International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies

EDITORIAL

Robyn Andrews and Brent Howitt Otto

We are pleased to introduce this special issue of the journal which comprises a collection of writings addressing a new work of historical fiction, *The Tainted* (2020) by Cauvery Madhavan, which spans colonial and post-colonial India and the diaspora in Ireland through ties of kinship across generations. The back cover description portrays the story as a quest for belonging for its mixed race protagonists and their community in general: “Everyone in Nandagiri knows their place and the part they were born to play – with one exception. The local Anglo-Indians, tainted by their mixed blood, belong…nowhere”. This provocative starting point makes it intriguing to explore this new novel from several academic angles.

The collection of articles in this issue begins with a transcription of an interview with Madhavan. She was interviewed by Rochelle Almeida, a scholar of English literature and Anglo-Indian studies, who wrote *Britain’s Anglo-Indians: The Invisibility of Assimilation (2017).* The interview was part of a *Meet the Author* event organized by the Pequot Library in Southport, Connecticut, USA, on July 11, 2020. Almeida provided the transcript which was only tidied up slightly for textual publication. We are grateful for permission to publish this interview for the insights it offers on Madhavan’s background thinking and research, her own account of what she was attempting to accomplish in this novel, as well as her writing process.

The next piece in this collection is Merin Simi Raj and Avishek Parui’s ‘“they shared those bits of history”: Reading *The Tainted* as a transnational memory-narrative’. Merin Simi Raj and Avishek Parui have initiated India’s first (and currently, only) Centre for Memory Studies at IIT Madras, which is associated with a network of other such

centers globally. Their reading of Madhavan's work of historical fiction demonstrates what fresh insight a memory studies lens can bring to such a novel that links two distinct periods in time through intergenerational and international family interactions. Through their critical reading they examine the representations of mixed identities, including Anglo-Indian and Anglo-Irish, in terms of nation, race, religion, and gender in colonial and the postcolonial times as set by the book. The framework of memory studies, means the article engages academically with the content of the book, particularly with cultural memory.

The final contribution to this issue is a review essay by Anglo-Indian author Keith Butler. While praising many of the literary qualities of the book, he queries Madhavan's seemingly unabashed resurrection of a trope derived of early 20th century Racial Science that characterised Anglo-Indian women, because of their 'tainted blood', as genetically formatted half-caste vamps. For him Madhavan's construction of Anglo-Indian female characters similarly pivots around their physical allure and dangerous charm. Paying close attention to Madhavan's characterisations and citing relevant scholars Butler contends that the author's depiction of Anglo-Indian women (and men) runs the risk of reinscribing this colonial stereotype for modern readers.

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International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN CAUVERY MADHAVAN, AUTHOR OF *THE TAINTED* (2020) AND ROCHELLE ALMEIDA, AUTHOR OF *BRITAIN'S ANGLO-INDIANS: THE INVISIBILITY OF ASSIMILATION*

This trans-Atlantic conversation occurred through a *Meet the Author* event organized by the Pequot Library in Southport, Connecticut, USA, on July 11, 2020. The *IJAIS* is grateful to the Pequot Library for granting permission for it to be reproduced here with minor editorial alterations.

ROCHELLE: It is a privilege to lead Pequot Library's first-ever trans-Atlantic 'Meet the Author' event via zoom which, I hope, will be the first of many.

Our guest today is novelist **Cauvery Madhavan** who is joining us online from her home outside Dublin, Ireland.

Hello Cauvery and congratulations on the publication of your novel *The Tainted* which I enjoyed reading and which is a worthy addition to the body of literature on and about Anglo-Indians. For the benefit of those participants who have not read your book, would you please summarize the plot for us?

CAUVERY: My book is called *The Tainted* and it is loosely based on the mutiny of the Connaught Rangers regiment that had a very illustrious history from when it was first started in the late 1700s. It served all over the British empire on every continent wherever the empire was based. In 1920, at the height of the Irish freedom struggle in Ireland, the regiment was stationed in India, in Jullunder in the Punjab.

Because of what was happening in Ireland with the British -- which included extremely cruel acts of a group of militia called the Black and Tans -- Irish soldiers in India mutinied. My book is loosely based on what happened at the time of the mutiny.

It actually also includes the aftermath of the mutiny and what happened to the people left behind in India. The book is set both in India and in Ireland—one half is set in the 1920s and the second half is set in the 1980s.

ROCHELLE: You have been living in Ireland for over thirty years. And your story is about a true historical event--the revolt of the Connaught Rangers (which you call the Kildare Rangers in your novel). Were you looking for an aspect of history that would bring India (the land of your birth) and Ireland (the land of your immigration) together in a work of fiction? I'm interested in knowing how you came upon this historical event and decided to fictionalize it.

CAUVERY: It was pure luck, actually. I stumbled on to the story by accident. I had just finished writing *The Uncoupling*, my second novel. It was in the process of being printed and had not yet been published. In fact, I was editing it at the time, when I happened to be at an event in the Indian embassy in Dublin and I literally overheard a conversation between two people about how the Indian flag was inspired by the Irish flag. Now I don't know how true that is—it might only be a myth, but it intrigued me. Two people were discussing the mutiny of the Connaught Rangers in India and how the Union Jack was pulled down and the Irish flag had been pulled up on the parade ground. Apparently, that was one of the inspirations for the Indian flag. It was still the early days of the internet and Googling, but I went home and straightaway looked it up as I had never heard about this incident before. I became fascinated by it. In fact, within a day or two of discovering it, I was immediately drawn to the story, and I knew immediately that it would become the plot of my next book which is *The Tainted*.

ROCHELLE: The chief protagonists of your novel are Irish-Indians, a small part of the larger mixed-race Eurasian community in India--the human legacy of European colonialism on the Indian sub-continent that are called Anglo-Indians. What made you bring the Irish-Indian community into your plot? I'm interested in knowing how you decided to bring this small Indian racial minority--the Irish-Indians from a small place in South India--into your novel.

CAUVERY: Again, that was pure accident. When I started writing the book, in fact, as soon as I started researching it, I realized that there was a story in the aftermath as

well. The fact that this young Irish soldier, Michael Flaherty, met and fell in love with an Indian girl, Rose, in India... in the 1920s, well…the realms of possibility narrowed it down to only one community that would have had contact with regiments and soldiers. And that just happened to be the Anglo-Indians because they would have been more cosmopolitan, more forward-thinking. So, the chances of British soldiers meeting them would have been greater. Once I began researching the book, Rose, an Anglo-Indian woman, who started off as a minor character, simply took it over. Once she got into my head, there was no stopping her. Anybody who has read the book would know that she and her descendants populate the whole book.

The more I researched it, the stronger came the realization that in the three hundred or so years that the British empire existed in India, there had always been Irish people who helped run that empire. And wherever the Irish men went--well, not just Irish men, but all men—when they left their homes and went away for years on end, they ended up having children with local women. Some of these liaisons were formalized and some were not. When this happened, hundreds of thousands of children were abandoned and not acknowledged by their fathers' people. Now, they could have been Irish, and they could have been Scots, Welsh or English. But in India, they were all clubbed together as 'Angrezi'...which would be translated as 'English'. I find it amazing that in India and in Ireland, outside academia and outside history, very few people know that so many Irishmen left behind progeny in India.

ROCHELLE: There are two things that strike me in your response: It's amazing for us, writers, as we start on a work, that we have no idea in which direction it will go—the manuscript takes on a life of its own and the characters propel us in a certain direction. This seems to have happened to you.

The second point is this: the Anglo-Indians or 'Eurasians" were called different names in India, such as 'angrezi' or 'ferangee'. But apart from the community itself and academics such as myself, not a lot of people know about them—they are an extremely misunderstood minority.

You talk about discovering the Connaught Rangers' rebellion and Irish-Indians by chance. I'm curious to know what sort of research sources you used to write your historical fiction that brings together Irish history and the sociological traits of a small minority community in India at the same time that it brings authenticity to your work.

CAUVERY: Well, Anglo-Indians from the very start were highly educated. Even as far back as two or three hundred years ago, Anglo-Indian children were well educated and knew how to read and write. I say (they had this advantage—parenthesis mine) in contrast to a lot of other groups in India. Because of this, they wrote a lot—they kept a lot of diaries. I spent a huge amount of money trying to find and buy these antiquated books. It was a thoroughly enjoyable research experience. But I think that also because, from the 1930s onwards, the Anglo-Indians left India and migrated to Canada, Australia and to England, the diaspora kept in touch with each other via journals or newsletters...and all of those were a huge source of material for me.

I also found a lot of very interesting social history in books and letters written by women. There were a lot of 'angrezi'—meaning English--women who were very bored in India. They were bored living in up-country, small, Hicksville kind of places...on tea plantations or jute farms or whatever. And a lot of these women were very articulate and wrote about their experiences as women. I found [their memoirs] a huge source. There were several Viceroy's wives and sisters who had spent a lot of time in India and I got details about life at the very top from them as well as about life…if not at the bottom, then throughout India—from these journals. Unusually, also, there were a lot of nurses [from the UK] who went out to India from the 1920s onwards and they wrote a lot of letters which have been published in volumes. So that was the basis of my research on Anglo-Indians.

And of course, the whole military establishment is so meticulous about archiving details pertaining to every single thing; so there was no problem about sourcing material for my book from the military point of view.

ROCHELLE: Oh, those diaries and journals of British women in India are a real treasure! I remember, when I was doing research at the British Library in London for my own book on Britain's Anglo-Indians, I would find a diary like this and become so fascinated that I spent hours reading it—although its contents were not directly related to my own work. I had to pull myself way from it to return to my own topic in order to stick to my own research schedule. These diaries were also written by Anglo-Indian women who spent time writing. In fact, it wasn't just British women who went out to India as nurses. A lot of Anglo-Indian women in India became nurses and they wrote a lot about their experiences, especially during the wars, because they worked at the front.

So here is my next question which is related to perceptions of Anglo-Indian women: Your Anglo-Indian characters, especially your female characters, possess a lot of derogatory characteristics and tendencies that are generally associated with Anglo-Indians or Irish-Indians in India, e.g. their tendency to flirt with white men to ensnare them as husbands (as Rose does when she comes in contact with Michael Flaherty); their dislike of the sun for fear of getting a dark suntan; their affinity for Western dance and music especially playing and teaching the piano. I actually had such a fascinating Anglo-Indian music teacher myself in India that I ended up writing and publishing a short story about her. Does your book not further the stereotypical impressions that most Indians have about women of mixed-racial descent? How do you think Anglo-Indian readers or Anglo-Irish readers would react to this book? Have you had a chance to talk to any of them about this and how have they responded?

CAUVERY: Well, I was always conscious about not being Anglo-Indian myself while writing about them. And this matter [judicious representation of Anglo-Indian women] was always in the back of my mind as I wrote the book. But what I would say about the way I have portrayed them is that the impression Fr. Jerome, the priest in my novel, has about Anglo-Indians is the way most people in India thought about them at that time. I am hoping that my readers will see how unfair that was.

For me, the big—really huge—boost… a real bonus...after I wrote the book was that I happened to be in India at a conference in Madras seated near a lady whom I did not know at all. We got talking and when she asked me what I was doing there, I told her that I had written this book. I then gave her a rough outline of it, and she looked at me and said, “You know I am an Anglo-Indian and I take huge objection to the fact that you have called the book *The Tainted*.” I was taken back by this, but this was also exactly what I was prepared for. So, I gave her a copy of the book and asked her to read it. She happened to be a recently retired Professor of English Literature in a very prestigious college in Madras. Her name is Eugenie Pinto and I hope she gets to see this interview sometime.

Well, she read my book, rang me after a week and said that she would like to meet me. I was very nervous, but when we did meet again, she put her hands in mine and said, “I want to thank you for writing this book, for portraying us as we were and as we are, and for making no judgements.” We had lunch then and I found that she had made notations on practically every third page. She went over them with me telling

me all the things I had got right even while she queried a few things. On the whole, she was totally in love with the book. For me, there was no better endorsement than one coming from an Anglo-Indian woman herself. She was probably in her early sixties—she had seen life; she had read books and she knew the community. So, for me, like I said, that was a huge endorsement. I am hoping that people see how biased perceptions about Anglo-Indians were and are even to this day.

ROCHELLE: Well, I hope people see also that the Anglo-Indian woman has evolved so much over the decades—from Rose in the 1920s to the contemporary Anglo-Indian female character in your novel, May, who is so poised, self-assured, highly educated and doesn't have any of the feminine pretensions that have been stereotyped for so long. I too found your representation of your characters to be highly sympathetic and, like you, I do hope other Anglo-Indians read this novel and gain an understanding of your intentions.

But this brings me to your setting. You based your plot in a fictional place you call Nandagiri, in South India's Nilgiri Hills, in Coonoor. How well do you know this town? Do you actually know any people of mixed racial descent (Irish-Indians) still living there? Do you have any idea if they have any contact with their paternal side in Ireland? It would be interesting to know what the current connections/relationships are between Ireland and India.

CAUVERY: The actual historical mutiny of the Connaught Rangers took place in Jullunder, in the Punjab, not in Coonoor. When I was writing the first three chapters of my book, I named the regiment the Connaught Rangers—which is their real name. But when I was three chapters in, I realized I would have to fictionalize the regiment because every regiment has only one chaplain, one colonel, one adjutant and I was putting words into the mouths of people who had been real and had descendants. I didn't want to get into a situation where I would be pilloried for doing that. So, I fictionalized the regiment. I called them the Kildare Rangers and, of course, once I did that, it set me free to place the mutiny anywhere in India.

I picked South India because I am from Chennai myself…from the South. I was not very familiar with the Nilgiri range when I started writing the novel; but I made myself very familiar with it by the time I finished the book. [I did this] by traveling there. I trekked for weeks on end with a guide into the deep, deep jungle and got to know the

flora and the fauna of the place because I knew that one of my main Anglo-Indian characters, Gerry, was going to be a forest officer. So, I needed background knowledge.

Coonoor, till today, is a garrison town in South India. My father was in the Indian army and his regiment, the Madras Sappers, have a base there. So, I named my fictional town Nandagiri and based it on Coonoor.

As for meeting other Irish-Indians, unfortunately, I have never actually come across any. However, all my life, throughout my schooling years in Bombay, I had many Anglo-Indian friends. Some of my best friends were Anglo-Indian and I think I have always had an obsession with this community, and I have no idea why. I had Anglo-Indian teachers and friends. But as far as the book itself goes, I never came across any Irish-Indians. Maybe some of my friends in school in India might have had Irish connections--who knows? I have no idea.

ROCHELLE: It is interesting you say this because that was precisely why I went into Anglo-Indian Studies. I had wonderful Anglo-Indian classmates, friends and teachers in India. Of course, they became more and more scarce in Bombay as they emigrated out of India.

Also, as regards your field research, I was thinking there could be worse places than Coonoor to do research in India! I bet you didn't want to leave once you began. However, here is my question: a plot that spans almost a century—from 1920 'til 1980—calls for a certain level of sophistication and skill in trying to piece together the fortunes of three generations of an Irish-Indian family. Where did you develop this skill as a storyteller? Have you formally studied Creative Writing? What are the milestones on your journey into becoming a novelist?

CAUVERY: You're so kind. I have no formal training, no. My own university degree is in Economics. So, I have no formal study in English Literature at all. But I have always liked to write. I wrote for my school paper and then in college. My love of writing came from my love of reading--for which I thank my parents. They were huge readers. My father passed away a few years ago, but my mother still reads a lot. In fact, she was the first person to read my book.

As for your question about the wide scope and the ambitious nature of my plot, I don't even know how it happened. I hadn't plotted the book out. I only knew I wanted

to write about the mutiny...and that happens to be the way I write. I never know for sure where my book is going when I begin it. I know now that there is a description [or name] for this kind of writing. It is called Writing by Headlights, apparently. It's like you're driving in the dark and you can only see fifteen or twenty feet ahead; but as you go, the headlights of the car illuminate the road for you. And that was what happened with my other two books too, *Paddy Indian* and *The Uncoupling*.

With this book, I knew how it was going to end about three-quarters into it. As you know, my book is set in two time periods—the 1920s and the 1980s: when I first wrote the book, every alternate chapter was set in a different period. So my plot went back and forth. When my mother, who was the first person to read the book, pointed out that this did not work for her as she had to go back to the previous chapter to remind herself what had happened in the last one, I ignored it. But when my manuscript went to my editor, Joan Deitch—my god, my guru, to whom I owe so much as she had edited all my books—she told me that she wished to change only one thing. She wanted me to club all the chapters that happened in the 1920s together and all that happened in the 1980s together and, thus, divide the book into two segments. I did that and it transformed the book. It made it easier for the reader. She told me that I was expecting too much if I thought my readers would be so committed to me that they would actually go back and forth to stay with the story. I did as she asked and literally it was the best thing that ever happened to the book—the simple act of cutting and pasting the chapters together. I think I owe her a lot.

ROCHELLE: I think that was an excellent idea because as you said, it would have been much too confusing for your reader to have to switch back and forth between the two eras. Your book reminds me (and you must be familiar with it) of Ruth Prawar Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*. She moves from the early 20th century and brings the plot into the 1970s. But at no point are readers confused because it involves such a skillful arranging of chapters that allows them to keep abreast of happenings through two different epochs.

This bring me to the writing process: You have talked about it already in this conversation; but people are always eager to know about a writer's creative process. I wondered if you have an outline on which you work before you begin. How do your books move from conception to publication? Do you keep revising as you go along? What's your creative process like?

CAUVERY: So overall, I don't plot the book, I never have. I know this sounds very vague, but I do trust my characters to tell me their story as it is going along. It sounds like a very peculiar thing, but it works.

I'm a very slow writer; so, for me 500 words, that is two pages a day, would make me so happy. I write very early in the morning. I wake up at half five—so I write from half five to nine. I am also addicted to golf; so, if I write, then I play golf as a treat. I find golf and gardening—my two hobbies—very much contribute to my ability to write as they give me my thinking time. And I've only just realized this, but literally, I think about my book all the time. Even when I am gardening, I am thinking, sometimes even aloud. I tend to look at my work again at night and make a few editing changes.

So, in terms of my process, I have just started my next book which is going to span the decades from 1930 right up to 2000. You see, because I wrote *The Tainted*, I am very familiar with the period right up to 1940s. I had absolutely consumed every movie set in the period from 1920 to the 40s—whether in India or in Ireland. But I have no idea about India in the 1950s—It is like a lost decade for me. So, I am now reading up on it and watching movies of that period. I hope this answers the question correctly.

ROCHELLE: Well, this is the sort of question about which there is no one correct answer. Everybody approaches writing differently.

Let's talk a little about Indians in Ireland. Leo Varadkar, who just finished serving as Ireland's Prime Minister, has an Indian Maharashtrian father and an Irish mother. How accepting were the Irish about having a leader of mixed racial descent—especially one whose father is non-European? What is the attitude of the Irish towards people of color or towards immigrants from other parts of the world living in their midst and now assuming positions of authority and political power?

CAUVERY: I felt so proud during the whole election campaign concerning Leo Varadkar—not just because I supported him or because of my political affiliations, but because, in Ireland, the fact that he was gay, half-Indian and the son of an immigrant, never came into the discussion. It was only after he was elected that the media jumped on the story and pointed out these issues. During the campaign, they did not come into any political debates.

Coming back to how Ireland has treated its migrant population, obviously there has been the rise of the Far Right in Ireland as in other parts of the world. But don't forget, the Irish are also a nation of migrants—they have migrated all over the world themselves. And this is not historical—it happens to this day. So most Irish families know what it is like to leave home, to have a family member away, to be desperate either to come back or not to. Let me put it this way, if we had felt unwelcome in Ireland, we would not have stayed.

ROCHELLE: You seem to have a very supportive group of writers from all around the world in Ireland, including writers from India, who seem to work closely together. How does that work?

CAUVERY: Yes, even before I started writing my novel *Paddy Indian*, in the pre-internet and pre-WhatsApp group days, these groups existed. There was one Irish writer—a very well-known children's writer named Sarah Webb—who used to organize a great deal of discussion about writing. She brought us together to meet once in two months, to have dinner and a chat. That support group broke up after a while because people just got busy. But that loose network of writers supporting each other happens often so that writers can get to know one another. After all, it is a small country. It has a population of just four and half million people. It's not an island…it's a rock. So, this sort of support group is very useful where I am based.

ROCHELLE: I am now going to take questions from the audience. Here is the first: How did you arrive at the title of the book?

CAUVERY: I called it *The Tainted* because it actually deals with three groups of people who are all tainted by association: Anglo-Indians by their mixed race; Irish-Catholic soldiers because they were Irish and were serving the Crown—in Ireland, they were considered traitors; and the third people are the Anglo-Irish community—children who are products of English and Irish parents. They were never English enough to be considered English or Irish enough to be Irish. And that sentiment continued right up to the last five or six years ago.

ROCHELLE: Can you talk a bit about the book's very attractive cover?

CAUVERY: The cover was designed by James Nunn, a well-known book designer. I really love the cover. He took his inspiration from vintage match box labels from the 1930s. I just love the type face and the image. They work so well together.

ROCHELLE: Is there a teacher or professor who influenced your writing?

CAUVERY: Yes, of course, there were a few. One was a Mrs. Sardesai, my English teacher when I was in high school in Bombay. And Mrs. Mehta, a geography teacher. I owe so much to my teachers. I get very emotional when I think of all my teachers who influenced me over the years.

ROCHELLE: Can you tell us anything about your next book?

CAUVERY: My next book is about a 90-year-old man, based in India, looking back on his life. It has a few historical Irish characters, but they are not the main players in the book that is set in India.

ROCHELLE: Most students are apprehensive about Creative Writing. How would you help them out or instill confidence in them to give it a try?

CAUVERY: Well, I would say that it is almost like any other job--you just have to sit at a desk and do it. And once you actually start writing the first ten words and then the first ten sentences, your writing will flow. So many people write in their heads; but a story is never done until it is actually written down on paper. I would say just sit down and write it. You don't need that special room or that special desk. You can write anywhere.

ROCHELLE: Students ask me all the time for advice as I too teach Writing. And, over the years, I tell them that I can boil down my advice to writers in just six words: Read, Read, Read; Write, Write, Write. That's the best advice I can give anyone no matter what medium or genre they choose to write in—whether for the literary page or for the screen.

CAUVERY: You're spot on. I am going to borrow that mantra from now on.

ROCHELLE: Did living in Ireland have a huge influence on your story in *The Tainted*?

CAUVERY: Yes, absolutely. Because Ireland contains so many Anglo-Irish, I realized pretty quickly that Ireland's attitude towards them was literally a mirror to the attitude of the rest of India towards the Anglo-Indian community. After living in Ireland, I observed their own peculiar circumstances. They were looked down upon and belonged nowhere properly. Of course, most of the Anglo-Irish would be better off financially than the Anglo-Indians are in India. But in terms of social challenges and perceptions, there are many similarities.

ROCHELLE: Are there any books you have re-read, and if so, which ones and why?

CAUVERY: I am a big fan of Barbara Kingsolver's books and a book I have gone back to three times is *The Poisonwood Bible*. I also have re-read *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides. What I have loved in both writers in their combination of history—real authentic history—blended into a family story.

ROCHELLE: Do you plan to write more about Irish culture and people?

CAUVERY: Yes, I do. My fifth book is going to be set in Ireland. I have a vague idea about it already. It will be set in rural West Cork—a part of Ireland I absolutely love. And I cannot wait to finish writing my fourth book so that I can start writing my fifth.

ROCHELLE: This has been a very interesting conversation, Cauvery, and I am very grateful that you made the time to talk about your novel. I wish you the very best as it goes out into the world.

CAUVERY: Thanks so much, Rochelle. It has been a real pleasure speaking with you and I thank you and the Pequot Library in Southport, Connecticut, for inviting me to participate in this event.

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"THEY SHARED THOSE BITS OF HISTORY": READING *THE TAINTED* AS A TRANSNATIONAL MEMORY-NARRATIVE

Merin Simi Raj and Avishek Parui

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to examine Cauvery Madhavan's historical fiction The Tainted (2020) as a memory-narrative engaging with cultural memory and colonial history and their impact in the lives of Anglo-Irish and Anglo-Indian characters of Irish descent. It examines the representations of mixed-race identities as 'tainted' while also foregrounding the notions of 'nostalgia' and 'home' in colonial and postcolonial historiography. Through a close reading of the text and the transnational historical context that has inspired the narrative, this study demonstrates how the novel emerges as a site where the cognitive and political potential of fiction and fictional framings help re-create as well as self-reflectively engage with historical materiality. Using the framework of memory studies, this study particularly draws attention to private memories and recollections which are transnational as well as intergenerational. The ontology and the experience of being 'tainted' is explored by unpacking the production and reception of desirable and undesirable subjects and the politics of forgetting, rejection, and remembrance in private as well as public lives. The article thus draws attention to how the conflicts, tragedies, and casualty caused by British colonialism have had transnational and intergenerational consequences for Anglo-Indian descendants in India and the diaspora.

INTRODUCTION

In an extraordinarily rare narrative canvass, Cauvery Madhavan's *The Tainted* (2020) brings together the history and lives of the Anglo-Irish and Anglo-Indians of Irish

descent, through a fictional re-telling of the historical event of Connaught Rangers Mutiny (adapted as Kildare Rangers Mutiny in the novel) that happened in Jullundur, Punjab in British India in 1920. Through a critical reading of the novel, this article examines the representations of mixed-race identities as 'tainted' in terms of nationality, race, religion, and gender in the context of the British colonial Empire as well as the postcolonial Indian nation. Using the framework of memory studies, this article particularly engages with representations of cultural memory in fiction by foregrounding the fluid notions of 'nostalgia' and 'home', and examines how they help forge a transnational historiography. Through an examination of *The Tainted* which is classified as historical fiction, this study draws attention to the possibilities of capturing Anglo-Indian experiences through private memories and recollections which are largely outside the purview of processes of official documentation. Traversing colonial and postcolonial memories foregrounded in the novel, this article thus draws attention to how the conflicts, tragedies, and casualty caused by British colonialism have had transnational and intergenerational consequences for Anglo-Indian descendants in India and the diaspora.

While most narratives of Anglo-Indian experiences were shaped by the heritage and memory of an imperial forefather from Britain, *The Tainted* usefully 'taints' that narrative with Irish as well as Anglo-Irish presence, on either side of the colonial experience. Though it was always understood that the British ancestry of Anglo-Indians often included the Irish, the Scots, the Scots-Irish and Anglo-Irish, this nuanced complexity in terms of identity was often overlooked, largely due to lack of records. *The Tainted*, a fictional narrative that draws on colonial history, creatively explores the Anglo-Irish politics of the colonial period and stretches it effortlessly into a dialogue with the postcolonial Anglo-Indian identity. This, the article argues, is a very telling departure from most colonial and postcolonial narratives found in the historiography. Accordingly, this study seeks to also demonstrate how Anglo-Indian histories and identities get largely subsumed in the overarching postcolonial metanarrative in which the colonized almost always is represented in antithetical terms with the colonizer/Empire. In the narrative milieu we are introduced to an interesting hierarchy in which the Anglo-Irish as well as Anglo-Indians are seen occupying a marginalized location, belonging nowhere. This opens up a new trajectory of historiography in which the fluidity and transnational location of Anglo-Indian identity

get foregrounded, circumventing as well as subverting the postcolonial discourse in multiple ways.

THE TAINTED AS A MEMORY-NARRATIVE

The critical and interpretative framework for this study emerges from the perspective of memory studies which locates fiction as "part of a social, cultural, and historical intertextual web, a distributed memory" (Welzer quoted in Erll, 2011, p.187). It is in that sense that this article seeks to present *The Tainted* as a memory-narrative where individual memory, cultural memory, and political memory intersect, in an intergenerational, transnational as well as transcultural context. Positioning fiction as a "medium of cultural memory" and as a form that facilitates 'memory-making' (Erll, 2011, p.144). *The Tainted* is examined as a site where Anglo-Indian lives are reconstructed from shards of history and memory. The title of this article is drawn from this obsession with 'bits of history' which are episodically revealed through different characters' remembrances. This flags the episodic and metonymic quality of memory and history, while also dramatizing how both categories are characterized by ontological and experiential incompletion. The fictional framework espoused by Madhavan emerges as the unique framework through which the liminality between remembering and forgetting, between what did happen and what may have happened, converge complexly to mix historical events with imaginative possibilities. As one of the central characters in the novel, May Twomey, an Anglo-Indian character of Irish descent, puts it, *The Tainted* is a historiographical reconstruction of "something that happened 60 odd years ago" (Madhavan, 2020, p.219). The novel creates the "illusion of an authentic memory" (Erll, 2011, p.77) by presenting Anglo-Indian lives and history as mediated memory; this mediation is an extension of cultural memory produced through "objects, images, and representations" (2011, p.132) which are collectively associated with particular groups or types of individuals. It is possible to refer to this novel as a narrative constructed in 'reflexive mode', where along with the illusion of glimpsing the past, "a critical reflection upon processes of representation" is also provided (2011, p.158). Thus, in a broad sense *The Tainted* may be classified as historiographic metafiction with a distinct mnemonic system as it draws attention to the processes and problems of remembering an Anglo-Indian past.

Set in the small military town of Nandagiri in Southern India, *The Tainted* portrays how a historical event in 1920s British India, impacted the lives of Anglo-Indians then in colonial times and later in 1980s postcolonial India. Life in Nandagiri revolves around the cantonment with the town functioning almost like a metonymic mimicry of an Irish town constructed around the cuisine, chapel, and distinct lifestyle, despite the sweltering heat of its real tropical setting. The novel opens with Private Michael Flaherty an Irish soldier serving in Royal Irish Kildare Rangers, who had enlisted himself in the British army as there were no jobs to be had in Ireland. Michael is being given 'lessons about life in India' by Sergeant Tom Nolan who takes him for a customary visit to the brothel in Nandagiri, frequented by the Irish Regiment. A chance encounter with Rose Twomey in church, while he is assisting Father Jerome, soon grows into a relationship which is not approved by his Irish superiors and companions as Rose is an 'Anglo-Indian', a 'chee-chee girl', with 'plenty of Indian blood running in her veins', thus foregrounding the complex entanglement of memory and miscegenation in a colonial setting, as dramatized in the novel. Alison Blunt in her book *Domicile and Diaspora* examines the ways in which "mixed descent complicates the imaginative and material intersections of home, nation, and empire" (Blunt, 2003, p.30). Even the most benevolent figure in the novel, the Irish priest Father Jerome, describes the Anglo-Indians as of 'mixed blood', and 'highly complexed'. Furthermore, he refers to the mixed-race marriages as "disadvantageous marriages with half-caste girls". The biased attitude of the Irish characters in the novel towards the natives as well as Anglo-Indians are thus made very clear right at the outset, with the Irish looking down upon both with the typical imperial, judgmental gaze which accentuates the racial reification operative in a colonial setting.

The first half of the novel narrates the story of May Twomey's grandmother Rose Twomey, a young Anglo-Indian woman with an Irish father Sean Twomey who serves as 'bacon-wallah' for Irish soldiers, and an Indian mother who grew up in a military orphanage, and is described as 'half-caste' and 'several shades darker' (Madhavan, 2020, p.63). Rose, whose complexion belies her 'mixed blood' (2020, p.63) has never been to Ireland but considers herself fully Irish and hopes to return to Ireland someday. Upon the Irish priest Father Jerome's recommendation, she finds employment as lady's maid in the household of Colonel Aylmer, the commander of the Royal Irish Kildare Rangers in Nandagiri. Rose becomes conscious of her mixed lineage and the

resultant inferior status when she is working at Mrs. Aylmer's household though she never shares her insecurities with anyone except her 'Diary' which is almost personified in the novel. Rose realizes that she is treated as an inferior by Mrs. Aylmer due to her Anglo-Indian lineage but she is also unable to identify herself with the natives or even hangout with other Anglo-Indians who are 'darkies' (2020, p.51). She falls in love with Private Michael Flaherty, hoping to marry him and leave with him for Ireland, the homeland that she longs for. While Rose and Michael do not make their relationship public in Nandagiri, they get to spend a day together when Rose visits Michael in Madras where he is posted temporarily. Following a riot in the city in the wake of rumours about Gandhi's impending arrest, Rose and Michael are forced to take shelter in Dr Swamy's apartment where they make love and Rose becomes pregnant. Life takes a tragic turn when Michael is sentenced to death for his involvement in the unfortunate Mutiny in which the Irish regiment turned against their British masters, to show their solidarity with the Irish back home. Rose finds herself pregnant, faces disgrace, is disowned by her father and dismissed from employment at the Aylmers'. She is sent off to Madras, to be with her aunt Mags with whom Rose's mother grew up in the military orphanage, where she gives birth to a son. Rose's mental health deteriorates; after Michael's death she is sent for treatment in an asylum while her son Maurice is raised by aunt Mags's family. The first part symbolically ends on the day India achieves independence, on 15 August 1947 with Father Jerome breathing his last, his concerns about Rose alleviated on being told that she is no longer in the asylum but safe in heaven (2020, p.128).

The second part of the novel opens in 1982, when sixty years later Colonel Aylmer's grandson Richard Aylmer visits Nandagiri where Rose's granddaughter, Maurice's daughter, May Twomey lives with her brother Gerry who is the District Forestry Officer. Here, Nandagiri is presented as a town with one bazaar and an ageing 120-year old club which also symbolically represents the decadent lives of Anglo-Indians. The central character in this part is Mohan Kumar, an IAS officer and District collector of Nandagiri. Richard, who arrives in India from Ireland to pursue a photography project that replicates his grandfather's paintings of Nandagiri, is introduced to the Twomeys by Mohan Kumar who is Richard's official host. Richard has little knowledge about his grandparents' life in India as "India was a taboo subject" due to the disgrace the Mutiny caused (2020, p.218). As the tale progresses we find both Mohan Kumar and Richard

Aylmer enamoured by the charms of May. Richard and May discover that they have a shared history of the Empire which brought together their ancestors who are Irish, Anglo-Irish and Anglo-Indians. Meanwhile, Mohan courts May and becomes personally involved in the Twomeys' family history, eventually even helping May locate her grandmother Rose who is discovered to be still alive in the asylum in Madras. The novel ends with them finding Rose alive, and with the promise extended to Rose that they are taking her 'home' (2020, p.282).

Arguably the first work of fiction which distinctively portrays the lives of the Anglo-Irish and Anglo-Indians, Madhavan's third novel *The Tainted* calls for a fresh perspective to examine mixed identities in colonial and postcolonial settings. This is the story of three families whose lives and future are altered forever during the Connaught Rangers mutiny and its aftermath, depicting how events shape remembrance and remembered identities in discursively and affectively marked spaces. The notion of 'prosthetic memory' is particularly useful here as the characters finds their lives, subjectivity, and politics shaped by a past event through which they never lived (Landsberg, 2004, p.2). The telling takes the reader through the stories of Irish, Anglo-Irish and Anglo-Indian families whose loyalties to the British empire were divided on account of their Catholic/Protestant beliefs, which again is part of a history which the Anglo-Indians in the novel do not directly subscribe to. This intervention of religion usefully complicates the identities of the Anglo-Irish characters; however, the implications of the same on the Anglo-Indians of Irish descent are not quite captured in the novel. In the novel, what holds the various episodes on either side of the colonial history together are the 'bits of history' and micro-memories shared by different characters. For instance, very early on in the narrative in the 1920s we are given to understand that the Aylmers and Flahertys go back a few generations through a "history of mutual loyalty" (2020, p.112). While the staging of this past gives the reader a glimpse into life on the other side of colonization those instances fail to integrate themselves into the ecosystem that the novel seeks to produce and sustain. A generation later the descendants of Aylmers and Flahertys, Richard Aylmer and May Twomey respectively, discover that they have a shared history which is more personal, familial, and intimate beyond the colonial administrative past shared by their ancestors during the presence of the Anglo-Irish in the British army serving in colonial India. While Richard's grandfather Colonel Aylmers and May Twomey's grandfather Michael

Flaherty served in the Irish Kildare Rangers, May's grandmother Rose Twomey served as lady's maid to Richard's grandmother Mrs Aylmers'. Fiction here emerges as a dynamic site which could potentially transmit different versions of a "socially shared past" (Erll, 2011, p.105).

The authorial intent and perspective which have been widely covered in the media through interviews, discussions and reviews highlight the author's twin connections with India and Ireland as well as the intensive research she had done on Irish presence in British India (Madhavan, 2020b). The splintered diasporic experience of the Indian author in Ireland makes her fictional re-telling of a hyphenated transnational community empathetic to a very large extent. At the same time, it needs to be stated that Madhavan's knowledge of the Anglo-Indian/Anglo-Irish community is neither experiential nor always empirically reliable. The fictional reconstruction of the Connaught Rangers mutiny is not born out of subjective experience or individual memory but by putting together the many fragments gleaned from different sites and sources. *The Tainted* is a fictionalized account of a real historical event reconstructed from the documents, memories, and versions that the author could have access to. The engagement with history, culture, and identity is heavily determined by the knowledge and details gained through the author's intensive 'research' which was focused as well as 'accidentally tangential' (Madhavan, 2020b). The sites Madhavan accessed includes movies, books, magazines, periodicals, Army and Navy catalogues, medical archives, documentaries, art galleries, museums, photographic exhibitions, dairies, long letters published in women's magazines, and even visits to older mental hospitals in India including the Kilpauk Mental Hospital in Chennai. While the novel is not entirely free from the many stereotypical images that overshadow Anglo-Indian lives, it enables the reader to look at the past as a "dialectical process of memory and forgetting experienced by individuals and societies" (quoted in Erll, 2011, p.41). What *The Tainted* narrates is thus a past that is collectively remembered gathered from a multitude of sources and sites.

The significance of the title *The Tainted* continues to unfold as the narrative progresses with snide remarks being made about the possibility of producing 'unexpected darkie children' if a white man gets involved with an Anglo-Indian woman, even if the woman appears fair-skinned (Madhavan, 2020, p.88). Not surprisingly, in

the novel the skin colour seems to determine much, including marriage, social mobility, and domicile choices, depicting what may be described as epidermalization of identities where racial reification operates through exclusion as well as rejection of miscegenation. Laura Bear's work *Lines of the Nation: Indian Railway Workers, Bureaucracy, and the Intimate Historical Self* (2007) which looks at the Anglo-Indian community as a 'railway caste' draws attention to how "the stigma of mixed-race, though it may be hidden by a non-swarthy complexion", was always a "tangible barrier" in accessing better privileges including salaries and allowances (quoted in Bear, 2007, p.79). Similarly, in the novel we find the anxiety and paranoia surrounding the 'darkies' who would eventually have to be left behind in India. Interestingly, Rose, an Anglo-Indian herself who is discriminated against owing to her mixed blood, maintains her distance from other 'darkies', and is quite obsessed about preserving her fair skin, even taking precautions while stepping out in the sun. Sudarshana Sen recounts how despite being in the "margins of British social life", the Anglo-Indians themselves 'often viewed other Indians as an inferior order' (Sen, 2017, p.54). Interestingly, the 'darkie' possibility is graphically discussed in the 1920s as well as the 1980s thereby also revealing some of the fundamental biases that have defined this identity on the basis of one's skin colour on either side of the colonial-postcolonial divide. This, we may note, mirrors the anxiety in the oft-quoted limerick on mixed relationships in John Masters' 1954 novel *Bhowani Junction*, "There once was a lady named Starky, who fell in love with a Darkie. The result of her sins, were triplets not twins; one Black, one White, and one Khaki" (Masters, 1954, p.170).

The contemporary meaning of the term 'tainted' is 'to spoil something or give it an unpleasant quality'. However, etymologically the word may be traced to the Latin 'tingere' meaning 'to dye' after which it passed through Old French to become 'teint', before briefly acquiring the Middle English 'teyneten' meaning 'convict, prove guilty'. In this article we choose to understand 'tainted' as a term that captures the word's evolutionary journey, through 'colour', 'guilt' and 'unpleasantness', thus offering a study of colonial identity through multiple focal points and experiential positions. In this novel we find the pattern getting replicated through the obsession with skin colour, followed by the overturning of lives around feelings of guilt and conviction, leading towards unpleasantness and trauma of varying degrees that the characters who bear mixed identities live through. Madhavan herself in one of the interviews refers to the

'legacy of trauma', drawing on bell hooks which will be a useful concept for another discussion though it is beyond the scope of this article (https://shaunagilliganwriter.com/2020/03/27/writers-chat-26-1-cauvery-madhavan-on-the-tainted-hope-road-london-2020/).

The Tainted explores and experiments with different narrative strategies. Diary entries and letters emerge as very strong narrative tropes, giving us access to personal as well as political details particularly from the woman's point of view. Though fragmented in nature, Rose Twomey's diary entries serve as a first-hand witness account of the complex ways in which race, class and ethnicity operated in British India in settlements that were part of the Irish Regiment, thereby foregrounding the complex colonizer/colonized locations in imperial India, if one considers the Irish position apropos of the imperial British. In the first part of Rose's diary entries, the reader is allowed to hear her voice, and the third person omniscient narrative keeps the reader informed about everything that is happening around her, including how her own mixed identity is being perceived. In the second part the linkages with the past are forged strategically through characters such as Richard, Ronnie, May and Gerry. Mohan, the product of secular Indian modernity is presented as the central force that holds the characters as well as the past-present connections together; his role is aided appropriately by his bureaucratic power and position as well. Interestingly, all chapters are dated (sometimes along with the place) accentuating the sense of time and place. Bringing the narrative to a cyclic and organic closure, Rose's letters recovered through uncle Ronnie connect the dots in the second part leading to the reunion between May and her mother Rose who was thought to be long dead. The modes of recovery of the past in the novel also has a metonymic and textual quality, as the historical raw material that the author Madhavan relies upon was also "gleaned from books memoirs, letters and manuscripts in both the Irish and British public and military libraries, as well as from private collections" (Madhavan, 2020b). Therefore, the story is a recovery of a tainted and forgotten political as well as family history, weaving together memory-narratives that are scattered across different sites across two different generations and nation states.

The figuration of Rose Twomey as a character that bridges the two parts of the novel raises more interesting questions about memory and identity in Anglo-Indian histories.

May talks about Rose, her mother, as the one who "paid a heavy price for that mutiny by the Kildare Rangers. She bore the brunt of it all, physically, mentally" (Madhavan, 2020, p.240). In Irish and British history, the Mutiny is seen as the 'only slur on the Regiment's glorious history' (2020, p.244) thus drawing attention to the historical and political implications of the event. Rose, on the other hand, emerges at best as a collateral damage of the event though her life is permanently disrupted beyond redemption, foregrounding the experience of interrupted identities that the novel constantly dramatizes. The disrepute suffered by Colonel Aylmer due to the insurgency of the Regiment under him and the dishonourable death faced by Michael Flaherty are indeed tragic; however, their lives and reputation are also salvaged historically to a very large extent. Colonel Aylmer's grandson Richard gets to revisit and redeem the legacy left behind by his grandfather; the respect and official recognition he receives in Nandagiri including his access to bureaucratic privileges are reflective of this poetic justice enacted politically. Similarly, Michael Flaherty is later declared as a hero for the Irish cause, and his body is taken back to Ireland in an official act that restores his honour though posthumously. However, Rose's humiliation due to her pregnancy out of wedlock, followed by her trauma in the asylum in Madras, lasts almost an entire lifetime until she is 'rescued' by her granddaughter May and Mohan. On a unique note, unlike the official definitions and reiterations which are patrilineal and patriarchal, the novel does engage with the location of the 'mother' whose presence/identity is otherwise immaterial in most Anglo-Indian discussions of origin or family history. In the novel, the Anglo-Indian characters May and Gerry even carry their grandmother's family name Twomey in a telling defiance of the dominant patrilineal Anglo-Indian tradition.

The Tainted seems to be extra cautious while presenting a community which is often absent from official records and whose identity has little legal standing unless descended from a European in the male line as the constitutional definition does not consider maternal lineage. Accordingly, the heavy state intervention deployed in the novel may be read in two different ways. One, it marks the integration of the community into various state institutions, almost overcompensating for the near absence of records and official documents. For instance, the character who can make a difference in the Anglo-Indian lives is Mohan who holds a powerful bureaucratic position, whose access to state machineries is normativised in the system. Similarly, Gerry Twomey

works as District Forestry Officer, an official designation that connects the Twomeys with Mohan as well as Richard Aylmer. Secondly, it makes a deliberate attempt to legitimize the private memories by giving them the stamp of state authorization. The reference to Commonwealth Military Graves Association who could help maintain the graves, the support offered by the Public Works Department (Madhavan, 2020, p.269), the Secretariat, the offices of the Registrar of Births and Deaths, and the extended and privileged access Mohan has to official records make a difference in the way the Anglo-Indian lives undergo changes in the novel, exemplifying the entanglement of the experiential and the bureaucratic textual orders of material engagement characterizing the Anglo-Indian identity and its rituals of remembrance. Rose Twomey, whom the family thought was dead is brought to 'life' by pursuing official records relentlessly. The memory-narratives in the novel are thus also shaped by space, place and location, and characters are symbolically resurrected through textual and material processes of re-membering and recollection.

The Tainted is a blend of historical fiction and romance with elements of history heavily determining individual lives and their emotions for each other, even after sixty years. The event that is placed as the turning point is based on the Connaught Rangers Mutiny where the Irish infantry regiment registered a violent protest against British superiors, as a mark of solidarity towards the Irish cause, thus enacting the event of one anti-colonial protest on the site of another colonial exploitation. As a major symbol of the Irish colonial struggle in the British-Indian setting, this rebellion, dating back to 28 July 1920 is recorded in the British imperial history when five men from the Irish Regiment of the British army based at the Wellington barracks, Jallandhar, Punjab refused to follow orders or perform military duties in protest over British repressive policies and the imposition of martial law in Ireland. They were protesting at the behavior of the 'Black and Tans' during the Irish war of independence. Reportedly, as revealed in RTE Archives, Joe Hawes, one of the Irish soldiers, remarked to other mutineers, "We're doing the very same job that the British are doing in Ireland suppressing the Irish people" (https://www.rte.ie/archives/2020/0623/1149159-connaught-rangers-mutiny/). The protest emerged out of this conscience and empathy for Indians, and the solidarity for the Irish cause. As the protest spread to two garrisons, the British troops took over, and of the 88 who mutinied about 19 were sentenced to death after court martialing. However only one member, the ring leader

Private James Daly was finally executed, and the remaining were sentenced to life imprisonment. The Regiment was disbanded in 1922, after the establishment of the Irish free state. In *The Tainted*, the fictional re-telling of this event, serves as a pivotal point bringing together the lives of the Anglo-Irish and the Anglo-Indians.

NARRATING ANGLO-INDIANNESS AND MISCEGENATION IN POSTCOLONIAL INDIA

The Tainted encourages the reader to reassess the crisis of marginality in contemporary anti-colonial/postcolonial discourses. While listening to Richard's narration of the plight of Anglo-Irish families who were Protestants, Mohan says that they were 'like the Anglo-Indians' as they did not quite fit in. At the same time, he is also quick to point out that with the Anglo-Indians, "it's nothing to do with religion" but about the ambivalent Indian identity and the in-betweenness (Madhavan, 2020, pp. 257-8). In another instance May laments, "We're tainted – we were never white enough then and will never be brown enough now" (2020, p.221). Even the otherwise benevolent Father Jerome who always took an active interest in Rose's well-being generally refers to the Anglo-Indians with disdain, as ones with tainted pasts. Mohan who is overtly conscious about the Muslim-question which lies at the core of minority discourse in India makes a seemingly innocuous comment about how the Anglo-Indians "stand out a mile further than Muslims" (2020, p.228). It shows that the indifference or discrimination or even the passive hostility that the Anglo-Indians faced were very different from any other minority community, with the additional element of racial prejudice built into it. This also meant that shrouded within the discourses of illegitimacy and obscurity, the mixed-ness of Anglo-Indians had the additional burden of shame and humiliation as well, as they inhabited the interstitial territory between the colonizer and the colonized.

This article attempts to critically engage with *The Tainted* as a work of fiction that usefully complicates the complex identity borne by Anglo-Indians, irrespective of their descent or their ancestor's relation with the Empire. The mixed identity of the Anglo-Indians in terms of genealogy and culture had always surfaced as a "curiosity" in historical inquiries and discussions on national integration particularly in the post-Independence decades. Though the term Anglo-Indian was officially recognized as early as 1911 in the Census, and was used to describe persons of mixed descent, by

1935 the definition narrowed down to accept only persons "whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is/was of European descent, but who is a native of India" (Muthiah and MacLure, 2013, pp.58-59). This patrilineal structure along with the requirements of domicile status had led to many exclusions while documenting Anglo-Indian history and lives in postcolonial India. *The Tainted* as a historical narrative penetrates into these fissures in historiography, augmenting the challenges and trauma involved in this process.

Laura Bear's essay "Public genealogies: Documents, bodies and nations in Anglo-Indian railway family histories" (2001) draws attention to the problematic nature of this process through a thorough discussion on archives and state-interventions. Bear, through case studies from East Indian Railway Nationality Files, asks pertinent questions about the State becoming the 'final arbiters and guardians' of the genealogies of Anglo-Indians. This absence of documentation and the lack of institutional authorisation are also interestingly intertwined with the discourse of colonialism and legitimacy. For instance, as Allan Sealy, the renowned Indian writer in English, reveals in one of his recent interviews, "My family's [history] goes as far back as the 18th century; up to 1798, the documentation is sure. The first Sealys – two brothers, John and Charles, one a sea captain, the other a member of the Bengal judiciary – arrived in the 1770s, and the family could have descended from either one of them, who had an informal union with a 'kept' woman" (https://www.thehindu.com/books/books-authors/allan-sealy-on-his-latest-book-zelaldinus/article19457234.ece). This partial knowledge, which potentially posits a challenge on the discourse of legitimacy, is also at the core of Anglo-Indian mixed identity. As Alison Blunt recounts, this invocation of 'illegitimacy' particularly affects Anglo-Indian women, leading to assumptions that Anglo-Indian women are more licentious than other European and Indian women (Blunt, 2020, p.66). Thus, at multiple levels the marginalization faced by the Anglo-Indian community is tied up with the intricacies of family histories and personal liaisons along with the already complex historical workings of race and nationality.

In *The Tainted* we find this negotiation between personal memories/histories and historical documentation being foregrounded in very compelling ways. Michael Flaherty who as per documentary/State evidence is officially single at the time of his

unfortunate death is identified by Gerry and May as their grandfather. While a number of individuals including the Irish Reverend Father Jerome, Rose's father Sean Twomey, Aunt Mags' family and most members of the Irish regiment are aware of the fact that Maurice Twomey is Michael's son, this knowledge remains only as a private and hushed up information. Rose's status as an unwed Anglo-Indian mother and Michael's dishonourable discharge followed by death sentence make this entire episode a "shameful business" (Madhavan, 2020, p.242). May Twomey also recalls her mother's sentiments, "There weren't that many left in Nandagiri who knew the family history and she wanted it to remain that way" (2020, p.243). Even after the Irish government declares Michael Flaherty and Tom Nolan as 'heroes', Maurice Twomey decides not to let himself be known to the Irish authorities as he was only Flaherty's 'bastard son' (2020, p.244). In another significant episode when it is revealed that Rose was in a mental asylum, May echoes her brother Gerry's concerns and says, "Anglo-Indians with a family history of madness? He thinks it can't get any worse so why not just burn the letters and go back to believing that she [Rose] died in England of TB?" (2020, p.270). The stigma associated with shameful pasts and family histories have often emerged as a deterrent in tracing Anglo-Indian genealogies. An unnamed memoir published by an Anglo-Indian of Irish descent (Rileys who were born and lived in Madras before returning to England) in the blog www.findmypast.co.uk notes that after the 1857 Mutiny there was a shift in attitude due to which "the Anglo-Indians were no longer the privileged children of the Empire but its shameful secret" (A Hidden History, 2016).

In the novel, obscurity and rootlessness seem to underscore the complex workings of mixed identities and their articulation or the lack thereof. This anxiety is not historically and culturally unfounded either. For instance, Laura Bear gives an account of how Anglo-Indians were seen as being "low-class, too Anglicized, rootless, sexually disreputable, and cheap imitations" (Bear, 2007, p.11). Similarly, Parker's essay, which is autobiographical and experiential, draws attention to how most Anglo-Indians feel 'foreign' or 'homeless' despite having lived their entire life in India (Parker, 2015, p.26). The stereotypical notions about the community and the tendency to present unique characteristics in a derogatory light have been addressed by Dorothy McMenamin (2011) as well. In *The Tainted* we find this anxiety, operating from inside as well as outside, affecting the self-esteem of Anglo-Indian families sometimes in

intergenerational ways. Neither the European ancestors nor the native population into which they have assimilated seem to be able to offer a resolution to this anxiety which affects most Anglo-Indian characters in the novel. Part of this irresolution, which the novel uncritically subscribes to, may be located in the inability of colonial and postcolonial discourses to acknowledge these mixed identities whose belonging is contested. Sen's study on Anglo-Indian women succinctly demonstrate how "a discrimination-ridden situation gave birth to numerous stereotypes, mostly negative, and fostered a unique psychological state and social position of ethnic marginality" (Sen, 2017, p.142). As Homi Bhabha puts it, these stereotypes are a form of knowledge and identification that must be 'anxiously repeated' and which did not need proof but can never be proven. Crane and Mohanram's *Imperialism as Diaspora Race, Sexuality, and History in Anglo-India* is a work that argues forcefully about the need to interpret Anglo-Indian identity itself as fundamentally diasporic as it is a complex identity whose determinants rest on issues of diaspora, nostalgia, fear and restlessness (Crane and Mohanram, 2013, pp.1-2). To use a Saidian phrase, the Anglo-Indian's diasporic experience could perhaps be compared with that of a migrant who inhabits a "discontinuous state of being" (Said, 2000, p.183). These experiences of belonging which is diasporic and discontinuous at the same time could be historically as well as theoretically engaged with only by beginning to move away from 'typical' discourses on postcoloniality.

Anglo-Indian Studies, in terms of its historiography and location, has always signalled a departure from the postcolonial modes of accessing as well as framing identity. Characterised by intergenerational memories which were also transnational, the Anglo-Indian identity was a continuation of colonial mixed modernities from the 16th century onwards. For the same reason, drawing attention to this complexity, historians such as Muthiah have always stated their preference for the term 'Euro-Indian' which highlights the European roots, without necessarily limiting it to British alone (Muthiah and MacLure, 2013). Laura Bear notes, "The mixed and illegitimate origins of Anglo-Indians embedded in the history of the colonial encounter made it impossible for them to imagine founding any political, national or community space, even a homeland for themselves in contemporary India" (Bear, 2007, p.271). The 'impossible' nature of this imagining largely due to the 'illegitimate origins' is in stark contrast with the many 'imagined communities' that have emerged in the twentieth century. Arguably the first

fictional narrative that outlines the story of Anglo-Indians of Irish descent, *The Tainted,* also makes a case for the need to understand Anglo-Indian identities by being attentive to family-stories which do not always fall within the discourse of legitimacy. If one looks at the characters in *The Tainted* who are also metaphorical presences of the Anglo-Irish and Anglo-Indians of Irish descent, we find that their lives are determined by the discourse of shame and the construction of stereotypes which operate through the Empire in terms of political loyalty or morality, and later seep into postcolonial discourses as well.

The Anglo-Indianness that the novel explores emerges as an attempt to address issues which are largely pushed to the peripheries of colonial/postcolonial history. Here one needs to be attentive to the discursive background against which *The Tainted* is positioned. The complications that underscore the definitions of Anglo-Indianness has been the topic of political debates and scholarly discourses from mid-twentieth century, if not earlier. However, like most mixed-race communities, the discussions often remained diffused locally and globally, as there were multiple histories, nations, and ethnicities at stake. More importantly, given the paradoxical relationship between postcolonial studies and cultural memory, there was very little scholarly attention given to the Anglo-Indian stories which were mostly re-membered and re-constructed versions without archival or any institutional documentation. For instance, Michael Rothberg points out the complete absence of any mention of the category of 'memory', particularly 'cultural memory' in most canonical theoretical works or practices in the field of postcolonialism (Rothberg, 2013) even when the 'practices of remembrances' were often the subject of extensive research studies. The vocabulary of postcolonialism, which is largely an offshoot of the Saidian framework, arguably stressed narrative and stories over 'remembrances'. Even in the case of Partition history it was only in the 1980s, with remembered versions of the past, the event of Partition began to receive academic and scholarly attention. In the absence of state documents which were the "symbolic legitimation of power and discipline" (A. Assmann, 2008, p.101), the researchers often had to rely on personal experiences, memories and even stories to reconstruct the event. In similar ways when one engages with Anglo-Indian studies there is a pertinent need to also depart from the fundamental premises of postcolonial theory upon which most histories, narratives and identities *after* colonialism are founded. At best, in order to access the scattered and

hybrid transnational Anglo-Indian history, one could position the Empire as the 'forgetting machine' (Césaire et al., 2000, p.52) and the Anglo-Indian story-teller/historian as the 'remembrancer' (Burke, 2003, p.110). In *The Tainted* the struggle essentially is also between the many acts of the forgetting machine and the attempts of the remembrancer to counter the same. In the context of the novel we find the Anglo-Indian characters of Catholic Irish descent (such as the Twomeys) and the Protestant Anglo-Irish characters who were dealt with unjustly by the British (such as the Aylmers) emerging as 'remembrancers', as there are no official markers or supporting documents to supplement their claims. The re-membered stories that are foregrounded in *The Tainted* thus call for a departure from colonial as well as postcolonial constructions of Anglo-Indian lives and histories.

NOSTALGIA AND HOME IN *THE TAINTED*

In the novel, the term 'nostalgia' appears several times especially whenever May tries to talk about Anglo-Indians in general, whose lives according to her are steeped in the past. Nostalgia (from the Greek word 'nostos' meaning homecoming), is a term that best captures the Anglo-Indians' experience with the past and the way it informs their present; it serves as a useful pointer to discuss Anglo-Indian memory-narratives and their location. It may be noted that Svetlana Boym's notion of nostalgia defined as "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed" will be useful to understand the vital role played by memories in preserving and protecting Anglo-Indian identities. As Blunt puts it in the context of Anglo-Indians of British descent, "England is imagined at a distance as an inspiring source of memory, heritage, tradition and veneration, whilst India is imagined in more immediate terms as the site of daily life, present meaning and the location of home" (Blunt, 2003, p.42). For Boym, this longing, which in the 18th century was even considered as a pathological condition, is a longing for another space and time with a retrospective as well as prospective quality. As she extrapolates, "nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. The nostalgic desire to obliterate history and turn it into a private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues human condition" (Boym, 2002, p.xv).

In *The Tainted*, 'nostalgia' is experienced variedly by different characters in retrospective as well as prospective ways. For Rose Twomey, the daughter of Sean

Twomey, the Bacon-wallah, nostalgia operates through her longing for Ireland, the home that she never has seen or been to. Though she has never been to Ireland, she considers Ireland as 'home', and writes in her diary, "I'm Irish and I intend to stay that way". She aspires to claim this 'home' by working as a lady's maid for Mrs Aylmer, and later through her relationship with Michael, hoping she would be able to leave for Ireland with him. However, the 'Indian blood' that runs in her veins, her 'half-caste status' or the 'Eurasian identity' (Madhavan, 2020, pp.41, 61), of which the Aylmers are wary of and Michael has been warned about, complicate her possibilities of 'returning to' Ireland. It is in the context of an exploration in such spatial and temporal terms that Alison Blunt examines the construction of 'nostalgia' as an extension of the 'homing desire' of Anglo-Indians. She identifies McCluskiegunj as 'productive nostalgia', "oriented towards the present and future as well as towards the past, and revealed as an attachment to both India and Britain as home" (Blunt, 2003, p.717). However, this nostalgia is a traumatic memory for a character like May. May's mother lived in McCluskiegunj and had experienced that place as "one of the saddest places" (Madhavan, 2020, p.219) which seemed to have tainted the Twomeys's perceptions about the Anglo-Indian 'penchant for past'. Later in the novel, May even goes to the extent of perceiving nostalgia as a 'dangerous thing' with a "whole community strangled by dreams of what they never had in the first place" (Madhavan, p.219). The project of McCluskiegunj in rural Bihar is described by May with a tinge of cynicism referring to it as "an example of nostalgia gone badly wrong" as it was "an Anglo-Indian little England, a shrine to isolation" (2020, p.219). Despite what McCluskiegunj could never become, it continues to be referred to as a nostalgic reminder of the aspirations of the past as well as what was once thought possible (Erll, 2011, p.52).

In defining Anglo-Indian history and identity, this liminality between past and present is very valid. May recollects at one point, "Anglo-Indians have made an art of keeping those memories alive. God, how we live in the past" (Madhavan, 2020, p.199). However, what makes these 'memories' and 'past' more interesting is also the fact they are varied and non-linear, making it possible for multiple realities and identities to emerge. For instance, the Anglo-Indians in the novel namely Rose, May, Gerry and May's uncle Ronnie, differ radically in the way they identify with their Anglo-Indian identity. Rose always saw herself as fully Irish despite her 'half-caste' mother; May and Gerry prefer to subsume their Irish connection on account of the many stigma

associated with their roots; as for uncle Ronnie he chooses to stay close to his Indian roots, which on the other hand is exoticized by his children who have found their 'home' in Australia. Interestingly, even for Mohan it is the exotic quality of Anglo-Indianness which is more appealing; it is evident in the way he 'remembers' the Anglo-Indian girls in his class who "could really jive, those Anglo-girls, all cap sleeves and sweetheart necks". Further, he also recalls how he was "warned off Anglo-Indian girls" (2020, p.173) and how they had "the reputation of knowing how to have a good time" (2020, p.174). Interestingly, Mohan's mother clubs the Anglo-Indians with Muslims when she says, "never a Muslim, no Anglos" (2020, p.174) while discussing his marriage prospects. Later in novel when Mohan listens to May's stories from the past with a lot of empathy, he prefers to look at McCluskiegunj as a place that preserves collective identity (2020, p.219). With the same sentiment he also finds himself being fascinated by the "Anglo-Indianness of the whole tableau" when he dances in Uncle Ronnie's living room (2020, p.227) where May feels completely at home.

Home, here, becomes an extension of this experience of nostalgia, which is traumatic and exotic at the same time. The Anglo-Indian conception of 'home' is more metaphorical than real, especially when it is away from India. It gets further problematised as they were often ridiculed for longing to return to a home they had never seen. The novel showcases how Anglo-Indian notions of domesticity are heavily influenced by the 'homes' and spaces they have only heard about from either parent or other Europeans who are temporarily based in India. Alison Blunt's *Domicile and Diaspora* talks about the paradoxical positioning and complexities of home and belonging for Anglo-Indians as "of feeling both in and out of place, and of living as both insiders and outsiders" (Blunt, 2003, p.23). For instance, in the novel, we find that there is no unified idea of 'home' among the Anglo-Indians of Irish descent. Ronnie's idea of home scattered across Madras, Ireland and Sydney. As stated earlier, for Rose home is that idyllic place in Ireland – Glengarriff – which is her 'hometown', and of which she has only heard from her father and others including Mrs Aylmer (Madhavan, 2020, p.47). Michael, when he is at Aunt Mags' place in Madras along with Rose, he realizes that he was in a "real home" for the first time after he had left Ireland (2020, p.60). May's mother identified England as home and never missed a chance to show her loyalty to the crown (2020, p.243) by dressing up her Anglo-Indian kids as Prince Charles and Princess Anne. May who has lived her whole life in Nandagiri is skeptical

of ever finding home, and her sense of non-belonging is evident when she feels, “We’re tainted – we were never white enough then and will never be brown enough now” (2020, p.221). However, when the novel ends with May’s statement, “Home, Rose. We are taking you home”, it is clear that May has found her home in Nandagiri which evolves symbiotically out of the convergences across Anglo-India, Anglo-Irish and modern India.

CONCLUSION: MEMORY-NARRATIVES AS HISTORY

The Tainted makes it possible to ask fresh questions about Anglo-Indian mixed identity through interventions made through private memories and records, less remembered historical events and state archives/machineries, thereby presenting the ‘illusion of an unmediated memory’ (Erll, 2011, p.140) albeit in the space of fiction. The novel acts as a point of reference, drawing attention to the complex and invisible Anglo-Indian past which is otherwise neglected in cultural remembrance. It foregrounds the “complex processes involved in the circulation of stories and the evolution of collective remembrance: both the convergence of remembrance of particular sites and the gradual erosion of those sites” (J. Assmann, 2008, p.352). The narrative is woven together carefully to integrate the points of view of the Anglo-Indian as well as the Anglo-Irish characters, along with the Irish and Indians. It also brings in race, class, religion, region, and gender albeit sweepingly while discussing the lives of individuals who are Indian, Anglo-Indian and Anglo-Irish. This link across issues and identities is created by placing Mohan Kumar, an Indian middle-class male with a bureaucratic position as the central connecting point, thus underscoring the machinery and memory of bureaucracy that historically informed the empire and its aftermath. Mohan’s key role in the novel accentuates the possibilities of assimilation into the ‘mainstream’, by facilitating State interventions to capture family histories. This positioning, though entirely incidental, may be read as symbolic of the larger constructs of historiography where the State plays a major role as a mediating agency repressing, regulating as well as facilitating modes of recording and re-membering. For, in the collective imaginary, archives have always served as “institutions of cultural memory, which gather, preserve, administer, and impart culturally relevant information about the past” (Erll, 2011, p.100). The intervention of a number of official bodies and statutes is recurrent in this narrative with the British Empire and Indian State determining the course of private lives in the 1920s and 1980s respectively. The anxiety faced by May

an Anglo-Indian woman of Irish descent, and Richard an Anglo-Irish man whose father served the British army have a number of commonalities when analysed from the perspective of *their* memory of the Empire. Alternatively, the contrast between the memory of the individual and the forgetting of the Empire also demonstrates the 'fragility' of private memory as against the "ideological implications of public commemoration" (Erll, 2011, p.66). Here, despite the class and status differences that separated May's grandmother Rose and Richard's grandmother Mrs Aylmer in the 1920s, we find that both sets of families, and the individuals, are mere casualty and even collateral damage for the cause of the Empire. Michael's death sentence, Colonel Aylmer's dishonourable return to Ireland, Rose's humiliation and displacement are all events which permanently 'taint' the reputation of their respective families. While the mixed identity of the characters and the way their hyphenated identities determine their share of colonial and postcolonial experiences form the central concern of the novel, one cannot help notice how the narrative also actively foregrounds connections and relationships between and across identities, generating a transnational historiography.

The Tainted is a novel about miscegenation and memory, about mixed and interrupted identities in complex cultural and political settings informed by colonialism and postcolonialism. At a more fundamental level, it is a story about the production and reception of desirable and undesirable subjects and the politics of forgetting, rejection, and remembrance. It has as its historical core a major political event which connects two sites of subversion – the Irish and the Indian – situated against one order of imperial dominance. But the nuance of the narrative lies in its depiction of how political events generate ripples in intimate and sentimental spaces, in ways which are performative as well as permanent. The ontology and the experience of being *tainted* – being contaminated in private as well as in visibly public ways – makes Madhavan's novel a compelling study of liminal identities and their associated subjectivities informing subversion as well as shame. Most importantly, the novel emerges as an excellent example of the cognitive and political potential of fiction and *fictional framings* to re-create as well as self-reflectively engage with historical materiality, which makes literature such a significant medium in memory studies research today.

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THE STRAND OF HAIR:
AN ANGLO-INDIAN READING OF CAUVERY MADHAVAN'S *THE TAINTED*

Keith St Clair Butler

ABSTRACT

There is a 11th-century Indian collection of short stories in Kathasaritsagara by Somadeva (Wikipedia) where a fastidious man sleeps upon a pile of comfortable mattresses but still feels a strand of hair under them. I use the hair as a metaphor for my discomfort when reading Cauvery Madhavan's novel *The Tainted.* I contend Madhavan, despite her admirable talent, over supplies her narrative for a modern readership with a colonial trope, that of Anglo-Indians having 'tainted blood'. Madhavan deftly recreates these 19th century Racial Science inspired stereotypes in her main characters, two Anglo-Indians, Rose and May Twomey. These characters are presented in problematised ways with regard to their femininity, sexuality, identity, complexion, accent, self-perception, aspirations, customs, and loyalties. However, I acknowledge that stereotyping is a signifying practice that "is central to the representation of racial difference" (D'Cruz quoting Stuart Hall, 2018, p.36) and that Anglo-Indian stock character literary vigilantism could do well to go beyond 'spot-the stereotype' (D'Cruz, 2018, p.45) towards a deeper understanding of the milieu producing the stock images. I refer to various post-colonial analytical discourses of Anglo-Indian literary representations during the British Raj and Independent India to inform my point of view. I further posit that Madhavan has wandered into mimicry without empathy and possibly risks re inscribing and perpetuating a repugnant, salacious, and hurtful stereotype of Anglo-Indian females for modern readership.

The Tainted, by Cauvery Madhavan, is a novel of two parts driven by a somewhat tired theme, "Anglo-Indians, tainted by their mixed blood" (Madhavan, 2020, back cover). The first section, set in 1920's India, focusses on the doomed relationship between Michael Flaherty of the Royal Kildare Rangers, an Irish regiment of the British army based in Nandagiri in South-East India, and a local Anglo-Indian, Rose Twomey. Young Flaherty also becomes fatally entangled in a mutiny against his regimental British superiors when he protests the deployment of the Black and Tans against the Irish in their War of Independence back in Ireland. The Flaherty rebellion is based on the 1920 real-life mutiny of the Connaught Rangers in India. The second section – 1980s India – is orchestrated around a chance meeting of the Aylmer and Twomey descendants in 1980s India. Richard Aylmer, grandson of Colonel Aylmer of Nandagiri, arrives to photograph the landscapes of his grandfather's paintings. Hosted by Mohan Kumar, Collector of Nandagiri, Richard meets the grandchildren of Rose: May and Michael Twomey. This sets the stage for another romantic pursuit by Richard and Mohan for May Twomey.

Every review reflects the positionality of the reviewer, and in the interests of transparency, I mention I am Anglo-Indian and my reception of the novel may be what it is because it cuts close to the bone. My Anglo-Indian mother was the focus of curiosity, and derision, in post-Independence India, (Calcutta, 1960's) because she had married an *Ingrazi* – Englishman. Also, Mother's dark complexion meant she faced colour prejudice, sometimes even from Anglo-Indians. In marrying an Ingrazi she had jumped up the social order, got uppity, and the term 'memsahib' was sometimes hurled at her in mockery. In all frankness, Mother also admired whiteness. My sister and I were encouraged 'to improve the stock' by seeking fair complexioned over darker companions. I cannot say that I personally felt pointed discrimination but I'm conscious that many Anglo-Indians, for complex reasons, existed in a social bubble, where they ignored societal jibes and just got on with their lives. However, protected space or not, my sister, fair in complexion and light eyed, was pursued in all sorts of ways for reasons beyond and because of her charming appearance. It's important to also acknowledge that the so called 'Eve teasing' or harassment by Indian males was not reserved solely for Anglo-Indian females and I was not the only brother

assigned by parents to protect a sister. So, perhaps, I was always going to find *The Tainted* an uncomfortable, albeit fascinating read.

The novel caused me to recall, in one particular way, a 11th-century Indian story collection titled Kathasaritsagara by Somadeva. There is a tale of a young man, reputedly fastidious about beds, sleeping on seven mattresses and clean sheets especially placed upon a bed for his comfort, yet he still rose in pain. A crooked red mark is discovered on his body and upon investigation a hair is found on the bottom-most mattress of the bed. I felt that hair when reading Cauvery Madhavan's novel *The Tainted.* Her resurrection of a Raj literature meme – "Anglo-Indians tainted by their mixed blood, belong . . . nowhere" (Madhavan, 2020, back cover) – driving her characterisation of Anglo-Indians was the hair under the mattress for me.

It has to be acknowledged that Madhavan is a talented writer. The celebrated Indian author, Shashi Tharoor endorses the novel as, "A moving story, compellingly told" (Madhavan, 2020, front cover). Madhavan deftly creates vivid imagery and stock figures in her book. She provides many charming scenes in *The Tainted*; Father Jerome and Flaherty at the Emerald Tearoom (Madhavan, 2020, p.13), Mohan Kumar correcting little Apu's English syntax (Madhavan, 2020, p.149), absorbing details of the Indian wedding (Madhavan, 2020, p.289) and the tiger hunt (Madhavan, 2020, p.235). When it comes to depicting the Irish Father Jerome, and Flaherty Madhavan gets it just right with her characterisation, voice and Irishisms according to the Irish interviewer Miriam Kilmurry (2020, 13 mins). Adept at recreating the British Raj of the 1920's, Madhavan has the colonial lexicon of India break out of the starters gate on page one, past fine Eastern beauties, majestic tamarind trees, obsequious natives, *bakeesh*. The second page picks up the pace with Lonely Planet type notes on dysentery, shitting oneself to death, cholera, opium, consumption, dog, snakes, and mosquito bites, madness, sanatorium. Then there's venereal disease. "Jaysus, I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy" (Madhavan, 2020, p.4) says Tom Nolan of the Kildare Rangers warning Private Michael Flaherty about the local bordellos.

Using broad writerly brush strokes Madhavan effectively recreates the class-conscious bubble of 1920's British Raj in Nandagiri. At the social dictating heart of this society are the Burra Sahib General Charles Aylmer and his Burra Memsahib wife,

Beatrice, living in the Big House. Madhavan accords them a stock pedigree. Charles' forefathers gained their wealth in West Indian sugar plantations. Beatrice, the only daughter of wealthy County Kildare landowners brought to the marriage an independent income of four thousand pounds. The Aylmers were a career soldier family awarded battle honours in India. Burra Memsahib Beatrice awards positions in society. Obviously the General and she are at the top of the class pyramid. Indians, generally, are despised and are at the bottom. Anglo-Indians don't know their place in society and need to be controlled or they'll get uppity. Burra Memsahib Beatrice is just the person to put them in their place.

When it comes to finer detail of individual characterisations, especially of the Anglo-Indian females, Rose and May Twomey, Madhavan's imagination is fecund. It may be said that Racial Science inspired Raj stereotypes featuring Anglo-Indians, especially females, employed in colonial fiction could be reduced to a formula: Anglo-Indian = hybridity = tainted blood = promiscuity. Madhavan employs this algorithm ubiquitously and enthusiastically with a few twists of her own. She's at it early in the novel when over a cup of tea Father Jerome leans over conspiratorially to Flaherty to share his wisdom about the haughty Anglo-Indian waiter, "These Anglo-Indians all have a chip on their shoulder. They're mixed blood, you see and are highly complexed as a result" (Madhavan, 2020, p.14).

Madhavan gifts a surfeit of the colonial imagination to Rose's character; the yearning to be white when she admires all things in the world of whiteness in the sleeping figure of Mrs Aylmer in the train; fair flawless skin, gloves, copper bath, tea tray arrangement, and "flowers like lupins and sweet peas" (Madhavan, 2020, p.78). Mrs Aylmer thinks the native flowers are 'vulgar' (Madhavan, 2020, p.78). Elsewhere we learn, lest we forget, that Rose dislikes the sun as it may darken her skin. Then there's Rose's "frank gaze" (Madhavan, 2020), so potent it sent Michael Flaherty into an immediate and somewhat juvenile flashback of his amorous moments in Ireland with the Cullen sisters, and of Nuala, who everyone thought slow "except they hadn't seen the speed with which she could undo her buttons" (Madhavan, 2020, p.28). And there's more speculation about Nuala's huge breasts.

Finally, inevitably, and with some wry relief to me as a reader, Rose seduces Flaherty. After a dance in a room at Dr Swamy's house where they were taking refuge from an angry mob, Rose flopped onto the bed and began to fan herself.

> 'Come here Michael, and I'll share my little punkah with you.'
> 'Well, I never thought I'd make a punkah-wallah of you,' said Michael […] 'You could make anything out of me', she whispered and bent down to kiss him.
> She offered no resistance when a few minutes later he slid his hands under her shift or when he began unbuttoning her dress, but instead seemed to urge him on wordlessly with little intakes of breath and acquiescent movements of her hips (Madhavan, 2020, p.109).

It's easy enough to select from the burgeoning scholarship on Anglo-Indians, ideologies accounting for colonial stereotypes. Glenn D'Cruz's seminal *Midnight's Orphan's* (D'Cruz, 2006) proffers that most colonial texts inspired by contemporary discourses such as Racial Science and imperatives of hegemony and control, cast Anglo-Indian female protagonists as "predatory half-caste vamps" (D'Cruz, 2006, p.33). On account of their 'tainted blood', a female is 'a very dangerous creature, commonly figured as a bewitching siren and an unscrupulous, manipulative whore' (D'Cruz, 2006, p.33). It's important to see these literary texts performing specific ideological functions in the service of imperial power and prestige (D'Cruz, 2006 p.164).

Whilst stereotyping of Anglo-Indians continued past the colonial period, it's important to state there also appeared a fetishising of Anglo-Indian ethnicity on the literary science of modern India. But first, to sample the derogatory stereotypes: To employ an Anglo-Indianism, the one that always gets my goat – irritates me – is Nirad Chaudhuri's *The Continent of Circe* (1960) where he opines "Young Eurasians, both boys and girls, showed a weak and degenerative form of the exuberant animal spirit of the English schoolboy and girls…'. Eurasian (Anglo-Indian) females "were driven by a heady but very volatile essence of sensuality…" (Chaudhuri, 1967, pp.260-261). This genetic imperative, so it seems according to Chaudhuri, qualified them admirably as sought-after prostitutes, blitzing competitors, "the Hindu prostitutes were not piquant

enough" (Chaudhuri, 1967, p.262). Then there's a father nostalgically recalling, "We had the little Anglo-Indian girls from the railway colony, to do our growing up with...Little beauties some of them were. Young men now have a real problem. A man has to get his experience somewhere" (Sahgal, 1985, p.162).

As noted above, it's not that the characterisation of Anglo-Indians remained unchanged from colonial times in Independent India. Alongside the derogatory, there arrived a fetishising of ethnicity. Salman Rushdie's acclaimed *Midnight's Children* (1981) celebrates hybridisation in all its forms. Saleem Sinai, the narrator of Rushdie's novel is technically an Anglo-Indian. Here, Rushdie "partially inverts the degeneracy stereotype and uses the Anglo-Indian as a sign of a fecund and critical hybridity" (D'Cruz, 2006, p169). Although the innovative brilliance of the novel is widely acknowledged I don't break out into a jive because the community is now being promoted as, perhaps, the solution to the clash of civilization. (It has to be said, sections of our community sometimes see themselves thus.) Is this not Anglo-Indian hybridity, possibly once again, being employed for a political agenda?

Part two of *The Tainted*, centralises the love triangle of Mohan Kumar, Collector of Nandagiri, Colonel Aylmer's grandson, Richard, and May Twomey, granddaughter of Rose. Set in the 1980s things remain the same and different. Madhavan has been busy reincarnating the Anglo-Indian May Twomey. Now Indianised, May first appears in part two as "a tall strikingly elegant woman in a lavender sari" (Madhavan, 2020, p.185). With a bug-eyed Kumar watching her every move – Kumar's mother had warned him about Anglo-Indian females knowing how to have a good time, unlike good girls (Madhavan, 2020, p.203). May glides with sophistication in different circles. She has all the 'soft skills' (Andrews 2021, p.140) attributed to Anglo-Indians. At clubs she deftly handles Bala's double entendre when he suggests his gift of a fan to his wife was, "all the better to cool her." She parried with, "You don't need to play the big bad wolf, Bala, I know how you spoil your wife," (Madhavan, 2020, p.288) and then directs everyone's attention to the bride. May is a sage on stage for Indian wedding ceremonial rites and demurs against Richard's assertion that arranged marriages are "a baptism of fire" (Madhavan, 2020, p.283). A teacher by profession, May is accorded agency by Madhavan for her future and is in a different socio-economic register to Rose but never let it be said that the Anglo-Indian apple doesn't fall far from the tree

in this narrative. When recalling the past for Richard, May says, "The Anglo-Indian motto was all about keeping up appearances" (Madhavan, 2020, p.285). She then patronisingly remembers her mother's affectation for the Queen, that her brother Gerry dressed up like a mini-Prince Charles with Peter Pan collars, and May admits to being like Princess Ann (Madhavan, 2020, p.285). And of course, like Rose, there's the perennial self-pitying and identity crisis thing, "We're tainted – we were never white enough then and will never be brown enough now" (Madhavan, 2020, p.259). May is clearly invested with an incipient Indian nationalism by Madhavan but when Madhavan scratches her, May's tainted Anglo-Indian roots are exposed. Through all of this, Kumar, fortified by his voyeurism (Madhavan, 2020, p.242), bumbles around her like a lovesick puppy. His ultimate compliments to May are that she's a "dame" (Madhavan, 2020, p.215), and a "Sitar-Guitar girl" (Madhavan, 2020, p.242).

Whilst Anglo-Indian females seem to be Madhavan's preoccupation, men also, to use another Anglo-Indianism, 'get it in the neck'. Faithful to colonial characterisations the males of the species are represented as, "wasters', 'lazy, stupid and lack(ing) leadership qualities" (D'Cruz, 2006, p.35). Harkening back, *Kipling's His Chance in Life* depicts the story of Michele D'Cruz, "'a sickly weed' who lacks character because of his tainted blood" (D'Cruz, 2006, p.106). Similarly, Madhavan's male characters are cloned as unremarkable because of their tainted blood and wayward ways. The Anglo-Indian waiter is arrogant (Madhavan, 2020, p.13) and later, George Twomey, May's brother, has a chip on his shoulder (Madhavan, 2020, p.177), but then what can one expect of a race of bastards – the inference made by Mohan Kumar (Madhavan, 2020, p.177). When May and Kumar visit her uncle, the gormless Ronnie, an Anglo-Indian Lothario if ever there was one, regales them with tales of his romantic conquests before he left India for Australia. He returned to his *bap ka raj* where, in Kumar's distorted sense of India, Ronnie had the confidence to "defecate, urinate and spit anywhere with ease, bribe…cheat and defraud" (Madhavan, 2020, p.263).

What conclusions could one offer about Madhavan's characterisations of Anglo-Indian females? In interviews, such as one with Miriam Kilmurry (2020), Madhavan freely admits that the character of Rose Twomey ran away with her. Although Rose can't be faithfully portrayed other than in keeping with colonial mores, does Madhavan, with the knowledge of discredited ideologies such as that offered by Racial Science,

present the granddaughter May Twomey differently sixty years later? *Mushkil se* – hardly. I think Rose Twomey ran away with Madhavan's imagination and burrowed straight into May Twomey. May seems an avatar or manifestation of Rose. Madhavan appears to focus on the physicality of their being with a near obsession. She obviously enjoys writing about breathless sex and the perfect foil for her seems to be the Anglo-Indian woman. This brings to mind Chew's summation: 'There is the stereotype of the Anglo-Indian woman displaying a perverted agency as a conniving creature, governed by her sexuality, or the converse, the Anglo-Indian woman as victim; an object of pity' (Chew, 2021, p.257).

I doubt that Madhavan set out to malign an already maligned minority Indian community. To the contrary, she is of the view that Anglo-Indians are an educated and resilient people (Gilligan, 2020). However, she has marshalled a cawing choir of characters through which she dumps a plethora of objectionable characteristics upon her Anglo-Indian characters. At the heart of this collection, she has recreated a repugnant, sexualised stereotype of Anglo-Indian females for popular consumption. So, at the centre of this conversation there is a question to be asked: Could Madhavan's mimicry of the Anglo-Indian stereotype reinscribe the stereotype for the modern reader?

Whilst it may be contended that Madhavan created Rose and even May Twomey thus to showcase their plight and appeal to the reader's empathy, the authorial voice is much too enthusiastic and insistent with inscribing their inherent shortcomings for this view to hold water. Chew is probably closer to the mark: "All and sundry – at times unwittingly – contributed to the ubiquity of these stereotypes. And as a result, gender and racial stereotypes became an integral ingredient, deployed to add sizzle, augment plot, characterisation and even local colour by those who have little to no knowledge of the community, its history or experience, let alone lived experience, and who then draw on what's been written before" (Chew, 2021, p.261).

In summation, many factors can attach themselves, like those crown halo spikes on Covid-19, to colonial stock images of Anglo-Indians. An abundance of research suggests Racial Science as the spike head for this stereotype. Another threat, in a somewhat worrying and immediate sense, is that stereotypes could put the

stereotyped at some risk in the real world. I know members of my family suffered discomfort because of *gup* – gossip about Anglo-Indians – possibly from trace memories of Racial Science inspired stereotypes in popular fiction. Although Anglo-Indians quit India in droves since Independence, many still live in the sub-continent. My hair of discomfort is this: although *The Tainted* is presented as fiction for a modern audience, it can jump out of its dust jacket and influence contemporary mores, titillate appetites, confirm prejudices. Stories reflect lives, even imagined lives. So, are Anglo-Indian females in the 21st century, possibly being subjected to a reinscribing of a repugnant and salacious stereotype of themselves by Madhavan's, *The Tainted*?

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