



Embodying war: British women and domestic defilement in the Indian ‘Mutiny’, 1857–8

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The ‘mutiny’ of 1857–8 posed an unprecedented threat to British rule in India. In newspaper accounts, parliamentary debates and visual images, the severity of the conflict came to be embodied by the fate of British women and the defilement of their bodies and their homes. This paper concentrates on the contestation and spatiality of embodied and domestic discourses of defilement by focusing on representations of British women at the time of the conflict. It begins by studying the use of domestic imagery in depicting the severity of the uprising, its embodiment by British women, and the contestation of such representations in a newspaper addressed to women readers. Then, turning to written accounts and visual images of the British women who died at Cawnpore and who survived the siege of Lucknow, the paper examines how and why these discourses of defilement were place-specific. By contrasting images of British women as victims and as survivors of the uprising, the paper contends that their ultimately unrepresentable fate was spatially inscribed through their paradoxical embodiment at, and displacement from, different sites of conflict.

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Introduction

Despite improvements in transport and communications between India and Britain, in June 1857, an article in the *Calcutta Review* lamented British apathy and ignorance about life and events in India. In India, news five weeks old was received every two weeks and there were, according to the *Review*, two ‘easy modes’ of travel home, either by sea to Suez and then overland to Alexandria, or by sea around the Cape of Good Hope. As the article stated, “time and space, though not annihilated, nor even contracted to their shortest span, have been considerably reduced”.^[1] And yet, awareness of this reduction seemed to be largely one way. The *Review* argued that only an empire-threatening crisis would be likely to change the disregard of Indian affairs in newspapers, parliament, and among the British public more generally.

This article appeared just as the first outbreaks of unrest marked the beginning of such a crisis, which, in imperial terms, came to be known as the Indian or *sepoy* ‘mutiny’ and, in nationalist terms, as the ‘First War of Independence’.^[2] Over the next year, events in India came to command an unprecedented level of public attention in Britain.^[3] One central focus of attention was the fate of British women in India, with accounts of their deaths and suffering resulting in impassioned calls for vengeance. Through newspaper accounts, parliamentary debates and visual images, the severity of the conflict came to be embodied by the fate of British women and the defilement of their bodies and their homes. In this paper, I explore the symbolic and strategic significance of representing British women and homes under threat during the uprising

and the ways in which these discourses of embodied and domestic defilement were contested and place-specific rather than hegemonic and universal. First, by examining representations of the conflict in Britain, I consider the use of domestic imagery in depicting the severity of the conflict, its embodiment by British women, and the contestation of such representations in a newspaper addressed to women readers. Then, turning to accounts and visual images of the British women who died at Cawnpore and who survived the siege of Lucknow, I examine how and why these discourses of defilement were place-specific. By contrasting images of British women as victims and as survivors of the uprising, I argue that their ultimately unrepresentable fate was spatially inscribed through their paradoxical embodiment at, and displacement from, different sites of conflict.

Disaffection among Indian infantry soldiers had been intensifying since January 1857. In May, detachments of the Bengal army mutinied at Meerut, killing several British officers and setting fire to the cantonment, before marching to Delhi and declaring the Mughal king, Bahadur Shah II, as the reinstated ruler of Hindustan. Over the next year, revolts against British rule spread throughout central and northern India, taking place most notably at Delhi, Lucknow, and Cawnpore, as mapped in Figure 1. These revolts were concentrated in the Bengal army and did not spread to the two other armies of the East India Company in the presidencies of Madras and Bombay. In some places, particularly in the recently annexed province of Oudh, the ‘mutiny’ was also characterized by widespread agrarian unrest.^[4] But such military and popular struggles tended to remain localized and disparate, so that the events of 1857–8 represented “something more than a sepoy mutiny, but something less than a national revolt”.^[5] The uprising was brutally suppressed by more than 35 000 soldiers sent from Britain by June 1858. Writing from London for the *New York Daily Tribune*, Karl Marx wrote that “it should not be forgotten that, while the cruelties of the English are related as acts of martial vigour, told simply, rapidly, without dwelling on disgusting details, the outrages of the natives, shocking as they are, are still deliberately exaggerated”.^[6] Such “disgusting details” centred on the fate of British women.

In recent years, an increasing amount of critical work has concentrated on the gendered nature, implications, and representations of war in explicitly spatial terms. Moving beyond accounts of war as exclusively masculine and domesticity as separate and exclusively feminine, the interfaces between domestic and military life have provided an important focus for studies of both men and women at war.^[7] While some critics have explored war in terms of masculine discourses of heroic adventure to protect wives, mothers and daughters at home, others have focused on the central, and often transgressive, roles of women both in and beyond the domestic sphere at times of war.^[8] Other studies have explored the representation and legitimization of armed conflict in gendered terms, ranging from domestic and familial images of civil wars to gendered discourses of motherlands and families in national liberation struggles and fascist representations of a fatherland.^[9] At the same time, since at least World War I, feminist peace politics have mobilized gendered and domestic discourses of motherhood, the family and the home to oppose conflict and violence.^[10] In each case, domestic and military discourses are not only interpreted as inextricably linked, but also as crucially *embodied*, often through representations of women as wives, sisters, daughters and, in particular, as mothers.

Rather than merely add women to the study of war, an increasing number of scholars have studied the gendered nature of war in more profound and challenging ways. Focusing on gendered representations of war, Cooke and Woollacott explain that “war has become a terrain in which gender is negotiated”.^[11] This paper not only examines

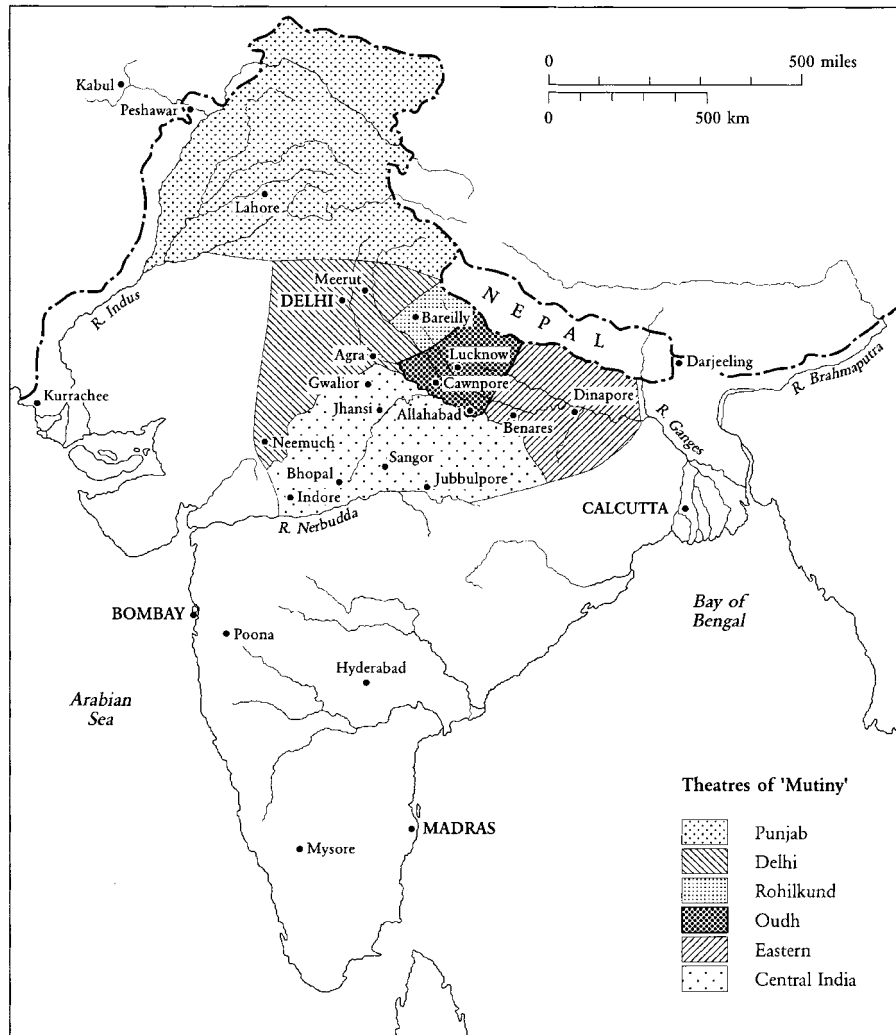


Figure 1. Theatres of war in the Indian 'Mutiny', 1857–8. Source: M. Innes, *Lucknow and Oude in the Mutiny: A Narrative and A Study* (London 1895) and G. MacMunn, *The Indian Mutiny in Perspective* (London 1931).

gendered representations of war, but also explores the 'terrain' of war on embodied, domestic and imperial scales. Unlike other accounts,^[12] this paper examines representations of British women during rather than after the suppression of the Indian uprising in 1857–8. Through its focus on representations of British women in parliamentary debates, visual images, and newspaper accounts addressed to both women and men, the paper considers the contestation and spatiality of gendered discourses of defilement.

Representing home and empire

The deaths of British officials, their wives and children prompted the *Bengal Hurkaru*, a daily newspaper published for British residents in India, to state that "this is not a

mere local outbreak, it is a great crisis, a crisis unprecedented in the history of British India . . . It is now a question of empire”.^[13] But the extent to which the ‘mutiny’ represented an imperial crisis was open to question, not least in early parliamentary debates. While the Liberal British government under Palmerston was anxious to contain the threat by describing the uprising as a military mutiny, Disraeli described events in India as a rebellion of national proportions that threatened British rule.^[14] For many commentators, the uprising was an imperial crisis best represented by images of domestic defilement that raised doubts about the permanence of British rule in India and the possibility of reconstructing future British homes in India.

Several commentators used domestic imagery to represent the imperial crisis as a civil war, revealing the inseparability of national and imperial power, honour, and prestige. In June 1857, the Earl of Ellenborough argued in the House of Lords that “it is as much the duty of the Government to protect our empire in India as it would be to protect the county of Kent, if attacked”^[15] and, in the following month, the *Times* declared that “a civil war is upon us”.^[16] In similar terms, the *Illustrated London News* reported that:

Our house in India is on fire. We are not insured. To lose that house would be to lose power, prestige, and character—to descend in the rank of nations, and take a position more in accordance with our size on the map of Europe than with the greatness of our past glory and present ambition. The fire must be extinguished at any cost.^[17]

Domestic imagery was used vividly to convey the threat posed to British control of India. Other commentators used domestic imagery to represent a more personalized and embodied threat to British homes in India. For example, in May 1857, the *Bengal Hurkaru* also represented the severity and immediacy of the imperial crisis in domestic terms:

when mutinies interfere only with the security of our Indian Empire—when they merely lower in the eyes of the world the national name—the consequences are comparatively trifling. The Government is aroused sooner or later, and more troops settle the matter. But when mutinies break out in our domestic establishments—enter our houses, and penetrate even to our wardrobes—it is plain that something must be done. We can bear up against a dishonoured name, but not a discoloured shirt. We can bear a stain upon our characters, but a stain upon our cravats becomes a momentous consideration.^[18]

For the *Bengal Hurkaru*, while some uprisings threatened the *security* of the Indian Empire and the status of Britain as an imperial power, the present ‘mutiny’ threatened the very *existence* of the Indian Empire. The domestic images of ‘houses’, ‘wardrobes’ and ‘cravats’ appear to stand for British rule in India and, while “comparatively trifling” mutinies could be contained, the scale and severity of the current conflict was seen to challenge to the very basis of British rule.

In August, the *Times* published a letter that graphically represented the destruction of a British home in India. In a letter from Neemuch in June, the wife of an officer in the Bengal army wrote that:

Our house, like all others, is a ruin, a shell, without one article left us. Our beautiful books, either torn or burnt; our furniture broken up, chopped in pieces, or carried off; not a cup, plate, or glass left; carpets torn up, or carried away; not a single garment of any kind; our silver dishes gone; doors, windows smashed; trinkets and curiosities, of which I had a goodly store, all taken away or destroyed . . . We have now nothing left.^[19]

Such an inventory of domestic destruction and loss represented the imperial conflict in



Figure 2. 'How the Mutiny came to English homes'. Source: unknown, 1857.

direct and vivid terms to the British public by conveying the threat to British homes and British rule in India through a description of domestic defilement. A similar image appeared in *Punch* in June 1857. As Figure 2 shows, the conflict not only threatened British homes in India, but this threat both to imperial domesticity and to imperial rule more broadly was embodied by the fate of a terrified and defenceless white wife and mother. With a baby at her breast and a young child playing next to her, the British woman is depicted at the centre of domestic and familial calm that has just been shattered by the invasion of two Indian insurgents. Her vulnerability is further compounded by the absent presence of her husband whose portrait hangs on the wall behind her. The box labelled 'England' on the *chaise longue* suggests that national and imperial power is similarly vulnerable alongside the child. One Indian is about to seize the child and is armed with a sword while the other brandishes a flaming torch. The rebels appear set to destroy the woman, her children, and the home itself. But the presence of the Indian insurgents is the only indication that the home is in India. Otherwise, the furniture and decorative interior appear quintessentially British, without even a visible cord for the ceiling fan known as a *punkah* that would have undoubtedly cooled the room. As a result, the Indian rebels are shown to be invading not only a British home but they also appear to be threatening British rule in India. In both cases, the presence of a defenceless British wife and mother embodies the severity of this threat to domestic, national, and imperial power, honour and prestige. The fate of British women in India embodied the uprising as a crisis of imperial domesticity that had implications not only for the presence of British homes in India but also for the security of British rule in India.

Representing British women

During the uprising, reports of the deaths and suffering of British women represented the severity of the imperial conflict to their countrymen and women in Britain and in India. In September, the *Illustrated London News* reported that

We hear with pain, but not perhaps with horror, of the deaths of our brave officers and soldiers slain by the mutineers, for it is the soldier's business to confront death in all its shapes; but when we read of the atrocities committed upon our women and children the heart of England is stirred; and the sorrow for their fate, great as it is, is overshadowed by the execration which we feel for their unmanly assassins, and by the grim determination that Justice, full and unwavering, shall be done upon them.^[20]

Representing British women as victims in the uprising helped to legitimize masculine retaliation against their “unmanly assassins”. The “heart of England” was effectively stirred by representing British women as displaced and dishonoured, enabling British vengeance to appear all the more virile in the face of Indian emasculation.^[21] Such representations of Indian emasculation revolved around discourses of honour. By committing “atrocities” against British women, the masculine honour of Indian men was not only irrevocably disputed but also served to bolster the masculine honour of British men as the brave and gallant defenders of their countrywomen. Many accounts represented atrocities perpetrated against British women in lurid detail. In the *Times*, a letter from an ‘Anglo-Bengalee’ stated that “our ladies have been dragged naked through the streets by the rabble of Delhi. Quiet ministers of the gospel have been murdered. Their daughters have been cut into snippets and sold piecemeal about the bazaar”.^[22] The *Illustrated London News* painted “a ghastly picture of rapine, murder, and loathsome cruelty worse than death”^[23] while *Blackwoods Magazine* described “horrors, such as men have seldom perpetrated in cold blood, outrages on women and children, atrocities and cruelties devilish in their kind—murder, treachery, rapine, mutiny—have been the expression of their rebellion”.^[24] As Jenny Sharpe has shown, other accounts invoked the ultimately unrepresentable rape of British women through hints and innuendoes.^[25] By appearing to set the limits of representation such accounts could speculate about what existed beyond such limits, as shown by a report in the *Times* in August:

There are some acts of atrocity so abominable that they will not even bear narration . . . We cannot print these narratives—they are too foul for publication. We should have to speak of families murdered in cold blood—and murder was mercy!—of the violation of English ladies in the presence of their husbands, of their parents, of their children—and then, but not till then, of their assassination.^[26]

Sharpe argues that “a discourse on rape . . . helped to manage the crisis in authority so crucial to colonial self-representation at the time”.^[27] Through a focus on their “deflowered” bodies,^[28] representations of British women came to legitimize British retaliation and heroic vengeance. As the *Illustrated London News* asked,

what do those who cry out for mercy to such wretches say of the murder of helpless babes and unoffending women? and of the almost incredible indignities and cruelties committed upon English ladies—cruelties so horrible that their mere mention is almost an offence in itself?^[29]

In similar terms of unrepresentability, the *Englishwoman's Review* reported in August 1857 that “the details of the sufferings and barbarities endured by English women and children almost surpass imagination, foul and cruel murder not being the worst of the

evils inflicted upon the helpless victims in the various stations of the Bengal presidency".^[30] The *Englishwoman's Review (and Drawing Room Journal of Social Progress, Literature and Art)* was published from 1857 to 1859 and was, according to Margaret Bentham, a "proto-feminist" journal that sought "to address the women of England from the women's point of view".^[31] Although it identified the lack of occupation for middle class women as a pressing social problem, the *Englishwomen's Review* refused "to prate of women's rights", and rather redefined "rights" and "occupation" in more feminized terms as "usefulness and kindness".^[32] In its extensive coverage of the conflict in India, the *Englishwomen's Review* focused on the fate of British women. As Vron Ware explains,

the paper adopted the tone of the aggrieved victim, giving full encouragement to the brave men who survived to avenge their sex. Accounts of dead children, of rooms filled with blood, matted hair, mangled toys, rotting clothes, would all have had a particular impact in the pages of a woman's paper which aimed to reinforce the conventional female role in the domestic sphere.^[33]

In its coverage of female victims in the 'mutiny' and its calls to avenge their suffering, articles in the *Englishwoman's Review* closely resembled those that appeared in more mainstream newspapers with largely male readers such as the *Times* and the *Illustrated London News*. But, at the same time, another newspaper that was addressed to female readers interpreted events in India in markedly different ways. Although the *Lady's Newspaper and Pictorial Times* reflected the same domestic concerns as the *Englishwoman's Review*, its interpretation of events in India was very different. Unlike the *Englishwoman's Review*, the extensive coverage of the 'mutiny' in the *Lady's Newspaper* included several vehement protests *against* 'the war cry "For the Ladies and the Babies!"'^[34]

The *Lady's Newspaper and Pictorial Times* was published from 1847 until it merged with the *Queen* in 1863. Its diverse contents included weekly embroidery patterns, fashion plates, and fiction, alongside home and international news and editorials: "Fashion, the Work-Table, Festive Meetings, Striking Events, the Court and Fashionable Assemblies and a consecutive novel of interest . . . all the great interests of society [including] Emigration and the Amelioration of the poor . . . the best in Art, Science and Literature".^[35] But its coverage of the Indian uprising came to eclipse all other stories in 1857 because "every other matter is just now of secondary importance. The magnitude of the atrocities and the immensity of the stake have united to secure the public mind, and it is satisfied only with what has reference to the great rebellion".^[36] In August, the *Lady's Newspaper* pleaded that:

If there is a political necessity for wholesale butchery, let it not be done in the name of woman; if the women and the children of our country have been the victims of the heathen, it is not so we would have them avenged; if we cannot raise these barbarians to our own light, let us not sink into their darkness; if we sicken with horror at their atrocities, let us not follow in their blood-stained footsteps.^[37]

Both the *Englishwoman's Review* and the *Lady's Newspaper* supported the reassertion of British rule in India and both did so by focusing on the fate of British women away from home. The *Englishwoman's Review* followed other newspapers in its calls for heroic vengeance. In the context of masculine discourses of honour, heroism, and revenge, the prestige of the British army and its success in reestablishing British rule were inextricably linked to its ability either to protect or to avenge British women. But, in

contrast, the *Lady's Newspaper* argued that mercy rather than vengeance should guide attempts to reassert British rule in India.

The *Lady's Newspaper* framed its arguments for mercy in terms of racial differences between the British and Indians and in terms of gender differences between British men and women. In August, it stated that “we are wrong in judging these dusky children of the sun by the same rules that would be just and right with home communities. We are a Christian, they are a heathen, nation”.^[38] In these terms, the *Lady's Newspaper* supported its claims for the superiority and enlightened nature of British rule and its desire for Christian mercy rather than “heathen” vengeance to guide the reestablishment of such rule. Moreover, the *Lady's Newspaper* called upon the moral influence of British women in terms that both reflected and also reproduced discourses of bourgeois, Christian femininity. As the *Lady's Newspaper* stated,

Especially let every woman use the privilege of her gentle but resistless influence in both asking and claiming mercy for these perishing people, to save them from the trampling down of the hoofs of vengeance. . . [L]et the voice of woman's pity penetrate wherever father, brother, husband, son, or relative may wield a weapon in this warfare, and let the word that it carries be ‘Mercy, and not Vengeance!’^[39]

Here, the moral influence of British women is seen to be simultaneously ‘gentle’ but strong, and most effectively exerted in familial, domestic relations and spheres. The *Lady's Newspaper* also identified philanthropic work as an appropriate channel for expressing the moral, merciful influence of British women:

A committee of ladies, those invaluable agents of mercy, are ready to administer such earthly comforts as the unfortunate sufferers may require. Of course the Lady Mayoress is as the head of this committee. The service rendered by this lady cannot be too highly eulogised: she is at home what Miss Nightingale was abroad.^[40]

Both in their familial, domestic sphere, and through the philanthropic extension of this sphere, the female readers of the *Lady's Newspaper* were positioned as Christian, feminine, and bourgeois ‘agents of mercy’ and moral responsibility. By October, the *Lady's Newspaper* reflected that:

We believe that our Journal was the first to lift up an imploring, a protesting voice against the wild, passionate, indignant clamour of the nation for an overwhelming retribution. We assume no merit in the act, for it was simply natural that women, especially the women of England, to whose heart the sorrow comes the nearest, should intercede to stay the fury of the Avenger. Happily, victory has not been given to our arms in India until we have had time for our passions so to cool that we may use it with an equitable moderation.^[41]

Christian mercy is represented in explicitly feminine terms as a ‘natural’ characteristic of women. The calm, pity, and compassion apparently displayed by British women clearly contrasts with the passion and fury of their male avengers.

Although the *Lady's Newspaper* condemned calls for vengeance in the name of British women and children, it fully supported the reassertion of British rule in India. But unlike the *Englishwoman's Review*, the *Times*, and the *Illustrated London News*, the *Lady's Newspaper* asserted that British imperial rule should not be regained at the expense both of the moral superiority of Britain as a Christian nation and of the moral influence of British women more specifically. But by October 1857, the *Lady's Newspaper* reported the fall of Delhi as a source of feminine as well as national pride:

There is something in that fact that stirs even the heart of woman; for who glories so

highly in the national honour, whose heart burns so warmly at the telling of noble deeds, as those of the wives, the mothers, the countrywomen of the heroes who have done them?^[42]

The *Lady's Newspaper* represented its readers and other British women as moral guardians of familial, national, and imperial honour. Through its coverage of the 'mutiny', discourses of moral influence shaped the newspaper's representations of bourgeois, Christian femininity. The British women readers of the *Lady's Newspaper* were positioned as exercising a Christian moral influence both on a domestic and an imperial scale. Not only did the domestic, familial sphere of middle-class women extend beyond the home to include philanthropic work, but it also extended across imperial space to influence the conduct of soldiers and officers in suppressing the uprising in India. While the *Englishwoman's Review* followed other newspapers in its calls for vengeance against the deaths and suffering of British women, the *Lady's Newspaper* argued for feminine mercy rather than masculine vengeance. While the *Englishwoman's Review* cited the fate of British women to legitimize vengeance against Indian insurgents, the *Lady's Newspaper* contended that such vengeance would compromise the Christian integrity of British imperial rule. Representations of the 'mutiny' in terms of domestic defilement and its embodiment by British women were common across newspapers addressed both to male and female readers. But as the divergent interpretations of the *Englishwoman's Review* and the *Lady's Newspaper* suggest, the material effects of such representations were contested. Despite their different interpretations of domestic defilement and its embodiment by British women in India, both the *Englishwoman's Review* and the *Lady's Newspaper* were united with other newspapers in their attempt to maintain and to bolster the inviolability both of British women and of British imperial rule in India.

During the uprising, the experiences of British women at Cawnpore and Lucknow received the most extensive parliamentary and popular attention. Although located only 40 miles apart, the fate of British women at Cawnpore and Lucknow was starkly different. Whilst almost 200 women were killed at Cawnpore in July 1857, more than 200 women survived the siege of Lucknow that lasted from June to November 1857. The deaths of British women at Cawnpore fuelled calls for vengeance and brutal retaliation in line with masculine, national, and imperial discourses of honour and prestige. But the British women who survived the siege of Lucknow embodied the severity of the imperial conflict in different and ambivalent ways.

British women at Cawnpore

In the mid-nineteenth century, most of the British population at Cawnpore lived in cantonments that spread for six miles along the River Ganges. In these cantonments,

Hundreds of bungalows, the residences of the officers, stand in the midst of gardens, and these interspersed with forest trees, the barracks of the troops, with a separate bazaar for each regiment, and the canvas town of the tented regiments... On the highest ground in the cantonments stand the church and the assembly rooms, in another part a theatre, in which amateur performances were occasionally given, and a cafe supported by public subscription. In the officers' gardens, which were among the best in India, most kinds of European vegetables thrived.^[43]

In April 1857 Louise Chalwin, the wife of a veterinary surgeon in the 2nd Bengal Light Cavalry, wrote to her sister that "I find the society in this station very pleasant and sociable",^[44] and described balls and dinners, and the social success of her unmarried

friend Isabel White who, at the last ball, “might have had three or four partners for every dance, and all the best in the room”.^[45] Visiting Cawnpore soon after the ‘mutiny’, the *Times* correspondent William Howard Russell wrote in his diary that he found it impossible to imagine the “exaggerated relief of an English garrison-town and watering-place” characterized by

The solemn etiquette, the visits to dinner, the white kid-gloves, the balls, the liveries. . . the millinery anxieties of the ladies, the ices, and Champagne, and supper . . . The little and big flirtations, the drives on the road—a dull, ceremonious pleasure—the faded fun of the private theatricals, the exotic absurdities of the masonic revels, the marryings and givings in marriage . . . the sense of security.^[46]

The domestic and imperial security enjoyed by the British residents of Cawnpore had been shattered in June 1857.

Following the mutiny of the 2nd Cavalry regiment at Cawnpore on June 5, the British population lived under siege in entrenchments for three weeks under the command of General Wheeler. After accepting terms of release, most of this population was killed on June 27 at the River Ganges. The surviving 210 women and their children were kept as prisoners until July 15 when, because of the approach of the British army, they were also killed.^[47] Representations of the fate of British women and children as victims of the uprising reached their peak in accounts of events at Cawnpore.

In the middle of August, Earl Granville rose in Parliament to dismiss rumours of ‘a dreadful massacre’ at Cawnpore as a fabrication.^[48] But by the first week of September, these rumours had been confirmed and news of events at Cawnpore came to dominate newspaper reports. Such reports focused on the deaths of British women on the orders of Nana Sahib, who was represented in dehumanized and often demonic terms.^[49] The *Lady’s Newspaper* described the Nana Sahib and other rebels at Cawnpore as “dastardly sleuth-hounds” and asked “Are the fiends who can coolly perpetrate such atrocities human?”^[50]

At this stage, reports of events at Cawnpore were still based more on rumour than on first hand information. The *Illustrated London News* speculated on three scenarios: that all British residents of Cawnpore had been killed at the same time; that British women and children had been sold ‘by public auction’ and had been subjected to ‘the highest indignities’ before being killed; or that they were being held prisoner.^[51] As the British soldiers who entered Cawnpore on July 17 discovered, the last of these scenarios had been closest to the truth. Letters home and other eyewitness accounts by several of these soldiers were printed in British newspapers and came to represent the fate of British women and children at Cawnpore in vivid detail to a wide audience. The apparent authenticity and immediacy of such eyewitness accounts centred on the fate of British women at Cawnpore. In many ways, representations of British women at Cawnpore came to embody the severity of the threat to British rule in India. Such representations were inseparable from often detailed written and visual images of the Bibighar—or ‘House of the Ladies’^[52]—where British women had been held prisoner and died.

Because they were based on the direct observations of eyewitnesses, an increasing number of newspaper reports and illustrations gained authority and legitimacy in their representations of the Bibighar.^[53] These eyewitnesses were usually British officers and soldiers who had reached Cawnpore the day after the remaining British women and children had been killed. The same officers and soldiers then fought their way to Lucknow, and came to be identified as the first ‘relief’ of the Lucknow Residency in September. While their accounts vividly represented the fate of British women and

children to the British public, and resulted in subsequent calls for vengeance, the eyewitnesses themselves had enacted their own revenge before their writings and drawings were reproduced in India and Britain. At this stage, before the arrival of the *Times* correspondent William Howard Russell in 1858, the reporters of the conflict were those men who were most closely embroiled within it. Written and visual representations of the Bibighar were inseparable from subsequent punishment and brutality inflicted on Indians both at Cawnpore and elsewhere during the 'mutiny'. Although the first soldiers and officers to reach Cawnpore saw the bodies of British women and children, later eyewitnesses were only able to view the room where they were held captive and killed. While the fate of British women and children continued to be made vividly clear, the evidence of this fate was increasingly sought in the Bibighar as a site of domestic defilement. The limits of representation meant that British women were imagined in their violent absence from the place where they had died.

The first British soldiers to arrive in Cawnpore found the bodies of British women and children in a well. As one soldier wrote, "I saw it, and it was an awful sight. It appears from the bodies we saw, that the women were stripped of their clothes before they were murdered".^[54] Another soldier described the same scene in more graphic terms, writing that "the [women] having been stripped naked, beheaded, and thrown into a well; the [children] having been hurled down alive upon their butchered mothers, whose blood yet reeked on their mangled bodies".^[55] Such horrific descriptions came to dominate other accounts not only of the well but also of the Bibighar. Looking down the well confirmed the view of another soldier that "the women were so ill-treated that death, even such a death, must have been very welcome to them".^[56] Following the suppression of the 'mutiny', an investigation into events at Cawnpore considered the veracity of widespread claims that British women had been raped before they were killed. Colonel Williams, Commissioner of Police in the North Western Provinces, interviewed 63 witnesses and concluded that "the most searching and earnest inquiries totally disprove the unfounded assumption that at first was so frequently made and so currently believed, that personal indignity and dishonour were offered to our poor suffering countrywomen".^[57] In his widely printed account of events at Cawnpore, Nujoor Jewarree, a spy in the 1st Native Infantry, answered the question "were any of our women dishonoured by the Nana or his people?" in the following way:

None that I know of, excepting in the case of General Wheeler's youngest daughter, and about this I am not certain . . . As they were taking the mem-Sahibs out of the boat a sowar (cavalry man) took her away with him to his house. She went quietly, but at night she rose and got hold of the sowar's sword. He was asleep; his wife, his son, and his mother-in-law were sleeping in the house with him. She killed them all with the sword, and then she went and threw herself down the well behind the house.^[58]

Stories about Judith Wheeler had been circulating since September, when, for example, the *Englishwoman's Review* printed the heroic account that "Miss Wheeler, the daughter of Sir Henry Wheeler, they say, killed five of these fiends with a revolver before they could get near her".^[59] As Jenny Sharpe has shown, myths of Judith Wheeler centred on her feminine and moral virtue as she defended her honour to the point of death.^[60] Her feminine and moral strength was enhanced rather than undermined by killing several Indians before killing herself. Moreover, by being represented as throwing herself down a well, her death came not only to reflect but also to avenge the deaths of other British women at Cawnpore in the name of feminine honour and moral fortitude.

The infamous well was soon covered and made into a grave for the British women and children who had died at Cawnpore.^[61] Rather than describe the bodies of British women and their children, eyewitness accounts came instead to focus on the place where they had been imprisoned and died, describing its location, design, and interior in great detail. An account published in September, for example, recorded that

I have been to see the place where the poor women and children were imprisoned and afterwards butchered. It is a small bungalow close to the road. There were all sorts of articles of women and children's clothing, ladies' hair evidently cut off with a sword, back combs &c. There were also parts of religious books. Where the massacre took place it is covered with blood like a butcher's slaughter house.^[62]

The details of this description were both reinforced and extended by another eyewitness account published in October:

I have seen the fearful slaughter-house . . . The quantities of dresses, clogged thickly with blood, children's frocks, frills, and ladies' under-clothing of all kinds, also boys' trousers, leaves of Bibles, and of one book in particular which seems to have been strewed over the whole place, called 'Preparation for Death'; also broken daguerreotype cases only, lots of them, and hair, some nearly a yard long; bonnets all bloody, and one or two shoes.^[63]

The remnants and relics described and often collected by British soldiers visiting the Bibighar memorialized the loss of British women who had been killed at Cawnpore and descriptions of their hair and blood represented their fate in viscerally embodied ways.

While the bodies of British women were inscribed as victims of the 'mutiny', the place where they died was inscribed to resemble both a shrine and a museum that was visited and continually reinscribed by British soldiers as they fought their way towards Lucknow. The reinscription of the Bibighar took literal forms, with British soldiers writing on the walls. There was considerable speculation at the time that the British women imprisoned in the Bibighar had themselves written on the walls, but, as William Howard Russell stressed in his diary in February 1858:

One fact is clearly established; that the writing behind the door, on the walls of the slaughter-house, on which so much stress was laid in Calcutta, did not exist when Havelock entered the place, and therefore was not the work of any of the poor victims. It has excited many men to fury—the cry has gone all over India. It has been scratched on the wall of Wheeler's entrenchment, and on the walls of many bungalows. God knows the horrors and atrocity of the pitiless slaughter needed no aggravation.^[64]

The Bibighar, and the relics and writings found inside, incited British soldiers to new levels of brutal retaliation and punishment. While representations of the fate of British women in India had fuelled public demands for vengeance long before events at Cawnpore had become known, such demands were exacerbated by the graphic detail contained in eyewitness accounts. In a similar way, the brutality of British soldiers had already reached extreme levels before events at Cawnpore had become known, but was further exacerbated by visiting or imagining the Bibighar. As the *Englishwoman's Review* reported in September 1857, "no power on earth can resist the fury of their charge, and they give no quarter".^[65] More specifically, the punishments devised by General Neill at Cawnpore plumbed new, notorious depths of cruelty. As the *Illustrated London News* reported in September,

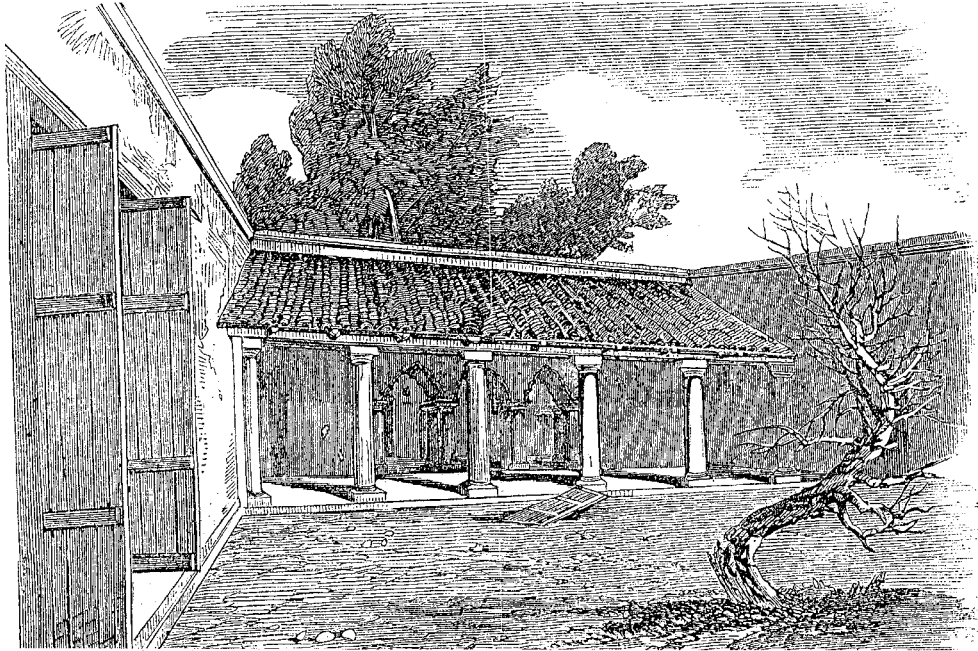


Figure 3. Exterior of the Bibighar, Cawnpore, 1857. Source: *Illustrated London News*, 23 January 1858.

General Neill was compelling all the high-caste Brahmins whom he could capture . . . to collect the bloody clothes of the victims, and wash up the blood from the floor, a European soldier standing over each with a 'cat', and administering it with vigour . . . The wretches, having been subjected to this degradation, which includes loss of caste, are then hanged, one after another. The punishment is said to be General Neill's own invention, and its infliction has gained him great credit.^[66]

The Bibighar was the subject of many visual as well as textual representations. Again, British women as victims at Cawnpore were imagined only through their violent absence, as shown by the engraving of the exterior of the Bibighar that was published in the *Illustrated London News* in January 1858 (Figure 3). An engraving in the *Bengal Hurkaru* depicted the interior of the Bibighar and featured a British soldier gazing upon blood-stained walls, hats, bibles, and shoes (Figure 4). To reinforce the violent absence of British women from the scene, its caption stated that "the floors were slippery with blood and the walls daubed with it. The courtyard was soaking, and in dragging the bodies across it the sand and blood had formed a sort of red paste".^[67] By placing a British soldier rather than British victims in the Bibighar, this image helped to reclaim and reinscribe a space that had been desecrated in the eyes of imperial rulers and had arguably housed the desecration of imperial rule.^[68]

The absence of British women from images of the Bibighar suggests the visual as well as textual limits of representing their fate. But these limits of representation were breached by a painting exhibited at the Royal Academy in the summer of 1858, which caused a public outcry because of its content and its public display. A number of paintings in the summer exhibition took as their subject the recently suppressed 'mutiny', and paintings by Edward Armitage, Edgar George Papworth, Joseph Noel Paton, and Abraham Solomon reflected popular interest that continued to focus on the place of

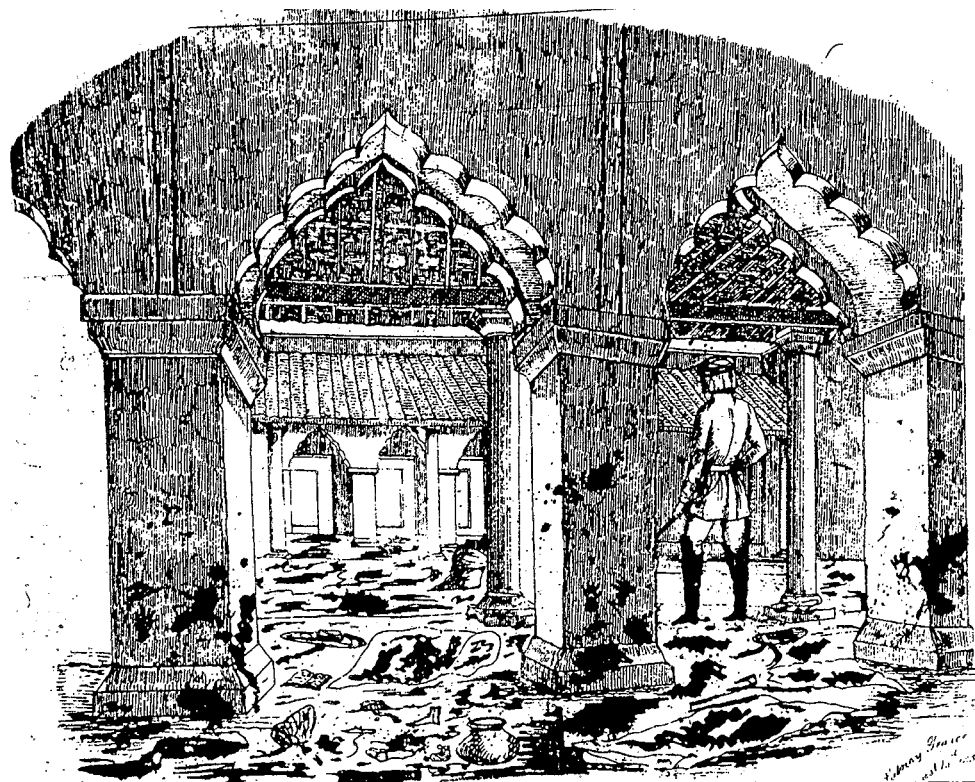


Figure 4. Interior of the Bibighar, Cawnpore, 1857. Source: *Bengal Hurkaru*, 25 November 1857.

British women in the conflict.^[69] One of these paintings—“In Memoriam” by Joseph Noel Paton—depicted British women, children, and an Indian ayah at Cawnpore as an armed sepoy approached them. The *Illustrated Times* described “the ferocity glaring in the eye, and bristling in the beard, of that advancing sepoy, with his blood-spotted legs, and his clenched musket”.^[70] In contrast, the calm expression of the white woman in the centre of the painting was seen to represent “more than Roman virtue”, “Christian resignation”, and “Christian fearlessness even in the very shadow of death”.^[71] But to represent British women at Cawnpore was to represent their imminent death to British viewers. The painting came to be known as “The Massacre at Cawnpore”, and the *Illustrated London News* bitterly condemned its content and its display, describing to its readers that “there, in that miserable murder hole, crouch the helpless English women and children of Cawnpore. Terror, anguish, despair on every face . . . The subject is too revolting for further description . . . The picture is one which ought not to have been hung”.^[72] In response to the controversy that “In Memoriam” had caused, Paton changed the title and subject of the painting. Crucially, Paton moved its location away from the unrepresentable fate of British women at Cawnpore to the rescue of British women at Lucknow. He painted kilted Highlanders over the figures of the advancing sepoys, and retitled the picture “In Memoriam: Henry Havelock” (Figure 5).^[73] Furthermore the engraving made of the revised painting in 1859 was “designed to Commemorate the Christian Heroism of the British Ladies in India during the Mutiny of 1857”.^[74] While representations of British women as victims at Cawnpore fuelled impassioned cries for vengeance, the fate of British women in the Bibighar could be



Figure 5. *In Memoriam: Henry Havelock* by Joseph Noël Paton. Reproduced courtesy of the Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection.

represented only through their absence. British women who survived the siege of Lucknow were similarly represented only through their absence until they were rescued and living in a place of imperial and domestic security.

British women at Lucknow

Together with the rest of the British population in Lucknow, 240 women lived under siege in the Residency compound from June to November 1857. The Residency compound was located in the centre of the ‘native city’ and consisted of 33 acres of land around the Residency building, which included “a large number of bungalows, houses, small palaces, and fortified gates”.^[75] The majority of the British women who lived under siege were married to soldiers, but 69 ‘ladies’ were related to officers or officials.^[76] In September, an unsuccessful ‘relief’ brought reinforcements, which provided the subject for the revised and relocated “*In Memoriam*”.^[77] Forces sent from Britain,

under the command of Sir Colin Campbell, relieved Lucknow for the second time on November 17. This was followed by the evacuation of Lucknow, first by the injured, and then by British women and children. This evacuation was followed by the withdrawal of all British troops from Lucknow by November 23, although fighting continued until the British recaptured Lucknow in March 1858.^[78]

In marked contrast to the reactions to “In Memoriam” that focused on the inappropriate depiction of British women at Cawnpore, reactions to a painting that featured British women escaping Lucknow were strangely placeless. “The Flight from Lucknow” by Abraham Solomon was also exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1858 (Figure 6). With biblical allusions to the flight of Mary and Joseph to Egypt, Solomon’s painting depicts a group of women and children fleeing a group of burning buildings. In contrast to reactions to “In Memoriam”, “The Flight from Lucknow” came to be appreciated in generic rather than place-specific terms. Solomon’s painting came to be known as “The Flight”, and its specific reference to Lucknow was often obscured. A critic in the *Athanaeum* wrote that “some English ladies are escaping from some Indian massacre”, while a critic in *The Art Journal* agreed that “the scene is India, and the fugitives are a party of our countrywomen flying in terror from a burning city”. As the latter critic continued, “any episode of this kind cannot be far from the truth, since these flights have occurred too frequently”.^[79]

Unlike the detailed accounts of British women as victims at Cawnpore, newspaper reports remained largely silent about the place of British women living under siege at Lucknow. While British women were surviving the hardships of life under siege, it was impossible to represent them as either protected by British rule or avenged by British retaliation. Such women thereby occupied an ambivalent but largely invisible place at the centre of the imperial conflict. But following their evacuation in November, representations of British women who had survived the siege increased as they travelled closer towards Calcutta. British women were represented as ‘heroines’ only once they had travelled a safe distance away from Lucknow and were resident in a place of imperial and domestic security.

Before news of the first ‘relief’ in September had been received in Britain, there were few representations of life under siege at Lucknow. The occasional newspaper reports to express anxiety about the siege often did so by focusing on the place of British women under siege. In September, for example, the *Englishwoman’s Review* quoted a letter from Lucknow that described “the most painful consideration” as

the number of ladies and women and helpless people who have fled for protection to the fort, and are now here. Upwards of two hundred of these poor creatures are crammed into this narrow place, where it is impossible to describe their sufferings. Death would be indeed a happy release to many of them, and it is enough to melt the heart of the hardest soldier to witness their cruel privations, while it is wonderful at the same time to see the patience and fortitude with which they are enabled to endure the unparalleled misery of their position.^[80]

The *Bengal Hurkaru* expressed its concern for the safety of the British population under siege by focusing on the sufferings of British women in class specific terms, asking “how many tender ladies nursed in the lap of luxury have given in to toils and anxieties of which their previous existence could have given them not the faintest notion?”^[81] These two accounts were, however, unusual in their representation of life under siege. Most reports focused instead on the need to save British women at Lucknow from the fate of British women at Cawnpore. For example, the *Times* followed its account of Cawnpore by asking “are we to have a repetition of those dreadful scenes at Lucknow?”



Figure 6. *The Flight from Lucknow* by Abraham Solomon. © Leicester City Museums Service.

God forbid! But we cannot but feel very great anxiety for the safety of this long-beleaguered party”.^[82] Although it stressed that rumours that Lucknow had fallen were likely to be untrue, the *Times* still speculated that

a catastrophe at Lucknow, similar to that of Cawnpore, would be far more horrible, because the garrison is larger, and the number of ladies and children far more extensive. Up to the present time, we repeat, there is no ground for apprehension on this score.^[83]

It was arguably more noble for British women to be killed by British soldiers than to risk the fate suffered by British women at Cawnpore. For example, as Sir Charles Napier stated in Parliament,

Before . . . so horrible a tragedy should be committed with innocent women and children as was enacted at Cawnpore, he trusted General Havelock would have sufficient courage to place them on his magazine and blow the whole of them up. No English General ever would permit women, still less his own countrywomen and their children, to be so outraged if he himself had the means of terminating their lives at once.^[84]

News of the first ‘relief’ of Lucknow on September 25 was published in British newspapers from November 14. At first, the relief was represented in heroic terms as British women had been saved from death and dishonour. The dangers posed to British women immediately before the relief were described in ways that bolstered the heroism of their rescue. For example, the *Lady’s Newspaper* stated that “the rebels had extended their mines within reach of the fortress, and had General Havelock been delayed a few more hours the people of England would probably have had to deplore another slaughter, perchance more sickly than that of Cawnpore”.^[85] Despite such heroic representations, it was clear that the relief merely provided reinforcements rather than rescue. As the *Times* reported, “while we must regret that it should be necessary to leave those unhappy women and children once more in their dreary confinement, it is yet reassuring to be able to point out that the trial is but for a short time, and that the danger is far from menacing”.^[86] As one way of minimizing the dangers posed to British women at Lucknow, reports focused on the place of Brigadier Inglis not only as the commander of the defence of Lucknow but also as a brave defender of his wife and children. The *Times*, for example, wrote that “this officer, whose wife (the daughter of Sir F. Thesiger) and three children are shut up with the little force in the Residency, has, we believe, had the chief command during the greater part of the siege”.^[87] The *Illustrated London News* printed an engraving of the Inglis family in late November (Figure 7), and, in December, the Earl of Derby praised Inglis “who, with all the anxieties attendant upon the presence of his wife and children, has nevertheless so nobly fulfilled the duties of his perilous position as commandant of the garrison”.^[88] Such representations of the Inglis family at Lucknow helped to domesticate the ongoing crisis. For the first time, the British women and children living under siege at Lucknow, embodied by Julia Inglis and her children, could now be represented under the protection by British men.

The Residency at Lucknow was relieved more successfully on November 17, and the first reports of this event were published in Britain from December 24.^[89] It was only once British women had been evacuated from Lucknow that their lives under siege could begin to be represented. For example, in mid-January, the *Lady’s Newspaper* printed a General Order by Sir Colin Campbell and the *Narrative of the Defence of Lucknow* by Brigadier Inglis. In the former, Campbell wrote that “the preserving constancy of this small garrison, under the watchful command of the Brigadier, has, under Providence, been the means of adding to the prestige of the British army and of preserving the honour and lives of our countrywomen”.^[90] In the latter account, Inglis described “the patient endurance and the Christian resignation which have been evinced by the women of the garrison. They have animated us by their example”.^[91] The daily



Figure 7. Colonel John Inglis, Julia Inglis, and two of their three children. Source: *Illustrated London News*, 28 November 1857.

dangers of life under siege were described for the first time with, for example, the *Lady's Newspaper* reporting that “it was by no means an easy matter to move the ladies out of the place in which they had so long borne up against privations and danger with more than heroic fortitude”,^[92] while the *Illustrated London News* stated that “the privations endured by the heroic garrison, and particularly by the ladies, were fearful”.^[93] As these examples suggest, it was only possible to represent the evacuated women as survivors and as heroines once they had travelled away from Lucknow, where they had been out of place, under threat, and suffering privations and dangers.

Newspaper reports about such women increased as they travelled closer to the safety of Allahabad and Calcutta.^[94] Both of these places were a safe distance away from Lucknow that offered both imperial and domestic security. The first steamer to arrive in Calcutta in January 1858 was welcomed with Royal salutes, a red carpet, an official welcoming party, and a crowd of onlookers on the quay, reflecting “the deep but cordial sympathy of the whole European population”.^[95] The Lucknow ‘heroines’ were represented in person for the first time by English-language newspapers published in Britain and India, which reported, for example, that

The black dresses of most of the ladies told the tale of their bereavement, whilst the pallid faces, the downcast looks, and the slow walk, bore evidence of the great sufferings

they must have undergone both in mind and body. The solemn procession thus passed on, and was handed into carriages which conveyed them to their temporary home.^[96]

Many British women found their temporary homes in Calcutta with friends or relatives or in houses provided by the Lucknow Relief Committee. It was possible to represent these women as ‘heroines’ because they were living not only in a place of imperial but also a place of domestic security. Far away from the dangers of Lucknow, the evacuated British women could finally be represented as ‘at home’ both in the capital of British India and also in an appropriately feminine domestic sphere.

Conclusions

The ‘mutiny’ of 1857–8 posed an unprecedented threat to British rule in India and its consequences for imperial rule and the place of British women in India were far-reaching. During the uprising, newspaper accounts, parliamentary debates and visual images represented the severity of the threat posed to British residents, homes and rule in India by focusing on the fate of British women. The imperial conflict was represented through discourses of defilement on embodied and domestic scales. And yet, these discourses were contested and place-specific rather than hegemonic and universal. As shown by the different opinions expressed in the *Englishwoman’s Review* and the *Lady’s Newspaper*, and by the controversial limits of representing the fate of British women in written accounts and paintings, these discourses of defilement were contested in ways that both reaffirmed and destabilized the inviolability of a white, Christian femininity. At the same time, the fate of British women was represented both in viscerally embodied ways and in terms of the absence of British women from different sites of conflict. Events at Cawnpore were represented in ways that concentrated on the fate of British women in terms of embodiment and displacement. While the first eyewitnesses described the bodies of British women in graphic terms, subsequent accounts focused on the place where they had been imprisoned and killed. British women at Lucknow were also represented through their absence from the site of conflict. Representations of British women increased once they had been evacuated from the Residency and had travelled to a place of imperial and domestic security. While the Bibighar at Cawnpore was reinscribed by British soldiers visiting and reclaiming the place where British women had died, the Residency at Lucknow continued to be a site of conflict until March 1858. In symbolic as well as strategic terms, representations of British women travelling away from Lucknow helped to deflect attention from the ongoing fighting. In different ways, images of British women as victims and as survivors of the uprising suggest that their ultimately unrepresentable fate was spatially inscribed through their paradoxical embodiment at, and displacement from, sites of conflict. While the victims of the uprising at Cawnpore were reflected and avenged through the Bibighar as a site of domestic defilement, the survivors of the siege of Lucknow could only be represented as heroines once they had travelled to a place of domestic and imperial security.

The ‘mutiny’ had far-reaching implications for British rule in India. Its main constitutional consequence was the Royal Proclamation of November 1, 1858 and subsequent Government of India Acts, which replaced the rule of the East India Company with that of the British Crown. As Metcalf argues, “although not often apparent on the surface, the India of the Queen was markedly different from the India of the Company”^[97] because the uprising had disrupted not only the formal structures of imperial rule but also the imperial representations that had legitimized such rule. As Bernard Cohn has shown, the ‘mutiny’ led to significant changes in the increasingly

formalized, ritualized and often spectacular display of British authority in India. Memories of 1857–8 continued to shape representations of imperial identity and authority to the British themselves. According to Cohn,

The Mutiny was seen as a heroic myth embodying and expressing [the] central values [of the British] which explained their rule in India to themselves—sacrifice, duty, fortitude; above all it symbolised the ultimate triumph over those Indians who had threatened properly constituted authority and order.^[98]

Representations of the fate of British women during the uprising also exerted a considerable influence on the reconstruction of British homes and British rule in India after 1858. Memories of the ‘mutiny’ were directly responsible for a growing distance between British rulers and their Indian subjects. Many commentators claimed that this growing distance was to a great extent caused by memories of the fate of British women during the uprising and exacerbated by the increasing numbers of British women living in India after 1858. The uprising of 1857–8 was represented through embodied and domestic discourses of defilement that were contested and place-specific. Representations of the fate of British women in newspaper accounts, parliamentary debates and visual images had material effects not only in the suppression of the uprising but also in the reconstruction of imperial rule.

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Notes

- [1] ‘India in England,’ *Calcutta Review*, June 1857, 335–63, 335.
- [2] See M. L. Bhargava, *Saga of 1857: Success and Failures* (New Delhi 1992) and S. B. Chaudhuri, *English Historical Writings on the Indian Mutiny 1857–9* (Calcutta 1979) for a historiography and bibliography of the ‘mutiny’. The causes of the uprising were and are contested. Imperial histories have tended to focus on the rumour that cartridges for new Enfield rifles had been greased with beef and pork fat. Biting into such cartridges would thus break the religious faith of both Hindu and Muslim infantry soldiers known as sepoys. In contrast, most contemporary debates about the causes of the ‘mutiny’ focused on the organization of the Bengal army; a widening distance between British officers and sepoys; and the annexation of the province of Oudh in 1856.
- [3] Graham Dawson has described the uprising as “the first ‘national-popular’ imperialist war fought by Britain in its Empire”. See G. Dawson, *The imperial adventure hero and British masculinity: the imagining of Sir Henry Havelock*, in T. Foley *et al.* (Eds), *Gender and Colonialism* (Galway 1995) 46–59, 47–8. The conflict continued to shape imperial imaginations about India after 1858, as shown by the publication of a wide range of imperial histories, including, for example: W. H. Fitchett, *The Tale of the Great Mutiny* (London

- 1902); G. W. Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny* (Edinburgh 1904); J. W. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India 1857–58* (London 1876); and G. B. Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857* (London 1891). More than 50 English novels about the ‘mutiny’ were published between 1857 and 1900 and 30 more appeared before 1939. See P. Brantlinger, *The Well at Cawnpore: literary representations of the Indian Mutiny of 1857*, in idem, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830–1914* (Ithaca 1988); and N. Paxton, *Mobilizing chivalry: rape in British novels about the Indian uprising of 1857*, *Victorian Studies* 36 (1992) 5–30, 7.
- [4] See, for example, G. Bhadra, *Four rebels of eighteen-fifty-seven*, in R. Guha and G. C. Spivak (Eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies I* (Oxford 1992); R. Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi 1983); J. Pemble, *The Raj, the Indian Mutiny and the Kingdom of Oudh 1801–1859* (London 1977); and E. Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India* (Cambridge 1978).
- [5] T. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857–1870* (Princeton 1965) 60.
- [6] K. Marx and F. Engels, *The First Indian War of Independence 1857–1859* (Moscow 1959) 83.
- [7] See, for example, M. Cooke and A. Woollacott (Eds), *Gendering War Talk* (Princeton 1993); C. Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women’s Lives* (Boston 1983); and B. Melman (Ed.), *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870–1930* (New York 1998). Referring to World War I, Melman writes that “both the material experience of the war and its representation are still largely seen in relation to a divide between a war zone (forbidden to women) and its rear, or the home front, the place of both genders, but mainly of women. Subsequently, much of the recent study of women ‘in’ or ‘during’ the war has been devoted to the closest female equivalents to the combatant man: military nurses, munitions workers, and women who served in armies in a variety of auxiliary roles”, 3. The essays in *Borderlines* seek to blur the boundaries between spaces of feminized domesticity and masculinized war.
- [8] Including G. Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London 1994); A. Davin, *Imperialism and motherhood*, *History Workshop Journal* 5 (1978) 9–65; P. Thane, *The British imperial state and the construction of national identities*, in Melman *op. cit.*, J. Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids: Women who Dressed as Men in the Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness* (London 1989); and A. Woollacott, *On her their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Berkeley 1994).
- [9] M. Higonnet, *Civil wars and sexual territories*, in H. Cooper, A. Munich and S. Squier (Eds), *Arms and the Woman: War, Gender and Literary Representation* (Chapel Hill 1989); A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York 1995); and K. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*. Vol. 1, *Women, Floods, Bodies, History* (Minneapolis 1987) and Vol. 2, *Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror* (Minneapolis 1989).
- [10] M. Kamester and J. Vellacott (Eds), *Militarism versus Feminism: Writings on Women and War* (London 1987); J. Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (Sydney 1996); and S. Ruddick, *Notes towards a feminist peace politics*, in Cooke and Woollacott *op. cit.*
- [11] Cooke and Woollacott *op. cit.*, xi.
- [12] See, for example, J. Robinson, *Angels of Albion: Women of the Indian Mutiny* (London 1996); J. Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis 1993); and P. Tuson, *Mutiny narratives and the imperial feminine: European women’s accounts of the rebellion in India in 1857*, *Women’s Studies International Forum* 21 (1998) 291–303.
- [13] *Bengal Hurkaru*, 12 June 1857.
- [14] As shown, most notably, in the three hour speech Disraeli made in Parliament on 27 July 1857.
- [15] Earl of Ellenborough, 29 June 1857, Hansard *op. cit.* Vol. CXLVI, 518. Lord Ellenborough had been Governor General in India from 1842 to 1844 and had been President of the Board of Control four times between 1828 and 1858. Metcalf, *op. cit.*
- [16] *Times*, 27 July 1857.
- [17] *Illustrated London News*, 4 July 1857.
- [18] *Bengal Hurkaru*, 11 May 1857.
- [19] *Times*, 7 August 1857.

- [20] *Illustrated London News*, 5 September 1857.
- [21] See M. Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester 1995), for further discussion.
- [22] *Times*, 8 August 1857.
- [23] *Illustrated London News*, 22 August 1857.
- [24] *Blackwoods Magazine*, December 1857.
- [25] J. Sharpe, The unspeakable limits of rape: colonial violence and counter-insurgency, *Genders* 10 (1991) 25–46; and Sharpe, 1993 *op. cit.* Also see Paxton *op. cit.* for discussion of the fictional representation of British women as victims of the 'mutiny' in the years after 1858.
- [26] *Times*, 6 August 1857.
- [27] Sharpe, *op. cit.*, 67.
- [28] *Times*, 8 August 1857.
- [29] *Illustrated London News*, 8 August 1857.
- [30] *Englishwoman's Review*, 8 August 1857.
- [31] *Englishwoman's Review*, 1, 1857, cited by Beetham, *op. cit.*
- [32] *Ibid.*
- [33] V. Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London 1992) 40. In her discussion, Ware makes the erroneous assumption that the *Englishwoman's Review* was "the only women's newspaper published at that time". *Ibid.*, 39.
- [34] *Lady's Newspaper*, 29 August 1857.
- [35] *Lady's Newspaper*, 1851, cited by M. Beetham, *A Magazine of her own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800–1914* (London 1996) 91.
- [36] *Lady's Newspaper*, 19 September 1857.
- [37] *Lady's Newspaper*, 29 August 1857.
- [38] *Ibid.*
- [39] *Ibid.*
- [40] *Lady's Newspaper*, 3 October 1857. For an account of the ideological significance of popular perceptions of Florence Nightingale in the nineteenth century, see chapter 6 in M. Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago 1988). For more on the philanthropic work of middle-class women in nineteenth-century Britain as an extension of the domestic sphere, see B. Harrison, *Philanthropy and the Victorians, Victorian Studies* 9 (1966) 353–74; and F. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford 1980). Other commentators have suggested that transgressions beyond the private sphere into more public arenas of philanthropy and social policy could provide important channels for radical political activity by women, as discussed by J. Rendall, *Friendship and politics: Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827–91) and Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829–1925)*, in S. Mendus and J. Rendall (Eds), *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century* (London 1989).
- [41] *Lady's Newspaper*, 17 October, 1857.
- [42] *Lady's Newspaper*, 31 October, 1857.
- [43] M. Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (London 1859). Captain Mowbray Thomson wrote that he and Lieutenant Delafosse were the two male survivors of Cawnpore, who, together with two soldiers who subsequently died, had escaped by boat on June 27.
- [44] Letter from Louise Chalwin to her sister Maria, 11 April 1857. MSS.Eur.B.344, India Office Library.
- [45] Letter from Louise Chalwin to her sister Maria, 30 April 1857. Louise Chalwin and Isobel White had been friends in Taunton, Somerset, and travelled to India together in 1855.
- [46] W. H. Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary* (London 1957) 36.
- [47] Nineteenth century accounts of events at Cawnpore include J. Shepherd, *A Personal Narrative of the Outbreak and Massacre at Cawnpore, during the Sepoy Revolt of 1857* (Lucknow 1894); Thomson, *op. cit.*; and G. Trevelyan, *Cawnpore* (London 1886). For a more recent debate, see R. Mukherjee, 'Satan let loose upon Earth': The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857, *Past and Present* 128 (1990) 92–116; B. English, *Debate: The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857, Past and Present* 142 (1994) 169–78; and Mukherjee's reply, 178–89. Also see A. Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered: The Cawnpore Massacres in the Indian Mutiny of 1857* (London 1996).
- [48] Earl Granville, 14 August 1857, *Hansard (Parliamentary Debates)*, CXLVII, 164.
- [49] The popularity of such representations was not confined to newspapers. Metcalf cites Trevelyan when he writes that "Even at home . . . a favourite amusement on a wet afternoon

- for a party in a country house was to sit on and about the billiard table devising tortures for the Nana”, Metcalf, *op. cit.*, 290.
- [50] *Lady's Newspaper*, 19 September 1857. See Sharpe, 1993, *op. cit.*, for further discussion of the implications of such dehumanization.
- [51] *Illustrated London News*, 5 September 1857.
- [52] As Sherer wrote, “this appellation does not mean the ‘ladies’ house’ as indicating the spot where the ladies were killed; the building had the name previous to the Mutiny. It was understood to have been a dwelling provided by a European for his Indian mistress”. J. W. Sherer, *Daily Life During the Indian Mutiny: Personal Experiences of 1857* (Allahabad 1910) 78. The building also came to be known as ‘the Slaughter House’.
- [53] Parallels, and differences, clearly exist with the status of scientific knowledge acquired through direct observation, often ‘in the field’. However, representations of the fate of British women in the Bibighar were more vivid, impassioned, and have been interpreted as sensationalist, unlike the detached objectivity often assumed to buttress scientific credibility. See G. Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge 1993) for further discussion.
- [54] *Englishwoman's Review*, 19 September 1857.
- [55] *Illustrated London News and Lady's Newspaper*, 19 September 1857.
- [56] *Illustrated London News and Englishwoman's Review*, 26 September 1857.
- [57] Quoted in Forrest, *op. cit.*, xi and Shepherd, *op. cit.*, 158.
- [58] *Illustrated London News and Englishwoman's Review*, 10 October 1857.
- [59] *Englishwoman's Review*, 19 September 1857. This was also printed in other newspapers, such as the *Illustrated London News*.
- [60] Sharpe, 1993, *op. cit.* As Sharpe also shows, popular stories about Judith Wheeler often cited conflicting evidence, and the veracity of such stories came to be questioned by, for example, Trevelyan.
- [61] *The Englishwoman's Review*, for example, printed a letter on 3 October 1857 written by General Neill in which he wrote that “the well of mutilated bodies—alas! containing upwards of two hundred women and children—I have had decently covered in and built up as one large grave”.
- [62] *Illustrated London News and Englishwoman's Review*, 26 September 1857.
- [63] *Illustrated London News and Englishwoman's Review*, 10 October 1857.
- [64] Russell, *op. cit.*, 35.
- [65] *Englishwoman's Review*, 19 September 1857.
- [66] *Illustrated London News*, 26 September 1857. See C. Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny: India 1857* (London 1978) for further discussion.
- [67] *Bengal Hurkaru*, 25 November 1857.
- [68] For similar visual representations of the Bibighar, see C. W. Crump, *A Pictorial Record of the Cawnpore Massacre: Three Original Sketches Taken on the Spot* (London 1858); and T. Moore, *Cawnpore and Lucknow During the Mutiny of 1857–8: Diary, Sketches, Photographs and Plans*, Additional Papers 37151, British Library, the Maps and Plans accompanying Moore's Diary, Additional Papers 37152 British Library, and Twenty-Six Coloured Views accompanying Moore's Diary, Additional Papers 37153 British Library.
- [69] P. Harrington, *British Artists and War: The Face of Battle in Paintings and Prints, 1700–1914* (London 1993).
- [70] *Illustrated Times*, 8 May 1858 cited by Harrington *op. cit.*
- [71] *The Art Journal*, 1858, and the *Times*, 1 and 22 May 1858, cited by Harrington *op. cit.*
- [72] *Illustrated London News*, 15 May 1858, cited by Harrington *op. cit.* Indeed, as Harrington also writes, the Hanging Committee at the Royal Academy had debated whether to exhibit the painting.
- [73] General Havelock died of dysentery in November 1857 after the evacuation of the Lucknow Residency, which will be discussed below. See Dawson, *op. cit.*, for more on representations of Havelock as an imperial hero.
- [74] Harrington *op. cit.* The engraving was made by Alexander Hill of Edinburgh after the painting had been re-exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1859.
- [75] From the Introduction by M. Edwardes in M. Germon, *Journal of the Siege of Lucknow: An Episode of the Indian Mutiny* (London 1957) 17.
- [76] M. Innes, *Lucknow and Oude in the Mutiny: A Narrative and A Study* (London 1895). Estimates of the numbers under siege at Lucknow vary. Innes states that there were 3000

- people under siege, of whom 1392 were Indian and 1608 were British and others of European descent. Innes also estimates that there were 1720 combatants and 1280 non-combatants.
- [77] Despite its lack of success, the date of the first ‘relief’—September 25—came to be known as Lucknow Day in the years following the ‘mutiny’ and was marked by an annual dinner of survivors. Arthur Dashwood, who was born during the siege, wrote that annual commemorative dinners continued until 1913. A. F. Dashwood, ‘Untimely arrival at the siege of Lucknow’, *The Listener*, 2 December 1936, reprinted in C. Brydon, *The Lucknow Siege Diary of Mrs C. M. Brydon* edited and published by C. deL. W. fford.
- [78] Hibbert, *op. cit.*
- [79] ‘*The Solomon Family of Painters*’, *Exhibition Catalogue*, The Geffrye Museum, London, 1985, 56. Thanks to Adrienne Avery-Gray at The Museum and Art Gallery of Leicester and Louise West at The Geffrye Museum for their help.
- [80] *Englishwoman’s Review*, 12 September 1857.
- [81] *Bengal Hurkaru*, 30 September 1857.
- [82] *Times*, 30 September 1857.
- [83] *Times*, 1 October 1857. In addition, Karl Marx wrote that “we must now expect to hear of the capture of the place by starvation, and the massacre of its brave defenders with their wives and children” in *New York Daily Tribune*, 13 October 1857, reprinted in K. Marx and F. Engels, *The First Indian War of Independence 1857–1859* (Moscow 1959). The *Illustrated London News* identified the two main threats to the British population at Lucknow as starvation and the presence of ‘that ineffable villain’ Nana Sahib. *Illustrated London News*, 3 October 1857.
- [84] Sir Charles Napier, 10 October 1857, Hansard (Parliamentary Debates), CXLVIII, 507. In her diary about the siege of Lucknow, Katherine Bartrum wrote that “my husband always consoled me with the promise that should things come to the worst he would destroy me with his own hand rather than let me fall into the power of those brutal Sepoys”. K. Bartrum, *A Widow’s Reminiscences of the Siege of Lucknow* (London 1858) 10. Some women at Lucknow kept poison to take if the Residency fell, while others saw their fate as wholly in the hands of a Christian God. According to Adelaide Case, “some of the ladies keep laudanum and prussic acid always near them. I can scarcely think it right to have recourse to such means; it appears to me that all we have to do is, to endeavour, as far as we can, to be prepared for our death, and leave the rest in the hands of Him who knows what is best for us”. A. Case, *Day by Day at Lucknow: A Journal of the Siege of Lucknow* (London 1858) 118. For more on the diaries written by British women at Lucknow, see A. Blunt, *Travelling home and empire: British women in India, 1857–1939*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia 1997; Sharpe *op. cit.*; and Tuson *op. cit.*
- [85] *Lady’s Newspaper*, 14 November 1857.
- [86] *Times*, 14 November 1857.
- [87] *Times*, 16 November 1857. John Inglis assumed command of the defence of Lucknow after the death of Sir Henry Lawrence on 4 July 1857. Inglis was born in Nova Scotia in 1814 and served in the 32nd Foot from 1833 until his death in 1862. In 1851, he married Julia Thesiger, daughter of the first Lord Chelmsford who had left his family estate in St Vincent to study law in London and who became Lord Chancellor in 1858. Julia Inglis published two accounts of the siege of Lucknow. See *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XXIX, and Vol. LVI (London 1898).
- [88] Earl of Derby, 8 December 1857; Hansard (Parliamentary Debates), CXLVIII, 317.
- [89] On 24 December, the *Times* stated that news of the relief had been sent by telegram from Lucknow on November 19 and arrived at Alexandria on December 19 and Malta on December 23.
- [90] General Order from Sir Colin Campbell, 21 November 1857, quoted in *The Lady’s Newspaper*, 16 January 1858.
- [91] ‘Brigadier Inglis’s Narrative of the Defence of Lucknow’, 26 September 1857, quoted in *Lady’s Newspaper*, 16 January 1858.
- [92] *Lady’s Newspaper*, 16 January 1858.
- [93] *Illustrated London News*, 9 January 1858.
- [94] See A. Blunt, ‘The flight from Lucknow: British women travelling and writing home’, in J. Duncan and D. Gregory (Eds), *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing* (London 1999), for more on representations of and by British women as they travelled away from Lucknow.
- [95] *Lady’s Newspaper*, 20 February 1858.

[96] *Ibid.*

[97] Metcalf, *op. cit.*, vii. Metcalf contextualizes the 'mutiny' and its implications in terms of Victorian liberalism, arguing that it marked a departure from liberal ideas of improvement to a more cautious, conservative era of imperial rule.

[98] B. Cohn, Representing authority in Victorian India, in B. Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi 1987) 647. Particular places imbued with heroic myths of the 'mutiny' shaped a new imperial geography of India in the years after 1857. Travelling around central and north India on the clear itinerary of a 'mutiny tour', visiting the entrenchments and memorial church at Cawnpore and the Residency at Lucknow, helped British residents and visitors to imagine their place as imperial rulers. See M. Goswami, 'Englishness' on the imperial circuit: mutiny tours in colonial South Asia, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 9 (1996) 54–84.