CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 CONTESTING THE STEREOTYPE

The creation of negative iconography's of Anglo-Indian women in colonial fiction, and in Indian writing in English, has been significantly influenced by a concern for defending those political, racial, and social borders, which were perceived as defining these diffuse and complex cultures. The undeniable poverty of a sizeable number of the community, its mixed heritage, and perceptions of cultural differences, contributed substantially to the projection of the stereotypes. These gained currency in colonial literature, and were also adapted, and reproduced, in Indian literature and popular cinema. During the colonial period especially:

The half-caste appears in a prodigal literature. It presents him, to be frank, mostly as an undersized, scheming and entirely degenerate bastard. His father is a blackguard, his mother a whore. His sister and daughter ... follow the maternal vocation (Dover, Half-Caste 13).

Lionel Caplan suggests that another factor that contributed, at least partially, to the ubiquitousness of these stereotypes during the colonial period, was the surprising lack of protest by the Anglo-Indians, against such a portrayal. Their response may have been limited because many of the earliest critical references appeared in travelogues, and official or semi official documents, rather than in fiction which has greater public currency. Reginald Maher believes that unbiased and positive views of individuals like the Bishop of Lahore, regarding the community, did not gain popularity because, "Bishops and such persons do not write novels for the public and their views, though more substantial because of their personal contact and experience are overlooked for the more satisfying luridity of the novelist" (39).
The paucity of "campaigns against error and evanescence," on the part of a fairly vocal community, may also be ascribed to a preoccupation with issues such as economic survival and identity during the early years of the Raj (Moore 164). The extended struggle for formal recognition, and the economic implications of the community's uncertain position in the hierarchical colonial space, contributed to a lack of engagement with negative literary representations. Maher believes that the Anglo-Indian did not "hit back" against this campaign of vilification because, "Years of oppression and psychological disease, followed by emasculation and a nurturing of self-contempt have left him with a most damaging complex" (40). This assertion, ironically, reinforces the stereotype, while drawing attention to the fact that such protests have only become vociferous since independence.

It is intriguing that, while other cultures were contemporaneously engaged in serious debates regarding the "status and role of women in society and in the nation," negative images of Anglo-Indian women were gaining currency (Caplan, Iconographies 874). During the late 19th and early 20th century, idealised images of womanhood, projected by both the European rulers, and the Indian nationalists, gradually came to be associated symbolically with concepts of nationhood. The Anglo-Indian leaders, perhaps, did not wish to highlight the boundaries separating them from the British by investing the women of their community with a specific and separate image. Caplan draws attention to the fact that, "'metis' populations like the Anglo-Indians whose borders are, by definition, porous and elastic, have no need nor wish to guard their entrances and exits, and are thus unlikely... to symbolize these thresholds in the language of women's bodies" (887). The imbrication of factors, such as race class and region, ensured the diffuseness and porosity of the boundaries of the Anglo-Indian community, especially at the highest and lowest levels. However, it is difficult to account for the fact that, the use of the stereotype in literature was most prolific, during a period when the community was engaged in vigorous attempts to inscribe a specific socio-economic identity for itself.2
Caplan’s contention that, “The patriarchal structures of the community did not encourage those who spoke (or wrote) for and about it to bring the topic of women to the fore” appears to be borne out by an article entitled “Husbands and Wives Again” published in 1870, which refers to the fact that a “considerable number of East Indian husbands in Calcutta are bound down to observe a peaceful demeanor to their partners by stronger pledges than those given at the altar” (The Friend of India 794). The author of the article concedes the fact that early marriages and poverty may contribute to domestic violence, and disavows any desire to “ascribe its origin to race characteristics” (794). He, nevertheless, contends that such violent behaviour is “after the manner of the natives than of Englishmen” because it lacks the “reverence for the female sex which animates the inhabitants of the Western nations” (794). Such references, to the prevalence of domestic violence among ‘East Indians,’ provide some indication of the status of women within the community, during the latter half of the 19th century. However, the validity of these reports is compromised by their racist subtext, and the fact that they mostly concern the lower strata of the community.

Gloria J Moore attributes the absence of protest, against the proliferation of negative images in colonial discourse, to the lack of higher education among the poorer members of the community, which compelled them to “preserve much of their own story in the spoken word” (165). She also claims that there was official, and unofficial, censorship of any matter that was critical of the Raj. Her contention is partly borne out by the fact that Cedric Dover’s “radical and challenging” book Half-Caste that was published in 1937 was immediately banned by the British government in India (97). In his work, Dover challenged a scientism which privileged the white races, and drew attention to the fact that in contemporary literature, “white superiority is emphasised by comparison with Bruce’s treacherous ‘Yewrasians’, Somerset Maugham’s ‘yellow Malaysian hybrids, the Ranee of Sarawak’s or Linklaters’ ludicrous mongrels, and Noel Coward’s or John Paris’ s dangerously seductive half caste harlots” (Dover 14).
Notwithstanding the relative lack of engagement with negative literary representations, during the 20th century, there was a growing concern with matters pertaining to women within Anglo-Indian discourses. Following the Montagu–Chelmsford reforms, which laid increasing emphasis on the Indianisation of services, Anglo-Indian men faced increasing competition from educated Indians for jobs which had earlier been considered their prerogative. The women of the community now began to form a significant part of the workforce. They found employment as doctors, teachers, nurses, shop assistants and secretaries. The relatively early entry of a sizeable number of Anglo-Indian women into a world of work hitherto perceived as masculine, was one of the factors which set them apart from the typical memsahib, as well as from the more traditional Indian woman (Caplan 30). British and American women did come out to work as nurses, teachers or missionaries, even in the 19th century, but their numbers were, of a necessity, relatively small. Many of these professions were also taboo for Indian women from conservative families, who were constrained by caste and class barriers from venturing into these fields. Esther Mary Lyons points out that Anglo-Indian women who ventured out to work were:

looked upon as cheap women because they had to deal with men of all culture and religion, especially of the native Indians background. At the time the Indian women did not work so these Anglo-Indians who worked were considered cheap and victims for the rich Indian and British men. They were looked down upon by both British and Indian for being half-breeds with no caste and poverty.4

Indian English fiction written in the early years of the 20th century, therefore, portrays most working women as either Anglo-Indian or Christian, rarely depicting the middle class Indian woman in such a role. Meena Shirwadkar’s comment, “Perhaps the writers thought the Eurasian or the Christian woman more amenable to the romantic set up of the novel” also reveals some of the
cultural underpinnings which impacted the portrayal of the Anglo-Indian woman in Indian literature (Shirwadkar, Images of Women 128).

5.1 IMAGING WITHIN ANGLO-INDIAN DISCOURSES

Anglo-Indian constructions of the women of the community invariably emphasise her role as a good mother and housewife, investing her with those very moral and patriarchally determined feminine attributes which her fictional stereotype lacks. This emphasis, however, does not preclude an unusual degree of concern with issues such as education and employment. Within Anglo-Indian discourses, women come to occupy a significant space in debates concerning economic survival. This was an indication of their increasing participation in the financial well being of the community, and of a general acceptance of working women within the community. Anglo-Indian journals, of the early 20th century, contain numerous references to women office bearers such as a Mrs Merriman, who became the first woman to be nominated by the U.P government as a member of the Agra Municipal Board, and Maud Olliver the secretary of the Anglo-Indian Association, Bareilly who undertook a three month long tour of various branches of the association. The March 1929 issue of The Anglo Indian Review mentions the fact that there are “nearly 30 Anglo Indian and Domiciled girls qualifying for their degree in Medicine and Surgery” and expresses the hope that, “now that the profession can be entered through the doors of this very excellent institution there will be many of our women taking the opportunity thus offered to them” (9). The March 1932 issue reports a memorandum, submitted to the Franchise committee, and takes pride in quoting the 1921 census to claim “cent per cent” education for Anglo-Indian girls, at a time when only 1% of Hindu and Mohammedan girls attended school. There is also an increasing concern with issues such women’s suffrage and unemployment. Thus while advocating the enfranchisement of “all women in India” (12) Anglo-Indian leaders put in a special plea that:

The women of any community in India, if sufficiently advanced and able to undertake such work as awaits them in the legislatures should not be penalized because women of other communities
may be less advanced or in any way unprepared for adult suffrage (12).

Despite the absence of women’s voices, the pages of publications like The Anglo Indian Review reflect a consistent concern with issues related to women’s employment which, at times, even calls into question British assumptions of superiority and efficiency. Anglo-Indian women had been part of the various nursing services since the 1870’s, but it is only during this period that there was any official protest against the fact that British nurses were being paid “salaries three times those received by locally recruited matrons besides other allowances denied to the latter class of servants.” Editorials in The Anglo-Indian Review exhorted Anglo-Indian nurses to revolt against this injustice promising them support:

The Association is willing and ready to fight your case, but you must, yourselves, individually and collectively show your courage and determination not to be oppressed any longer by imported nurses who are in no way whatever your superiors –indeed are undoubtedly your inferiors as far as India and her sick are concerned.7

While this surprisingly critical reference to British nurses is indicative of a collision of economic interests rather than of a summary disavowal of the colonizers’ superiority it is, nevertheless, at variance with perceptions of the community’s unqualified admiration of the rulers. It is evident that, the community had gradually “undergone a great change and was no longer a totally subservient, demoralized class of people content to subsist off the crumbs of British or Indian patronage” (Abel 185). Despite the fact, that its desire for assimilation with the British, was one of the popular themes in contemporary colonial fiction, community discourses of the period frequently articulate an awareness of injustice, together with a willingness to engage with the deficiencies and shortcomings of the colonizers. Thus, in his book Hostages to India, Herbert Alick Stark attributes the growing prejudice towards Anglo-Indians, in the late
18th and early 19th century, to a racial bias, and to the low status of women in England. He observes that, "When the social status of the women of England itself was hardly one remove higher than slavery, is it to be wondered at that the child of an Indian mother was looked down upon?" (79).

References to British women, within the discourses of the Anglo-Indian community, are also surprisingly equivocal at times. The Eurasian of 3 July 1909, for instance, urges Anglo-Indian women to become industrious housewives and "imitate the womenfolk of the West in their enterprising energy, and not in their elastic sense of morality (Caplan 874). This statement, ironically, invests the 'pure' European woman with the same dubious morality frequently ascribed to Anglo-Indian women in colonial fiction. Another editorial in The Anglo Indian Review of September 1944 which discusses the frequently disastrous consequences of liaisons between Anglo-Indian "girls from better homes" and U.S. Army soldiers is strategically followed by a report on "Britain's Good Time Girls." The report ascribes this lapse into immorality, on the part of Anglo-Indian women, to the war, and to economic independence. However, its insistence that, "the problem of the independent working girl is not peculiar to the Anglo-Indian community," also implies a contestation of the image of the superior and morally perfect memsahib (18). Further, in a complete reversal of the image of the predatory seductress frequently encountered in colonial fiction, young Anglo-Indian women involved in liaisons with U.S Army soldiers are portrayed as innocent 'victims' who are entrapped because of "their lack of sophistication."9

Anglo-Indian writers often held Englishwomen to be responsible for the creation and maintenance of social distance between different races. The author of an article entitled "New Order," published in the Anglo-Indian Review dated February 1941, states that, "Englishwomen, with marked exceptions, have utterly failed, though golden opportunity lay within their grasp to play their part in the social evolution and improvement of the land in which their husbands live and earn their livelihood" (4). The writer, however, goes on to assert that the Anglo-Indian who has been the "chief victim of this pride and prejudice, is not prepared
any longer to submit to patronage” (4). Frank Anthony's, seminal work on the history of the Anglo-Indian community also accuses British women of evolving “an insidious, almost viciously malicious, social code” directed towards the elimination of competition offered in the ‘marriage market’ by attractive Anglo-Indian women (Britain’s Betrayal 354). This allegation elides other socio-political imperatives which contributed to the marginalisation of Anglo-Indians, and invests the memsahib with a greater measure of agency than was possible, given the patriarchal underpinnings of the colonial project. It does, however, draw attention to the indisputable fact that, due to a similarity of culture, language and religion, Anglo-Indian women always found it easier to breach the walls of privilege around the colonizer, than did the men of the community. In the November 1943 issue of The Anglo-Indian Rev. I.J. Hopkins discusses the possibility of solving the problems of the community by reabsorption into the European community and acknowledges that:

An aspect of the Anglo-Indian problem which has not been given the attention that it deserves is the obvious fact that the problem of the girls is in many ways quite different from that of the boys and must be dealt with differently. It is largely true that re-absorption into the European community is a possible solution for the girls to a much greater extent than it is for the boys (18).

Anglo-Indian constructions of the women of the community invest them with traditionally feminine attributes praising them for “their “striking beauty” and for “the excellence of their recipe, some of which were handed down from generation to generation” (Anthony xi, 363). However, such references are often accompanied by a recognition of their physical and mental hardihood, such as the fact that, “Free from cast and communal; inhibitions, Anglo-Indian women have made a contribution to India’s nursing services that was unique” (Anthony x-xi).10 Women are also lauded for their contribution to projects such as McCluskieganj where “These women and girls did jobs very few men in towns would put their hands to. Those stout hearted pioneers carried on as if they had
never done any other work... I've never met with such hospitality, and in one of the most hospitable lands, India” (Moore 88). Alison Blunt points out that the women of McCluskieganj are invested with a pioneering spirit which locates them within a “European, and specifically British, tradition of colonization that was far removed from the lives of Indian women.” More significantly, the emphasis on their participation in this project also positions them within the very tradition of colonization from which they were excluded in colonial discourses, through an emphasis on their racial, physical and moral deficiencies.

Within the discourses of the community, the ambivalent attitude towards economic independence of women finds expression in the concern with the threat to “the whole future moral and physical fabric of the community” posed by economically independent yet ‘innocent’ young women who were supposedly exposed to temptation because of their jobs. Evidently, their contributions as earning members of the family did not free them from the necessity of conforming to patriarchally assigned norms of behavior. This was especially true in the middle class families where fewer women took up employment, and those who did, tended to give up their jobs after marriage. This duality leads to conflicting perceptions of working women, and of their status within the community, which are often linked to the economic standing of the individual concerned. Thus, while Beatrix D'Souza’s contention, that “The Anglo-Indian woman was liberated centuries before Women’s Lib became fashionable” (Beatrix d’Souza Souvenir 2) is true, it is equally correct that many of the poorer women of the community had to struggle along, “suppressed by their own men, society/community and taken advantage (of) by the rich British and Indian men.”

Contemporary Anglo-Indian objections to the “mythologizing of Anglo-Indian women as objects whose identity was and is solely defined by their sexuality” take cognizance of the fact that economic necessity, and a desire for social acceptance were often cited as motivating factors for promiscuity (Williams, Anglo-Indians 91). This served to reinforce the portrayal of Anglo-Indian
women, especially those belonging to the lower classes, as “creatures of their sexuality which they use variously to escape, transform or mask identity and situation.” The indigent reality of a sizeable number of the Anglo-Indian community, was one of the factors which contributed substantially to the projection of this stereotype. However, it is significant that women belonging to the lower classes were often elided from the community’s own discourses, which perceptibly foreground the successful, educated middle class woman. Despite such omissions, and a desire to project the image of a cohesive community subsuming internal dissentions and regional differences, it is indisputable that there has always been a perceptible dissonance between the imaging of the Anglo-Indian woman within the discourses of the community, and her portrayal in literature written by outsiders.

5.2 ANGLO-INDIAN LITERATURE

Stereotypes are “symbols of identification” which are positioned within the “ethnic and status structure” of a society (de Sola Pool 31). Anglo-Indians have most frequently been identified and located in literature through perceptions influenced by the racial, class, and power affiliations of the authors. In the absence of significant creative work from within the community, imaginative literature written by outsiders became a significant means of forming an image of the men and women of the community. This permitted the projection of a selective and biased representation as the only reality and “Creative writers, both Indian and British, and even more creative critics from all over the world imagine what it is to be Anglo-Indian, and let their fantasies run riot in painting the Anglo-Indian character in the worst colours possible” (Peppin Souvenir 53).

The polemical nature of most of the works written by Anglo-Indians in the earlier years of the century, denied them a sufficiently wide audience, even within their own community, thus laying it open to the charge of neglecting its own heritage. “It was you that condemned Derozio to oblivion, it was you that neglected the writings of Kyd, it was you that drove Dover to another shore and Wallace to silence. At your door lies the blame for the unread, unappreciated works of Stark.
and Madge, the unknown literature of Mareno. In the recent past, however, there has been a concerted effort, on the part of the community, to present its own picture through memoirs and histories. There is also a growing recognition of the significant role which literature can play in challenging and modifying stereotypical images of a community and its culture.

5.2.1 RUSKIN BOND- A FLIGHT OF PIGEONS

Anglo-Indian authors recognize, and acknowledge the socio-economic and cultural markers of difference which distanced the community from the colonizers and from other Indians but their perception of reality is coloured by their own experience of contending with such boundaries. In his biographical work, *Scenes From a Writers' Life*, Ruskin Bond calls the indigent Anglo-Indians and 'poor whites' the "flotsam of the empire, jettisoned by the very people who had brought them into existence" (47). Admitting the ambivalence of his own feelings, he records the manner in which he came to terms with cultural duality: "Being a child of changing times, I had grown up with divided loyalties; but at the end of the journey I had come to realize that I was blessed with a double inheritance. And I was determined to make the most of it" (xvi). The portrayal of Anglo-Indians in his work, though infrequent, therefore reveals a nuanced perception of individuals, whose occupancy of an ambiguous space between two cultures, is often a source of strength rather than a cause for distress. His depiction of cultural complexity, and individual motivation also deconstructs those simplistic stereotypes which were frequently used to justify the marginality of the community.

In Bond's novel *A Flight of Pigeons*, the story of Mariam Labadoor and her daughter Ruth, unfolds against the backdrop of the Sepoy Revolt of 1857. This was a period when social and racial indicators of exclusivity, meant to separate Anglo-Indians from the privileged world of the colonizers, were already in place. The narrative, however, depicts a polyphonic, multicultural society in which it is the dual ethnicity of the Labadoor family which ultimately saves them from destruction. The events, seen from the perspective of 13 year old Ruth, reveal the
subtle cultural, and emotional ties which bind her family to its Indian roots despite its identification with the British.

Mariam, a first generation Anglo-Indian, is one of the few residents of the cantonment who has any inkling of the imminent outbreak of violence. Unlike other British wives, who are caught up in their restricted and exclusive social milieu, she does not think it beneath her dignity to converse with her servants, and is therefore familiar with the latest bazaar news regarding the uprising. Though she cannot prevent the death of her husband, at the hands of rebels led by Javed Khan, she does find shelter for her family thanks to the cordiality of her relations with Indians like Lala Ramjimal. The women’s knowledge of Urdu and of Indian culture helps them to fit, relatively unobtrusively, into the Lala’s household: “We soon fell into the habits of Lala’s household, and it would have been very difficult for anyone, who had known us before, to recognize us as the Labadoors” (839). Even when they are captured by Javed Khan, who wants to marry Ruth, Miriam prevents him from achieving his purpose by using arguments which reveal her intimate understanding of Muslim culture, and of the psyche of the proud pathan. Playing upon Javeds’ sense of honour, Mariam tells him, “I have just lost my husband, and there is no one to guide me or advise me. Let us speak again on this subject at some other time” (851). The next time he tries to broach the subject she puts him off once more by reminding him, “I have my brothers living. What shall I answer them when they find out that I have given you my daughter in marriage, and the girl still only a child? And moreover, my husband’s younger brother is still alive. I have to consult them before I can decide anything” (860). Javed, predictably, finds these arguments, which accord primacy to decisions made by men, quite plausible, especially as he himself has decided to marry a second time against the wishes of his wife.

The consideration, with which the Labadoors are treated, during their long sojourn in Javed’s house, is partly due to the fact that their respectability is reaffirmed by their connection with the nawabs of Rampur. The pathans’ aunt, Kothiwalli, tells him “Javed, you should not have done this thing. These two are
of good birth and they are in distress... Be kind to them, I tell you, and do not insult them in their present condition” (849). There is, in fact, an unusual solidarity amongst all the women which protects Miriam and her daughter and keeps Javed at bay.\textsuperscript{18} Mariam’s dignified and circumspect behaviour wins the sympathy of Javed’s relatives, and surprises the women of the household, who are convinced about the licentious ways of British women. Ruth says:

Whereas they had formerly believed that as Firangi women we would be peeping out of doors and windows in order to be seen by men, without whose society European women were supposed to be unable to live, they were agreeably surprised to find that we delighted in hard work, that we loved needles and thread, and that, far from seeking the company of men, we did our best to avoid them (865).

Ironically, their sense of decorum and respect for the cultural norms of their hosts makes them superior to the ‘memsahibs’. Mariam’s familiarity with dual cultures helps her to survive, and at various junctures in the narrative she successfully assumes a British or a Muslim identity. The village headman Gangaram offers her assistance because he realises she is British, despite her native dress. Later, Mariam’s command of Urdu helps her to convince a pursuing band of rebels that they are harassing hapless Muslim women, who are escaping from death and dishonour.

Shashi Deshpande points out that, “The creative writer, unlike the historian or the social/political analyst, explores the gaps, the silences, the ambiguities, the complexities, the contradictions and this not to get to any kind of a conclusion, because often there is no conclusion.”\textsuperscript{19} Bond’s portrayal of the Labadoor women admits of an ambivalence and complexity far more convincing than any stereotypical representation. This ambivalence manifests itself, not merely in the ease with which the women inhabit two cultures, but also in their emotional and individual responses to historical events taking place around them. When news of the British victory in Delhi reaches Shahjahanpur, Mariam tells Kothiwali, “May
you have peace out of it too, Pathani” (881). Ruth also admits that their motives in hoping for the restoration of British authority were entirely personal as, “We had, during the past months, come to understand much of the resentment against a foreign authority, and we saw that the continuation of that authority could only be an unhappy state of affairs for both sides” (883). This rejection of any social, political, cultural or even historical absolutes imparts depth to a narrative which like Kothiwal deals, ”in individuals not in communities” (881)

Despite the lack of any overt polemical concern, scattered references to his community, in Bond’s work, help to illuminate its mores and social customs. There is also an honest and clear-eyed perception of the manner in which the shedding of its Indian affiliations, and adoption of Western cultural and political loyalties contributed to negative perceptions of the community amongst Indians. In Scenes from a Writer’s Life Bond refers to that rigid adherence to colonial attitudes, which often characterised the behaviour of members of the community, including some of his own relatives. Describing his resentment against an aunt and uncle who wanted him to sever ties with his Indian friends, while he was in Britain, he remarks sarcastically, “He was a South Indian Christian, my aunt an Anglo-Indian, and yet they were champions of Empire!” (142).

Bond’s memories of the feverish nightlife of the war years when, “roistering” British and American servicemen often vied with each other to go out dancing with “the few Anglo- Indian girls who still lived in Dehra”, emphasise the cultural differences between these girls and their relatively cloistered Indian counterparts (44). Doreen, the author’s favourite young lady, ultimately marries one of her soldier boys, and goes ‘Home’ to England, thus fulfilling the dream of every stereotypical Anglo-Indian girl. However, her kindness to the young Ruskin, and the absence of any critical assessment of her behaviour prevent her from appearing to be the calculating seductress, so frequently encountered in colonial fiction. Bond’s reference to the community’s attitude towards his mother, who had left her husband to marry a second time, also reveals an adherence to traditional norms of respectability which runs counter to most
literary portrayals of Anglo-Indians. He says, “She had come in for a certain amount of social ostracism, particularly from the better off Anglo-Indians and domiciled Europeans who disapproved of everything she had done” (70). This emphasis on conventional behaviour, which is often encountered in Anglo-Indian discourses, draws attention to the existence of a conservative middle class which was significantly erased from most literary representations of the community.

5.2.2. I. ALLEN SEALY – THE TROTTERNAMA

Ruskin Bond’s portrayal of Anglo-Indians remains incidental to his creative concerns as there is no deliberate engagement with issues, which would be of specific relevance to the community. However, in the recent past there has been an increasing recognition, within the community, that stereotypical portrayals of Anglo-Indian men and women, which continue to surface in literature, “will remain intact until such time as more writing emanates from within the community and those who would wish it well with regard to fair, fact-finding research and interpretation.” Contemporary Anglo-Indian writers are challenging the projection of these uni-dimensional images, not by denying any underlying and uncomfortable truths, but by portraying a reality too complex and multifaceted to be encompassed within the narrow confines of stereotypes. E. M. Lyons suggests that fiction can play a significant role in combating negative projections by representing a reality which only Anglo-Indians are fully familiar with:

The Anglo-Indian author can make the characters the way he knows them to be in his community... through the fiction prose, the Anglo-Indians can spread the subculture of theirs for understanding, knowledge, awareness, cultural values, religious and social values. Besides it being the best way of keeping alive the Anglo-Indians of yesterday, today and tomorrow, it also helps to gain respect for the community and spreads understanding and awareness in the world at large.
It would be reductive and extremely limiting to view any literary work merely as a socio-political tract, but it is undeniable that in fiction, "What is ultimately communicated is a picture of the world as the writer sees it, a picture that comes out of somewhere deep within" (Deshpande 1). The Trotter Nama by I. Allen Sealy is an attempt to come to terms with history and heritage, through an honest, and often humorous, perception of the life and the varying fortunes of his community. This remarkable literary construct uses a variety of stylistic devices, including numerous lengthy digressions, to demystify those biases and presuppositions, which have impacted perceptions and portrayals of the community in literature, and in life. Events are viewed from the perspective of the community, and the author portrays the complex and varied influences which contributed to its creation, and to the substantiation of an ethnicity which emerged despite the disparity of genetic and cultural inputs. The unapologetic, creative, and original contemplation of the prejudices encountered by the community, and those which influenced its own perceptions of others, carries his work beyond the merely polemical. The book is not an apologia, an explanation, or an extenuation of the presumed shortcomings of the community, it is a celebratory attempt to look back on the past and portray it because, "the past alone is true" (4).

The very style and form of The Trotter Nama are indicative of the diverse cultural inputs which have gone into the making of the Anglo-Indian community. The novel draws upon the diffuse and discursive style of the Persian and Mughal chronicles to trace the origins, and evolution of the community, but uses a foreign language which was held to be the identifying mark of the true Anglo-Indian. Sealy weaves fact and fiction together seamlessly, and adds to the stylistic complexity of the novel by using a series of digressions, and interpolations. Through these, the narrative creates an imaginative record of those compulsions, beliefs and modes of thought and behaviour, which imparted a specific identity to the Anglo-Indian and, ironically, also contributed to stereotypical perceptions of the community.
The depiction of the fortunes of various generations of the multitudinous Trotter family also highlights significant moments in the lives of the Anglo-Indian community. The Trotter Nama, the reader is informed, is “the chronicle (not history) of the Trotters as set out by the seventh Trotter”, Eugene, who feels someone has to “garner” the story of this diasporic and peripatetic clan or “it’ll all blow away” (7). From the very beginning it is apparent that ambiguity is going to be unapologetically acknowledged, and celebrated, by the chronicler, whose multi-racial antecedents are physically manifested in the fact that one of his eyes is blue while the other is brown. Eugene’s duality is further reaffirmed by the manner in which his colour changes in keeping with his location, he is white in India but brown in the West. He has learnt to accept this reality, with its attendant implication of never really belonging anywhere, with relative equanimity, “it starts to happen at the airport, so I usually wait in the toilet till the change is complete” (6). The narrator’s unapologetic and candid engagement with the past, and with those stereotypes generally associated with his community, is already evident in the introductory passage of the novel. Here Eugene admits that he, “used to be a writer, but in the old East India Company sense of clerk. All Anglos were writers until the railways came, almost all. Soldiers and teachers too—we’re still that, though there aren’t very many of us left. Maybe a hundred thousand, maybe two, counting bazaar-side Anglos” (4-5).

The chronicle proper has a sequence, “though the gathering was random” (7). It begins, appropriately enough, with Justin Aloysius, the Great Trotter, who landed in India as a French soldier of fortune in the 18th century. The first Trotter, however, soon jettisons his French identity and joins the British army. This change of loyalties was, evidently, possible in the swashbuckling early days of the Raj, when individuals could make their fortunes, and acquire status without being hampered by their nationality, birth or antecedents. Sent to Nakhlau as a captain, Justin uses his knowledge of artillery to impress the Nawab. He is not only appointed Commander-in-chief of the nawab’s army, but is also gifted a large tract of land, which is used to build Sans Souci, the palatial home of the Trotters.
The narrative opens with a description of the fateful day on which the multi-talented Great Trotter, who shares many of the eclectic interests and characteristics of the 18th century philanthropist Claude Martin, falls to his death from a balloon. It then reveals the impact of this momentous event upon the numerous residents of Sans Souci. These include the Greco-Indian daughters of Alexander the sculptor, Fonseca, the hair dresser and ice manager of Portuguese-Indian descent, Justins' three begums, whose multi-racial parentage testifies to the frequency of interaction between Europeans and the Indians, and Justins' "khaki" coloured son Mik.

As the narrative goes back in time to relate the story of The Great Trotter's rise to fame and fortune, it also reveals the porosity of racial and cultural borders during the early years of European presence in India. The Nakhlau Trotter gradually adopts Indian clothing and cuisine and discovers that his fleur-de-lis seal has 'turned fish.' The Nawab of Tirnab, on the other hand, transforms himself into an "Ebony Frenchman" and begins to look "exactly as Trotter sahib had looked before he gave up his firangi garb" (72). When Elise, the jarman begum uses the word 'native' to refer to Indians, Justin feels the word sits oddly on her lips because, "although country-born and at least one half Indian, she used a European distinction to set apart the very person he, a European, was doing his best to become" (194). Elise's reference to 'natives' is significant because it is indicative of a growing identification with the west, and marks the beginning of that distancing from other inhabitants of the subcontinent which ultimately added to the Anglo-Indian community's own sense of displacement.

Justin's son Mik encounters increasing prejudice on the part of the British, and his life and career is deeply impacted by official distinctions designed to separate the growing population Anglo-Indians from 'pure bred' Europeans. Mik's early life parallels that of another famous hybrid, Kim, with whom he shares a phenomenal memory and a talent for intelligence work. Unlike Kim, however, Mik's career is soon put on hold by the infamous Standing Orders which mark the beginning of official discrimination. After he is "summarily discharged"
from the army in 1795, Mik finds refuge in the aptly named “Cimmerii Street” which “runs between White Town and the black city” (202). As Mik alights at his lodgings and pays his fare he is surprised by the arrival of numerous other Anglo-Indian officers who have shared the same fate, “Mik was puzzled: he had imagined himself the only one. So, apparently had the others who were standing erect in their civilian clothes and wondering what to make of it all” (202).

Evidently, it is too early for these disbanded officers to feel any sense of community, and they soon part having decided to offer their services to Indian princes, who welcome them with open arms. Mik joins the Marathas, a decision which ultimately leads to a battlefield confrontation between him and his father, Justin, who has been recalled to service by the British army. Wounded and disowned by both “the foreign and the native masters” (255) for whom he fought, Mik ultimately decides to return home, but only after finding himself a bride from the Upper Military Orphanage of Calcutta as “the girls of that institution had always provided the Company’s officers with wives” (224). However, as he arrives late for the annual ball, the last orphan of suitable age has already been promised and Mik returns to Sans Souci just in time to put in his claim as the heir of the Great Trotter.

Mik soon discovers that, in his case, the rule of “primogeniture counted for nothing: the son- and - supposed heir was a country-born and as such had no rights. An entire class of persons like Mik, sprung equally from Europeans and Indians, was altogether destitute of law” (253). Mik’s realisation marks the beginning of a greater, and chronologically correct, engagement with issues related to the community. There is a constant interweaving of fact and fiction, as real and imaginary individuals interact to create a multifaceted tapestry, recording significant events in the growth and search for identity of a young community. Though the narrative continues to focus on the men of the family, gradually it is the references to women which indicate a hardening of boundaries between the various inhabitants of the subcontinent.
Thomas Henry, Mik’s son, who is known as the Middle Trotter, is rewarded a Victoria Cross and given a covenanted job for his services during the Mutiny. His dark complexioned wife Philippa, on the other hand, is debarred from membership of the European club and encounters increasing hostility from Indians who cannot “hide their puzzlement at the sight of a dark-skinned woman in a foreign dress” (330). Philippa rather ingeniously resolves the difficulty of maintaining a decent table, on an insufficient allowance, by creating dishes which have a dual provenance. These signal the birth of an Anglo-Indian cuisine and Trotter curry nourishes a whole generation of railwaymen and telegraphists.\(^\text{24}\)

Quite predictably, however, its fusion of various culinary influences does not appeal to the Trotter’s staunchly British daughter, Victoria. Thomas Henry’s subsequent inability to identify completely with either the British or the Indians indicates an incipient desire for an individual identity. His voyage home from London, after losing his wife Philippa, also reinforces his perceptions of being an outsider. He soon realises that, despite his covenanted status, he is considered ineligible by the young ladies of the ‘fishing fleet’ whose “attentions withered on the vine when he let fall that he was an Anglo-Indian” (383). Thomas Henry’s disillusionment is complete when he is asked to resign because of a financial misdemeanor, and he returns his Victoria Cross just as Queen Victoria is declared the Empress of India.

Thomas Henry’s daughter Victoria, gradually assumes a significant role in the narrative. Her unquestioning identification with the British is, paradoxically, offset by her increasing blackness. While her complexion disqualifies her from entry into the privileged world of the colonizers, it does nothing to reduce her unequivocal loyalty to the Empire, and her rejection of all things Indian. She summarily dismisses the Ilbert bill which would have permitted Indians to sit in judgement over Europeans. She tells her husband Mr Montagu, “It’s not right for servants and all to go judging their masters. I wouldn’t want an Indian to sit in judgement over me, and that’s that.” (397). Victoria’s opinion is echoed by the majority of the inhabitants of Sans Souci, and by “ladies of every complexion, from coal to steam by way of ash grey” who frequent the Railway Institute.
However, some members of Victoria’s own family dispute this ardent support of the British, which appears rather misplaced in the light of increasing discrimination against the community. Victoria’s husband Mr Montagu, traitorously demonstrates, with the help of a Globe geometry box, the principles of ‘divide and rule’ by which the British govern and maintain their empire. Alexander Trotter goes to prison for attacking an editor, who refers to him as ‘half-caste’. He insists that his people be called ‘Anglo-Indians’ because, despite their diverse racial antecedents, “they no longer speak French or Portuguese or Spanish, but English” (401).

Together with an honest, though frequently irreverent, acknowledgement of those allegiances and biases, which often exacerbated the prejudices of others, the narrative also focuses on other loyalties, which are rarely acknowledged by outsiders. Victoria’s dislike of all things Indian, for instance, is balanced by her husband’s support of the Congress, and her aunt Alina’s adoption of Indian ways. Alina wears saris and:

A dark yellow glow of mustard oil hung over her and she smelt of fresh coriander (she had turned vegetarian). Her glossy graying hair was scented with aloes, parted down the middle and done up in a bun. In the middle of her forehead was a bind. … Alina’s Hindustani had become fluent, too fluent, and she insisted on being called not Aunty Alina but Alina Aunty (385).

This variety of allegiances reinforces the complexity of the narrative. Even Victoria’s uncompromising devotion to the British, which is one of the defining features of her personality, becomes merely one of the characteristics which contributes to her individuality. The density, of character and incident, in the text parallels the diversity of thought and motivation, making it impossible for the reader to accept any specific mode of behaviour as representative of the thought processes of an entire community.
As Anglo-Indians face the uncertainties of the period leading up to Indian Independence, and slowly emerge as a relatively unified community, the women of the Trotter family join the ranks of the employed. They choose professions typically associated with the women of the community; the 'maiden aunts' become teachers in the local Anglo-Indian girls school, Ruby opts for nursing while Pearl disappears from home in search of celluloid glory. Pearl is the only woman in the narrative whose depiction comes close to the stereotypical images of Anglo-Indian women frequently encountered in fiction. Pearl jettisons not only her identity, but also her morality on her way to success, thus justifying Victoria's malapropism, that her runaway daughter is a girl of "unimpregnable virtue." (438). Unfortunately, like another Anglo-Indian actress, Merle Oberon, Pearl's stint in the Talkies is cut short by the arrival of colour which makes it impossible for her to hide her dusky origins. 27

Despite her evidently flexible morals, even Pearl does not set out to entrap unwary Englishmen. Her sister Ruby, who does marry a shiftless British private, is deserted by him soon after Independence, illustrating another reality which was frequently elided from colonial discourse. The fact that colonial literature generally focused on the upper classes facilitated the depiction of the stereotypical Anglo-Indian woman who tried to gain access to the privileged world of the rulers by using her sexuality. This image could not be substantiated by portraying the more porous lower levels of society where such marriages did take place, and where there were instances of cheating and desertion, which would call into question the vaunted moral superiority of the breed of colonisers. Though Ruby's story remains a mere strand in the complex tapestry of the novel, it reveals an aspect of the cliched theme of inter-racial marriages which is rarely encountered in colonial literature, but is well documented in Anglo-Indian discourses. 28

Towards the end of the novel it is the women who, frequently, embody or articulate some of the basic concerns of the community, including the quest for a home. Victoria, quite appropriately, dies on the eve of independence. She tells
her grand daughter-in-law, “Queenie, I’m going Home” (487) and leaves her to ruminate over the true significance of the word.

Was home the place where one was born? Or the place where one hoped to bury one’s bones?... Was home the place where your ancestors lay dead? Or where your grandmother- in- law and your little daughter lay buried? Was it simply the place you happened to be at the moment? Or the place in your mind where you weren’t? (489).

Queenie’s own uncertainties, about where she belongs, prompt her to go to England in the hope of discovering her real home. Caplan feels that until end of colonial rule Anglo-Indians “imagined themselves as belonging elsewhere. In other words they could be seen as ‘transnationals’-to employ a currently pop term-not by virtue of migration across political boundaries but through experiencing profound displacement in terms of belonging: by residing in one location but adjudging themselves only at home in another”. 29 However, Queenie soon realises that she is gradually turning brown in the land of the whites, and as her feelings of discomfort and alienation increase, she quite readily decides to return to Sans Souci. Her feelings of displacement, and rootlessness are associated with the lack of a specific geographical space which she can claim as her own, and ultimately she learns to come to terms with her discomfort. After independence there is a mass exodus of Anglo-Indians, who depart for foreign lands in search of 'home.' Queenie, and others who stay behind, struggle to maintain a sense of community and identity, while gradually acknowledging, and encompassing, a variety of social and cultural influences:

He saw a girl in white play a piano and a neighbours’ daughter in saffron play the sitar, after which they made a sort of hesitating music together; he saw the orthodox block their ears; he saw silver tears shed when one of Our Girls married out; he saw coins of blood when a Trotter boy eloped with one of Their Girls... (561)
The Trotter-Nama is first and foremost an imaginative piece of work and its "rehabilitatory mission", if any, is incidental to its creative design. However, it does provide an alternate image of a community which has been defined most recognizably through stereotypes. Literary allusions add to the density of the text, along with interpolations, notes and digressions, which illuminate minute facets of the life and culture of the Anglo-Indians. While these impart the immediacy of an oral narrative to the novel, the table of contents indicates a concern with diverse social, cultural and historical factors which have impacted the community.

Beatrix D'Souza says, "In extracts from the Anglo-Indian saga, The Trotter-Nama we recognize ourselves, our food, our customs and history. We are even invited to laugh at ourselves, secure in the fact that he is one of us" (D'Souza, Souvenir 3). Delineating the extended history of the Trotters, the narrative engages with issues and attributes which were used to substantiate literary images of Anglo-Indian women, but portrays them from the perspective of the community itself. Sealy's text challenges the ubiquitous stereotype of the Anglo-Indian woman through its depiction of individuals whose quotidian concerns rarely include the opportunity, or desire, to use their sexuality for privilege. The bad girls who "listened to Radio Ceylon in the evenings and plied their trade at night" do exist, but so do the Trotter stenographers and teachers, who lived in the respectable suburbs and" hated their bosses for the passes they made" (556). Sealy's depiction of this alternate reality, and his honest, irreverent, and imaginative representation of the minutiae of the life of his community, impels a reappraisal of popular iconographies.

5.3 RECLAIMING THE PAST

Relatively few works of fiction have emanated from within the community, but an increasing number of memoirs, histories, sociological and critical treatises written by Anglo-Indians resident in India and abroad are, currently, attempting to reclaim and re-examine the past. Contemporary Anglo-Indian writing moves away from the polemical to a realistic, and unapologetic, representation of the
community. It acknowledges those internal divisions of race, region, and class, which determined patterns of behaviour, but were rarely acknowledged in earlier discourses. Most of these writers, who belong to the educated upper classes, challenge the prejudices which have impacted representations of Anglo-Indian women in fiction, and in cinema. They also continue to highlight traditional family values, and ethnic specificities. Criticising the portrayal of Anglo-Indian women in Indian films, Neil O’ Brien comments that "Julie or Sally or Rita or whoever it is must wear a dress, must be a Cabaret dancer and must have the boss making a pass at her. These are stereotypes and I think it is time we took up these kinds of issues".

Anglo-Indian writers respond critically to uni-dimensional portrayals, drawing attention to their lack of cultural authenticity, and dependence upon outmoded socio-political structures. Contemporary discourses also establish the extent to which the complex interweaving, of patriarchal attitudes with factors such as race and class, influenced representations of women of the community, especially during the colonial period. Lionel Caplan suggests that "the line separating the colonial past from the post-colonial present cannot be precisely demarcated, that neither can be conceptualised as an undifferentiated entity, and moreover, that the transition from one to the other is characterized by both continuities and disjunctions" (Children 223). This contention is borne out by Anglo-Indian writers and critics. In her introduction to Allegories of Empire, Jenny Sharpe admits that, "None of us escapes the legacy of a colonial past and its traces in our academic practice" (19). Relating incidents from her own family history, Sharpe also underscores her community’s problematic sense of belonging during the colonial period. "I grew up listening to stories of an ancestor who dyed her skin to escape from the Agra fort during the Mutiny. But there were also other stories, like the one of her granddaughter (my paternal grandmother), who was refused entry into "whites-only" restaurants because her skin was too dark" (20). The perspective from which Sharpe interrogates her material and the past is evidently impacted by "the history of the half-caste" and by the effects of ambivalent social and cultural associations (20).
Through their representations of the colonial past, and the present, Anglo-Indian writers have begun to interrogate negative iconographies, and confront the various factors which contributed to their propagation. Lee Maracle says, “Usually when one writes of oneself it is called non-fiction—I disbelieve that. Hindsight is always slightly fictitious. The events that shaped my life are written down here. They happened. They taught me those great lessons that alter the course of your life. They moved me.” Memory may not be factually exact, but it is a significant means of recovering the individual and collective past. The reminiscences of members of the community substantiate an image of the community, and its members, which is rarely encountered in the writings of outsiders. Eric Stracey’s *Growing up in Anglo-India* gives a nostalgic account of his younger days in Bangalore, and reveals the manners and customs of middle class Anglo-India during the Raj. It portrays a community which, despite its feelings of affiliation with the British, was always conscious of a separate social identity. Stracey attributes the Anglo-Indian privileging of western culture, over the Eastern, to the British system of education, but is honest enough to include a tongue in cheek portrayal of the prejudices of his own racially mixed community:

We had to have names that were identifiable Anglo-saxon or Anglo-Celtic. Not for us names like Gonzalves, Alfonso, D’Silva or Desouza that implied a Latin-based European heredity. These were for “wops”, “dagos” and other such inferior beings—to be changed by deed poll. Until I discovered to my youthful dismay that my fathers’ mother was a Pereira.

This acknowledgement of internal stratifications is typical of a memoir which provides a candid appraisal of relationships between the English, the Anglo-Indians, and the Indians. Stracey reveals the derogatory attitude of the community towards Indians, as well as extent to which factors, such as class, played a role in determining the level of interaction between the British and the Anglo-Indians. Thus, while contact with the higher levels of British hierarchy was limited, due to
the reservations of the colonisers, the higher class Anglo-Indians themselves were snobbish about interacting with the lowly British Tommy; “We did not invite them into our home, nor since we did not credit them with honourable intentions, would any of my sisters have encouraged them to be friendly or, still less ever thought of marrying one” (25). This statement indicates a much more nuanced, and class specific, appraisal of the colonisers than is generally portrayed in colonial literature. It also stresses the largely endogamous nature of the community, while confirming the fact that marriages, which did take place between Anglo-Indian women and British men during the later days of the Raj, were mostly confined to the lower official levels of the colonial hierarchy.

Stracey’s portrayal of the women of his acquaintance, inevitably focuses on those belonging to his own class. There are merely passing references to the “Shoolay Marys,” whose lax morality is evidently linked to their poverty. Stracey records the presence of women in professions including medicine, nursing and teaching, and indicates that social acceptance of working women within the community was accompanied by an equal emphasis on their conformity with traditional feminine roles. Significantly, despite the community’s tacit acceptance of British superiority, there is no record of any overriding desire to access colonial privilege through marriage. The responses of women to situations do, however, reveal social, and racial prejudices which influenced relations between various communities. The community’s derogatory attitude towards Indians, for instance, manifests itself, not merely in references to ‘wogs’ and ‘niggers’, but also in the behaviour of women like Stracey’s sister- in law Ruth, who never feels at home with her husband’s Indian friends because of her “domiciled” mentality (96). This is a mindset acknowledged by other writers including G.J Moore, who attributes the nostalgia of some of her women correspondents, to the fact that their domesticated existence protected them from any manifestations of British prejudice. On the other hand, “they were more likely to meet this from Indians around them” and this would inevitably colour their relations with the community (91).
Eric Stracey does not exhibit any specific concern with interrogating stereotypes, but the majority of the women he depicts are "ladylike without being prudish or Victorian," thus compelling a re-evaluation of fictional images (150). Gloria J Moore in *The Anglo-Indian Vision*, on the other hand, deliberately contests these images, and attempts to assess their impact upon individuals from the community. She says, "When one looks at stereotypes in literature it becomes clear that one strong motive for the sensitive to ‘pass’ was to escape the libelous images which abounded" (165). While her contention elides other economic and social factors, which contributed to the phenomena of ‘passing,’ her argument does echo the assertions of other writers from the community. Reginald Maher also ascribes Merle Oberon’s denial of her ‘half-caste’ Anglo-Indian identity to her fear of “having thrust upon her the reeking mantle of the odious Victoria Jones of Bhowani Junction.” and concedes, "Who can blame her if she did not desire to risk career, fortune and happiness for something she had been taught to despise from her cradle in Calcutta" (41).

G. J. Moore admits the prevalence of a prejudiced and negative image of the community, and attempts to counter ‘the errors of past reporting’ by presenting the community’s view of its own history. This endeavour, to displace itself from the margins of history and assume a central position in the narrative, is indicative of the community’s desire to “redress a little of the massive imbalance of deliberate distortion, misunderstanding, ignorance and hackneyed views” (175). Stereotypes are destabilised, by representing the views of members of the community itself, regarding issues which contributed to the construction of these images. However, despite the fact that numerous correspondents contest the negative imaging of the community, it is evident that such preconceptions were current, and did impact the daily lives of Anglo-Indian women. Like many other women, who emphasise the sheltered and conventional nature of their upbringing, a distinguished nurse recalls: “I met a rather predatory Commanding officer. He thought I was ‘fair game’ since Anglo-Indian. I soon put him right on
the subject, a lesson I think he never forgot" (102). Ironically, in a real life situation, which recalls Victoria’s experience in *Bhowani Junction*, the Anglo-Indian woman refuses to become the victim of a closed mindset which uses stereotypes as a means of identification.

Moore concedes the existence of ‘passers,’ and a privileging of white colour within the community, but she also records the economic and social compulsions, which motivated such behaviour. There were numerous instances where men, who were fair, were classified as Europeans and drew a higher wage than their darker brothers, who had to be content with a lower remuneration, and limited prospects of promotion (Roychowdhury 105). Even women found that employment opportunities were, sometimes, linked to their complexion. During the early decades of the 20th century the majority of teachers in Anglo-Indian schools were English, and the few Anglo-Indian women who did get jobs were chosen because, “they might have been English to look at, and often very good looking at that. And on this basis several Anglo-Indian girl teachers were employed” (158). This remark by a respected educationist underlines the extent to which the privileging of white skin impacted economic issues.

Lydia Turner, one of the interviewees in *The Anglo-Indian Vision* also draws attention to the manner in which stereotypes were extended or modified in accordance with socio-economic necessity. Thus, the image of the promiscuous, ungenteeel Anglo-Indian woman existed alongside another stereotype, which valorised the working women of the community, in relation to the men. Lydia says, “A lot of nonsense was talked about our women being brighter than our men. The deeper reason for this was supply and demand. They needed our women in offices, as nurses, even wives” (98). Though Lydia refutes this opinion, its persistence after independence, and in the discourses of the community which depict women as being more dependable and committed, does imply a certain grounding in reality. Gist and Wright also acknowledge that, “Anglo-Indian women usually enjoy a more favourable work image than the men. Indeed, they have earned an enviable reputation as responsible and skilful
workers, especially in the clerical occupations” (66). Caplan attributes the substantiation of this parallel image to “colonial and post-colonial economic and political developments” which reduced employment opportunities available to Anglo-Indian men, who were literate but not well educated (Iconographies 888). This placed the burden of household responsibilities on the shoulders of Anglo-Indian women, whose reputation for efficiency and trustworthiness, within the community and outside it, ran counter to their negative imaging in British and Indian fiction.32

Moore claims that, “For an image in literature to have any credence, the people portrayed must recognise their own-all else is caricature” (173). However, her contestation of stereotypical portrayals of her community, is itself limited by her lack of engagement with internal stratifications, and with the economically weaker sections of the community. While it is evident that perceptions of class differences played a significant role in creating and establishing boundaries between communities during the colonial period, similar prejudices are perceptible within the works of Anglo-Indian authors as well. Frank Anthony, for instance, contends that intermarriage between communities at the middle class or upper class levels has produced offspring who have “more than held their own with the finest types of the so-called unmixed races, white or brown” (370). However, he subsequently comments that “If the offspring is the product of a low-class British Tommy and a servant woman the result is not likely to be a competent vehicle of humanity” (370). A sentiment which, rather ironically, echoes beliefs expressed by numerous colonial writers, whose perceptions of the shortcomings of Anglo-Indian character were influenced, not merely by the racial hybridity of the community, but also by factors such as poverty, class, and legitimacy.

5.3.3 ESTHER. M. LYONS-BITTER SWEET TRUTH

Contemporary Anglo-Indian discourses exhibit a more candid acknowledgement of racial, social and economic divisions within the community, than before. However, they do not always portray the impact of social and economic
deprivation upon women belonging to the lower classes. While this omission may be related to perceptions of greater porosity at the lower socio-economic level of the community, it limits, and circumscribes, the writers’ engagement with issues which contributed to the growth of stereotypes. Esther M Lyons’ autobiography *Bitter Sweet Truth* therefore acquires significance as one of the few texts which portrays the experiences of a first generation woman of mixed heritage. Esther, who is the offspring of an informal liaison between an American Jesuit priest and a tribal Indian convert, gives a candid and unapologetic description of her struggle for recognition and economic survival. The narrative reveals the impact of traditional morality, class, and gender biases upon relationships within the community. Esther confronts issues of identity and legitimacy, which impacted earlier representations of the community in literature, though they are no longer relevant for those Anglo-Indians, whose ethnicity is sustained by generations of relationships within an essentially endogamous community.

All Anglo-Indian women occupy, a “transitional space” between cultures, but Esther also speaks from a subaltern perspective, due to the circumstances of her birth. The text reveals the tentativeness and insecurity which impacts Esther’s perceptions of belonging, despite her confident assertion that, “I am a descendant of an American father, whose father was Irish from Ireland and mother came from France. So I am Anglo-Indian with an Indian mother. I am a pure Anglo-Indian because I am a direct descendant of an Irish-British origin and an Anglo-Saxon and an Indian.”33 Her sense of identification with the community is quite fragile, initially. It develops gradually due to a number of factors, such as her association with other Anglo-Indians like Edie and Uncle Dick. “It was in his house at the railway quarters that we learnt to live like Anglo-Indians and had the security of a stable home. It was also in Uncle Dicks’ house that I was recognized as the Missy baba, a name given to the British and Anglo-Indian girls by the servants” (142).

Esther’s desire for an Anglo-Indian identity necessitates the eliding of her proximity to her Indian roots. 34 While working at La Martiniere Girls’ School
she does not introduce her “Indian mother who wore a sari and could not speak English” to the Anglo-Indian staff because they are “very British in their outlook” (237). Like Elsa, Victoria and other Anglo-Indian heroines of fiction, Esther has the ability to access a dual cultural space, but she learns to privilege western culture, dress, and language, in order to gain acceptance within the community. Writing about her appointment as a teacher in the Frank Anthony Public School, she recalls that “The main condition of employment in that school was to wear dresses and act like an Anglo-Indian following British ways” (303). Her recognition of the impact of visible cultural differences is also evident in her acknowledgement that, “After school when shopping I usually wore a sari, as that way I was treated with respect by shopkeepers who considered that anyone wearing a dress could be expected to act like people in English films, that, to them, was behaving immorally by openly making love” (303-304).

Anglo-Indian writers have portrayed the women of the community primarily in relation to their interaction with the English. Esther’s story places her within the context of Indian, rather than colonial society. She says, “The best way to keep a community living forever is to write their stories in the present climate, as it is now in the present... The past stories of the Colonial times and the British ancestry is valuable but the present is just as important”.35 Bitter Sweet Truth reveals the extent to which essentialist, and paternalistic, perceptions of cultural and gender differences, continued to impact responses to Anglo-Indian women, even after independence. Esther’s experiences as a stenographer bear out the reservations of one of her acquaintances, Bishop Raymond, who acknowledges that “Indian bosses are from a different moral background and there are many cases of harassment of our girls” (186). There are numerous instances, where the cultural divide between the communities manifests itself in responses to Anglo-Indian women, whose relative lack of social constraints is taken to be a marker of sexual promiscuity.

Esther’s experiences in India provide an alternative view of the complex, and stratified Anglo-Indian reality. They reveal the prorosity of the community’s
borders, and the impact of factors such as caste, region, and culture upon community identities, especially at lower economic levels. She points out that, "Unless the Anglo-Indian writers decide to write about this confused state of life in India, and express their coping with it, or about their coping in the country they migrate into, their success and achievements, no one will know of them." Her book not only offers a glimpse of the "Anglo-Indian subculture," but also captures, authentically, its "values, lifestyle and way of talking." Esther ultimately substantiates her identity through the discovery of "A family with ancestors who were important and successful people," as well as by her paradoxical realisation that people in Australia judged her "according to what I was as an individual," regardless of her background. Her life in Australia also reveals the multiple, and often contradictory, responses which constitute the migrant experience. Her multi-racial identity impacts her life in both countries; "being of fairer complexion than average Indians, I felt I was picked upon by the many in India for being the child of a European man and a half-caste. In Australia I felt discriminated because I am darker than the average Australians." Even her accent sets her apart, and whereas in India she is told that she speaks Hindi with an Anglo-Indian accent, in Australia she finds it difficult to get employment because of her Anglo-Indian accent, and the fact that she was born in India.

*Bitter Sweet Truth*, and a subsequently published novel *Peacock and the Gum Tree*, which is also loosely based on Esther's own experiences in India and Australia, constitute an individual reclaiming of a gendered discursive space. Her confident assertion of identity, despite facing discrimination and exclusion, illustrates that acceptance of hybridity which increasingly characterises the self-image of the Anglo-Indian woman. While it is necessary to recognise the fact that the experiences and perceptions of women belonging to the diaspora differ significantly from those of Anglo-Indian women living in India, there is a collective assertion of identity which is not concomitant upon any affiliation with the white or the black races.
Erica Lewin points out that:

In their perceptions of themselves Anglo-Indian women demonstrate a refusal to adhere to the dominance of binary oppositions, they explain their values and lives not in terms of binaries, but as independent agents. They acknowledge their racial hybridity and grasp the opportunity to create their lifestyles. They resist complete identification with the Indian and with the British, and claim their own space and objectivity. 39

Contemporary critical interventions by Anglo-Indians, not only prioritise racial hybridity, but also demonstrate their assumption of control over their identity, by interrogating literary representations of women of the community. They reappraise the social and cultural contexts which motivated these portrayals as well as the responses of the Anglo-Indian community to these images. Kathleen Cassity analyses John Master's novel *Bhowani Junction*, originally denounced by community leaders as "an exercise in pornography", and sees it as representing an "unprecedented exploration and affirmation of Anglo-Indian identity." 40 Lauding its relocation of the Anglo-Indian from the periphery of colonial discourses to the center she attributes the critical responses of Anglo-Indian male commentators to the novel specifically to its portrayal of Anglo-Indian women. Cassity contends that, "Undoubtedly the stigma of illegitimacy and stereotypes of the "loose" Anglo-Indian woman have contributed to an understandable sensitivity among the Anglo-Indian community regarding its perceived morality, particularly where its women are concerned." 41 Her claim reinforces the fact that, within the discourses of the community, the Anglo-Indian woman was invested with the burden of conforming to the same patriarchally determined parameters of acceptable feminine behaviour which operated in British and Indian discourses. Victoria's sexuality, and independence, therefore, offended against the "Victorian sexual mores and some of the Indian ideals of womanhood" which had been internalised by the community. 42 Though Cassity assesses Master's

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portrayal of Victoria from the point of view of a modern sensibility, this does not negate the contexts which determined the critical responses of the community to it. Her reappraisal of Victoria’s choices does, however, represent an attempt to “integrate the hybrid post-colonial perspective into both the literature of empire and its criticism... by reconsidering previous assessments of texts that do consider the Anglo-Indian view point”43

Dolores Chew also contests negative gender depictions of Anglo-Indian women in literature contending that, “As an Anglo-Indian woman engaged in a project of rehabilitation and deconstruction, I see a definite need to reform the parameters that constructed these representations.” (22). Chew draws attention to the fact that the image of the sexually promiscuous Anglo-Indian woman is encountered much more frequently in literature than in factual records, and attributes its proliferation to the racial, economic, and social marginality of the community. She does not, however, consider the significance of the dichotomy between external representations of the women of the community, and their imaging within the discourses of the community. She recognises the threat, which Anglo-Indian women constituted to positivist racial categories, though her preoccupation with the “Anglo-Indian ‘whore’,” essentialises one component of a complex stereotypical image (5). She also does not take into account those subtle modifications in literary representation, which reflect the impact of changing perceptions of race, class, and gender.

The engagement of contemporary Anglo Indian writers, and critics, with superimposed images, and their assertion of racial hybridity as a constituent of identity, represents an initiative to create their own iconography. Regardless of literary merit, these works constitute a significant, and substantive attempt to reinterpret history and reality from their own point of view. They also take cognizance of the manner in which socio-economic imperatives, class distinctions, and gender biases influenced the evolution of normative images. In his introduction, to the Souvenir celebrating 150 years of Anglo-Indian association with the Indian railways, I. Allan Sealy remarks that, “The great
virtue of these stories is their truth, and every one of them puts another nail in the coffin of those gaudy lies which outsiders, whether popular British novelists or bollywood film-makers, have told about the community” (8). Within the community the positive image of women is reinforced by assertions that, “According to many historians and researchers, it was the Anglo-Indian woman who was a mentor in showing the women of the wider community on the subcontinent the path to self-determination and confidence.” Anglo-Indian women today claim a discursive, and critical space, which accords primacy to their concerns, without eliding the impact of social and class stratifications upon their lives. More significantly, they are progressing beyond a recovery and reappraisal of the past, to an engagement with the present, and with issues which impact their self-image and their representation in literature.
NOTES

1. "The nineteenth century could well be called an age of women, for all over the world their rights and wrongs, their 'nature', capacities and potential were the subjects of heated discussion." Radha Kumar, The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India, 1800-1990. (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993) 7.

2. The Anglo-Indian Review of September 1942 refers to "camouflaged hybrids" who have "escaped the colour handicap" and attempt to hide their true identity for social and economic reasons. Though the article laments this "leakage from the top" there is, however, no reference to the porosity of the community at the lower economic levels. 17.

3. Dolores Chew attributes the substantiation of negative images partly to the fact that Anglo-Indian working women ventured into a space which had so far been dominated by males. She does not, however, attempt to account for the fact that European working women were not invested with a similar image. This difference in perception could be accounted for by the kind of work undertaken by the two groups of women. European women generally worked as teachers, doctors and missionaries whereas the Anglo-Indian woman who worked frequently belonged to the lower strata of society and worked in jobs which were considered socially inferior such as nursing and as shop assistants. Further, the association of the European women with colonial authority endowed them with a certain measure of superiority which mitigated socio-cultural responses to them.


Despite Anthony's defense of the behaviour of Anglo-Indian young ladies, it is evident that members of the community were worried about the impact of the relative freedom of the war years upon morality and relationships.

Eric Stracey mentions his concern at the promiscuous behaviour of some Anglo-Indian girls during the Second World War, indicating that such behaviour was more of an aberration than a norm. "Such blatant behaviour shocked me and others in our prudish town, until we came to realise that, like higher prices, food shortages, crowded pavements and congested traffic, it was all part of the changed conditions that war brought." Growing up in Anglo-India (Chennai: East West Books, 2000) 174.

10. Beatrix D'Souza criticises the portrayal of the Anglo-Indian nurse in the film Cotton Mary referring to it as "an insult to the nursing community in India." She also draws attention to the fact that, "Anglo-Indian nurses have laid the foundations of the nursing profession in India. They have been recipients of the Florence Nightingale and Red Cross awards. Anglo-Indian military nurses have been decorated for their gallantry, before and after Independence. They were and are sticklers for discipline besides being compassionate and caring" The Times of India March 13 2000: 12.


13. Moore observes that before 1947 “Most women of that era did not work and so rarely came in contact with prejudice. They were more likely to meet this from Indians around them.” However it is evident that her comments apply only to women from economically secure backgrounds thus revealing the dichotomy in the experiences of Anglo-Indian women from different economic strata. The Anglo-Indian Vision 91.


17. In the novel Lost Property by the Ranee of Sarawak, the two Eurasian children are referred to as “the flotsam and jetsam of the East and West.” Quoted in Bhupal Singh, A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction (London: Oxford University Press, 1934 rpt 1975) 193.

18. When Kothiwali warns Javed that he should be circumspect in his behaviour towards Ruth he agrees citing the example of Miss Wheeler who was rumoured to have killed herself after murdering her abductor. Miss Wheeler in fact becomes a contested image in most colonial and post-colonial histories of the 1857 uprising and her fate is subject to various interpretations some of which are linked to her racial antecedents. Ruskin Bond, “A Flight of Pigeons” Complete Short Stories and Novels (New Delhi: Viking, 1996) 877.


22. Sealy’s portrayal of the first Trotter draws closely upon the life and character of the French adventurer and general Claude Martin of whom Gloria J Moore says, “he cast cannon, minted his own coins, sailed the first balloons to float in the Indian air. Martin left a huge estate, the interest of which was to be distributed to the poor...but the bulk of his fortune went to found, in his mansion, Constantia at Lucknow, the famous college-La Martiniere. Knowing the nawab meant to appropriate Constantia, Martin arranged to be buried there- a Muslim would not inhabit a tomb. It is said he won the land for the college in a cockfight, and that he first offered it to the Catholic church, who, surprised at his Muslim customs (four wives!) discreetly declined the offer. The Anglicans did not demur- and La Martiniere has been Anglican ever since” The Anglo-Indian Vision 151.

23. Mik, the palindrome for Kim, inevitably calls to mind the adventures of the hero of Rudyard Kipling’s eponymous novel. Sealy however inverts the events depicted in Kim making Mik participate in the ‘little game’ instead of the ‘great game’ and initially it
almost appears as though Mik is on the Russian side rather than the British. The legal wrangle over his patrimony recalls Ricketts petition which drew attention to the absence of a uniform civil code applicable to the community and especially to the fact that there is no law which regulates their marriages, and makes them lawful-there is no law which shows the rule that is to define the legitimacy or illegitimacy of their issue- there is no law which prescribes the succession to their property...there is no law which points out whether they possess the right of bequeathing by will, and if so, to what extent..."Quoted in Evelyn Abel, The Anglo-Indian Community: Survival in India 26.

24. Eric Stracey draws attention to the fact that "Anglo-Indian cuisine was about the only cultural item that we could claim as peculiarly our own. It consisted of the tastiest elements of Indian, English and Portuguese cooking with local variations." Growing Up in Anglo-India 53.

25. There are numerous literary and historical allusions scattered throughout the book. Alex’s attempt to horsewhip the journalist R.K, for instance, calls to mind the fact that Kipling “had once been packed off in haste to the north from Allahabad. The senior Hearsey of the day had travelled 500 miles to horsewhip the scribbler who challenged command of a regiment being given to a ‘half-caste.’ Kipling himself was reputed to be ‘four annas in the rupee’” G.J Moore, The Anglo-Indian Vision 166.

26. The Hearseys were founder members of the Indian National Congress. Other Anglo-Indians also participated in the freedom struggle and Cyril Stracey was a member of the Indian National Army.

27. Theodora Thomson says “Merle exploited her very Anglo-Indian looks, while denying she was Anglo-Indian ... Under all that paint she looked to me abandoned. Perhaps that’s why she was so desperate for wealth and fame. One can’t regard her, once she left for that world, as Anglo-Indian: so in a sense her deception about identity had a certain rightness.” Quoted in G.J. Moore, The Anglo-Indian Vision 81.

28. G.J. Moore draws attention to the fact that, “There were known cases of European men who married Anglo-Indian girls ‘off the strength’ of the army. Some of the girls were deserted, along with any children they had, whilst other men actually tried to kidnap the children of the unions.” The Anglo-Indian Vision 78.

29. Caplan says that for many Anglo-Indians Britain became not just longed for homeland but an “imagined state of being or moral location.” Children of Colonialism Anglo-Indians in a Postcolonial World 121.

30. Dolores Chew, 16. Ashley. E. Myles sees a specific pattern and definite purpose in the text and says, “the plight of the Anglo-Indians is taken up in the Mulkian tradition of using a social problem for building up the plot of a novel.” Recent Indian Fiction ed. R.S. Pathak (Delhi: Prestige Books,1994) 75. Sealy himself however, states that, “If writers are trying to become social activists. I tell you they are all pretending to be so. Or, they are seriously mistaken.” The Hindu (Online edition) 6 March 2003.


32. Caplan also points out in contrast to the negative colonialist imaging of Anglo-Indian women, “Post-Independence Anglo-Indian discourses, both official and popular highlight, the role of women as the mainstay of the family and by extension the community. “Iconographies of Anglo-Indian Women” Modern Asian Studies 34.4(2000) 888.

34. Unlike metis populations such as the chicanos who identify with their Mexican Spanish roots the Anglo-Indians' rejection of Indian culture was quite widespread especially among the higher classes.


38. Erica Lewin points out that Anglo-Indian women belonging to the diaspora are often quite critical about the absorption of Indian culture by the community in India. As one of them says, “I am very firm about the fact that I am an Anglo-Indian and not an Indian.” “Anglo-Indian women: Identity Issues” *The International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies*. 1.2 (1996):n.pag. Online. Internet. 14 July 2001. Caplan, however, feels that the idealization of the extended family, amongst the community in India, indicates the influence of ideologies and practices in the surrounding Indian society further, among the more affluent Anglo-Indians there is “evidence of a developing critique...of the Western domestic regime which is seen to compare unfavourably with their own” (189).


