkened back to the Napoleonic Wars when he wrote that "The spirit that had sustained Great Britain in her long contest against Napoleon was a living force in

³⁹ Malleeson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*, 16. Malleeson wrote that "The annexation of Oudh was felt as a personal blow by every sipahi in the Bengal army, because it deprived him of an immemorial privilege exercised by himself and his forefathers for years, and which secured to him a position of influence and importance in his own country."

⁴⁰ Malleeson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*, 53.

⁴¹ Malleeson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*, 170.

⁴² Malleeson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*, 410.

India in 1857-8, and produced similar results.”⁴³ He went even further back in history when he wrote that:

The energy and resolution which gave the Britain which Caesar had conquered to the Anglican race; which almost immediately brought that Britain to a preponderant position in Europe; which, on the discovery of a new world, sent forth its sons to conquer and to colonise; which, in the course of a brief time, gained North America, the islands of the Pacific, and Australasia, which, entering only as third on the field, expelled its European rivals from India.⁴⁴

Through his historical writings on the event, Malleson placed the crushing of the Indian Uprising as the latest providential affirmation of the British Empire. For him, the proof of this providential affirmation was to be consistently found across geography and history: from the time of the Roman conquest of Britain to the 19th century; and from North America to Australasia. In the introductory chapter of this thesis, we encountered Priya Satia’s characterization of history as a discipline which insisted on “an empirical foundation but then willfully weaves imaginative truth from it.”⁴⁵ The transcendent power of history lay in historians’ weaving of imaginative truth. The truth claim Malleson extracted from the Indian Uprising was that of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, a notion that was ascendant in British intellectual and political circles in the mid-19th century.⁴⁶

III. Conclusion

Women were not seen as inhabiting history proper but existing, like colonized peoples, in a permanently anterior time within the modern nation.⁴⁷

Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*

⁴³ Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*, 409.

⁴⁴ Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*, 409-410.

⁴⁵ Priya Satia, *Time’s Monster: How History Makes History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2020), 55.

⁴⁶ For more on ideas of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority in the time, see Reginald Horsman, “Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain before 1850”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 3 (1976): 387-410.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2708805>. Horsman writes that “Through the views of Carlyle, Thomas Arnold, Disraeli, and Charles Kingsley one can readily perceive how a variety of threads had been woven into a new Anglo-Saxon racial tapestry. Carlyle was the first great British writer to view Saxon triumphs as clearly a product of racial superiority.”

⁴⁷ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 359.

As the historian Anne McClintock writes, a gendered analysis of nationalism is essential in how “Women are represented as the atavistic and authentic ‘body’ of national tradition...Men, by contrast, represent the progressive agent of national modernity.”⁴⁸ British and Indian women rarely appear as historical agents in the histories analyzed in this thesis. Where British women do appear is in scenes meant to provoke a sense of national humiliation, scenes in which they were written not as historical actors, but as embodiments of the nation and as “signifiers of ethnonational differences.”⁴⁹ Furthermore, McClintock recommends understanding how “Social evolutionism and anthropology gave to national politics a concept of natural time as familial.”⁵⁰ Understanding how the rubric of the heterosexual nuclear family informed historical and temporal worldviews is indeed fruitful for our analysis of British histories of 19th-century revolts in the Empire.

More explicitly than the previous historians of the Indian Uprising we have encountered, Kaye’s and Malleson’s history presented the revolt and its crushing as a violent clash of rival masculinities. In the final paragraph of the second volume, Kaye wrote “it would be left for our English manhood to decide for itself whether any multitude of Natives of India, behind their walls of masonry, could deter our legions from a victorious entrance into the city of the Mughul.”⁵¹ So martial and masculinist was Kaye’s analytical framework of the revolt that the word ‘manhood’ appeared in association with British figures no less than 10 times in the first volume and 22 times in the second one. Where British manhood was lauded for its perseverance, Indians were denigrated as skittish and infantile, a perception that went at least as far back as Robert Orme’s essay on “The Effeminacy of the Inhabitants of Indostan.” Writing about sepoys, Kaye argued that “Even his outbreaks of rebellion had recently partaken more of the naughtiness of the child than of the stern

⁴⁸ Anne McClintock, “Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family,” *Feminist Review* (no.44, Summer 1993): 66.

⁴⁹ Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, “Introduction,” in Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, Editors, *Woman-Nation-State* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1989), 7.

⁵⁰ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 359.

⁵¹ Kaye and Malleson, *Kaye’s and Malleson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 2*, 495.

resolution of manhood.”⁵² For his part, Malleson rhetorically questioned “But what were 4000 Asiatics against one-tenth of their number of Englishmen?”⁵³ Applying McClintock’s analysis, we can see how Indians were infantilized using the rubric of the family while British martial prowess was lauded as the expression of a stern and complete manhood. Everyone else, marginalized along the axes of gender, race, and religion, among others, was thought to be “in a permanently anterior time.”⁵⁴

In the introductory chapter of this thesis, we have already seen how the notion of time as linear, progressive, and universal was important to British history writing in the 19th century. Simultaneously, the notion of improvement was critical to the discourse of the time as well. It was widely believed by British historians, following Macaulay’s reverential declaration of British physical, moral, and intellectual improvement, that colonized peoples would follow the same trajectory that had been pioneered by Britons in the first place. In such a perspective centered on ‘improvement’, the future of the colonized, including Indians and Jamaicans, was expected to be one of ‘improvement’ under the tutelage of Great Britain. It was the best, most ‘civilized’ future imaginable. To those who held such a perspective, revolts from the colonized often appeared as instances of petulant resistance against the civilizing progress of time. Using the analogy of the heterosexual nuclear family in Victorian England, the implications of revolts were minimized by seeing them through the lens of childlike stubbornness to paternal authority, an authority that was physically and intellectually superior. It was in such an ideational context that Kaye wrote that the sepoys’ “outbreaks of rebellion had recently partaken more of the naughtiness of the child than of the stern resolution of manhood.”⁵⁵

⁵² Kaye and Malleson, *Kaye’s and Malleson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 1*, 326.

⁵³ Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*, 170.

⁵⁴ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 359.

⁵⁵ Kaye and Malleson, *Kaye’s and Malleson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. Volume 1*, 326.

In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I will return to how such infantilizing conceptions of the colonized were employed to minimize the implications of the revolts in India and Jamaica.

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In 1834, Robert Montgomery Martin, whom we have encountered in the previous chapter as an historian of the Indian Uprising, published the five-volume *History of the British Colonies*. Martin concluded that “*Slavery*, both Indian and negro—that blighting upas—has been the curse of the West Indies.”⁵⁶ He argued that slavery was an inimical and unstable system that was bound to implode violently. To substantiate his case, he counted no less than 28 slave revolts in Jamaica between 1678 and 1832.⁵⁷ Moreover, Martin made the case for racial equality when he wrote that “the argument founded on an alleged mental inferiority of the African race is unfounded in fact.”⁵⁸ He went on to provide examples of Black “mathematicians, physicians, divines, philosophers, linguists, poets, generals, and merchants.”⁵⁹ True to his devout faith in Christianity and the British Empire, Martin believed that the abolition of slavery in 1834 was a testament to the piety and power of the two interlocked forces. With abolition, he felt there was finally a chance “in the mother country and in the colonies to promote calmly and judiciously the efficient working of this truly grand and noble experiment for the freedom, welfare, and happiness of millions of the human race.”⁶⁰

On March 5, 1866, the Jamaica Royal Commission was into its thirty-fourth day of collecting testimony for its report on the Morant Bay Rebellion when it questioned Edward Bassett Key (1840-1893), a Jamaican curate. The commissioners asked Key about the atmosphere in religious circles in

⁵⁶ Robert Montgomery Martin, *The British Colonial Library, Comprising a Popular and Authentic Description of all the Colonies of the British Empire. Volume IV. History of the West Indies, Volume 1* (Whittaker & Company, 1844), xvii.

⁵⁷ Martin, *History of the West Indies*, 38.

⁵⁸ Martin, *History of the West Indies*, xix.

⁵⁹ Martin, *History of the West Indies*, xix.

⁶⁰ Martin, *History of the West Indies*, xxxvi.

the lead up to the Morant Bay Rebellion, particularly a lecture on education delivered by George William Gordon (1820-1865) during his visit to Falmouth in July 1865.⁶¹ Key had previously stated that he noticed a book being circulated in Baptist schools in early 1864, one that was, “holding up the people who had been condemned in the late rebellion of 1832 as martyrs.”⁶² The commissioners earnestly questioned Key if he remembered the title of “that dangerous book?”⁶³ Once it became clear that he was unable to provide an exact title, the commissioners suggestively asked: “Was it Montgomery’s History of the West Indies?”⁶⁴

Edward Bassett Key’s claim that he simply couldn’t remember the title of the book he had previously felt “would do mischief among the people” is suspicious.⁶⁵ For our purposes, however, the forbidding invocation of Martin’s history in a commission of inquiry 32 years after the book’s publication illustrates the importance of understanding the politics of history writing in this time period. Across the British Empire, from India to Jamaica, history writing was a contentious, charged, and critical endeavor.

⁶¹ Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, Evidence of Edward Bassett Key, pp. 711-4.

⁶² Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, Evidence of Edward Bassett Key, pp. 711-4.

⁶³ Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, Evidence of Edward Bassett Key, pp. 711-4.

⁶⁴ Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, Evidence of Edward Bassett Key, pp. 711-4.

⁶⁵ Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, Evidence of Edward Bassett Key, pp. 711-4.

Chapter 3: Writing History with the Atlantic Rolling Between the Pen and the Press¹

Morant Bay is doubly significant because it represents an instance of metropolitan, internal conflict that emanates directly from an external colonial experience.²

Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*

Indeed, if the notion of crisis has now come to be read as a central category in the cultural discourse on English identities, it is perhaps because it was only through imperial crises as West Indian emancipation, the Indian Mutiny (1857), and the Morant Bay rebellion (1865)—to cite just a few examples—that the official English mind could reflect on the national character, its economy of representation, and its moral imperative.³

Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*

I. The Most Lovely Island that Eyes Have Seen—Initial European Accounts of Jamaica

one shall meet with Words, and Names of Things, one has no Notion or Conception of.⁴

Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands*

The first European account of Jamaica was written by Andrés Bernaldez (1450-1513), a Spanish cleric and chronicler who had travelled to the Caribbean in the voyages led by Christopher Columbus. Using Columbus' writings, the *Historia de los Reyes Católicos Don Fernando y Doña Isabel* revered the natural beauty of Jamaica, claiming that "the island is the most lovely that eyes have seen."⁵ The book contained descriptions of the Taino population's canoes, weapons, and

¹ The chapter title plays with the epigraph of George Wilson Bridges, *The Annals of Jamaica. Volume the First* (London: John Murray, 1828). Bridges wrote that "The arduous undertaking of printing a voluminous work, with the Atlantic rolling between the pen and the press, will, the Author hopes, plead in extenuation of those errors which might possibly have been corrected under his own superintendence; and the charitable reader will extend his indulgence to that arrangement of the numerous Notes which advice or experience might probably have improved."

² Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 11.

³ Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 114.

⁴ Hans Sloane, Michael van der Gucht, and B. M. [i.e. R. Bentley and M. Magnes]. *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica : With the Natural History of the Herbs and Trees, Four-Footed Beasts, Fishes, Birds, Insects, Reptiles, &c. of the Last of Those Islands; to Which Is Prefix'd, an Introduction, Wherein Is an Account of the Inhabitants, Air, Waters, Diseases, Trade, &c. of That Place, with Some Relations Concerning the Neighbouring Continent, and Islands of America. Illustrated with Figures of the Things Described, Which Have Not Been Heretofore Engraved. In Large Copper-Plates as Big as the Life*. Vol. 1. London: B.M, 1707, Preface.

⁵ Andrés Bernaldez, "The First European Account of Jamaica", in Diana Paton and Matthew J. Smith, eds., *The Jamaica Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 21.

military tactics.⁶ Jamaica was a small component of Bernáldez's larger account of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. In subsequent decades, a number of prominent Spanish histories of the Caribbean were written. Chief among them were those of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, Bartolomé de las Casas, Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, and Diego de Torres Vargas.

In May 1655, as part of Oliver Cromwell's Western Design, Jamaica was conquered by British forces, ending Spanish control over the island. Some members of the invading force initiated British settlement. An anonymous letter from one of these settlers dated June 1, 1655 gave a physical account of Jamaica and wrote about the promise of growing tobacco, cotton, chocolate and other commodities there.⁷ Another letter from the same settler dated November 5, 1655 detailed the vicissitudes of settling Jamaica, particularly grueling tropical diseases. The settler wrote that he had not "endured soe much sicknesse as here with the bloody flux, rhume, ague, feavor, soe that I desire earnestly to goe for England in March next."⁸ By January 1656, leading British officers in Jamaica were writing to Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell about the lethal diseases facing soldiers in addition to the threat posed by formerly enslaved persons who had formed Maroon forces after the Spanish left them behind in the chaos of the British invasion of the island.⁹

From the first European accounts of Jamaica then, a number of salient characteristics emerged that would continue, in some degree or form, in subsequent British accounts of Jamaica. Jamaica's natural beauty and agricultural fertility were cherished while its maroon population was represented as a challenge to sustained settlement and total control over the territory. The writing of challenges posed by maroons and diseases indirectly posed a question for many in the British

⁶ Bernáldez, "The First European Account of Jamaica", in *The Jamaica Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, 21.

⁷ Anonymous, "Mountains of Gold Turned to Dross", June 1, 1655, in Diana Paton and Matthew J. Smith, eds., *The Jamaica Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 44.

⁸ Anonymous, "Mountains of Gold Turned to Dross", November 5, 1655, in Diana Paton and Matthew J. Smith, eds., *The Jamaica Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 45.

⁹ Robert Sedgwick and William Goodson to Oliver Cromwell, "The Establishment of Maroon Society", January 24, 1656 in Diana Paton and Matthew J. Smith, eds., *The Jamaica Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 46-48.

Empire: was the island worth holding on to? This question would linger in subsequent history writing. British writers with commercial, emotional, and familial ties to the island would push back against these concerns time after time and make extensive cases for the importance of Jamaica to the British Empire.

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While Richard Blome wrote perhaps the first British historical account of Jamaica in 1672, it was the natural history written by Hans Sloane (1660-1753) that became the first prominent British account of the island. Sloane was an eminent naturalist, physician, and artefact collector. As the physician to the Lieutenant Governor of Jamaica Christopher Monck, Sloane travelled to the Caribbean and studiously studied the region, especially its flora and fauna. The result was *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica : With the Natural History of the Herbs and Trees, Four-Footed Beasts, Fishes, Birds, Insects, Reptiles, &c. of the Last of Those Islands ; to Which Is Prefix'd an Introduction, Wherein Is an Account of the Inhabitants, Air, Waters, Diseases, Trade, &c. of That Place, with Some Relations Concerning the Neighbouring Continent, and Islands of America*. The first volume was published in 1707 and the second one in 1725. The text provided an extensive natural account of Jamaica. Indeed, it was encyclopedic in describing and cataloguing the geography, animals, marine life, insects, climate, diseases, and plants of Jamaica. In the preface to the first volume, Sloane expressed his intention of making available a catalogue that anyone interested in the natural composition and history of Jamaica could consult.¹⁰ The first volume was dedicated to Queen Anne as a natural history of “one of the largest and most considerable of Her Majesty’s plantations in America.”¹¹ To use a metaphor apt for Sloane’s worldview and legacy, the

¹⁰ Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica Vol. 1*, Preface.

¹¹ Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica Vol. 1*, Dedication.

text was a portable, albeit heavy, miniature museum that made Jamaica legible, familiar, and known to the metropole through its extensive descriptions and ample illustrations.

Sloane's text was important also for its description of the cultural lives of enslaved and Indigenous Jamaicans in the late 17th century. His recording of songs sung by enslaved Jamaicans was the "first transcription of African music in the Caribbean."¹² The assistance of a Mr. Baptiste was crucial to this endeavor. Unfortunately, we still know close to nothing about this individual. For the purposes of this thesis, suffice it to say Hans Sloane's two-volume *A Voyage to the Islands* was the first major account of Jamaica by such an eminent British figure. His status ensured that this particular account of Jamaica would be widely read in Britain. Moreover, Sloane's study of the island was encyclopedic. While previous British accounts (e.g. the letters by English colonists or Richard Blome's text) had written about Jamaica's natural composition, none of them were as meticulous or exhaustive. He made the island's flora and fauna legible to readers, future settlers, and the colonial state unlike any other preceding scholar.

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In the remainder of this chapter, I will first encapsulate some of the most important British accounts of Jamaica up to the Morant Bay Rebellion. The extensive histories of James Knight and Edward Long were momentous interventions compared to preceding historical accounts of the island. They provided some of the most enduring racial tropes and justifications of slavery in the 18th century. They also helped metropolitan readers perceive Jamaica as an essential and, at the very least, partly enlightened, component of the Empire. Next, I will study the works of George Wilson Bridges, James Phillippo, and Anthony Trollope. Looking at these writings on aggregate, we will be able to more incisively analyze British history writing on the Morant Bay Rebellion. An array of

¹² "Musical Passages: A Voyage to 1688 Jamaica", <http://www.musicalpassage.org/#read>. Accessed February 16, 2025.

competing worldviews, tropes, and narrative modalities had emerged in British history writing on Jamaica. British writers of the Morant Bay Rebellion wrote their accounts in dialogue with these worldviews, tropes, and narrative modalities. For instance, while slavery was abolished in Jamaica in 1834 (more completely with the end of apprenticeship in 1838), the anti-Black ideas propagated by historians like Edward Long and George Wilson Bridges would continue in the writings of Trollope, Carlyle, and Froude. The same prejudicial tropes would be used to explain the Morant Bay Rebellion. A lineage of prejudice cast its shadow over late 19th-century history writing on Jamaica because the question of human equality remained unresolved on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, as Paul Gilroy reminds us, the Morant Bay Rebellion was “an instance of metropolitan, internal conflict that emanates directly from an external colonial experience.”¹³

II. The Canonical Histories of James Knight and Edward Long

Few eighteenth-century writers could equal Edward Long in gross racial prejudice.¹⁴

David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*

Lives of Anxiety, Care, and Trouble—James Knight’s *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica*

Important as his account was, Hans Sloane’s worldview was principally that of a naturalist. By the mid-18th century, writers like the Anglo-Jamaican merchant, planter, and colonial legislator, James Knight still felt that Britons were inadequately informed about the island and its inspiring story of rapid development under British rule. Having left Jamaica for England in 1737, Knight worked on writing what would be published as *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica and the Territories Thereon Depending: From the Earliest Time to the Year 1742*. The historian Jack

¹³ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 11.

¹⁴ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 1988), 459. Originally published 1966.

P. Greene situates Knight's history in the genre of provincial histories, a genre that had congealed in the colonial historiography of North America by the time Knight was writing about Jamaica. Key texts in this genre were John Smith's 1626 *Generall History of Virginia, and New England*, Richard Ligon's 1657 *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes*, and Robert Beverly's 1705 *The History and Present State of Virginia*. Provincial histories "used some combination of narrative, chorography, and important documents to promote provincial consciousness within their respective polities, correct metropolitan misconceptions about their character and development, and enhance metropolitan appreciation of their value to Great Britain."¹⁵ In Knight's history then, the Atlantic was indeed rolling between the pen and the press. Readers in Britain were expected to appreciate the importance of Jamaica as a paramount concern of theirs. Those in Jamaica were to find providential and instrumental affirmation of their control over the island, its land, plants, animals, and human beings.

The first part of *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica* described pre-Columbian life on the island and the era of Spanish control. Towards this end, Knight relied on some of the aforementioned Spanish histories of the Caribbean, especially those by Oviedo and Tordesillas. The third part described the era of British rule, using the structuring principle of the list of British governors of the island. The second volume was written in the chorographical modality in that it described the geography, climate, and diseases of the island. It also wrote about political, racial, and religious configurations. Part 9 provided another rich account of the flora and fauna of the island, standing next to the titanic contribution of Hans Sloane. Finally, Part 10 concluded the text by laying out the promise and progress of Jamaica for the British Empire. Knight felt the island was being held back from even greater progress. For him, Jamaica's utility lay in its agricultural output,

¹⁵ James Knight and Jack P. Greene, *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica, and the Territories Thereon Depending: From the First Discovery of the Island by Christopher Columbus to the Year 1746* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2021), xvii.

importance to trade, and its geostrategic importance in times of war.¹⁶ He proposed ten reforms that would enable Jamaica to become even more valuable to the Empire, including a unique Jamaican currency, an easing of excise duties, and setting limits to land ownership to ensure greater productivity.¹⁷

For the purposes of this thesis, two excerpts of Knight's history are significant. First, in helping his British readers better understand Jamaica and its importance to the Empire, Knight explicitly sketched the hierarchy governing the moral and political life of the island. He wrote that "The Inhabitants of this Island are Ranked in these four Orders, Vizt. Masters, who are English, Scots, and Irish, and some Portuguese Jews; White Servants; Free Negroes, and Mulattos; and Negro Slaves. And the Masters may be divided into these two Classes, Merchants or Trading People, and Planters."¹⁸ The life of a planter, particularly the task of 'managing' the enslaved, was described as one of "Anxiety, Care, and trouble."¹⁹ In this sketch of Jamaican life, Knight betrayed a periphrastic awareness of the unequal, volatile, and untenable social order in the island. Echoing Olaudah Equiano's description of slavery as a perpetual state of war, the historian Vincent Brown aptly describes this burning tension as "the simmering violence inherent in mastery."²⁰

Secondly, where he acknowledged the threat of insurrection by enslaved Jamaicans, Knight wrote that "the chief security of Jamaica against any general Insurrection of the Negroes, is the great Extent of the Country. Separated by Woods and Mountains, difficult of access; the Plantations lying at a great distance from each other, so that the Negroes can have no communication together, or if they had, it would be almost impossible."²¹ Not only was Jamaica naturally beautiful, agriculturally

¹⁶ Knight, *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica, and the Territories Thereon Depending*, 612.

¹⁷ Knight, *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica, and the Territories Thereon Depending*, 633.

¹⁸ Knight, *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica, and the Territories Thereon Depending*, 471.

¹⁹ Knight, *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica, and the Territories Thereon Depending*, 474.

²⁰ Vincent Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020), 4.

²¹ Knight, *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica, and the Territories Thereon Depending*, 482.

fertile, and aquatically rich, it was also a large island whose natural features prevented rapid communication between distant plantations. Knight further added that since slaves were not allowed to own arms without certification from their ‘masters’, white Jamaicans could open their windows at night and “live in greater Security...than People do in England.”²²

Thus, future British settlers were assured by Knight that they would be safe from any violence. Jamaica was a land of great opportunity where the boiling cauldron of chattel slavery was well ‘managed’ thanks to planter surveillance and natural impediments to movement. For those who doubted the viability of a Jamaican colony in Britain, Knight’s history presented an immediate past of improvement and a future of great promise. He wanted them to know that the political and economic regime on the island could be made more prosperous with greater support from the metropole. The colony would not implode.

An Atlantic of White Power—Edward Long’s *The History of Jamaica*

Like James Knight, the Anglo-Jamaican planter, writer, and once-speaker of the Jamaican Assembly Edward Long (1734-1813) felt that there was no detailed history that would be useful to “those who intend to settle” in the island.²³ To address this equally-historical, equally-colonial need, he wrote the three-volume *The History of Jamaica or; General Survey of the Ancient and Modern State of that Island: with Reflections on its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government*. Volume 1 of the text was an administrative overview of British rule over Jamaica, Volume 2 focused on the island’s landscape and peoples, and Volume 3 studied

²² Knight, *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica, and the Territories Thereon Depending*, 483.

²³ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica: Or; General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of That Island, with Reflections on Its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government. Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Originally published in 1774), 1.

Jamaica's meteorology and climate.²⁴ According to the historian Catherine Hall, "Long had three priorities: the first to defend slavery and the colonial system, the second to put Jamaica on the Enlightenment map, the third to identify the success of the colony with that of his family."²⁵

Adhering to the tenets of conjectural history discussed in the first chapter, Long classified, ranked, and described the inhabitants of the island.²⁶ He had a hierarchical worldview in which "Europeans were civilized. Every other people that he recorded were judged in terms of their position en route from savagery to civilization...The new African captives, brought into Jamaica between 1765 and 1766, he wrote were 'all of them as savage and uncivilized as the beasts of prey that roam through the African forests.' It was only plantation life, he believed, that had the potential to partially civilize those born on the island."²⁷ Thus, while he wanted to put Jamaica on the 'enlightenment map' of European thought, Long considered Black people to be outside of the fold of civilization and history. Jamaica was made important by emphasizing the role of white settlers like Long and his family as the principal agents of the island's history.

On the question of revolt, Long was clear that it was African-born slaves who were the most threatening while those born in Jamaica were expected to have a greater stake in life in Jamaica and thereby be less belligerent.²⁸ Where James Knight had found Jamaica's size and topography to be the principal inhibitors of slave revolt, Edward Long felt a greater number of Jamaican-born slaves

²⁴ Dania Dwyer, "History of Jamaica or, General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island," The Early Caribbean Digital Archive. Boston: Northeastern University Digital Repository Service, 2016. <https://ecda.northeastern.edu/item/neu:m04109796/>.

²⁵ Catherine Hall, *Lucky Valley: Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 7.

²⁶ Hall, *Lucky Valley: Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism*, 7.

²⁷ Hall, *Lucky Valley: Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism*, 20.

²⁸ Suman Seth, "Materialism, Slavery, and the History of Jamaica," *Isis; an International Review Devoted to the History of Science and Its Cultural Influences* 105, no. 4 (2014): 766. Seth writes that "For Long, however, the difference between "salt-water" and "creole" Negroes was to be the solution to the most pressing social problem of the sugar islands: slave insurrection. Where newly arrived slaves were believed to be the most likely protagonists in a future uprising, Long hoped that a selectively gentler slavery might win mulattoes and creoles to the side of plantation owners."

subject to a ‘gentler’ regime of slavery would shield the island from revolts by the enslaved. Long was writing a few years after the crushing of Tacky’s Revolt in 1760.

Published in 1774, Long’s defense of colonial slavery was made critical considering the 1772 *Somerset v Stewart* judgement declaring slavery to be unlawful in England.²⁹ Indeed, Jamaica was Charles Stewart’s intended destination for James Somerset to be sold into slavery. As Long made the case for Jamaica’s importance to Britain, he simultaneously made the case for the continuation of slavery. Towards the end of Volume 1, with the aid of extensive statistics, Long argued that “nearly one half of the whole” benefits from the Caribbean sugar colonies, “must be ascribed to this island.”³⁰ About Black people, Long averred that “they remain at this time in the same rude situation in which they were found two thousand years ago. In general, they are void of genius, and seem almost incapable of making any progress in civility or science, They have no plan or system of morality among them.”³¹ Such denunciations were intended to allay any concerns about violating doctrines of human dignity or Christian equality or human rights by arguing that Black people need not be considered on the same moral and philosophical plane as white Europeans.

Fully aware of the atrocities of slavery and the slave trade, Long reasoned through the dilemma by painting Africa as a continent of utter barbarism. Thus, “they have no right to repine at the want of it in the country to which they are driven. They were already slaves, and have only exchanged their owner and laws; the former, for one less arbitrary; the latter, for one more beneficent and gentle than they had experience of.”³² In Long’s history then, Jamaica was represented as a thriving plantation colony that was essential to Great Britain’s economic position in the world.

²⁹ Hall, *Lucky Valley: Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism*, 4.

³⁰ Long, *The History of Jamaica. Volume 1*, 494.

³¹ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica: Or, General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of That Island, with Reflections on Its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government. Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Originally published in 1774), 353.

³² Long, *The History of Jamaica. Volume 2*, 403.

Advocates of slavery and any readers with mild qualms about the institution found reassurance in the argument that slave owners were not subjecting the enslaved to anything worse than what they would have suffered in Africa. They were further assured that Black people were inhuman. Thus, in Catherine Hall's words: "Long envisaged the Atlantic as a place of white power, made productive by enslaved black labour. His politics of place, rooted in the geography of the West India trade, fixed England, Jamaica and Africa in a fateful triangle, secured by Manichean racial binaries of 'White and Negro.'"33

III. Anglicans, Baptists, and Travelers

Writing Against the Attacks of 'Modern Philosophy'—George Wilson Bridges' *The Annals of Jamaica*

As the abolitionist cause gained greater ground in the initial decades of the 19th century, the Anglican Rector, writer, and future notable photographer George Wilson Bridges (1788-1863) published *The Annals of Jamaica* in 1827. Bridges' declensionist history was a protest against what he saw as the decline of Britain's Jamaican colony. In Jamaica, Bridges saw the same issues which had led to the independence of Britain's American colonies in how settlers were being inhibited by the metropole.³⁴ He lamented that Jamaica had once "shone pre-eminent amongst the proudest and the richest of colonies; a splendid beacon in the West guiding the industrious to affluence and honour."³⁵ By 1828, however, he felt Jamaica was a colony in decline with a weakened Assembly and an insurrectionary population of slaves supported by Baptist missionaries from Britain. Bridges blamed abolitionist rhetoric for destabilizing Jamaica since "Before they were thus attacked by the

³³ Hall, *Lucky Valley: Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism*, 15.

³⁴ George Wilson Bridges, *The Annals of Jamaica. Volume the Second* (London: John Murray, 1828), 338.

Bridges wrote that "The colony was destroyed in detail: the ears of the British Parliament were shut against the reiterated complaints of the Assembly; the monarchy always distant, and often deceived, heard not the faint murmur of colonial distress, and even if he did, the waves of the ocean weakened the powers of control."

³⁵ Bridges, *The Annals of Jamaica. Volume the Second*, 8.

agents of modern philosophy, the great body of slaves in Jamaica had been a contented race of people, obedient to their masters, and receiving in return every comfort and protection which could lighten the chains of servitude, or mitigate the pains of ordinary labour.”³⁶

Pushing back against the rising tide of abolitionism, Bridges implored his readers to see “The humanity of the slave-trade” since the institution had offered “the savages of Africa an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the civilized institutions of Europe, which they could never enjoy in their own land.”³⁷ He therefore believed that the abolition of slavery would be an economic, moral, and colonial disaster.

In December 1831, Jamaica and the Empire writ large were jolted by the Great Jamaican Slave Revolt, also known as the Sam Sharpe Rebellion. In August 1834, the Slavery Abolition Act was passed. In subsequent years, a new round of transatlantic debate began to determine whether abolition had been a success or failure. Those who had advocated abolition would laud its successes while those who had opposed it argued that it was an unmitigated disaster.

The Great Family of Man—James Phillippo’s *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State*

The writing of Jamaican history in a Christian missionary modality goes back to the initial Spanish writings on the Caribbean. However, in the English language, the publication of the Methodist Thomas Coke’s (1747-1814), *A History of the West Indies containing the Natural, Civil and Ecclesiastical History of each Island* between 1808 and 1811 was a pioneering intervention. Written in dialogue with Bryan Edwards’ *History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, Coke’s history emphasized the role of Christianity in the Caribbean on par with economic and geostrategic developments. He believed that “it is to the gospel, that Great Britain, in

³⁶ Bridges, *The Annals of Jamaica. Volume the Second*, 366.

³⁷ Bridges, *The Annals of Jamaica. Volume the Second*, 407-8.

all probability, stands indebted for the preservation of many of her richest colonial possessions, even to the present day: that her swarthy subjects have not revolted like those of a neighboring island; and committed those depredations on the white inhabitants, which humanity shudders to name.”³⁸

Ironically, during and after the Sam Sharpe and Morant Bay revolts, British writers questioned whether ‘Christian’ Jamaica really was insulated from the threat of violent revolt associated with Haiti in political and religious discourse. Returning to Coke, his opposition to slavery was unequivocal and he considered it “directly contrary to the spirit of Christianity.”³⁹

Like Thomas Coke, the Baptist missionaries William Knibb (1803-1845), Thomas Burchell (1799-1846), and James Phillippo (1798-1879) had been prominent abolitionists who felt slavery to be inimical to Christianity. They saw Christianity as a civilizing force whose propagation in the Caribbean was being inhibited by slavery. The Baptist Missionary Society purchased large tracts of land which it felt, through distribution among the formerly enslaved, would revitalize the Jamaican economy and help the island’s inhabitants move past the depredations of slavery. These free villages were a crucial component of the Baptists’ post emancipation vision of the island. However, before and after abolition, Jamaican Baptist missionaries were vilified by proponents of slavery.

The most prominent attempt to affirm the Baptist mission was James Phillippo’s 1843 *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State*. Phillippo focused on “the moral and religious condition of the black and coloured population, and to the encouraging results of missionary efforts among them.”⁴⁰ In the classic trope of Biblical redemption, Phillippo’s history detailed the atrocities of slavery before detailing how Christianity was working as a civilizing, enlightening, and philanthropic force over time. He decried slavery as a system which made “merchandise of the bodies and souls of men”

³⁸ Coke quoted in Elsa V. Goveia, *A Study on the Historiography of the British West Indies to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Mexico: Instituto Panamericano de Geografia e Historia, 1956), 91.

³⁹ Coke quoted in Elsa V. Goveia, *A Study on the Historiography of the British West Indies to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, 92.

⁴⁰ James M. Phillippo, *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State* (Philadelphia: James M. Campbell & Co., 1843), v.

and prohibited the enslaved from access to Christianity.⁴¹ The fifteenth chapter titled “Religious State” detailed the arrival of Christian missionaries and how they had worked to ‘improve’ Jamaica.

In the hands of Baptists like James Phillippo, a specific meaning was instilled to concepts that were generally in vogue at the time. For instance, the notion of ‘improvement’ had been used by multiple writers with respect to measures like economic growth or civilizational enhancement. In his *History of England*, Thomas Macaulay had triumphantly declared that “the history of our country during the last hundred and sixty years is eminently the history of physical, of moral, and of intellectual improvement.”⁴² The notion of improvement manifested itself in British history writing through narratives of ascent. For Baptist missionaries in Jamaica like Phillippo, improvement specifically referred to the spread of Christianity and Christian education in the colony.

Moreover, preceding historians like Edward Long and James Knight had rationalized empire and Jamaica’s importance to that enterprise through geostrategic and economic rationales. Phillippo, on the other hand, framed Jamaica’s importance in religious terms. He believed that the island could become “the key-stone to the possession of the New World—a kind of rallying post for the army of the living God, in its efforts to subjugate the whole continent of South America to the “obedience of faith.”⁴³ The principal actor in this vision of empire was not the planter or the merchant but the missionary.

Furthermore, Phillippo went to a considerable length to convince his readers in Britain and Jamaica that Black people were “men endowed with minds equal in dignity, equal in capacity, and equal in duration of existence.”⁴⁴ They were equal members of the “great family of man.”⁴⁵ He gave

⁴¹ Phillippo, *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State*, 63-65.

⁴² Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Macaulay’s History of England from the Accession of James II. In Four Volumes. Volume One. Introduction by Douglas Jerrold* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1953, originally published in 1848), 2.

⁴³ Phillippo, *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State*, 114.

⁴⁴ Phillippo, *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State*, 63.

⁴⁵ Phillippo, *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State*, 63.

examples of Black musicians, scientists, writers, politicians, and intellectuals to prove his point.⁴⁶ Included in the list were individuals like Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780), Toussaint Louverture (1743-1803), and Francis Williams (1702-1770), the Jamaican polymath who had been particularly singled out for denunciation by Edward Long in *The History of Jamaica*.

James Phillipo was writing for an audience, a significant portion of which, had to be painstakingly persuaded that Black people were equal to white people, in every field of life. His conception of human equality was shaped by the belief that all human beings existed in a fallen state until Christianity lifted them up to salvation. Slavery had to be opposed because it inhibited salvation for both the enslaved and the enslaver. Thus, the aftermath of abolition was a deeply promising moment for Phillipo. He felt that the British Empire's true calling was to serve as an instrument for the spread of Christianity. Towards the end of his book, he expressed a zealous vision of the global propagation of Christianity:

China is enthralled and bowed down by a grovelling and debasing superstition. Persia, Arabia, and Asiatic Turkey groan beneath the domination of the false prophet. The teeming myriads of Hindostan are still wedded to loathsome idols. Africa lies involved in a darkness as profound as that which veiled Egypt during the prolonged and fearful night, when no man knew his brother. "Instruments of cruelty are in her habitations;" her dismal altars are at this moment streaming with human blood, and groaning beneath the weight of murdered victims, while her strength is consumed by intestine wars and merciless oppression. "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, oh Zion!"⁴⁷

Exercises of Memory and Intellect—Anthony Trollope's *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*

According to Bernard Cohn, the observational or travel modality of colonial knowledge created "a repertoire of images and typifications that determined what was significant to the European eye. It was a matter of finding themselves in a place that could be made to seem familiar

⁴⁶ Phillipo, *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State*, 82.

⁴⁷ Phillipo, *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State*, 165.

by following predetermined itineraries and seeing the sights in predictable ways.”⁴⁸ Moreover, Simon Gikandi writes that travel writing was often posited by British writers as “a mechanism of totalization” which served to “affirm the integrity of the empire as a *symbolon* that unifies English peoples across diverse geographical spaces and endows them with a privileged identity.”⁴⁹

In the case of Jamaica, Anthony Trollope’s (1815-1882) *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* was the most significant example of travel writing in the lead up to the Morant Bay Rebellion. Published in 1859, the book contained Trollope’s extensive musings based on personal experiences as he traveled through multiple Caribbean islands.⁵⁰ Trollope was initially bewildered to witness territories with a majority Black population. In a perhaps unintended acknowledgement of the social construction of race, he wrote that “When one has been a week among them, the novelty is all gone. It is only by an exercise of memory and intellect that one is enabled to think of them as a strange race.”⁵¹ However, Trollope’s subsequent comments would reify notions of racial difference in colonial circles, notions that were hardening in the aftermath of the Indian Uprising of 1857.

Trollope claimed that while Black people were “capable of the hardest bodily work”, they were intellectually and religiously depraved.⁵² He averred that “God, for his own purposes— purposes which are already becoming more and more intelligible to his creatures—has created men of inferior and superior race.”⁵³ In substantiating his argument of preordained racial inequality, Trollope relied on a definition of civilization based on property. He felt that “Without a desire for property, man could make no progress. But the negro has no such desire; no desire strong enough to

⁴⁸ Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 6.

⁴⁹ Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, 87.

⁵⁰ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 209.

⁵¹ Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main. Sixth Edition* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867. Originally published 1859), 55.

⁵² Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, 56.

⁵³ Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, 61.

induce him to labour for that which he wants.”⁵⁴ From here, he went on to argue that emancipation had been a disaster since “The negro’s idea of emancipation was and is emancipation not from slavery but from work.”⁵⁵ These arguments represented a time period when abolitionist rhetoric was waning and emancipation was increasingly being seen as an economic and moral disaster in the metropole. Trollope’s book specifically was “a damaging blow to the missionary cause.”⁵⁶

In *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, readers found an account of an unproductive island with unenthusiastic and uncivilized Black workers. Trollope’s opposition to emancipation in the Caribbean relied on the same notions that historians like Edward Long and George Wilson Bridges had used earlier. Sedentary agriculture was considered as the first step to the civilizing of human beings. Notions of private property soon followed. Writers like Long, Bridges, and Trollope believed that this abstract trajectory of the civilizing of human beings across history had never really occurred in Africa. The continent and its peoples were considered to be outside this universal progression of history understood as the gradual attainment of civilization. It then followed that slavery was beneficial to Black people since it coerced them into sedentary agriculture and regimes of private property. In this manner, they were thought to be coerced into the fold of history by their enslavers.

Moreover, Trollope saw the world as a series of distinct regions where different races performed their unique purposes according to their dispositions. In the Jamaica of 1859, he saw a mismatch between life on the island and his worldview of how things should have been. He speculated that “Providence has sent white men and black men to these regions in order that from them may spring a race fitted by intellect for civilization; and fitted also by physical organization for tropical labour. The negro in his primitive state is not, I think, fitted for the former; and the European

⁵⁴ Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, 62.

⁵⁵ Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, 90.

⁵⁶ Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*, 209.

white Creole is certainly not fitted for the latter.”⁵⁷ He felt that the immigration of indentured Chinese and Indian laborers might also be a beneficial addition to the island’s racial profile since it might make “the necessary compound” for “these latitudes.”⁵⁸ The telos of history for him was the emergence of intellectually and physically ideal races for every geographical region. In this respect, according to Simon Gikandi, Trollope was rejecting the Victorian dogma on miscegenation and endorsing a more evolutionist perspective on the issue.⁵⁹

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On October 11, 1865, the Morant Bay Rebellion erupted. Hundreds of Jamaicans protesting their dire socio-economic conditions stormed the courthouse and police station at Morant Bay. Over the course of the next few days, the rebels were met swiftly with overwhelming violence by the Jamaican forces and their allied Maroons. The revolt and its suppression became a vehement issue debated by British intellectuals, including historians. Morant Bay raised important questions such as human equality, the justifications of colonial violence, and the importance of Jamaica to the Empire. Long, Bridges, Phillippo, and Trollope had already given answers to these questions. Their influence was palpable in the accounts of the Morant Bay Rebellion that we now turn to.

IV. Writing History in the Aftermath of the Morant Bay Rebellion

The Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission

One of the first accounts of the Morant Bay Rebellion was penned by the Jamaican journalist Sidney Lindo Levien (1809-1895). Levien had been a consistent critic of the Jamaican government’s policies and his newspaper *The County Union* published material on and supported the so-called

⁵⁷ Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, 74.

⁵⁸ Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, 75.

⁵⁹ Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, 97.

‘Underhill Meetings’ in the lead up to the Morant Bay Rebellion.⁶⁰ Titled *A chronicle of the rebellion in Jamaica, in the year of Our Lord, 1865*, Levien’s pamphlet was written in a “grandiose mock-Biblical style” and narrated the revolt satirically. The Biblical tone was apt for the religious valence of the revolt’s rhetoric.⁶¹ Levien set up a clash of personalities, describing John Edward Eyre as one who “did rule the land with iron hand doing that which seemed evil in the sight of some, but good in the sight of others”, George William Gordon as “one among the wise men of the land”, and Edward Bean Underhill as “a wise scribe of the sect of the Baptists.”⁶² The chronicle provided a chronology of the events in Jamaica in 1865: the circulation of Underhill’s letter to Secretary of State for the Colonies Edward Cardwell, the petitions to the Queen, the march to the Stony Gut Court House, the declaration of Martial Law, and the suppression of the revolt.⁶³ As Mimi Sheller notes, unlike most accounts of the Morant Bay Rebellion, Levien’s text had a “transnational view of the events, involving not just native Jamaicans, Black and white, who have been the focus of the historiography, but diverse troops from across the empire, Maroons, Haitians, Scots, Jews, a German Custos, and even an Italian painter.”⁶⁴

The focus on individual personalities in analyzing the revolt is understandable since a substantial proportion of the controversy in Great Britain was about debating “just how colonial administrators were supposed to act when they left the British Isles.”⁶⁵ Even writing about the

⁶⁰ Mimi Sheller, “Complicating Jamaica’s Morant Bay Rebellion: Jewish Radicalism, Asian Indenture, and Multi-Ethnic Histories of 1865,” *Cultural Dynamics* 31, no. 3 (2019): 212.

⁶¹ For more on the use of biblical rhetoric in the Morant Bay Rebellion, see Stephen C. Russell, “Skin for Skin: Biblical Language in Jamaica’s Morant Bay Rebellion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 90, no. 3 (2022): 636-53. Russell particularly focuses on Paul Bogle’s phrase from the Book of Job ‘skin for skin.’

⁶² Sidney Lindon Levien, *A Chronicle of the Rebellion in Jamaica, in the Year of Our Lord, 1865* (1865), 1-2. Accessed through Digital Library of the Caribbean. <https://dloc.com/AA00065556/00001/pdf/0>.

⁶³ Sheller, “Complicating Jamaica’s Morant Bay Rebellion: Jewish Radicalism, Asian Indenture, and Multi-Ethnic Histories of 1865”, 216.

⁶⁴ Sheller, “Complicating Jamaica’s Morant Bay Rebellion: Jewish Radicalism, Asian Indenture, and Multi-Ethnic Histories of 1865”, 218.

⁶⁵ Marouf Hasian Jr, “Colonial re-characterization and the discourse surrounding the Eyre controversy,” *Southern Journal of Communication* 66, no. 1 (2000): 83.

controversy has tended to focus on the eminent personalities who assembled into the Jamaica Committee (e.g. John Stuart Mill, John Bright, Charles Buxton, Charles Darwin, and T.H. Huxley) or the Eyre Defense Committee (e.g. Thomas Carlyle, Charles Kingsley, Charles Dickens, and John Ruskin). However, what the focus on individual personalities inhibited in the 1860s and ever since was a systemic analysis of the British Caribbean's political economy.

In late 1865, the Jamaica Royal Commission was sent to investigate the Morant Bay Rebellion and settle the controversy shaking imperialism to its core in Great Britain. The Commission comprised: Henry Knight Storks, a former soldier and Governor of Jamaica from December 1865 to July 1866; Russell Gurney, a Conservative lawyer and politician; and John Blossett Maule, a Barrister. After recording testimony from no less than 730 witnesses in Jamaica, the Royal Commission concluded that "praise is due to Governor Eyre for the skill, promptitude, and vigour which he manifested during the early stages of the insurrection."⁶⁶ With respect to the causes of the revolt, the Commission found three main reasons: the desire of impoverished Jamaicans to obtain lands without rent; a lack of trust in tribunals by workers; and hostility towards personal and political opponents.⁶⁷ About the violence inflicted on rebel Jamaicans in the suppression of the revolt, the Commission concluded that "the punishment of death was unnecessarily frequent", that "the floggings were reckless", and that "the burning of 1,000 houses was wanton and cruel."⁶⁸

The Jamaica Royal Commission's method of inquiry left an enduring mark on subsequent British history writing on the Morant Bay Rebellion. As Stephen C. Russell writes, "The pattern of the Royal Commission...with its emphasis on reconstructing the economic and political context, the sequence of events, and the legal culpability of those involved has continued to shape scholarly

⁶⁶ Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, 1866, Part 1. Report. London: Printer by George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1866, 40.

⁶⁷ Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, 1866, Part 1. Report, 40.

⁶⁸ Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, 1866, Part 1. Report, 41.

treatments of the rebellion.”⁶⁹ Moreover, as Jonathan Connolly argues, “the structure of the inquiry shaped the commission’s reconstruction of the facts, separating relevant from irrelevant. It limited the inquiry to short-term “proximate” causes. It discounted, on a racialized basis, oral testimony regarding the socioeconomic state of the colony before the rebellion began.”⁷⁰

Indeed, there is a common chronology of events that runs through accounts of the Morant Bay Rebellion in the 1860s. What the histories contested with each other was not the chronology of events laid out in the report of the Royal Commission, but three other contentious questions: 1) Was Eyre’s declaration of Martial Law and use of violence justified? 2) Did the Baptists incite their Black congregants into revolt? 3) Were Black Jamaicans inferior to white Jamaicans?

Once the report was published in 1866, the Royal Commission’s work was done. Henry Knight Storks’ Governorship had served its purposed and he moved on to other endeavors. He would go on to serve as Controller-in-Chief and Under-Secretary at the War Office before an ill-fated run in politics. The controversy of Morant Bay, however, burned on and then continued to simmer. Even after the Jamaica Committee and the Eyre Defense Committee had quietened down, the legacy of the controversy surrounding the revolt lived on in three ways according to Marouf Hasian Jr.: the emergence of “harsh martial laws in the colonies”; an opposition to “the granting of political rights to people of colour”; and the construing of the revolt as “empirical evidence of racial hierarchies and the natural inferiority of blacks.”⁷¹

Beyond its conclusions, the report was significant for including an extensive appendix with the recorded testimony of the 730 witnesses questioned by the Royal Commission. As happened with the pro-slavery histories of Edward Long and Bryan Edwards, the extensive descriptions of life in

⁶⁹ Russell, “Skin for Skin: Biblical Language in Jamaica’s Morant Bay Rebellion”, 638.

⁷⁰ Jonathan Connolly, “Re-Reading Morant Bay: Protest, Inquiry, and Colonial Rule,” *Law and History Review* 41, no.1 (2023): 205.

⁷¹ Hasian Jr, “Colonial re-characterization and the discourse surrounding the Eyre controversy”, 89.

Jamaica, including its discriminations and violence, would be used by the advocates of emancipation for their own cause. The history of the Morant Bay Rebellion would be contested for the remainder of the century.

The Accounts of John Gorrie, Thomas Harvey, William Brewin, and Henry Bleby

The Jamaica Royal Commission was John Gorrie's (1829-1892) first consequential foray into the tortuous jurisprudence of the British Empire. He was selected by the Jamaica Committee as a Counsel to the Royal Commission. As a result, Gorrie was part of the gathering of testimony by the Commission, very often suggesting questions to be asked from witnesses. Looking through the appendix of the Report, we find no less than 530 interventions by John Gorrie, including questions he asked witnesses himself or those he suggested the Commissioners ask. Unsatisfied by the conclusions of the Royal Commission, Gorrie published his assessment of the Morant Bay Rebellion through the Jamaica Committee as *Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica*. Gorrie contended that the Commissioners had "not looked into the mass of evidence contained in the Appendix to the Report."⁷² The agenda of his book was to "bring together under appropriate heads bits of evidence which lie scattered promiscuously about the pages of the bulky volume of Evidence, or which are lost in the confused pages of the Blue books."⁷³

In a similar vein to Edward Leckey's critique of popular metropolitan perceptions of the Indian Uprising of 1857, John Gorrie endeavored to falsify prevalent notions of Black barbarity against the white inhabitants of Jamaica. In the beginning of his text, Gorrie quoted Eyre's correspondence with Secretary of State Cardwell in which the latter had written exaggerated descriptions of violence inflicted upon white people in Jamaica, including the scooping out of eyes,

⁷² John Gorrie, *Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica. Compiled from the Report of the Royal Commissioners, And Other Blue Books Laid Before Parliament* (London: Published by the Jamaica Committee, 1867), v.

⁷³ Gorrie, *Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica*, v.

the extraction of brains, and the cutting of fingers as trophies.⁷⁴ Eyre had written that “the whole outrage could only be paralleled by the atrocities of the Indian Mutiny.”⁷⁵ In his book, Gorrie called out Eyre for cynically exaggerating the killings during the rebellion.

However, the chief focus of his critique was what he believed to be Eyre’s unjustified use of Martial Law to suppress the revolt. He argued that Eyre knew that there was no organized rebellion throughout the island.⁷⁶ To further his argument, Gorrie laid out a direct comparison of the violence inflicted by rebels and that by Jamaican authorities. He counted rebel violence as having killed 22 people and damaged 20 properties while the Jamaican authorities had killed 439 people, flogged 600, and damaged 1,000 properties.⁷⁷ *Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica* was a meticulous legalistic text with a focus on colonial administration and law. Gorrie was unequivocal in opposing Eyre’s use of Martial Law to suppress the Morant Bay Rebellion. He ended his text by contrasting the violence faced by the inhabitants of Jamaica with the natural beauty of the island: “These are samples of the scenes enacted in the beautiful island of Jamaica under pretence of repressing disturbances.”⁷⁸ Gorrie’s was an attempt to reform colonial governance by saving it from “the preposterous pretensions of Colonial Governors and military officers, to deal with human life and property as they please, without responsibility to the laws which bind society together, or to the nation which places the sword in their hands for the purposes of justice and mercy.”⁷⁹ These were the prerogatives of the Jamaica Committee. John Gorrie would go on to have a successful trans-imperial legal career, becoming Chief Justice of Fiji, the Leeward Islands, and Trinidad.

⁷⁴ Gorrie, *Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica*, 3.

⁷⁵ Gorrie, *Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica*, 3.

⁷⁶ Gorrie, *Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica*, 9.

⁷⁷ Gorrie, *Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica*, 9.

⁷⁸ Gorrie, *Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica*, 102.

⁷⁹ Gorrie, *Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica*, 102.

While Gorrie had written his account of the Morant Bay Rebellion as a legal expert, another account was published in the same year that was written in the tradition of missionary writings on the island. The Quakers Thomas Harvey and William Brewin published *Jamaica in 1866. A Narrative of a Tour through the Island, with Remarks on its Social, Educational and Industrial Condition*. The former had accompanied the eminent Quaker abolitionist Joseph Sturge to the West Indies in 1836. Thirty years later, Harvey and Brewin were still endeavoring to measure and advocate the ‘improvement’ in Jamaica in the decades since the abolition of slavery. The account was structured by a district-by-district analysis of ‘improvement.’ In the typical vein of missionary writings, the authors gauged the improvements in education across Jamaica. However, they were unique in also critiquing the Jamaican prison system. They felt that “there was much that was painful” in it, especially the “working of prisoners in chains in the streets of Kingston; the reintroduction of the treadmill into the General Penitentiary; the use of old rice-bags for clothing in all the prison.”⁸⁰

On the question of the outbreak of the Morant Bay Rebellion, Harvey and Brewin believed that there was an “entire loss of confidence in the administration of justice as between employers and employed and between the higher and lower classes; and the generally arbitrary, irritating and excessively indiscreet conduct and bearing of the magistracy and other persons of authority.”⁸¹ The critique implored a reform of the judicial system in Jamaica by highlighting how it was leading to a complete breakdown of authority and social stability. Simultaneously, Harvey and Brewin hoped that their readers would be dissuaded from believing that there had been an island-wide conspiracy to revolt against British control over the island or any attempt to exterminate all the white inhabitants,

⁸⁰ Thomas Harvey and William Brewin, *Jamaica in 1866. A Narrative of a Tour through the Island, with Remarks on its Social, Educational and Industrial Condition* (London: A.W. Bennett, 1867), 6.

⁸¹ Harvey and Brewin, *Jamaica in 1866. A Narrative of a Tour through the Island, with Remarks on its Social, Educational and Industrial Condition*, 22.

invoking echoes of the violence of the Haitian Revolution. They wrote that even the Royal Commissioners, men who were “by no means indisposed to exonerate and approve what had been done by authority, report with apparent reluctance as their conclusion-the non-existence of a widespread conspiracy.”⁸²

While pro-emancipation missionaries had been enthusiastic at the prospect of ‘improving’ Jamaica in the aftermath of abolition, by the late 1860s, there was a dampening of those hopes. By 1867, Harvey and Brewin rued how “anti-slavery Christians have somewhat underrated the difficulty of raising a population darkened in intellect and embruted in their moral nature by slavery, to the dignity of a free, Christian manhood.”⁸³ The Morant Bay Rebellion and the general state of Jamaica appeared to be one of social, political, and moral degradation to Harvey and Brewin. They ended their text using the same trope that John Gorrie and many other British writers had used by contrasting extensive descriptions of the problems of Jamaican society with its natural beauty. Harvey and Brewin believed that the island was a splendid territory that “needs capital, good judgement and patient plodding industry to develop its capabilities. Without all these it is a land of painful contradictions.”⁸⁴

Another missionary account against pro-Eyre metropolitan sentiments was written by Henry Bleby (1809-1882). A Methodist missionary, Bleby had served in Jamaica between 1830 and 1843 before returning to Britain. He returned to the Caribbean in the 1850s, this time focusing on improving the state of education in the Bahamas. Like John Gorrie, Bleby used Parliamentary Blue Books and the testimony in the Report of the Royal Commission to argue that Eyre had abused his

⁸² Harvey and Brewin, *Jamaica in 1866. A Narrative of a Tour through the Island, with Remarks on its Social, Educational and Industrial Condition*, 23.

⁸³ Harvey and Brewin, *Jamaica in 1866. A Narrative of a Tour through the Island, with Remarks on its Social, Educational and Industrial Condition*, 71.

⁸⁴ Harvey and Brewin, *Jamaica in 1866. A Narrative of a Tour through the Island, with Remarks on its Social, Educational and Industrial Condition*, 74.

powers as Governor in suppressing the Morant Bay Rebellion. Like Harvey and Brewin, Bleby's text admitted a loss of hope in the prospects of 'improving' Jamaica when he wrote that "The philanthropy and the Christianity of Britain suffered a sad eclipse in the events which transpired in Jamaica during the latter part of 1865."⁸⁵

The author argued that John Eyre was "an unfit man to be placed in such a high position, and to exercise such powers as those intrusted to him."⁸⁶ About the outbreak of the Morant Bay Rebellion, Bleby claimed that it was "a sudden outburst of popular fury, unconnected with any plot, and confined to the parish and neighborhood in which it originated."⁸⁷ As was the case with Harvey and Brewin, British missionaries aimed to reconcile the notion of empire with their Christian notions of emancipation and racial equality. They hoped to persuade their readers that the years since 1834 had witnessed great social, political, and religious improvement in Jamaica. In the immediate aftermath of the Morant Bay Rebellion, especially in the case of the Baptists, they sought to allay metropolitan and planter accusations of using the pulpit to incite revolt against the British administration.

Henry Bleby used the conclusions of the Royal Commission to argue that there had not been a planned island-wide conspiracy to end British rule or exterminate white Jamaicans in 1865. To this end, he wrote "The Negroes are as loyal and peaceable, and would be as industrious and virtuous, as any people in the world, if they were wisely and honestly governed."⁸⁸ Bleby's account of the Morant Bay Rebellion deemed the revolt a localized outburst of violence arising from misgovernance. His account cleared the name of missionaries from any association with the revolt and it depicted Black Jamaicans as loyal subjects of the British Empire.

⁸⁵ Henry Bleby, *The Reign of Terror: A Narrative of Facts Concerning Ex-Governor Eyre, George William Gordon, and the Jamaican Atrocities* (London: W. Nichols, 1868), 1.

⁸⁶ Bleby, *The Reign of Terror*, 3.

⁸⁷ Bleby, *The Reign of Terror*, 9.

⁸⁸ Bleby, *The Reign of Terror*, 11.

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As we have seen from these historical accounts Baptist, Quaker, and Methodist missionaries who had supported the abolition of slavery and lauded the ‘improvement’ of Jamaica ever since were suddenly pushed into a defensive position after the 1865 revolt. They took pains to assure their audiences that Jamaica needed more not less Christian missionary activity; that they were not against the British Empire; and that Black Jamaicans were loyal British subjects who were being gradually civilized. Also, they cited the conclusions of the Royal Commission to persuade readers that there was no widespread conspiracy to overthrow the British administration in Jamaica or to exterminate the white inhabitants of the island.

The discourse on race in Britain was already shifting before the Indian Uprising and the Morant Bay Rebellion. As Catherine Hall notes, the republication of Thomas Carlyle’s 1849 essay “Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question” in 1853 as “Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question” “marked the moment when it became legitimate for public men to profess a belief in the essential inferiority of black people, and to claim that they were born to be mastered and could never attain the level of European civilization.”⁸⁹ In the wake of the Morant Bay Rebellion, Carlyle emerged as the most notable defender of Eyre’s actions in suppressing the revolt. Other eminent British personalities did not stay out of the fray either. Charles Dickens, Charles Kingsley, and John Ruskin all rushed to defend Eyre.

The hardening of notions of racial inequality in the governing of the British Empire is exemplified in the lecture delivered by the Royal Navy veteran, explorer, and barrister Bedford Pim (1826-1886) before the Anthropological Society of London on February 1st, 1866. Pim repudiated the advocates of racial equality all the way back to the abolition of slavery in 1834. He spoke that

⁸⁹ Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*, 48.

“the institution of slavery has played a very important part in the world’s history.”⁹⁰ He urged his audience “Let us take the negro as we find him, as God designed him, not a white man, nor the equal of a white man.”⁹¹ For Pim, as it was for Edward Long, George Wilson Bridges, and Thomas Carlyle before him, racial inequality was divinely ordained, virtually irreversible, and functional. For Jamaica and for other British colonies, Pim believed that it was naïve “to suppose that two alien races can compose a political unity” since “One section *must* govern the other.”⁹²

The revolts of the mid-19th century cumulatively comprised a watershed moment in the British Empire. From Jamaica to Ireland to South Africa to New Zealand to India, they were comprehended by many British intellectuals as proof of immutable racial differences. In order to better govern the British Empire, such intellectuals believed that racial hierarchies out to be adhered to rather than dissolved. Citing not only Jamaica but St. Vincent, Antigua, New Zealand, southern Africa, and India, Pim warned his audience that ““how to govern alien races” has yet to be learnt.”⁹³ At the end of Pim’s speech “three cheers for Governor Eyre were loudly called for.”⁹⁴

V. Contesting the Memory of Morant Bay at the End of the Century

Froude certainly deserves his reputation, alongside Carlyle, as one of the most flamboyant race-mongers of an overtly racist century.⁹⁵

Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination*

There has been splendour and luxurious living, and there have been crimes and horrors, and revolts and massacres.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Bedford Pim, *The Negro and Jamaica. Read before the Anthropological Society of London, February 1, 1866, at St. James’s Hall, London* (London: Trübner and co., 1866), 17.

⁹¹ Pim, *The Negro and Jamaica*, 50.

⁹² Pim, *The Negro and Jamaica*, 35.

⁹³ Pim, *The Negro and Jamaica*, 50.

⁹⁴ Pim, *The Negro and Jamaica*, 72.

⁹⁵ Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination: Nineteenth Century Visions of Greater Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 198.

⁹⁶ James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900), 347. The book was originally published in 1887.

Birds of Passage—John Anthony Froude’s *The English in the West Indies, or The Bow of Ulysses*

Thomas Carlyle died in 1881. His long-time friend and fellow historian, John Anthony Froude (1818-1894) published his biography the following year. In subsequent years, Froude travelled between South Africa, Oceania, the United States of America, and the West Indies. His writings on his travels across the Empire were published in two books: the 1886 *Oceana, or, England and Her Colonies* and the 1888 *The English in the West Indies, or The Bow of Ulysses*. In the latter, the Bible, Homer, and Roman history were all employed to depict an empire living through an agonizing moral and political transition. Froude believed that, through their empire, Britons were fulfilling a transcendental racial duty providentially thrust upon them, the same “duty which fell to the Latin race two thousand years ago.”⁹⁷ About India, he wrote that Britain had provided India “internal peace undisturbed by tribal quarrels or the ambitions of dangerous neighbours, with a law which deals out right to high and low among 250,000,000 human beings. Never have rulers been less self-seeking than we have been in our Asiatic empire.”⁹⁸ This sense of imperial exceptionalism and transcendental purpose was echoed in a Homeric valence in the title of the book since only Ulysses could string the bow. In other words, Great Britain was the only nation which could dominate in a manner that was benign, beneficial, and historically advancing. Empire was conceptualized as a providentially sanctioned and historically paramount endeavor entrusted upon a chosen people in a given era. Ethical dictums paled in comparison to the grandeur of such a calling.

Froude’s account of the West Indies was morose. He felt that the Empire writ large was in “a moulting state” ever since the abolition of slavery and the rise of liberal humanitarianism.⁹⁹ He

⁹⁷ Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 207.

⁹⁸ Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 207.

⁹⁹ Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 15.

believed that Great Britain had abandoned its historical calling as an empire. Consequently, Froude saw a despairing picture of the British West Indies in which white settlers of British origin were “drifting into ruin” because they could no longer control the lives and labor of “The blacks whom, in a fit of virtuous benevolence, we emancipated.”¹⁰⁰ About the Black inhabitants of the British Caribbean, Froude described them as living in a prelapsarian Eden in which there was no need for human labor and crops grew by themselves. He reinforced Carlyle’s notion that Black people were reluctant to perform agricultural work unless coerced to do so. Where Carlyle had denigrated Black people as lazy and obsessed with growing pumpkins, his disciple Froude expressed a similar racist vision with an expanded assortment of paradisiacal fruits: “They live surrounded by most of the fruits which grew in Adam’s paradise—oranges and plantains, bread-fruit, cacao-nuts, though not apples. Their yams and cassava grow without effort, for the soil is easily worked and inexhaustibly fertile. The curse is taken off from nature, and like Adam again they are under the covenant of innocence.”¹⁰¹ Looking at the Caribbean holistically, Froude felt that unlike French and Spanish possessions, the British West Indies were overpopulated with the formerly enslaved.¹⁰² Additionally, British settlers did not tend to stay on in the island like French and Spanish settlers. They were “birds of passage, and depart when they have made their fortunes. The French and Spaniards may hold on to Trinidad as a home. Our people do not make homes there.”¹⁰³

Looking back at the Morant Bay Rebellion, Froude argued that those who had opposed Eyre during the controversy were oblivious to the violence suffered by white Haitians during the Haitian Revolution. He wrote that the violence in Haiti was “ever present in the minds of the Europeans as a frightful evidence of what negroes are capable of when roused to frenzy.”¹⁰⁴ Even though he felt

¹⁰⁰ Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 121.

¹⁰¹ Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 49.

¹⁰² Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 123.

¹⁰³ Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 74.

¹⁰⁴ Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 258.

Eyre had been excessive in his suppression of the revolt, Froude urged his readers to “allow for human nature and not be hasty to blame” since “Men do not bear easily to see their late servants on their way to become their political masters, and they believe the worst of them because they are afraid.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, Froude justified Eyre’s imposition of Martial Law and violent crushing of the revolt by reinforcing the racist trope of Black people as violently barbaric.

The Morant Bay Rebellion was one component of Froude’s larger critique of British liberals and humanitarians who had advocated the abolition of slavery in the early 19th century and were pushing for Home Rule for all British colonies in the second half of the century. When he looked at Jamaica in 1888, he saw an island of wasted potential and moral degradation. Echoing the writings of Edward Long, George Wilson Bridges, and Anthony Trollope, Froude’s *The English in the West Indies* depicted Jamaica as an unproductive and anarchic island since the abolition of slavery. White settlers were written as the real victims of the British administration of the island. Such analyses relied on racist assumptions of Black Jamaicans as unproductive, incapable of freedom, and deserving of coercion. About the long history of British naval victories in the Caribbean, Froude felt that “since the Iliad there has been no subject better fitted for such treatment or better deserving of it—the West Indies will be the scene of the most brilliant cantos.”¹⁰⁶ As Simon Gikandi writes, when Froude pondered the landscape and history of the British West Indies, what he valued was “not the native Arawak or Carib cultures, or the social formations instituted by African slaves or Indian indentured laborers, but the historical spaces in which the triumphant moments of Englishness were played out.”¹⁰⁷ Jamaica was a site of bygone glory.

J.A. Froude’s morose vision of Jamaica and the British West Indies writ large was shaped by a resentment at the abolition of slavery and attempts to achieve racial equality across the 19th

¹⁰⁵ Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 260.

¹⁰⁶ Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 10.

¹⁰⁷ Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, 104.

century. As Elsa Goveia writes, “In Froude’s book, all residue of political liberalism has disappeared, and what is left is undiluted pro-slavery doctrine.”¹⁰⁸ About the prospect of Jamaican independence from Great Britain, he wrote: “Give them independence, and in a few generations they will peel off such civilization as they have learnt as easily and as willingly as their coats and trousers...their education, such as it may be, is but skin deep, and the old African superstitions lie undisturbed at the bottom of their souls.”¹⁰⁹

Froude’s racial worldview extended across the British Empire. He believed that Britons had to accept their role as a historically significant race who would advance human history as the Romans had supposedly done through their empire. For him, humanitarian considerations and notions of racial equality inhibited such a practice of empire. In the case of Jamaica, as well as that of India and Ireland, Froude implored his readers to accept the fact of “the superior force of England, and we must rely upon it and need not try to conceal that we do, till by the excellence of our administration we have converted submission into respect and respect into willingness for union.”¹¹⁰ Froude was frank in admitting that empire was a coercive enterprise. He hoped that, over time, subjugated peoples would be civilized and integrated into a gargantuan British union.

Clearing the Baptist Name—Edward Bean Underhill’s *The Tragedy of Morant Bay*

As long-time Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, the missionary and historian Edward Bean Underhill (1813-1901) visited India, Ceylon, and the West Indies in the 1850s to assess the state of the missions in these territories of the British Empire. Throughout his life, Underhill promoted and defended Baptist missionary activity in the colonies, from the high noon of abolition to the hardening of racist ideas against the Empire’s inhabitants of color. While he was in

¹⁰⁸ Goveia, *A Study on the Historiography of the British West Indies to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, 153.

¹⁰⁹ Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 287.

¹¹⁰ Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 282.

India a few months before the revolt of 1857, it was in relation to the West Indies that Underhill would be most enduringly remembered. In 1859, alongside J.T. Brown, Underhill was sent by the Baptist Missionary Society to assess the state of the mission in Jamaica.¹¹¹ In response to Anthony Trollope's *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* and anti-Black metropolitan sentiments in general, Underhill published *The West Indies: Their Social and Religious Condition*.¹¹² The book deemed Trollope's text misleading and incorrect. Underhill hoped to soften perceptions of Black people and emphasize the achievements of Christian missionaries, particularly the Baptists, in 'improving' the state of Jamaica and its inhabitants. The contention between Anthony Trollope's *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* and Underhill's *The West Indies* exemplified the political, social, and colonial tensions that had run through centuries of British historiography of Jamaica. Firstly, abolition had not settled but heated up the question of racial equality. Secondly, the question of whether Jamaica was an integral colony to the British Empire or a burdensome one that could be harmlessly let go off bubbled forth again once profits from the slavery-driven plantation regime dwindled.

Trollope did not feel emancipation to have been beneficial or slavery to be inimical. For him, Jamaica was a colony in languid disarray and decline after abolition. The telos of history for him was the emergence of intellectually and physically ideal races perfectly adapted to their particular climactic regions of the world. On the other hand, the missionary Underhill saw Jamaica as a site of human improvement through Christian conversion, rituals, and education since abolition. The telos of history for him was universal salvation through the global propagation of Christianity. Jamaica was an essential steppingstone to the attainment of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the lead up to the Morant Bay Rebellion, Edward Underhill wrote an urgent letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Edward Cardwell. In the letter, he wrote that Jamaica was in dire

¹¹¹ Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*, 223.

¹¹² Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*, 224.

straits and headed towards complete failure. As the cause of the crisis, he pointed to the impact of drought, the lack of employment, the lack of British investment, excessive taxation, and the withholding of political rights from the formerly enslaved.¹¹³ He urged a comprehensive inquiry into the island's situation and a revamping of its trade to focus more on exporting crops other than sugar.¹¹⁴ Underhill's letter was sent to Eyre and published in the *Jamaica Guardian* in March 1865.¹¹⁵ Despite the Jamaican political establishment's indifference to his letter, Underhill's critique and suggestions kickstarted a series of 'Underhill meetings' across Jamaica to discuss the myriad of crises facing the island's inhabitants. Leading the Kingston Underhill meeting was John Eyre's political adversary George William Gordon, who would be hanged for his role in the Morant Bay Rebellion. The Baptists would thereafter be excoriated in Jamaica and Britain for inciting the revolt. This was not only because of Underhill's role in starting anti-government meetings. Decades before the Morant Bay Rebellion, the 1831-2 Great Jamaican Slave Revolt was led by another Baptist, Sam Sharpe.

In 1895, Edward Underhill published *The Tragedy of Morant Bay; A Narrative of the Disturbances in the Island of Jamaica in 1865*. Now in his 80s, Underhill still felt he had to provide "an authentic account of the events."¹¹⁶ The book was principally a defense of the Baptist mission in Jamaica and sought to distance it from any accusations of having encouraged Jamaicans to revolt in 1865. Following the early accounts of the revolt by John Gorrie, Thomas Harvey, and William Brewin, Underhill used the conclusions of the Jamaica Royal Commission's report to convince his readers that there had been no widespread or planned conspiracy to overthrow British rule.

¹¹³ Gad J. Heuman, *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 45.

¹¹⁴ Heuman, *The Killing Time*, 45.

¹¹⁵ Heuman, *The Killing Time*, 46.

¹¹⁶ Edward Bean Underhill, *The Tragedy of Morant Bay; A Narrative of the Disturbances in the Island of Jamaica in 1865* (London: Alexander & Shephard, 1895), preface.

About the causes of the revolt, Underhill reiterated the contents of his letter to Cardwell. He wrote that “It was the rarest thing in Jamaica to find a black or brown man on the benches of the Assembly” and that “Of forty Acts actually passed by the Assembly in 1861-62, and allowed by the Colonial Office, only one in the slightest degree touched the well-being of the labouring-classes.”¹¹⁷ He blamed the Jamaican political establishment for being indifferent to the plight of Jamaicans in the lead up to the revolt and for actively excluding them from any say in the island’s politics. To this end, he wrote that “A small oligarchy of some 2,000 persons possessed themselves of the reins of administration, and laws of monstrous stringency were often passed, to limit unjustly, or to destroy, the freedom conferred by the mother country.”¹¹⁸ In Underhill’s sociopolitical analysis, a small Jamaican elite’s indifference to the plight of most Jamaicans led to the protracted crises in the lead up to the Morant Bay Rebellion. He felt the metropole’s administration ought to have regulated the colony’s elite. This was in stark contrast to the views of writers like George Wilson Bridges, Anthony Trollope, and J.A. Froude who felt the island’s white elite and planter class had been betrayed by the metropole’s policies and humanitarianism.

Notably, Underhill went to a considerable length to clear the name of the Baptist Missionary Society from the violence of the Morant Bay Rebellion. About the ‘Underhill meetings’ he wrote “It is certain that out of the twenty-one parishes in which Baptist ministers laboured, the meetings were held only in eleven.”¹¹⁹ Also, using the Royal Commission’s report, Underhill concluded that “the Baptist missionaries had not, directly or indirectly, any part whatever in producing or aiding the outbreak at Morant Bay.”¹²⁰ While Baptist missionaries were exonerated by Underhill by denying

¹¹⁷ Underhill, *The Tragedy of Morant Bay*, 3-4.

¹¹⁸ Underhill, *The Tragedy of Morant Bay*, 7.

¹¹⁹ Underhill, *The Tragedy of Morant Bay*, 22.

¹²⁰ Underhill, *The Tragedy of Morant Bay*, 180.

any association with the rebels, he went on to use the racist tropes of the time to further clear the name of his mission and its followers from the phenomenon of revolt.

After arguing that there had been no organized attempt to overthrow British rule in 1865, Underhill hoped to further assure his British readers when he wrote that “Negroes are incapable of it. They are excitable and impulsive enough; they may easily be provoked, perhaps, to the extent of a riot; but to combine for general and considered action they display little thought or skill.”¹²¹ By infantilizing Black people, Underhill was clearing the name of Baptist missionaries from any association with the revolt of 1865. Indeed, he was minimizing the rebellion into a localized burst of violence. Furthermore, he was indirectly making the case for the importance of the Baptists’ work in Jamaica since he believed that it was only through Christianity that Black people could be civilized. The Morant Bay Rebellion was therefore dismissed by Underhill as a tragic outburst of violence by the heathens of Jamaica. It was presented as an example proving the continued need for missionary work in making Jamaica an enlightened part of the British Empire.

Edward Underhill’s *The Tragedy of Morant Bay* ended by affirming the ‘improvement’ that had taken place in Jamaica since 1865. He urged his readers to see the revolt as a blessing in disguise that made Jamaica a Crown Colony and therefore subject to more efficient and beneficial rule. He wrote that “Jamaica is now inhabited by a flourishing, contented, and happy peasantry. Peace and order everywhere prevail; crime has largely decreased. The cultivation of the soil, the growth of numberless homesteads and settlements, the secure possession of their holdings by laborious and skilful labourers, bear witness to the capacities and industry of a class which, half a century ago, was held in hard and hopeless bondage.”¹²² Adhering to the classical Biblical trope, Underhill’s history concluded with the replacement of wretchedness with deliverance.

¹²¹ Underhill, *The Tragedy of Morant Bay*, 135.

¹²² Underhill, *The Tragedy of Morant Bay*, 218.

VI. Conclusion

But maybe it is just the scenery that is wrong. Maybe nothing that happens upon stolen ground can expect a happy ending.¹²³

Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*

This chapter first sketched the contours of the British historiography of Jamaica before the Morant Bay Rebellion, particularly the work of Hans Sloane, James Knight, Edward Long, George Wilson Bridges, James Phillippo, and Anthony Trollope. While only some of these writers would classify themselves as professional historians, all of them had a transatlantic political and historiographical impact through their writings on the island. Studying these writers allowed us to better analyze history writing in the aftermath of the Morant Bay Rebellion by parsing out continuities and critical disjunctures in worldviews, tropes, and narrative modalities. For example, by studying the accounts of Jamaica written by Christian missionaries like Thomas Coke and James Phillippo, we were able to better situate the historiographical tradition in which Edward Bean Underhill wrote *The Tragedy of Morant Bay* even as he was in dialogue with authors of other traditions of history writing. Underhill wrote his historical accounts of Jamaica in opposition to two texts which, we can safely say, were written in the modality of metropolitan travel writing. Both Trollope and Froude traveled to Jamaica as part of trips to the Caribbean from Britain to assess the state of the island on behalf of a metropolitan audience.

In the first section of this chapter, I flagged two themes that run across British writing on Jamaica from the letters by the first English settlers to the histories of Froude and Underhill at the end of the 19th century. Firstly, as an affective strategy, the island's natural beauty was contrasted against its social, political, economic, and religious crises. After the Morant Bay Rebellion, writers

¹²³ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (New York: Vintage International, 2001), 299. Originally published in 2000.

like John Gorrie, Thomas Harvey, William Brewin, and Henry Bleby all contrasted the natural beauty of Jamaica with the somber details of their histories of the revolt to leave their readers with an enduring image of contradiction, a contrast of the hopes they had from the island with its disillusioning realities.

Secondly, an unstated yet unavoidable element of writing on Jamaica was offering one's opinion, however indirectly, on whether Jamaica was worth holding on to for Great Britain. Historians like James Knight and Edward Long were unequivocal in promoting the island as an essential possession that had geostrategic and economic importance for the Empire. As we have seen, one of the motivations behind his history of Jamaica was Edward Long's desire to find a place for Jamaica in the European Enlightenment imaginary. The missionaries James Phillippo and Edward Underhill advocated the island's significance to the Empire in their own way as a bastion of Christianity in the 'New World.' They saw Jamaica as a steppingstone to the propagation of Christianity in the Caribbean and beyond. While Knight, Long, Phillippo, and Underhill had argued for holding on to Jamaica for their different reasons, there was a historiographical strain that saw the island's exasperating *mélange* of social, political, economic, and religious crises as exasperating burdens. Anthony Trollope and J.A. Froude fell squarely into this line of thinking. For them, Jamaica's state of decline was a festering sore in the hypothetical imperial body. They didn't feel the island to be existentially significant to themselves or to their Empire. Unsurprisingly, it was historians who had spent many years of their life in Jamaica, as planters or missionaries, for example, who advocated Jamaica's indispensable importance to Britain. For those like Trollope and Froude, Jamaica was one among a multitude of Caribbean islands they visited over a few months, a decaying stage of bygone colonial triumphs.

Conclusion: The Jagged Time of Rise and Fall

Empire has located its existence not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe. Empire dooms itself to live in history and plot against history. One thought alone preoccupies the submerged mind of Empire: how not to end, how not to die, how to prolong its era.¹

J.M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*

This is the charged, the dangerous moment, when everything must be reexamined, must be made new; when nothing at all can be taken for granted.²

James Baldwin, "Notes on the House of Bondage"

This thesis started with Edward John Thompson's *The Other Side of the Medal* and the author's contention that Indians weren't predisposed to be historians since they supposedly lacked the ability to think critically. Thompson had further written that "Such solid highways to scholarly esteem and approval as indexes and bibliographies are almost unknown to them. So they are not likely to displace our account of our connection with India."³ Thompson's remarks from 1925 represented an epistemological certainty in the idea that the account of Great Britain's entwined histories with its colonies could be written and contested exclusively by British historians since Britons were the quintessential 'historical' people.

More than a century before Thompson, James Mill had similarly spoken of history as the preoccupation of a 'mature' or 'refined' people on a civilizational scale that ran from rudeness to refinement. In the histories of the Indian Uprising and the Morant Bay Rebellion we have studied in this thesis, British hegemony in the realm of history writing was an assumption shared by almost every British historian of these revolts. Very rarely did a British historian think of Indians

¹ J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 153-4.

² James Baldwin, "Notes on the House of Bondage," *The Nation*, November 1, 1980.
<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/notes-house-bondage/>.

³ Edward John Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1926), 29-30.

or Jamaicans as thinkers and writers of their own histories. Consequently, none of these histories were written in dialogue with Indian or Jamaican histories. It was blithely and incorrectly assumed that there weren't any of those in the 19th century. Moreover, the pronoun 'we' was employed repeatedly throughout to signify an audience whose identity was assumed to be stable. Not only were the colonized not considered to be writers of history, they were not even thought of as potential readers of it. Everything from triumphalism to critique to atonement was assumed to transpire in a discursive plane whose only participants were Britons. Indians and Jamaicans were only the subjects of these histories.

Moreover, a curious throughline across the histories I have analyzed in this thesis is the ever-present, ever-unsatisfied desire of British historians to pen a history that would yield conclusive lessons about the peoples and lands that comprised the British Empire. Historians often hoped that their work could contribute to a more efficient and sensitive administration of the colonies. The 'lessons' from history often pertained to developing a greater awareness of pre-colonial social, political, and religious structures that was to be used to govern the colonized in ways that were familiar to them and mindful of their sensitivities. At the same time, historical knowledge could also be employed cynically to use existing societal discontents to 'divide and rule.' As Macaulay had told his readers, "No past event has any intrinsic importance. The knowledge of it is valuable only as it leads us to form just calculations with respect to the future."⁴ For the historians studied in this thesis, the calculations historical knowledge was to be used for were colonial calculations aimed at prolonging and improving British rule.

⁴ Thomas Macaulay, "The Task of the Modern Historian" in *Little Masterpieces: Volume IV (Macaulay)*, ed. Bliss Perry (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1909), 10. Originally published in *Edinburgh Review* in May 1828.

In 1768, Alexander Dow had dedicated *The History of Hindostan* to King George III. He believed he had laid the history of India “at the foot of the throne.”⁵ Dow believed his work to be important in light of “The intimate connection which the British nation now have, with a part of Hindostan.”⁶ In 1817, James Mill believed his thorough ‘judgement’ of Indian civilization to be significant since Britain was “charged with governing” India.⁷ More than a century of British rule and history writing later, Edward John Thompson felt he had to write a history to correct misplaced British perceptions of Indians. Whether it was learning more about pre-colonial technologies of rule or familiarizing themselves with India’s many religious traditions or to atone for the imperial violence of the past, British administrators, politicians, and scholars turned to history writing to engage with narratives in vogue.

In the case of Jamaica, Hans Sloane published his natural history in 1707 with the intention of making available a catalogue of natural phenomena that anyone interested in the natural composition and history of Jamaica could consult. The colony and its flora and fauna were so new to metropolitan Britain that Sloane wrote that “one shall meet with Words, and Names of Things, one has no Notion or Conception of.”⁸ Likewise, James Knight wrote his history of Jamaica with the intention of making the case of the island’s importance to the

⁵ Dow quoted in Manan Ahmed Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan: The Invention of India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2020), 16.

⁶ Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindostan; from the Earliest Account of Time, to the death of Akbar; translated from the Persian of Mahummud Casim Ferishta of Delhi: Together With a Dissertation Concerning the Religion and Philosophy of the Brahmin with an Appendix containing the History of the Mogul Empire, from its decline in the Reign of Mahummud Shaw to the Present Times*, 2 vols. (London: T. Becket and P.A. De Hondt, 1768), i.

⁷ James Mill, *The History of British India. Abridged and with an Introduction by William Thomas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 225.

⁸ Hans Sloane, Michael van der Gucht, and B. M. [i.e. R. Bentley and M. Magnes]. *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica : With the Natural History of the Herbs and Trees, Four-Footed Beasts, Fishes, Birds, Insects, Reptiles, &c. of the Last of Those Islands; to Which Is Prefix'd, an Introduction, Wherein Is an Account of the Inhabitants, Air, Waters, Diseases, Trade, &c. of That Place, with Some Relations Concerning the Neighbouring Continent, and Islands of America. Illustrated with Figures of the Things Described, Which Have Not Been Heretofore Engraved. In Large Copper-Plates as Big as the Life*. Vol. 1. London: B.M, 1707, Preface.

Empire. For his part, Edward Long's extensive history was also aimed at "those who intend to settle" in the island.⁹ By simultaneously emphasizing the indispensable significance of Jamaica and sketching the political and economic issues facing the island's white settlers, historians like Knight and Long hoped for a better quality of metropolitan control over the island. Of course, there was no question of abolishing slavery in such visions of better and more efficient governance.

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In the histories analyzed in this thesis, a historian's worldview and politics were often expressed through their narrative strategies and emplotment. Before abolition, in spite of criticisms of the metropole, pro-slavery histories tended to be narratives of ascent, emphasizing how prosperous Jamaica had become as well as how significant the island was to the British Empire. These histories encouraged further settlement from Britain. In the aftermath of abolition and emancipation, pro-slavery sentiments were expressed in declensionist histories that spoke of Jamaica as a once-prosperous colony whose promise had been betrayed by a liberal metropole. Anthony Trollope and J.A. Froude's writings fell squarely in this tradition. For the latter, Jamaica was a crumbling stage of bygone glories, one that could have been the background of epics of a Homeric scale. Froude's writings were challenged by historians like Edward Underhill, who framed the history of Jamaica through Biblical narrative tropes of deliverance and salvation. Underhill, like James Phillippo before him, framed Jamaica's pre-abolition history as one of immense moral darkness. It was Christianity and the British Empire that were pious and

⁹ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica: Or, General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of That Island, with Reflections on Its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government. Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Originally published in 1774), 1.

powerful entities which served as the instrument of salvation through the abolition of slavery. Thereafter, the years after abolition were written as years of ‘improvement.’

Every time a major revolt erupted in the colonies, Britons returned to historical knowledge and history writing to investigate where things had gone wrong. There was never a uniform answer to the question since colonialism itself was a contentious endeavor, even within the metropole. Revolts compelled the practitioners and readers of history to reexamine the palimpsest, all the while endeavoring to discern where things had gone wrong. Was it because of emancipation? Was it Eyre’s fault? Did Dalhousie’s annexation of Awadh push things beyond their breaking point? Were the greased cartridges the real cause of the revolt? What did the circulation of chapattis really mean? The longing to answer such questions encouraged historians to dig deep into Britain’s entwined histories with India and Jamaica. As we have seen time and time again, they inevitably ran into a morally charged question: were all humans in the Empire equal to one another?

*

On March 8, 1784, William Robertson wrote that he was abandoning his historical project because the American Revolutionary War had subverted the future horizon with which he had first started writing *The History of America*.¹⁰ He had firmly believed that the thirteen colonies would remain a transplantation of Great Britain in the Americas, the site of the British Empire’s ascendance over the Spanish Empire. However, by 1784, America was lost to the

¹⁰ Robertson quoted in Florence Petroff, “William Robertson’s Unfinished History of America. The Foundation of the British Empire in North America and the Scottish Enlightenment,” *Transatlantica*, 2019, 5.

Empire and to him. In independence, America was no longer the paramount subject of historical concern, inquiry and writing that it once had been for him.

Most 19th-century British historians of the Indian Uprising and the Morant Bay Rebellion were faced with a similar quandary. Through the tumultuous violence of these revolts and their suppression, they continued to envision India and Jamaica as stable colonies of Great Britain in the future. Even if there was resentment, they hoped that the hearts and minds of the colonized would be won in the long run. Any violence accompanying this process was considered simply unavoidable and even beneficial for the colonized. Such historians hoped that British economic, geostrategic, normative, and psychological hegemony would be internalized as common sense by the colonized just as it had been by them. In such a worldview, revolt against the British Empire appeared as an antihistorical act personifying infantile and petulant resistance to the civilizing progress of time.

Such a vision was crucially enabled by perceiving time as linear, progressionist, and even familial. Every people, at least every people in the British Empire, was expected to follow the same trajectory of ‘improvement’ and ‘civilization’ that Britons themselves had first charted. Thomas Macaulay had himself enshrined such a view of time in history writing when, in *The History of England*, he had written that “the history of our country during the last hundred and sixty years is eminently the history of physical, of moral, and of intellectual improvement.”¹¹ The colonized were expected to inevitably follow the same trajectory under the aegis of the British Empire. They were thought to inhabit, in the words of Anne McClintock, “a permanently anterior time.”¹² As Theodore Koditschek frames it, “Yesterday Clive and Hastings. Today Macaulay.

¹¹ Macaulay, *History of England from the Accession of James II*, 2.

¹² Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 359.

Tomorrow the remasculinized Indian, West Indian, and African, all English in taste, intellect, and opinion, whatever their color or blood.”¹³

It was with such confidence in the workings of historical time and even destiny that, towards the end of his history of the Indian Uprising, Henry Mead wrote that “The ultimate absorption of every native State is, perhaps, merely a question of time... With destiny on our side, we may be surely content to await that appointed hour.”¹⁴ He hoped that “henceforth our rule may be such as to foster in the native mind a love of English domination.”¹⁵ For his part, J.A. Froude was more brazen in acknowledging the violence of empire when he wrote about “the superior force of England, and we must rely upon it and need not try to conceal that we do, till by the excellence of our administration we have converted submission into respect and respect into willingness for union.”¹⁶ Thus, a linear, progressive, familial, and universalist notion of time shaped the ethical framework in which a multitude of British historians rationalized the infliction of violence by the Empire.

Nevertheless, the revolts of 1857 and 1865 were not the last ones to jolt the British Empire. Unthinkable as it was for the historians analyzed in this thesis, the Empire would end. The colonized would become the formerly colonized and chart an independent existence of their own as historical actors, which they always were. They would write histories as well, which they already did. The love for British domination that Henry Mead hoped for could never be fostered. J.A. Froude’s hopes of converting submission to respect and respect to willingness for union

¹³ Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination: Nineteenth Century Visions of Greater Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 146.

¹⁴ Henry Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1857), 219.

¹⁵ Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and Consequences*, 378.

¹⁶ James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies or; The Bow of Ulysses* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900), 282. The book was originally published in 1887.

went equally unrealized. Revolts continued to subvert historians' worldviews and temporal horizons. Eventually, India and Jamaica would be lost to the Empire and to them.

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