

IDENTITY IN MOTION: *BHOWANI JUNCTION* RECONSIDERED

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Today there is certainly no shortage of novels concerning British colonialism in India, India's Independence and Partition, and the aftermath of the Raj. The late twentieth century has seen a literal explosion of novels on the subject, penned by both British and Indian writers, invoking a variety of perspectives ranging from staunch anti-imperialism to colonial nostalgia. Yet few of the novels concerning the Raj invoke, or even acknowledge, the unique role and perspective of the Anglo-Indian Community, an ethnically and culturally hybrid people of mixed European and Indian ancestry known also, at various times, as "Eurasians," "half-castes," "half-breeds," "blacky-whites," "eight-annas" and "chee-chees." Anglo-Indians today remain a numerically small minority both diasporically and within India; according to sociologists Noel Gist and Roy Dean Wright, they are socially marginal to the British, and both socially and culturally marginal to the major Indian communities. The peripheral position of Anglo-Indians in both British and Indian societies extends into literature and literary criticism as well, even that produced by contemporary post-colonial writers and critics who are otherwise sensitive to and aware of issues surrounding marginalization and minority discourse.

One notable exception to the relative invisibility of the Anglo-Indian Community in narratives of empire is John Masters' novel, *Bhowani Junction*, published in 1952 and subsequently adapted into a Hollywood film. This work, set in the first half of 1947 in a fictional railway town named Bhowani, is narrated primarily through the Anglo-Indian perspective and specifically concerns the attempt of Anglo-Indians to come to terms with their problematic cultural identity and social position in the waning days of British rule. Though Bhowani is a fictional place, the association of Anglo-Indians with the Indian Railways is rooted in historical fact. Anglo-Indians have

existed since Europeans first set foot in the subcontinent in the sixteenth century, and during the so-called "High Noon" of Empire, Anglo-Indians played key roles in the day-to-day operation of the British Empire's infrastructure: communications, education, health care, government services, and most especially, the Indian Railways. Between 1857 and 1947, one-third of all Anglo-Indian men comprised more than half of all railway workers, and most Anglo-Indian residential communities—called "railway colonies"—were located in the vicinity of major railway stations. So closely are the Anglo-Indians associated with the Indian Railways, in fact, that in narratives of empire, the term "railway man" functions as a euphemism for "Anglo-Indian." The Anglo-Indian "railway men" and women of *Bhowani Junction*—Victoria Jones, her railway family, and the bumbling civil servant Patrick Taylor—stand apart from the typical characters in novels of empire because of their mixed ethnicity. It is rare to find Anglo-Indian characters in novels concerning the Raj, and even more unusual when they are central rather than peripheral characters. In that regard, the publication of *Bhowani Junction* stands as something of a watershed in terms of literary representation of the Anglo-Indian people.

Yet most critical responses to *Bhowani Junction*, both by prominent members of the Anglo-Indian Community and literary critics outside the Community, have been dismissive at best, disparaging at worst. Though the plot unfolds primarily through Anglo-Indian eyes and is narrated primarily by Anglo-Indian voices, most contemporary critics fail to consider *Bhowani Junction* from the hybrid vantage point of the Anglo-Indian, and instead remain entrenched in polarized interpretations which take either a British viewpoint or an Indian perspective. Typically, Indian critics will tend to focus on how the novel represents the major segments of Indian society, neglecting to notice the novel's hybrid viewpoint and as a result overlooking its anti-imperialist implications. Most British critics, meanwhile, consider *Bhowani Junction* as little more than a nostalgic and adventuresome portrayal of the last days of the Raj, and they tend to interpret Anglo-Indian characters as little more than "human metaphors" for the British experience. Most critical interpretations have failed, then, to note that when *Bhowani Junction* was first released, it constituted a representation of a hybrid Anglo-Indian subjectivity that had, up to that time, been unprecedented. The main thrust of the novel, namely the struggle of the Anglo-Indians in 1947 as they find themselves caught between cultural and historical cross-currents, has been

overlooked by British and Indian critics alike. These superficial interpretations have perhaps been influenced to some extent by the tawdry and sensationalistic Hollywood film treatment of the novel, which went so far as to radically alter the novel's conclusion in a manner that undermined the book's affirmation of Anglo-Indian identity—a point I will discuss again later in this article.

What is more, *Bhowani Junction*'s attempt to portray an Anglo-Indian subjectivity has not always been appreciated by the Anglo-Indians themselves. In *Anglo-Indians: Neglected Children of the Raj*, for example, Coralie Younger interprets *Bhowani Junction* as little more than another instance of derogatory Anglo-Indian literary stereotypes. Various Anglo-Indian Community leaders have in the past decried the novel as "cheap" and "pornographic." Parliamentarian and Anglo-Indian Community leader Frank Anthony called *Bhowani Junction* a "penny-shovelling exercise in near pornography" (Anthony iii), while Community historian Reginald Maher referred to its protagonist as "the odious Victoria Jones" (Maher). Anglo-Indians such as Anthony and Maher based their criticisms on the fact that Victoria Jones is a sexually active character who has several premarital affairs, one of which is consummated on a moving train. The derogatory stereotypes of the Anglo-Indian woman as "loose" and "immoral," as well as the ongoing controversy regarding the extent to which the Anglo-Indian Community is originally of "legitimate" or "illegitimate" paternity, have no doubt made the Anglo-Indian Community understandably sensitive to issues surrounding the perceived virtue and morality of its women.

Yet all these readings fail to do justice to *Bhowani Junction*'s complex—and, at the time of its publication, unprecedented—exploration and affirmation of Anglo-Indian identity. Contemporary developments in literary theory, particularly in the areas of feminism and post-colonial studies, make it possible to reconsider *Bhowani Junction* as a positive and provocative treatment of the hybrid Anglo-Indian subjectivity that is all too often obscured in both literary and critical texts. Contemporary feminist theory allows Victoria Jones' sexual and psychological independence to be viewed in a much more positive light, as aspects of her ongoing quest to come to terms with her multifaceted identity rather than as mere evidence of immorality. Recent developments in post-colonial studies, meanwhile, demonstrate the paradox that colonialist paradigms may actually be reified rather than challenged

when the hybrid perspective, such as that of the Anglo-Indians, is misrepresented, disparagingly stereotyped, or overlooked. Not only have many novelists tended to marginalize and stereotype Anglo-Indian characters in fiction, but many literary critics have similarly failed to take notice of Anglo-Indian characters when they do appear, even in a text such as *Bhowani Junction* which boldly announces itself as about nothing *but* the Anglo-Indian Community. Critical neglect of both the hybrid—that is, Anglo-Indian—and feminist perspectives has tended to produce analyses which are ostensibly post-colonial yet which actually overlook the ways in which *Bhowani Junction* serves to critique imperial power and hypocrisy. This article considers several previous critical readings of *Bhowani Junction* while suggesting an alternative feminist/ post-colonial approach which finds in the novel both a criticism of colonial power relations and an affirmation of Anglo-Indian identity, as represented through characters such as Victoria Jones. Before turning to the critical readings, however, it is helpful to briefly reiterate *Bhowani Junction*'s plot, clearly emphasizing that this discussion concerns the novel and *not* the altered plot which appeared in the film version.

Bhowani Junction is primarily narrated in the first person by Victoria Jones, the daughter of an Anglo-Indian railway family. Victoria has recently returned to her hometown, Bhowani, following a tour of duty as a WAC officer. For years she has been courted by an Anglo-Indian railway man, Patrick Taylor, whom she sees as embodying "the worst trade marks of our people—inferiority feelings, resentment, perpetual readiness to be insulted" (73). Victoria's recent exposure to the world beyond the railway colony has led her to become impatient with such attitudes in her own community; thus, she terminates her relationship with Patrick, and grows increasingly irritated with the Anglo-Indians, particularly their deference to and mimicry of the British, and their allusions to faraway England, which they have never seen, as "Home."

Victoria's irritation explodes into full-blown anger one night when her British supervisor, Lieutenant Macaulay, attempts to rape her: "I have always admired the English and, like the rest of us, pretended to be more English than I am. When Macaulay tried to rape me he broke that chain. I was free . . . If I wanted to turn toward India, my home, I could" (75). At this point Victoria deepens a casual

friendship with one of her Indian coworkers, a Sikh named Ranjit Singh Kasel—a friendship which proves fortuitous. One evening following a riot which has resulted in British violence against Indians, Macaulay insists upon escorting Victoria home in order to "protect" her. He then tries to rape her for a second time. In the ensuing scuffle, Victoria kills Macaulay; Ranjit is the only witness to the incident.

Ranjit helps Victoria to cover her tracks and offers her refuge in his mother's home. His mother encourages Victoria not to confess: "Why should you support the British law? You're half Indian, aren't you? . . . Have you ever met an Englishman who didn't insult you? . . . Why don't you see that you're an Indian, and act like one? We're strong now. We'll look after you (133)." She then dresses Victoria in a sari. Victoria is astonished when she looks in the mirror: "It was me, but this person in the mirror was more beautiful than me. She was a beautiful Indian girl in her own clothes" (133). Victoria subsequently explores an Indian identity for herself, wearing the sari and embarking on a romantic relationship with Ranjit. She grows increasingly resentful of the superior attitudes displayed toward India by the English, which she realizes her own community has largely absorbed:

I remembered the smell—what was it? Curry, incense, clean linen? I absorbed some of the Sirdarni's bitterness. It was not a conscious single thought; it was a gradual seep, drop by drop. I said to myself, looking around me. This I could have loved; this the English have spoiled for me; sneering at me, they have brought me up to sneer at myself. (146)

All this causes Victoria to become alienated from her family and community, and while she is in this vulnerable state, she agrees to marry Ranjit. Ranjit has one caveat, however: he requires that Victoria convert to Sikhism. She agrees, and the baptism ceremony is well underway before Victoria fully realizes the implications of such a conversion. All that remains is for Victoria to declare her new Sikh name and identity, when she realizes: "But my name was Victoria. Victoria Jones. I was a cheechee engine driver's daughter" (248). Victoria runs from the ceremony and catches the first train back to Bhowani—which, as it turns out, is driven by her father.

The novel then shifts to a more adventurous focus, as Victoria, Patrick, Ranjit, and the British officer Rodney Savage (with whom Victoria has a brief relationship) seek to locate and thwart a violent terrorist named K.P. Roy. Thanks largely to Patrick's

familiarity with the railways and schedules, they are ultimately successful in foiling and killing Roy—with the added benefit that they are able to frame Roy posthumously for the murder of Lieutenant Macaulay, allaying any fear that Victoria will be prosecuted. As the adventure concludes, Patrick Taylor emerges as a more confident and self-aware character. The text concludes with Victoria terminating her relationship with Rodney, Patrick emerging as a stronger and more likeable character than he initially appeared, and the strong suggestion that Patrick and Victoria will end up together after all. The reunification of Patrick and Victoria, along with her acceptance of a distinctly *Anglo-Indian* (as opposed to English or Indian) identity, suggests that the mixed identity of the Anglo-Indian is a valid identity even though Patrick and Victoria cannot fully be either British or Indian; and, that perhaps in a new, independent India without the scourge of foreign rule "justified" by racist ideology, there can be a place for the Anglo-Indian after all. (As an aside, the film suggests something quite the opposite; not only does Rodney promise to "come back" for Victoria, but the Anglo-Indian Patrick Taylor, far from emerging as an unlikely hero, is killed.)

N.S. Pradhan is one of few postcolonial critics who interprets *Bhowani Junction* somewhat favorably. In a 1990 article for *The Commonwealth Review*, Pradhan notes that "one of the strongest appeals of Masters' fiction . . . is the effective use of symbols and metaphorical images," and in the case of *Bhowani Junction*, symbols such as the railway "truthfully reflect Anglo-Indian dilemmas and predilections" (103). Moreover, according to Pradhan: "Victoria emerges as a dignified character who subsumes the built-in tragedy and rootlessness of her people" (Pradhan 104). Yet in final analysis, Pradhan misses much of significance in that he superficially interprets the proliferation of railway images as mere symbols of the British departure from India and the "comings and goings of those in power" (Pradhan 105). Because Pradhan fails to recognize the significance of the railways in the Anglo-Indian consciousness, he likewise fails to recognize that working on the railways was not only the quintessential Anglo-Indian occupation but also one of the few sources of unabashed Anglo-Indian pride. Aboard the train, Anglo-Indians experience a momentary yet satisfying sense of ascendancy over the Englishman: "Father began to explain to Colonel Savage what it was for . . . It was good to hear [the Colonel] asking silly questions" (252). Aboard the train, Anglo-Indians find the sense of

"home" that eludes them elsewhere. After Victoria runs from Ranjit, the place where she finds her father, regains her bearings, and feels herself, finally, to be "Home", is aboard the moving train:

Out in front of us the rails stretched like a hundred tangled snakes between the yards and the Loco Sheds, but we found our own path under the gantries...the signals were like a page of semaphore for us to read, their drunken arms giving us the message. It was a book I had learned to read without being taught, the way I had learned English and Hindustani. I muttered the messages of the signals to myself, hugging myself with pleasure to be here...I felt that my nerves and muscles were slowly relaxing and settling back into old, well-worn places, and it was the jerk and heave of the footplate under my feet that was doing it. (252-253)

Pradhan misses an opportunity to consider *Bhowani Junction's* metaphors in more depth, then, by failing to note that Anglo-Indians, unable to identify themselves as belonging to a specific locale, may nonetheless find their sense of "place," their identity, in motion itself—a poignant commentary on the displacement experienced by these daughters and sons of the colonial encounter. Clearly, *Bhowani Junction* is about more than simply "the comings and goings of those in power"—something even a sympathetic critic like Pradhan misses by neglecting to invoke the specific perspective of the Anglo-Indian Community when making his interpretation.

More troublesome than Pradhan's basically positive yet superficial reading, however, is the disparaging discussion of M.K. Naik in the 1991 *Mirror on the Wall: Images of India and the Englishman in Anglo-Indian Fiction*. For starters, Naik cites Victoria Jones as an example of a *failed* identity crisis: "[Victoria] makes a determined effort to get Indianised . . . But it all fails to work out and she is soon back to square one" (Naik 72). Naik's simplistic assesement fails from both a post-colonial and a feminist standpoint, as it fails to acknowledge both Victoria's agency and the cultural constraints which limit her options. Though Victoria's choices are certainly circumscribed by both her gender and her mixed ethnicity, within those limitations she does make conscious choices. Victoria's romance with Ranjit, for example, does not simply "fail to work out"; Victoria *chooses* to reject Ranjit and to maintain her own religion, asserting at the moment she is asked to assume a new identity, "But my name was Victoria." Nor does Victoria's realization merely take her "back to square one"; instead, this is just one of many steps on her internal journey toward an

awareness of all her heritages. Perhaps Victoria is characterized more accurately as an embodiment of the dynamic expressed by T.S. Eliot in *Four Quartets*: "We shall not cease from exploration/And the end of all our exploring/Will be to arrive where we started/And know the place for the first time."

More egregious, however, is Naik's neglect of the female perspective invoked by the large portion of the novel narrated by Victoria in the first person. As one example, Naik interprets a passage in which British soldiers urinate on an Indian demonstration as an instance of "farce" which makes "broad fun" of the Indians (Naik 150). Here is that "farcical" scene of "broad fun" as seen through Victoria's eyes:

"Three...two...one...fire!" . . . The Gurkhas all began to urinate . . . The volunteers scrambled up, shouting, onto the platform . . . urine staining their clothes and dripping from their faces . . .

I turned away and walked to the Purdah Room and was sick. On the platform there were blood and broken glass and torn clothes and a few teeth...They'd done that to the women too. I saw every detail while my stomach contracted and my throat swelled and my eyes bulged. When the vomiting and retching passed, and I had washed and sat down to rest and bathed my eyes again, I came out.

"You don't look well, Miss Jones," Colonel Savage said.

I whispered, "You are a cruel bully." (108-109)

It is difficult to see where Victoria finds the humor in this so-called "farce." In the process of neglecting the female perspective, then, Naik manages to obliterate both the female viewpoint and the hybrid perspective of the Anglo-Indian woman, Victoria Jones. Paradoxically, by so doing, Naik overlooks entirely the way in which this passage sharply criticizes British imperial cruelty.

Naik even goes so far as to characterize Victoria Jones as an "arrant coward who "accomplishes nothing of significance" (Naik)—two difficult assertions to support, given Victoria's actions in the novel. For starters, Victoria questions and rejects most of the values she was raised with, risking total ostracization in order to live a life of integrity. Victoria is a military officer, and though she has not been trained as a nurse, she participates in rescue missions and swallows her anxieties in order to care for the severely injured. Victoria uses her intelligence to help uncover and

prevent a planned capital crime. Lastly, the "arrant coward" Victoria kills her would-be rapist, refuses to turn herself in, escapes prosecution, and feels no guilt—unusual actions for a coward. Further, if Victoria "accomplishes nothing of significance," then follows the unlikely conclusion that the murder of a British rapist by his female Anglo-Indian victim is an insignificant event, unworthy of notice. In fact, I have yet been able to locate a critical analysis of *Bhowani Junction* which even makes mention of the fact that Victoria murders her rapist—who is, moreover, an agent of British empire—and gets away with it, even though this is one of the most critical and dramatic turning points of the novel.

On what basis, then, does Naik term Victoria an "arrant coward?" Naik bases his assessment on an incident that precedes the novel's action; namely, Victoria's confession that she once went to bed with a friend of Macaulay's, on the basis that "he thought that because he was a British officer, and I was a chee chee girl, I'd do anything" (59). Victoria elaborates by offering some insight into her own psychological response to the way in which she has been constructed by British officers: "And...he was right. Slowly, slowly, I did feel I had to do it" (59). This is one of the passages that caused consternation for Anglo-Indian Community leaders such as Maher and Anthony when the book was originally published. However, from a present-day feminist/post-colonial perspective, a number of arguments can be invoked against using this passage to draw negative conclusions regarding Victoria's morality. Rather than portraying Victoria simply as a morally lax woman, Masters instead sheds light on the ways in which people in untenable social positions often internalize and then enact the expectations of those who hold power over them. This passage actually serves more as a criticism of the British officers and their narrow, damaging stereotypes of the "loose" cheechee woman than of the woman herself, if attention is paid to the role of power relations in shaping this encounter. Moreover, when interpreting this passage, it is also important to note that Victoria is describing an incident that took place three years earlier, and that she has since fought to exercise her own agency where her sexual choices are concerned. Macaulay's violent sexual aggression with Victoria is aided by his belief that she is "loose" because she slept with his friend, but by the time Macaulay tries to seduce her, Victoria has since changed her self-concept and will no longer allow others to define her. Victoria repeatedly rejects Macaulay's advances, and shouts angrily to Patrick

and Rodney that "[all of] you make me feel like a bitch in heat!" By giving Victoria her own voice and an opportunity to resist, Masters challenges the British construction of the "cheechee whore" and gives Victoria a higher degree of agency, namely the ability to make her *own* sexual choices. That Victoria does not necessarily exercise those choices in a manner consistent with mainstream 1950s morality need not necessarily be construed as a put-down to Anglo-Indian women. Instead, it may suggest that Masters' Anglo-Indian protagonist Victoria Jones may well have been ahead of her time in her desire to make her own sexual choices. A feminist approach, then, to considering some of *Bhowani Junction's* implications may lead to a reading more sympathetic to the Anglo-Indian viewpoint as well as more critical of British imperial cruelty.

Likewise, in the 1985 *Indo-Anglian Fiction: Some Perceptions*, H.S. Mahle similarly obliterates Victoria's viewpoint, thereby missing an opportunity to comment on *Bhowani Junction's* criticism of British imperial authority and exploration of Anglo-Indian hybrid identity. Like Naik, Mahle misses Masters' criticism of British imperialism, asserting that "John Masters does not find fault with the Britishers living in India" (8). According to Mahle, even Kipling is more critical of the British than Masters, since in *Kim*, at least, Kipling dares to present an "unscrupulous British employer" (Mahle 8). But, like Naik, Mahle ignores the many passages in *Bhowani Junction* which describe British brutality in considerable detail. Once again, Mahle neglects to mention altogether that Masters portrays more than one of the British officers as rapists. Taken to its logical extension, Mahle's statement would suggest that raping an Anglo-Indian woman is a far less egregious offense than misusing another man's money.

Bhowani Junction is certainly by no means an ideal novel from the standpoint of either Anglo-Indian studies or present-day feminist criticism. From a feminist standpoint, Masters does deserve some credit for creating a female protagonist, narrating a large portion of the story through her voice, and launching her on a voyage toward self-awareness. Yet at the same time, he does fall into the stock trap of relying almost exclusively upon romances with male characters as the only viable symbols for the various stages of a woman's inner journey. Nonetheless, *Bhowani Junction* is by and large successful both in presenting an active and self-directed

female protagonist and in acknowledging the constraints which shape the life of an Anglo-Indian woman. It is also noteworthy that Masters does not appear to succumb to the Madonna/whore dichotomy that characterizes much male writing about women, in that he allows Victoria to pursue and enjoy sexual activity without "falling from grace" as a woman, even though some of his male characters—not to mention male critics and readers—do at times fall prey to this common pitfall of male writers representing female characters.

Ironically, while Victoria's assertiveness and sexuality are part of what allow her to emerge as a strong and formidable Anglo-Indian character, her sexual independence is also at the heart of why Anglo-Indian male writers have often discredited *Bhowani Junction* as a "work of near pornography." Undoubtedly the stigma of illegitimacy and stereotypes of the "loose" Anglo-Indian woman have contributed to an understandable sensitivity among the Anglo-Indian Community regarding its perceived morality, particularly where its women are concerned. The Community has, after all, imbibed both Victorian sexual mores and some of the Indian ideals of womanhood, and thus it is not surprising that the average Anglo-Indian (especially those of an earlier generation) would be repulsed by the idea of a sexually active woman. Masters' biographer, John Clay, reports that many English critics were similarly outraged by "the active sex life of the seemingly uninhibited half-caste girl [sic] . . . Masters was, to many English eyes, breaching a taboo subject, and not everyone was pleased" (Clay 222). Obviously, a number of arguments, both feminist and anti-racist, can be invoked against such a narrow position. Furthermore, by 1994 standards, the sexual scenes in *Bhowani Junction* are nowhere near explicit, and in fact comprise a very small segment of the text as a whole. On the whole, particularly given the dearth of literary representations of Anglo-Indian in literature, Anglo-Indians stand to gain much by reconsidering this assessment of *Bhowani Junction*.

It is true that *Bhowani Junction* partakes of certain stereotypes historically associated with the Anglo-Indian Community. Such stereotypes, almost all of them negative, pervade both British and Indian writing about India, and the sensitivity of Anglo-Indian Community members to their proliferation is completely understandable. It is worth noting, however, that Masters does not appear to consider the stereotypes associated with Anglo-Indians as either determinative or essentialist; rather, he uses

certain of those stereotypes not as conclusions but as springboards for further exploration, considering the possibility that whatever "truth" they might contain is most likely the result of an untenable social position and cultural struggle foisted upon Anglo-Indians by the British rather than as evidence of innate, genealogically based inferiority.

Among the most prevalent stereotypes that Masters explores in *Bhowani Junction* are those embodied through Patrick Taylor, such as the Anglo-Indian as British lackey who wishes to disown his Indian heritage. As Patrick explains his own background: "When I say 'we' or 'us' I mean the Anglo-Indians. Sometimes we're called Domiciled Europeans. Most of us have a little Indian blood—not much, of course" (4). In interpreting Masters' presentation of Patrick, however, it is important to note that within the next few pages, he is revealed to be an unreliable narrator. Rather quickly into the novel, it becomes apparent that Patrick's assertion is a defensive mechanism rather than a statement of fact. On the very next page, for instance, Patrick states that Victoria's mother, "is very brown . . . and she chews betel nut in secret" (5). He then reveals that Victoria's mother is in fact three-quarters Indian; that she only knows how to cook Indian food; and that many Anglo-Indians in fact chew betel-nut, a habit associated with Indians and not with the English. A mere two pages after insisting that Anglo-Indians have "not much" Indian blood, Patrick advises Victoria that if she does not wear her topi, she will "get all brown" (7), to which Victoria responds: "It isn't sunburn that makes us brown, is it?" (8). Patrick's reaction betrays both his attempt to deny his heritage and the psychological price he has paid in the process:

It was not a nice thing to say, and I felt frightened that she had said it. If we didn't wear topis people would think we were Wogs . . . We didn't look like English people. We looked like what we were--Anglo-Indians, Eurasians, cheechees, half-castes, eight-annas, blacky-whites. I've heard all the names they call us, but I don't think about them unless I'm angry. I kicked furiously, and the engine turned over...the engine made the hell of a noise . . . I didn't dare speak myself, but I could make the Norton [motorcycle] speak for me. Victoria seemed to understand about the noise I was making. (8)

Another stereotype embodied in Patrick Taylor is that of the ineffectual, bumbling mid-level civil servant. Patrick is touchy and swift to anger, overly enamored of the colonial bureaucracy, and eager to wield what meager power he holds as a railway

official. As described by Victoria, "Sometimes he acted like a bully, sometimes like a soft-hearted old woman. He thought he was a good driver, but he just held that precious Norton on the road by sheer strength, which I know is not right" (77). Yet even after terminating their romantic involvement, Victoria's feelings toward Patrick are complex: "My chest ached with anger at him and pity for him. He tried and tried, and only got hurt, whatever he did" (223). Even the British officer Rodney Savage acknowledges: "Taylor's a better man than his luck lets him show. It wasn't anybody's fault tonight. With Taylor it never is" (228). Later, Savage acknowledges that Taylor is, at least, well-meaning: "a most admirable man, really" (274). Clearly, then, though Patrick in some ways lives up to the narrow expectations foisted upon him by the social structure, Masters presents him not as a buffoon so much as an unfortunate victim of the colonial structure. Just as Victoria originally internalized British stereotypes of her as an "immoral" cheechee woman, Patrick has lived up to—or, perhaps more accurately, down to—the expectations foisted upon him by the colonial structure. To read the novel in this way leads to a much different conclusion than that reached by critics such as Mahle or Naik; the colonial structure is flawed and sadistic, and the Anglo-Indians, far from being despicable or laughable human beings, are among the many who have experienced in their own lives the price of imperial cruelty.

It is important to note, then, that in the end of the novel, it is Patrick who uses clues provided by an Indian station master in order to deduce the plot to blow up the Mayni Tunnel. Patrick's intimate knowledge of the railway schedules enables him to formulate the solution, and in the end he is the one who shoots and kills the terrorist K.P. Roy. This prompts the comment from Savage: "Your luck's changed, Patrick. Congratulations" (390), suggesting that there may be a place for Anglo-Indians in an independent India after all. Quite disturbing, then, are the implications of the film's alteration in which Patrick Taylor's agency in solving the mystery and presenting the crime is rendered completely invisible, even to the extent that Patrick is killed and Victoria ends up with Rodney Savage. (This celluloid travesty may have influenced the reading of Mahle, who opines that Masters actually credits Rodney Savage rather than Patrick Taylor with preventing the tunnel explosion.)

Finally, while post-colonial Indian critics have tended to fall into the trap of neglecting the hybrid and female perspectives, and Anglo-Indian readers have often been dissatisfied with Masters' portrayal of a sexually active Anglo-Indian woman, many British critics continue to overlook the Anglo-Indian subjectivity invoked in *Bhowani Junction* as well. As one example, in *The British Image of India*, Allen Greenberger acknowledges that much British literary representation of the "Eurasian" has been less than favorable, then notes that later authors such as Masters, "in contrast to writers such as Ollivant, Kipling and Diver . . . at least attempt to understand the Eurasians" (Greenberger 183). Greenberger's suggested motivation for this sensitivity, however, assumes an inability to look beyond the British perspective:

British sympathy with this group--something which is completely new--is probably associated with the feeling of the British in India about themselves...As presented by the British authors of this period, the Eurasians sum up the melancholy feeling with which the British looked at India (185-186).

Greenberger's assumption fails to suggest that perhaps the "Eurasians" can exist as subjects in their own right, rather than simply as metaphors for the British experience. Even though *Bhowani Junction* is written by a British author, it is reasonable for his Anglo-Indian characters to "sum up" their *own* melancholy feelings--about not knowing who they are, not knowing where they belong, and having been led by their British overlords down a path toward self-loathing--a path paved with ugly class, race and color-consciousness.

By failing to recognize both a hybrid and a female subjectivity in literature, then, the paradox is that critics may misrepresent the Anglo-Indian Community at the very same time as they rightly criticize British Orientalist writers for misrepresenting India. It is a further paradox that the Anglo-Indian viewpoint they neglect does in fact offer some crucial perspectives on, and criticisms of, the human cost of imperialism. Because the Anglo-Indians, particularly in years past, often mimicked their British colonial overlords and denigrated their own mixed heritage, it may at first glance appear that invoking an Anglo-Indian subjectivity could only result in reifying British superiority or in an apology for colonialism. Yet an attempt to understand this community from the inside may actually have the opposite effect, by revealing the damaging hierarchical assumptions which they then proceeded to internalize. In

order to understand Anglo-Indian characters in literature without merely exacerbating the proliferation of shallow stereotypes, then, it is crucial to pay close attention to the socio-historical-cultural context of the literature, including the differing perspectives of male versus female characters. Unfortunately, those Anglo-Indians who dismissed *Bhowani Junction* out of hand as "licentious" have missed an opportunity to further explore the challenge of Anglo-Indian identity. Masters indeed uses Anglo-Indian stereotypes in *Bhowani Junction*, but as a starting point rather than an ending point, and with a view toward both understanding and critiquing the problematic, marginalized cultural and social position in which Anglo-Indians have historically found themselves.

Naik, Mahle, Pradhan, and other post-colonial literary critics cite extensive evidence of historical, geographical or cultural inaccuracies on the part of so-called "Anglo-Indian" (that is, British) writing about India. These criticisms are important and should be considered seriously. Post-colonial literary criticism and theory, such as that initiated by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, expanded upon in the numerous texts of post-colonial studies in the twenty-plus years since its publication, have demonstrated the inadequacy of literary representation by cultural outsiders, especially in a colonial setting where there is a power differential between cultures and the writer is representing the subjugated culture from the more powerful position. Yet ironically, many of these critics fall into a similar trap when it comes to their treatment of the Anglo-Indian people. By failing to recognize an Anglo-Indian subjectivity in literature, such critics effectively impose an outsider's construction on a culture they are not from and do not attempt to understand, even as they rightly criticize European writers who have misrepresented, overlooked, or negatively stereotyped the cultures and peoples of India. From a post-colonial and anti-imperialist perspective, it is a further irony that the voices silenced whenever the Anglo-Indians are neglected may in fact offer some important perspectives on the deleterious effects of colonialism. After all, the duplicity of pro-imperialist rhetoric becomes strikingly apparent when one realizes that "East and West" *have* been meeting, at the most intimate level, for over three hundred years. Colonial authority is further undermined when it is recognized that many of the accomplishments cited by the British as evidence of their innate "superiority" as "whites" were in fact undertaken by men *and* women who were "not quite white." One challenge for post-

colonial studies in the future is to integrate the hybrid Anglo-Indian perspective into both the literature of empire and its criticism, as well as by reconsidering previous assessments of texts that do consider the Anglo-Indian viewpoint—among them, novels such as *Bhowani Junction*.

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