BEYOND "COTTON MARY": ANGLO-INDIAN CATEGORIES AND RECLAIMING THE DIVERSE PAST

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The recent interest in Anglo-Indian studies, not as an inherent appendage of the British imperial experience and the story of white identity in India, but as an evolving paradigm of historical research concerning mixed-race people who identified as mixed-race, has evolved in tandem with postcolonial investigations into the relationship between "hybridity" and colonial identity formation *per se*. However, although the contemporary quest to collapse simple colonial dichotomies between the European ruling élites and indigenous 'subalterns' in the Indian context, heralded in the late 1970s with Arnold's work on Eurasians and poor Europeans in Calcutta (Arnold 1979), has unearthed a diverse and complicated set of social identities who have straddled the neat boundaries of traditional colonial categories (Stoler 1995), commentators such as Edwards anticipated this fashion by almost a century with his poignant depictions of both class and racial hybridities (Edwards 1881). Furthermore, along with other silenced communities whose origins were from outside India, such as the Armenians, Jews and Parsis, the Anglo-Indians have carved an historiographical niche for themselves as a contemporary Indian minority.

Although "Anglo-Indian" history may have come of age, it continues to be articulated in universalistic and almost nostalgic or sentimental tones as an offshoot of the British experience and the divergent and often conflicting vignettes of hybrid identities are subsumed under the banner of universalism and an eternal Anglo-Indian ethnicity which remains fundamentally rooted in the historical narratives of the Raj. Such narratives, as Mills has forthrightly argued (Mills 1996), render the community as an anthropological anomaly, as a tragic and 'culturally lost' ethnic phenomenon with a shared sense of marginality and pathos. Even as the community ventures into the twenty-first century as an Indian ethnic minority, the Raj style stereotypes of Anglo-Indians hopelessly lost in an anachronistic "identity crisis"

continue to permeate the Indian public consciousness as the latest controversy surrounding the portrayal of an Anglo-Indian character in Ismail Merchant's film "Cotton Mary" testifies (The Calcutta Statesman: 3-4 March 2000).

In this article, I wish to de-essentialise the Anglo-Indian experience in India by arguing that the pursuit to name the community has always been an area of contestation that reflected the diversity and multiplicity of the Eurasian condition. People of mixed-race in India have been known by, and have described themselves as, a differing range of names which reflect the changing cultural and political circumstances in which they found themselves and the varying importance of the imperial connection in the development of community self-consciousness. The existence of multiple techniques of naming and describing the Eurasian condition in India reflected the fact that Anglo-Indians were imagined, and imagined themselves, as different things at different times. This is to confront both the false assumption that the mixed-race and British experiences in India are one and the same; and the false universalism so prevalent in many Anglo-Indian histories of an unchanging and eternal sense of ethnic self that lends itself, whether consciously or unconsciously, to the dangerous stereotypes of the community still prevalent in contemporary public culture.

Early European travellers to India confirm the existence of Eurasian communities in India before the arrival of the British, suggesting that the Eurasian community had a pre-British heritage quite separate to the imperial connection. It was the Portuguese who first established trading centres, factories and military strongholds along the western shore of India form Calicut to Diu and along the Coromandel coast and later in Bengal at centres such as Chittagong and Hughli. The establishment of permanent colonies far from the Iberian peninsula and in the general absence of European women meant that casual and more formal relationships with Indian women were commonplace. As early as 1546, the term *mestico*, likely to be the forbear of the later terms *mustees*, *mestiz* and *mustechees*, to indicate a person born in India of mixed descent, is used widely in common parlance amongst the Portuguese to indicate the existence of such a community. According to Hobson and Jobson, moreover, the term "mestizo" is also used in India by 1588 to describe a person who is "halfe an Indian, and halfe a Portugall"(Hobson and Jobson 1903).

Initially, under the governorship of Albuquerque, the Portuguese encouraged inter-racial marriages in the early sixteenth century and there appears to be negligible social sanction against the idea. Some writers have over-emphasised a cultural predilection of the Portuguese for inter-racial marriage based on the experience of the Moorish migrations to the Iberian peninsula and while this may have been true, in some cases inviting disdain by later British writers (Whitehead 1889), it appears to be largely an exaggeration (Stark 1926; Whitehead 1889). Even Albuquerque himself identified that many mixed marriages in Goa, for example, were the products of corrupt ecclesiastical practices, bribery and a desire to proselytise the local population rather than unions of choice and of love. What is clear, moreover, is the sexual objectification of Indian women as part of the process of European occupation that saw the treatment of women as colonial possessions to be used by the Portuguese without regard to great intimacy. For example, the seventeenth century Spanish historian, Faria y Sousa, comments that the Portuguese encouragement of mixed-marriages by Albuquerque did not assume that the European men knew or recognised the women who were to be their wives, even on the wedding night itself (Faria y Sousa 1695). Furthermore, in the English introduction to Camoens' *The Lusiad* (1572), William Mickle comments that the treatment of Indian women as sexual objects by the Portuguese was widespread in the sixteenth century. Notwithstanding the author's obvious bias against Portuguese Catholicism in this text, his comments are telling of a patriarchal culture that tolerated sexual licentiousness in a climate where Indian women were often treated no better than sexual slaves by European men in a climate of unrestrained commercial acquisition (Mickle 1778).

However, the Portuguese placed considerable social status on the institution of marriage and in Goa, particularly, Albuquerque's insistence on a married male settler population meant that racial exclusivity was deemed impractical. The "casado" or married settler was at the apex of a Portuguese colonial hierarchy which requiring inter-marriage with Indian women due to the very low migration of Portuguese women to India in the sixteenth century (Subrahmanyan 1993). Regardless of the method and conditions under which inter-marriage took place, however, the Portuguese considered the children of such marriages and unions as an essential component of Indo-Portuguese society. According to Pearson, what is clear is that

the Portuguese included the descendants of Portuguese and local women in the population figures for Goa from 1540, indicating a willingness to accept hybridity as an aspect of civil society (Pearson 1987). A dichotomous system of racial distinctions begins to surface where there is a tendency to include Eurasians as an intrinsic component of the Portuguese population, extending the category "European" to include them, and thus establishing social distance between the maternal Indian families who are excluded from the guardianship of Eurasian children generally. Furthermore, despite historical disagreements concerning the egalitarianism of Portuguese race relations in India, it is clear that a hierarchical societal structure placed those of mixed-race born in India at the lower echelons of a colonial society that privileged "white" men born in Portugal (Boxer 1963). As French explorer de Laval notes in the seventeenth century, mixed-race people were at first racially marked by differences in skin colour from the children of white Portuguese settlers who were called "casticos" or "castiri":

The most esteemed are those who have come out from Portugal, and are called "Portuguese of Portugal"; next are those born in India of a Portuguese father and mother, and called "Castiri", that is of their caste and blood; the least esteemed are the offspring of a Portuguese and an Indian parent, called Mestices, that is, Metifs, or mixed (Pringle 1895).

Social gradation was mapped according to purity of blood, military rank and marital status in an increasingly stratified society where, according to Pearson, "*mestiços* were regarded with considerable suspicion by the elite"(Pearson 1987).

However, while historical evidence supports the existence of Indo-Portuguese nomenclature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this is not to infer the existence of a self-conscious hybrid community that it recoverable as a discrete historical entity. On the contrary, there are problems with this pursuit due to the fact that Roman Catholicism as a social category appears to have more concrete resonance for the Portuguese. The Portuguese encouragement of intermarriage, for example, requiring religious conversion for the Indian woman, may have been more likely the strategy for proselytation and, hence, colonial hegemony. According to Rao, it was only after an Indian woman had been baptised that sexual relations were considered 'unsinful' in the eyes of Portuguese colonial society (Rao 1963). Eurasian

children of a baptised union, therefore, could identify themselves as 'Christian' whereas those not affirmed by such religious sanction would bear the brunt of social stigma due to their 'heathen' illegitimacy.

Yet, on the other hand, Portuguese mixed-race people were later, if not concurrently, included in an ambiguous national categorisation that also saw the inclusion of Europeans and some Indians who were bound together by the glue of Portuguese Roman Catholicism. Campos has pointed out that the category "Portuguese" was an elusive one that brings into question the idea that European identity was either consolidated or stable (Campos 1919). The category included not only European Portuguese, and their mixed-race children who became known as *Luso-Indians*, but also Indian Christian converts who bore Portuguese names and adhered to quasi-Western lifestyles. Furthermore, by 1800 the category also included children of Indian women and other non-Portuguese European settlers, regardless of paternal origins (Campos 1919). It must also be stressed that the *lingua franca* of European social and commercial intercourse in India up to the mid to late eighteenth century was Portuguese and not Dutch, French or, indeed, English.

The Dutch East India Company, formed in 1602, established trading posts in Gujarat and Kerala, and later in Bengal from 1656, but did not establish a permanent presence on the subcontinent in the same way as the Portuguese. It has been suggested that the lack of extensive intermarriage or sexual relations by the Dutch in India can be attributed to traders being allowed to have accompanying Dutch female partners. Yet, the historical record remains ambiguous. Foster stresses the strict moral code of Dutch life in seventeenth century India with severe penalties for sexual misconduct outside of marriage and the practice of enforcing Protestant marriage with Portuguese Eurasian ("misticos") women who were attached to Dutchmen (Foster 1908). On the other hand, Furber cites the existence of Dutch Eurasian families in Cochin in the 1720s (Furber 1997). It is clear that intermarriage certainly occurred in locations of Dutch commercial interest in India although it was far less widespread than in other Dutch colonies such as in Java and Sri Lanka. Dutch Eurasians, known as *Oolandez* or *Wallendez*, were included in the category "European" although they could not claim Dutch citizenship (Mills 1997).

Where the Dutch married Indian women, it was likely to be the case that religious conversion was a prerequisite to the arrangement. However, as with Dutch marriage patterns in Java and Sri Lanka, it was also likely that existing Portuguese Eurasian women, who were considered European, married or co-habitated with Dutch settlers. However, it was the issue of religion and not of race that provided the framework for struggles of identity between the Dutch and the existing Portuguese Eurasians with whom they were more likely to intermarry, especially in former Portuguese settlements along the Malabar coast. Although historical evidence is paltry, Portuguese as the *lingua franca* amongst Europeans continued long after the Portuguese left India, suggesting that the persistence of the language amongst Eurasians most likely continued into the Dutch era. This is certainly the case in Sri Lanka where Portuguese Eurasians intermarried with the Dutch settlers and the Portuguese language became the dominant medium of European social discourse (McGilvray 1982). The issue in the context for European supremacy in India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would not have been one of race but one of the battle between Dutch Protestantism and Portuguese Catholicism as religion was a primary social marker.

The French term *métis* for people of mixed European and Indian parentage is used in India by 1610 although it appears to be a descriptive term used by French explorers to describe the existing Portuguese Eurasians (Yule and Burnell 1903). It was after the formation of *La Compagnie des Indes* in 1642 that French traders and settlers began to arrive in India, establish factories and intermarry either with local India women or with the Dutch and Portuguese Eurasians who had established themselves in colonial European society. Spear notes that the French tended to intermarry in a relatively casual sense with Eurasians being incorporated into the larger category "European" with little social sanction or discrimination. For the French, intermarriage was freely encouraged and there appears to be little evidence of discrimination with thriving and sometime influential Eurasian communities developing in Pondicherry and Chandernagore. These 'communities' were a body of individuals who were an intrinsic part of the larger French presence and were not subject to separate classification as a racial group, yet it is clear that intermarriage between the French and Portuguese Eurasian women was common in these two

towns. It is well-known that Dupleix's wife, Johanna Begum, was a well-known and influential Portuguese Eurasian woman from Pondicherry (Goebelé 1956).

Danish influence in India has not been the subject of intense historical research due to the negligible impact of Danish culture despite a continuous presence in the subcontinent for over two hundred years. The Danish East India Company was formed in 1612 and their first settlement was at Tranquebar on the Coromandel coast, settled in 1620 (Feldbaek 1969). By 1636, they had established a factory at Ballasore in Bengal and another at Gondalpura in the southeast of the French territory of Chandernagore, known to Bengalis as *Dinemardanga* or "land of the Danes". In 1755, the more well-known settlement of Serampore in Bengal was established which included important ecclesiastical and educational centres that pre-date British missions and colleges in India. The Danes remained on more cordial terms with both the Dutch and the French, but differed from their allies, according to one English observer who noted in 1700 of their tendency to "being supplied with wives from home and disdaining to form alliances with women of the country" (Bradley Birt 1919). In view of this, there has been no substantial evidence of the existence of a large Danish Eurasian community in India although individuals of Danish origin may have remained in towns such as Serampore when the Danish territories were transferred to the British in 1845.

The cosmopolitan and diverse landscape of the Eurasian experience, therefore, comprised of a multiplicity of conflicting categories in the pre-British period where people of mixed race were more likely to have been Portuguese-speaking and of Portuguese and Dutch paternal origin, professing the Catholic faith and calling themselves "Portuguese" generally. Early sources point to an array of terminologies to describe Eurasian identity in pre-British India: *mesticos*, *mestices*, *metifs*, *métis*, *mustees*, *mestiz* and *mustechees*, *Oolandez* or *Wallendez*. The early British male settlers were, therefore, attached to women who were mostly Portuguese Eurasian or Indian with official mixed-race Protestant marriages, in Calcutta at least, reaching a climax between 1748 and 1754. The early British Eurasian community did not find itself set apart from the European community but differed instrumentally from other European Eurasians in its profession of the Protestant religion which tended to mark out the boundaries of British subjectivity to the twentieth century.

Early British categorisations of the mixed-race community were essentially depictions of the Portuguese Eurasians, such as the use of the term "Fringy" by the British in the 1755 to describe "all the black Mustee Portugueze Christians residing in the settlements as a People distinct from the Natural born subjects of Portugal" (IOR). At this time, British Eurasians were included in the category "British subject" but discriminatory practices by the East India Company, well-known to Anglo-Indian historians, in 1786, 1791 and 1795 created a racial boundary between Europeans and Eurasians for the purposes of discrimination. According to Yule and Burnell, the derisive British term *half-caste* was used to describe people of mixed European and Indian origin from about 1789 (Yule and Burnell 1903). Both these discriminatory practices and the use of this appellation created resistance amongst pockets of the Anglo-Indian community who petitioned in Madras and Calcutta in the late 1820s to have such prejudices altered and removed. One of the first major Eurasian petitions was that of the widows of European soldiers in Madras, starting in 1825, who were excluded from the benefits of the Lord Clive's Fund, on account of their being "country born". In order for a widow of a European soldier in the Company's armies to be entitled to a pension, an affidavit was required stating that the woman's parents were of unmixed European blood. This petition was successful and resulted in the affidavit being withdrawn as a requirement in the funding process. Yet, more interestingly, a concomitant petition, in 1827, from a committee of Madras Eurasian men followed it disputing the appellation "half-caste" as an appropriate term by which people of mixed-race should be referred to in official British documents. Eight names were under consideration: *Eurasian*, *Indo-Briton*, *Asian*, *Anglo-Indian*, *East Indian*, *Anglo-Asian, Asiatick* and *Asiatick Briton*. According to the petitioners, the term "Eurasian" was deemed the most appropriate as it was the name "adopted among themselves as a distinctive general appellation" since the year 1802. However, a lobby group from Calcutta led by Kyd, disputed the term "Eurasian" as a substitute for "half-caste" and instead put forward the argument that the term "Indo-Briton" should be the replacement term as, politically, all Eurasians should consider themselves "as a branch of the great venerable British oak"(IOR).

The fact that the term "Indo-Briton" was chosen as the most appropriate term marked the beginning of nomenclature based *not* on racial or cultural origins, but on assumed and invented political identification. The second more commonly known

petition, presented to Parliament by Ricketts (Hawes 1996) campaigned against the discriminatory practices of the East India Company but was pre-dated by a meeting in 1823 by leading Calcutta Eurasians who decided on the term "East Indian" to represent all people of Eurasian origin in Bengal. Although the term was used to describe Indian Christians in Bombay, and had wider connotations as nomenclature referring to the inhabitants of "East India" as opposed to "West India", *East Indian* began to supersede Indo-Briton as the official categorisation of the community in the late 1820s. Yet, the struggle to name and describe itself remained a lasting legacy of the mixed-race community in India due to its diverse origins with regional differences also standing out as the primary reason for this contestation. There were, therefore, people of mixed-race with different identity affiliations in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Furthermore, the shift away from cosmopolitan European Eurasian affiliations based on diverse origins to broad-based political affiliations based on identification with British subjectivity was not in itself universally agreed upon. Opposition to the term "Indo-Briton" in Madras was based on the idea that the term "Eurasian" encompassed all people of mixed-race regardless of European origins, and, for the petitioners, the term "Eurasian" did not have the pejorative connotations it was to attract in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Likewise, Portuguese Eurasian Henry d'Rozario initially voiced his opposition to the East Indians' Petition based on the fact that "the descendants of European foreigners were not included among the parties from whom the petition was said to come" (Edwards 1884).

The exclusion of "European foreigners" from the nomenclature used to signify a cohesive mixed-race community came at a time when the British were consolidating the boundaries of their own imperial identity in India against the perceived threat of continental European influence, signified most markedly in the Catholicism of Portuguese Eurasians and the wider French influence in the service of the Indian princes. The quest to define themselves led to an increasing racialisation of the colonial state and a widening social and cultural distance between the British and all non-British groups in early colonial India. The great East Indian petition demanded that the Eurasian community be accepted not as natives of India but as British subjects and a sense of loyalty to British interests developed which has been well-documented by historians dealing with the community. The recognition of the term "Anglo-Indian" to represent all mixed-race people coming from India came only in the

late nineteenth century with the formation of the Imperial Anglo-Indian Association in 1898. Yet, John Malcolm suggested that this term was "the most descriptive and unexceptional" early as 1826 (Malcolm 1826) and the term had previously been used to describe the white English community as far back as 1806.

The leader of the Anglo-Indian Deputation to the Secretary of State for India, Dr Wallace, declared that the adoption of the term "Anglo-Indian" was both politically and culturally significant to distance the community both from the native Indian communities and from racial terminologies such as "Eurasian":

Britishers we are and Britishers we ever must and shall be. Once we relinquish this name (Anglo-Indians) and permit ourselves to be styled 'Eurasians' or 'Statutory natives of India' we become estranged from our proud heritage as Britishers (Wallace 1930).

The development of the post-1911 Anglo-Indian community has been given most attention by historians, anthropologists and social scientists dealing with the conditions leading to the great Anglo-Indian exodus from Indian to Britain, Canada and Australia. The continuing emphasis on the boundaries of community formation based on political loyalty meant that the community itself was caught on the horns of a cultural dilemma as it emphasised the development of a unique cultural identity attached to India while, simultaneously, presenting itself as part of a greater "domiciled" British constituency. Furthermore, not all Anglo-Indians believed in the anglophilic constituency to which people of mixed-race were now supposed to adhere with prominent voices of dissent coming from different parts of the community who opposed "the shrill screaming" of those who "encourage Anglophilic communalism" (Dover 1937) and the continuing use of the term "East Indian" by some community leaders as "the most applicable and proper designation" to describe the community (Stark 1934). Nevertheless, by the twentieth century, and more poignantly after the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, the claim that Europeans and those of mixed-race in India were, for all intents and purposes, belonging to the same "domiciled community" brought the Eurasian communities full-circle to the pre-colonial situation. What could be termed a "domiciled imaginary" relied on the belief that, according to Henry Gidney, both communities were closely connected by blood and other ties and between whom, in pre-Reform days, "very few differences existed

and were practised"(Gidney 1934). The realities of Indianization and the replacement of European and Eurasian personnel in military and civil services were thought to bond this "domiciled" community together against the Indian communities who were now brought more visibly into the public sphere as Independence meant changing times for all people of European origin. Yet, Gidney's comments are overstated. 'Domiciled Europeans', as they came to be known, distanced themselves from the terminology of "Anglo-Indian" once people of mixed-race became known by this appellation, and thus it became clear that there existed a fundamental racial boundary between the two communities which remained pronounced in the everyday social discriminatory attitudes practiced by Europeans towards Eurasians in the twentieth century. Although a new invented political category for the purposes of communal representation saw Europeans and Eurasians in the same Christian fold, their material lives and relationship to the larger structures of colonial bureaucracy were generally very different indeed (Moore 1986).

The anglicisation of the Eurasian communities in India and the subsequent development of the Anglo-Indian community as an imaginary adjunct of the European community were historical realities that can hardly be denied. However, the erasure of continental European difference in the articulation of hybrid identity is as much a reality. Although the contemporary Anglo-Indian communities in India are patriotically Indian and have taken a role as a constitutional Indian ethnic minority, the role of Eurasian Indians of Portuguese and other European origin remains obscure and ambiguous. Goans, for example, are not considered Anglo-Indian by community leaders and the growing population of Eurasian Indians who have European mothers and Indian fathers are considered ineligible for mixed-race political affiliation by a colonial definition of hybridity based only on the concept of European patrilineality. The point is that the denial of the heterogeneous and diverse origins of the Anglo-Indian community can lead to an "ethnic essentialism" where Anglo-Indians are perceived to have fixed and immutable characteristics rooted in the colonial experience and that such characteristics can be too easily internalised.

Such an historical trope of a colonial category lost in the imperial wilderness can be located from around the beginning of the nineteenth century when commentators and historians began to construct the idea of the "tragedy" of the Eurasian condition. Its expression was manifested in the philanthropic practices of the Bengal Orphan

Society where the line demarcating social control and social support was not always clearly defined, and where the emerging colonial state saw the management of the growing numbers of British Eurasian children as an intrinsic part of the governing process. The "Eurasian problem", as it quite clearly became for social philanthropists, was as much a problem of the challenge that hybridity posed to the racial categories of British rule than it was about the protection of Eurasian children of British fathers who had died in East India Company battles. The denial of Indian maternal care, and influence, was another vignette of this "problem" as Anglo-Indian children were considered too British to be in Indian care and too Indian to be sent to England for an education. As such, they were re-classified in the language of philanthropic social morality as "illegitimate" or as "orphans", terms that continue to haphazardly permeate the contemporary historiography of the Anglo-Indians, and were reconfigured as a potential threat to the British state. Early British commentators from Viscount Valentia to Bishop Heber confirm the growing paranoia that mixed-race identity posed to British conceptions of themselves and of the racial boundaries that were needed to keep colonial power intact. Furthermore, the only future avenue open for Anglo-Indians was to prove that they were not a threat to British power through somewhat over-compensated displays of loyalty and mimicry. As such, the idea of the "Eurasian problem" became an issue caught up in the mechanics of the consolidation of colonial rule.

The denial of historical complexity and the portrayal instead of a narrative trope of the Anglo-Indian as an essentialist ethnic type has also found currency in the texts of social science and quasi-anthropology. Lee's 1912 thesis, for example, stimulated a fascination with Anglo-Indians as a cultural problem (Lee 1912) that has led to a plethora of studies that assume, rather wrongly, that the Anglo-Indian community is a colonial product of the British and Indian experiences and the "problem" is that they do not fit into either community. The community is, therefore, represented as caught between two cultures like the shaded area in a Venn diagram (Dutt 1990). Such stereotypes tend to be propagated by the intellectual idea that the Anglo-Indian, pathologised as a cultural type, is "marginal" to both the Indian and British senses of identity (Gist 1967; Grimshaw 1958; Hurwitz 1955; Wright 1970) and is an idea that refuses to acknowledge hybridity beyond the simple dimensions of an uncontested colonial dualism (Stoler 1989). This has also led to other community-based

sociological studies that perceive the Anglo-Indian community in locations as diverse as Calcutta and Jaipur as possessing similar characteristics of maladjustment and social alienation due to their marginalisation from the mainstream culture (Peacock 1977; Sen 1983). Although such depictions may well have material foundations, there remains a tendency to judge people of mixed-race against a normative British or Indian benchmark and to see all members of the community as possessing identical and innate characteristics of ethnicity.

Furthermore, the concept of an eternal "ethnic identity" amongst Anglo-Indians in both India and the AI diaspora, as well as the commitment to presentist historical nomenclature to reflect the experiences of all Indian people of European origin in all times and all places, has obscured the pursuit of postcolonial ventures to contextualise the mixed-race experience in India as a political and cultural construction that is subject to constant change. The Anglo-Indian experience, like other ethnic experiences, is constructed "historically, culturally, politically", in Hall's words (Hall 1996), as a specific temporal moment reflected by specific circumstances and techniques of description and nomenclature. Yet, the pursuit of re-reading Anglo-Indian history in light of the imperial experience has not often lead to a re-reading of the language used to reflect such a history but we are left, rather, with a static Anglo-Indian monolith in a sea of changing social and cultural contexts. It is in this sense that mixed-race communities have not been viewed as "ideological entities, made and changed in struggle" or as "discursive formations, signalling a language through which differences are accorded social significance" (Bulmer and Solomos 1998), as have other racial and ethnic groups in an increasingly more sophisticated canon. Instead, static stereotypes of Anglo-Indians have been produced, reproduced and internalised without reference to the diversity and differences that an attention to the language of hybridity would illuminate.

This seems surprising considering that innovative research on the community has more often been focused on the formation of the community as a specific historical construction in a specific set of circumstances. Both Goodrich and Hawes, with very different intentions in mind, articulated the formation of a mixed-race community as a response to the consolidation of British colonialism in the late eighteenth century and stressed the invented and contested nature of mixed-race affiliation (Goodrich 1952; Hawes 1996). This also seems surprising in light of the greater emphasis placed by

south Asian historians of race generally on the contingent nature of the language used to describe and categorise ethnic groups (Ballhatchett 1995). In fact, an intrinsic part of the pursuit to de-essentialise ethnic identities has been to relocate ethnicity itself as the product of certain cultural and political constructions of which a changing linguistic description is an index.

It is in this sense that such representations as those of "Cotton Mary" miss the point and become enmeshed in the historical myths that continue to portray Anglo-Indians, as a term to describe those of mixed-race, as an adjunct of the British domiciled community, when this may be only one narrative of a much larger and more complex historical landscape. Yet, the refusal of a pre-British past and the presentation of Raj-style stereotypes are sadly familiar to all Anglo-Indians, especially those still battling discrimination in India based on their perceived colonial baggage. Such stereotypes demean the diverse and complex components of the Eurasian experience and render the community to nothing more than a pathetic and lost colonial hang-over. Such stereotypes mean that the enormously positive contributions of Anglo-Indians to Indian public life (Anthony 1969) are belittled and ignored and the continuing strength of the Anglo-Indian diaspora deemed an anomaly of the colonial experience. Only by reintroducing the historical diversity of the Anglo-Indian experience, by illuminating both the British and non-British components of that history, and by excavating the changing language by which the community has been symbolised, do we have the ammunition to reveal such characterisations as historical myths.

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