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"THE FETISHISM OF THE ORIGINAL": ANGLO-INDIAN HISTORY AND LITERATURE IN I. ALLAN SEALY'S *THE TROTTER-NAMA*

Loretta M. Mijares
New York University

And can we here and now and once and for all abandon the fetishism of the original?
- The Trotter-Nama

The regular appearance of creative works centrally concerned with the mixed-race "Eurasians" of India, such as Vikram Chandra's *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1997), the Merchant Ivory film *Cotton Mary* (1999) and Ayub Khan-Din's play *Last Dance at Dum-Dum* (1999), testifies both to an ongoing interest in the historical curiosity of this small community and to the irresistible opportunity racial mixture offers for explaining contemporary dilemmas of national identity.[1] Many of these works propagate or engage with the familiar colonial motif of the tragic Eurasian as metaphor for the lamentable outcome of social intercourse between colonizer and colonized. The longlived realist tradition of the tragic Eurasian stands in stark contrast, however, to the story of racially-mixed Mary Pereira and Saleem Sinai in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) or the zany antics of "fifty-fifty of the species" (31) in G.V. Desani's *All About H Hatterr* (1948). And indeed contemporary representations of the Anglo-Indian seem to fall into one of two oppositional approaches: The tragic realism of *Cotton Mary* and *Last Dance at Dum Dum* on the one hand, and on the other the postmodern experimentation inaugurated by Desani and further explored by writers such as Rushdie and Chandra.[2] In this essay, I will

examine the first major attempt to re-imagine the history of Anglo-Indians outside of the convention of tragic realism, I.Allan Sealy's *The Trotter-Nama* (1988), to investigate not only why the figure of the Eurasian continues to hold fascination for contemporary writers, but also how the formal experimentations of this "postmodern historiographic metafiction" (Hutcheon) challenge those of its predecessors most notably *Midnight's Children*.

In his well-known survey of Indian literature Salman Rushdie writes that it is "hard to imagine I. Allan Sealy's more recent Eurasian comic-epic, *The Trotternama* – an enormous tome, swirling with digressions, interpolations, exclamations, resumptions, encomiums, and catastrophes – without Desani" (Damme 58). Rushdie's own acknowledged debt to Desani in the same essay gives rise to the inevitable question of Sealy's relationship to Rushdie. Bharati Mukherjee, for example, complains, "Sealy fails to do what Rushdie did in *Midnight's Children* – quicken history with a novelist's passion" (4). Comparisons between *Midnight's Children* and *The Trotter-Nama* are inevitable, and, I would argue, intended by the later novel. *The Trotter-Nama* appears a mere seven years after *Midnight's Children*. Its protagonist is, like Saleem Sinai, Eurasian and the narrator of his own sweeping tale about generations of his family, spanning and incorporating Indian history of the last two centuries in its breadth. Sealy's novel, however, is distinct from *Midnight's Children* and *All About H Hatterr* in the treatment of its protagonist's racial mixture. Rushdie and Desani's Eurasions are not "Anglo-Indians" in the sense that they are not part of an Anglo-Indian community and do not see themselves defined in those terms.[3] In contrast, *The Trotter-Nama* is centrally concerned with re-imagining actual historical figures and events understood as pivotal to the development of the Anglo-Indian community. This Commitment to *re-imagining* the history of the Anglo-Indians seems to rebuke what Timothy Brennan terms as the "flattened" cosmopolitanism of writers like Desani and Rushdie (52). It is also the basis for *The Trotter-Nama's* distinction on the other hand from realist works such as *Cotton Mary* or *Last Dance at Dum Dum*. Whereas the realist fiction is most concerned with the story of the Eurasian as a tragedy, often dramatized at the cost of effacing Anglo-Indian history, *The Trotter-Nama* seeks to fundamentally challenge the assumptions of that tragedy and reconnect the literary Eurasians to its own history, calling attention to the myths of origins and authenticity that so often underlies the notions of "hybridity"[4].

The function of writing itself is crucial to the novel's creative positioning of the Anglo-Indian community within Indian history: the act of imaginative and yet historically committed writing is the means through which *The Trotter-Nama* offers alternatives to myths of authenticity. The novel's explicit interest in imitation and revision clearly invites evaluation of *The Trotter-Nama* as Sealy's revision of several preceding texts, including *Midnight's Children*. If this is the case, the project of rewriting *Midnight's Children's* greatest offence necessarily reflects the later novel's assessment of the inadequacy of its predecessor in some way or another. I would submit that *Midnight's Children's* greatest offence, in the view of *The Trotter-Nama*, is the erasure of the history of Anglo-Indians from its biologically Eurasian narrator's claim to be representing the history of all of India. Rebuke of this offense is undertaken by the novel on behalf of a particular underrepresented minority, but also a reminder that the re-imagined histories of all of India's communities must form integral parts of the Indian whole.

The fact, then, that *The Trotter-Nama* appears at times to be derivative of *Midnight's Children* is not, within its own terms, a weakness, but rather a strength, according to an aesthetic theory in which subsequent iterations of an artwork improve with each manifestation. The narrator of *The Trotter-Nama* ties this aesthetic theory to his conception of the Anglo-Indian as somehow always belated and uses parallels between belatedness of the Anglo-Indian and the imitativeness of all art to argue that "fetishism of the original" obscures the fact of the impossibility of such an original; true creation, asserts the narrator, lies in parody and imaginative repetition. At the same time, the structure of the novel, in its constitutive patchwork of Anglo-Indian history and literature, aims to prove that pastiche, if done well, can be generative. This aesthetic statement, asserted by the narrator and echoed by the novel's form, suggests as a correlative a new understanding of Anglo-Indian identity as a similarly original creation through the very function of repetition. Of course, as *The Trotter-Nama* does not exempt itself or its own ambitions from the parodic gaze, this thesis is not allowed to stand unquestioned. The novel's ending in decadence and ignominy points to the difficulty of championing any new model of identity in the face of the chronicle's enemy, officially written "history".

The Trotter-Nama plays with the entire roster of figures from Anglo-Indian history, from such eighteenth century luminaries as Claude-Martin and James Skinner, to the Anglo-Indian heroes of the 19th century (John Ricketts, Henry Derozio), to its earliest historians and contemporary advocates (Cedric Dover, Henry Gidney, Frank Anthony). It makes use of and alludes to Anglo-Indian histories such as Herbert Stark's *Hostages to India: or the Life Story of the Anglo-Indians* (1926), Cedric Dover's *Cimmerii?: or Eurasians and their Future* (1929) and Frank Anthony's *Britain's Betrayal in India: The Story of the Anglo-Indian Community* (1969), as well as to primary documents from colonial archives. The patriarch of *The Trotter-Nama*, Justin Trotter ("The Great Trotter"), is based on Claude Martin (1735-1800), a Frenchman who made his fortune in India, had numerous Indian and Anglo-Indian mistresses, and built several stately homes, including Constantia, the model of Justin Trotter's estate, Sans Souci. In his will, Martin left Constantia to be a school for "learning young Men the English language and Christian religion if they find themselves inclined" (Llewellyn-Jones 211). The school, La Martiniere became an institution of Anglo-Indian education and culture.[5] The novel also uses the colorful life events of Colonel James Skinner (1778-1841), a famed mixed-race military officer who served a Maratha prince under an aging Benoit de Boigne (another French soldier-for-hire and an intimate friend of Claude Martin's) after he was denied entry into British military service. Skinner was later accepted into British service, with the understanding that he would not take arms against his former employer. The novel's account of the Great Trotter's son "Mik", takes elements from both Skinner's life and Kipling's Kim.

And yet, The Trotter-Nama is neither historical fiction nor a straightforward roman à clef, as its characters are parodies who exist outside their originals: Mik Trotter serves in the army of a Maratha prince *with* James Skinner, and yet his military career bears a more-than-passing resemblance to Skinner's own. Mik's fictional memoir is juxtaposed with a direct quote from James Skinner's actual military memoirs that marks the discriminatory employment policies of the British against "country-borns".[6] Similarly, the character Jacob Kahn-Trotter carries the "Petition of the Anglo-Indians" to England, at the same time that a segment of the real text of the "East Indian's Petition" presented to the British Parliament in 1830 by John Ricketts is inserted verbatim into the novel, followed by a quote from an actual 1853

Parliamentary debate on the physical inferiority of "crannies" (307; cranny is another nineteenth-century derogatory term for Eurasians). The work of the Anglo-Indian poet Henry Louis Vivian Derozio is quoted (284), before the recounting of the career of the fictional Henry Louis Fonseca Trotter. Cedric Dover becomes Cedric Kahn-Trotter, and while mention is made of the organizing efforts of "a man called Gidney-Trotter" (432), it is young Paul Trotter who helps to craft a new constitution protecting Trotter rights and Alex Kahn-Trotter who insists on the English language as the defining trait of Anglo-Indians (401). Frank Anthony never explicitly appears, but Marris Trotter, like Anthony, defends job quotas for Trotters in the railways, post and telegraph services and edits a Trotter newspaper, featuring largely of his own contributions (517).[7] The central importance of parody in *The Trotter-Nama* makes clear that the novel is more than one critic calls "an attempt to recreate the community's history through myth and legend" (Vijayshree 226). While the novel's keen interest in the documentary material constituting Anglo-Indian history clearly indicates some sort of project of reclamation or memory; its simultaneous reliance on the filter of parody, rather than mythologization, through which to present that material disallows the characterization of its project as reclamation alone.

Much critical work on the historical nature of *Midnight's Children* focuses on demonstrating how Rushdie's parodic treatment of history destabilizes notions of historiography and representation. In David Lipscomb's analysis of the challenge that *Midnight's Children* poses to the "discourse of western historiography", he convincingly demonstrates that Rushdie's re-use of material from Stanley Wolpert's *A New History of India* is more than spoofing": "The narrative produces doubt about the authority and credibility of the western historian by introducing his actual voice where it is not expected, where it seems intrusive" (164,167). While a similar conclusion might well be made about Sealy's re-use of historical material, I would submit that the introduction of doubt cannot be said to be the primary outcome when treating a history whose authority has never been visible: whereas Stanley Wolpert's *A New History of India* is "one of the most popular introductory textbooks in India" Lipscomb (166), and therefore can be expected to be familiar to a significant segment of Rushdie's readers, the same cannot be said of Herbert Stark's *Hostages to India* or Cedric Dover's *Cimmerii*?. These obscure histories, while central to the Anglo-Indian community, are presumably familiar to a minute readership of Sealy's

novel, a presumption confirmed by the pervasive unfamiliarity of critics with the history *The Trotter-Nama* is treating.[8] Furthermore these Anglo-Indian histories cannot be said to share the authority of "western historiography" – they are in fact decidedly oppositional, in their polemical and defensive tones, to a process of history-writing that has excluded the history they strive to record. While *Midnight's Children's* parodying of history may indeed question the authority of historiography, this is not the most salient result of *The Trotter-Nama's* playful use of Anglo-Indian history.

T. Vijay Kumar argues that the unfamiliarity of historical references in novels like Sealy's is itself evidence of a new Indian novel that is no longer obsessed with the West or the colonial past: "the sensibility and the aesthetic of these texts is so specific ('parochial') that only those who share their contextual situation can fully appreciate their complete meaning" (199). The audience for these novels, argues Kumar, is primarily Indian. *The Trotter-Nama*, however, is uncomfortably included in this grouping. The novel's dedication, "To the Other Anglo-Indians" is certainly meant to offer the book to the *lesser-known* Anglo-Indians, that is, the mixed-race community in India, yet at the same time this dedication acknowledges that it is defining itself against British India. It is also uncertain, even within India, if the "parochial" Anglo-Indian history parodied in the novel would resonate very far outside of that small community. I will look in a moment more closely at what we might call *The Trotter-Nama's* "parochial aesthetic".

In her work on postmodern "historiographic metafiction" Linda Hutcheon combines both the documentary and de-authorizing functions in a redefinition of parody, not as ridiculing imitations," a definition rooted in eighteenth century concepts of wit, but rather as "repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signalling of difference at the heart of similarity" (26). For Hutcheon, postmodern intertextual parody is always situated within historical discourse. Parody in historiographic metafiction like *Midnight's Children* works "not only to restore history and memory in the face of distortions of the "history of forgetting," but also, at the same time, to put into question the authority of any act of writing by locating the discourses of both history and fiction within an ever-expanding intertextual network that mocks any notion of either single causality" (Hutcheon 129). This account of parody expands beyond

Lipscomb's argument about western historiography to include all modes of representation. The paradoxical nature of postmodern parody, argues Hutcheon, is its dual function "both to enshrine the past and to question it" (126). The past enshrined by parody however, "is a past that can be known only from its texts, its traces – be they literary or historical" (125). Judith Plotz echoes this conception of the parody of history in her characterization of *The Trotter-Nama* as a cheerfully *unreliable* book, flaunting the constructedness of all history..." "Sealy," continues Plotz, "emphasises the pastness and unknowableness of the past, its distinction from the present, and its *unavailability* except through strenuous verbal reinvention" (45; emphasis in original).[9]

The dual nature of parody formulated by Hutcheon goes a long way in helping to account for *The Trotter-Nama's* curious approach to its history. And yet, these conclusions shared by Hutcheon and Plotz about the unknowableness of the past, seems to leave something in *The Trotter-Nama* unacknowledged. The unknowability of the past is an interest of postmodernism and its theorists – what is left out by these theorizations is what we might call the postcoloniality of *The Trotter-Nama*. Its past is not "always already" textualized and therefore unknowable, but it is also simply unknown and unread – a past in danger of being irremediably forgotten. *The Trotter-Nama* is, in Bhabha's terms, "driven by the subaltern history of the margins of modernity – rather than by the failures of logocentrism....to rename the postmodern from the position of the postcolonial" (175). By presenting exactly verbatim the documentary sources of Anglo-Indian history, The Trotter-Nama is demonstrating that there is in fact, a history, albeit textualized that is available but ignored. In this context, parody becomes a strategy for historical survival: the unreliability introduced by parody transforms the careful reader of *The Trotter-Nama* into a historian.

A closer look at an example of what T. Vijay Kumar might call *The Trotter-Nama's* "parochial aesthetic" should demonstrate this point. After a colourful anecdote of violent uprising and mutilation, the narrator's interlocutor (the "Cup-Bearer") begs for a reprieve, requesting a tale that is "plain" and "bland" (306). Eugene obliges with an account of Jacob Kahn-Trotter's journey to England, bearing the "Petition of the Anglo-Indians". The narrator's epithet for Jacob, "Rickety Trotter" (307), is one clue among several that we are to read him as the parodic version of John Ricketts,

although most readers will not notice this allusion, not knowing that John Ricketts existed and was the actual bearer of the East Indian's Petition to the British Parliament. The unfamiliarity and specificity of this kind of historical reference would be evidence, according to Kumar, that The Trotter-Nama's intended audience that would readily recognize these allusions are "The Other Anglo-Indians" of Sealy's dedication, and, as this minute population makes a rather small readership, that the novel's aspirations are in fact broader and trickier. The style, as this passage continues, indicates the nature of that trickiness. As promised, the narrator's prose is relatively bland in this segment, mimicking and paraphrasing the bureaucratic language of government proceedings. But the chronicle is then interrupted by what is announced as an *"Extract from minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Government of Indian territories"*:

> 6700. *Earl of Ellenborough*. Are not the ladies of that class physically much better than the gentlemen?
>
> *Sir C.E. Trevelyan, K.C.B.* I think not. That is not the result of my observations
>
> 6701. Are not the generality of Indo-Britons a class of poor weakly looking persons; very sallow and unhealthy in their appearance, and very small in stature?
>
> They must not be compared altogether with us.
>
> 6704. You would not say that the persons called Crannies were a fair sample of the human race, should you?
>
> I think they are. They are superior in physical qualities to the Bengalees. They are inferior to the up-country peasantry; but many of our people are inferior to the up-country peasantry. The Jat peasantry of the country between Agra and Lahore are a better grown, more developed and much handsomer race than our own southern peasantry in England.
>
> 6705. Are you talking of their bodies or of their legs? (307-08)[10]

This exchange, particularly the last question, is so absurd that the reader cannot help but assume that it is the narrator's invention, in the style of much of his earlier tale. Aware of this, the narrator challenges his audience to verify it themselves, considerately giving the full citation of his source:

> *You look sceptical Cup-Bearer. Very well go to the British Parliamentary Papers on India for 23 June 1853, handsomely published by the Irish University Press, and see if I have changed a single word. Volume 16 at page 187. And while you are there fetch me a cup of Irish coffee, potent, and sweet and creamy.* (308; italics in original)

When the reader obediently complies with this directive, she learns that Eugene has not in fact changed a single word. He has, however, omitted Sir Trevelyan's reply to the last question: "Of their whole persons: I have never seen a finer race of man than many of them are" (Papers 170).

Ending the citation before this response highlights the ludicrous and offensive tone of Ellenborough's questions. The juxtaposition of the narrator's own coyly straightforward style and the embarrassing documentary record blurs the line between history's prose and fiction's parody. Yet, as I have mentioned, very few of The Trotter-Nama's readers, Indian or otherwise, would have knowledge of these historical facts without doing the research. The narrator's challenge to the readers to confirm his faithful citation of Parliamentary papers, then, works not so much to question the authority of historiography as to demand the archival work of verification, creating a past more known than previously. Our own attentiveness to Anglo-Indian history and its marginalization helps to reveal the important difference from other postmodern metafiction.

THE TROTTER-NAMA'S EURASIAN LITERARY HISTORY

Of course, what *is* generally known of Anglo-Indians is known not through historical accounts but through literature. Here, as well, *The Trotter-Nama* deploys parody as a strategy to challenge the interpellation of the Anglo-Indians. Rukmini Bhaiya Nair's astute examination of the literary genealogies of *Kim*, Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora* and *The Trotter-Nama* uses the insights of subaltern studies to relocate discussion of these works from the "gentle twittering" of literary history's approach to subjectivity, to subalternism's uncompromising insistence on "the futility of any discussion of subjectivity, even the most esoteric, without reference to collective consciousness or power relations" (163). Nair's corrective insight shifts the tendency to see *The Trotter-Nama* as a "cheerfully *unreliable* book" toward recognizing the novel as an

urgent effort to "rescue the Anglo-Indians...from historical oblivion and textual abuse" (179). The most canonical example of this textual abuse is Kipling's disparagement, in *Kim* and other works, of the "Half-caste." *The Trotter-Nama* rewrites Kim as Mik, the Great Trotter's son, who is mentored by a Tibetan lama and instructed to start "non-violent" fires in office buildings as part of "our Little Game."[11] In Nair's reading, Sealy's rewriting of Kim stages the ultimate revenge in choosing Kim, and *Kim* as the patriarch of the Anglo-Indian community and chronicle: "The Trotternama (sic) simply will not allow *Kim* its blissful innocence; it rips up the colonizer's history with 'other' historical records that reveal the Raj's shabby treatment of the Anglo-Indians" (180). This is not postmodernist intertextuality for the sake of questioning representation, but rather, a gesture to make visible the constitutive nature of *mis*representation:

> Pushed off the official maps and ethnographies, the Anglo-Indians can turn for redress neither to the proud bourgeois nationalist tradition that *Gora* endorses nor their ungrateful patrons, the British. In limbo, the despised collective can discover a sense of self only through a perverse fiction. Here *The Trotternama* (sic) ceases to be a huge intertextual spoof and becomes a record of the collective anguish that must interest subalternist historians (Nair 180).

As Nair suggests, there is no room within the confines of the realist novel for an Anglo-Indian identity not already constituted through literary texts. The novel's allusions to *A Passage to India, Kim* and John Master's *Bhowani Junction* draw attention to the canon defining the literary Eurasian and delineate the confinements of the space available to the Anglo-Indians within that canon.[12] The reappearance of the "tragedy" of the Anglo-Indians of these earlier texts in the realism of contemporary works like *Cotton Mary* and *Last Dance at Dum Dum* underscores the longevity of the colonial interpellation of the Eurasian preserved in this body of fiction. It is only through a "perverse fiction" that the Anglo-Indian can stage a protest, and attempt to find a collective "sense of self" not absolutely determined by those canons. The narrator of The Trotter-Nama's coy confession that he has "yearned and yearned to introduce literary echoes, but [has] held back for fear of ridicule and misunderstanding" (484) on one level amuses the reader with its disingenuous claim to have resisted literary echoes. On another level, however, the narrator's "fear of ridicule or misunderstanding" is well-founded as Bharati Mukherjee's strident critique demonstrates. This anxiety about re-use of literary material brings together discourses on the imitativeness of Indian writing in English

and the inauthenticity of the Eurasian.

IMITATION/MINIATURIZATION

While *The Trotter-Nama* attempts in the insertion of documentary Anglo-Indian history and the rewriting of its predecessor texts, to save Anglo-Indians from "historical oblivion and textual abuse," it does so at the same time that it recognizes the inevitability of "ridicule or misunderstanding." The use of Eugene, "The Chosen Trotter," as the frame narrator displaces the ridicule from the novel itself to the narrator, much as Saleem Sinai as unreliable narrator receives the brunt of the reader's frustration with the narrative of Midnight's Children. After discovering at Sans Souci original miniatures, preserved paper and art supplies from the eighteenth century, Eugene sets about developing his skills as a professional miniaturist and forger – a perfectly respectable occupation, he argues, since art by nature is derivative:

> And can we here and now and once and for all abandon the fetishism of the original? All art is imitation – the point is to make the imitation sing. And sell...The point about copy is that it *improves* on the one that went before...dissolving the old imperfections, the contradictions of the original, so-called. All the sly designing of the first copyist is reproduced, but filtered through the guile of the next man, so that what you have as your copies is a progressively better product (513).

Eugene's plea for the abandonment of "the fetishism of the original" is a defense of the originality of all art, all intertextuality, which should be judged by the "guile" of its execution, its improvements on its predecessors, the success of its resolutions of "the contradictions of the original, so-called."

Miniaturization, however, is even beyond this process of improved iteration:" With miniatures, you're past imitation" (277). For Eugene, miniaturization is the endpoint in an artist's evolution, transcending the vulgar mimeticism of conventional art:

> Your work gets better and better and soon there are enough improvements to warrant speaking of an epistemological break- a painting with no allusions to the past. A new painting – not an original one – just one that has no direct link with the world. And when you first learn to dispense with the world – or squash it – you're on your way to becoming a miniaturist (513).

For Eugene the freedom of creation "with no allusions to the past" is the freedom to recognize the artifice of that past and the power to relocate its meaning by

reinventing the tradition by which one has been defined. Miniatures were generally commissioned to commemorate such "historical" events as the tiger hunts and durbars of Rajahs and Viceroys. The ease with which Eugene can imagine new scenes for miniaturization, inserting the "Great Trotter" into these regal tableaus, is the ease of reinventing a history that creates a place for the Anglo-Indian.

Eugene's miniaturist skills are tied both to his vocation as chronicler of the Trotters (and hence to writing in general) and to something that could be called Anglo-Indian culture or identity. His career as a forger has been facilitated by the hypothesis of an American art historian, the "Kirani School" of Indian miniatures. According to this art historian, the "Kirani School", "despite a specious resemblance to the Company School is a new style in its own right" (157). Eugene observes of the art historian's theory that "he might have specified Sans Souci, but then he had never been to India," and further, that "he might have come right out and said Cranny, but once again he was a long way from Sans Souci" (527). The link between this hypothesized school of miniatures and "crannies" creates a niche for "Anglo-Indian art, distinct from its seeming forbear, the East India Company School."[13]

The existence of the "Kirani school" however, is a contentious hypothesis – until Eugene Trotter learns of it. The art historian writes: "It is not without the bounds of probability that someday there will be released into the world of art a collection of miniatures whose beauty and authenticity will establish beyond a shadow of doubt the autonomy of the Kirani school" (527). Thus the way is paved for Eugene's lucrative career as a forger. As he warms to the task of inventing the "Kirani School":

> Inchmeal, he introduces Cranny elements into his work – or rather he allows free play to those elements in himself that he has held in check till now. And as liberties multiply, his spirit takes wing and soars until suddenly there's no longer a blend of Company and indigenous elements but something altogether new (528).

Eugene's *de facto* invention of the "Kirani School" is the invention of Anglo-Indian art as an indefatigable entity. It is not "a blend of Company and indigenous elements," but rather, "something altogether new." "Hybridity" here is not the aggregate of two intersecting parent cultures, but rather, an intrinsically original phenomenon. That this originality is apparently the inauthentic mimicry of forgery is precisely the paradoxical challenge put forward by *The Trotter-Nama*. The present originates the

past, demanding once again the abandonment of "the fetishism of the original," Eugene's aesthetic theory of imitation and miniaturization takes out at the same time a defense of his art and of Anglo-Indian culture in insisting on the "authenticity" and superiority of the imitation over the original ("so-called").

The link between the art of miniaturization and writing is made explicit in the classification of *The Trotter-Nama* as an "illustrated chronicle." Eugene, of course, is both illustrator and chronicler. His demonstrated skill in the former role seems to qualify him as writer, a gesture that makes writing an act of miniaturization as well:

> Now there's just this illustrated chronicle to finish, its endless repetitions waiting for their final release, the nirvana that comes with perfection, its many sitters – some of them not yet born – waiting for their ideal expression. Repetition is the twentieth century miniaturist's lot in a fallen age, a perfectly honourable lot (394).

Repetition in *The Trotter-Nama* is not based on a notion of parody as "ridiculing imitation" (Hutcheon 26), nor is it the emptying of all meaning. Rather, it is a progression toward "nirvana," a striving after an "ideal expression." Eugene locates repetition as much in the future as in the past: It is a birthing, a creative process. It is in the future sitters who are unique repetitions, not in the miniaturist who is unimaginatively repetitious. The "contradictions of the original so-called" say of Kipling's Kim or Rushdie's unacknowledged Anglo-Indian Saleem Sinai are revisited in *The Trotter-Nama's* Mik and Eugene, and will be revisited again, improved upon, in a Mik or Eugene "not yet born." Thus in its innovative reinvention of history, The Trotter-Nama calls attention to the limiting effects of past histories and constructions of hybridity at the same time that it calls for a new conception of hybridity, not as "a blend of Company and indigenous elements" but rather, as "something altogether new." That something new, however, must paradoxically remain "perversely' faithful to the past. In this perverse commitment to the past, *The Trotter-Nama* demands an emendation of theories of hybridity: The novel suggests that without a study of "the original, so-called," or the historical processes that produced the postcolonial "hybrid," we will never make that "epistemological break" that allows our repetition to become 'something altogether new."

THE EPILOGUE: THE UNBEARABLE BURDEN OF HISTORY

And yet, while this aesthetic theory and the seeming promise it offers for a new

identity are alluring, the novel undercuts this very promise, first, in characterizing the creation of a unique space for the Anglo-Indian as a shameful process of forgery undertaken for material gain, which eventually gets Eugene into trouble and disgrace. The twentieth-century miniaturist's lot is "perfectly honourable," until "Orangemen and Interpol and hired thugs like Carlos get involved" (394). The epilogue's recounting of Eugene's disgrace casts doubt on the efficacy of his theory of progressively improved repetition. While he was to be the "Chosen Trotter," his era of "New Promise," he ends the novel a fugitive, with a dubious job as a "sort of agent," (565) luring tourists into run-down eating establishments. The sweeping designs and lofty goals of Eugene's illustrated chronicle are obscured by its author's ignoble ending. The novel's enigmatic conclusion, furthermore, puts the survival and value of Eugene's work in jeopardy.

Eugene apparently leaves his manuscript in strangers' hands and public places until it is finally lost, to his consummate lack of concern. "Never mind. Bit late inventing the paperweight, he`?" (566).

In the last pages of Eugene's chronicle, he recounts meeting a man doing "a story on the Anglo-Indian remnant" (599). While the journalist has never heard of Sans Souci, he has travelled all over India to reach the conclusion that Anglo-Indians are "a strange monadic people...They live in a kind of bubble...or many bubbles. They speak a kind of English...They fantasize about the past. They improvise grand pedigrees. It's like a Raj novel gone wrong" (560).[14] While this formulaic and cliché summation invites doubt as to the depth of the speaker's knowledge and understanding of this "strange sad monadic people," his pronouncements are clearly meant as well to mock *The Trotter-Nama* itself – a mockery Eugene seems to acknowledge deserving in confessing in the Epilogue, "Tell you the truth I made up the whole line – I mean joining up all those Trotters like that. Funny bloody story, more holes than a cheese in it" (572). The epilogue serves to deflate any pretensions Eugene held about his chronicle. Despite the narrator's self-conscious desire to construct a mythic and eschatologically progressive "chronicle" of Anglo-Indians with which to oppose the official histories, *The Trotter-Nama* ends, as with the Trotter/Anglo-Indian family tree, in decay and ignominy. If, however, the novel is to remain "perversely" faithful to the past it parodies, what other option is there? In the

parodic writing of the genealogy of the Trotters, *The Trotter-Nama* can rebuke literature and supplement and challenge history, and in so doing reveal the silences and injustices of both. But it cannot alter the conditions of "the Anglo-Indian remnant." Its call of a new model of hybridity is tempered in the epilogue by the acknowledgment of the burden that history continues to foist on those living in the present. This timely conclusion, undercutting the novel's own playful self-invention, reminds us that our theorizations of hybridity must always acknowledge the inescapable impact that lived experiences of inequity have on the power of self-fashioning.

THE TROTTER-NAMA AND POSTCOLONIAL INDIA

While the primary focus of *The Trotter-Nama* is a re-imagining of Anglo-Indian history as part of its call for the abandonment of "the fetishism of the original," the novel does not undertake this endeavour solely to rescue the Anglo-Indian from "historical oblivion and textual abuse." *The Trotter-Nama* places itself generically at the centre of Indian literary history alluding to and reusing a panoply of literary forms, not only from the British canon (Fanny Parks, Forster, Kipling, etc.) but also from diverse Indian traditions, such as the great medieval histories of Mughal India, (for example, the Akbar-Nama and the Babar-Nama), classical Urdu poetry, and the Arabian Nights. These strategic narrative choices not only claim a place for Anglo-Indians within Indian history and literature, but also demonstrate the variegated nature of those traditions. Furthermore, the novel's conclusions about "the fetishism of the original" have ramifications that extend beyond Eugene's aesthetic theory of miniaturization.

The Trotter-Nama does not call attention to the diversity of Indian culture in order to celebrate an abstract "multiculturism," but rather, in recognition of the real costs of failing to recognize this lived diversity. The ubiquity of the Eurasian in fiction - a ubiquity seemingly disproportionate to the relative obscurity of a community that forms a fraction of one percent of the population of India – represents a long history of constructions of identity and ideas of authenticity and mimicry. Imaginative and coy retelling of the silenced Anglo-Indian story is central to the challenge *The Trotter-Nama* stages to the demand for authenticity. The novel's "perverse" commitment to history is the basis for this challenge: the representation of "minor" histories like that

of the Anglo-Indian, forgotten not only by official colonial discourse, but also by the less historically grounded experimental fiction of writers like Desani and Rushdie, is an important means of complicating the insistence of various contemporary fundamentalisms on one version of the national story. Thus, in creatively returning to the concrete history of the Anglo-Indians, *The Trotter-Nama* offers powerful lessons about the project about identity – building in the present moment.

One of the recurrent motifs associated with the trope of the "Eurasian" in colonial literature is the idea of England as "Home," even for those who have never left India; it is standard to hear Eurasian characters lament longingly for "Home," and for British characters to mock that longing. *The Trotter-Nama's* invocation of this motif provides a means of situating its Anglo-Indian "synchronicle" within the context of India at large. As Independence looms, Eustace Trotter, father to the narrator muses:

> Home...The Hindus wanted theirs, the Muslims wanted theirs, the British were going back to theirs. What about us? He had never taken seriously Young Paul's Nicobar homeland idea – an island reserved for his people. A place for those who were neither Indian nor European, who spoke English and ate curries with a spoon. Like the Muslims carving out their holy Land of the Pure, and the Hindus dreaming of a once and future Aryan homeland. But why stop there? Sooner or later the Sikhs would want their own Land of the Pure. And what about the Malabar Jews? There was talk of a new state to be called Zion over there. So many purities! And yet he too wanted a home. He was only half at home here. Could one have a home that one had never been to, that filled one's chest with a prickly longing, like the plainsman's longing for the mountains he has never known? (491-2)

For Eustace, the idea of a homeland for the Trotters is absurd, as it implies a coherency of identity separate from other identities that, for him, does not exist. How can one form a homeland on identity as negation ("neither Indian nor European") and amalgamation ("spoke English and ate curry with a spoon")? As important as this absurdity, however, is the parallel Eustace sees between his own problematic longing for an impossible homeland, and the more successful agitations of other communities for separate homelands. "So many purities!" – the "carving" and "dreaming" of Muslim and Hindu homelands, sandwiched between the obviously flawed options available to the Anglo-Indians and Malabar Jews, makes clear that all such purities are fictitious.

The Trotter-Nama is not only suggesting that the contradictions of the Anglo-Indians are analogous to the disavowed impurity of other ethnic communities. It is also asserting that the "inauthenticity" of the Anglo-Indian is the unacknowledged predecessor of the new religious nationalist identities. As communal violence breaks out on the eve of Independence, a young journalist calling for unity is killed, and his ghost foretells the future of the nation:

> Independence from Britain, yes. London is finished, my friends. The day after tomorrow we are free and there is no more Westminster. But the day after that you must make room in your hearts for Los Angeles, Bombay-Los Angeles and Delhi-Moscow. And between these borrowed stools we will fall. And even our fall will be a parody. It has happened before. And here in Nakhlau [i.e.,Lucknow] we will imitate the imitators. (499)

What is important to recognize here is the allusion to the stereotype of "inbetweenness" of the Eurasians, which was repeatedly described in colonial literature using the metaphor of falling between two stools.[15] The notion reified the two "stools", or supposedly unified parent cultures, that the Eurasian ostensibly fell between, and paradoxically lent support to the ideas of "foreignness" and an original Indian purity that have been so costly in contemporary India. In *The Trotter-Nama*'s strategic positioning of Anglo-Indian experience within the nation at large, postcolonial India itself becomes a parody of the trope of Eurasian mimicry. The novel's paradoxical conclusions about the originality of inauthenticity therefore apply not only to Anglo-Indian identity but to the Indian nation itself. *The Trotter-Nama* suggests that only through "perverse" attentiveness to the imbricated history of "the original, so-called" Indian nation is there hope to avoid the inevitable violence that accompanies insistence on purity and authenticity.

NOTES

1. Set in Kerala in the 1950s, *Cotton Mary* depicts the relationships between a British family living in India and their Anglo-Indian ayah, Cotton Mary. The Anglo-Indian characters' nostalgic longing for the days of the British Raj forms the backdrop to Cotton Mary's determined and increasingly deranged efforts to transform herself into a British memsahib. Through Cotton Mary's descent into madness, the film restages the familiar colonial tragedy of the "Eurasian" within the framework of a newly postcolonial India – a framework which portrays the

Anglo-Indian as a dying breed whose acute longing for a British identity is all the more tragic in the absence of British rule. Likewise, an aging household of Anglo-Indians who lament the decay of their community forms the center of the tragic story of *Last Dance at Dum Dum*. The play's contemporary setting in Calcutta of 1981, however, makes clear that the Anglo-Indians are used foremost to demonstrate the dangers of *hindutva*, extremist Hindu nationalism.

2. In this essay, "Eurasian" and "Anglo-Indian" will both be used to refer to the mixed-race population of India, with "Eurasian" generally referring to the stereotypical constructions of mixed-race characters in colonial and postcolonial fiction, and "Anglo-Indian" indicating a more formal association with a self-identified "community." For recent historical accounts of the Anglo-Indian community in India see Hawes and Caplan. Laura Roychowdhury's memoir of her time in India (then Laura Bear) researching the railway colonies provides a more personal look into the lives of present-day Anglo-Indians and the legacy of colonial history.
3. For more on the significance of racial mixture in *Midnight's Children*, see my forthcoming article "You are an Anglo-Indian?": Eurasians, Hybridity, and Cosmopolitanism in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*."
4. My theoretical use of the term "hybridity" is informed by the work of such critics as Robert Young, Anne McClintock, and the contributors to the volume *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and Politics of Anti-Racism*, edited by Pnina Werbner and Tariq MoDood. These critics question the efficacy of current postcolonial theories of hybridity, most notably those of Homi Bhabha, and their tendency toward abstraction and dehistoricization, which often results in fuzzy celebrations of "multiculturalism." My work on "Eurasians" aims to expand our theoretical conceptions of hybridity by grounding literary analysis in the experience of actual historical "hybrids."
5. Sealy's choice of Martin as a fictional patriarch for his Anglo-Indian clan is not without irony: Martin was not himself Anglo-Indian, had no children, and was not especially fond of "the Blacks," despite his numerous Anglo-Indian and Indian mistresses. Nontheless, his founding of La Martiniere ensured his enshrinement as a hero in the annals of Anglo-Indian history. Gloria Jean Moore, for example, acknowledges that "though Martin was not himself Anglo-Indian, few Anglo-Indians would not know his name" (151).

6. See Fraser 159 for Skinner's disillusionment with the capriciousness of British colonial policy.
7. Marris's paper is *The Sans Souci Reminder*. Frank Anthony's is *The Review* (previously *The Anglo-Indian Review*). Anthony's legal defense of Indira Gandhi during the Emergency is alluded to in Marris's "brief eclipse along with his favourite prime minister."
8. To my knowledge, no critic has done substantial work to identify the actual documentary history of the Anglo-Indian community that *The Trotter-Nama* re-presents. Some, in fact, seem quite uninformed about this history. Geetha Ganapathy-Dore, for example, seems surprisingly unclear on the origins and history of the term "Anglo-Indian."
9. While Plotz acknowledges that *The Trotter-Nama* purposes to "construct a place in history for those neither white nor black, neither Indian nor English" (38), she backs away from the specific history of Anglo-Indians, reading the novel instead as a national allegory, a "form of performative nation building" (29) – in spite of her assertion that generic developments in the English Indian novel need to be historicized in order to rescue terms like hybridity from "its own vagueness in a cloud of unknowing" (46).
10. One of the questions I have omitted refers to Colonel James Skinner, who had been introduced earlier as an exemplary Indo-Briton, but whom the questioner wants to except from the class, on the grounds that his mother was "a Rajpoot lady." *British Parliamentary Papers,* 23 June 1853, vol. 16, p. 170.
11. In Kipling's novel, Kim is not explicitly identified as racially mixed, although the novel's opening introduces a degree of ambiguity concerning his parentage. The "half-caste woman" who raised Kim claimed to be "Kim's mother's sister" (1,2); however, the apparent refutation of kinship immediately following this claim in fact does nothing to unequivocally establish Kim's mother's racial status: "but his mother had been nurse-maid in a Colonel's family and had married Kimball O'Hara, a young colour sergeant of the Mavericks, an Irish regiment" (2). Kim's mother is identified as Irish, and the link between her and Kim's foster mother is undermined. The uncertainty introduced by the odd initial account of Kim's parentage contribute to the sense of Kim's unstable social identity. Several critics have investigated Kim's "hybridity"; Parama Roy provocatively discusses the topic in the chapter of *Indian Traffic* titled

"Anglo/Indians and Others," although she surprisingly makes only slight reference to the historically ambiguous connotations of the term "Anglo-Indian" (86).

12. The history of literary stereotypes of "half-castes" is nodded to in Alex Trotter's altercation with journalist "R.K." (Kipling) (401) and the allusion to "Col. Sodney Ravage of *Bawana Junction*"[i.e.' Rodney Savage of *Bhowani Junction* by John Masters, who is "not our kind of Anglo-Indian"(469)].
13. *The Trotter-Nama* gives a humorous dictionary entry for kirani ("see CRANNY"): "...Mere copyist...member of caste neither here nor there; country-born Christian...applied to Anglo-Indians generally, this community having supplied the bulk of English copyists" (55).
14. In her unfavourable review of *The Trotter-Nama*, Bharati Mukherjee seems most disappointed that the novel is not, in fact, a "Raj novel gone wrong." Whereas the journalist's comment about the "Anglo-Indian remnant" are meant to parody existing conceptions of that remnant, Mukherjee selects that passage as somehow summing up what the book should be about. She argues that the "strongest sections" of the book are those in which Sealy addresses, "with charm, with wit, the survivalist manoeuvres of Anglo-Indians," (echoed in the title of her review, "An Anglo-Indian Family Caught Between Two Worlds"): "Their tragedy is that, though the British look down on them for being 'black' and openly discriminate against them in the Indian Civil Service, they regard themselves as 'white' and therefore superior to the Indians" (4). This is not, however, a "tragedy" that *The Trotter-Nama* centrally concerns itself with. In effect, Mukherjee seems to object to all the elements in the novel that do not lend themselves to making it another *Bhowani Junction*.
15. See, for example, Diver's *Candles in the Wind*: "the half-caste out here falls between two stools, that's the truth" (45).

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Dr. Loretta Mijares *has written several articles on Anglo-Indians in British and Indian fiction, as part of a larger project analyzing the challenge that actual racial hybridity poses to postcolonial theories of hybridity and cosmopolitanism, most notably those of Homi Bhabha. She argues that these theoretical concepts must be revised through a responsibly historicized literary criticism, to adequately account for lived experiences of disparate hybridities. Dr. Mijares completed her doctoral work in English at New York Unviersity in 2002 and has since been teaching, writing, and editing. Her website is www.lorettamijares.com. She currently lives in northern California. She can be contacted at lmm2147@nyu.edu*