

**A FAMILIAL TURN: A STUDY OF *THE DUTT*
FAMILY ALBUM (1870)**

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DHRUPADI CHATTOPADHYAY



**Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067 (India)
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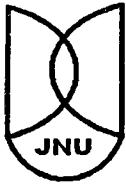


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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This dissertation titled “**A Familial Turn: A Study of *The Dutt Family Album (1870)***” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

Dhrupadi Chattopadhyay
(Dhrupadi Chattopadhyay)
M.Phil. student
CES/SLL&CS
JNU



Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067, India

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY Date: 28.7.09

CERTIFICATE

This dissertation titled "**A Familial Turn: A Study of *The Dutt Family Album (1870)***" submitted by **Mrs. Dhrupadi Chattopadhyay**, Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

(Prof. G.J.V.PRASAD)
SUPERVISER

Prof. GJV PRASAD
Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067

(Prof. SANTOSH K SAREEN)
CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson
CES/SLL & CS
J.N.U., New Delhi-67

Gram: JAYENU, Tel: 26704231, FAX: 91-011-26165886

Acknowledgement

In a world where education is predominantly verbal, highly educated people find it all but impossible to pay serious attention to anything but words and notions. There is always money for, there are always doctorates in, the learned foolery of research into what, for scholars, is the all-important problem: Who influenced whom to say what when?

--- Aldous Huxley

My humble effort in the manner of this dissertation, I realize, has just contributed to the circuit of Ws (who, what, whom, when...). But this realization is a vital part of this dissertation, perhaps more than the written text itself. At the terminal stage of this dissertation Prof Prasad remarked that if one hasn't realized that this dissertation is full of mishaps one hasn't matured in the course of the Mphil. So, my 'sequence of mishaps' has in effect initiated an academic journey. Without his witty remarks, his pointed questions and his patience, this dissertation wouldn't have materialized. Words are not enough to express my gratitude to the man who has gently nurtured my academic sensibilities for the past four years. The germ of this dissertation owes its parentage to the late evening classes of the Indian Writing in English Course of the M.A. days where Prof. Prasad introduced me to nineteenth century Indian English Poetry.

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Introduction

What shall I do with this life? What is to be done with it? This question has haunted me since my youth and all my life I have searched for an answer.

----- Bankim Chandra Chatterji¹

The poetic past of nineteenth century India is coloured with the angst of paralysis and inaction. With Bankim's lines quoted above the focus shifts again to the quintessential angst, of the colonized looking for a 'historical presence' faced with the possibility of erasure in colonial time. Both in the later inimical post-colonial responses and in the earlier colonial framework, colonial time appears to be all encompassing and always in excess. The colonial modern has lived his life of contradictions both as a victim and a winner of the historical circumstances. The politics of presences and absences perhaps best represent the historical tension of contradictions. In the wrath of colonial time, the colonial modern was often the subject of marginal memories, and a veritable part of a seemingly insurmountable grand narrative design. Bankim's discovering 'national pride'² as a requisite to an indigenous history or Tagore encountering struggles 'under a crushing load of unreason in abject slavery to circumstance';³ aptly illustrate the dilemma of the colonial subject that vacillated between a 'presence' and a 'non-presence'. Colonial official discourses usurped the rights of 'presence' of colonial subjects and even when they were granted a presence it almost already presupposed a silent presence, bereft of subjective shades. The narrative space by virtue of its generic allowances is perhaps the only route to subjectivity that the colonial intellectual subject had at his disposal. It is through the narratorial route that the colonial subject often tried to negotiate this critical balance. The narrative agency also provides for fissures and porous spaces where this dyad could be addressed. Ironically, the dialectics of presence, non-presence and absence therefore has given the colonial modern subject a subjective edge to record his presence, which is often in the form of interventions.

¹ Quoted in Das, Sisir Kumar.p.12.

² Chowdhury, Indira. p.40.

³ Quoted in Datta, K.K.p.35.

Interesting modes of representations take centre stage when the angst finds its voice in the literary domain. The literary landscape of the nineteenth century often engaged in registering its presence in the face of discourses authorized by colonialism. Literature situated at the crossroads of instrumentation and improvisation provides a small window through which acts of intervention could be articulated. The literary subject of the Bengal Renaissance proved to be this 'speaking' link between presence and non-presence. While this speech act of the writers in Bengali met with applause that of the Indian English writers met with scorn smirks and culminated into the overwhelming charge of mimicry. E.E. Spright's collection of prose by Indian authors seems to have been from 'a class who may be interpreters' (Macaulay),⁴ "the men and women who have written the following pages stand for me as symbols of a power of adaptation which is so much more astonishing because it comes from people who in other ways are so conservative..." (p.xvi).

The poetry of Indians writing in English in the nineteenth century is not merely silenced by the critics of its age but it has continued to suffer historically as well. Mimicry was just one of the many problems that it had to contest. It was charged of imitation and therefore it bore the incapacity to respond to the needs of an emergent nationalism, which later became the identifying politics of Indian literature. In 'Some Aspects of Historiography of Colonial India' Ranajit Guha points out that one of the primary problems with the colonialist and neo-colonialist historiography has been their desire to map Indian nationalism as "primarily an action of stimulus and response"⁵. This causal connection has dominated the landscape of literary studies as well. Often heterogeneous associations were deemed problematic. Rosinka Chaudhari observes, "At the same time, an emergent nationalism in the nineteenth century now made the mother tongue more important in the consciousness of the middle class in Bengal"(p.4). Availability of dramatic engagements with colonialism in the mother tongue forced the Indian English writers to take a back seat. Nation, opines Bankim, could be written only in the mother tongue and therefore in the annals of the histories of Indian English writing, the nineteenth century authors were promptly orphaned. The nineteenth century agreed that 'nation' was the future and the mother tongue offered posterity as its winning horse. The linguistic demands of the age alienated the Indian writers in English when the century gave itself to posterity.

⁴ Quoted in Yong, G.M. p.722.

⁵ Guha, Ranajit. p.53.

The Post- Independence critics did not do much justice to them either. In a bid to find the necessary Indian national idiom in the poetry of the Indian writers in English of the nineteenth century they were paraded as the poets in the act of 'becoming'. They were presented as the players of a process of continuity; the just predecessors of an independent body of Indian English writing⁶. In terms of the retrospective literary historical scholarship it has since then emerged as a historical marker (which constantly reminded one of transition). This transitional movement was in tune with what Homi Bhaba calls 'continuous narrative of national progress' (p.221).

Indian English poetry of the nineteenth century did not find takers even with the later scholarship because it was overshadowed by the fastidious necessity to write the nation. The national question was of prime importance and hence the form that represented the becoming of the 'nation' invariably seized the centre stage of academics. "In the last quarter of the nineteenth century", says Meenakshi Mukherjee, "two beginnings were witnessed in India, the emergence of the idea of the nation and the appearance of a new artifact of the imagination called the novel." (p.2). Mukherjee's comment is far from an exquisitely crafted individualized comment on the nineteenth century; rather it is a part of a larger intellectual exercise which continued to position the nation at the centre of the discursive domain. The nation and its representations emerged as the centre of academic discourses. This comment is emblematic of the neglect that poetry as a genre has long suffered at the hands of the critical theorists. It was not the national form and certainly not written in a national tongue/tongues so it stands uncomfortable in the nationalist academic net. Hence, the poetry of the nineteenth century has been deftly appropriated as the primitive form, waiting to find its authentic voice. The poetry of the Indian Writing in English has found very few takers because it has been historically crippled by both form and content. It could neither speak for the nation nor become the 'form' that represented the nation. The departure from this formulation, the likes of Rosinka Chaudhari, GJV Prasad, etc, have painstakingly tried to prove the allegiance of these poets to the national question. Chaudhari parades them as 'proto-nationalists' looking for acts of subversion while clearly admitting defeat at the question of any literary prowess. She also states in this context that perhaps they were the first ones to have visualized the nation as a unified

⁶ see M.K.Naik, Srinivasa Iyengar, Paul Varghese, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, A.N. Dwivedi etc

political entity. While the earlier literary historians find it difficult to place these poets in the channel of a native/ nationalistic framework, Rosinka assuages the poets of such charges. “The emphasis here, thus, is with that underlying subtext in the poems-Orientalist history, nationhood – that gave to a generation of poets a language with which to speak of India, even if paradoxically, it was a language that was not their own.”(p.7). It is finally a participant in the representation of the nationalist circuit. Eventually in the post-Independence scholarship the nineteenth century poetry finds itself as an object of historical and sociological importance stripped of any literary contribution whatsoever. It just silently documents in the literary histories of a presence that was responsible for recording the beginnings of a now vibrant and commercially viable genre of Indian writing in English. Colonial modernity’s bid to fame and acceptance came with the sense of a progressive movement, deriving its roots from the European Enlightenment rationality. The poetry is but a document of historicity of the movement called ‘modernity’. The poetics of the nineteenth century is pregnant with the historicities of the nation and ‘modernity’.

Challenged by the earlier repeated dismissals, the text of our concern in this academic venture proposes to dismantle major critical claims about the nineteenth century Indian English Poetry. The text that we study here, *The Dutt Family Album*, in the annals of Indian writing in English, is but a shadowy tome, documenting the gradual growth of the genre from imitation to ‘authenticity’. Unlike its contemporaries, most of whom have faded into oblivion this book stands in the literary histories primarily because it was the literature produced by, if we may take the liberty of calling, the first family of Indian English Poetry. Almost everybody in the extended family of the Dutts of Rambagan exercised the might of the pen. Hur Chunder Dutt, Oomesh Chunder Dutt, Greece Chunder Dutt, Govind Chunder Dutt, Shoshee Chunder Dutt, Aru and Toru Dutt all belong to the family of the earliest clan of Indian English writers. They were a prosperous group of Hindu converts to Christianity belonging to the clan of the famous businessman of Rambagan at Calcutta, Rosomoy Dutt. He was in turn very close to the famous missionary Orientalist, William Carey of Sreerampore. Rosinka Chaudhari while introducing the *The Dutt Family Album* to the readers of the history of Indian English literature turns to their religious affiliation for documentation. This religious aspect of the Dutt family weighs heavy on its critics almost rationalizing their

choice of poetry and the language that they use. Without exception almost all the documentations of the text begin with the well charted route of their Christian affiliations. Their religious affiliation was read as a fixed category capable of explaining and ironing out differences and deeper problematics. The conversion from Hinduism to Christianity was almost presented as a footnote to their poetry. Partha Chatterjee has rightly said that 'history is always the product of the present' (2002, p.17). If we could extend this argument to rope in criticism at large, we could well state that criticism is always already informed by the present. As Peter Van De Veer observes:

The success of industrialization, science and technology has made religion in the modern world obsolete. In sociological theories of modernity the transition from the pre-modern, rural community to the modern, industrial and urbanized society is said to be marked by the decline of religion as an expression of the moral unity of the society.(p.7)

Religion, however, in the context of the critical history, remained as a historical given. Both their literary choice and their authorial entity received nourishment from this historical absolute. Here one would like to turn to Tanika Sarkar for some timely intervention where she suggests that religious conversion studies have always concentrated on missionaries and their activities and has rarely documented otherwise. Not only has there been a dearth in the scholarship of the same, there has always been the problem of accommodating minority religious identities in the national politics. When one turns to the politics of the present for some solace, one encounters religious fragmentations and sterilization of spaces. In this 'context impelling cohesive national identities become the norm'⁷. The relationship between theology and sociology in the context of conversion becomes germane to this discussion. Rowena Robinson observes that the act of conversion cannot merely limit itself to 'God-Talk'. The theo-logos (which literally means 'discourse about God') has to accommodate not only world (cosmos) and God (theos) but most importantly the human being (andros)⁸. All these elements appear

⁷ See for eg. Gauri Vishwanathan. 1998.

⁸ Robinson. p. 3

as mutually exclusive categories in the national question. Therefore the sociological context of the conversion remains distinct from its theological counterpart. Writing on religion or reading into religious fermentations and associations become an act that often engenders anomaly. Monika Wohlrab-Sahr borrows Thomas Luckmann's term to suggest that perhaps this is a result of 'invisible religion'. Our associations and debates about religion since then have been marked by "the growing independence of religious phenomenon from their organizational representation" (p.170). Hence, when the literary historians harp on the religious identity of the Dutts, they represent it in the episodic form. It functions perfectly well in the schema of the disjunct between the 'theos' and the 'andros'. The break therefore functions as a release that allows the normal course of history to continue. The convert Dutt poets thus stand as an easy incongruity and hence do not account for any threat to the construction of the literary history of Indian Writing in English. Reading convert literary identities as the reason for ruptures in the flow of 'progressive' historicization is an easy course. This episodic break allowed the critics to integrate this with the larger continuous history. This dissertation holds the opinion that the text offers itself to a host of bellicose historical forces which resist such easy assumptions. We would like to focus on the problems of this 'undesirable past'. The historical continuity in this dissertation thus acquires multiple hues.

Our proposed departure in this venture is not in the manner or in the style of a eulogy of post-colonialism erasing colonial complicities inherent in the text itself. Our aim is to expose other variants or tools of looking at the text (which was a unique literary artifact in its time). Its inimitability emerges from its inability to subscribe to any of the other dominant modes of organized literary representations of its time. It is a collection that boasts of 172 poems written in various forms and which does not carry the names of any of the individual contributors. It is with the recognition that the language that the Dutts have used (English) carried limitations in an age when English education was fairly new and was gaining popularity that one begins to review this text. When we navigate the depths of the text it is not with the desire to reclaim the lost ground of 'authentic' and rich poetry (in terms of rhetorical quality) that we turn to *The Dutt Family Album*. Recognizing the influence of the Victorian and romantic modes of poetry writing, primarily the two dominant styles of contemporary Europe, one instead turns to very

interesting machinations and innovations with the form and the content of the text. The configuration of the expressive styles in this text and their layering is fascinating and more so when one is constantly reminded of the fact that they were bad imitators of their Western counterparts. This dissertation will attempt to look at differential relational parameters (not necessarily complementary or antagonistic) with the colonial knowledge paradigm. Not only has the text struggled against its antagonists who hurled charges of mimicry, or railed against them for their inability of proving their literary presence in the potent mother-tongue (like Michael Madhusudan who turned to Bengali after having failed to establish himself as an English poet) it had also ‘apparently’ often forgotten to supply the national idiom. Rosinka Chaudhari states “The tone in which the critics have dealt with the poetry produced by the Dutt family has generally been dismissive. The Dutts were writing in an age when the greatest respect was reserved for men like Bankimchandra, who were propagating Bengali.”⁹

While we have used up a lot of print in telling ourselves about the necessity to look at our Indian literary past to remind us of our progressive ‘improvement’ in terms of form and content we have certainly missed the opportunity of looking at the text as a unique experiment in form and content.

The Dutts claim in the preface to their text that “But they venture on publication, not because they think their verses good, but in the hope that their book will be regarded, in some respects, as a curiosity.” (p.1). It reminds us of the preface of *Bengal Peasant Life* (1892) where Rev Lal Behari Dey introduces the text:

Gentle reader, I therefore purpose like a tradesman who though anxious to earn a penny, wishes to obtain it in a honest way, to tell you at once, in all sincerity and good faith, what you are to expect, and what you are not to expect in this hall of refreshment. (p.i)

Charting expectations from a text was an interesting trope that the nineteenth century authors employed. But situating the expectation at the vantage point of the ‘curious’ is a significant contribution of the Dutts to the understanding of the text.

⁹ Quoted in Mehrotra p.59

The 'curiosity' question can lead us to an easy evaluation on Saidian lines where nineteenth century Orientalist literature and scholarship invested their creative energies in formulating a distanced and exotic category of the 'curious'. India was invariably represented as a 'curious' deviant of the occident, a part of the monolithic East, lost and unfathomable. This image was paraded only after it was sieved, ordered and perfected for consumption. For once we put Saidian discursivities in the background and survey other alternative hues of the 'curiosity' lens.

We would like to explore the dimensions of this curiosity factor in the course of our discussion of the text. What did they intend when they teased the imagination of the Western audience? Was it just pandering the Orientalist ego of the West or a bid to gain legitimacy? One of the prime concerns of this dissertation is to investigate the texture of this 'curiosity'. It is with an inverted gaze of the 'curious' that we enter the text, discovering layers of experimentations with the limits of the apparently 'unassailable' Western knowledge paradigm. The 'curious' paradigm is an apt preface to a text that oozes of counter-transference. In the company of the Dutts we explore the text through all its ruptures. To aid a systematic study of the text, the dissertation has been divided into three chapters with a concluding section at the end.

The first chapter introduces a host of existing scholarship on the nineteenth century that influences the reading of the text. It specifically chooses to identify three key areas of approach to the nineteenth century Indian writing in English. Post-colonial studies, scholarship on the Renaissance in Bengal and a peek at the literary historiography of the poetry of the Indian writers in English in the nineteenth century. There have been sustained efforts post Independence to construct a cultural memory of the nineteenth century (that often oozed of a singular hegemonic cultural interaction between the colonizer and the colonized) where routes of deviance and difference were suitably silenced. Both in terms of later 'post-colonial' scholarship and the erstwhile colonizer's discourse, the colonial subject had always already occupied the position of the transcendental centre. Wading through the disciplined often sedimented layers of cultural memory, intact with moth balls and the smell of dust, one conceivably encounters in these writers the possibility of looking beyond the apparent direction of cultural flow. Perhaps this body of literature would merit a re-reading of the 'subject oriented

discourses'. It exposes how reading along the lines of modernity has resulted in these three approaches representing the colonial subject perpetually engaged in the act of 'becoming'. Interestingly enough, the early Indian English poets were resilient in accepting the parameters of this progression. This linear historicization was premised on the two registers of time and space. The poetry we propose to analyze, with their generic advantage, attempt at diluting and often expose the limits of both these registers.

Chapter two addresses the specific case of the *The Dutt Family Album*. It takes into account the interesting case of inter-textual interactions. The Dutt's dot their album with instances not only from their home turf but offer translations of poems from German and French and often Hebraic sources. This places the text in the order of comparative reference where cultures exchange notes. It disrupts the conceptualization of insular cultures as well as critically looks at a unique phenomenon of the East translating the West in heydays of the Orientalist enterprise. This 'counter-flow' is examined in the context of alternative interactive spaces.

Chapter three operates at the level of form critically examining the unique experiments that the Dutt's conduct with the form. The album as opposed to more structured forms of literary utterances allows porous entries into the colonial matrix. With the Bengal Renaissance the 'West' had 'arrived', everywhere, within the West and outside, in structures and in the minds of both the colonizer and the colonized. It seems to have pervaded the parlour and the streets (to borrow Sumonto Banerjee's phrase) alike. Dutt's explore the space of the literary to evade surveillance and a disciplinary prescience of the dominant trope of the colonial modernity, rationality. The choice of the interesting form of the album opens windows to probable oppositions of sterile black and white distinctions. As a unique form it engenders 'curiosity' even while it continuously tries to place itself at the crossroads of public and private spaces. The album therefore opens spaces for interactions hitherto considered as closed and sealed domains and manages to escape the strictures of both the machinations of the colonial knowledge systems and the dictates of the dominant tropes of the literary currents of its age.

According to the natural dictates of the text we approach it not through the disciplined but through the lens of the 'curious'.

Chapter 1: The Politics and Poetics of 'Presence'

It needs to be emphasized, perhaps, that the Indian colonial intelligentsia of the nineteenth century chose Indian languages not English, as their primary indeed overwhelmingly predominant, media for imaginative expression. 'Indo-Anglican' writing had to wait for post-colonial times to become a significant literary genre, under conditions of intensified Globalization.¹

The Indian Writing in English of the nineteenth century, as Sarkar notes, is marked by the sudden favour that it received with the post-colonial theorists. The nineteenth century literary economy in English had to wait a century for post-colonial scholarship to rescue it from the depths of time. While one admits that this charge carries significant weight, one perhaps needs to question the logicity of both the critical interest and the chronoscopic amnesia. The politics of this obstinate imaginary move from cultural specificities loaded with imperial gear to the metaphorical necessity of historicities². As specimens of historical interest, the Indian literature in English of the nineteenth century remained bounded within the expectations of Western historical co-ordinates of time and space. In this chapter we will not tread the charted routes of earlier critical approaches; instead we shall attempt to study other aspects of this literature of 'dismissal'. It is neither the passing of a proleptic future that we intend to document nor do we intend to present an encomium to them. In examining the poetry of the Dutts within this historical broth, one is faced with poetry that continuously contested definitive ideas about the restrictive co-ordinates of time and space. The poetry of the nineteenth century in effect tantalizingly invites the readers to access porous spaces, where these restrictive expectations can act as the basis for accessing the liminal. This is a humble attempt to record sequences of departures that scholarship on the nineteenth century has been unable to provide.

¹ Sumit Sarkar. p.174.

² For eg, see Jonathan Spencer, 1997.

I

That's no doorstep
It's a pillar on its side.

Yes.
That's what it is.

----- Arun Kolatkar

To claim that Post-colonial literary scholarship is a novel perception would be preposterous. In case of India, the coinage has traveled extensively from Creole categories like the Anglo-Indian, Indo-Anglican to commonwealth literature to the post-colonial and still contains the possibility of further movement. It has constantly aimed at modeling and re-modeling itself to suit the demands of the age. It marks its legitimacy by staking its claims as a voice of dissidence against its erstwhile colonial masters. It also claims to have displaced the centrality of the West in the academic arena and allowed some space for the significant "other". The long list of possibilities that it engenders has succeeded in providing it with a permanent berth in global literary studies. As Meenakshi Mukherjee piquantly points out "after having been accustomed for a long time to being actors without speaking parts in the world arena of English Studies, it is both flattering and exhilarating for us to be allowed a voice, and to suddenly find that the present moment in our narrow local existence is actually part of a broader historical process of global magnitude worthy of being theorized."(1996,p.9) Post-colonial scholarship amidst certain whimpering protests has since been given that extra gloss because it has apparently catapulted the 'non-speaking' subjects into the 'speaking' (albeit still in the margins) arena.

Hence, when Said says, "Empires and the imperial context" can no longer be ignored by the historians, in *Culture And Imperialism* (1993)³, we applaud and bask in the glory of our 'arrival' in the global intellectual arena. Our post-colonial analyses have often been dictated by the discoloured pages of colonial history and hence a post-colonialist's main objective has been to

³ Said, Edward. 1993. p.3

achieve that quintessential 'non-ignorance' of the West .We cannot but ignore the centrality of the West in even in our Post-colonial discourses. Even in a diffused state the West still continues to hegemonise our discourses that write back. Themselves pawns of history, cultural historians have often sought the custody of their European counterparts. According to Dipesh Chakrabarty,

That Europe works as a silent referent in historical knowledge itself becomes obvious in a highly ordinary way. There are at least two everyday symptoms of the subalternity of non-Western, third-world histories. Third-world historians feel the need to refer to the works in European history; historians of Europe do not feel any need to reciprocate. ... "They" produce their work in relative ignorance of non-western histories, and this does not seem to affect the quality of their work. This is a gesture however that we cannot return. (p.4)

The consolidated West, interestingly enough, has always maintained its axial position in terms of 'third-world' scholarship. Theoretical moorings in the third world, whether in its bellicose denial or its affable embrace, have both consciously and unconsciously placed the West at its very centre.

The journey from the scholarship on 'common wealth literature' to 'post-colonial' literary studies, suggest Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge have been tainted with the possibility of 'complicity'⁴: "the condemnation of Rushdie by Islamic post-colonial world raises interesting questions about the category of the post-colonial itself and also whether one can ever totally remove the stains of complicity with the Empire that come an appendage with the 'profession' of post-colonial writer" (p.277). Post-colonial criticism was not merely stained by insinuated colonial associations but also carried its legacy of self-referentiality. And Literature, according to Aijaz Ahmad,⁵ in our 'time' (as in the 'time of theory'), is symptomatic of our socio-political matrix. Ahmad here perhaps acts as the mouthpiece for the entire ilk of the post-colonial scholarly community and speaks of the post-colonial scholarship as the 'time' of the colonized. Warns Khair, " However, it is the colonial that is privileged in the post-colonial

⁴ Mishra, Vjay and Bob Hodge in Elliams, Patrick and Chrisman, Laura ed. 1993. p.177.

⁵ Aijaz Ahmad. 1997.

theory and criticism—a fact obvious not only in the texts selected (colonial or post-colonial) but also the surprising inability of, say, Indian English fiction writers to move to a third cultural space without trekking heavily across the bridge of the colonial or the (current) imperialist structures of commerce and culture.”⁶ The dynamics of ‘speech’ of a post-colonial (in the ‘time’ of the colonized) subject talking about his/her colonial encounter is invariably coloured by the dialectics of interacting cultural spaces of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’.

One perhaps needs to reconsider Said in this turn of events. Said in “Orientalism Reconsidered” examines “the muteness imposed of upon the orient as object” and goes on to view the Orient as “not Europe’s interlocutor, but its silent other.”⁷ Within and without the confines of post-colonial theories, one has often focused relentlessly on the tenacious relationship between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, primarily, as we observe, in terms of the dialectics of the colonizer and the colonized. Post-colonialism’s agenda seems to be countering the ubiquitous presence of the merchants of the exotic, i.e, the ‘other’. The saga of this contentious relationship has been discussed, debated over a long period of time. As William S. Sax⁸ would like to argue, that the basis of post-colonial studies is the ‘difference’ between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. The academic engagement with the ‘self’ or the ‘other’ has proved to be of immense scholarly profit as it dominated the academic scene for decades.

The solipsistic post-colonial beloved ‘subject’ of the critics was a product of their own ‘real’ historical context. As Meenakshi Mukherjee remarks in jest, “All this is very encouraging for us professionally, inspiring us to keep our passports constantly renewed and suitcases perpetually in the state of readiness.”⁹ It was the third-world trans-geographical narrative voice that was slowly trying to acquire legitimacy in a historical narrative. The critic, the trans-geographical subject, had to therefore invent a located often self-conscious literary and historical subject as part of his/her ancestry. Salman Rushdie’s *Imaginary Homelands* (1981) might serve as a case in point. “Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools” (p.15). Therefore,

⁶ Tabish Khair. 2001

⁷ Edward Said, 1985. p.24.

⁸ William S. Sax. pp. 292-301.

⁹ Meenakshi Mukherjee, 1996. p.19.

concurrent to the rise of the importance of the third world academician in the world arena was the formulation of interesting post-colonial narratives. These narratives for the necessity of its own survival invariably placed the 'colonial subject' at the very centre of their discourses.

II

The greatest gift of the English, after universal peace and the modernization of society, and indeed the direct result of these two forces—is the Renaissance which marked our 19th century. Modern India owes everything to it.

————— Sir Jadunath Sarkar, 1928

The narratives of the Bengal renaissance created an interesting space where the personal histories interacted with the grand narrative History with the result that it became one of the most important markers of Indian modernity. The semiotics of this characterization of the renaissance derived its roots from the curious relationship it had with the template of cultural interactions. It was perceived as the quintessential result of the coupling of asymmetrical cultures. It has remained in the cultural memory as the age of supra heroes, their paeans being sung relentlessly. "For the average educated Bengali today, nineteenth-century Calcutta lives on mainly as a galaxy of great names. Religious and social reformers, scholars, literary giants, journalists and patriotic orators, maybe a couple of scientists, all merge to form an image of renaissance, 'nabajagaran'(awakening) or nabayuga (new age), as assumed to mark the transition from the medieval to the modern."(p.122) Sarkar's comment is indicative of the pervasive and overwhelming presence of the nineteenth century in our living memory. The Bengal Renaissance stands as a mammoth cultural signifier, unassailable, always in the excess of itself. The construction, appropriation and consumption of this aura have been possible under two major governing principles: the colonial formative subject and the rhetoric of the nation. These two categories have since captured the imagination of Post-Independence India.

Amit Sen says,

The impact of British Rule, bourgeois economy and modern western culture was first felt in Bengal and produced an awakening known usually as the Bengal Renaissance. For about a century, Bengal's conscious awareness of the changing modern world was more developed and ahead of that of the real India. The role played by Bengal in the modern awakening of India is thus comparable to the position occupied by Italy in the story of the European renaissance. (p.46)

So the primary modes of interaction between India and the West of the nineteenth century were seen as legitimate initiation process and thereby the entry point into the world of the 'western modern'. As the famous historian R.C. Majumdar notes,

Yet it is a well-known fact that the 19th century is a great landmark in the evolution of the culture of the Indian people as it witnessed their transition from the medieval to the modern age. It ushered in those forces and movements, in the political, social, religious, literary and economic life which have produced India of today.(p.3)

The renaissance was India's ticket to modernism, opening her to myriad trans-cultural interactions. Subrata Dasgupta opines that study of this unique cultural anatomy, that of the nineteenth century, can be read as the melding of two often contradictory cultural currents one of the Indian cultural and philosophical past and the other of the western creative and intellectual tradition.¹⁰Our very own renaissance, resembling the European one, therefore stood at the crossroads of a distant Indian philosophical past and a vibrant western enlightened present. India's tryst with her renaissance (Renaissance?) has long arrested the imagination of its historiography and often dictated its flow. This seems all too logical as it has given a temporal and an ideological parameter of constructing our colonial history. The temporal scale emerged as one of the most important markers as we premised our history and its 'fragments' on the template of western linear historiographic parameters. This curious heterodox of cross cultural broth in a

¹⁰ Dasgupta, Subrata. 2007.

historiographic account had to be codified and organized at the chronoscopic level. As the nineteenth century was seen in terms of linear movement out of the colonial period, it functioned as the threshold of colonial modernity. It was presented as the gestation time that the target Indian culture took to finally come of age and mark its movement towards a post-colonial era. There have been several attempts thereafter to map the flow and the current of this encounter.

Spatial parameters of the renaissance were of the trans-geographical character with most of the prominent luminaries of the ages, braving the 'black waters' and dissolving the physical distance between the two contending cultures. Like all historical utterances, there was an attempt to temporally fix the parameters of this social upheaval when the stability of the spatial co-ordinates was suitably shaken. Interestingly enough, temporal scale has often premised itself on the category of the individual subject. It is the individual historical subject often locked in the flow of history that we encounter in the post-facto recordings.

Amit Sen for one categorizes the Renaissance into five periods:

1. 1814-1833 – The easiest starting point is, of course, the date 1814, when Rammohun Roy settled down in Calcutta and took up seriously his life's works. His death in England, in 1833, obviously ends the period of which he was, indisputably, the central figure.
2. 1833-1857. From the death of Rammohun Roy to the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny.
3. 1857-1885. From the mutiny to the foundation of the Indian National Congress.
4. 1885-1905. From the commencement of the Congress to the partition of Bengal.
5. 1905-1919. From the partition and the great Swadeshi agitation to the coming of non-co-operation and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

This division is symptomatic of another interesting phenomenon of the age, that of blending of the idea of general history with that of the literary or the social. The parameters of the nineteenth

century history have been often defined on its firebrand nationalism or its emerging 'modern' intelligentsia. Notes J.C.Ghosh, "The Indian Renaissance, although it began in 1800, did not fully come to its own until the second half of the century."(p.33) And this claim seems to have been based on the fact that 'modern' forms of literary articulation that were associated with the renaissance emerged only in the second half of the nineteenth century. Observes Hans Harder "In the field of literature, the breakthrough of creative innovation presents itself somewhat delayed, and it is not before 1860s that we hear of a booming production in 'modern' genres, the novel and drama."(p.354)The overlapping of historical trajectories is significant in the manner in which one conceptualizes the formative subject. The literary subject was placed at the very centre of the historical discourses of the nineteenth century. Its significance lies perhaps in dissolving the distance between the 'literary' subject and the 'historical' subject. The historical was as much part of the literary as was the literary of the historical. Kopf offers an interesting insight " The literature of the nineteenth century Bengal Renaissance falls into two broad categories: the popular image of the renaissance among Bengali's proud of their recent heritage and the scholarly notion of renaissance as a problem in British Indian historiography."¹¹ This schism between the two creates this interesting overlapping of the two significant disciplines of history and literature of the nineteenth century which emerges as the potent tool for historiographic constructions. History and literature both offer angular perceptions which carry the redemptive agency in the manner of interventions. In this context it is germane to consider how the 'individual' rides the current of history. Literary endeavours with its premium placed on 'authorship' and 'authorial' entities play a significant role in further aiding the construction of the 'formative' subject in the nineteenth century scholarship.

As Kumkum Sangari has argued "the colonial states and cultural formations established under the aegis of imperialism.... Produced specifiable ideological configurations which loop and spread across 'national' boundaries" and hence as one might observe that the Indian subject formation was as much the concern of the British imperial agenda as the Indian. It might be interesting to consider Malinowski in this context. The concerted effort of the empire notwithstanding one look at the emergence in this age of a cultural change that Malinowski chooses to call 'organized behaviour'.

¹¹ David Kopf. p.3

The invention of a new technological device, the discovery of a new principle, or formulation of a new idea, a religious revelation or a moral or aesthetic movement, remain culturally irrelevant unless and until they become translated into an organized set of co-operative activities.(p.18)

Sifting through scholarship of the nineteenth century, one encounters, without a dose of surprise, the birth of the Indian modern 'intelligentsia', the birth of luminaries who emblemized the concept of modern India. This concerted attempt at mobilizing an esoteric class of 'intelligentsia' seems to work at the level of Malinowski's 'organized behaviour' which was responsible for the tectonic cultural changes of the nineteenth century. The opening lines of David Kopf's seminal book on Bengal Renaissance reads:

This book is an account of the social, cultural, psychological, and intellectual changes that were brought about in the Indian region of Bengal as a result of contact between the British officials and missionaries on the one hand and the Hindu "intelligentsia" is a useful analytical tool for a deeper understanding of cultural exchange between the western and non-western civilizations during our so called age of Western dominance.(p.1)

In common literary parlance thereafter the nineteenth century was perceived as an age that demonstrated in optimum doses the coming into being of the Indian modern "intelligentsia". This universalistic turn ensured that 'modern' India, read post-independence, was born of the entrails of the colonial rule. As seconded by Sudhir Chandra, it almost clinically decides the cultural make-up of 'modern India' where literature plays the interlocutor.

Attitudes towards the colonial connection reflect something of the essence of colonial consciousness. Besides practically determining political behaviour, they exercise, in a colonial society, a critical influence on the making of choices in matters social and cultural. These attitudes, especially during the earlier stages of the colonial contact, often combine in varying proportion hostility towards and willing acceptance of the alien presence. (p.16)

The transition therefore from the medieval to the modern was marked by the arrival of the 'subject' as an available, palpable formative unit. The texture of this formative category has been debated over the ages and over tons of print. "Erikson speaks", quotes Subrata Dasgupta, "of identity formation as being simultaneously situated both within the individual and the community of which she is a part."(p.15)The identity formation politics is but a part of the larger schema of the centrality accorded to the 'colonial subject'. Cloaked in the identity formation juggernaut is the obsession with the subject. It is exciting to note how Dasgupta concludes that the nineteenth century Bengal and its identity politics was situated somewhere in between a sense of negative identity (where the colonized is unsure and incapable of individual articulation) and a positive one. Hence, one can safely assume that the nineteenth century 'subject' and his/her identity figures in the historical articulation of the 'positive'. This has been a part of a self-deterministic project of re-writing histories. Linda Tuhiwai Smith says, "A critical aspect of the struggle for self-determination has involved questions relating to our history as indigenous peoples and critiques of how we, as the Other, have been represented or excluded from various accounts. Every issue has been approached by indigenous peoples with a view to *rewriting* and *rerighting* our position in history."(p.102) It is no wonder therefore that Post-colonial histories (which are invariably looking for a direction or movement in the positive manner) have turned to the nineteenth century for its muse.

The individual subject here plays the role of the "contact zone". "... the youthful band of reformers who had been educated at the Hindoo College, [who] like the tops of the Kanchenjunga were the first to catch and reflect the dawn."¹² Kishorichand Mitra's comment in 1861 is telling of the fact that 'contact zone' that one often assumed and paraded as the representative of an entire region's or in a synecdochian extension, the nation's awakening is in effect the product of one class, the bourgeois. Nineteenth century with its premium on English/western education created the Indian middle class. The embryo of the Indian middle class was conceived in the nineteenth century with the flourishing of the clerical cadre. The infected zone that soon multiplied and proliferated bears a pedagogical and genetic connect with a large section of the current intellectual order. The 'contact zone' thereafter was fiercely conceptualized as an individual act. Tropes of travel and education became significantly prominent. Simonti Sen quotes Swami Vivekananda (1892 Vivekananda wrote to Shankarlal)

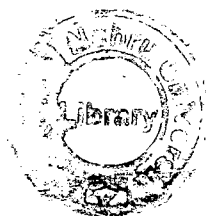
¹² Quoted in S.C.Sarkar , pp121-122.

“We have to travel; we have to go to foreign lands ... if we have to really reconstitute ourselves as a nation, and we have to freely mingle with other nations.”(p.194) Modes of individuation were equated relentlessly with the coming into being of the ‘subject’, most importantly, the traveling malleable subject. Travel was a motif of change and exchange, where the candid rural met the effervescent urban. The movement from the town or villages to the city and the entry into the colonial cityscape combined these two tropes to induce the palpable category of the ‘formative colonial subject’. The spatial movement of the subject was thus condensed. “The meritorious village boy”, says Tithi Bhattacharya, “formed an important figure in the late nineteenth century literature, who by his individual merit and wits overcame the hurdles placed in his path in this long epistemic pilgrimage from the village to the city.”(p.37) Migration to the city was the epistemic leap that the formative subject took to refurbish his claim to modernity. “For Rammohun Roy as for Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, two of India’s most prominent nationalist intellectuals of the nineteenth century, British rule was a necessary period of tutelage that Indians had to undergo in order to prepare precisely for what the British denied but extolled as the end of all history: citizenship and nation-state.” Therefore the individual, the colonial modern subject, emerges in these discourses as a psycho-social entity, an entity that lived with ease in both the societal and mental realities.

The routes of divergence in these theoretical moorings have been to find subcultural and subaltern voices. Women in this regard have found a significant position in this historical panorama. A peek through the purdah reveals that there was a phenomenon in the nineteenth century that one had to acknowledge and couldn’t ignore as it involved (within the indigenous populace) a significant section of the societal ‘other’. The budding of this English educated literary, political and sociological sensibility has been termed by Geraldine Forbes as the birth of the “new woman”¹³. With the category of the women’s question as tackled thus far by many theorists Antoniette Burton, Himani Banerjee, Judith E. Walsh, Lindsay Prereira, Eunice De Souza to name a few. But this tradition of feminist theorists largely contributed to the domain of nineteenth century discourses in locating the female subject as contributive to the larger project of subject identification.

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¹³ Geraldine Forbes, 2005.



Nineteenth century Bengal held at its very centre the trope of anthropomorphism, the likes of which grudgingly found parallels with its western (Italian Renaissance) counterparts. The cerebral output about the nineteenth century has produced a history that was self-centered, often a product of cultural inequities. Sibnarayan Ray takes on the classical Italian renaissance as his point of departure to claim a lineage for the subject as distinct from his “circumstances”. “The notion of verticality which is central to my inquiry is closely related to this description of the man of renaissance. By verticality I mean affirmation of oneself as a distinct person who moulds himself or herself through his or her own conscious effort, and who is not to be reduced to being a creature of circumstances.”(p.19) Even in such departures, inclusions and exclusions the formative colonial subject continues to play the transcendental signified. The variables in this scholarship, that of the nation, gender or subcultures maintain the trajectory of the subject as the distinctive centre whether in linear progressive history or in what Arup Kumar Sen calls “the discoloured pages of history”.¹⁴

III

The Scepter may pass away from us. Unforeseen accidents may derange our most profound schemes of policy. Victory may be inconsistent to our arms. But there are triumphs which are followed by us reverse. There is an empire exempt from all natural causes of decay. Those are the pacific triumphs of reason over barbarism; that empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals; our literature and our laws.

———— Macaulay

Speech on the Government of India, 1833

The literary history of Indian writing in English has often premised itself on the idea of a ‘prospective’ and ‘progressive’ history to the effect that the movement has been away from colonial history. The nineteenth century has borne the brunt of theorists of the early Indian Writing in English as it guarded the prospect of an uneasy relationship between colonial modernity and the

¹⁴ Arup Kumar Sen. p. 66.

'complicit' coupling with the colonizer. The discourse of the colonizer was engraved in the language itself. N Krishnaswamy and Archana S. Burde's schematization of the history of English in India firmly assigns the reign of the development of this literature to the colonizer. The division is based on the British government's policies and spans a couple of centuries.

1600- The year East India Company was started

1813- The year East India Company's Charter (for trade and commerce in the Indian subcontinent) was renewed

1857- The Mutiny year- this was also the year when the first three universities were set up at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras.

1904- The year the Indian Universities Act was passed, which gave the British Government a tighter control over higher education in India.

1947- The year India became politically independent.¹⁵

The onus of the development of the language and its literature has been often the prerogative of the colonizer as we find in this categorization. Early Indian writing in English has continued to function quietly under the royal British parasol. The temporal parameter of the history of the literature produced in India (in English) has been dictated by the personal historical engagement of the literary historian with the narrative of the literary history that he is in the process of constructing. Consequently, the engagement with the literature in English and its history has been one with silent intrusions and compulsive interactions of both the colonial presences and their significant absences. The first phases of early Indian writing were presumably dictated by the colonial construction and hence always remained suspect. Often, the linguistic parameter with its colonial 'complicity' factor written large has interacted and exchanged notes with the temporal conceptualization of the history of Indian writing in English. The language question has indisputably emerged as the 'context' of such literary negotiations.

¹⁵ N. Krishnaswami and Archana S. Burde., p.18

Some of the earlier critics have identified the pathogen as being almost an illegitimate coupling between the British intelligentsia and the Indian. As M.K. Naik puts it, "Indian English literature began as an interesting *by-product*¹⁶ of an eventful encounter in the late eighteenth century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant India." (Naik, p.1) The body of Indian English writing was seen as a bastard child, whose parentage was constantly under scrutiny. "One of the obvious results of the British Rule in India is the origin and growth of Indian Writing in English."¹⁷, says Dwivedi. Hence, the early critics of Indian writing in English like M.K. Naik, K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar, Paul C Vargese and David Mc Cutchion etc., took the onus on themselves to dissociate Indian writing in English from the body of English literature. Indian literature had remained a cancerous bulbous tumor in the body of Anglo-Indian Literature and had to be claimed and invented as the country's very own. To achieve this target, one had to first legitimize the genesis of that literature. All the prominent early historians of Indian writing in English trace it back to the colonial "fruitful"¹⁸ encounter.

Iyengar starts off by claiming it as a part of 'Common Wealth Literature' having "common goals" and "shared interests" with the rest of the Common Wealth countries. He concludes that we should perhaps call it 'Indo-Anglican Literature'. He says, "Indo-Anglican Literature, then, is both an Indian Literature and a variation of English Literature. It has an appeal to Indians, and it should have an appeal to Englishmen as well."(p.17) Writers like R.K.Narayan responded in the negative and ensured that Indian Writing in English was far from being considered as an appendage to the "parent" body of English literature.

We are still experimentalists. I may straightaway explain what we do not attempt to do. We are not attempting to write Anglo-Saxon English. The English Language, through sheer resilience and mobility, is now undergoing a process of Indianization in the same manner as it adopted U.S. citizenship over a century ago, with the difference that it is the major language there but here one has fifteen.

(Narayan in Naik, 1979, p.28)

¹⁶ Italics are mine.

¹⁷ A.N. Dwivedi, 1979. p.17.

¹⁸ K.R.Ramachandran Nair. 1987

Writers like Mulk Raj Anand continued to feel that English was an 'alien tongue' and therefore the speech that emerged as 'Indian English' had to be synthetic. "There is a psychological truth behind this kind of synthetic speech. It is this: even when Indians know English grammar and have been used to speaking alien tongue for a long time, they tend to feel and think in their own mother tongue." (Anand in Naik, 1979, p.37) This debate ensured that there is an independent body of Indian Writing in English and therefore there was a need to historicize it to exorcise the looming presence of English Literature. The early historians of the literature still held the view that "English is proving an indispensable tool, a cementing force, a key, and a channel all at once." (Iyengar, p.26)

The colonial construction and later a kind of nationalist reaction to frame the nineteenth century literary history has created an interesting trajectory of the Indian writing in English. Apart from the obvious nomenclatural markers like the Anglo-Indian or the Indo-Anglican to the Indian writing in English, this genre has traversed the contentious path from 'imitation' to 'authenticity'. The embryonic stage that Naik and Iyengar would like to establish is that of the mimetic stage, where in the colonial period, the literature "is greatly influenced by writing in England, and we have our own 'Romantics', 'Victorians', 'Georgians', and 'modernists'" (Iyengar, p.5). R. Pathasarathy maintains "from Henry Derozio... to Aurobindo Ghose... are only of historical interest. They wrote like English poets and, as a result, failed to establish an indigenous tradition of writing in English." (p.285) The intermediary stage is that of Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao onwards that functions in a continuum via the historians till Rushdie takes over the reins. With Rushdie and 'Rushditis' begins a new era where Indian English has come of age and need not engage in squirmishes against the so called 'parent' English Literature. It does not engage in a debate on the choice of the medium of language. One virtually travels from Derozio's romantic lisp to Rushdie's 'broken mirror'¹⁹. It is at Raja Rao that we pause and ponder a little.

The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an

¹⁹ Salman Rushdie p.19.

alien language to us. It is the language of intellectual make-up—like Sanskrit or Persian was before—but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it.(p.1)

It is with Rao that we learn to confidently appropriate the language as our own, albeit with the sub-text of translation looming large. The genealogy of this translated presence has been often traced to the nineteenth century. The act of translation somehow manages to legitimise the prospect of appropriating an alien tongue: English. The linguistic parameter therefore often takes the guise of a cultural interpreter rendering the ‘complicit’ colonial linguistic transactions hospitable and more importantly perhaps provides the opportunity of domestication. GJV Prasad, taking cue from Rushdie’s comment about the writers of Indian English as ‘translated men’ illustrates what one perhaps gains from this ‘translation’. “This gain is mirrored in the pollinated and enriched language (and culture) that results from the act of translation—this act not just of bearing across but of fertile coming together. Thus it is not only in the case of Indo-British writers but in that the texts that create are ‘translated’, the very act of their writing being one of translation.”²⁰ Translation becomes a viable tool of coping with the paucity of linguistic articulations; therefore, the act of translating culture exceeds the language itself. One is always already translating the origin in one’s original culture to produce the desired Indian concoction. To write in English is to transcend the boundaries of petty culturally bound regionalisms and form a ‘national language’ of articulation, in effect speak for the ‘nation’. Sisir Kumar Das questions:

Why did they write in English at all? Was it a curious exercise by the young men with the language of the new rulers of the country, or was it a serious attempt towards a search for a new medium suitable for a new literary perception? (p.788)

²⁰ Prasad,GJV,2000. p.33..

The onus of the English author to write for the nation has been a cultivated trope in the criticism concerning Indian writing in English. The linguistic parameter has always overshadowed the reading methodologies of the literature of the nineteenth century. But the 'excess' inherent in the language itself has also allowed the critics to place the conscious literary subject at the very centre of the genre of Indian writing in English. The intellectual production has continuously sought to establish this genre as a stable political discourse.

The logical parameters of this discipline of criticism has placed the modern, English educated, Indian subject at the very centre of this discourse, almost using it as a pure sign where colonial constructions and available nationalist reactions function as polar signifiers, continuously attesting the authority of the subject. The scholarship concerning the nineteenth century early Indian writing in English has therefore predicated itself on the formation of a cultural matrix that relied on its 'imitative' potential. The intellectual broth of the Indian writing in English school of the nineteenth century bridged the gnawing gap between the philosophy of the 'national cultural rhetoric' and its praxis as it played the role of formative connect between the derivative colonial subject and the firebrand nationalist. The textual culture of the nineteenth century Indian writing in English, therefore, was easily subsumable in the larger historical trajectory.

IV

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century two beginnings were witnessed in India, the emergence of the idea of the nation and the appearance of a new artifact of the imagination called the novel.²¹

— Meenakshi Mukherjee

²¹ Meenakshi Mukherjee.2008. p.19.

Novel as a genre has come to represent the nation and nineteenth century in the grand narratorial rhetoric of history. Meenakshi Mukherjee makes a strong case for the novel as the overarching mode of literary expression that championed the national sentiment in the nineteenth century. In effect the nation found its voice and expression in the novel form and hence it continues to be endowed with liberal doses of reverential treatment in the often jingoistic articulations of cultural nationalism (complete with its contradictions and resistances) the world over. "For example", says Mukerjee, "the history of the novel in India alone can chart some of the complex negotiations between colonial education and its resistant impulses."²² The novel and the nation, imaginative neophytes of the nineteenth century, emerged as symbiotic signifiers in the critical conceptualizations of the nineteenth century.

Our point of departure in this section is the poetry of the nineteenth century Indian writing in English in Bengal. The reasons for this choice are manifest in the earlier sections of the chapter where one has tried to outline possible approaches to the literature of the nineteenth century. The choice has been informed by the possible departure from the normative theoretical formulations of the nineteenth century literature where the novel was the voice of the progressive subject. One will probe into possible reasons of this departure, all the while highlighting the fragmentary nature of the consolidated formative literary subject on the linear scale of history.

The paradigmatic framework of the scholarship of the nineteenth century as discussed in the earlier sections has often concentrated on mapping the terrain of the development of a conscious formative literary subject. The subject, in these scholarly moorings, was often the indicator of the representational relationship between the nation (and its fragments) and a progressive temporal range. But the colonial formative subject continued to function as its very centre. It is almost accorded the status of a maxim where the epitome of the colonial modern subject is paraded as the harbinger of Indian modern cultural consciousness.

The axis of the enquiry would be Henry Louis Vivian Derozio. This choice is not a random one but is premised on the observation that almost unanimously he has been accorded the status of the 'modern' hero, subsuming within himself all the representative symbols of the nineteenth

²² Meenakshi Mukherjee. 2000, p.34.

century. As GJV Prasad observes “ Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831), the first Indian English poet of any importance, almost perfectly exemplifies all that has been said so far about the problems of the Indian English poet and the problematics of Indian English poetry.”²³

He is at once the colonial ‘modern’ (read the founder figure of Young Bengal), one of the earliest to conceive the idea of India as a unified political entity and definitely the marker of a progressive literary presence.

He is possibly the brightest figure in the history of the literary studies of the Indian writing in English of the nineteenth century. Biographical parameters might have aided in this quasi deification of Derozio. “In all the fascinating pages of Anglo-Indian romance there is no more brilliant and pathetic figure than that of the boy-poet Henry Louis Vivian Derozio. His brief career, so full of effort and enthusiasm, flashes like an inspiration across the dull grey story of his unhappy fellow-countrymen.”²⁴ It is the quintessential progressive individual struggling against the most defining parameter of historical perception; time.

Derozio was the favourite among the critics as he responded to the demands of the historical time. Nationalist history obviously chose him as their muse. His oft quoted poems, now part of the syllabi across schools and colleges, like the ‘The Harp of India’ or ‘To India My Native Land’ introduce a nascent Indian national consciousness. More importantly, his pedagogic function allowed him the tag “Honorably associated with the literature and the moral, social and political improvement of his countrymen.”²⁵ The progressive modern has been traditionally placed within the grand parasol of improvement, which in turn was plotted against linear time and a fixed geographical co-ordinate of the space of India.

Language seems to play an important variable in this encounter. Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay highlights the handicaps of the nineteenth century Indian writing in English and points out “(a) Lack in skill in selection of words and in their application, (b) uncertainty about correlation of different parts of a sentence, (c) absence of a measure in assessing the length and balance of

²³ GJV Prasad, 1999. p.8

²⁴ Bradley, F.B. p.(i)

²⁵ Quoted in *Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, A Memorial Volume* .ed. Mary Ann Dasgupta. 1832.

the whole sentence.”(p.26) But Immanuel Narendra Lal says “There is no doubt that the poets listed above came from upper class Indian society, but it is absurd to attribute their creative expression in English to “anglomania”. They wrote because they could write in English, a skill they made use of.”(p.3) Be it the mangled heap of English words or a casual employment of a newly acquired skill, the language itself has been instrumental in an overriding engagement with the historical ‘real’. It is the connection that the poet establishes between the ‘temporal’ and the ‘spatial’. Examine what Madhushudhan Dutt says:

I have heard quincitilians talk disparagingly of this manifest language as irregular, as anomalous. I disdain such petty cavaliers! It laughs at the limit which the tyrant Grammar would set to it- it nobly spurns the thought of being circumscribed. It flows on like a glorious broad river, and in its royal mood, it does not despise the tribute waters which a thousand streams bring to it. Why should it? There is no one to say to it— thus far though go and no further! Give me, I say, the beautiful language of the Anglo-Saxon. It is the glorious mission, I repeat, of the Anglo-Saxon to renovate, to regenerate, or — in one word to Christianise the Hindu.²⁶

There is curious method of appropriation and engagement, at once. The ‘beautiful’ language has to be ‘given’ and then appropriated to delineate the Christian to the Hindus. This curious play of attachment and detachment that this language promises, allows the poetic to take charge.

Use of the English tongue as debated over and over again in heaps of print becomes the third variable against which the early Indian writer had placed himself. It is through co-ordinates of time, space and language that he seeks to negotiate his subjectivity or to some extent negate the possibility of subjectivity. It is not only on the sartorial level that one makes this comment, for example, the very fact that Derozio had used a pseudonym Juvenis. It is the act of dissolving the sense of time and space that propels them to initiate subjectivity at the level of the real where the engagement with the ‘real’ historical context is through the language itself. Daruwalla finds this limiting, he says, “ the Indian poets took the easy way out, ... untouched

²⁶ Dutt, Madhusudhan.p.49

by either the reality around them, drought, famine, plague, colonial exploitation or by the reality within, namely erosion of faith and the disintegration of modern consciousness.”²⁷

Manmohan Ghose writes:

—Strive how I may, I cannot slumber so:
Still burns that sleepless beauty on the mind;
Still insupportable those visions glow;
and hark! My spirit’s aspirations find
An answer in the leaves, a warning on the wind.
o crave not silence thou! Too soon, too sure
shall autumn come and through the branches weep:
Soon birds shall cease, and flowers no more endure;
and thou beneath the mould unwilling creep.
and silent soon shalt be in that eternal sleep” (p.7)

Derozio and his ilk , i.e. the early nineteenth century writers innovatively use the idea of space and dissipated time to create a ‘literary presence’ that often defies the sense of the historical immediacy. Kasiprasad Ghose chants the song of a Hindustanee Minstrel thus:

I

With surmah thing in the black eye’s fringe,
‘twill sparkle like a star;
With roses dress each raven tress,
My only loved Dildar

II

Dildar! There is many a valued pearl
In richest Oman’s sea:
But none, my fair Cashmerian girl!
O! none can rival thee.²⁸

²⁷ Quoted in Prasad, 1999, p.19

²⁸ Gokak, V.K. 2005(1970). p. 55

The dissipated sense of time and space, which is almost at times taken to its logical limits, creates a dissolved sense of both the parameters of historical conceptualization. If the West was to frame the colonized in terms of strict temporal and spatial markers, it was in the poetry of the colonized writing in the colonizer's tongue that one challenged and dissolved such markers. So Kasiprasad's Cashmere girl is as much at home as Derozio's Nulliee in their brand of poetry. Hence, in all these poetic machinations, the idea of sleep and slumber seems to be a recurrent theme. In sleep interestingly one co-exists both in the state of real and imaginative time and space. In this trope one can silently challenge the restrictive parameters of both 'time' and 'space'. Derozio's poem 'Goodnight' might be a case in point.

Good night
Goodnight!— well then, good night to thee,
In peace thine eyelids close:
May dreams of future happiness
Illume thy soft repose!
I've that within which knows no rest,
Sleep comes to me in vain:
My dreams are dark—I never more
Shall pass goodnight again.

It is almost like in defiance that the Indian English poets live in the language itself. They continuously detest being the 'progressive' pawns of history. They challenge in effect the two markers of history itself, the 'time' and the 'space'. The Fakeer of Jungheera or the King Porus of the *Captive Ladie* do not exist in any concept of 'real' either in the conceptualization of time or of space. This fluidity allows the entry of the language to bind the folds of poetic elements together. Hence the poetry of the nineteenth century Bengal exists in language and with language. It cannot but exist without the politics of language. To claim that the language played a liminal role in their poetic activities would therefore be ringing the death knell for this body of work. It is both the language and its politics that allow new spaces to be explored. Temporal and spatial co-ordinates both exist in language and therefore it is here that the colonizer and the colonized can exchange notes and co-habit. The West likewise is reduced to a digestive bolus. So

when Derozio asks “I have often put a few questions to myself which I have been at a loss to answer— Why is it that Literature does not flourish in this country— is the soil or the climate uncongenial to the culture of so delicate a flower— or is there is paucity of those talents necessary to accelerate its growth?” one is certain that it is the poetry of the angst of exercising a literary presence that openly invites history for a challenge. The idea of the formative inchoate modern Bengali male faces a tough challenge here. The poetry is in a perpetual state of slumber trying to simultaneously exist in the ‘time’ and ‘space’ of both the colonizer and the ‘colonized’ and even beyond. Derozio’s lament in the ‘The Poet’s Grave’ is germane in this context.

Be it beside the ocean’s foamy surge,
On an untrodden, solitary shore,
Where the wind sings an everlasting dirge,
And wild wave, in its tremendous roar,
Sweeps o’er the sod!— there let his ashes lie
Cold and unmourned ; save , when the seaman’s cry
Is wafted on the gale,
...
No dream shall filt into the slumber deep-
No wandering mortal thither once shall wend.²⁹

Be it transient or an eternal sleep, it is the slumber and its fluid temporal and spatial coordinates that accommodate the historical defiance. The text of our concern, *The Dutt Family Album* follows the trend of their counterparts. It begins with the poem called ‘Home’ that flows with ease in space and time unsettling the notions of both home and away.

No picture from the master hand
Of Gainsborough or Cuyp may vie
With that which at my soul’s command
Appears before my eye.
In foreign climes when doomed to roam—
Its scent my own dear native home. (p.4)

²⁹ Collected poems. P.36

The very first poem settles the dynamics of home and away of spatial dislocations, temporal and otherwise, that governs the politics of the text. Home is not bound either by its natural or cultural markers, it's a concept that rests in the mind.

The boundaries of historical co-ordinates face a challenge as the authors move from Todd's accounts of Rajasthan to Ramabagan. The 'young and tall' Rajput embraces the fatherland in an uber heroic splendour in 'For King and Fatherland'.

It was a Rajpoot young and tall,
Upon whose neck his bride
Hung weeping, that the cruel wars
Should wrest him from her side.
'Nay, weep not, love! High hopes are mine;
Canst thou not understand
'Tis sweet to shed our heart's best blood
For King and Fatherland!'. (p.119)

The Rajpoot is promptly abandoned for the solitary nymph lost in the white snowy landscape in the poem 'Solitude'.

Nymph, upon whose forehead white
Gleams a wreath of snowdrops bright,
Starred with specs of violets fair,
Meekly peeping here and there,
In the depth of whose eyes
Dainty sorrow slumbering lies,
With the new-born Spring come nigh,
Rescue me before I die.(p.120)

The most fascinating piece in this context is a poem that deals with the act of creation itself. The contest between God and science is fought against the backdrop of a photograph. Both powers contend for a singular real 'presence' in 'On an Instantaneous Photograph'.

Some drops of water sprinkled on this card.
Reveal a picture that here latent lies,
And if for science this be not too hard,
Can it be difficult to God allwise? (p.122)

These lines capture ideally the dilemma of the colonial modern subject trying to negotiate alternative interactive modes of supernatural and rational powers. The frozen space of the photograph becomes the site of dispute where differential knowledge systems interact and often overrides the strictures of the available knowledge paradigms. So the poem ultimately resorts to a mechanism of 'repair' at the 'appointed hour' where the formative subject enacts a recuperative drama.

The cultural, theological and historical parameters are constantly challenged as we move from poetry on abject slumber to abstract didactic pieces. It foreshadows the possibility of engaging with the content of the text itself. While the album subscribes itself to a host of other writings in this period that challenges solipsistic reading of cultural anatomies, it moves further. This chapter in effect places the text in the context of other existing poetical works of its time while simultaneously examining its tenacious relationship with the insurmountable cultural signifier of its time, the Bengal Renaissance.

Chapter 2: A Conquest of History?

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that gray vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is History.

----- Derek Walcott

Finding a literary voice, Walcott suggests in 'The Sea is History', in the locked confines of ethereal colonial time, is a daunting task, it is like confronting the limitless and the absolute. Chapter one led us to believe that there were continuous contestations with the colonial time and space where literary psychic states constantly jostled for specificities, often flowing against the tide of an all encompassing coloniality. In chapter two we shall try to unravel layers of this association and dissociation, looking for alternative spaces of interaction (which have often remained as silent articulations).

Sripantha wishes to delineate a Calcutta that lies buried, beneath the surface waiting eagerly to be spoken about and which William Hunter dearly calls "Calcutta underground" (p.191).

The Calcutta of Hunter and of countless other Orientalists that laid buried deep in its slumber woke up to its realization of history, as Kejriwal would like to believe, with the Orientalist scholars. "Thus we can say that in the eighteenth century, India had a past but it had no history. The past was preserved in the form of archaeological and architectural remains, inscriptions on buildings, stone and iron pillars, copper-plates, buried sites of ancient cities, and coins, but there was no work of history to highlight their importance."¹ History thus picked up pieces of India's past from its ruins intact with cobwebs and the smell of dust. Past as a malleable domain in the Indian cultural memory was to be thus methodically framed as a consumable bolus, a recognizable part of the Western knowledge paradigm, that of linear history. India's past was soon her 'history' with all its grime and glory. The onus of constructing a historical genealogy was well conceived and executed by the Orientalist forces as the Indians, it was believed, never 'discovered' their

¹ O.P Kejriwal, 1988.

'history'. One of the primary objectives was therefore to initiate the formulation of a Western paradigmatic discourse of 'history'. Hence, the nineteenth century India soon confounded her history in the discoloured pages of the "moving procession"².

As Alexander Allanson writes in 1836:

Despoiled by bigots and through time grown gray,
By wretches pillaged for a bauble's worth.
Still do thine iron-bound walls resist decay.
By fame forgotten- in historic dearth.
Whence shall we seek for knowledge of thy rise?
No proud inscription on thy walls proclaim,
Not e'en tradition's lying tongue supplies,
Thy founder's object or thy builder's name.
All save thyself have long since decayed. (p.1965)

The onus as one would invariably observe is on the part of the occidentals to catapult Indians in to the realm of history. Indians were soon part of this insurmountable narrative (that heavily relied on a corpus of ascertained inalterable 'facts') of History as historical subjects³. India lies in the realm of historical 'dearth' as erstwhile rulers had 'pillaged for a bauble's worth' and this poverty of genealogy or a sense of linear historical time was proven to be a prime source of incapacitation. Be it John Brigg's *History of the Rise of Mohammedan Power in India* (1829), Dow's *History*(1782), Gladwin's translation *The Ayin Akbary, or The Institutes of the Emperor Akbar* (1777) or William Davy's *Civil and Military Institutes of Timour*(1780) to name a few, there was a growing sense of historical etherification. Powers, institutions and their ramifications preceding the European colonial intervention were meticulously mapped and eventually rendered immobile and inert. A definite sense of linear time-scale was thus formulated where the idea of the historical self was plotted against the sense of geographical space and time as

² Edward Hallet Carr, p.42.

³ Carr maintains that the nineteenth century historians heavily relied on factual history. " the nineteenth century fetishism of facts was completed and justified by a fetishism of documents.... The facts are available to the historian in documents, inscriptions, and so on, like fish on the fishmongers slab." P.6-7.

opposed to 'apparently' indigenous historical knowledge systems that primarily relied on memory, oral narratives and therefore was removed from the concept of strict spatial and temporal markers. Fantastical Orientalist narratives preceding the discovery of the sea route to India, dissolved the possibility of the existence of a 'real historical subject' as it was removed from both the axes of space and time. Perhaps with the West's most daring marine exploration, that of Vasco Da Gama to the southern coast of India, the fragile imaginative distance between the West and India was irrevocably dissolved. Removed and distant as it was in the earlier narratives, India often enjoyed the fluidity of spatial and temporal co-ordinates resulting in its obvious placement beyond the realm of historical time. With the entry of the West in the concrete geographical limits of India, the possibility of formulating a history for the country became a palpable reality. Spatial cohabitation made chronographic mapping of the past possible. India's tryst with the Eurocentric concept of history rendered the scope of prospective interaction between the histories of the Orient and the Occident flagrant with the spirit of rationality reigning supreme. India deftly moved from micro-structural historical positions to a larger macro-structural historical entity, and was soon part of the Eurocentric historical broth. Now India and her history was a part of the larger European Historical cartography. In effect the Eurocentric historiography devoured historical spaces of the colonized. Halhed's poem 'The Bramhin and the River Ganges', written in 1774, offers the best illustration.

Silent and sad (where Ganges' waters roll)

A care-worn Bramin took his pensive way,

Prescient of ill, in agony of soul tracing his country's progress to decay.

Age on his brow her furrow stamp had wrought,

While sorrow added to th' impression deep:

And melting Nature at each pause of thought snatch'd the indulgent interval to weep.

Thus straying, as he wearied out with pray'r

Each fabled guardian of that hallow'd wave;

To soothe the misery of vain despair

The river's goddess left her oozy cave.

'O lost to thought and obstinately blind! Weak man!' she cried,
 'thy baseless passion cease: Rouse from this torpid lethargy of mind,
 And wake at last to comfort and to peace.
 Smile, that no more ambitious spoilers range
 Thy labour's fruits relentless to devour:
 Smile to obey (and hail the happy change) The rule of reason for the rod of
 pow'r.'⁴

The flow of the poem urges the Ganges to leave her 'oozy cave' in relative happiness ('smile and obey') making room for 'reason' to take the prime position and prove to be the *raison de etre* of power thereafter. Rationality and power as we see therefore proved to be the winning combination of Orientalist studies of the nineteenth century in India. History seemed to provide the logical link between rationality and 'modernity' as it concretized causal connections between an event and time thus playing to act of progression. The rationalist intervention brought diverse disciplines on the same plane and perhaps introduced the utilitarian aspect to history. History therefore was not just an exercise of a 'torpid lethargic reconstruction of mind' but a careful balancing act of rationality and utility. Some critics like S.N. Mukherjee would like to believe that there was a definitive pragmatic angle to the prioritization of reason over 'baseless passion'. He says, "Orientalist studies had a practical side", and in "British India Warren Hastings was encouraging the study of Sanskrit for purely utilitarian reasons"⁵. To discover ancient history and language of India was to locate oneself at the crossroads of history and reason where often both were not mutually exclusive entities. This distinctive utilitarian and rationalistic turn is evident in the extensive list that Jones provides on board just before his ship anchored in the Indian shores.

1. The Laws of the Hindus and the Mahomedans.
2. The history of the ancient world.

⁴ Quoted in Rosane Rocher pp.217-9.

⁵ Mukherjee, p.79.

3. Proofs and illustrations of Scripture.
4. Tradition concerning the deluge, etc.
5. Modern politics and geography of Hindustan.
6. Best mode of governing Bengal.
7. Arithmetic and geometry and mixed sciences of Asiatics.
8. Medicine, chemistry, surgery, and anatomy of the Indians.
9. Natural products of India.
10. Poetry, rhetoric and morality of Asia.
11. Music of the eastern nations.
12. The She-king or 300 Chinese odes.
13. The best accounts of Tibet and Kashmir.
14. Trade, manufactures, agriculture and commerce of India.
15. Mughal administration.
16. Maharatta constitution.⁶

Jones with almost a sense of scientific precision sets out to map the contours of varied disciplines exploring India ranging from Mughal administration to natural products , eventually to the She-king and 300 Chinese odes. As David Ludden observes, “even the most instrumental knowledge, produced to sustain technologies of colonial rule---- what I will call colonial knowledge---- was produced under the Enlightenment rubric of objective science.” (p.77) Such meticulous arrangement of the probable course of research reveals that there was almost a scientific rationality behind the discipline of historical studies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century India. This rationality prompts, as one would definitely observe from the poem quoted below, dissociation with the Mughal history that precedes the British intervention. The ‘degeneration’ and irrational behaviour of the Muslim rule is often contrasted in the orientalist corpus with the just and the organized rational framework of the British colonizer. The following lines of the poem on Ganga by Halhed might just be a case in point.

⁶ Quoted in Kejriwal. p.37

What could Mahommed's race degen'rate teach,
Themselves to spoil alone and ruin taught?
Neglected Commerce wept her silent Beach,
And Arts affrighted distant dwellings sought.
Think then on what ye were - destruction's prey
How low, how worthless in the scale of things! (p.39)

Therefore the positioning of the present historical subject was against a series of despotic historical mishaps and tragedies that gave a bleak retrospective colour to the rational history.

An attempt to codify all these layers of historical froth happened with learning a lot of languages. Jones like his contemporaries, Colebrook, Halhed, Prinsep, and others, was a polyglot and knew as many as twenty eight languages. The politics of this semiology lay in a grand philological design. The veracity of the Orientalist design therefore derived its supremacy bolstering base from an epistemological route that vigorously took to philological intervention. On the philological front the Orientalists accommodated the Indian languages within the grand European design. As Michael J. Franklin observes about Halhed, "He was the ground breaker for both Wilkins and Sir William Jones, inspiring Wilkins to become the first European with a perfect knowledge of Sanskrit, and anticipating Jones's famous 1786 pronouncement (that the classical languages of India and Europe descend from a common source) by some eight years"(p.12). The idea therefore was to frame India into a larger logical initiative. Sanskrit at once was hailed as part of the hallowed legions of European languages and on the other hand was comfortably absorbed into the Eurocentric knowledge system. Hence, Kalidasa famously became the Indian Shakespeare.

As Kejriwal notes, "He considered the acquisition of languages necessary because they held the key to 'the history of mankind'."(p.31) East and its identity as a historical presence, that could be consumed, debated and which would contribute to the larger Euro-centric narrative design, was born. As Jones writes in his essay, *Essay on the Poetry of Eastern Nations*:

I cannot but think that our European poetry has subsisted too long on the perpetual repetition of the same images, and incessant allusions to the same fables... If the languages of the eastern nations were studied in our great seminaries of learning... a new ample field would be opened for speculation; we should be furnished with a new set of images and similitudes; and a number of excellent compositions would be brought to light, which future scholars might explain, and future poets might imitate.⁷

The acquaintance with the East is of contributory nature to the larger body of knowledge production that lies beyond the geographical limitations of its knowledge base. Although, it was never accorded the status of complementary knowledge, it enjoyed celebrity status, providing the necessary blitz and entertainment. As Jones suggests it is a space for 'speculation' that possibly has the latent potential to contribute variety and lustré to the already existing body of 'excellent compositions'. This polyglot culture as we would like to construct rode on the assumptions of civilizational and moral poverty. Sudeshna Banerjee quotes Charles Grant to state "they assigned India's contemporary poverty-ridden condition to a lingering medievalism appropriate for characterizing the contemporary condition in India."(p.73). The historiography of India, whether in its prosthetic defiance or encouraging embrace, has structured itself around this depravity.

At the cost of sounding redundant, one might suggest that it is this sense of history that we have invested our energies in constructing and reconstructing. We have learnt to challenge such imperialist conceptualizations of our history and lisped protests in the Post-colonial vocabulary. Post Said and his most influential text *Orientalism*, one has continuously tried to equate Western modes of knowledge production and its representations with imperial designs. The Saidian epidemic in the field of culture studies in India has much problematized the Orientalist studies of India in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. It has constantly looked for spaces of imperialist hegemonies and therefore rendered colonial machinations digestible. One significant example might be Gauri Vishwanathan's influential study of the Anglicist and the Orientalist debates of colonial India wherein her charges against Orientalist studies were well defined on the lines of Saidian cultural exchange.

⁷ Quoted in Kejriwal. p.79

Through its government-supported researches and scholarly investigations Orientalism had produced a vast body of knowledge about the native subjects which the Anglicists subsequently drew upon to mount their attack on the culture as a whole. In short, Orientalist scholarship undertaken in the name of 'gains for humanity' gave the Anglicists precisely the material evidence they needed for drawing up a system of comparative evaluations in which one culture could be set off and measured against another. (Vishwanathan 1987,pp.1-2)

We have since debated, marinated upon the effect of Enlightenment rationalist designs on culture, most importantly perhaps in shaping our imaginary geography with the primary insistence on language itself. Edmund Burke and David Prochaska observe in *Genealogies of Orientalism, History, Theory and Politics* (2008), "in the primary sense of the term, Orientalism referred to the academic discipline based on the philological study of original texts in Asian languages which flourished in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."(p.9) One invariably looked at the imperialist rationalist designs in the representations of the eastern folk with the linguistic circuit as its point of reference. Equating knowledge systems, most importantly historical designs, with imperialist power machinery has often dominated the Saidian Orientalist studies in the Post-colonial academic net. So we often raise charges against the blatant and often reductionist Orientalist discipline. As Peter Gaeffke asks:

While it is essential to deconstruct this discourse for the Orientalist assumptions underlying it, it is equally important to take the opportunity to raise the question whether Orientalism should be construed in a totalistic manner, regardless of the specificities of particular historical contexts. Should we not, even while recognizing the strains of the universals of Orientalism in every imperialist moment, also recognize the particulars which variegate and complicate the world of Orientalism, making it multivocal and heterogeneous with their distinctive dissimilar histories? (p.67)

These kinds of contestations had led to us to consider and debate on the question of the authority of the narrative subaltern subject about his history. Dissimilar histories as Gaeffke chooses to call it, invests its critical acumen in looking for voices that decide the agency of the speaking historical subject of the nineteenth century India. The question that immediately ensues from this discussion is the authority of the speaking subject over his narrative in the domain of the Western knowledge paradigm. Can the subaltern speak (to borrow Spivak's term)? Most importantly when he does, in which knowledge paradigm does he operate? Does he continue to function in the knowledge paradigm of the colonizer? Does the subaltern narratorial voice continue to operate in the framework that renders it subaltern? The historical parameter that we have chosen beyond any doubt is a European knowledge construct and hence it has been, and perhaps rightly so, has been accorded the time of the colonizer. In the colonial time with the colonial knowledge framework as the functional paradigm we look for the authorial agency of the colonial modern subject.

Franco and Preisendanz's critical commentary on Halbfass's work is a case in point:

Halbfass possesses a strong philological background and he is no less capable than other philologists to point out that the Neo-Hindu distortions and misinterpretations of the Indian tradition in the self-representation for and at the same time against the West- and this he has done masterfully, for the key concepts of dharma and darshana. But Halbfass goes beyond that: he instructs us in the appreciation of these "mistakes" in the light of the hermeneutical situation of the Neo-Hindus and presents those who "commit" them as serious thinkers who try courageously and innovatively to come to grips with the inescapable European modernity without thereby losing their religious or cultural identity. In doing so Halbfass has profoundly changed our perception of Indian philosophy that is no longer something that is immovably fixed in the past or, in the present day 'authentic' appearance, a mere fossilized relic from the past. It is alive and "dialogically" creative; it keeps on changing in the dynamic encounters, just as European encounters do.⁸

⁸ Ed. Eli Franco and Karin Preisendanz. P.76.

They accord history and its ramifications the status of an open discipline. Where time is that of the colonizer as the colonized can never ever escape 'European modernity', so all he can do is constantly engage with his past in a dialogical fashion, bringing to light the state of a constant friction of historical spaces. Gyan Prakash⁹ writes that after the boom of the Orientalist theory "the notion of the third world writing its own history reeks of essentialisation", for the possibility of a sovereign historical voice is rendered dysfunctional by the act of Post-Orientalist studies devouring spaces. This is an interesting comment in terms of how we have thereafter continued to conceptualize hostile historical spaces and parameters. The essentializing charges notwithstanding, what with the nation and its ideological ramifications taking center stage, the act of engaging with historical spaces is infinitely challenging. It may be germane to consider here Partha Chatterjee's engagement with the national consciousness. He says "the result is that autonomous forms of imagination of the community were, and continue to be, overwhelmed and swamped by the history of the postcolonial state."(Chatterjee 1993, p.11). Over fed with post-colonial responses to the nineteenth century's construction of India's past (at the macro level), we invariably rely on modes of resistance and engagement therein. As suggested above, there is often the trap of cultivating a cultural imaginary that relies primarily on the idea of 'writing back to the empire' to borrow Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's term. Hence, the historicity and the counter-historicity framed therein were always in excess of themselves and were constantly eyeing the idea of negation to frame them. As Sudipta Kaviraj almost in the league of the nationalist counter-history writing process, suggests:

By telling the history of India, Europeans were constructing an essentialist image of a subject people, whose whole history destined them for British conquest, just as by telling their own story of Europe they created a myth of what they were, destined to rule the world through the somewhat long period of preparation since ancient Greece. The lion is always shown as being defeated, Bankim would argue, because it was man who painted the

⁹ Gyan Prakash,1990.p.386.

picture. By an extension of this logic, Bengalis initially and later, Indians must win the right to their own history. They must assert the right to narratives of the self.(p.9)

The right to this kind of history as Kaviraj suggests lies with the historian or the narrator. Quoting Bankim he has justly illustrated that it is the painter who decides the fate of the lion and not vice-versa hence the power lies with the narrator. The narrative is never independent of the narrator. As a corollary one might suggest that the narrative is the space which can be conquered. But in this context it is germane to consider the position of the negative 'narrative' self that we create with what Kaviraj later suggests is the source of a kind of imaginative consciousness of history. Contra-distinctive feature of the imaginative history places it at a divergence from 'real' history (which he states is the 'result of laborious academic research').

This curious interaction of histories, disciplined and riotous, continues. Recording history in a post-colonial academic context is therefore no longer a daunting task. It is a time-tested game of appropriation of time and space. Be it the colonizer or the colonized, history has been the sight of multiple aggressive seizures. Post-colonialism with all its gloss has sought to frame itself in terms of 'negative' narratives. Therefore it followed the charted route of what Bhaba in jest calls 'temporality of continuance'. The past is hence invariably evoked as living present history, the history of the historian and thus the chronicle of seizing time continues. Ranajit Guha says:

This, and the appropriated past came to serve as the sign of the Other not only for colonizers but, ironically, for the colonized as well. The colonized, in their turn, reconstructed their past for purposes opposed to those of their rulers and made it the ground for marking out their differences in cultural and political terms. History became thus a game for two to play as the alien colonialist project of appropriation was matched by an indigenous nationalist project of counter-appropriation. (p.17)

This interesting often bellicose interaction with history has resulted in the post-colonial subject often veritably claiming both the axes of time and space for its narrative voice. When heard this voice ruptures definite paradigms of temporal and spatial markers. Thus History fashionably emerges as a fluid space of histories where the dominant and the recessive often co-habit with a loud clamour, jostling for interactive spaces. When we have rummaged around for alternative histories (if we might call it), the search has always been in terms of flouting the normative militarization of spatio-temporal parameters. Even paradigmatic shifts have often tried to trace an alternative geographical trajectory that has in turn shaped the larger Oriental historiography. Therefore, we have counter narratives that emerge of the Indians who traveled to the 'heart of darkness', to borrow the title of Joseph Conrad's famous novel, and their geographical displacements often form counter-history. Spatial displacement in terms of travel from Britain to India by the British has enjoyed a fair share of academic attention. Their exploits and eventual tryst with history has charted the governing domain of spatial strictures, i.e, of a logical travel by the imperialist forces from their mother country to their target colonized country. Parameters of geographical dislocation were defined according to a larger Orientalist historical design (which was accorded the status of History in macro-structural terms)¹⁰. So the question of immigration or geographical displacement in terms of the counter-flow is seen as a break in this larger western historical framework. As Michael Fisher observes,

Many histories of colonial India concentrate on Britons as they conquered and ruled the subcontinent. Similarly with a few notable exceptions, most histories pay little or no heed to people from India there. Yet, representations by Indian s directly in the British Public sphere often contrasted with British 'Orientalist' constructions of Indians, which have been far more extensively studied. (p.11)

Hence, we are not amused or surprised when Kipling writes:

¹⁰ See Goh, Daniel P.S. 'Reorienting Orientalism'. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Volume 37, Number 2, 2009 , pp. 317-318(2)

Linked to the chain of empire one by one,
Flushed with long leave, or tanned with many a sun,
...
And how so many score of times ye flit
And wife and babe and a caravan of kit,
...
Bound in the wheel of the Empire, one by one,
The chain-gangs of the East from sire to son,
The Exile's lines takes out the exiles' line
And the ship's them homeward when their work is done.(pp.162-63)

Movements in terms of geographical transference from Britain to India have been the norm for the colonizers. As Buettner extensively discusses, narrative on this count framed a historical imagination that confined its historical liabilities within the precincts of this trajectory.¹¹ Therefore departure from this trajectory is seen as a major break in terms of historical conceptualizations. Divergent voices of histories are seen to emerge from this detour. As Burton notes:

Confronting the “local” effects of imperialism requires, therefore, a new cultural geography and, more important, a radically different way of looking at those cartographies to which we have become accustomed. It means working to see and to read domestic cultural landscape for the traces of imperialism that are there, unobtrusive and perhaps even invisible to the ye trained in thinking of empire as something remote, at one removed from the “motherland.”. Historicizing the presence of colonial peoples in Victorian Britain makes manifest, above all, the various ways in which imperial England itself was available for consumption, appropriation, and refiguration by its colonial subjects. (p.8)

¹¹ See Buettner, Elizabeth. *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

One has continuously sought to engage with counter-histories by disturbing the accepted norms of historicity.¹² The narrative subject of post-colonial histories therefore, in another sense, still continues to urge for a space in the renewed, more fluid system of knowledge generation of the West in the current academic climate, which isn't geographically or materially constricted and often appropriated, contested and debated in the electronic medium. Counter-historicity's departure is but a renewed recognition of the Western knowledge paradigm. Seizing recognition in the academic historical flux has become a prime concern and the sense of history of the colonized in this regard, maintains a curious balance between solidarity and distance with the knowledge paradigms of the West.

This interesting balance has been fostered by a deluge of scholarship that has excavated remains of resistance and co-option in the era of colonization. The post-colonial subject writing retrospectively in this imported knowledge network has sought territorial aggrandizement in the very knowledge system which has produced it.

An interesting departure from this duality of resistance and recognition is perhaps the parallel process of the Indian intelligentsia of the nineteenth century who dabbled with both the traditional and the western paradigms. K.N.Panikkar says, "therein was posited the possibility of an alternative modernity, which the Indian intelligentsia tried to construct, through a selective appropriation and expropriation of the traditional and the Western" (p.12). This duality led to the catapulting of the narrative colonized subject into the speaking arena. At the very least it allowed him the space to situate himself in the larger macro-structural knowledge framework. However, the dynamics of the speaking arena were clear on the direction of knowledge flow. Translation in this regard has been seen often as the domain of the imperialists. Both with the overt agenda of administrative concerns of communications and the more subtle attempts at hegemonizing, the nineteenth century has been emblematic of Orientalists' translations of texts from Indian languages into European languages. "Most importantly", says Dodson, "translation has also been identified as important for resources it provided in the construction of representations of the colonized as Europe's 'civilizational other'. On the former point, Cohn has argued that the codification of South-Asian languages in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth

¹² See for eg. William Graf., 1997, Pages 45 – 58.

centuries served to convert 'indigenous' forms of 'textualized knowledge into instruments of colonial rule'."(p.74). Therefore translation has functioned both as an instrument and as a litmus indicator for the colonial hegemonic network.

An easy estimation would be to rank the translations that the Indians often made of the texts in European languages into the native languages as an extension of the received knowledge paradigm. The historicity of such a venture would be to merely record or offer resistances to the received knowledge pool. Where the logic of translation lay in expanding the corpus of the 'instruments of colonial rule', it is not a wonder that we primarily find translations between Indian tongues and European languages. The Dutts place an interesting alternative in the *The Dutt Family Album*, they do not offer translations of texts of European languages into native tongues, instead they engage in translating and often appropriating liberally texts from French and German into English with generous doses of Indian mythology. With abject disregard for thematological synchronization or linguistic harmony (albeit in terms of translation), in the company of the Dutts the reader travels from Reboul, Lachambaudi, Muller to selections from the New Testament, selection from Captain Reid's exploits to a scene in a crowded street in Madras. The normative translation exercise is jolted out of its serene siesta when it encounters this translation carnival by the Dutts. This allows the colonized subject to take directly take part in the macro-history. So, one is not overwhelmed by the monolithic West (the reference point of History) as one realizes it is fractured by national and linguistic specificities. Almost certainly posited at the intersection of European knowledge and colonial power, this interesting intertextual web possibly overrides the extravagance of Macaulay's infamous *Minute on Education* (1835). The choice of the location of this curious philological extravaganza happens to be the centre of the Empire, London. The text was published in London by Longman, Green and Company in 1870. It is therefore suitably doubly displaced, one by its sheer geographical co-ordinates and the second by its alternative engagement with the western knowledge system. At the cost of not sounding 'national' or eastern enough, the text chooses to translate and appropriate Western texts and present them as part of the consumable bolus of poetry at the very heart of the empire, London. A suitable reference may be a review of Kasiprasad Ghose's poetry in the *Athenaeum* on June 31st which read:

We are not at all inclined to be critical with a work written and published under such circumstances; but one objection we must state, that, whatever the intention may have been, the Poems are generally *not* national; excepting the names there is nothing eastern about them; they would pass current in our own magazines for genuine home-manufacture, although some are of superior workmanship.(p.393)

The historical presence of the text and its epistemic ramifications therein operate both literally and culturally in a space well beyond the limits set for them in the traditional Western edifice of knowledge systems. The mnemonic receptacle that is created by interesting co-habitation of translations, appropriations of western texts and suitable Indian subjects destabilizes the hegemonic paradigm of the colonizer's knowledge system completely overriding 'indigenous' forms.

A natural possibility that emerges in this context is the right to colonial mimicry (to borrow Homi Bhaba's term). It is almost a prerequisite of the behavioral dynamics of the colonized people to react to the imperialist knowledge framework as mimics, reflecting and refracting with the luminosity that the Western knowledge system dutifully doles out. Bhaba suggests that mimicry is a sub-text of a forked tongue. The colonized tongue that mimics is already challenged by the limits of the system.

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around ambivalence, in order to be effective, mimicry must continuously produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry, is thus, the sign of double articulation: a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate,

however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of the colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers. (p.277)

Translation as an act of mimicry is an interesting departure. Translation per say can be easily logically blanketed as an Orientalist import. The colonial knowledge system of framing the colonized was heavily dependant on translation both literally and metaphorically. The epistemic necessity of this interesting act of translation cannot merely be dismissed as an act of mimicry that as an obvious choice took to the West to pose a threat to the 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers. As the translations that we encounter here do not pander to the expectations of the discipline of post-colonial studies, it is even more difficult to accommodate it in the pre-existing frameworks. They refuse to allow any easy readings of colonial architectonics in terms of subversive appropriation or a direct attempt at tinkering with the Western knowledge format within. As Lefevere points out "It may be just possible that the West has paid so much attention to translation because its central text, the Bible, was written in a language it could not readily understand, so that it was forced to rely on translators to legitimize power." (p.3). Biblical centrality almost becomes the lingua franca of further translating mechanisms, it stands for an invincible bridge between apparently disparate cultures and speaks for itself and beyond where the understanding the 'rest' paradigm reigns supreme. The West derived its translational legitimacy from a source that was sacrosanct and beyond the realm of easy cultural bartering. The biblical language, the a priori centre for further intercultural trade allowed the West to specify a point of origin which made charting routes of departure easier. So when the imperialist missions traveled they moved from a definite Eurocentric biblical centre. The radial movement of imperialist forces away from the centre has been a well charted and apparently a logical journey. Therefore the cultural routes that the colonialist mapped were a well rehearsed journey of cultural hegemony from the Eurocentric biblical locus to oriental recipient centre. A counter-flow to this trajectory has been somehow that of the Indians traveling back to the heart of the empire. Colonial culture commerce has often premised itself on a geographical route. This

dynamics of the flow and the counter-flow stands deeply problematized in this text. The cultural centrality accorded to translation in the West finds a challenging dilution and dissipation in the text. The biblical mythologizing forms an interesting part of the entire translation conundrum. They not only translate from disparate Western sources into *English* rather than any of the native tongues, they also appropriate the biblical template as their epistemic foundation. Therefore the Dutts in effect take charge of the very axis of Western knowledge paradigm. Innumerable biblical references from the books of Luke and Mathew to appropriation of the narrative of the Ephesians, serve as the skeletal framework of the text. It is as if the poems in the collection are placed on a grid of biblicality. A read through the entire collection suggests that almost every fourth poem in the collection boasts of a biblical affiliation. The movement and the counter movement that we have traditionally charted in the historiography as discussed above has been crafted on the basis of a certain negation of historicity and identity. Both the erstwhile colonizer's discourse and the present 'writing back of the empire' have premised on the dialectics of negation and counter-negation. East as the opposition of the Christian West is deeply problematized here. Clear oppositional markers are replaced by complex warp and wefts of chains of signification where the location of the biblical transcendental centre is destabilized. Hur Chunder Dutt in *Short Discourses on Scripture Subjects* (1870) displaces Christianity from its veritable European base. He begins by claiming that the text is "unaided production of a Native of Bengal" and later states that "the Religion of the Bible is the religion of Nature, because it has been promulgated by Nature's Great Author and Architect", so Christianity "in the one case it is a subjective effort of the human mind, and in the other objective reality."¹³ Bible, the key text of the Western knowledge framework has been effectively displaced from the epicenter of the colonial knowledge framework. Hence, the cultural markers of the East and the West are placed on a charged plane which has significantly altered the kinetic potential of the Bible. Taking charge of the touchstone of the Western civilization is telling of the fact that bastion of the West was taken beyond the barbed fences of both the cultural and the geographical parameters. Rosinka Chaudhuri says "The idea of Europe as the cradle of all superior civilization and culture seems to have been taken seriously by these colonial

¹³ Dutt, H.C. p 5,9.

poets, and an interaction with this culture was an imperative for any man of letters writing in English in Calcutta.”(p.140) The poem ‘Christ the Gardner’ might well serve as a case in point, (it is a translation from the German original by Schenkendorf, replete with overt biblical references) and it begins with:

A gardner to His Garden tends
Where thousand flowers bloom,
With patient care He rears and tends
those buds of rare perfume ...
thou gardener, tender, true and tried,
Our Saviour and our King,
Let us too then be purified,
For that eternal spring.(p.112)

Several poems written as direct derivatives of biblical sources form the skeleton of the text, they come back time and again to give the mosaic a character of its own. It plays with the biblical allusions and its possible importance and interestingly enough, equally weighs it against completely non religious heroic ballads or descriptive pieces on the landscape or cityscape from the East and the West. Thus the text journeys through “Lord in these precious words/ oftimes I find within my heart of hearts/ strong consolation and a priceless hope.” to the lap “of Teesta’s slope bloom flowers of every clime/ The golden cistus and the ‘rath primrose’ or to an extraordinary humanitarian understanding of the plight of a Nepali peasant working away from his home.

They do not respond actively to the *Othering* paradigm as their translations eschew any attempt to render the West transparent to the Eastern audience, neither do they attempt to introduce and display eastern antiquity as the new domain of accessible knowledge.

As perhaps E.E.Spright comments in the introduction to his anthology of English Prose by Indian writers, “This little book, which has been in my mind for some years, has been compiled to give Indian students a series of models of what can be done by elder students of their own nationality in the handling of so difficult a language as English.”(p.1) Mimicking is a difficult art and a result of long rigorous practice. The act of mimicry

therefore is doubly problematized when we look at a text that travels easelessly between cultures or rather conjures a culture pool. Fluid interactions in these pose a serious challenge to the idea of a monolithic consolidated West as the West appears not in a garb of a singular entity that lies beyond the geographical scope of the orient, but as individual cultural units (for example the French, the Greek, the German, Scottish, Swedish and with obvious liberal imports of Hebraic texts) that exchange notes in the common philological domain of English. Hence, it is important to note how cultural fragmentations and dissociations operate to disrupt the idea of a holistic superior European civilization. Hence the paradigmatic West is no longer a mammoth overpowering cultural reference point but a cluster of individual cultural spaces. As represented in this immensely dense intertextual web the West travels from France to Sweden to the Alps and is equally comfortable playing itself in all these different geographical and cultural locales. This ingenious intertextuality subsumes within itself not only translations from several European languages but engages in looking at various myths, legends and even the landscapes. Their poetic or artistic trans-locatedness rides on the fact that it was published from the centre of the empire, London. The text therefore travels between a definitive sense of location and trans-location. Often the landscape loses its locatedness with its diluted sense of character and appears to be a mere receptacle of poetic agencies. The very first poem in the collection boasts of dissolving the creative distance between home and away. The poem titled *Home* travels between home and away and it is to the power of imagination that the poet turns to dissolve this epic distance. The geographical distance dissolves at the demand of imagination. The poem therefore ends with the stanza:

As star by star leaps out above,
As twilight deepens into night,
As around me cluster those I love,
And eye meets eye in glances bright,
I feel the earth itself may be
Lit up with heaven's own radiancy. (p.2)

There are various poems in the collection that are denied individuation in terms of nomenclature. One such 'Sonnet' introduces the reader to a landscape devoid of any strict geographical markers; it remains in the state of a mythic location, tranquillized and still.

On autumn eyes I love in listless mood,
While yet the west retains in golden hue,
And the leaves whisper and the stars are few,
To saunter leisurely by the lake and wood,
And mark the dorhawk and its tawny brood
Half lost by the distance to the aching view. (p.87)

It often takes for granted a collective memory that is prerequisite to the understanding of the poems that follow. The poem 'Charade' is about Sir Donald Cameron of Lochiel and his exploits in the Jacobite rebellion. This Scottish legend finds space in the poetry of the Dutts without any introduction, almost presuming that this popular eighteenth century historical character is as much a part of their collective cultural psyche as translated poem of Reboul about the child and the Angle that soon follows it. "The banner of gallant Lochiel" and the tragic demise:

The battle is won, but Lochiel is no more
How lies he; the spot is all red with his gore,
And another death the bold chieftain is near,
'Tis gray-haired old Allan, the bard and the seer.(p.71)

The poets move swiftly from an instance of an individual historical character to the description of a Swedish maiden which runs into a fleet of fantasy as the poem opens:

Once on a bed of sickness as I lay,
Weary and restless through the silent night,
Scarce able in my mind to think or pray,
My shut eyes saw a vision of delight,

Sprung from a mist-like, half remembered story,
And deepening clear and clearer into glory.(p.72)

The poetry collection clearly opts for an understanding of cultural anatomies that resists systematization on the lines of western knowledge paradigm or its immanent resistive approaches. This becomes evident in their choice of language that they choose to translate in. As discussed in beginning of the chapter, the translation circuit often involved indigenous languages and their European counterparts as an exercise of initiating a dialogue between the cultures. Hence, one encountered translations of Western literature into indigenous languages and works of indigenous language finding their way into the shelves of a larger European audience through translations into European languages.

The Dutts promise an ambitious linguistic polyphony in the Album. They create a translation pool in English where there are translations from various European languages and Indian myths and legends (primarily Hindu) cohabiting the same print space. Choosing to translate texts from European poetry into English cannot be merely dismissed or agitated on the grounds of it being an act of subversion. Lefevere while quoting Schleiermacher offers an interesting insight. Translating with respect to one's mother tongue is an act of irreverence as one belongs to the time and the space of the 'other'. This kind of translation observes Lefevere "Schleiermacher and his contemporaries produced their translations not for the monolingual reader who has no access whatsoever to the original, but rather for the educated reader who was able to read the original and the translation side by side and, in doing so, to appreciate the difference in linguistic expression as expressing the difference between two language games."(p.5) The translation pool that we encounter in the text places the language game in a contested space. It is not merely encountering differences between the original and the translated texts but being exposed to an excess of dissipated cultural colonialism. The translated poems are not part of the easy association of understanding cultures or of mere reciprocity but of a close interpretation where the colonial subject undertakes a crucial journey. It not only places itself in relation to western cultures (rather than the West) but only engages in interpreting himself. Hence, there are poems where the Dutts chose to speak on subjects and translations that were already

translated into English by the Europeans. Such borrowed material is not orphaned but recognized right at the beginning of the poem, this leads us to believe that it was an intentional act. For example the poem titled 'The Flight of Rana Singha' (p.156) begins with a subtitle "Vide Erskine's 'India', Vol I.I.474". On the other hand some culture specific poems donot invite any elaboration. For eg. 'The Caves of Elephanta' or 'The prophecy of Ahijah' (to cite a few) do not carry any introduction, whereas 'The Hym to Shiva' beings with an extensive explanation which reads, "It is usual with the inhabitants of some of the provinces in India to repair, even from distant stations, to the temple of Shiva at sacred periods and after having bathed and purified themselves to lay before the altar offerings acceptable to the deity, with such flowers as the season affords. Then they chant hymns of which the annexed one is a specimen."(p.56).This act of placing the translations as a part of a larger translation schema is an interesting act of identification and counter-identification. Taking charge of the colonialist's own tool and rendering the West as a consumable commodity to the West itself is a daunting task and hence the choice of the language medium here becomes interesting. It is in English, the language of the colonizer that the Dutts chose to speak and most importantly to speak to a Western audience about the West and its tensile relationship with the East. So the Dutts allow nomenclatures to dissolve as well so as to allow new modes of signification to take charge. There are innumerable poems in the collection which lack unique nomenclature; some are just named as 'the Sonnet' or 'the Charade'. They take away traditional signifiers from the translation pool leaving the reader to counter with a matrix of cultural relations hitherto shelved. So when the Dutts say:

Sir Harry sat in the strong old tower,
 Entrapp'd in his own snare!
 Dark thunder cloud upon his brow,
 And in his heart despair.
 He cursed his rashness,—cursed his fate,
 For luckless was the day
 When he allowed vain dreams of power
 To lead his steps astray.(p.164)

The strong old tower of the Western knowledge paradigm here sounds weak when placed in a chain of identifications and counter-identifications. 'Entrapp'd in his own snare' the West finds itself in a vortex of complex cultural commerce where the colonial literary voice is always in excess of itself continuously contextualising and contesting colonial knowledge mechanisms. The strong old tower appears not as a divorced cultural entity but one with strong intertextual base and hence the colonial literary subject offers to find space in literary excess that history as a discipline refuses to offer. This excess is not limited to the level of content, as the Dutts illustrate in this unique attempt. The 'other's' experiments with the form in the album is germane therefore to the understanding of the larger question of the literary confounding historicities.

Chapter 3: The Familial Turn

There is properly no history, only biography.

----- Emerson

History and memory are not really so much conceptual opposites as complementary parameters of experience. The most atomic element or the basic metaphor for understanding the colonial experience has often been restricted to this dyad. This chapter attempts to explore the limits and the dynamics of this relationship through the lens of the album.

I

Between remembering and forgetting

Ek hum hain ke liya apni soorat ko bigadh

Ek who hain ke jinhe tasveer banana aata hai

(On the one hand, there is me who has ruined my own face

On the other hand, there is he who knows how to make a painting)

—— Saadat Hasan Manto¹

History and memory both carry the onus of remembering. The wedlock of memory and history has not been particularly easy. It has seen sunny days of happy co-existence and days of torrid weather where both jostled for space. While history had to contend with its own skeptics as early as Aristotle, who incidentally had taste for poetry over history, memory often silently played the fluid signifier, moving effortlessly between the heard and the unheard. In *Poetics*, Aristotle remarks, “Poetry is more philosophical and more weighty than history, for poetry speaks rather of the universal, history of the particular. By the universal I mean that such or such a kind of man will say or do such or such things from probability or necessity; that is the aim of poetry, adding proper names to the characters. By the particular I mean what

¹ Manto, Saadat Hasan. p.92.

Alcibiades did, or what he suffered”(p.11) History since then has often essayed the role of living in particular temporal scales and hence had a formidable teleos. Through the ages History has continued to guard its sacred space of preserving specifically its spatio-temporal particularities.² While a “fluid skepticism” as Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacobs would call it, has invaded the sacrosanct space of history (which has often sought to represent the past ‘as it was’) in the later half of the twentieth century, memory continues to play the fluid signifier dissolving and often diluting concepts of ‘time’.³ With its skepticism intact, history has continued to rely on ‘evidence’ as its epistemic source. As Wilkinson notes, history rides on ‘evidence’ to distance itself from other sources of knowledge (such as the notion of past), about a chronologically distant phenomenon.

Parallel to the distinction between history and the past there exists a second, less frequently noted distinction between evidence and the remains of the past. The remains of the past comprise what survives of everything that ever happened; evidence consists of those remains that historians use in making histories. Evidence, in other words, occupies the same relation to remains as history does to the past: it is a tiny subset of a far larger domain. But unlike the past, remains constitute an actual, not a virtual, reality and are thus subject to the effects of time. Not everything in the past has left traces, and not all traces have survived. In the absence of remains, there can be no evidence, and in the absence of evidence, there can be no history. (p.83)

While the historians maintain strictest vigilance in this regard and continue to hold fort in terms of threading the past with the present with what they call ‘evidence’, memory enjoys a free reign ceaselessly traveling limits of space and time. The progression in terms of literary and historical studies has been such that ‘Evidence is everywhere’ (Wilkinson p.90). Evidence has scattered its spores and hence embroiled everything in

² Hutton, Patrick. P.537.

³ Appleby, Joyce, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob. p.242.

history. Barrera has been careful in sorting the evidence paradigm from the mechanism of writing history and hence makes an interesting distinction between 'making history' and 'talking about history'⁴. So there exists a history in narratives which is distinct from 'real' history. In this interesting context the talking paradigm is always in excess of making history as the talking "overcomes self-made scientific communities" and lies beyond the strictures of Western historiographic parameters. Although memory has continuously resisted confinement it has ended up within the bounded knowledge framework called 'History' albeit perhaps as the most evanescent form of evidence. Memory's slippery status owes its fair share to the active intervention of the subject and its rather contentious claim to 'genuine' evidence providing the fine dividing line between history and other forms of knowledge production. Wilkinson observes, "The first concerns the search for sources, the second the work of historical reconstruction; between these two, the authors situate the analysis of documents, a process whose aim is to sift the genuine from the false."(p.83) The parameters of a historical identity interestingly are poised on the desire to distinguish between the genuine and the false. The dissipated character of the 'memory' that is always in excess of itself therefore becomes a difficult choice for history as it is always already tainted with the complicity of the historical subject. The genuine false dichotomy takes a sticky turn with the desire to find overlapping identities. Greenblatt believes "More generally, the interest in local knowledge has usefully called attention to shared speech patterns, communal stories, and collective obsessions, often transmitted across generational and geographic boundaries."(p.56) The historical turn assumes a collectivity that often defines its perimeters of functional space. The question of collectivity and its manifestations assures an interesting relationship of memory with history. Shared collectivities invariably imply shared mnemonic spaces. In the spaces of the 'collective' history and memory often coalesce. Patrick Hutton in 'Recent scholarship on memory and history'⁵ addresses the question of the relationship between memory and history as a historiographic problem and poses a tripartite division in the ways it has been studied thus far. The first among them being the relationship between collective memory and national identity, second one deals with the Second World War and the atrocities of

⁴ Barrera, Jose Carlos Bermejo. p.201.

⁵ Hutton, Patrick. p.537

the Holocaust and finally, the third consists of what is called 'the end of history'. The 'end of history' marks the break between the concept of a collective memory and its bid to record its historical presence. The formation of the collective memory in this case, albeit extremely problematic and biased, still highlights the possibility of a disjunction between unassailable collectivities and their constraints in terms of historical character. Hutton poses the concept of a national identity as a plausible primary collectivity (which is in itself deeply problematic given the texture of the nation-state and its formulation) but highlights an interesting point of convergence of memory and the emergence of a collective historical character. Michele Cole and John Gay pose some interesting questions in this regard:

When one turns to a consideration of how people think, agreement is more difficult to achieve; when the contents of thought are the same, do people operate differently on these contents as the result of training specific to certain cultural settings? At one extreme, it is suggested that there are universal modes of expression, shared by all languages investigated thus far (Greenberg 1963). At the other extreme, each man's approach to problem solving may depend significantly on his personal background and training. (p.1079)

The polar extremities suggest that the cognitive collective locus is very difficult to obtain. Memory straddles these apparent polar extremes with equanimity and aplomb. It moves between the individuation and a larger cultural collectivity. Saul Friedländer while trying to understand Henry Rousso's *Le syndrome de Vichy* (*The Vichy Syndrome*; 1987), says, "Le syndrome de Vichy also plays to the suspicion that beliefs are instruments of power or of self-preservation-that memory functions as a shield in the present rather than as a bond with the past." (p.83) The polar indicators in this regard often function as a recuperative mechanism vociferously guarding the act of the present through long held beliefs. It is through these beliefs and the belief systems that memories abound both within and without. This is an interesting movement towards the understanding of the

colonial memory and its dilemma. That colonization was an active kinetic organ of the cultural matrix is a long accepted fact, so much so that it has obtained the indisputable exegetic status. The status however of colonial memory remains a site of constant contestations and negotiations. As colonial history or its post-colonial counterpart has tried to organize it either in affirmative or negative terms, it has always escaped the strictures of formulation. Perhaps it is memory's interesting self-preserving mechanism that offers, as Vichy suggests, a bond with the present. Colonial culture of memory and its practices hence tread a very tricky path between remembering and forgetting. As history tries time and again to remember and replicate, organize and formulate, colonial memory is always a signifier in excess of its signified. Even while it invents possible channels of remembering it constantly dilutes it. It reminds of Hobsbawm and Ranger's idea of 'invented traditions' where they say, "Invented traditions' is meant to be a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuities with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historical past."(p.xii) Ritual and symbolic alignment with the colonial 'time' and 'space' was important in associating with the 'historical past'. Hence our concept of the colonial memory is always already an excess of the colonial history and historiography. The power of knowledge categorization that Cohn suggests furthers our claim to a dissipated excessive colonial memory.

From the eighteenth century onward, European states increasingly made their power visible not only through ritual performance and dramatic display, but through the gradual extension of "officializing" procedures that established and extended their capacity in many areas. They took control by defining and classifying space, making separations between public and private spheres; by recording transactions such as the sale of property; by counting and classifying their populations, replacing religious institutions as the registrar of births, marriages and death; and by standardizing languages and scripts. (p.34)

The separatist machinations of colonial power are such strong determinants in our historiographic constructions that colonial memory and its excess become an interesting point of departure. It is invariably aggrieved by the dichotomies posed by Cohn, that of formalization and dissipation, and of segregation of spaces. In an article titled ‘ On the Importance of the study of History’ a student of the Calcutta University in 1865 remarks “ there must be in every age and in every country a mass of men, whose wills must be individually counted for thought. But it is of the highest importance to observe, the aggregate will of these men must have a character distinctive enough to exert some influence on the guiding public opinion of the country. It is in this sense that we can understand the remark made above that, every man is a historic character.”⁶ The tension between an every man and a larger congregation of men and their overlapping historicities make remembering perhaps the most important concern. The historic man has to assert his presence through permanence while memory eludes this intransience. *The Dutt Family Album* is an interesting case in this regard. It tantalizingly situates itself between both the acts of remembering and forgetting, of permanence and dismembering and hence between colonial history and memory. The mnemonic space that it generates plays itself on the aporias of the ‘colonial time’ which exists in the post-colonial memory as a large block often without temporal and spatial specificities.

The definition of the word ‘album’ in the Oxford Dictionary reads: “**noun 1** a blank book for the insertion of photographs, stamps, or other items forming a collection. ORIGIN Latin, ‘blank tablet’, from *albus* ‘white’.”⁷ A lay interpretation suggests that an album is collection of disparate objects (as the etymology points) on a blank tablet. Unlike a collection of poetry with specific cultural co-ordinates in place, the album as a collection of poems begins on a blank surface conjuring spaces and time zones of its own. It poses to begin on a clean slate, organizing memorabilia of the family with the help of poetic pieces. It stands as a living memory, an act of the present, when it is trying to systematize memories on a platform that allows mingling of spaces and time.

⁶ The Calcutta University Magazine. Vol II. July 1865.p.5

⁷ http://www.askoxford.com/results/?view=dev_dict&field-12668446=album&branch=13842570&textsearchtype=exact&sortorder=score%2Cname.

This becomes a larger historical intervention albeit in evanescent terms as the members of the Dutt family initiate a process of recording the past. In the collection being called an album it is at once the call to establish a relationship with the past as well as an act in the present. The making of an album precludes a selection process, a sieving of memories, hence it remains an act of individuation even while it tries to 'remember' collective memories. The historic necessity of 'remembering' is coloured by the possibility of individual intervention. It is in this 'individualistic' turn that the Dutts propose an interesting category of the 'family'. The 'family' lies between a larger collectivity and the individual, and hence is successful in playing with the act of history writing. The process of recording presences via an album is an interesting phenomenon as it ensures a historical character for a cluster of memories; thus the album stands at the crossroads of remembering and forgetting. The concept of an album often comes with an amateurish desire to record presences and therefore entails the neurosis of 'forgetting'. In this case perhaps it is the angst of the colonized to place itself at the very heart of the presence and absence. The album, albeit not an indigenous concept, plays to cadence of this dichotomy. It is within the epistemic reach of the 'memory' and yet it toys with the idea of a historicity. Memory's claim to history can always be challenged as its 'evidential' parameter can with obvious reasons be questioned. The presence generated by memory and the bid to a historicity framed within the frame of posterity places the album tantalizingly both within and without the parameters of history. Hence, the album plays as the chronological vector of posterity, the time of the future, and it exceeds the limits of both memory and history. The literary presence in the form of an album prides itself on choosing liminal historical 'evidence' as its marker. An album presumably contains what history would like to call 'evidence'. The Dutts therefore elevates literature to the category of 'evidence' thus proposing alterity in the colonial historical schema. The dilemma of the act of recording a historical presence is centered around a 'nothingness', the absence of received forms of knowledge, in the midst of a historical angst. It is the 'nothingness' or the absence of the available colonial historiographic tools that foregrounds the category of the literary as a possible alternative. Hence, it is interesting how the literary (the most effervescent form of historiographic tool as it is often the receptacle of memories) becomes the site of this act of remembering. It's on a clean slate

that the Dutts conjure unrelated images and consequently hold the possibility of exceeding colonial knowledge. The album holds records for posterity and hence is beyond both the immediate and the past. Hence, the colonial subject in the album attests the fact that the colonial subject could and did exist beyond the apparent trappings of hegemonic 'rational' colonial knowledge systems. The overarching colonial framework is put to rest for once as the 'family' of Dutts resolve at organizing their memorabilia.

Hence, it is not surprising that the age that paraded individual luminaries held the possibility of such a narrative space. The Renaissance as it was conjured brought into the public sphere the category of the individual that strove to establish his historical presence. S.N. Banerjee declares at the very beginning that his reading of the nineteenth century would challenge the accepted culturescape of the nineteenth century which was based on the two polar junctions, one comprising of the philosophers of the age: the likes of Bankim, Vidyasagar and Rammohan, while the other had the Baiji and Babu culture as its patrons. This is where perhaps the differentiation between the 'great tradition' and the 'little tradition' that Sumonto Banerjee makes comes to a challenging application. He quotes Coomaraswamy to differentiate between the accepted norms of knowledge production and the other neglected forms. The 'great tradition', observes Banerjee, sometimes participated in the activities of the 'little tradition' but the involvement in the other way around was not possible.(p.47) The cultural commerce of the nineteenth century that we are to observe here straddles both the 'little' and the 'great' tradition. On the one hand the English poetry as a form of delineation presupposed participation in the 'great' tradition, on the other hand a queer unknown form of literary organization belongs to the domain of the 'little'. This interesting interplay of the accepted and the contested forms of cultural exchange invariably raises question about the position of the text vis a vis the public and the private.

Antoinette Burton in the context of W.C. Bonerjee's family history says, "In many ways, the version of Hemangini which *Family History* offers flies in the face of such binaries as public/private and inside/outside and illustrates— quite subtly, but in the end persuasively- that the domestic is always already the public, the private is always already the national, and the household is always already the political."(p. xviii) The album as a

representative of a family historical expression hence situates itself at the confluence of the personal and the political. It thunders a change in the way colonial knowledge framework has been reworked. The album refuses to be consumed by the insurmountable overwhelming colonial history. A familial collection of poetry in an album treads the fine line between participating in a larger colonial narrative history and the local immediate and personal. One might suggest that these are not mutually exclusive categories and that the personal is part of the larger history. But in posing a collectivity of the family in an album boasts of looking at another possible subject position which doesn't give into easy compartmentalization of the private personal history and the larger public historiographic constructions as the album. This is evident in the choice of the album as mode of artistic articulation. As the definition of the album suggests the album presumes a pictographical organization. It reminds us of Benjamin and his ideas on the mechanical reproduction of art, the politics and poetics of photography interacting with the individualistic art, painting.

The nineteenth century dispute as to the artistic value of painting versus photography today seems devious and confused. This does not diminish its importance, however; if anything it underlines it. The dispute was in fact the symptom of a historical transformation the universal impact of which was not realized by either of the rivals. When the age of mechanical reproduction separated art from its basis in cult, the semblance of its autonomy disappeared forever. The resulting change in the function of art transcended the perspective of the century; for a long time it even escaped that of the twentieth century, which experienced the development of film.(p.220)

The question of pictorial representations here is interesting and unsettling because as Benjamin has pointed earlier that the break of photography from the other individualistic art forms is not merely in its historical transformation but its bid to disrupt 'historical testimony', in effect displacing the 'authority of the object'. Poetic pieces wrapped in the form of an album's historical testimony and claim to autonomy is in effect a claim to posterity, always already existing in the realm of the 'other'. The futuristic principle is a

prominent trope of the project of modernity with its insistence on the idea of the future, because 'modern' in itself assumes an excess of the 'present'. This futuristic approach is based on the principle of negation, a negation of the past, of barbaric medieval ages (which is superseded by the civility of the modern). As Foucault observes in 'Other Spaces' "in the medieval ages there was a hierarchic ensemble of places; sacred place and the profane; protected places and the open, exposed places; urban places and the rural."(p.25). The modern assumed a constant re-orientation of spaces and hence the rhetoric of the modern was always that of 'becoming'. So the once sacred space of the family can well be exposed and consumed in the literary commercial forum. The Post-colonial historian placed his historiography as a disjunction and a departure from the overarching colonial framework. Both these formulations, not necessarily mutually exclusive, assumes linearity in terms of its association with the future (that which is to come). This break with the past in terms of a futuristic approach is premised on a negativity. The album here provides a generic break in terms of its form as it eschews the possibility of this negativity. So the 'messianic time' in the case of the album is not premised on disapproval of the past. Its bid to posterity is a part of an alternative framework outside the domain of this linearity and hence it can place itself beyond the parameters of a necessarily teleological discipline. It has already surrendered itself to the call of a dissipated autonomy as the object of artistic expression attempts to capture something which is always in excess of the object itself. Although the frame itself, as Benjamin highlights, in its bid to a pictorial arrangement, allows a mirage like semblance of autonomy, it is always tainted with the complicity of the 'historical testimony' of the audience. In the case of the colonial subject, this is complicated by the fact that right to 'testimony' is often not granted. With the innovative generic use, the Dutts claim this right to 'testimony'.

In this we might turn to Foucault and thus the idea of 'counter-memory'. He categorically denies, using his epistemic genealogical tool, that 'will to knowledge' is linked to the 'counter-memory'.⁸

⁸ Foucault, Michel, 1977.p. 162.

Knowledge does not slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason; its development is not tied to the constitution and affirmation of a free subject ; rather, it creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence. (p.163)

The counter-memory is premised on the 'instinctive violence' of the knowledge system or paradigm. The album appeals to a sense of counter-memory and yet moves beyond it. The systematized knowledge paradigm of history engenders incarceration of 'free subjectivities' which counter-memory contests with its violence within. The album however panders to the idea of a historical account assessing and contesting its limits yet offers itself to be placed outside this knowledge construct. Hence, even when it attempts to construct a pictographically poetic account for posterity by teasing the violence within history, in effect it destabilizes the paradigm of history itself. It does not seek an association with the past, but engenders a consensual identification with the present, and thereby exceed even the limits of memory. For even counter-memory assumes a relationship, albeit in negation with remembering, whereas the album consents to the limits of both remembering and forgetting, thereby unsettling chains of signification. The constants of time and space both stand uneasy and orphaned as the album plays to the tune of posterity, playing to the rhythm of the other, always in excess even of itself.

II

Rupture and Recovery

CAIRO IS EGYPT'S own metaphor for itself.

Everywhere in the country except the city itself, Cairo is Egypt. They are spoken of by the same name, Masr, a name that is appropriate as well as ancient, a derivative of a root that means 'to settle' or 'to civilize'. ... In the distance shanties grow in tiers upon the ruins, and they in turn fade gently, imperceptibly, into the

scraggy geometry of Cairo's skyline- into a tableau of decay and regeneration, a metaphor for Masr.

----- Amitav Ghosh⁹

Ghosh's poignant articulation succinctly puts into perspective the strange colonial metonymical existence. The modern Cairo, the centre of British authority in Egypt is constantly overrun by the semantics of the underlying Masr. It is symptomatic of the excess of the semiotics of the relationship between the colonizer's time and the time of the colonized, where the colonized belongs to the part as well as the whole, as a fluid signified. This was played against a limitless colonial space, the space that lay beyond the colonial centre. The simultaneous existence of the two civilizations and its interesting nomenclatural function is indicative of a larger colonial situation, that of a colonial metonymic existence. It carries the onus of existing not only as an immediate historical integer but constantly be a part of a larger collectivity. Unlike the notion of 'verticality' that Sibnarayan Ray insists charted the domain of the Renaissance in India, the colonial existence was always already metonymic. He could not have been just a 'nomo singulare or nomo unico', "affirmative of oneself as a distinct person who moulds himself or herself through his or her own conscious effort and who is not to be reduced to a creature of circumstances."¹⁰ The corpus of colonial knowledge was so overwhelming that it was beyond such specificities as 'circumstances'. The historical contingencies were confounded with the flattening of colonial time and space that resisted claims of specificities. Coloniality whether pronounced or subtle erased the possibility of the existence of a singular subject in possession of his 'circumstances'. The colonial time stretched out across the entire colonial space, the colonial subject is often the metonymic subject. The colonial subject's attempt to express himself has always struggled against this dissipated metonymic space. As illustrated in the section above this space contains the possibility of both 'forgetting' and 'remembering'.

Bankim opines in 'The Popular Literature for Bengal',

⁹ Amitav Ghosh. p.38.

¹⁰ Ray, Sibnarayan. p.6

And thus the national character and the productions of the national intellect acted and reacted on each other. Indolent habits and a feeble moral organization gave birth to an effeminate poetical literature; and then for the ages the country fed and nourished itself on that effeminate literature. The acute but uncreative intellect of the Bengali delighted to lose itself in the subtle distinctions of the law, and he indulged in the favourite pastime till he succeeded in making his won bonds tighter and more intimate.¹¹

This potentially slippery generic space was coloured by the politics of the production of both the national and the immediate. The litterateur of the nineteenth century had to potentially agree to his feeble effeminate past and yet participate in the project of the 'imagining' of the nation. Bankim's voice is but a representative one of a large section of the creative populace. Literature and the development of the indigenous languages had to be of contributory nature to the larger 'national' question, opined a significant section of the writers. Asitkumar Bandopadhyay in his literary history of the nineteenth century says that three key words that best described the literary scene were *desh* (nation), *samaj* (society) and *bahirdesh* (beyond the nation)¹². It illustrates beyond doubt the fact that the writers employed these concepts as polar signifiers in their creative output. As Bhudev Mookherjea opines in 'An Introduction to the Art of Teaching', published in *The Hindoo Patriot*, that literature was aimed at 'revolutionizing national taste and popularizing moral truths.'¹³ The twin objectives succinctly summarize the colonial subject's urge to subscribe to a renewed collectivity. The common cultural register in this 'imagining' thus produced would activate the voice of the 'modern' and premise itself on a 'rational' detachment with the past and this would further lead to the futuristic aspirations of the modernity. As Bankim notes " There is scarcely any readable work (readable even in the sense in which Bharat Chandra's poems are readable) belonging to that age- the age of the *Naba Babu Bilas* and the *Prabodha Chandrika*; as for literary filth, there never was a more copious supply. Happily, the whole mass of rubbish has vanished from public memory."¹⁴

¹¹ Chatterjee, Bankim. 1969. p.98

¹² Bandopadhyay, Asitkumar. p. 347.

¹³ Mookherjea, Bhoodeb. 'p.230

¹⁴ Ibid. 'Bengali Literature'. P.103

So the colonial subject made amends and offered itself to the universal. As Tagore suggests, “to detach the individual idea from its confinement of everyday facts and to give it soaring wings the freedom of the universal: this is the function of poetry.”¹⁵

Tagore continues in ‘East and West’:

Today the real East remains unexplored. The blindness of contempt is more hopeless than the blindness of ignorance, for contempt kills the light which ignorance merely leaves unignited. The East is waiting to be understood by the Western races, in order not only to be able to give what is true in her, but also confident of her own mission.¹⁶

Tagore squarely attributes the shrinking of cultural geographies to the ‘modern age’ and hence he finds the need to cope with this growing sense of loss. To bridge this gnawing gap he advocates and administers ‘universal humanism’. Although the West carries the ‘shock of passion’ for ‘power and wealth’ he wishes to acknowledge “the most significant fact of modern days is this, that the West has met the East. Such a momentous meeting of humanity, in order to be fruitful, must have in its heart some great emotional idea, generous and creative.”¹⁷ This greatness is possible as he suggests when one combines creativity with a spiritual ideal, ‘But the creative genius is in Man’s spiritual ideal’. The co-existence of the spiritual and the creative, the Indian modern self and the West is possible only in collectivities. He augments his argument by the suggestion that the ‘creative unity’ lies in establishing a connection with the world beyond. Transcendence of national boundaries and a simultaneous metonymic existence therefore emerges as a suitable and a possible recuperative strategy.

Despite recognizing the wealth of his own intellectual history, as the observations from the two prominent literary figures of the nineteenth century suggest, one had to engage with both the national and the transnational and therefore necessarily move beyond the immediate. There was a desire to partake in the larger cultural juggernaut, that of

¹⁵ Tagore. ‘Creative unity’. P.27

¹⁶ Tagore, Rabindranath. 2004. p.58.

¹⁷ Ibid. p.46

modernity. Whether one desired or detested, modernity was a part of their lives. Be it the universal humanism of Tagore, or the nationalism of Bankim (to suggest a few) one heard the voice of the collective as the answer to the 'modernity'. The creative autonomy lay in identifying coping mechanisms within the overwhelming presence of colonial knowledge systems. Nineteenth century Bengal therefore formulated modernity as its association with a larger collectivity, of the individual connecting with the larger reality. The 'authorial' Renaissance man had to situate his individuality as a subset of a larger universal modernity. In claiming an individuation in this entire process is the choice or spark of autonomy in the almost insurmountable load of belonging to the colonial knowledge framework. In a lecture titled 'Our Modernity' Partha Chatterjee introduces a larger debate about the texture of modernity and concludes that we had a modernity that we could claim to have been ours. The logic of modernity, says Chatterjee, could be encapsulated in two key words in Bengali, *nabya* (new) , *unnati* (improvement or progress).¹⁸ India historically took to imagine its modernity on the lines of a larger historical vector, progress. The author figure in the nineteenth century, often a historical register of modernity, took to employing its creative agencies to situate himself in a larger structure. As an article in *The Friend of India* says "The spread of education has given to the development of individual character among the natives of this country... It would tend to purify the national character, render it more susceptible of the innate value of good and evil, of truth and falsehood, of moral rectitude and its opposite."¹⁹ Subrata Dasgupta takes a step further to insist that "I would like to suggest that *construction of a cross-cultural mentality involving Indian and western cultures is the most consequential creative achievement of the Bengal Renaissance.*"²⁰ Nandy engagement with the dialectics of existences takes it step further by highlighting the possibility of an alterity within the all embracing aspect of Western modernity. He stakes his claims on an alternative West, the West that found its way into the parlour and the streets alike, akin to the idea of 'our modernity' suggested by Partha Chatterjee, " they construct a West which allows them to live with the alternative West, while resisting the loving embrace of

¹⁸ Chatterjee, Partha. 1994. translated by the author. p.4

¹⁹ 'The progress of the Hindu Mind' in Ed. Benoy Ghose, '*Selections From English Periodicals of the 19th Century* , Vol VI 1861-1874.

²⁰Dasgupta, Subrata. p.74.

the West's dominant self."²¹ The coping mechanism that the nineteenth century employs to tackle the overwhelming presence of the colonial that the response is often the simultaneity of living and not living with the West, of living in multiplicities. The colonial subject of the Bengal Renaissance in the literary landscape had to straddle world of multiple existences. The cognitive creative identity of the authors of the nineteenth century therefore visibly moved from a solipsistic mode of self-expression to a larger collectivity. Anindya Roy takes it to a logical extreme when he states that "Bengal Renaissance was characterized by a 'collective cognitive identity'"²². So, the call for collectivity emerged as the answer to an overwhelming subjectivization by the colonial knowledge network.

Partha Chatterjee seeks to look at this individuation as a part of the project of "the bourgeoisie to create a cultural homogeneity within the nation-state".²³ Be it the project of nation state or transnational formulations, the literary scene of the nineteenth century established the individual in relation to a collectivity. Both in philosophy and praxis the textual culture construed metonymic existences.

The opening lines of a famous retrospective historical novel on the nineteenth century in Bengali, *Shei Shomoy (Those Days)*²⁴ begins with the birth of Nabinkumar (a character believed to be based on the legendary translator of the *Mahabharata* into Bengali, Kaliprasanna Singha), the quintessential figure of the Bengal Renaissance. "the baby was born after it had barely spent seven months and ten days in the womb. He had expressed his eagerness and urgency in the womb itself. He did not want to stay in the dark waters for long." These lines ring an uncanny epiphany, that of the untimely birth of the Renaissance. To add to the woes, in the text, the first chapter comprises of the birth of Nabinkumar, a bastard child of an impotent Babu. It toys with the idea of the Renaissance as a bastard child, immature and waiting to see the light. The rhythm of this line of thought is in accordance with the idea that the Indian renaissance was a consumer of

²¹ Nandy, Ashis. p.xviii.

²² Roy, Anindya. p.31

²³ Chatterjee, Partha. (aug 1975).p.68

²⁴ Gangopadhyay, Sumil. p. 9. (my translation)

universal modernity and never its producer. To the effect that it hurriedly consumed as much as it could and born before its time into a world that he thought could relieve him from the 'dark waters'. Although 'modernity' with the idea of the nation state has attempted to iron out differences and subsume the idea of differences, "differences are too heterodox for the nationalist project of modernity to contain them".²⁵ Playing with the differences the colonial modern subject carried the burden of belonging to contrastive pairs of identities such as the public/private, individual/group, community/society.²⁶

The imaginative centrality of the subject has stood the test of time. The bastard child of Western modernity, 'our modernity' has made the colonial individual subject the centre of its discourse orbit. The inchoate subject has sought to claim its authority over itself by its metonymic aspirations. The text in question, *The Dutt Family Album*, poses to attempt a rupture in this apparent balance between the individual and his larger collective by experimenting with the idea of a consolidated authorial figure. As Sumit Sarkar warns:

Eulogy and denunciation can become mirror images, inversions of each other. What they have had in common here at times is an assumption of total 'acculturation' that tends to eliminate the autonomy and agency of the colonial subject. This attitude is at its most blatant in some applications of Saidian framework where the critique of colonial power-knowledge gets extended into an assumption of complete control or seamless cultural hegemony. It appears that the colonial middle-class is not capable of not only derivative discourses.²⁷

It is neither a eulogy nor a complete denunciation of colonial modernity that the Dutt offer in the text, instead they offer complex alternative reading of the same. There is the realization that Western modernity is inescapable. Therefore the Dutt attempt to play with the co-ordinates of this 'modernity'. Apart from using the form of the album which lies somewhere in between the domain of the public and the private, they experiment

²⁵ Chakrabarty, Dipesh. (Autumn, 1993), pp. 1-34.

²⁶ Van De Veer, Peter. (1998), pp.285.

²⁷ Sarkar, Sumit. 1997 P.98

with the limits of the contrasting pairs that modernity poses as alternative bids to identity. In the unassailable politico-cultural colonial framework their experiments with the identity of the authorial subject contests the paradigmatic assumptions about 'derivative discourses', to borrow Benedict Anderson's term.

In the Western knowledge paradigm it is with the two essays at the close of the twentieth century that one started questioning the authority of the authorial subject. While Barthes declared the 'The Death of the Author' in 1977, Foucault closely followed suit by questioning the functionality of the authorial self altogether with 'What is an author?' in 1980. This break displaced the author as the power centre of a text. Foucault dissociates ownership of a piece of literary work from the author claiming that authorship is in effect an ownership certificate which says nothing about the actions and the characteristics that produced it. He therefore speaks of the 'author-function', "the author-function is therefore characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within society".²⁸ Barthes refuses to acknowledge the power of the text thereby restricting the limits of the text within the imagined self of its individual producer. He equates writing with the concept of *écriture*. For him writing "is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing."²⁹ Both Foucault and Barthes pronounce the end of the era of the author.

In this formulation the Dutts occupy a very interesting position. Their text is unique in the fact they are the only family in the nineteenth century Bengal to have co-authored a collection of poems without revealing their individual identities. It goes with the overarching familiar identity of the Dutt family. It travels between absolute anonymity and the choice of a collective authorship. One might argue that the Dutts were a well known family of Rambagan of Kolkata and hence their social position might have given them some mileage. Rosinka Chaudhuri draws our attention to the fact that all these authors had published previously and hence it would preposterous to assume that it was solely recognition that the Dutts were eyeing with the family identity. Greece Chunder

²⁸ Foucault, Michel. Counter-memory and practice. P.148.

²⁹ Barthes, Roland. P.146.

Dutt for one was one of the most famous students of Hindu College and had published *The Loyal Hours: Poems Welcoming the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburg on their Advent to India* in 1869, his brother Hur Chunder Dutt had published *Fugitive Pieces* in 1851 and *Lotus Leaves, Or Poems Chiefly on Ancient Indian Subjects* soon after the publication of the Album in 1871. Many poems of this collection by Hur Chunder Dutt and Greece Chunder Dutt were published in the *Bengal Magazine* and particularly in *The Athaeneum*. There lies an incipient tantalizing invitation to the reader to discover the individual contributors because most of these poems had been published elsewhere with the names of their authors. Unlike just the complex mesh of discourses displacing the authors as the power centre of the text, here the authorial figures themselves move between a presence and an absence. Here the authorial subjects themselves lapse into a singular unitary that still carries the potential of individuality. The overarching collective is an interesting category that the Dutts chose to represent. It is not a collective that obliterates individual entities completely. The category of the family and that too of an illustrious one, presumes identifiable authorial figures. The simultaneous positions of assertion and negation of identities that the Dutts chose to take in effect expose the limits of the contrasting identity pairs that the colonial modernity of the nineteenth century offered.

Since one could not alter the dynamics of the unassailable colonial framework, they played with the other signifier, that of the individual foregrounding the possibility of the authorship traveling to the family. The routes of association that were available limited the interventionist act of the poetry of the Dutts. The quintessential Renaissance figure of the individual taking charge of the historical situation, of the 'man alone is not locked into his environment'³⁰, stands challenged. The colonial Renaissance man not only carried the onus of individuality but also of 'modernity' where one had to align oneself with the larger geo-political narrative. The politics of the multi layered authorial entities pose an alternative collectivity that ruptures the binaries offered by the literary currents of the nineteenth century. Authorial sovereignty and anonymity has been read as two different political positions in the nineteenth century. As we have discussed, the authorial entity was often the colonial subject's entry point into the discursive space of the

³⁰ Bronowoski, J.H. p.7.

colonizer's knowledge paradigm. Claiming the authorial voice or its negation prove easy binaries that can be tackled within the scope of the critical enquiry posed so far. But the Dutts in the family album pose a serious threat to our conceptualizations of the nineteenth century when they claim both authorship and anonymity. This uneasy relationship couldn't be accommodated harmoniously into the warp and the weft of the rhetoric of the nineteenth century.

The familial identity not only ruptures the dialectics of the individual and the larger collectivity, it also positions itself outside the dynamics of the personal and the public. The collectivity posed in the familial bonding with cousins and brothers in a singular literary articulation charges the 'domestic' space with the politics of literary productivity. The filial is not merely a point of beatific homecoming but a political space of intense contestations. This intervention cannot be simply read as the result of the alienation of the Dutts in the literary circuit of the nineteenth century. "The low status of Bengali might initially have led to the use of the English for poetry, but the idealism over the use of the mother-tongue that became progressively of widespread made the English verse of the Dutts out of place."³¹ According familial identity as the status of the authorial marker is not merely an act of retribution but is a window to larger space of methodological negotiations. This filial identity interestingly is coloured by the bonds of 'Christian brotherhood'.

The preface to the text reads:

The writers of the following pages are aware that bad poetry is intolerable and that mediocre poetry deserves perhaps even a harsher epithet. There is a glut of both in the market. But they venture on publication, not because they think, their verses good, but in the hope that their book will be regarded, in some respects, as a curiosity. They are foreigners, natives of India, of different walks of life, yet one family, in whom the ties of blood relationship have been drawn closer by the holy bond of Christian brotherhood. As foreigners educated out of England, they solicit the indulgence of British critics to poems which on these grounds alone may, it is hoped, have some title to their attention.

³¹ Mehrotra. P.54.

This preface exactly reads like the ideal aftermath of an Orientalist hegemonic indoctrination. This can be easily read as an ideal example of the result of the imperial ideology and official doctrine of the 'civilizing mission'. The ever banished colonial subject is seen pleading for a place with the ever indulgent West. But the subtle alterations in the generic treatment place this preface in perspective. Here the spatially displaced colonial subject is inviting the British critics to look at them with the eye of the 'curious'. The curiosity here is very self-conscious portrait, almost as an act of counter-transference of gaze. Unburdened by the need to either praise or to blame we might look into the deeper problematics that this preface introduces. The authorial entity, in the process of seeking an alternative coping strategy, offers Christian brotherhood as its point of continuity with a larger collective. This connect comes as the logic of the Dutt family's bid to colonial modernity and to a different order of metonymic existence. As Gerald Studdert-Kennedy rightly points out, that the 'modern' secular society has problems dealing with the 'sacred'. Hence South Asian Christianity has often been dismissed to the effect that the scholars have "tended to generalize and homogenize the hegemonic and countervailing colonial and imperial discourse."(p.16) It has resulted in the inability of distinguishing 'religious ideology' with 'religious belief'. With this proposed metonymic bonding, the Dutt's initiate the language of 'religious belief' as an alternate coping strategy.

This transnational collectivity proposed here comes at a historical juncture where the colonial subject was negotiating his space with the modern. Religion and modernity share a history of exclusions in the lore of colonial modernity. Modernity presumed, as Van De Veer suggests, dissociation with the religious. "The success of industrialization, science and technology has made religion in the modern world obsolete. In sociological theories of modernity the transition from the pre-modern, rural community to the modern, industrial and urbanized society is said to be marked by the decline of religion as an expression of the moral unity of the society."(De Veer, 1996.p.6) Anderson speaks on similar lines albeit in the context of national allegory, "Disintegration of paradise: nothing makes fatality more arbitrary. Absurdity of salvation: nothing makes another style of continuity more necessary." (Anderson, 1991, p.11)Continuity in terms of modernity, suggests Anderson in the context of imagining the nation, had to dissolve remnants of the religious. Novel was the form that was the answer to this continuity as it was a nouveaux entry which was not tainted with pre-conceived cultural aspirations.

Religion has often been read as a historical constant, a fixed consciousness which has been tainted repeatedly with the colours of treason and fragmentations in the nationalist conceptualizations. The later scholarship concerning the nineteenth century has paraded religion as a fragmenting agent, often looking at the equating religious belief with religious ideology.³² The Dutts posit an interesting challenge to this imaginary. In their layered collective they appeal to the British to accept their poetry as one of the Indian origin all the while trying to establish connection with religious continuities. They pose religion as the suitable bond that would link the different layers of their metonymic existence.

Modernity as a concept immediately strikes connection with movement and flux, the destruction of particularities and 'destruction of the particular by the universality of the Cartesian cogito'³³. But interestingly enough, the universality in part was standardized by a teleological directive of compartmentalizing temporal parameters. As Jashodhara Bagchi points out that the mainstay of European modernity was "exigency of the temporal arrivism"³⁴ that with a certain teleological precision categorized Europe into ancient, medieval and modern. This temporal categorization helped in constructing the colonial modern on the lines of 'improvement'. This in turn allowed the Western imperial construct to offer 'posterity' to the 'other'. As Foucault says "The attitude of modernity does not treat the passing moment as sacred in order to try to maintain or perpetuate it."³⁵ In dissolving spaces for the sacrosanct the modern plays to the tune of the temporal other. The logic therefore of modernity is construed on this disjunction.

The Dutts face a strange dilemma in this text and in the flux of modernity. The religious continuity that they pose as a possible answer to modernity doesn't resolve the tension that belies the project of modernity, the emergence of a secular nation-state. Hence, the Dutts chose to employ 'chaos' as an active recuperative tool. The collection boasts of a 'chaotic' organization. It refuses to commit itself to any logical framework and works

³² See for eg. Vishwanathan Gauri. *Out of the fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief*. New York: Princeton University Press, 1998.

³³ Lash Scott and Jonathan Friedman. P.92.

³⁴ Bagchi, Jashodhara. P.11.

³⁵ What Is Enlightenment? (Was ist Aufklärung?). (accessed October 3, 1999 <http://www.knuten.liu.se/~bjoch509/works/foucault/enlight.txt>)

effectively at showcasing various literary genres that the concerned authors have dabbled. From historical Romances, descriptive poems, sonnets to didactic pieces the album has it all. It does not carry the names of the authors to begin with. One cannot possibly fathom the organizational logic of the text as the poems carry no information about their publication. The reader is left in the dark to wonder whether the text is organized according to chronological parameters or as a collection of authorial oeuvres. All normative expectations from a literary work are dissolved. The only tool that is left with the reader is that of assessing the content and trying to formulate a logic that would perhaps organize them on the lines of similar thematic orientations. On this count, the reader is disappointed yet again. For example, a poem called the *The Southern Wind* is followed by *The Chief Of Porkurna* and then by a translation from the original German poem by Gaudy³⁶. The readers fail to find any logical organization either in terms of authorship, chronology, themes or poetic styles. The text tends to obliterate any preconceived notion of the literary that the readership might carry.

In presenting chaos as a recuperative strategy the Dutts pose a tenacious challenge. The disruptive quality of chaos becomes an interesting entry point into the text. Colonial modernity in particular carries the logic of stability which encounters complete anarchy in the text. An expose of this literary bedlam is in effect yoking together as the poets suggests of 'earth' and the 'heaven'. "When first I left the pleasant shade/ of academic bowers,/ I thought that this bright world was made/ Of sunshine and of flowers,/ And panted, my book-labours o'er/ Its fairy regions to explore."(p.128). The English literary scene is already doomed by its anarchic relationship with colonial modernity. The labours are part of a 'dizzy brain' that tries to constantly compel the union of disparate entities (often that of 'heaven' and 'earth').

The modern as we had observed a little while earlier carries at its centre a stasis marked by a teleos. Even when it tries to absorb differences it is unable to subsume heterodoxies. Colonial modernity, with its metonymic existence, has always posed as the stabilizing vector of progress. Hence its co-habitation with chaos is a difficult proposition. The

³⁶ P.9-13

rupture and the recovery dialectics that the Dutts pose in the album sustains in this particular text because it is framed in a porous category of the album. The album unlike the project of 'modernity' (which presupposes a 'pre-modern') does not carry the onus of either remembering or forgetting. The liminal existence of the album allows modernity and chaos to co-habit. This is not an easy existence and has never meant to be one. The generic innovation yokes together chaos and modernity exposing thereby the limits of the same. Therefore perhaps *The Dutt Family* album remains a loner in the history of Indian writing in English. It is only with the various innovative strategies both in form and content that they bring together diverse apparently acrimonious forces of history. The text the lone survivor of that marked its literary presence by dabbling with the limits of its contemporary bellicose historical forces.

Conclusion

If then amongst thy sons a fallen race,
Alas! Departed low, (unhappy days!)
I a poor school boy with my scanty store,
Unlearned in the mysterious shastras lore,
On painted wings of fancy strive to soar,
And hail thee, India from thy days of yore,
Then welcome to my breast, forever dear,
While on thy sad remains I drop a tear.
And tho' I'm born in this unlucky age,
Without the fire of any ancient sage,
Accept the tribute of a heart sincere.

———— Gooroo Churn Dutt

That essentialist historiographic constructions of India were placed on an epistemological quicksand is no new narrative. It has been the constant around which post-colonial India has organized its subjective abstractions. The Indian historians have continuously claimed that the nineteenth century gifted India her history, albeit in a Western framework. History's prominence as a discursive mode of power in the nineteenth century is a tribute to the machinations of the very European knowledge paradigm that framed it. The generic character of history allows subjectivity and subjectivization simultaneously; therefore history's dominance in the nineteenth century discursive domain elicits no wonder. The power of history in a colonial context far exceeds the limitations of subjectivization that the colonial power imposes. Gyan Prakash sums up the history power dialectics in the Indian context when he states "A profound sense of historical awareness guided the European colonial conquest of 'peoples without history'; anticolonial nationalism responded to the European rule by asserting its claim to history and the identity of the Post colonial Third World rests on the experience of subjection to the master of History- Europe."¹ One can obviously steer the debate around our history and the History that lies with Europe. Although the contestations are fierce about the

¹ Prakash, Gyan. p.352

concept of 'histories' rather than one grand narrative called History, there is perhaps one constant that governs the paradigm of history writing post the colonial intervention. To begin with one has always invariably cited the utilitarian James Mill's *The History Of British India*² published in six volumes in 1820 as the source of India's modern historicity. Mill's account of India's history accounts for a meticulous organization of events of his historical interest on temporal and spatial parameters. The definitive structures of temporal and spatial parameters have given birth to a unique dialectics of individuation and subjectivization. While the genre has provided the colonial subject with the possibility of 'speech' its inherent subservience to the temporal and spatial scales has ensured that the subject continues to function in a European knowledge network. Many believe that this understanding of history occurred with the intervention of the modernity. As Dirks puts it "history is surely one of the most important signs of the modern. We are not only modern because we have achieved this status historically, but because we have developed consciousness of our historical depths and trajectories, as also our historical transcendence of the traditional."³ As Dirks puts it, history has not only been the dominant genre of articulation of the modern, it has graduated to become the 'sign' of the modern. In effect history as a discipline by nineteenth century had become the functional logic of the 'modern'. The continuous process of modernity allowed the dialectics of apparently opposing entities of individual subjectivity and the process of subjectivization to co-habit the space of colonial history. The scopic regime of modernity made co-existence a reality because the logic of it lay in the act of 'becoming'. It ensured that the subject was always in the process of being formulated. Therefore while the subject could individuate himself, the colonial discursive forces could necessitate its subjectivization. In an age where cultural insularity was a fable, and the lure of modernity's bid to individuation a palpable reality, the colonial subject responded actively to the call of the present. Therefore when Bankim claims "we have no history! We must have a history!" we are introduced to the colonial subject claiming his space, with the present as its moral base, in the new modern construct called history. The colonial modern is perforce a subject of history hence he has to subscribe to the centrality of the axes of time and space even in his individual act at claiming a historical presence. All he can do is dabble with the limits of the space of the subject within the larger framework of history.

² Mill, James. P.79.

³ Dirks, Nicholas B. p.372.

As Indira Chowdhury notes :

The problem as Bankim saw it, was two- tiered, not only was he concerned with relocating the banished colonial subject within history as a discourse of Enlightenment, he also wanted to re-instill within the colonial subject a sense of pride in the colonized by reminding him of the different historical sources he possessed namely genealogical narratives.⁴

History as a subject of modernity for the colonial subject therefore has also meant looking for alternative sources. Partha Chatterjee quotes Mrityunjay Vidyalkar's *Rajabali*(1808), to suggest how the puranic stories were an alternative narrative route to modern history. The text claims an interesting historicity where the content is that of a puranic corpus but the dimensions of the text remains entrenched in the linear time. The text opens with the following lines:

In the course of the circular motion of time, like the hands of a clock, passing through the thirty kalpa such as Pitrkapla, we are now situated in the svetavaraha kalpa... This yuga consists of 432,000 years. Of these, upto the present year 1726 of the Saka era, 4095 years have now passed; 427,095 years are left.⁵

As the colonial subject continued to deal with history and the present, he in turn 'heroized' the present. This has as Foucault observes from an interesting aspect of modernity, "Modernity is not a fleeting sensitivity to the fleeting present; it is the will to heroize the present."⁶ The present for the colonial subject holds redemptive potential in terms of negotiating with the colonial circuit. This relationship between modernity and the present allows the space for the colonial subject to intervene in the acts of the present. This will to heroize allowed the colonial subject to belong to both the processes of his subjectivization and his individuation.

⁴ Chowdhury, Indira. p.40

⁵ Chatterjee, Partha. 1994.p.3

⁶ What Is Enlightenment? (Was ist Aufklärung?)(accessed October 3, 1999 at <http://www.knuten.liu.se/~bjoch509/works/foucault/enlight.txt>)

According to Partha Chatterjee, the domain of intellect and culture or what he famously called the 'spiritual domain', was equivalent to a civil society for the colonized, a sovereign territory from which the colonial power was excluded.⁷ The license that the discipline of literature harbours allows it to function both at the level of history and beyond. As Linda Orr observes in 'The Revenge of Literature: A history of history', "if literature is understood in a limited generic sense, this historical perception makes sense; in fact it is in the interest of history, transformed into science, to construct periodization around such an epistemological break. But "literature" doesnot retreat so easily; it remains implicated in history, where it assumes various guises as writing, language, text, rhetoric, fiction, reading and so forth."⁸ It is debatable whether the domain of intellect could be completely segregated from the colonial, but perhaps it open spaces where the colonial subject can dabble with the limits of the overarching colonial knowledge framework. Where Western history limits the co-ordinates of the colonized to spatial and temporal parameters, literature with its poetic license is a greener pasture.

The epigram by Gooroo Churn Dutt suggests that the 'wings of fancy' can only lead to the final tribute to the nation. It corroborates with the suggestion by Linda Orr that literature lies both with and beyond history. It can inhabit spaces that western historicity denies the colonial subject. Therefore literature even while dabbling with the limits of historicity can participate with equal ease both in the grand narrative histories and particular historicities even when it transcends it. Therefore when the Dutts take to literature and the literature of the West as their mentors the result is the not without surprise. Their efforts are directed at displacing the axial advantage of the European knowledge system. Literature as a medium allows them to engage with the politics of the colonial knowledge system without necessarily participating in the familiar national grid. They play with the most popular and engaging trope of their age history. Their unique experimentation with the form allows them to engage with the porous spaces of knowledge production. The literary output of the nineteenth century, particularly of the *Dutt Family Album* is telling of the fact that Indian English writers rather than blindly subscribing to the Western knowledge framework or

⁷ Chatterjee, Partha, 1996, p.14.

⁸ Orr, Linda. 1986, pp. 1-22

introducing the concept of the consolidated idea of the nation, initiated a process of simultaneity of addressing cultures. It highlights the limits of colonial modernity and rallies modernity as a heterodoxa. Such successive efforts speak eloquently of their desire to engage with the indigenous and the euro-centric knowledge systems in a dialogic fashion overriding possibilities of outright inimical attitude. Interestingly enough this attempt has remained a singular initiative. While it could yoke together disparate forces because of its unique generic edge, it could not sustain the possibility of a genre. The particularities of the text therefore stand out in the long history of Indian writing in English as the album silently challenges some of its founding tenets. This is possible because literature can subsume within itself historicity yet exceed its parameters.

Concluding this dissertation is a very difficult exercise because the text itself generates more questions than it answers. The parabolic function of the text is symptomatic of the fact that their poetry uses the colonial knowledge framework as a referent rather than a basis for knowledge production. So when Theodore Dunn said the book “must be of abiding interest to students of literary history of India” we turn not to the ‘curiosity’ question of the colonizer but initiate an introspective exercise. Playing in tune with the riotous character of the text the dissertation has tried to relinquish a ‘disciplined’ academic approach. The album introduces us to a range of critical possibilities where the familiar national grid is irreparably undermined.

After the text has been a part of me for almost over a year it is very difficult not to say the injustices that have done to it during the course of this dissertation. It was imperative to have collected most of the works of the contributors of this text. Due to the geographical challenges (most of them lie in the country of their original publications, England) and the limitations of time I couldn’t access most of them. This text is immensely inter-textual, as I could gather data about some references due to temporal constraints accessing the rest was not possible. I realize that working with this text has opened avenues that I would like to pursue in my PhD where I would like to extend the field of study to include the Christian convert literature of nineteenth century Bengal.

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