Gautam Chakravarty explores representations of the event which has become known in the British imagination as the ‘Indian Mutiny’ of 1857 in British popular fiction and historiography. Drawing on a wide range of primary sources including diaries, autobiographies and state papers, Chakravarty shows how narratives of the rebellion were inflected by the concerns of colonial policy and by the demands of imperial self-image. He goes on to discuss the wider context of British involvement in India from 1765 to the 1940s, and engages with constitutional debates, administrative measures and the early nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian novel. Chakravarty approaches the Mutiny from the perspectives of postcolonial theory as well as from historical and literary perspectives to show the extent to which the insurrection took hold of the popular imagination in both Britain and India. The book has a broad interdisciplinary appeal and will be of interest to scholars of English literature, British imperial history, modern Indian history and cultural studies.

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Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, social organisation, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought – in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as ‘background’, feminist, Foucauldian and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field.

This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work which intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

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Acknowledgements


I should also thank G. K. Das of the University of Delhi, who provided the first nudge into an area that took clearer shape as I worked with my supervisors, John Lennard of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and Nigel Leask of Queen’s College, Cambridge. I am especially grateful to John for closely reading the chapters at several stages, and for pointing out errors of style and substance. Chris Bayly of St. Catharine’s College read parts of the work while it was still a thesis, and I have profited as much from his fine books as from his conversation, his knowledge of modern Indian history, and his familiarity with sources. Tim Cribb, Basudev Chatterjee, Douglas Peers, Tom Metcalf, Michael Fisher, and my Ph.D. examiner, Bart Moore-Gilbert, read parts of the book at later stages, and their comments and insights were most useful. I must also thank the two anonymous readers for encouragement and suggestions, and the editors and staff at Cambridge University Press for their patience.

Neil, Jaydeep, Anne, Maria, Desmond, Paul, Naoko, Isabel, Suman, Cheng, Gordon, and Mrs. Baxter will know why their names are here, as will Charles and his wife at the Devonshire Arms. My parents were as ever a source of quiet support and inspiration, and Nikita, who went over this many times with her careful eye, is now waiting to see the book in print.

GAUTAM CHAKRAVARTY
New Delhi
2003
Glossary

baboo/babu: a Hindu gentleman; but a disparaging Anglo-Indian term for English-educated Indians, especially Bengali clerks
banjara: a nomadic tribe of artisans, peddlers and performers
bahadur: lit., brave
begum: a lady of rank, or wife
Benares: the British spelling for Banaras or Varanasi
bhang: a variety of cannabis
bibi: Persian-Urdu term for lady; but Anglo-Indian argot for the Indian wife or mistress of a British male in India
budmashees or, budmash: a criminal or one with a criminal record
Camdeo or, Kamadeva: the god of love in Hindu mythology
Collector: the chief administrator of a district under British rule
Company Bahadur: popular Indian name for the East India Company
dacaiti/dacoity/dacoitee: armed robbery by a gang of five or more men
Delhi Ridge: a wooded spur north of the city wall; the British were camped on the Ridge during the siege of Delhi
diwanji: here, the post of minister, or steward; but also, council chamber and reception hall; also, the collected works of a poet
durbar: the royal or imperial court
fakir: a Muslim mendicant
farman/firman: an order, edict, royal charter
Feringhee/Firangi: a Hindustani term for Europeans
Futtehghur: the British spelling for Fatehpur
ghat: landing stage, wharf or riverbank
gossain: a Hindu mendicant order; also a Brahmin sub-caste
Governor-General: the chief administrator of the East India Company’s Indian territories; renamed Viceroy after the Crown takeover in 1858
griffin: the Anglo-Indian argot for a newly arrived British subaltern in India
Glossary

haveli: an Indian-style house, usually single-storeyed with rooms arranged around a central courtyard

Hindostanis/Hindustanis: the people of Hindustan, including Hindus and Muslims

jehad/jihad: the religious duty to defend and proselytise Islam

Jahanpanah: lit., ‘shelter of the world’: a honorific for the Mughal Emperor

khansaman: lit., the keeper of stores: chief steward or butler

khidmatgar: a waiter; male domestic servant under the khansaman (q.v.)

khufia: of or pertaining to secret or criminal intelligence; an intelligence agent or police informer

Lal Quila: lit., ‘the red fortress’: the popular name for the red sandstone Mughal city-palace at Delhi

Mahatma: ‘great soul’: the honorific of M. K. Gandhi

Maharatta: another spelling for Maratha

memsahib: an Indian word for a white woman

moffusil: the district and other provincial towns as distinct from the presidency towns

mujahid: an Islamic religious warrior

munshi: a clerk or administrative officer

Mullah/Maulavi/Maulvi: Islamic clergyman

nabob: the Anglo-Indian argot for an East India Company clerk, official or private trader who had made a fortune in India

nawab: the pl. of Naib or deputy; the title of provincial governors in the late Mughal administration, though under British rule it came sometimes to mean independent rulers

newab wazir/nawab wazir: the governor and minister of finance, or principal minister

Oude/Oudh: the British spelling for Awadh

Plassey: the British spelling for Palasi or Palashi, where the East India Company defeated the Nawab of Bengal in 1757

peshwa/peishwa: the chief minister of the Maratha kingdom; later the ruler of an independent Maratha state.

pindari: the roving bands of plunderers in central and western India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The pindaris were unemployed soldiers and mercenaries hired by Indian states against each other.

Raj: the term for the British government of India after 1858

Resident: the British agent stationed in an Indian court, and the instrument of ‘indirect rule’
Glossary

Rohilcund: British spelling for Rohilkhand, a region near Delhi
sadar adalat: the chief civil court of a province or presidency
sarai: inn
sati: the Hindu practice of cremating widows with their dead husbands; also, a virtuous wife
sawar/sowar: a cavalryman
seth: Hindu banker or merchant
sipahi or sepoy: a trooper, usually an infantryman
sharif: pl. of ashraf or the Mughal service class; the culture of this class
swadeshi: lit., produced in one’s own country; a nationalist agitation that began in 1905, calling for the boycott of British imports to India
subah: a province; political or administrative subdivision of the Mughal empire
subedar: sergeant major, or the senior most Indian officer in the army; also the governor of a subah (q.v.) in the Mughal administration
talukdar: a superior zamindar (q.v.) with proprietary rights in land who collected rent on behalf of the government from other landlords; after the rebellion, the talukdars of Awadh were given proprietary rights over the land whose rent they had earlier collected
thag/thug: a fraudster or highway robber; see thagi (q.v.)
thagi: a form of highway robbery in which victims were ritually murdered. Unlike dacoits (q.v.), thags usually disguised themselves as travellers to befriend the genuine travellers whom they robbed and murdered on the way; also known as phanisgar, or strangler
tulwar: sword
vaishya: an intermediate Hindu trading caste
wahabi: a follower of Abu Wāḥāb, the eighteenth-century Arab reformer
zamindar: under British rule, a holder of property rights in land who collected rent from tenants and paid revenue to the government
zenana: the women’s quarter in a Muslim household