Chapter 6

A Fancied Fear

Who has not heard of the vale of Cashmere?

—*Lalla Rookh*

This chapter undertakes an analysis of three "Indian" works by authors who were considerably popular in their own day. The term "Indian" in this context refers specifically to those works in which the setting, theme, characters and atmosphere are, ostensibly at least, Indian. The texts considered are two narrative poems—Robert Southey's *The Curse of Kehama* and Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* and a historical novel by Walter Scott—*The Surgeon's Daughter*. The creation of an image of India in these works as well as general views with regard to the imperial enterprise are focussed on. Southey and Moore quite unabashedly essentialise India and distil exotic imagery from all possible sources. Scott does try to deal in "real" historical characters, if not events—but it is evident that the history followed, in itself highly conditioned by political compulsions, is further subordinated to the demands of contemporary market trends and conceptions of Orientalist aesthetics. The India which emerges from these texts is an embodiment of the colonial discourse to which they contributed and in which they partook.
In his Indian epic, *The Curse of Kehama* published in 1810 (and dedicated to Landor; himself a writer of Oriental poetry) Southey makes elaborate use of Hindu mythology, but refers to it his preface as "monstrous." Indeed, the poet takes considerable trouble in the Preface to exculpate himself from any accusation of sympathy with "heathenism." Southey was especially careful on this point because he had earlier been accused of misrepresenting Islam and presenting it in a flattering light in his *Thalaba*. In the original Preface of 1810, Southey refers to the Hindu religion as "of all false religions, the most monstrous in its fables and the most fatal in its effects". He adds that:

No figures can be imagined more anti-picturesque and less poetical than the mythological personages of the Brahmins. However startling the fictions may appear, they might almost be called credible when compared with the genuine tales of Hindu mythology.

(1873:548)

In the later Preface to the Collected edition, Southey claims that "the spirit of the poem was Indian, but there was nothing Oriental in the style." He had adopted a "high strain of poetry" because

Here, neither the tone of morals nor the strain of poetry could be pitched too high; that nothing but moral sublimity could compensate for the extravagance of the fictions and all the skill I might possess in the art of poetry was required to counterbalance the disadvantage of a mythology ... which would appear monstrous if its deformities were not kept out of sight.

(1873: xv)

It is not even as if the mythological personages in the poem are presented in such an appealing fashion so as to render a disavowal in the Preface necessary to prevent Oriental corruption/seduction. In fact, the poem to a great extent concentrates on the horrific, repellent portrayal of Indian practices. The negative stereotypical images of Sati, "Juggernaut's" procession and temple prostitution are painted in detail. It is quite significant that despite such a portrayal, the author is still eager to express his disapprobation of his material in the Preface. While pandering to the contemporary craze
for Oriental works, Southey also manages to position himself outside the poem and indicate to the reader also that an external perspective would be the ideal one.

The "hero" of Southey’s poem, the peasant Ladurlad, kills Arvalan; the son of the evil Rajah Kehama—to protect his daughter Kailyal’s honour. Kehama, who through sacrifices and penances has attained sufficient power to be feared as the "Almighty Man"; pronounces a terrible curse on Ladurlad in revenge. Ladurlad is sentenced to an eternity of torment, which the elements or death itself cannot terminate. Kailyal is also pursued by agents of Kehama's wrath, but she is temporarily saved by a Glendoveer named Eerenia with whom she shares a highly spiritualised love. However Eerinia's powers are not enough to oppose Kehama and he has to seek help from the "Highest God"—Shiva. Kehama in the meantime completes his penance and lays claim to omnipotence. Descending to the abode of Yama, he drains the “Amreeta cup.”

Southey manipulates mythology for his convenience, as his "Amreeta" is supposed to have positive or negative effects, depending on the nature of the person who partakes of it. Kehama does attain immortality, but is transformed into a living statue, destined to hold up Yama's throne for ever; Kailyal too attains immortality and is united with Eerenia. Ladurlad is released from the torments of the curse and all is well that ends well.

However, the poem does not follow a technique of straightforward narration. Indeed, the narrative framework is extremely convoluted, so as to accommodate the numerous descriptions and exotic incidents Southey wished to include. For instance, in an incident which has no necessary connection with the main plot, Kailyal is kidnapped by the priests of "Juggernaut."

To facilitate this episode, Ladurlad who by virtue of the curse of eternal torment, has been rendered indestructible— who is invulnerable to elemental forces and even death itself, who overcomes huge monsters in single combat— is presented unconvincingly as

1 Though Southey is somewhat doubtful about it in his footnotes, "Glendoveers" appear to be a corruption of the Orientalist “Gandharvas”. The section on Wordsworth in this thesis refers to his similar use of the term.
helpless before the priests who abduct Kailyal. The episode, of course is necessary for Southey to include his extremely Gothic description of Juggernaut's procession.

On Jaga-Naut they call
The ponderous car rolls on
and crushes all
Through flesh and bones
It ploughs its dreadful path
Groans rise unheard, the
dying cry,
And death and agony
Are trodden underfoot
by yon mad throng
Who follow close, and
thrust the deadly wheels along.
(1963: 598).

In keeping with the extremely diffuse narrative route, several Indian mythological personages- Casyapa, Bali, Camadeva, Indra, Pollear and Martially for example- as well as locales-Mount Calsay (Kailas), Padalon, (the Netherworld) Swerga and the city of Bali are introduced. The heroine and her father are plunged into episodic adventure after adventure, so that these representations can be indulged in. Southey is obviously determined to pack in as many mythological images—though from a monstrous” mythology—as he can into this poem.

On the terrestrial level also, Southey provides numerous word pictures. The objects selected for description are those which could be regarded as typically Indian, like the Banyan tree, the elephant and the man-eating tiger. The cumulative effect of these descriptions is to create an "Oriental" ambience, with stress being laid on India's "difference", geographical as well as mythographical, from what the western readers would be accustomed to at "Home." The vision of the locales created is that of an area where the "monstrous fictions" referred to can credibly originate.

Nigel Leask points out that the prolific use of Indian motifs and imagery was in fact an "appropriation of those emblems into the imperial heraldry" (1993: 8). A contemporary reviewer, John Foster, while pronouncing a generally harsh verdict on Southey's poem, commended its success in using Indian mythology "for the augmentation of our national splendour" (quoted in Leask 1993: 9). Obviously, Oriental
poems, even when ostensibly presented as quite apolitical had their imperial affiliations. The images, the motifs, the works themselves—all contributed to the "Imperial Archive"\(^2\), maintained by the Empire.

Southey's statement in the Preface that "the spirit of the poem is Indian" merits discussion. With his prejudice against the entire schema he is dealing with, Southey is quite unable to handle his machinery with either insight or sympathy. Only on one occasion, perhaps, does Southey seem to concede and depict a certain level of conceptual sublimity in Indian thought—in the description of Shiva as the indestructible Almighty power:

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For all around is light,
Primal, essential, all pervading light!
Heart cannot think, nor tongue declare,
Nor eyes of Angel bear
That glory unimaginably bright,
The sun himself had seem’d
A speck of darkness there
Amid that Light of Light!
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(1873:612)

John Drew refers to the "limitations imposed on Southey by his Christianity" (as opposed to the atheist Shelley) and points out this epiphanic description as an exemplary occasion of how he overcomes them. However, one instance among a plethora of representations should not be overstressed. For the major part, Southey in his poem is advancing European ideals in Indian garb.

The supposedly "Indian" peasant, Ladurlad is unmistakably a European philosophical revolutionary whose principles are encapsulated in his declaration that "The virtuous heart and resolute mind are free." (Southey 1873: 609). His characteristic traits, like those of Shelley's Prometheus, are "s\(\text{tern}\) patience unsubduable by \(\text{pain}\)/And pride triumphant over Agony." (Southey 873:608). George Bearce comments that Ladurlad

\(^2\) The process of creating and maintaining the "Imperial Archive" has been examined in detail by Thomas Richards in his study *The Imperial Archive* (1993).
was a symbol of the romantic faith in the genius of men to endure all suffering; to resist all the evils imposed on society; and with a return to the principles of natural religion and the natural order to restore mankind to its natural well being. Of course, the hero exhibited very few Indian characteristics, he has the Western urge to attain moral freedom, to throw off the shackles of ecclesiastical and civil despotism and usher in the dream of a Golden Age. (1961:104)

In this context—that of Ladurlad's obviously European/British traits (his adversary Kehama is presented as thoroughly Oriental)—a suggestive "misreading" in Foster's review gains significance. Foster says:

It is impossible that such a person as Kehama should have been in India at that time, without coming into collision with General Clive, who would have saved Seeva the trouble of interfering to put him down.

(quoted in Leask 1993: 98-97)

The whole point is that the Englishman (even in the absence of a single direct mention) is not absent, he is an absent presence in the figure of Ladurlad. As Robert Sencourt points out,

For whole books we remain far from the Hindu atmosphere and see a plot developing harmonious only to English morals. The Curse of Kehama is a better expression of the ideals and personality of a British poet than of the system and influence of Hinduism.

(1990:290)

Southey cherished a firm belief in the discourse of imperialism, as illustrated in his 'Ode on the portrait of Bishop Heber.' Here, Britain's imperial responsibility is emphasised and she is accused of gross negligence in allowing Indian "malpractices" to continue:

Large, England is the debt
Thou owest to heathendom;
To India most of all, where Providence
Giving thee thy dominion interest

Rises against thee, from beneath the wheels
Of that seven headed idol's car accurst
Against thee, from the widow's ftneral pile
The smoke of human sacrifice
Ascends even now to Heaven!

Thither our saintly Heber went
In promise and in pledge
That England from her guilty torpor raised
Should jealously and wisely undertake
Her awful task assigned.

(1873:207-208)

Obviously, Southey was in favour of both imperial "civilisation" and conversion of the heathen. His portrayal of India fits into the genre of "imperial gothic" (Leask 1993: 51) which underlined the necessity of the civilising mission. Nor did the poem miss its mark; as Sencourt notes "it aroused little sympathy to India and much repugnance and it is not surprising that its publication was followed by a great new effort of the missionaries and the appointment of an Anglican Bishop to Calcutta" (1990: 302).

Given Southey's (somewhat muted) early claim to radicalism, he does not in Kehama directly introduce a British presence to bring about the overthrow of 'Oriental Despotism' (unlike Jones whose Hymns are filled with anachronistic indications of the British presence.). But, in the first place, as Leask points out, the very fact of representation on British terms is "itself the talisman of authority" (1993:97). Secondly, though Southey makes use of the Indologists' works to a great extent, he manages to put across the Anglicist and assimilationist viewpoint at the same time, by making his hero an epitome of the desired product of such an assimilation. "The ambivalence of Kehama indicates that Orientalist and assimilationist positions are at moments mutually supportive than antagonistic" (Leask 1993:96). Sir Walter Scott's review of the poem approved of it because of the exposure of "the abyss of outrageous and monstrous fictions" in Indian religion (quoted in Bearce, 1961: 106). This seems to have been the dominant reading, which encouraged missionary and civilising activity. Bearce comments that Southey offered an "allegoric quest for the Indian man" (1961:105). What he does not note however is that the allegory is based on the Indian becoming man, attaining manhood through Europeanisation.
At the end of the quest, we have a product of successful imperial assimilation. Bearce's suggestion that the attacks on Indian religion and superstitions were not directly intended for conversion; as at an allegorical level, "Christianity is not the antagonist in the struggle" is somewhat misplaced (1961: 106). The dark side of the struggle is Oriental superstition and tyranny personified in Kehama. If his adversary Ladurlad is not specifically Christianised, we yet have to insist on the fact that he is prototypically a Europeanised Indian. Also, in contrast to Kailyal's eager protestations of faith, we have not a single such testimony from Ladurlad, who often doubts the powers of the Hindu divinities. He is as far removed from an actual participation in Hindu doctrine as possible without being a declared Christian (in which case the story would have been chronologically impossible).

Setting his revolution against tyranny in distant India also enables Southey to avoid unpleasant charges of a desire to disturb the status quo at Home. Among the three statues already supporting Yama's throne (Kehama makes the fourth one) one represents avarice, one religious falsehood and the third is being punished because:

I o'er my Brethren of mankind the first
Usurping power, set up a throne sublime
A King and conqueror: therefore thus accurust
For ever in vain I repent the crime.

(1873:624)

Shelley in a letter records that "Southey says he designs his three statues in Kehama to be contemplated with the republican feelings, but not in this age" (Shelley 1964: I 154-5). To this, Leask correctly adds "and not in this country" (1993: 96).

The numerous notes which Southey appends to his text so as to authenticate his Indian material serves to enforce this "not here, not now" conception of a republican revolution. Southey quotes at length from Jones' Works; from the Asiatic Researches; Williamson's Oriental Field Sports, Moor's Hindu Pantheon, the works of British and other European travellers in India and translations of the Manu Smriti, Bhagavat Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Shakuntalam and Nala Damayanti. These lengthy quotes (one is nearly ten pages long!) do not only function as authenticating devices, they also
establish the scene firmly in India, an exotic locale at a safe distance away from the British metropolis.

Leask points out that Shelley, unlike Southey, Moore or Byron does not give copious footnotes to his Oriental works, so that he could disavow the Oriental setting at a theoretical level and project his revolutions as "universal" (1993: 74). By the same token, Southey's copious footnotes indicate his need to avow and endorse the Oriental setting as the very restricted and only locale where he advocates revolution. Significantly, the revolutionary republicanism here is ushered in through an assimilation by European values; itself one of the projected desires of imperial domination.

B

In *Lalla Rookh*, Thomas Moore lets his imagination run riot in the realms of exotic fear and fantasy; after providing the readers with a barely plausible frame tale. The work consists of a series of Oriental stories; each complete in itself. The connecting thread is the journey of the young Mughal princess, Lalla Rookh (supposedly, the daughter of Aurengzebe) who is travelling from Delhi to Kashmir to be married there to the king of Bucharia.

The tedium of the journey is mitigated by the verse tales narrated by a young poet, Feramoz, with whom the princess falls in love. Fortunately, the poet turns out to be the bridegroom King in disguise and matters end on a happy note. The immense amount Moore received as payment for this work and the numerous editions it went into testify to its popularity in contemporary England. Raymond Schwab points out that apart from popularity at home, "Moore's widely famous *Lalla Rookh* written in 1817, gave him an international reputation. It was translated into French in 1820 and also adapted for the opera." (1984: 197). The prevalent discourse of exotic Orientalism contributed much to this grand success:

The circumstances and timing of its production gave [*Lalla Rookh*] an importance quite apart from its intrinsic worth, i.e., it is a valuable document of English interest in Oriental things. The popularity it enjoyed gauges the extent of that interest in the first place, and secondly, the poem itself
decided to a great extent the form in which the cultivated world of England pictured India. 
(Sencourt, 1990: 303-304)

Actually, only a very minor part of *Lalla Rookh* explicitly deals with India. Among the tales narrated by Feramoz, the first one, the "Veiled Prophet of Khorassan' deals with the false prophet Mokanna, who starts a cult to fight against the Muslim Emperor. Mokanna is presented as cruel, deceitful and sensual. The hero Azim joins him only through a mistaken Greek ideal of liberty. Mokanna traps, ravishes and corrupts Azim’s love Zelica and the lovers are united only after death. The false prophet's attempt at world domination fails and he commits suicide after murdering those who remain of his beguiled band of followers. The second story relates how a Peri gains entrance to Paradise by conveying there, in succession a drop of a patriotic hero's blood, the sigh of a maiden who dies for her lover and a tear from a repentant sinner. The third narrative deals with the rebellion of the ancient Fire Worshippers' of Persia against the invading Mohommedan Sultan and the love of the Persian leader and the Sultan's daughter whereby both perish. Only the last tale, which tells of a love quarrel between Jehangir and Nur Jehan and their reconciliation is actually even located in India; specifically in the valley of Kashmir.

India, however is an informing presence throughout the work. There are many scenic descriptions in prose, concerning the progress of Lalla Rookh, interwoven with the verse narratives. Not only is the landscape referred to, but the customs, manners and traditions are also described. Unlike Southey, who chose to concentrate on the Gothic aspects of India, Moore prefers to give idealised, exotic pictures. Also, a few references to India are to be found even in those verse stories which are not actually set there. Feramoz is described as "graceful as that idol of women; Crishna, such as he appears to their young imaginations, heroic, beautiful, breathing music from his very ears and exalting the religion of his worshippers into love (Moore 1986:7). We also have references to Brahma (15) Hanuman (39) Ghazni’s invasion (29) and to Indian "despotism" (5) apart from idealised landscape descriptions.
A good example of Moore’s exoticising of the Indian locale can be found in these (still quoted) lines from the last tale:

Who has not heard of the vale of Cashmere?
With its roses the brightest that earth ever gave
Its temples and grottos and fountains as clear
As the love lighted eyes that hang o’er the wave!

If woman can make the worst wilderness dear,
Think, think what a heaven she must make of Cashmere.

(1987:256-257)

Nurjahan’s song in this story has the refrain "If there be an Elysium on earth/It is this, it is this!" (283) referring to Kashmir. In the second tale, India is described as a "Peri’s paradise" (126) and there are also many prose passages which extol the beauty of the landscape.

Sencourt lists in detail the "mistakes" Moore makes in describing the locale and records many instances of the poet’s lapses from authenticity or geographical exactitude. (Sencourt 1990: 308-9) This is to miss the point that exoticism, the most important factor in this context, was not dependent on authenticity. The Edinburgh Review laid stress on precisely this aspect of the poem:

The land of the Sun has never shone out so brightly on the children of the North-nor the sweets of Asia been poured

\(^{3}\) A similarly idealised description (not just of India; but of the East as such as a locale) is given by Byron in “The Bride of Abydos”, with the addition that “man is vile” there in contrast to the ideal landscape:

Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime?
Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle
Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime?
Know ye the land of the cedar and the wine
Where the flowers ever blossom the heavens ever shine;
Where the bright wings of Zephyr, oppressed with perfume
Wax faint o’er the gardens of Gul in her bloom
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit
And the voice of the nightingale never is mute,
With the tints of the earth and the hues of the sky
In colour though varied in beauty may vie
And the purple of ocean is deepest in dye,
Where the virgins are soft as the roses they twine,
And all save the spirit of man divine?
It’s the clime of the East, ’tis the land of the Sun

(my emphasis; Byron 1970: 264)
forth nor her gorgeousness displayed so profusely to the delighted senses of Europe.

(quoted in Bearce 1961: 108)

This idealised exoticisation of India, with all its lack of authenticity was as much a part of the essentialisation and appropriation of Indian motifs into imperial heraldry as Southey's "imperial gothic."

It has been pointed out that the essentially contradictory but supportive motifs of an attractively exotic and frighteningly bizarre orient are presented symbolically in *Lalla Rookh*:

Moore's romance contained the stock details of what the East was supposedly like: doe eyed women in abundance, languishing with love and expiring of desire, wicked men who kept them in captivity, rich banquets gorgeous brocades and cashmeres, jewels, perfumes, music, dance, and poetry. But this lyrical rhapsody was not free from the traditional Western hostility to Islam. *Moore did not at all distinguish between history and legend;* there reappear in his text medieval motifs of *Muhammed* as imposter, magician and sensualist.

(my emphasis; Kabbani:1986: 34)

Apart from a few isolated references to Hindu customs, Moore's "India" is as completely Islamic as the generalised "East" in which the first three tales of *Lalla Rookh* are set.

Through this tactic of simultaneous exoticising and alienating Moore manages to have his cake and eat it too. He indulges himself, and his readers to the utmost limit in exotic Orientalism, through luxurious and voluptuous descriptions. At the same time, an undercurrent of morality articulated by the "heroes" serves to underline the "Western virtues" of abstinence and rectitude, clearly here identified as unislamic/non-oriental.

Moore may be said to have made use of the triadic structure of Othering described by John Barrell—consisting of "This, That and the Other" (Barrell 1991: 9). The actual Other is progressively distances by absorbing aspects of it into the "This", making it merely a "That" and not really "Other". Moore's *Azim* is motivated by explicitly "Greek" ideals, his Hafed is an ardent opponent of Islam and a supporter of a Europeanised version of Fire Worship; Feramoz himself, the poet hero, is "modern and progressive" as
opposed to the Chamberlain Fadladeen who is a typical representative of amusingly decadent Islam. These *reclaimed* Oriental characters are absorbed into the Occidental self, retaining only a minimal amount of difference. They *are* Oriental, but only Oriental enough to be able to carry out the work of self civilisation on European terms. The actual other of the threatening Orient is left outside, moved further away by its distancing from even these ostensibly *Oriental* heroes themselves.

Francis Jeffrey's 1817 review of *Lalla Rookh* gains importance from this perspective. He remarks that the poem is:

> The poetry of rational, honourable, considerate and humane Europe, filtered off from the childishness, cruelty and profligacy of Asia. So far as we have yet seen there is no sound sense, firmness of purpose or principled goodness, except among the natives of Europe and their descendants.

*(my emphasis; quoted in Bearce 1993: 22)*

There is no real need for such a statement of value judgements in a supposedly literary review, unless the sub-text of the imperial civilising mission was kept well to the forefront. As we have seen in the case of Southey also, the literal absence of a representative of English power does not indicate that their presence is written out of the text. The Orientals, who themselves overthrow Oriental despotism and representation have internalized the European virtues and function as proxy *Englishmen/Europeans*.

Leask and Bearce both note the importance of the Irish context in interpreting Moore's stand against Islam. There is an identification between Zoroastrianism/ Catholicism and Protestantism/Islam and the Fire Worshippers under the Islamic yoke can be seen as standing in for the Irish predicament under British domination (Leask 1993: 103). From a different perspective Bearce argues that the attacks on Indian religion could be interpreted as self criticism; equally applicable to Roman Catholicism (Bearce 1961: 109). Both these interpretations are valid in their own right, but they must not be allowed to overshadow the fact that no matter whatever else Moore's Islam/Orient is, it is also, quite simply, the Islam/Orient. The Fire Worshippers, at one level, are but convenient mouth pieces to criticise the self-consciously distanced Islamic Orient. And if in the "Veiled Prophet" Islam seems to triumph over the prophet's policy of destruction,
it must be remembered that the victory is in many ways presented as the personal triumph of the "Greek" Azim.

It remains to be noted, as Leask points out, that the revolutions in Moore, whether the negative one of the prophet or the positive one of the Fire worshippers are "failed revolutions" (Leask 1993: 58). At one level, there is a warning against supposedly republican revolution, based on the principles of Jacobinism. The final unveiling of the prophet can be seen as the unmasking of the deluding Jacobin ideology:

Not the long promised lights,
    The brow whose beaming
Was to come forth, all conquering
    all-rendering
But features horrible than
    hell over traced
On its own blood.

(Moore 1986: 110)

Leask identifies this as a warning to fellow Irishmen about pernicious Jacobin principles, which are not acceptable, even in a figuratively distanced Indian locale (1993: 113). At the same time, it has to be noted that on another level, rebellion when aimed against Oriental tyranny itself (instead of colonial aggression) as in the case of the Fire Worshippers is desirable and its failure is to be regretted. If even the civilising mission pales into insignificance beside the need to suppress Jacobinism represented by Mokanna, it has to judged mainly as a question of priority.

A revolution based on French principles is not desirable, at home or abroad, the status quo in any shape is preferable to such a process. But the civilisation of India/East through justifiable revolution based on British/Greek principles is desirable and necessary. If, as in Lalla Rookh the ambivalence of the colonial presence could be masked through the representation of European values in assimilated Orientals themselves, that would be the ideal situation.
Scott's novel *The Surgeon's Daughter* is different from the two epic/narrative poems examined in this chapter in as much as it does have an avowed British presence and that the British characters play the role of moving spirits in the action. Scott stresses the exotic and fabulously wealthy aspects of India, but he does so to give increased credence to the concept of India as a land of European/British adventure. For Scott's Anglo-Indian characters, the East/India is, as Disraeli comments in *Tancred* "a career". Though this aspect is dismantled later by a revelation of the Gothic and corrupting aspects of India, it nevertheless functions as a motif of extreme significance throughout the text.

In the fictional introduction to the novel, a friend, Mr. Fairscribe advises the author to "send his Muse of fiction ... as many an honest man does with his own sons ... Send her to India ... [where] the most wonderful deeds [were] done by the least possible means" (Scott 1920: 16-17). This suggestion kindles the author's imagination and he launches into a rhapsody on India as the land of adventures and infinite possibility:

> The non commissioned officers and privates ... are like Homer's demi-Gods among the warring mortals. Men like Clive and Caillard influenced great events like Jove himself. Inferior officers like Mars or Neptune and the sergeants and corporals may well pass for demi-Gods.

(1920: 17)

After such an ardent account, one would expect Scott to plunge right into his story. But he does register one small caveat: "The only objection is that I have never been there, [India] and know nothing at all about them" (1920: 17). This, of course, is hardly a great objection when we consider the flourishing number of contemporary metropolitan Orientalists. Indeed, as we have seen, James Mill actually considered a lack of personal contact with India as a positive advantage in writing about her.

In any case, what any British novelist could say about India, was to a large extent circumscribed, by the discursive framework of imperialism. Edward Said observes:
Even the most imaginative writers of an age, men like Flaubert, Nerval or Scott were constrained in what they could either experience or say about the Orient. For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality, whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar and the strange ... Orientals lived in their world, "we" lived in ours.

(Said 1978: 43-44)

Quite in keeping with this argument, Scott presents a stereotypical version of the 'Other' in India, where the Europeans are adventurers in a world which is not and cannot be the 'Same' for them.

The surgeon's daughter of the title is Menie Gray, who is loved by two young suitors—Richard Middlemass and Adam Hartley. She loves Middlemass, an orphan who grew up under her father's care. The rejected Hartley goes to India where his upright character enables him to make good. But the fickle Middlemass is soon seduced by stories of India's wealth and proceeds to India, leaving Menie behind. His career is a series of disasters which end in his leaving the British camp altogether and taking up with Begum Montreville, a European adventuress in league with "Tippoo Sultan". Jealous of what she hears about Menie, the Begum entices her to India and plans to offer her to Tippoo's harem, a plot in which the reluctant Middlemass is compelled to share. Menie applies to Hartley for help and through the good officer of a Fakeer (actually Hyder Ali’s spy) he manages to bring the situation to Hyder Ali's notice. There is a dramatic climax where Hyder arrives in disguise and foils the Begum's plans. Richard Middlemass is brutally killed and Menie is allowed to return to England.

The image of India as the land of fame and wealth is reiterated throughout the novel. Upon hearing that Hartley is leaving for India, Middlemass exclaims: "Happy dog to India! Oh Delhi! Oh Golkonda! ... India where gold is won by steel, where a brave man cannot pitch his desire of fame and wealth too high, but that he may realise it if he have fortune for his friend" (1920: 118). Obviously, Delhi, Golkonda—indeed India itself—all these are vague phrases which connote fabulous possibilities. This general
conception among the youth of the time is fully exploited by the member of the Company press gang who lures Middlemass to India with a glowing account of what was on offer:

Not a stream did he mention but flowed over sands of gold and not a place that was inferior to that of the celebrated Fata Morgana. His descriptions seemed steeped in colours and his every phrase perfumed in attar of roses.

(Scott 1920: 120)

Starting from the unscrupulous practices of the company in recruiting its soldiers, the actions of the British in India come in for sharp criticism. Scott bluntly states that "a back stair was the necessary appurtenance of every government in India" and describes the President of British Council as:

An able and active but uncouscientious man who neither in his own affairs nor in those of the Company was supposed to embarrass himself overmuch about the means he used to attain his objects.

(1920: 140)

The comment of the Fakeer when Hartley refuses payment after having treated him is revealing in this context: "A Feringhi can then refuse gold! ... I thought they took it, from every hand, whether as that of a Houri or leperous as Gehagi's" (1920: 131). This is a rare instance of the British being portrayed as the natives must often have seen them—as greedy and quite unscrupulous adventurers.

Nevertheless, such criticism is finally relegated to the past and Scott is careful not to advance anything against the better regulated, reformed contemporary system. He takes an anticipatory bail against any charge of radicalism by remarking in a note that "Of course, such things should be deemed possibly only in the earlier period of the English settlements when the check of the Directors was imperfect and that of the crown did not exist" (Scott 1920: 142). Bearce observes that Middlemass represented the violence and cupidity of early British adventurers in India and that a linear progress is traced to the stature of Hartley who "had a Burkean sense of responsibility and morality
in India" (Bearce 1961: 112). Scott had no problem with British rule in India, so long as it was of the kind to be expected from men like Hartley.

Also, if the British authorities were criticised, their Indian agents were painted in positively demoniac terms. The President was supposed to carry on all business through his native steward or Dubash. The Dubash Paupiah is described as follows:

The thin dusky form which stood before him wrapped in robes of muslin embroidered with gold was that of Paupiah, known as a master counsellor of dark projects, an oriental Machiavel, whose premature triumphs were the result of many an intrigue in which the existence of the poor, the happiness of the rich, the honour of men and the chastity of women had been sacrificed without scruple to gain some private or political advantage.

(1920: 140-41)

The associations with Burke's portrayal of devious Indian Banyans during his impeachment speeches are obvious. Paupiah is shown as drawing Richard Middlemass even deeper into the web of Indian intrigues.

An extremely sensitive issue touched upon by Scott is the fear of miscegenation. Being included in Tippoo's Harem is evidently the worst fate that could befall a pure English girl like Menie. Begum Montreville's speech in which she "offers" Menie to Tippoo is suggestive in the extreme:

I am so void of means that I can only pray your highness will deign to accept a lily from Frangistan to plant within the secret garden of thy pleasures. Let my lord's guards carry yon litter to the Zenana.

(1920: 160)

The image of the lily is extremely evocative, conjuring up visions of the fair English woman being entrapped. The phrase "secret garden of thy pleasures" hints at unspeakable sexual practices, which were "unnatural" by Western mores, but were willingly projected on to the Orient.
Since the novel is set in a time when the native princes retained some degree of sovereign power, the exotic pomp of their rule is presented in some detail. The description of Tippoo's procession\(^4\) attempts to encapsulate incredible splendour and gorgeousness. Sencourt remarks:

Scott is the only great British novelist who drew on India for romantic material, who brought home to the general reader ... an accurate idea of the strange terror and fascination of the jungle, of the blaze of the princely procession as it passed through the ancient bazaars of the native city.

(Sencourt 1990: 323)

The claim of Scott to be the "only great novelist" in this context is open to debate; but the gorgeous effect created by his descriptions, especially by that of the procession has to be acknowledged:

Long before the appointed hour, the rendezvous of Fakirs, beggars and idlers before the gate of the palace extended ... The noise increased as the procession traversed the outskirts of the place ... shouting at the top pitch of their voices the titles and virtues of Tippoo ... In this manner, the procession advanced ... the houses were ornamented with broadcloth, silk shawls and embroidered carpets ... so that the whole street had a singularly rich and gorgeous appearance.

(Scott 1920: 156-57)

However, it should not be assumed that such descriptions were intended to suggest anything more positive than a temporary attraction of the Fancy ... The gorgeous descriptions are offset with accounts of the implications of the religious beggars, the desperate scramble for money, the hollowness of Oriental titles and the brutal way the commoners were whipped and pushed about. As Edward Said remarks, "European representation was always a way of controlling the redoubtable Orient" (Said 1978: 60). Scott's detailed descriptions help to domesticate the Orient through overfamiliarisation,

\(^4\) Southey of course pictures a very different procession in his account of "Jaga Naut's" process. A similar description of a gorgeous procession, with decorations is presented by Moore in his account of *Lalla Rookh's* deception at Kashmir (Moore 1986: 291-292).
to reduce its threatening qualities by the very process of representing them, to temper its exoticism, precisely by elaborate descriptive indulgence.

Hyder and Tippoo are presented as imposing figures and Hyder especially is known as a just and fair ruler. His speech after the rescue of Menie is notable:

> Hakim [Hartley] ... thou shalt return with the Feringhi woman and with gold to compensate her injuries wherein the Begum as is fitting shall contribute. Do thou say to thy nation, Hyder Ali acts Justly.

(Scott 1920: 163)

The sense of justice here is obviously meant to be admired. But despite all his bravery, Tippoo in the final analysis is a sensualist; despite his justice, Hyder is a despot who indulges in tyrannical cruelty to the top of his bent; as is indicated by his having Middlemass trampled to death by an elephant. To quote Said:

> The general category in advance offers the specific instance a limited terrain in which to operate. No matter how deep the specific exception, no matter how much a single Oriental can escape the fences placed around him, he is first an Oriental, second a human being and last again an Oriental.

(Said 1978: 102)

Despite the occasional favourable portrayal or positive attribute bestowed on him, in the last instance Hyder is yet an Oriental tyrant whose defeat by "the better class of Englishmen" is definitely to be desired. Hyder swears to be a "destroying tempest in the Carnatic" and Scott comments: "It is well known how the Nawab kept this promise, and how he and his son afterwards fell back before the discipline and bravery of the Europeans" (1920: 163).

Despite all qualifications, the final European triumph is not only desirable, but also inevitable. Yet, even in the face of this conclusion, we have to assert, in order to escape from a constricting absolute binarism, that even in this stereotypical vision, the ambivalences—for whatever they are worth—did exist. The question of their existence
however is not as important as the fact that these gaps were needed for the edifice to persist.