



EDITORIAL

Robyn Andrews and Brent Howitt Otto

We are pleased to introduce this special issue of the journal which comprises a collection of writings addressing a new work of historical fiction, *The Tainted* (2020) by Cauvery Madhavan, which spans colonial and post-colonial India and the diaspora in Ireland through ties of kinship across generations. The back cover description portrays the story as a quest for belonging for its mixed race protagonists and their community in general: “Everyone in Nandagiri knows their place and the part they were born to play – with one exception. The local Anglo-Indians, tainted by their mixed blood, belong...nowhere”. This provocative starting point makes it intriguing to explore this new novel from several academic angles.

The collection of articles in this issue begins with a transcription of an interview with Madhavan. She was interviewed by Rochelle Almeida, a scholar of English literature and Anglo-Indian studies, who wrote *Britain’s Anglo-Indians: The Invisibility of Assimilation* (2017). The interview was part of a *Meet the Author* event organized by the Pequot Library in Southport, Connecticut, USA, on July 11, 2020. Almeida provided the transcript which was only tidied up slightly for textual publication. We are grateful for permission to publish this interview for the insights it offers on Madhavan’s background thinking and research, her own account of what she was attempting to accomplish in this novel, as well as her writing process.

The next piece in this collection is Merin Simi Raj and Avishek Parui’s “‘they shared those bits of history’: Reading *The Tainted* as a transnational memory-narrative’. Merin Simi Raj and Avishek Parui have initiated India’s first (and currently, only) Centre for Memory Studies at IIT Madras, which is associated with a network of other such

centers globally. Their reading of Madhavan's work of historical fiction demonstrates what fresh insight a memory studies lens can bring to such a novel that links two distinct periods in time through intergenerational and international family interactions. Through their critical reading they examine the representations of mixed identities, including Anglo-Indian and Anglo-Irish, in terms of nation, race, religion, and gender in colonial and the postcolonial times as set by the book. The framework of memory studies, means the article engages academically with the content of the book, particularly with cultural memory.

The final contribution to this issue is a review essay by Anglo-Indian author Keith Butler. While praising many of the literary qualities of the book, he queries Madhavan's seemingly unabashed resurrection of a trope derived of early 20th century Racial Science that characterised Anglo-Indian women, because of their 'tainted blood', as genetically formatted half-caste vamps. For him Madhavan's construction of Anglo-Indian female characters similarly pivots around their physical allure and dangerous charm. Paying close attention to Madhavan's characterisations and citing relevant scholars Butler contends that the author's depiction of Anglo-Indian women (and men) runs the risk of reinscribing this colonial stereotype for modern readers.

Robyn Andrews holds a Ph.D. in social anthropology from Massey University in New Zealand, where she is a senior lecturer in anthropology. Her Ph.D. thesis was on the *Anglo-Indian Community (2005)*, about which she continues to research and write extensively in collaboration with other Anglo-Indian Studies scholars in various disciplines. She has most recently co-edited: *Anglo-Indian Identity: Past and Present, in India and the Diaspora* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) and *Beyond the Metros: Anglo-Indians in India's smaller towns and cities* (Primus, 2021). Contactable via R.Andrews@massey.ac.nz

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