# Colonial representations of gender, race, and class in John Masters' novels.

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For all women, all survivors.

**Abstract**

This thesis examines the patterns within popular British literature of stereotypical racial and gendered representations in the colonial setting of British India. It will focus upon John Masters' collection of novels, which centre around the British Savage family that have resided in India for generations, to illustrate colonial representations of gender, race and class. These novels, *Coromandel!, The Deceivers, Nightrunners of Bengal,* and *Bhowani Junction,* were chosen to be analysed as their author is an upper-middle class British male, who though was born and resided primarily in India, received a British public-school education and went on to pursue a successful military career. Not only does Masters' background explain some of the gendered representations found within his novel, but it also highlights how class was pivotal in strengthening these representations. After India's independence from Britain in 1947, Masters moved to the United States where he wrote his successful saga set in British India, with two of the novels being adapted to Hollywood films. By highlighting the binary representations of gender, race, and class within these far-reaching novels, Masters provides an insight into the everyman's intimate life, where the politics of the states are played out and emphasised. The novels depict a highly racist and sexist environment within British India, whereby people of colour and women are perceived as inferior and therefore deserving of abuse. Although Masters at times seems sympathetic to Indian characters, he never reserves the same treatment for women. Whilst many in the field have looked at the racist elements of colonial literature, there is a gap in the representations of women and the sexual violence they faced during this time, and after. Furthermore, Masters novels definitely hint at an imperialistic longing, and also the 'White Man's burden' of civilising savages. Through a close reading analysis of the literature, we are able to see how the language used helped further the ideas of a stereotypical Indian, Briton, man, and woman, emphasising a male Eurocentric superiority, and ultimately a justification for the British empire's rule.

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## Chronology

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| **1600** | British Royal Charter forms the East India Company, beginning the process that will lead to the subjugation of India under British rule. |
| **1613-14** | British East India Company sets up a factory in Masulipatnam and a trading post at Surat under William Hawkins. Sir Thomas Roe presents his credentials as ambassador of King James I to the Mughal Emperor Jehangir. |
| **1615-18** | Mughals grant Britain the right to trade and establish factories. |
| **1700** | India, under Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, accounts for 27 per cent of the world economy. |
| **1702** | Thomas Pitt, Governor of Madras, acquires the Pitt Diamond, later sold to the Regent of France, the Duc d'Orleans, for £135,000. |
| **1739** | Sacking of Delhi by the Persian Nadir Shah and the loot of all its treasures. |
| **1751** | Robert Clive (1725-74), aged twenty-six, seizes Arcot in modern-day Tamil Nadu as French and British fight for control of South India. |
| **1757** | British under Clive defeat Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula to become rulers of Bengal, the richest province of India. |
| **1765** | Weakened Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II issues a *diwani* that replaces his own revenue officials in the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa with the East India Company's. |
| **1767** | First Anglo-Mysore War begins, in which Hyder Ali of Mysore defeats the combined armies of the East India Company, the Marathas and the Nizam of Hyderabad. |
| **1771** | Marathas recapture Delhi. |
| | Birth of Rammohan Roy (d. 1833). British establish their capital in Calcutta. |
| **1773** | British East India Company obtains monopoly on the production and sale of opium in Bengal. Lord North's Regulating Act passed in Parliament. Warren Hastings appointed as first Governor-General of India. |
| **1781** | Hyder Ali's son, Tipu Sultan, defeats British forces. |
| **1784** | Pitt the Younger passes the India Act to bring the East India Company under Parliament's control. Judge and linguist Sir William Jones founds Calcutta's Royal Asiatic Society. |
| **1787-95** | British Parliament impeaches Warren Hastings, Governor-General of Bengal (1774-85), for misconduct. |
| **1793** | British under Lord Cornwallis introduce the 'permanent settlement' of the land revenue system. |
| **1799** | Tipu Sultan is killed in battle against 5,000 British soldiers who storm and raze his capital, Srirangapatna (Seringapatam). |
| **1803** | Second Anglo-Maratha War results in British capture of Delhi and control of large parts of India. |

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| **1806** | Vellore mutiny ruthlessly suppressed. |
| **1825** | First massive migration of Indian workers from Madras to Reunion and Mauritius. |
| **1828** | Rammohan Roy founds Adi Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta, first movement to initiate socio-religious reform. Influenced by Islam and Christianity, he denounces polytheism, idol worship and more. |
| **1835** | Macaulay's *Minute* furthers Western education in India. English is made official government and court language. |
| **1835** | Mauritius receives 19,000 migrant indentured labourers from India. Workers continued to be shipped to Mauritius till 1922. |
| **1837** | Kali-worshipping thugs suppressed by the British. |
| **1839** | Preacher William Howitt attacks British rule in India. |
| **1843** | British conquer Sindh (present-day Pakistan). British promulgate 'doctrine of lapse', under which a state is taken over by the British whenever a ruler dies without an heir. |
| **1853** | First railway built between Bombay and Thane. |
| **1857** | First major Indian revolt, called the Sepoy Mutiny or Great Indian Mutiny by the British, ends in a few months with the fall of Delhi and Lucknow. |
| **1858** | Queen Victoria's Proclamation of taking over in the name of the Crown the governance of India from the East India Company. Civil service jobs in India are opened to Indians. |
| **1858** | India completes first 200 miles of railway track. |
| **1860** | SS *Truro* and SS *Belvedere* dock in Durban, South Africa, carrying first indentured servants (from Madras and Calcutta) to work in sugar plantations. |
| **1861** | Rabindranath Tagore is born (d. 1941). |
| **1863** | Swami Vivekananda is born (d. 1902). |
| **1866** | At least a million and a half Indians die in the Orissa Famine. |
| **1869-1948** | Lifetime of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Indian nationalist and political activist who develops the strategy of non-violent disobedience that forces Britain to grant independence to India (1947). |
| **1872** | First British census conducted in India. |
| **1876** | Queen Victoria (1819-1901) is proclaimed Empress of India (1876-1901). Major famine of 1876-77 mishandled by Viceroy Lord Lytton. |
| **1879** | The *Leonidas*, first emigrant ship to Fiji, adds 498 Indian indentured labourers to the nearly 340,000 already working in other British Empire colonies. |
| **1885** | A group of middle-class intellectuals in India, some of them British, establish the Indian National Congress to be a voice of Indian opinion to the British government. |
| **1889** | Jawaharlal Nehru is born (d. 1964). |

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| **1891** | B. R. Ambedkar is born (d. 1956). |
| **1893** | Swami Vivekananda represents Hinduism at Chicago's Parliament of the World's Religions, and achieves great success with his stirring addresses. |
| **1896** | Nationalist leader and Marathi scholar Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) initiates Ganesha Visarjan and Shivaji festivals to fan Indian nationalism. He is the first to demand 'purna swaraj' or complete independence from Britain. |
| **1897** | Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrated amid yet another famine in British India. |
| **1900** | India's tea exports to Britain reach £137 million. |
| **1901** | Herbert Risley conducts first ethnographic census of India. |
| **1903** | Lord Curzon's grand Delhi Durbar. |
| **1905** | Partition of Bengal rouses strong opposition. Swadeshi movement and boycott of British goods initiated. Lord Curzon, prominent British viceroy of India, resigns. |
| **1906** | The Muslim League political party is formed in India at British instigation. |
| **1909** | Minto-Morley Reforms announced. |
| **1911** | Final imperial durbar in Delhi; India's capital changed from Calcutta to Delhi. Cancellation of Partition of Bengal. |
| **1913** | Rabindranath Tagore wins Nobel Prize in Literature. |
| **1914** | Indian troops rushed to France and Mesopotamia to fight in World War I. |
| **1915** | Mahatma Gandhi returns to India from South Africa. |
| **1916** | *Komagata Maru* incident: Canadian government excludes Indian citizens from immigration. Lucknow Pact between Congress and Muslim League. |
| **1917** | Last Indian indentured labourers are brought to British colonies of Fiji and Trinidad. |
| **1918** | Spanish Influenza epidemic kills 12.5million in India, 21.6 million world wide. |
| **1918** | World War I ends. |
| **1919** | Jallianwala Bagh massacre. General Dyer orders Gurkha troops to shoot unarmed demonstrators in Amritsar, killing at least 379. Massacre convinces Gandhi that India must demand full independence from oppressive British rule. Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms promulgated. Rowlatt Acts passed. |
| **1920** | Gandhi formulates the *satyagraha* strategy of non-cooperation and non-violence. Khilafat movement launched. |
| **1922** | Non-cooperation movement called off by Mahatma Gandhi after Chauri Chaura violence. |
| **1927 & 1934** | Indians permitted to sit as jurors and court magistrates. |
| **1930** | Jawaharlal Nehru becomes president of the Congress party. Purna Swaraj Resolution passed in Lahore. Will Durant arrives in India and is shocked by what he discovers of British rule. Mahatma Gandhi conducts the Salt March. |

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| **1935** | Government of India Act. |
| **1937** | Provincial elections in eleven provinces; Congress wins eight. |
| **1939** | World War II breaks out. Resignation of Congress ministries in protest against noy being consulted by viceroy before declaration of war by India. |
| **1940** | Lahore Resolution of Muslim League calls for the creation of Pakistan. |
| **1942** | Cripps Mission. Quit India movement. Congress leaders jailed. Establishment of Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauj) by Subhas Chandra Bose to fight the British. |
| **1945** | Congress leaders released. Simla Conference under Lord Wavell. |
| **1946** | Royal Indian Navy Mutiny. Elections nationwide; Muslim League wins majority of Muslim seats. Cabinet Mission. Interim government formed under Jawaharlal Nehru. Jinnah calls Direct Action Day. Violence erupts in Calcutta. |
| **1947** | India gains independence on 15 August. Partition of the country amid mass killings and displacement. Britain exits India.[1] |

**Derived from Tharoor's 'Inglorious Empire'**

[1] S. Tharoor, 2016

## Preface

## A Woman in Me

Throughout my life one thing has been made abundantly clear to me. That I am first and foremost a woman. The supposed roles that are assigned to gender via British sociedty have influenced and defined my life. I was born in South London, England, with two older sisters, and was raised by my mother, my mother's sister, my grandmother, and my partially absent, self-defined "metrosexual" father, who also happened to have five sisters. At age six, my younger sister was born, and I remember being excited to have my own live doll to dress up. However, my dreams were not realised as my younger sister was very adamant and resistant to anything feminine, so I was not allowed to dress her in the pinks and frills that I had planned. For the majority of her childhood, she was what we called "tomboy", but it felt more extreme than this. She tried to change her name to a more stereotypical male name, shaved her hair, and played an all-boys football team. Looking back at this situation sometimes fills me with regret, as I was not fully accepting of my sister's choice to be more masculine and explore those options, and neither was my family. These were my first instances of the defined differences between men and women. Before this, my ideas of gender stemmed from my mother and father. My dad originated from a strict catholic Italian household, where the gender roles were clearly stated. Men work, whilst women remain in the household and do all the domestic duties. This was evident in my own household, where the work my mum would undertake would either be housework or supporting my father's business. Eventually, this would change after my parent's divorce, as my mum took on both roles in our household.

At age eleven, I attended an all-girls secondary grammar school. In preparation for this education, I had to purchase an expensive school uniform that consisted of a kilt, blouse shirt, jumper, hockey skirt, hockey socks, hockey knickers, gym shorts, gym tracksuit bottoms, gym polo, and raincoat, all requiring an embroidered name label attached. Not only did this show

the class divide in secondary education, but also highlighted the differences in uniform and dress among gender. Although there was not a male uniform to compare to at my all-girls school, we did have a case that seemed unfair in relation to gender. One student reassigned their gender and was permitted to wear the gym tracksuit bottoms instead of the kilt as part of their everyday uniform. All other students however had to wear the kilt, and trousers were never an option. It did create controversy as the school was for all girls. There were many rules surrounding our uniform at school such as kilt length had to be three inches below the knee, with some teachers greeting students at the gates with a ruler. The reason behind this was never stated other than mandatory dress code, and the usual argument of distracting other students was less prominent in an all-girls school., but due to the religious nature of the school it was most likely due to modesty. When it came to sixth form, we were allowed the privilege of wearing our own clothes each day, but again with a strict set of rules alongside. No ripped jeans, no strappy tops, no shorts or skirt that were above the knee, and many more, all under the guise of a supposed female respectability. From a young age, my wardrobe choices were not only judged by my educators and superiors but were also determining factors. If we broke any of the above rules, we were sent home to change, ensuring a day of missed education. These are some early examples of strict dress codes assigned to gender that many in the British educational system would encounter.

In today's courtroom, when cases of sexual assault are heard, the victims clothing is called into question and is sometimes used in favour of the defendant's actions.[2] Growing up there were many comments on dress, and whether certain outfits constituted being "ladylike" or whether they were protecting my modesty. These comments came from teachers, parents, grandparents, family, friends, strangers, and most media. Speaking of the media, I was a child of the television

[2] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-46207304

generation. Watching television was a part of my daily routine, specifically the Disney channel and Nickelodeon, and many of the programmes I watched were rife with gendered representations. In 2024, *Quiet on Set; The Dark Side of Kids TV* was released, a documentary commenting on the toxic environment of working in Nickelodeon, and Disney by association. Not only had these production companies hidden sexual abuse of their child stars, but also purported an overt sexualisation of children and women in their shows. In doing this, they potentially created a generation that would be more accepting of sexual abuse, as they were exposed to explicit sexual behaviour subtly through their tv screen from a young age. Also, classic Disney movies such as *Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Mulan, Pocahontas, Alladin*, to name a few, are notorious for displaying stereotypical gender roles and can also be seen stressing racial stereotypes too. Similarly, as an avid reader, I was also introduced to strict gender roles through a variety of literature, both suggested through school, and through personal preference, from the likes of Jane Austen, George Orwell, Jane Eyre, the Bronte sisters, to Sarah J. Maas, Stephenie Meyer, and the now infamous for trans-exclusionary radical feminism, J. K. Rowling. Through, my female dominant family, my gendered education, and my obsession with media, I was taught how to be a lady and learnt what a woman should and should not do.

However, I was also taught that even if a woman was to do everything right in following these rules of gender, that the chances of being sexually assaulted was high. According to the current Rape Crisis in England and Wales, there is a one in four chance that women will have been raped or sexually assaulted since the age of sixteen, whereas for a man the risk is one in eighteen.[3] As a woman with three sisters I do not like these odds. Thus, I began my thesis journey, trying to understand how this statistic came to be, and if possible, find a solution.

[3] https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/

Whilst it may be impossible to understand why someone might commit such an act as it could be an inherent evil psyche, it is possible to understand how such behaviours could become so accepted in society as to happen on such a large scale. As explained in the above-mentioned court case, a woman is usually blamed for these crimes happening to her, based off her dress, or inability to protect herself. Personally, I was influenced by *13 Reasons Why*, Jay Asher's 2007 novel, that depicts a young girl who commits suicide due to being raped. The novel, which was adapted into a successful Netflix series depicted the realities of rape culture in today's society. Rape culture today is a hot topic. Supreme Court Judges, such as Brett Kavanaugh, and President Donald Trump being accused of sexual assault, yet still going on to be elected. American college boys being accused with evidence but being given minimum, if any sentence. Universities not treating rape accusations seriously or involving police. Singers, such as Kesha, being trapped in contracts by their rapists. Film director moguls, with the likes of Harvey Weinstein being accused by thousands. The large-scale international trafficking paedophile grooming gangs, with connections with Jeffrey Epstein and Prince Andrew. All of these are examples of a rape culture, and all are current affairs. With it being a constant topic in the news and the media, one has to question whether more people are coming forward to report these sexually violent crimes or it is happening more, or scary to think about; both. One thing that is clear, is that it is widespread and constant. I did not want to believe that every society had this same bleak issue, so I began researching places without a 'rape culture' to see if there was an exemplary society. Among my research, a key theme kept arising and that was in its political, social and economic structure. Societies that were perceived or claimed to have no rape culture were those that were significantly egalitarian or matriarchal. Through this deductive reasoning, I began to associate patriarchal structures with a lack of respect for women, and thereby an environment where rape cultures could flourish. In particular, I intend to look back at the British Empire, one of the most prominent patriarchal societies of all time.

The importance of this study is demonstrated, as in both India and the UK today, the rate of sexual assault and rape on women is exponentially high. Whilst there are many reasons as to why this may be the case, what is evident within this discourse is that women are predominantly the victims of these crimes, whilst men are the perpetrators. Therefore, by looking at representations of gender roles we can see if 'victim' is one of the roles enforced on women, and how class and race come into this complex interplay. As the British Empire reached almost all continents, this thesis can be understood internationally as the World Health Organisation also reported that, "1 in 3 women globally experience violence"[4]. India, in this sense, is used as a case study of how attitudes originating from the British Empire had an effect on their colony states, specifically in terms of gender. As a woman myself coming from a female dominated family, I fear for women everywhere that will more than likely experience gender-based violence at some point in their lives. According to the United Nations "gender-based violence can include sexual, physical, mental and economic harm inflicted in public or in private. It also includes threats of violence, coercion and manipulation. This can take many forms such as intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation and so-called 'honour crimes'". Scarily, these crimes can take place both in and out of the home, by someone you know or by a stranger. The common trend is that an overwhelming percentage of perpetrators are men. The United Nations also deemed it important to note that "when people flee their homes, they are often at greater risk of physical, sexual and psychological violence, such as rape, sexual abuse, trafficking and forced prostitution."[5] Through colonisation, we know that many people become displaced thereby meaning that colonised people would be put at greater risk of gender violence. I intend to argue

[4] https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence
[5] http://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/protection/gender-based-violence

that the colonial legacy of Britain, were societies that were left in states worse than they started, especially in relation to gendered violence.

## Introduction

### A Woman in British India

At the British Empire's peak in the early twentieth century, Britain was responsible for over 400 million people where "at its most extensive, the British Empire comprised 57 colonies, dominions, territories or protectorates from Australia, Canada and India to Fiji, Western Samoa and Tonga. From London, the British ruled about 20 percent of world's population and governed nearly 25 percent of the world's land mass, according to calculations by British researcher Stephen Luscombe."[6] The global reach of the empire ensured that British influence extended beyond its own constructed borders and into the cultural, political, and ideological foundations of both coloniser and colonised. Colonialism fundamentally reshaped ideologies, religion, and social attitudes. Nowhere was this more evident than in British India – often regarded as the "jewel in the crown" of the empire. Yet, it cannot be ignored that the British enterprise in India had a lasting impact on the British imagination as well for

> India was the greatest, the most durable, and profitable of all British colonial possessions. From the time the first British expedition arrived there in 1608, until the last British Viceroy departed in 1947, India acquired an increasingly massive and influential role in British life, in commerce and trade, in industry, politics, ideology, war and, by the middle of the eighteenth century, in culture and the life of the imagination.[7]

Through this idea of India's resourcefulness for Britain, we can see, as Shashi Tharoor goes on to depict, that India was a civilisation advance in architecture, science, and commerce. Yet,

[6] https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/08/the-sad-end-of-the-british-empire-110362/#:~:text=At%20its%20most%20extensive%2C%20the,Fiji%2C%20Western%20Samoa%20and%20Tonga.
[7] Said in Kipling, 2000, p.8

over time this image was inverted and recast through a colonial lens that portrayed India as regressive, immoral, and in need of Western intervention.

Prior to the formal creation of the British Empire in 1857, the East India Company, a trading organisation managed in London, took on an early role of imperialism from 1600, focusing on commerce. From the nineteenth century, however, there was a change in attitude. Colonial expansion, deriving from the East India Company, was no longer used purely for commercial reasons. The new premise consisted of a "civilising mission", bringing Christianity to what prominent western figures considered "godless savages".[8] Tharoor depicts this by stating

> Nearly every kind of manufacture or product known to the civilised world – nearly every kind of creation of man's brain and hand, existing anywhere, and prized either for its utility or beauty – had long been produced in India. India was a far greater industrial and manufacturing nation than any in Europe or any other in Asia. Her textiles goods – the fine products of her loom, in cotton, wool, linen, and silk – were famous over the civilised world; so were her exquisite jewellery and her precious stones cut in every lovely form; so were her pottery, porcelain, ceramics of every kind, quality, colour, and beautiful shape; so were her fine works in metal – iron, steel, silver, and gold.
>
> She had great architecture – equal in beauty to any in the world. She had great engineering works. She had great merchants, great businessmen, great bankers, and financiers. Not only was she the greatest shipbuilding nation, but she had great commerce and trade by land and sea which extended to all known civilised countries. Such was the India which the British found when they came. [9]

The transformation of Britain's representation of India from a high performing civilisation to a country in need of moral saving was employed through not only military and economic manipulation, but also through a set of analytic strategies and principles. These strategies, such as universalism, binary oppositions, and imperial benevolence, allowed the British Empire to rationalise domination whilst maintaining the moral high ground. Through universalism, the empire believed that western values, especially concerning race, gender, and class, were universally applicable. Through binary oppositions, the empire was able to divide the world into neat categories, including "West vs. East", "male vs. female", and "civilised vs. savage".

[8] Crofton, 2011, p.102
[9] Tharoor, 2017, p.2

And finally, through imperial benevolence, the empire enacted harsh and violent acts and policies under the guise of moral responsibility and uplift. These principles were not only confined to policy, but were embedded in the very narratives that sustained empire, especially in colonial literature. Furthermore, these principles can also be found within Western feminism, where the "dominant 'representations' of Western feminism is its conflation with imperialism in the eyes of particular third world women."[10] Chandra Mohanty critiques such representations for their complicity in imperialism, warning that dominant feminist discourses often position, in this case, Indian women, as helpless victims in need of western salvation. In doing this, the framing erases local agency and reinforces colonial power structures. The above critique is vital throughout my thesis, when analysing John Masters' novels, as they are heavily rooted in a British imperial worldview, steeped in gendered and racialised hierarchies.

Civilising people was one excuse, but also to promote capitalism, and thereby prevent communism. By encouraging capitalism, you encourage competitiveness, and the value of money and success. At the time of this promotion, women were also considered property, especially in terms or marriage, and could be used to denote a man's success. With this in mind, when Britain was expanding its empire, it conquered not only land and people of colour, but also women. In turn, this led to a vast discourse within colonial literature, representing many habits, rituals, and stereotypes that furthered the idea that men were superior, and women were thereby inferior, and considered as objects or spoils of war. The same tactic was also used on people of colour, and those of lower class and social standing.

. India, historically, has had numerous influences on all aspects of its creation, forming a land of multiple cultures and experiences. The state of India as we know it today was not formed until 1947, after the British colonisers divided India into a two-state nation (India and

[10] Mohanty, 1984, p.55

Pakistan), creating a hostile and dangerous environment. This was Britain's colonial legacy in India. The Partition of India was extremely violent, resulting in 100,000's of women being kidnapped and raped in the mass-migration that ensued. Deepa Narasimhan-Madhavan in their article *'Gender, Sexuality and Violence: Permissible violence against women during the partition of India and Pakistan'* claims that

> This day also marked the worst communal violence in India's history. The threats to family, religion, national status and security during the partition magnified the tension over ownership and honor in female sexuality, leading to terrible violence inflicted against the women of both societies. The sexual violence that occurred during the time of the partition of India and Pakistan illustrated an extreme manifestation of the societal view of women's sexuality, namely the need to control and own her. The violence also illustrated how women's sexuality symbolically represented power in the arrangement of gender relations in both the Hindu and Islamic communities in India.[11]

It has been 75 years since the British Raj dissolved, and India was physically divided in the partition. Since then, the news has been dominated by cases of sexual assault against women, gaining India the infamous title of the, "world's most dangerous country for women" which is mainly "due to the high risk of sexual violence".[12] Some of the accused perpetrators of these crimes are not only supported by the government and police, but are also members themselves (see the case of Vijay Tripathi in 2021 or Kuldeep Singh Sengar in 2017, but there are many more). When the system created to protect and serve a nation is doing the opposite, they have intrinsically created and enforced a rape culture. Victims are blamed, families are shamed, and justice is not served. To understand how this may have been created, we must look back at India's history to learn from and potentially, and hopefully, find a solution. However, the issue of rape and sexual violence is not a problem only found in India. It is found all over the world, including Britain. Is this the legacy of the British Empire?

[11] Narasimhan-Madhavan, 2006, p.396
[12] Goldsmith & Beresford, 2018

There were two major events signifying the start of the British Raj and finalising its end. Both these major events had one frighteningly similar aspect. Rape. In 1857, Indian Soldiers working under the instruction of British officials revolted against the latter's orders. There were many reasons for the growing unrest. A new change had come into effect meaning that production of bullets would now involve being coated in animal fat. As many of the Indian soldiers derived from Hinduism and Islam, this went against their religious beliefs. Additionally, there had been growing concerns about the enforced change of the soldier's appearance, primarily in the cutting of their hair, which again went against their religious beliefs. This ultimately caused a revolt against the British officials by the Indian soldiers. Not only was this event significant in British India, but was also a very popular topic in Britain especially in fiction among British writers. There was a fascination with the event, due to the sexually violent nature. There have been conflicting versions of the event, not only with why it happened, but also how and who it happened to. For starters, some refer to the event as a Mutiny, and others a Rebellion, and some Indian writers claim it as the First War of Independence. It was a great time for the British Empire to subtly push their agenda into the arts, for within these texts about the Indian Rebellion, there is a focus on Indian men raping white British women. This event began the official one-hundred-year rule of the British Raj, dramatically ending in the partition of India and Pakistan. Rape was again rampant in this significant event. Whilst this is a common tool in war and domination, it is interesting to see how sexual violence was used in literature to emphasise notions of 'us' and 'them'.

Under this idea, we see not only the differences between West and East, Colonised and Coloniser, but also in my focus of Male and Female. The British government's justification for colonisation derived from the notion that the West and all that entailed, was superior to the East. With this belief, during colonisation, the British Empire imposed their "supposed" superior way of life onto their colony states, including their ideas surrounding gender. Edward

Said, has been considered as one of the founders of post-colonial studies, and in his book 'Orientalism' he discusses the above notion and explains that the West created the concept of the 'orient' or 'other'. There is a long history of labelling anything that is not considered western civilisation as 'other' and therefore inferior, "this means, in effect, that the East becomes the repository or projection of those aspects of themselves which Westerners do not choose to acknowledge (cruelty, sensuality, decadence, laziness, and so on)".[13]

Race will absolutely play a pivotal role in almost every aspect of the thesis, alongside gender and class. As the period I am looking at covers the length of the British Raj, it is important to highlight how race was used not only to justify the rule, but also to justify the oppression of the natives. The idea of colonisation was based on many things, such as cultural evolutionism, social Darwinism, white supremacy, and the ideas of progress. Although colonisation in India started with the British East India Company for merchants and traders, once Britain understood the potential that India held in terms of economy and rule, the British Raj was formed. Will Durant, American historian and philosopher, in 1930 in *The Story of Civilisation* said

> The British conquest of India was the invasion and destruction of a high civilisation by a trading company [The British East India Company] utterly without scruple or principle, careless of art and greedy of gain, overrunning with fire and sword a country temporarily disordered and helpless, bribing and murdering, annexing and stealing, and beginning that career of illegal and "legal" plunder which has now [1930] gone on ruthlessly for one hundred and seventy three years.[14]

In order for this to happen

> The first dictum of Colonialism of course was that the colonies existed for the good of the mother country and the second, that the natives were an inferior people. However, the European Renaissance also swept in the spirit of humanism, which mandated dignity of man as man. Britain in particular prided itself on its spirit of justice and fair play. The dilemma therefore was how to reconcile the imperialistic motives with humanistic ideas. Kipling makes a sardonic interpretation of the dilemma by calling it ' the white man's burden'.[15]

[13] Barry, 2009, p.186
[14] Durant in Tharoor, 2017, p.1
[15] Roychowdhury, I. & Randhawa, A., 2015, p.99

Postcolonial theory tries to undermine the idea of a universal and therefore superior culture, as previously the notion asserted by the British Nation was that other countries were 'barbaric', 'savage', and 'uncivilised'. In order to change this notion, we must reclaim the colonized past that was ignored, and considered inferior at the time of conquest. Though religions may differ, and cultures oppose, the gender roles of men and women had to be universal. The upper-class white woman in particular, really appealed to this notion;

> 'The Indian Woman,' represented almost invariably as a helpless, degraded victim of religious custom and uncivilized cultural practices, signified a burden for whose sake many white women left Britain and devoted their lives in the empire.[16]

Invariably, however "the civilizing mission was deemed a way of emasculating Indian men by asserting that they were not capable of taking care of their own women"[17]. This is not the start of Indian History, although post-colonial theory states that "for centuries the European colonising power will have devalued the nation's past, seeing its precolonial era as a pre-civilised limbo, or even as a historical void."[18] However, before the British Empire, India was ruled by the Mogul Empire leaving Islamic laws and Islamic culture intermixed with the Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhism and other cultures. Chitnis and Wright claim that "Pre-colonial India was characterized by a pluralistic and fragmented cultural, religious, and political structure in which there was no monolithic Hindu, Muslim, or Christian authority.'"[19]There are many ancient Hindu monuments containing statues and paintings of explicit sexual positions, suggesting that there was a form of sexual freedom in this country. Additionally, there were numerous sacred texts that indicated the same thing, with some religious texts being dedicated to desire or

[16] Tschurenev, 2004
[17] Chitnis & Wright, 2007, p.1318
[18] Barry, 2009, p.186
[19] Chitnis & Wright, p.1317

‘Kama’. However, when the Mogul Empire came and started imposing Islamic inspired law, and then the British came and imposed Christian inspired laws, this freedom was hindered.

As India is an incredibly vast and different geographical space, where culture and custom changed depending on locality, the above varies quite widly, and this must be considered in all aspects. If you were to generalise India, you remove the individuality of choices, and instead made the east, the ‘other’, the Indian, a collective and ready to be treated as such, furthering imperialist ideas that demote individualism. We see similarities across fiction regarding colonial India of what qualities is typical of someone from the Orient, and this was not only represented in media but also education. There was a whole field of education dedicated to Orientalism and

> what are striking in these discourses are the rhetorical figures one keeps encountering in their descriptions of ‘the mysterious East’, as well as the stereotypes about ‘the African [or Indian or Irish or Jamaican or Chinese] mind’, the notions about bringing civilization to primitive or barbaric peoples, the disturbingly familiar ideas about flogging or death or extended punishment being required when ‘they’ misbehaved or became rebellious, because ‘they’ mainly understood force or violence best; ‘they’ were not like ‘us’, and for that reason deserved to be ruled.[20]

Thereby, the above could also suggest that education, specifically the field of Orientalism, influenced these racialised representations in literature, and became to be understood as fact, rather than a means of justifying a violent and unjust rule.

The measure of civility during colonisation, particularly by western feminists, was to assess the treatment of women and their oppression. "Kathleen Wilson and Catherine Hall [Historians] in particular, point out, a society's treatment of women was frequently held up as evidence of its degree of civilization, with ‘rude’ societies cruel to their womenfolk and ‘advanced’ ones respectful of them".[21] Although Britain colonised many countries, the reason

[20] Said, 1993, p.xiii
[21] Levine, 2004, p.6

I chose to look at India, was not only due to its lasting effect on the British imagination but also because India is deemed as, "the world's most dangerous country for sexual violence against women."[22] There are many reasons why the rate is increasing; more reporting, more people, more outrage. However, what stays the same within this discourse, is that women are predominantly the victims of these crimes, whilst men are usually the perpetrators. Therefore, by looking at representations of gender roles we can see if 'victim' is one of the roles enforced on women, and how class and race come into this complex interplay. I aim to argue that by enforcing division, such as those between white and black, male and female, or upper and lower class, colonisation was easier. Whilst this is not a new theory, especially in racial terms, I want to articulate that gender should be considered in the same way. By having a supposed weaker sex, colonisers have someone they need to protect, and by portraying the natives as a lower "barbaric" race, colonisers also created an image of a stereotypical villain, that women needed to be protected from, a theme we see throughout in the literary texts.

A few themes that are highlighted relate to the public-school and military school setting, and the information they taught in regard to assigned gender roles. For example, the importance of dress and uniform to denote race, gender, and class can be seen in both these environments, and also in literature. Despite the misleading title "public", these schools were not available to everyone. These schools were predominantly single-sex, similar to my own educational upbringing, and required a hefty entrance fee. Still today, many politicians, authors, and many leading members of the elite class in Britain and in the world attended public schools. Not only do public school alum play a huge role in today's inner workings of society but so can be said for the time of the British empire, if not more so. Empire and public schools went hand in hand, whereby imperialist ideologies were taught and encouraged in education. As stated above, this education was only available for the elite and upper classes, furthering the production of said

[22] Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2018

class. However, it was not only politics, history, and literature that were explored, but also the intimate relations between genders and sexuality, and of course, class. Ronald Hyam explains in his novel *Empire and Sexuality* how attitudes towards sexuality evolved over time, especially as it relates to colonialism. Starting from a more sexually expressive and free 18th century, where there were many reports of inter-racial relations, to a more reserved and conservative Victorian 19th century. In particular:

> During the course of the century, however, there was a marked shift in the meaning of 'manliness': a shift from the ideals of moral strenuousness, a Christian manliness, to a cult of the emphatically physical (what later generations would call 'machismo'); a shift from serious earnestness to robust virility, from integrity to hardness, from the ideals of godliness and good learning to those of clean manliness and good form. Manliness, it has been said, moved first from chapel to changing-room, into an 'overpowering phil-athleticism' (an over-valuation of games), and then into a militarisation of the public schools after 1901.[23]

A key component of public schools is the competitive nature of their students, especially relating to games and sport. As stated above, public schools influenced their male students to embody their curated image of the ideal 'man', and this included athletic prowess. Not only was this to aid in imperial armies, and to produce soldiers, but "the games ethic was a frontiersman's code, emphasising stamina and grit and team spirit. It helped to produce useful colonists, uncomplaining soldiers and resourceful missionaries." Furthermore, by encouraging sports amongst other public schools, nationalism and competitiveness, key factors in colonisation, were encouraged, and "Organised games were a means of artificially providing adversity. The need to experience pain was held to be a necessary preparation for the self-reliance and wretchedness of the imperial frontier."[24]

[23] Hyam, 1990, p.72
[24] Ibid, p.73

The influence public schools have had on every aspect of our current society has long been underplayed.

> The hidden curriculum taught the boys attending these institutions what was considered to be 'good form' both at school and in later adult life, the very 'principles, character and manners' recognised and recommended by the Clarendon Commission. Much of this was pursued through elaborate rituals developed at the schools, reinforced and maintained in other influential areas dominated by ex-public schoolboys, from the gentlemen's clubs to the regimental officers' mess and numerous masonic lodges, it was partly through the use of these rituals Dr Rich maintains, that control was exercised by the dominant social class at both home and abroad. 'Imperialism was frequently more reliant on ritual than arms or money. Imbued with public schoolism, the British governed with ritualism … The Empire required rituals, which old boys enthusiastically espoused. In school they had their prefectorial wands and hierarchy of colours, and in the Empire they instituted similar honours … These rituals kept millions of people in their place.'[25]

Another example of a pattern of repeated rituals and symbols used to support the imperial effort is in literature, specifically produced by British male authors with a public-school education. Therefore, the author I have chosen to analyse, in my thesis and the authors I chose to compare with, all have this background.

## A Woman in John Masters' novels

**For my thesis, to explore the changing gender roles and identities within Colonial India, I have chosen to look at a selection of novels. Using novels as a source of data can still be argued in both the historical and sociological circles, due to its entertainment bias and question of validity. We have to consider why the novel was written, who it was intended for, and what environment lead to the creation of the novel.**

**The characters, events, and scenes are all fictitious, but are normally always inspired from some reality. However, the characters and events are not what we are trying to prove are true, but instead the attitudes and underlying bias towards the separated**

[25] Rich in Griggs, 1994, p.132

**gendered roles. Again, it could be unreliable as a source as these could be exaggerated, but they show what the author wants to highlight, or conceal, in their personal ideals, and how they intend to unite others in similar social imaginaries.**

I have chosen to look at John Masters as he was born into a British family living in India during the time of the British Raj. His novels follow the lives of the Savage family, a British family that has lived in India for generations. All the protagonists in Masters novels are soldiers within the Indian army, which is very similar to Masters' own history. Not only do Masters novels depict an Anglo-Indian life within cantonments in British India, but he also came from this lifestyle himself. As Masters has served in the Indian army from 1933 until 1947, he also gives an interesting insight into a British soldier serving in a British colony's life.

Masters was the fifth generation of a British family residing in India. Typical of these families, Master's spent his early years living in India, before moving back to England for a British public-school education. He studied at Wellington College in Berkshire, and then at Royal Military College in Sandhurst. In John Masters autobiography 'Bugles and a Tiger', Masters gave an anecdote of his military school days, where the recruits would "arrive, learn, conform, pass on"[26], which would later be mimicked through colonisation. Following in his father's footsteps, Masters had an impressive military career, serving with the Indian Army up until India's independence. The British Army offered him service after 1947, but instead Masters chose to relocate with his family to the US to start a new life. Masters career up until this point had been dedicated to the military, but he needed to start a new enterprise in order to support his family, so Masters decided to draw from his experiences of life in India and explore his skills as a writer. This is an important aspect to bear in mind throughout the entirety of the analysis of Masters' novels, as his novels primary aim was to reach the widest audiences to

[26] Masters, 1954, p.39

earn the most amount of money. Although each of his novels starts with a disclaimer that it is a work of fiction, he also iterates that he hopes it will be a source of history, very much the same way as Rudyard Kipling's writings became. Whilst these novels are fictitious but may be based contextually in a historical setting, the reader must remember that these works were created to form an income, and this means that Masters would have to adhere to his US editors in order to be published. The editors of the novels would be more interested in selling copies rather than factual accuracy, and therefore may have encouraged Masters to embellish certain aspects.

The key texts that I am analysing will be discussed in chronological order starting with *Coromandel!* which is set in 1628. *Coromandel!* is the first novel in John Masters series labelled 'The Storytellers'; a collection of novels following the Savage Family throughout the history of British India. Ironically, Masters chooses the family name of his protagonists to be Savage, which has its own connotations that are heavily linked with the justification for colonisation. Although chronologically 'Coromandel' is set as the first novel in the series, it was the fifth book to be published. Masters actually released each book in an unusual order, as can be seen below:

| Book Title: | Set in: | Published: |
|---|---|---|
| Coromandel! | 1628 | 1955 |
| The Deceivers | 1820 | 1952 (1988 – Film) |
| Nightrunners of Bengal | 1857 | 1951 |
| The Lotus and the Wind | 1879 | 1953 |
| Bhowani Junction | 1947 | 1954 (1956 – Film) |

Whilst this may not seem of any importance, I think it is interesting to see that the novel Masters started with included the event that captured the British public's imagination, and allowed politicians to draw on the fear of the public to pass further laws to consolidate British rule in India; that of the Indian Mutiny in 1857, in his novel form of *Nightrunners of Bengal*. I will speak on this in much more detail later on in chapter three. A couple of Masters' novels also grabbed the interest of Hollywood, with *The Deceivers* and *Bhowani Junction* being made into films in 1988 and 1956, respectively. This again is important for the reader to bear in mind, to understand the wide reach that John Masters had. Not only were his novels popular in the US and the UK, but also were able to reach a wider audience through cinema.

As Masters is a self-proclaimed Anglo-Indian, this thesis aims to look at this community of "Anglo-Indians" by focusing on the cultural representations of gender roles in Anglo-Indian literature, as they are a great representation and amalgamation of both Indian and British culture. By looking at these texts we can see an exploration of two cultures coming together, and how that affects representations and actuality of gender roles. What is prevalent throughout all of Masters' novels is the undercurrent of racism that underpins not only the marginalised characters make-up, but also the language that is used towards these characters. In a similar way that the stereotypical gender roles highlight what gender is perceived to be superior or inferior, and thereby implements rape cultures, the stereotypes surrounding Indian people represented Indians as inferior and British as superior, thereby justifying British rule. Throughout all novels, Masters continuously refers to Indian stereotypes:

> for it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency; ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs it strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in *excess* of what can be empirically proved or logically construed. Yet the function of ambivalence as one of the most significant discursive and psychical strategies of discriminatory power, whether racist or sexist, peripheral or metropolitan – remains to be charted…To recognise the stereotype as an ambivalent mode of knowledge and power demands a theoretical and political response that challenges deterministic or functionalist modes

> of conceiving the relationship between discourse and politics…colonial discourse suggests that the point of intervention should shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *process of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse."[27]

Thereby, many of the representations explored throughout are evidence of stereotypical discourse surrounding not only race to enforce colonialism, but also for stereotypical discourse about gender and how that enforced gendered violence. I will also be drawing from other novels of a similar topic, produced by other authors who received a similar education to Masters, that of either public school or military educational systems. The reason behind choosing these kinds of authors, is to show that there is a pattern among men that attend these institutions and their production and representation of race, gender, and class.

The main mode of research for this study is socio-literary analysis of fiction. By analysing literature, I hope to gain a personal insight into the author's experiences and ideals about the time in which the text was written about, whether consciously or subconsciously. Additionally, by analysing fictitious literature, we see a form of history that is not so commonly documented. For example, novels provide an insight into the social interplays of gender roles, and also great examples of the sexist and racist language that would have been used on a daily basis. In this way, I will be using Master's collection of novels as a form of social history. Through analysis of these novels, I hope to see representations of intimate life, particularly between genders, during the British involvement in India. John Masters himself states in the "Author's Note" of his first and most famous novel 'The Nightunners of Bengal' that:

> ALTHOUGH most of the incidents in this story of the Indian Mutiny are drawn from local tradition, official reports and contemporary letters, this book is a work of fiction. My object has been to make the fictional whole present a true perspective of fact—the facts of environment, circumstance and emotion. In general, the people actually met with in the story, and the places they visit, are fictitious; the people and places that

[27] Bhabha, 1983, p.18

> remain offstage are or were real, and notes on many of them are included in the glossary.[28]

Though Masters claims the novel is "a work of fiction", by closely examining the language used between characters in the novels, regardless of relevance to the plot, an image can start to form of what relations are like between different types of characters, based on race, gender, and class. As Masters states, he can still "make the fictional whole present a true perspective of fact". I intend to use the fictitious literature as a form of social history or gender history, to show representations of subaltern Indian populations that can help readers understand how a dominant gaze about a subjugated population was reproduced and naturalised in a genre of a literature. I intend to use a similar methodology in my thesis to show how in Masters' novels, the representations of gender, and their interplay with race and class, can depict a sexist, misogynistic, racist culture that was prevalent in Colonial India, and there by in Britain. The British government's justification for colonisation derived from the notion that the West and all that entailed, was superior to the East. With this belief, during colonisation, the British Empire imposed their "supposed" superior way of life onto their colony states, including their ideas surrounding gender.

The reason I have chosen to look Masters novels is because he is a part of male British imperialist authors who write on colonial India, based off of their own experiences. Although there are many texts written by British women and their experiences in British India, I choose to focus on male writing, to represent gender as seen historically through "the male gaze". Female authors can represent women's agency and resistance against the inherent sexism within Britain and can show female characters that are represented as strong and independent. Instead, I wish to show the commonality of male authors representing women as the opposite, as weak and dependent on men. As men, historically, show more examples of being accepted

[28] Masters, 1951, p.3

by society, their novels in turn, would have been more readily received, more likely to have publication encouraged, and more likely to have a male readership. Again, as men historically have held more positions of power in monarchy, government, religion and education, the literature they would chose to read most likely had an impact on their ideals and morals. One can feel personally affected by a good book. Minorly, it can cause an emotional response, but largely it can change personalities and define identities.

By finding similarities in Masters works with the likes of Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster, and other authors of a higher class who also attended public schools, I intend to show a pattern of educated racial and gendered stereotypes. Whilst these authors may differ among themselves about the legitimacy of Britian ruling India, the generalised representations of Indians and women are found consistently throughout all of their novels. Certainly, Masters belongs to the genre of historical fiction, but his position within is complex. Similar to his earlier counterparts, Kipling and Forster, Masters remains in the Anglo-Indian historical writing. Whereas Kipling produced literature through a late-Victorian lens, and mythologised the Raj justifying British authority, and Forster highlighted the instability of the empire through cultural fractures in *A Passage to India,* Masters instead uses significant past historical events, including the 1857 uprising (*Nightrunners of Bengal)* and the 1947 partition of India (*Bhowani Junction)*, to place his narratives and inspire imperialist longing. Compared to Kipling's frequently paternalistic depictions, Masters portrayal of Indian characters is more diversified, but is nevertheless filtered through a British gaze whereby the Anglo-Indian struggles bear a heavier focus.

In Masters novels his heroines, like Victoria Jones in Bhowani Junction, dramatize the precarious and hybrid status of Anglo-Indian women, torn between ethnic boundaries and social hierarchies, making gender a particularly sensitive topic. Similar to this, Masters' focus on class differences within the colonial army draws attention to the hierarchical power structure inside British society as well as between colonisers and colonised. By employing historical

fiction conventions to examine the rifts of empire, Masters both builds upon and deviates from his forebears while staying bound by the ideological presumptions of colonial authority. Through literature and through the repetition of stereotypical language and scenes, Masters, like his counterparts, promotes racism and sexism, all to remain in a superior position, something he learnt through his imperialist schooling.

Therefore, for my research, I will be adopting a new historicism approach, believing that the literature produced at the time of colonial India will give an apt understanding of what life is like under British rule. The main influence of this approach on this thesis is that the literary texts are given the same importance and credibility as non-literary texts when depicting scenes of history. I will be considering these fictitious texts as historical texts, as the new historicism theory is a "method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period". By doing this, "the word of the past replaces the world of the past". [29]

In addition to the new historicism approach I intend to use a qualitative research method of document analysis. Document analysis is a form of literary analysis essentially due to the 'close reading' of documents, which is what I intend to do on all formats. This method allows for a deep analysis of texts: "Bowen sums up the overall concept of document analysis as a process of "evaluating documents in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced and understanding is developed"[30]. By using this methodology, I will be able to explore detailed descriptions about Colonial India, and look for signs, symbols and patterns that demonstrate the representations of gender roles and examine how this discourse has changed over time. An advantage to this method is that the research list is flexible. After each new document, a multitude of other relevant sources appear, meaning I will not be lost for content.

[29] Barry, 2009, p.166-9
[30] Ibid, p.33

In analysing colonial representations of race, gender, and class in John Masters' novels, this thesis adopts a methodological approach that treats fiction as a valuable sociological resource. Mariano Longo in his book *Fiction and Social Reality* highlights that "literature as a source gives a social scientist the opportunity to go beneath the surface of social phenomena" and that "fictional narratives … still produce rich, culturally determined documents"[31]. This viewpoint acknowledges that novels provide insights into the social imaginaries and cultural logics that underlie colonial discourse. According to Longo, fiction offers a "knowingly false yet likely representation of reality", which makes it a vital instrument for examining the formation and maintenance of ideologies related to identity, power, and hierarchy. [32] Masters, himself says something similar at the start of his novels, as can be seen above. Thus, Masters' novels are not approached as transparent reflections of historical fact but as cultural documents in which the dynamics of colonialism are imaginatively reproduced.

At the same time, this research situates Longo's methodological insight within the critical framework of postcolonial theory. Said's notion of Orientalism alerts us to the ways cultural production consolidates imperial authority by representing colonised peoples as inherently different and subordinate[33], whereas Gayatri Spivak's *Can the subaltern speak?* is concerned with the silencing of subaltern voices highlighting the representational asymmetries embedded in colonial narratives[34]. Consequently, reading Masters through Longo allows for a dual analysis: on the one hand, fiction is viewed as a sociological document that encodes cultural ideologies and social relations; on the other hand, postcolonial theory offers the critical lens that allows for the unpacking of the racialised, gendered, and classed aspects of these representations.

[31] Longo, 2015, p.4-6
[32] Ibid, p.9
[33] Said, 1978, p.2
[34] Spivak, 1988, p. 287

Longo cautions that "literary narratives are documents"[35] requiring careful methodological translation into sociological terms. This thesis embraces that tension, recognising Masters' novels both as imaginative constructions shaped by genre and authorial choice, and as historically situated artefacts that illuminate the social realities of British colonialism. For instance, *The Deceivers* exposes anxieties about cultural infiltration and corruption, while *Bhowani Junction* stages fraught negotiations of racial and gendered identity at the end of empire. Both illustrate how Masters' narratives function as documents that crystallise colonial anxieties and reassert, yet sometimes destabilise, imperial authority.

This approach highlights the novels as locations where colonial discourse is both expressed and opposed by fusing Longo's sociology of literature with postcolonial critique, so illuminating the intertwining of race, gender, and class in the literary imagination of empire. This analytical foundation serves as a framework for the following section, which focusses on how women are portrayed in Masters' literature and explores the ways in which gender interacts with race and class to reproduce colonial structures.

## A Woman in representations

Colonial discourse has always been deeply gendered, and John Masters' novels provide a particularly revealing lens through which to examine the intersection of gender with race and class under empire. Women in these texts are rarely neutral figures; rather, they are sites where colonial anxieties and ambitions are played out. As postcolonial critics have long observed, the representation of women in imperial literature is bound up with questions of authority, purity, and possession[36]. In *Bhowani Junction*, for instance, the Anglo-Indian heroine Victoria Jones becomes a focal point for negotiating racial boundaries, her gendered body cast simultaneously as a site of desire, contamination, and national identity. Similarly, in *The Deceivers*, female

[35] Longo, 2015, p.12
[36] McClintock, 1995; Spivak, 1988

characters are mobilised to dramatize tensions between cultural loyalty and betrayal, embodying both the vulnerability and resilience projected onto colonised societies.

Representation has gone through an evolution, from Descartes, to Kant, and then toFoucault. As stated by other scholars, this theory and idea, and those two words themselves are difficult to formulate. As 'representations' is an innately known concept it is hard to describe, but whether that concept is innate is what is being argued. Descartes claimed simply that representation is thought. Kant then added to this principle by claiming that the object in your thought is not an exact representation of the object, for example, a visualisation of a table is not the exact representation of the physical table, and therefore 'ideas' or 'representations' could be conducted within your mind. Before moving onto the focus of Foucault, Stuart Hall's definition of 'representations' allows more clarity on the whole concept. Hall starts by clearly stating that "representation connects meaning and language to culture [and]… is the production of meaning through language". Hall divides this process into two systems. The first system is *mental representation* and the second is language. The mental representation is what Kant describes and is an innate knowing. Language, however, is a social construct based off of a cultures conceptual understanding, and "depends on constructing a set of correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of signs, arranged or organized into various languages which stand for or represent those concepts. The relation between 'things', concepts and signs lie at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call 'representation'". The literature surrounding 'representation' is crucial to laying a conceptual framework for my thesis. As I intend to analyse literature based off of a historical period to better understand the culture, this idea of 'representation' constituting meaning to language, and thereby culture and identity, is paramount. [37]

[37] Hall, 1997, p.2-5

According to Serge Moscovici's theory of social representations, collective knowledge is a socially created system of meaning that directs conduct and identity rather than being a neutral reflection. Once ingrained in common speech, representations influence how groups view one another and themselves, normalising dominance and naturalising hierarchies[38]. In the framework of British colonialism, depictions of Indian women as helpless victims and Indian men as violent attackers were social imaginaries that supported colonial intervention and gender subjugation, not just literary devices. This type of representation is reproduced in Nightrunners of Bengal, for instance, where Masters' graphic portrayals of Indian men as predatory characters during the 1857 uprising ingrain racial and gender prejudices into the cultural memory of empire. Using Moscovici's paradigm, we can observe how these representations functioned as common "truths," normalising violence as a gendered inevitability as well as a colonial need.

Applying these critiques to Masters' novels reveals how representations of women are central to the functioning of colonial discourse, with female characters—whether Anglo-Indian women caught between racial boundaries or Indian women depicted as vulnerable and voiceless—never neutral. Gayatri Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?* demonstrates how colonial and nationalist discourses alike silenced women, positioning them as objects of protection or violation but rarely as agents of speech or resistance. Lata Mani's *Contentious Traditions* demonstrates how colonial debates over sati instrumentalised women as bearers of cultural identity, even as their voices were erased from the record. Their symbolic subjection serves as justification for both patriarchal authority and imperial dominance, and they are the locations on which colonial worries over race, gender, and class are projected.

[38] Moscovici, 2000

The relationship between colonial violence and gendered violence is revealed by Moscovici's theory in conjunction with subaltern feminist perspectives. Colonial representation created a logic that made domination both necessary and moral by framing feminised subjectivities as weak or corruptible. How thoroughly these representations influenced cultural creation is seen in Masters' work, which was produced in the middle of the 20th century but was firmly rooted in the colonial mindset. A continuum of violence that connected the control of women's bodies and the repression of rebellion is naturalised by the recurring images of sexual menace, female fragility, and white male protection. This continuity shows that gendered violence was a component of colonisation rather than an afterthought.

By acknowledging this causal relationship, we can place Masters' books in a larger collection of colonial discourse that still influences postcolonial realities. In South Asian cultures of gendered violence today, the naturalisation of males as aggressors and women as victims—first popularised as social representations in colonial texts—has left lasting effects. In this sense, examining Masters' novels is not just a literary critique but also an investigation of the ways in which colonial imaginaries still influence contemporary racial, gender, and class relations.In today's society, there is a movement of discrimination towards transgender people, as they do not fit into the standard "representation" of gender. For example, there is an argument currently to ban transwomen from women's sport under the guise of protecting cis-women. Not only does this purport the stereotype that women are biologically weaker, but also ignores the contextual history of the encouragement of sports for boys, compared with the home training for girls. Specifically, public schools put a great importance on setting up international sports networks, which are still evident today, whilst maintaining the exclusion of women. Differentiation between the genders is what signifies them having meaning. It allows control over one or the other because they can carry different meanings. It is the difference between them that signifies. Gender only has meaning because there are two that are significantly

different. If they were considered the same, there would be no term gender. Additionally, there has always been a third gender visible in all societies, including India. Hermaphrodites and eunuchs held a religious and important role in ancient Indian society. Yet Britian thought to criminalise these individuals with the Criminal Tribes Act, focusing on what clothing was deemed appropriate for men and women. Fashion denotes a person's sense of style but historically it has represented class and wealth, and ultimately gender.

This can also be further applied when understanding India or Britain values. A female is not feminine because she is but rather because her relation to the signs of femininity is set by a code; "meaning depends on the relation between a sign and a concept which is fixed by a code. Meaning, the constructionists would say, is 'relational'."[39]

Michel Foucault was inspired by this notion of relational codes and also added that not only could knowledge or ideas come from you and not a physical representation, but that they could be grounded in historical or cultural contexts. In a 'History of Sexuality', Foucault talks about representations continuously but with the term 'discourse'. He used discourse as a system of representation. Discourse is a way of representing knowledge about a particular topic at a particular time. There is no meaning without discourse. Discourse creates the topic and thereby creates the knowledge. However, the difference with 'discourse' and 'representation' is that discourse "is not singular and monolithic – there is always a multiplicity of discourses – so that the operation of power structures is as significant a factor in (say) family as in layers of government… thus, the personal sphere becomes a possible sphere of political action" [40].

Foucault predominantly focuses on Power and its relationship with knowledge (also known as discourse or representation. Both Kant and Foucault, and the majority of scholars are concerning themselves with the pursuit of knowledge and what knowledge is. What Foucault

[39] Ibid, p.13
[40] Barry, 2009, p.170

argues, and the course my thesis will follow, is that knowledge is created and learnt through political, social and historical circumstances. Due to this, everyone's understanding of knowledge is different, and therefore everyone's the same. In this sense, the ideas of scholars before me and the vast literature created, can neither be right or wrong, but another angle or viewpoint, and within my thesis I will add my own. By drawing from this literature, I will strengthen my own argument such as using Antonio Gramsci's idea of 'hegemony'. "The basic premise of the theory of hegemony is one with which few would disagree: that man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas"[41]. Foucault agrees with this point by claiming there is a state that is an "all-seeing surveillance" and "by the power of its 'discursive practices' … [it] circulates its ideology throughout the body politic"[42]. As stated above these ideas are represented through language, and Foucault again adds to this idea by also claiming that "often the most important social knowledge is unspoken knowledge"[43]. The unspoken knowledge Foucault focuses on is sexuality which is intrinsically linked to gender and therefore will be crucial throughout my research.

In the 18th century the discussions around sex and sexuality influenced heavily by the Catholic church, were restricted to a minimum, and were considered "an evil that afflicted the whole man". However, due to the encouragement by the church that sexual behaviour is deviant behaviour and in need of penance, there was a rise in confessionals thereby emphasising that which was forbidden[44]. Foucault argues that there was not a change in how much sex was spoken about, but rather in the way it was spoken about. The keyway of enforcing these gender roles is through the subtlety of language. The majority of this academic literature "concern the way power is internalised by those whom it disempowers, so that it does not have to be

[41] Bates, 1975, p.351
[42] Barry, 2009, p.169-170
[43] Foucault, 1998, p.21
[44] Ibid, p.18-20

constantly enforced externally"[45]. In this case, how the discourse around gender roles allows women to be considered inferior and also easier to control.

Gender Roles are an intrinsic part of our everyday life. We receive a gender at birth and we assume its status. "To date, there is no known society in which the status of female is consistently ranked higher than that of male."[46] The assumed roles between each gender varies widely dependant on political, social, and environmental factors. Gender is a huge part of people's identity, with it being the second thing asked, after your name, on most important documents. Who we are and what should we do with our lives, is a constant question among millennials. When physically surviving is no longer at the forefront of westernised lifestyles, more time is opened up to exploring these philosophical questions. Historically, the roles allotted to each gender were for the benefit of the family and thereby the society, but now, with this no longer being the most important issue, self-concept and identity maintains the mental health of the individual. Traditionally, these roles would have been based on the societies need to survive, and as these needs have changes, so have the roles assigned to each gender correspondingly. Upon entering the world, we are all assigned a sex. From birth, we are physically different than half the population. In an ongoing debate, it is argued whether these physical differences translate mentally and socially and are pre-destined within our genetics. "In biosocial terms, gender is not the same as sex. Gender refers to the psychological, social, cultural, and behavioural characteristics associated with being female or male"[47]. After reading critical literature on representations, it would be safe to argue that these gender roles are learnt through discourses that are imparted in most aspects of life. The gender roles are expected due to social norms, such as "the status of mother calls for expected roles involving love, nurturing, self-sacrifice, homemaking and availability. The status of father calls for expected roles of

[45] Barry, 2009, p.170
[46] Lindsey, 2016, p.2
[47] Wienclaw

breadwinner, disciplinarian, home technology expert, and ultimate decision maker in the household."[48] However, every society has different needs, and this led to a multitude of differing roles for each gender, depending on the nature of the community. In pre-historic times and also in indigenous tribes today, individuals all working together as one is paramount to survival. In order to survive, each member of a community is given a role to contribute to their chances of survival. Traditionally, and also still seen today, these roles are based off of gender. Gloria Steinem argues that pre-history is matriarchal. Before the scientific revolution and before a complete understanding of how we make babies, Women were revered as magical goddesses of nature, almost equivalent to 'Mother Earth'. Due to this, it was imperative to protect them, placing the men on the outskirts in case of any attack or danger (This can also be seen among some primates). Doris F. Jonas looks at how in most animal societal structures, female primates have the highest status, whilst the males are chased from the herd, fighting on the edges for top spot. Males act as involuntary "protectors", first to be hurt by predators and this would have influenced masculine gendered roles. Yet Jonas also states that there is too much importance placed on hunting by the males, when in fact culture was being created in the centre, in the matriarchy. As men were used to be protectors, they had to be physically stronger and braver to fight other men. Women were traditionally given domestic roles, related to hearth and home, as they were in the source of the society, with childbirth and child rearing. On the other hand "in patriarchal societies, rape is a form of "preferred political violence."[49]

Richard Fester states that there are more feminine roots in words than masculine. He believes this is due to mother's voicing intimacy to children, producing language. Furthermore, tools did not come from men hunting, but from mothers needing to make food suitable for their babies. "according to him it was the mothers who laid the groundwork for every subsequent

[48] Lindsey, 2016, p.2-3
[49] Dhonchakf, 2019 p.45

technology. They are the origin of human society through giving birth, the origin of culture through the invention of language and the creation of religion". Alternatively, some scholars, such as Claude Levi-Strauss, claim that men are the reason for the rise of civilisation and society. By spreading their ideals of civility, they also taught how to exchange women as products in the spoils of war demonstrating "Original male behaviour - war mongering, selfish accumulation of goods, and violence against women". Both these ideas I find fault with, as although I agree that mothers are instrumental in the education of their children, especially historically in poorer families (i.e. folk and oral tales), I believe it is dangerous to put all the praise or blame on one gender. Additionally, although men were predominantly in office and enforcing laws and committing atrocities to women throughout colonization, the idea behind gender roles and civilising a nation, came from both men and women. Robert Briffault, however, claimed "mothers as the foundation", yet unfortunately his idea was suppressed[50].

The idea of gender, and thereby gender roles, is rooted in feminist theory. As Simone de Beauvoir famously said, "One is not born but becomes a Woman"[51]. It is argued that this is when gender and sex were clearly separated. De Beauvoir also states that the source of women's oppression, similar to that in colonisation, is the social construct of "other". Scholars, such as Aristotle and St Thomas, traditionally defined women by their lack of male qualities, and due to this they were able to ignore the problems of women. At the end of the 19th century, Darwin had commented on the inferior mental and moral qualities of women, which he thought were rooted in biology. In the early 20th Century, Freud also held similar views connecting women specifically to hysteria, and arguing for 'penis envy,' fantasies about seduction from the father and mental inferiority. Fredrich Engels was historically the first person to write about gender roles, and how women were strategically oppressed in the common practice of marriage

[50] Goetnner-Abendroth, 2012, P.14-7
[51] De Beauvoir, 1949, p.267

to ensure male inheritance. He with Karl Marx, also followed Conflict theory, which Michel Foucault seems to ascribe to. Conflict theory denotes that social order is maintained through power of one social class over another[52]. In this instance, male over female. Women have been left out of most academia until the past century. However, more recently there have been women focusing on female 'herstory'. Judith Okely, a British anthropologist, claims that women everywhere have similar problems, and they are four-fold:

> 1. Women in the West, if not elsewhere, have been formally assigned a single economic (and usually unwaged) role rather than a choice from the multiple alternatives open to men. While women often have the main responsibility of childcare, food preparation and domestic work, their economic contribution outside the home, however essential, has been denied and belittled or grossly under-rewarded relative to that of men
>
> 2. Women have rarely been given or achieved formal or actual political power. Their political activity has been largely by influence and usually through a male intermediary.
>
> 3. The biological difference between male and female has frequently been used as the basis for a dichotomisation of social quality. The female has been deemed subordinate. The animal, irrational or supernatural charms associated with her are merely another way of describing and reaffirming that inferiority.
>
> 4. Women have often been subject to greater controls on their sexual needs and desires than men. Virginity, sexual fidelity and abstinence have in many cases been demanded more of women than of men.[53]

The discourse on gender roles, however, that I need to focus on for my thesis will be heavily influenced by Victorian ideals of femininity and masculinity, though that would have been similar to what Okely proposes above. To understand the impact that British colonizers had on India, we must understand the society from whence they came. Sexuality in Britain at the time of Indian colonisation was mainly based on Victorian suppression; masturbation was believed to cause mental health issues as well as physical issues, women were believed to have less of a sexual appetite than men, and "social customs, particularly among the influential elites, required that men bring sexual experience to marriage but demanded virginity in women and

[52] Lindsey, 2016, p.8
[53] Okely, 1996, p.77

that wives ignore their husbands' sexual wanderings"[54]. The stigma around sexuality originating from Victorian ideals of being chaste and contrite have followed us in today's culture allowing a woman's sexual exploits to be up for public discussion.

> Victorian notions of womanhood (chastity, innocence, self-effacement, and passiveness) continue to pervade some laws, and certainly the traditional training of lawmakers and judges in the British legal system allows them to bring their often patriarchal understanding of the historical foundations of these laws to bear as precedents and jurisprudential principles, even when the laws are facially egalitarian.[55]

By looking at representations of gender roles we can see how 'victim' is regularly one of the roles enforced on women, and due to the binary nature of society, the male role is then 'aggressor' or 'saviour'. Furthermore, I intend to use literature surrounding the Marquis de Sade and his ideas of sexuality and gender, particularly the concept of sexual power and how women can either be predator or prey. What cannot be ignored during this analysis, is the complex interplay between gender and both race and class. In the same way that racial discourse was used in order to justify colonial rule, gendered discourse is used to keep women as the supposed inferior sex. By continuously highlighting differences between race, sex, or even class, these differences become realised and can create friction. Additionally, in this discourse, the difference are usually one of two options (as stated above, a representation of a binary society), and if someone does not easily fit into one of these two options, they can experience identity crisis, leading to further problems. By enforcing division, colonisation was easier, very much originating from the Latin 'Divide and rule' concept, whereby power is best maintained through the division of groups. When there is solidarity among minorities, these groups are harder to oppress. Whilst this is certainly not a new theory, especially in racial terms, I want to articulate that gender should be considered in the same way. By having a weaker sex,

[54] Turner, 2018
[55] Chitnis & Wright, 2007, p.1319

colonizers create someone they need to protect from the supposed "barbaric" people they are trying to rule over; a theme we see throughout in the literary texts.

In every chapter of this thesis, both the gender and racial stereotypes will be analysed to show how Masters' language in his novels reflects colonial representations of race and gender. However, with this analysis, class must also be considered and how that affects these stereotypes. It is shown that gender roles are not as strict among lower classes, as women are more involved in the running of day-to-day life. They are shown to more promiscuous perhaps due to a lack of education. Eash chapter will have a consideration of class, primarily by looking at education, such as the ironically named public schools. Public schools still exist today around the world, which run predominantly single sex boarding schools for the upper class and elite members of society. These schools are not open to the public, but subject to tuition fee, with costs exceeding £10,000 a year. These schools have produced many leading members of society, such as many prime ministers of the United Kingdom, and also many members of the Indian parliament. John Masters himself attended Wellington College; a public school inaugurated by Queen Victoria in 1859. By comparing Masters work to the literature that was commonly taught in these schools, or written about authors experiences in these schools, you start to see patterns form in regard to the representations of gender, race and class, and how this formed a stereotypical discourse.

Finally, it always key to remember that class, race and politics will affect the attitudes to gender and their roles. Due to its history and importance, gender has infiltrated every aspect of our societies and lives. As societal needs have changed, so has the roles placed upon each gender. In today's society, there are billions of people, all with different backgrounds, cultures, education, politics and family, and the need for adaptability is crucial. Having the ability to use both gender roles and traits means you will be able to handle more situations. With

technological advances and social media phenomenon, we are encountering experiences we never would have before.

## Thesis Layout

The first chapter of this thesis builds understanding of what was already in place before the British Raj began. In doing this, we can see the changes India underwent in its attitudes towards gender; changes that were trying to be enforced by British settlers. Prior to the British Raj many parts of India were under East India Company influence:

> It all began with the East India Company, incorporated by royal charter from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth I in 1600 to trade in silk and spices, and other profitable Indian commodities. The Company, in furtherance of its trade, established outposts of 'factories' along the Indian coast, notably in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay; increasingly this involved the need to defend its premises, personnel and trade by military means, including recruiting soldiers in an increasingly strife-torn land (its charter granted it to the right to 'wage war' in pursuit of its aims). A commercial business quickly becomes a business of conquest, trading posts were reinforced by forts, merchants supplanted by armies.[56]

Therefore, similarly to throughout the British Raj, many different cultures, religions, and groups come into play. Even though the term British Raj was coined and put into effect after the Indian Rebellion in 1857, Britain had had a hand in India's composition since the first settlers in the early 17th century. Additionally, India is a vast and complex nation, but for the sake of this thesis it will be classified as one whole unit, similar to how the British Empire considered it. I do not want to be dismissive of the varying cultures within this large geographical space, but the stereotypes enforced were meant to be wide covering, in order to allow domination.

[56] Tharoor, 2017, p.3

More specifically, chapter one will use the novel 'Coromandel' to explore how first-time visitors to India, and other countries in the world, pre-colonisation were described in order to later justify rule. In 'Coromandel,' a lowly British farmer's son wants adventure and purpose, and after discovering a map with a cross marked into it, he heads off to India. This first novel has many similarities with travel diaries of explorers, but obviously with a fictitious twist. This allows Masters to have more creative licence and not worry about factual evidence. Regardless, Masters still includes stereotypes early on for Indian people, whilst also differing stereotypical roles for men and women. 'Coromandel' has its limitations when analysing, due to it being set in a period way before Masters' time, losing credibility.

The second chapter will focus on Masters' novel *The Deceivers* where an official of the East Indian Company goes undercover and infiltrates a killing cult, based off the Thuggee tribe. This novel is extremely interesting, as to infiltrate the tribe, the lead character in the novel had to undergo a form of blackface, and mimic traits he believes to be associated with Indian people. Again, by further perpetuating these stereotypes Masters allows a space for a justification for the colonisation of India. Although, this chapter will deal mainly with race, there are good insights into gender representations that will also be explored.

The third chapter is one of the most important, as it revolves around Masters' most successful novel 'Nightrunners of Bengal'. In this novel, Masters looks at the build up before the 1857 Indian Mutiny, where the sepoys of India rebelled against the British involvement in India. The event that took place holds an integral space in the British Empire's legacy, as it was used to show the violent and barbaric nature of the Indian people, and gave way for a stricter form of rule, which resulted in the creation of the British Raj. Additionally, this novel received such success with the public that Hollywood made it into a film, that was also positively received. I will include in this chapter an analysis of both the novel and the film adaption. There is much to say on this event in regards to gender, as although both men and women were killed, the

focus when presented to the British public was that Indian men had sexually assaulted "their" British women. This is a key analysis in how representations of gender roles purport a rape culture.

Finally, the fourth chapter looks at *Bhowani Junction*. In this novel, Masters depicts the lead up to India's independence from Britain, and the Partition of India, and its creation of Pakistan. This novel is key in analysing representations of gender, as the majority of the novel is from the viewpoint of an Anglo-Indian woman, thereby allowing Masters to impose his ideas surrounding what it means to be a woman onto this character. Moreover, the last chapter focuses on the violent nature of the Partition of India. This was key in the decolonisation process, dividing India and Pakistan and ultimately dividing Hindus and Muslims. This led to mass movement on both sides, with the main casualties being women. Again, it is another infamous event to be depicted in novel form, with the focus again on the sexually violent crimes.

## *Coromandel!*

> "'Why, if you can read you can travel without ever leaving your chair.
> You are as wise as the wisest man who writes the books.'"[57]

*Coromandel!* is the focus of this chapter, as it is the first instalment of Masters' series *The Storytellers*. Set in 1627, published in 1955, the novel depicts the history of the fictional British Savage family that resided predominantly in India. After a critical synopsis, the chapter starts with a brief synopsis of the book to then move to analyse how race, gender and class structure the negative stereotypical representations of otherness that lay the groundwork for the justification of the British rule and the colonisation of India.

Drawing from Said's critical concept of Orientalism the first part of the chapter will focus on the racial representations of Indians as "other" to Britain that underlies *Coromandel*!. Masters uses constant comparisons between British and Indian culture, as well as repetitive racial slurs, his novel is a clear example of Said's binary oppositions that characterise colonial representations of otherness:

> the culturally sanctioned habit of deploying large generalizations by which reality is divided into various collectives: languages, races, types, colors, mentalities, each category being not so much a neutral designation as an evaluative interpretation. Underlying these categories is the rigidly binomial opposition of "ours" and "theirs", with the former always encroaching upon the latter (even to the point of making "theirs" exclusively a function of "ours"). This opposition was reinforced not only by anthropology, linguistics, and history but also, of course, by the Darwinian theses on survival and natural selection, and – no less decisive – by the rhetoric of high cultural literacy.[58]

This classification is prevalent throughout *Coromandel!* by locating the supposed traits that are opposite to an ideal British citizen and assigning them to the unknown Indian character. This

[57] Masters, 1955, p.87
[58] Said, 1978, p.227

exemplified the constructed gap between Britain and India which always equated to the understanding of Britain's superiority. Additionally, there are also many examples within *Coromandel!* of racial slurs, and animalistic or feminine stereotypes being assigned to Indian peoples, such as "blackamoor" or "dogs". On this point Said argues that:

> Race theory, ideas about primitive origins and primitive classifications, modern decadence, the progress of civilization, the destiny of the white (or Aryan) races, the need for colonial territories – all these were elements in the peculiar amalgam of science, politics, and culture whose drift, almost without exception, was always to raise Europe or a European race to dominion over non-European portions of mankind.[59]

This chapter will then go on to detect patterns of gendered representations within *Coromandel!* whereby women are shown to be inferior, secondary characters. In a similar way that Masters depicts Indian people as different and thereby less than British people, Masters shows women as different from men and thereby 'other' and inferior to men. In both instances, Masters uses these stereotypes and generalisations to show a justification for abuse of women and Indian people. Similar to the racial slurs, Masters uses a multitude of derogatory terms to describe the female characters of the novel, such as "Whore" and "Strumpet". Even though the protagonist Jason has sexual relations with four different women in the novel, Master never refers or infers to Jason with these terms, highlighting the double standard and opposite treatment of men and women. The novel also depicts the sexualisation of women and how a woman's sexual history is an open discourse for men to discuss and judge. India and its people were also represented under a sexualised gaze, as if a British Victorian idea of sexual morality was an example of superiority, compared to the representation of India's free and exotic, animalistic approach to sex. Another key stereotype Masters places upon both Indian people and women in general is that they are all 'stupid' and of a lower intellect. If it is to be believed that women and Indian

[59] Ibid, p.232

people are not as smart as British men are, then they required guidance and rule. Within this 'rule', many atrocities, degradation, and oppression occurred, as shown in *Coromandel!*.

Finally, this chapter will look at the representations of class, and how one's position in society can affect their identity and their actions. It will also show how class always seems to transcend race and gender. Through the class representations, Masters shows subtle hints throughout the novel of his own public-school education. Backed by the knowledge that Masters attended both a military and public school in both England and India, I argue that the ideals represented in *Coromandel!* were influenced, and at times mimic, the teachings of a public-school and/or military education. Importantly, and similarly, the British Empire also used the format of a public school to set up similar establishments in its colonised states to ensure order and rule.

Most importantly, as *Coromandel!* is set in early 17th century, over 300 years after Masters was born, this novel cannot act as a primary source. Instead, Masters uses this novel to set the tone of Britian and India's relations prior to the British Raj, under a post-colonial, and thereby a nostalgic, longing influence.

## Synopsis

*The Storytellers* series starts with a typical picaresque story, where the protagonist, Jason Savage, is a roguish character of the English rural labouring class, who goes on an adventure in the hope of increasing his social standing. Jason "knew nothing except to be a farmer's son in Shrewford Pennel, in the county of Wiltshire"[60], yet he goes on to embark on a treasure hunt, following a map of India marked with an 'x'. By having Jason as the lead in the novel, it allows Masters to appeal to a very wide audience who may feel that they are inferior, as this is

[60] Masters, 1955, p.9

something Jason continuously explores within his inner dialogue. By using a character who feels inferior, yet ironically consistently uses bigoted language, is an important tool that Masters uses to not only emphasise imperial ideas and longing, but also to alleviate blame. Moreover, it represents the time historically. Additionally, Jason's character and inner dialogue represents the complexity of what one feels compared to what they present. As stated previously, a lot of young men travelled to India looking to make a lot of money quickly and rise through the ranks of the East India Company, regardless of their class and situation back in England. There seemed to be "few in Calcutta seem to have had much interest in either the mores of the country they were engaged in plundering, or in the social niceties of that which they had left behind."[61] Many of the men who moved out to India were experiencing the first tastes of freedom, some being as young as fifteen, and ultimately were let rampant on India. "India was no longer a place to embrace and to be transformed by; instead it was a place to conquer and transform."[62] Jason certainly represents one of these men.

At the start of the novel, Jason is beaten up by three gamekeepers who are deemed his superiors within his village. The reasoning behind the beating is they assume, "He's been poaching … We'd better give him a taste of stick, master … He's going to live here all his life." They intend to make Jason a lesson to others, although on this occasion Jason had not actually been thieving, though he had been considering it. Masters depicts how Jason is used to the abuse, and almost deserving of it. and how he struggles with his class position and illiteracy through his "impotent tears"[63], and explains why Jason chooses to leave for an adventure in the hopes of becoming somebody more powerful. Jason does not seem to seek adventure to escape the abuse, but more to switch his position of power, from victim to abuser. The novel essentially represents a man

[61] Dalrymple, 2002, p.409
[62] Ibid, p.454
[63] Ibid, p.17

trying to increase his class and this effects every aspect of the novel. Ironically, in order to overcome his insecurity, he puts down others around him to feel superior.

The novel is divided into five chapters, with the first chapter starting in Jason's birthplace of 'Shrewford Pennel'. Whilst going about his farming duties, and in between having sexual relations with Mary, a local farm girl, Jason is approached by "old Voy the poacher"[64] who entices Jason to purchase a map that will lead him to treasure. This map is the pivotal motivator for Jason's journey throughout the rest of the novel, and the treasure acts as a metaphor for social success and all the riches that entails. In reality, the map is marked as being in Coromandel "a corruption of the Tamil *Cholamandalam*"[65], "in India, near Golconda"[66] and could be a representation of the Coromandel coast in Southeastern India. In the early 17th century, with early exploration, and the hope of setting up trade, the Coromandel Coast in India was a target by the British for its prime location. For example,

> another Company emissary, Captain Hippon, was despatched on the *Globe* to open the textile trade with the eastward-facing Coromandel coast and to establish a second factory at Masulipatnam, the port of the Mughal's great Deccani rivals, the diamond-rich Sultanate of Golconda, where could be bought the finest jewels and chintz in India…
>
> It was not until 1626 that the EIC founded its first fortified Indian base, at Armagon, north of Pulicat, on the central Coromandel coast [67]

The second chapter focuses on Jason's first step towards reaching Coromandel, by travelling to London to board a ship. Instead, Jason meets "Dick o the Ruff", a pimp who shows Jason the lucrative business of working as a dancer. Meanwhile, Jason becomes sexually involved with two women: Emily, a young prostitute, and Mabel, an elderly widow paying for Jason's

[64] Ibid, p.8
[65] Allen, 2018
[66] Masters, 1955, p.23
[67] Dalrymple, 2019, p.54-5

company. However, Jason swiftly moves on from both women, to continue his adventure, physically assaulting Emily in the process.

The next two chapters of the novel focus on Jason once he has finally reached India in his continuous search for the treasure marked in Coromandel. Jason first arrives in India aboard the 'Phoebe', "a ship of the Company of Merchants of London"[68] which is an earlier, alternative term for the British East India Company. "'The Company of Merchants of London trading to the East Indies' was thus originally an outgrowth of the Levant Company and a mechanism for its shareholders to extend its existing trade to the Far East by developing the sea route, and to raise as much new capital as possible."[69] Even within the novel, Jason states that "English people go there for the Levant Company, and they make a fortune, every one. They stay there a few years, then come home rich."[70] The contrast between the wealth of India in relation to Britain cannot be underestimated as it paved the way for colonisation where India was regarded as a promised land for British men seeking fortune.

> India then had a population of 150 million — about a fifth of the world's total — and was producing about a quarter of global manufacturing; indeed, in many ways it was the world's industrial powerhouse and the world's leader in manufactured textiles. Not for nothing are so many English words connected with weaving — chintz, calico, shawl, pyjamas, khaki, dungarees, cummerbund, taffetas — of Indian origin. It was certainly responsible for a much larger share of world trade than any comparable zone and the weight of its economic power even reached Mexico, whose textile manufacture suffered
> a crisis of 'de-industrialisation' due to Indian cloth imports. In comparison, England then had just 5 per cent of India's population and was producing just under 3 per cent of the world's manufactured goods. A good proportion of the profits on this found its way to the Mughal exchequer in Agra, making the Mughal Emperor, with an income of around £100 million, - by far the richest monarch in the world.[71]

Additionally, "at that time England was a relatively impoverished, largely agricultural country, which had spent almost a century at war with itself over the most divisive subject of the time:

[68] Masters, 1955, p.105
[69] Dalrymple, 2019, p.42
[70] Masters, 1955, p.22
[71] Dalrymple, 2019, p.48

religion."[72] Religion continues to be a theme throughout, and can be seen when Masters first introduces Master Drayton, 'one of the ships owners'[73]. Upon arriving in Coromandel, Jason follows Master Drayton to a meeting with Don Manoel d'Alverez, a Portuguese agent in India, or "'fellow Christians in a heathen land'"[74]. At the start of this meeting Drayton states that "as a matter of courtesy – no more – we have come here to tell you of our plans. We hope you will help us in a work of trade which will bring great good to all Christendom."[75] Although the British East India Company (EIC) stated that they were a guild for merchants, Masters' constant references to religion in *Coromandel*! hint that the spread of Christianity was also an important agenda to Masters, similar to how colonisation was presented as a civilising mission to "heathens". In this scene, the European agents discussed the political fate and trade possibilities of India without any Indian person present. Through this scene, Masters displays an example of the entitled attitude of colonisers.

*Coromandel!* is set in 1627, and therefore is Masters' representation of the Company in its early stages, depicting the competition and conflict between the British, the Dutch, and the Portuguese over their holdings in India. Furthermore, the success the EIC gained in their early years, was due less to their diplomacy skills with Indian natives, and more to do with their unscrupulous pillaging of Dutch and Portuguese boats and loots, with "Lancaster had been advised to conduct his men 'in a merchantlike course', but was also authorised to indulge in piracy against Spanish or Portuguese ships should 'an opportunity be offered without prejudice or hazard'. He did not hesitate."[76] As stated above, Jason is depicted as a thief and is therefore the perfect protagonist to represent a typical Briton in early 17th century India. Additionally, "British relations with India actually began not with diplomacy and the meeting of royal

[72] Ibid, p.38
[73] Masters, 1955, p.100
[74] Ibid, p.147
[75] Ibid p.105
[76] Ibid, p.46

envoys, but with a trade mission led by Captain William Hawkins, a bibulous Company sea dog who, on arrival in Agra, accepted a wife offered to him by the emperor and merrily brought her back to England."[77] The history can definitely be seen reflected in Jason's own hunt for a wife, and in the sexual opportunities and offerings he receives in *Coromandel!*.

Thereby, after the meeting with the Portuguese agent, Jason yet again meets another woman, a Devadasi, or female servant to God, named Parvati, whom Jason wishes to marry. Jason also encounters Catherine, the blind daughter of Portuguese agent Don Manuel, who despite Jason deeming "not at all beautiful"[78], he eventually goes on to marry. Whilst searching for his dream bride, Jason is also striving for power, continuously referencing his "golden fleece". This refers to the Greek mythology of Jason and the golden fleece, whereby the golden fleece represents kingship and authority, something we see Jason aspire to throughout the novel, in his hunt for the treasure. In this search for power, Jason becomes increasingly involved with the politics of Coromandel. Jason tries to form allies with the different Indian rulers in Coromandel and get them to work together to defeat the current and looming occupation of the English, Dutch and Portuguese forces. Although this can be read as anti-imperialist, the fact that the end of the novel depicts a return to order, Masters depicts an inevitable failure of Indians, and thereby rule of the British. The next part of the novel shows Jason running between the differing fighting forces, spreading lies and deceit, which results in a battle that ends the lives of many key players, including Catherine's father, Don Manuel. As is common in all Masters novels, there is graphic depictions of war and violence, and the chapter ends with Jason running for his life with the newly orphaned Catherine.

The next part of *Coromandel!* shows a clear depiction of gendered violence and sexism, as Catherine is being continuously verbally, physically, emotionally, and financially abused by

[77] Ibid, p.25
[78] Ibid, 1955, p.111

Jason, whilst the two are in hiding together. Masters continuously refers to Catherine's disability when having Jason abuse her, such as "an accursed limpet of a blind Portuguese whorelet."[79] Not only does he call her a "whore", but by focusing on her disability, Masters creates a hyperbole of a victimised character. He is not only mocking physical disabilities, due to Catherine's blindness, but also her mental disabilities; "God's blood, this one was really off her noggin, a sort of female Softy. They ought to shut her up." Masters using the word 'female' before 'Softy' suggests that mental illnesses or being "soft in the head" was a female ailment and rather than receive help, they should "shut her up".[80] Masters here represents a lot of British history, where women who were considered to be breaking the traditional concept of the female role would be "shut up" in asylums. Particularly during the Victorian Era, if a woman did not fit the Victorian model of a wife, mother, and homemaker, remaining intellectually inferior and passive, then they would be deemed "mad". Masters certainly displays these ideas in his representation of Catherine.

Masters also uses the term "female" as an insult, furthering the idea that anything deemed feminine is inferior to anything masculine. This will play a key role in the analysis of gender representations later on in this chapter, and how Masters subtly inputs depictions of gendered violence, desensitising his audiences to these behaviours in real life. Despite or because of the abuse, Catherine continues to hope that Jason will become her husband, and therefore she continues to support him in finding the treasure marked on his map.

The map is a pivotal tool used by colonisers, orientalists, geographers, as "Orientalism is a field with considerable geographical ambition."[81] In the novel, the map represents an internal journey of self-exploration for Jason and is used as different metaphors depending on Jasons wants. Through Jason's struggles, Masters portrays an emotional immaturity caused by a lack

[79] Ibid, p.209-210
[80] Ibid, p.112
[81] Said, 1978, p.50

of identity creating indecisiveness and impulsiveness. This is a theme we see throughout all of Masters' novels in a variety of characters. Through a series of coincidences, Jason believes he has become the next "reborn Lama of Tsaparang" and goes to Tsaparang monastery to sit examinations to determine this. After failing, Jason has an epiphany and realises the journey was greater than the treasure. The final page acts as an inspiring monologue to other men, likening Coromandel, to an exotic adventure:

> I want to believe, because I know now that the magic mountain is always the one beyond the one you have climbed, the coast of Coromandel is always over the horizon. If it were not so, magic would be at an end and a man could only dream, or only do – but never both.

Whilst this is a similar sentiment of many imperialists who look longingly to the past, most of Masters' novels have a strong romantic undercurrent, so the real ending is that Jason ends up married to Catherine. After the monologue, the last sentence on the novel focuses on Jason and Catherine's relationship where, "He gripped Catherine's hand more firmly, and she began to hum." [82] To Jason, this is a successful ending as he has raised his station significantly and received a devoted wife, but the ending seems bleak for Catherine, someone who has been continuously abused by her partner. Mary, Molly, Emily, Mabel, Parvati, and Catherine are the central driving forces in the novel, as these women are Jason's primary reasons for leaving or staying, except for his quest in following the map. Ultimately, by having both the women and the treasure map used for the same purpose Masters shows the representation of the objectification of women. Furthermore, by ending with Jason married to Catherine, shows Masters post-imperialist background. During the seeing of this novel, it would have been more common for Indian women and British men to have relations, as the country was not yet influenced by Victorian ideals. However, Masters portrays throughout all his novels that a union between two Europeans is preferred. Through these representations Masters tries to apply

[82] Masters, 1955, p.295

character traits as absolutes to a whole race or gender but "time and space, or rather history and geography, is [no] more than anything else imaginative."[83]

## Racial Representations

### Classifications

Masters displays constant comparisons of India to England. In this case, following Darwin's classification system, Masters explores how classification is a part of the imperialist notion. Following in the format of the many classificatory travelogues that have emerged since the 7th century, when Xuangzang, a Chinese philosopher, first visited India. From the likes of Charles Darwin and Captain James Cook, *Coromandel!* is similar in the sense that upon arrival in a new and exotic land, to make sense of the unknown, a classification takes place.

> This is Thomas Herbert's opening description from his travelogue, *A Relation of Some Years Travel into Afrique, Asia, Indies* (1634). Herbert's description emphasizes two conditions encountered by travellers of the 1600-1750 period: *variety* and unbelievable *strangeness* (or, to use the word most commonly deployed during this period, "novelty"). This dual image of variety and novelty is, I shall demonstrate, a feature of the aesthetic mode of the entire genre of seventeenth-century English travel writing on India… English travellers were confronted with a radically different topography, climate, animal and plant life, and diseases. The negotiation of this difference took form of a *rhetorical* transformation of India. This transformative rhetoric was informed, and in many ways facilitated, by the aesthetics of the marvelous. The aesthetic of the marvelous, with its dual emphases on variety and otherness, highlighted India's uniqueness, evoked wonder, and constructed a "marvelous topography" of Indian space… The marvelous was therefor an *explanatory* and *explorantory* aesthetic that enabled the traveler to discover, wonder at, organize and define, and ultimately explain (away) India's newness… William Davison published his *Profitable Instructions* in 1633, where he listed the items to be specially observed by travelers, asking them to organize the information into three groups: "The Country," "The People," and "The Policy and Government." The numerous natural histories compiled during this period provided narrative models for these travelogues. Natural history categorized an otherwise unknown/unknowable and wild land into something more orderly. It was an attempt rhetorically to transform the land into an object of inquiry and control.[84]

[83] Said, p. 1978, p.55
[84] Nayar, 2005, p.213-5

The idea of using classification to explain the unknown and thereby have more control is prevalent in pro-colonisation discourse and can also be seen throughout *Coromandel!*. For example, Jason speaks with extremely derogative language towards anyone he perceives to be lower than him, such as "'*You* won't allow? Who are you? A bleached outcaste, helpless.'"[85] This racially focused statement also again demonstrates Masters' insistence on placing importance on the caste system and colour, and thereby justifying even Jason, a lowly British farmer, to be capable of ruling above the Indian people. Therefore, the caste system is below the lowest rung in the British class system.

Additionally, Jason's arrogance leads them to believe that Britain is superior to India leading to these constant comparisons. When Jason tries to create agency for the Indian rulers in Coromandel, he also tries to do the same for his friend Simon, whose occupation is to dive for pearls.

> The pearlers, for instance – in London they would have been a guild years ago. He had seen the power of the London guilds during the week he stayed with Master Wigmore in Leadenhall Street. A guild could force even the king to do what it wanted, as far as concerned its own business. Simon and the rest of them were good, kind people, but they would starve unless they banded together and stood ready to fight.[86]

Again, Masters is comparing English with Indian culture, saying that the guilds in London are further ahead than the pearlers on the Coromandel coast. However, whilst the idea of them "banded together and stood ready to fight" against invaders seems sincere, the way it is delivered is patronising, as though only Jason, a lowly Englishman, could give them this way of life.

Another comparison made between Britain and India was the architecture; "The houses were of all sizes and patterns and colours. There were low hovels, such as men used for pigs in

[85] Masters, 1955, p.189
[86] Ibid, p.128

England."[87] In this statement, Jason is outwardly comparing India's accommodation to England's, even likening the Indian houses as 'hovels' which men in England would use for the pigs. This direct comparison of Indian dwellings to those of domestic animals in England, shows the typical representation that imperialists used to justify their rule over India. Again, the trait of servitude usually goes hand in hand with the animalisation of the Indian characters, as shown by Jason, drunk with power, "his servants no bigger than ants down there as they ran to do his bidding."[88] By associating Indians with animals, Masters takes away from their humanity and allows others to treat them as such. The Friend of India (1858), an Anglo-Indian newspaper, is quoted by Tara Chand as saying, "(Indians) were a little better than wild beasts and the only way to rule them was to abandon the paternal methods of the company and rule them henceforward with a rod of iron"[89]. Alternatively, this description was also commonly used to describe working class men in the 19th century within Fredrich Engels *The Condition of the Working Classes in England*, and thereby still also describing something considered inferior.

Throughout the novel, the Indian characters are represented through a racially charged lens. At the beginning of *Coromandel!* there are no characters of colour mentioned at all. Then, when these characters do start to be introduced, they are rarely dignified with a name, and are mentioned in passing usually through a demand of someone considering themselves 'superior' finished off with a racial slur, such as "'Where's that blackamoor who bought us here?'"[90] There are a handful of Indian characters, however, that are given slightly larger roles in the novel, but they are represented by Masters with an abundance of racially stereotypical assumptions, primarily with a servitude attitude. Jason, regardless of his low status at home, is

[87] Ibid, p103
[88] Ibid, p.279
[89] Roychowdhury & Randhawa, 2015, p.101
[90] Masters, 1955, p.113

treated with the utmost respect by Kings, Dons, and Chief Abbots alike. They seek his counsel, and the latter even misunderstands Jason to be the Twentieth Lama of Tsaparang Gompa, where Jason also befriends the pearl fishermen, particularly Simon, a Hindu, who worships Jason as a God "'We do, Lord Jason. How can we not trust you? You are our star.'"[91] Additionally, Jason makes assumptions about the pearlers based on stereotypes:

> They were shiftless people and drank too much and took no thought for the future. They must have had good years in the past. What had they done with the money they'd got then? He knew the answer. They'd spent it in feasting and marrying off their children and getting into debt on account of their silly superstitions.[92]

By making a caricature out of the 'typical' Indian person and presenting that to the British public through popular literature, Masters helps to justify the domination and occupation of India. To gain domination you have to prove that you are superior to the people you want to rule, and in order to do this, you have to demonstrate that those you rule are inferior and subservient to the colonisers. Masters often demonstrates this in his language regarding any Indian character, or Indians as a whole where moral, intellectual and racial superiority are claimed. For example, "'many of their soldiers will be drunk, for they are black-faced scoundrels'"[93] or "the Indians were stupid."[94]

These comments and those similar are repeated throughout *Coromandel!* and derived from "the supposedly unquestionable status of Britons as the 'ruling caste' of Indian society … justified by their whiteness. The Social Darwinist notion of white racial supremacy served as a crucial ideology to legitimate and police the boundary between the colonizer and the colonized".[95] In *On the origin of species* (1859), Darwin formulates the struggle for survival within nature and

[91] Ibid, p.169
[92] Ibid, p.180
[93] Ibid, p.188
[94] Ibid, p.153
[95] Mizutani, 2011

animals, and then in *Descent of Man* (1871), he applies this to human cultures, highlighting the different moral and intellectual qualities between men and women. The scientific method of classification has become the norm, and is in encouraged of all aspects of life, primarily education. Fuentes, states Darwin "went beyond simple racial rankings, offering justification of empire and colonialism, and genocide, through "survival of the fittest."" Darwin also argued that it is a biological fact that women are the weaker sex, and thereby justifying the common gender roles.

> Darwin identified women as less capable than (White) men, often akin to the "lower races." He described man as more courageous, energetic, inventive, and intelligent, invoking natural and sexual selection as justification, despite the lack of concrete data and biological assessment. His adamant assertions about the centrality of male agency and the passivity of the female in evolutionary processes, for humans and across the animal world, resonate with both Victorian and contemporary misogyny.[96]

## Religion

In the same way that races and genders have been put into hierarchal structures, Religion also seems to have been classified and ranked. The Abrahamic religions Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, with their monotheism seem to be pitted against the binary opposition of polytheism, such as Hinduism. We see this clearly with the ultimate partition of India in 1947, whereby India was split to create Pakistan, with the idea of dividing Hindus and Muslims into these territories respectively. Furthermore, when Jason is with Simon, the Indian pearl diver, he notices "Simon has two lockets, and in one he kept a crucifix and in the other a small stone emblem, red-painted and squatly deformed, but unmistakably a representation of a man's sexual organ."[97] Here, in this passage, there is a stark contrast between the religion of the empire, and the religion of India. Simon, who is represented as a "typical" Indian, carries two lockets one representing his new religion that colonisation brought, and the other representing

[96] Fuentes, 2021
[97] Masters, 1955, p.121-2

his old religion, the exotic religion, the one that is supposedly fixated on sex. Sexual freedom or promiscuity is commonly used to denote one's lack of morality, especially during the Victorian era, thereby suggesting that Simon's old religion is inferior. In terms of colonisation, the measure of civility was based on how men treated women, with the colonial effort hiding under a guise of liberating native women.

Masters follows many imperialist historians in how he displays the different religions in India by representing them as inharmonious, when India historically had a diverse mosaic of religions that cohabited in relative harmony.

> Jason said impatiently, 'Vishnu-bhakta, Shiva-bhakta, Right Hand, Left Hand, Brahmin, Pariah! How many more ways do you divide yourselves?'
>
> She [Parvati] said, 'Portuguese, English, Popish, Christian, Wiltshire, London, lords and strumpets – what else have you not told me about?'[98]

Here this could show Masters sarcastically mocking his own society, but as we will see later on, Masters believes in these divisions and reinforces them in his repetitions of the differences. Additionally, Masters represents Hinduism as inferior to Christianity, and it is clearly portrayed through an imperial lens. Even though India was made up of multiple religions, first explorers, and many historians created a synonym between India and Hinduism.

Within the British Raj, this ultimately led to laws being created with the Hindu caste system in mind, with even Jason stating "'A man is born into a faction, according to his caste and his father's trade.'"[99] Through doing this, stereotypes about India were further emphasised. Pawha, states that "excessive sexuality undergirded Anglo-Indian perceptions of Hinduism, which was constructed in colonial discourse as arcane, ritualistic and vile, with erotic underpinning."[100] Even though Jason is incredibly sexual, having no regard for who he has

[98] Ibid, p.161
[99] Ibid, p.187
[100] Pawha, 2004,p.286

intercourse with, he still uses Hinduism as a reason to not marry a woman he supposedly loves, with her caste being considered an obstacle: "the problem of his caste was more difficult, because of the Indians' mad insistence that a man could not become other than what he was."[101]. Placing the onus on Indians for Jason's inability to marry Parvati, is another example of Masters emphasising the inferior nature of Indian culture.

At the time of the novel's setting, "most Hindu law, apart from that of the brahmins, was unwritten and based on custom, which varied both over time and across cultural, regional and caste boundaries. In contrast, Western law was written and based on the binding force of Parliament, applying uniformly to everyone, and interpreted more rigidly as precedent developed."[102] By the British Empire later insisting on having a written law, it stopped this flexibility of fairness, ended equity, thereby creating the law to be unequal, especially for women;

> The Brahminical-Aryan customs that governed the upper castes of northern India were decidedly anti-woman and patriarchal. Many of the customs governing the lower castes and the Dravidian regions were more liberal towards women mainly because women engaged actively in productive labor.[103]

The above also shows that class plays an active role in both gender and racial representations and reality. This will be discussed further in the last part of this chapter. Additionally, the master-servant relationship is heavily prevalent throughout Masters' novels, with quotes such as "'This is your master. Obey him.'"[104] Even though Jason is of lower class in England, because of his skin colour and nationality he is afforded the royal treatment in India and is instantly assigned numerous servants, one being Parvati. The servants are always played by Indian characters with darker skin, as if Masters is trying to present servitude as a typical trait

[101] Masters, 1955, p.154
[102] Liddle and Joshi, 1985
[103] Chitnis & Wright, 2007, p.1320
[104] Masters,1955, p.132.

of people of colour. Also, following Said's notion of "otherness", Masters contrasts Indians servitude to British ruling. These representations of masters and servants throughout *Coromandel!* further emphasise Masters insistence on a hierarchal and patriarchal system, of which the white male is at the top.

## Stereotypes

Another colonial trope is nakedness. One of the first things that Jason mentions is the Indians lack of clothing, especially in relation to the Indian women having their breasts uncovered. Similar to many travelogues, and explorers, Masters never misses an opportunity to recognise an Indian's nakedness. Levine argues

> Naked male Figures were commonly displayed with the trappings of war and sometimes (especially in the 18th century) the cannibalistic spoils of victory. Physical prowess rendered colonial men not manly but animalistic ... The absence of clothing that connoted his distance from civilization rendered him, too, closer to nature, further from reason, and in material as well as figurative ways, impoverished and politically, if not physically, powerless.[105]

Again, this is similar to travelogues such as Abdul Lateef Shustari's where "he remarks that he was 'shocked to see men and women naked apart from an exiguous cache-sex mixing in the streets and markets, as well as out in the country, like beasts or insects. I asked my host "What on earth is this?" "just the locals," he replied, "They're all like that!" it was my first step in India, but already I regretted coming and reproached myself.'"[106]. In the next section of this chapter, I will explore in further detail the sexualisation and objectification of the female characters within *Coromandel!*. However, another aspect of continuously describing the Indian characters without clothing, highlights another stereotype that was typically assigned to Indian people, that of them being 'barbaric' or 'uncivilised'. Historian Phillipa Levine's article *Naked*

[105] Levine, 2013, p.18
[106] Dalrymple, 2002, p.165

*Truths: Bodies, Knowledge, and the Erotics of Colonial power*, explores how "in the British Empire, where the calibration of difference was paramount, nakedness acquired hierarchical significance. The sensibilities of the Victorians clashed with those of their colonial subjects on this topic over and over again, and nakedness came to define savagery and subjecthood."[107] Thereby, "Nakedness … increasingly became emblematic of colonial primitiveness, savagery, and inferiority."[108] Yet, hypocritically the nude white male is considered the highest art or civilisation as seen by the statues in Greece. Whereas even "in Darwin's recollections … nakedness is central to a deeply primitive lifestyle."[109] The focus on the nakedness of Indians was definitely sexually charged, similar to that of slavery, where a lack of clothing allowed for easier access to abuse. Masters uses this focus, as previous travelogues have done, in his literature to be "part of the steady beat of colonial characterization, commonplace, ordinary, predictable even as its sexualized potential added a frission of danger." [110] When discussing the gender representations within *Coromandel!*, we will see how again nakedness, and especially female nakedness, becomes a prominent focus for both Masters and Jason.

Another recurrent representation is that Indians lie. This points out to their alleged moral weakness and untrustworthy nature. Jason "had decided that deviousness was here a form of disease, and that it afflicted everyone"[111] in India. These representations of Indians as liars play into the notion that colonised peoples lacked morals, and this was regarded as another proof of cultural inferiority.

Moreover, Masters novel *Coromandel!* is an unusual, and at times confusing, read and that could be due to Masters trying to represent his understanding of an exotic and wild India

[107] Levine, 2013, p.5
[108] Ibid, p.9
[109] Ibid, p.14
[110] Ibid, p.11
[111] Masters, 1955, p.149

through his style of writing. Not only were Indians presumed to be liars, but they were also represented as being unclear and disordered.

> This was India! Let her speak, then, in riddles or jokes. Let her join the charade, because no one, including the actors, knew from moment to moment whether it was charade or reality. Kisses and blood, gold and cow dung – anything might be pressed upon her at any time..[112]

By claiming that India and its people would do the unexpected, and were not to be trusted, it allowed for injustices to take place, and Indian people's stories and accusations to be disbelieved or disregarded. By repetitively highlighting the differences between Britain and India, Masters represents Indian irrationalism in implicit contrast with British rationalism. In saying "the Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus, the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal""[113], Masters suggests that India was childlike, in need of a patriarchal rule. However, unlike most would presume, it was not used to rationalise the situation as "colonial rule was justified in advance by orientalism, rather than after the fact."[114]

Furthermore, Masters describes London at the start of the novel, as smelling like "filth" and you do get a huge sense that Jason is happier, and more himself, whilst in India, showing a love and kinship for the country and its people. Although is that because he can be in a superior position for once, due to his White Man status. Additionally, Masters does include a variety of Indian characters, who although display a multitude of stereotypical generalisations, also give them agency and at times seems to criticise imperialist aims. Anil N Dadas reflects more this sentiment in his article *Masters' Coromandel!: Beginning of East-West Encounter* where he explores the "White Man's Burden" through Jason. Thus it falsifies the view the Occident is superior and Orient as 'other' portraying the East, the Orient and the West, the Occident on

[112] Ibid, p.242
[113] Said, 1995, p.40
[114] Ibid, p.39

equal footing."[115] Whilst at times Masters seems sympathetic to the Indian plight, and finds more affinity with his Indian subjects, as to his British counterparts, the further treatment of Indian characters in Masters' other novels, shows a racialisation which lays the groundwork for justification of colonisation. By having Jason offering the Indian characters a chance at agency, Masters implies that Indian people would not have come up with this idea on their own, showing the benefits of a British influence. Furthermore, even if Indian characters are shown in an equal representation, my argument is primarily that the female characters are definitely not.

## Gendered Representations

### Sexualised descriptions

In this thesis, I seek to use these theories on orientalism and apply it to gender. "Irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"" are all terms that can be applied to women. Thereby, another key trait that was assigned by Masters to his representation of the India as a country, is that of being more effeminate than Britain; "Indians, in general, were perceived as an effeminate, inferior and degenerate branch of the Indo-Aryan family which had declined through intermarriage with the dark indigenous races of the country, their "effeminacy" further aggravated by the climate."[116] Again, this was a popular trope used during this time to describe India and was used to justify the creation of the British Raj. As the trait of being feminine was used as a negative and a weakness, women therefore were also represented as weak and in need of help and protection. From comparing Indian people to animals, servants or women, Masters represents the characters of colour as less than, as well as emphasising the inferiority of those that Indians are compared to, thus ensuring the white male as the ultimate superior figure. As

[115] Dadas, 2014, p.146
[116] Sinh (112) in Pawha, 2004, p.284

being compared to a woman is seen as a negative within Masters novels, the next section of this chapter is dedicated to the representations of gender, and how these representations added to the novel's audience's understanding of Masters' representation of life in Anglo-India.

Following a longstanding tradition of critical orientalist discourses I will use the binary oppositions as a critical device to analyse gender in Masters novel. How we have previously applied the theory of 'other', comparing India and Britain, to explain the racial representations in colonial Indian literature, we will do the same in terms of gender. Whereas 'white' and 'black', or 'East' and 'West' are used as binary terms, so our 'man' and 'woman'. Firstly, I intend to focus on Masters' introductions to the female characters in *Coromandel!*. Masters', as most of his colonial contemporaries, has a fascination with female breasts and "the Female breast was frequently central to visual and verbal conversations around colonial nakedness."[117] Not only does this highlight women's inferiority, if nakedness equates to savagery, but also highly sexualises them. There is definitely a racial charge though, that creates some differences as "It was, on the one hand, a reminder of women's reproductive role [women were closer to nature than men, and none more so than those who lived savage, primitive lives], and, on the other hand, exemplified the unattractiveness of the savage and the aesthetic indifference of uncivilised peoples seemingly unaffected by such ugliness or indeed by unchristian nakedness."[118] In this case nakedness acts as well as a fascination for white women. The first few women we meet in the novel are only spoken about in their relation to Jason and his sexual escapades; Molly, Mary, Emily, Mabel. One of the first women we are introduced to is Molly: "she was his twin, a tall girl with his thinness of body and neck and nostrils; but a woman's lips and a woman's eyes, darker grey than his; and small, tight breasts."[119] Although the first thing Masters mentions is that Molly is Jason's twin and one would assume some similarities,

[117] Levine, 2013, p.15
[118] Ibid, p.16
[119] Masters, 1955, p.19

Masters instead goes on to explain all the differences they share based on their gender. Early on, Masters presents the definite differences between men and women, down to their lips and eyes, and of course their breasts. Later on in the novel, we also discover that Jason was having a sexual relationship with Molly, his sister, which although during *Coromandel!* may have been more common, in the time of Masters writing in the 1950s, it was definitely considered taboo and was also most likely considered taboo in the early 17th century. Furthermore, Jason's own commentary on this situation shows that he knows it is not considered 'moral': "For a moment they clung together like lovers. (But there must be a woman in the world for him who was not his sister.)"[120] On the other hand, Dalrymple states " the sexual promiscuity of the pre-pubertal children of the British lower classes, to say nothing of the completely commonplace nature of their involvement in incest."[121] Also, Dalrymple goes on to say that "In the case of female babies of Mughal families, the brother of the infant was asked to suckle the 'milkdrop' so produced; this was believed to create a deep bond of love between a brother and his sister."[122]

At the start of the novel, Jason is also having relations with Mary, a local farm girl, who is of similar class to Jason and who he believes would make a good farmer's wife. Although, "Mary was a good girl. For a moment, with one hand on the ivy, he thought of her. She was kind, and when she smiled it was slow and didn't hurt, and her hands were hard as his, but her thighs were soft and her lips wet. He was very fond of her."[123] This initial description focuses on a sexualised account of her feminine body, such as "thighs" and "lips", and sexual imagery like "hard", "soft", and "slow". Despite Mary being "a good girl", and a real contender for the role of Jason's wife, Masters only displays her as a sexual object. However, as Mary is of lower class in Britian, it would have been more typical for her to be more sexually open and

[120] Ibid, p.59
[121] Dalrymple, 2019, p.62
[122] Ibid, p.339
[123] Masters, 1955, p.11

promiscuous, than say Catherine. Yet, Jason does go on to discard Mary, showing how Masters represents women as disposable playthings for the interest of the male lead, and this belief is continuously repeated throughout the novel.

The next love interest causes Jason some inner turmoil, as she is of much higher class than he is, but that does not stop him from trying. When Jason has an encounter with Jane Pennel, Masters represents these encounters between these two characters as romanticised and idolised. Our first introduction to Jane goes like this:

> Jason remembered that time, three years back, when her breasts were just growing, and she'd hung around him at the fair, and they could have been in love, only she was just a girl and a Pennel, and he was a young man and a Savage.[124]

Again, we see more obsession with women's breasts, and this is primarily the first thing Masters mentions when describing new female characters. Masters even goes so far as to say that Jason "seeing so many naked breasts had made him wish he had a pair himself"[125], further highlighting the physical differences between genders to justify the stereotypical gender roles. All of the female characters are sexually objectified, and that unfortunately includes children, when a grown man is looking back at the thought of a young girl with budding breasts as an object of his love. Additionally, the above quote shows the importance of Masters using "Savage" as the protagonist's family name. The term "savage" has negative and inferior connotations, steeped in colonial history. Whereas "Pennel" clearly denotes a higher class within *Coromandel!* as that is the name of Jason's hometown of "Shrewford Pennel". Through the use of these names, Masters shows the importance of language on power dynamics, as well as identity.

[124] Ibid, p.41
[125] Ibid, p.133

There is a lot of sexual imagery throughout the novel, and again many of these representations use animalistic metaphors., From the very start of the novel, It is suggested at the start of the novel that Jason commits crimes of bestiality with his cows. Masters shows Jason to be Savage in name and character, as he partakes in many sexual acts that could be considered "perverse" with an intense fixation on sex.

> 'Not this afternoon, will you, please?' The cow stood restive, with her four legs spread and her flanks bulging in tight drum-circles, and looked at him.[126]

The connection between cows and bulls and Jason's sexuality is demonstrated a few times throughout the novel, with Masters even using it to describe Mary's alternative to Jason with "George Denning was a good man, a slow, bull-like fellow"[127]. On the other hand, as Jason's main role on the farm is to look after his cows, it would make sense that he finds references for them. However the animal imagery continues.

Early on in the novel, Masters creates a scene of excitement centred around a dance called "the Old Wife's Pride" which consisted of "'The maidens in the middle and the men outside"[128]. Even from the title of the dance, Masters demonstrates one of the traditional gender roles for women, that of being a wife remaining in the home, or private and men in the outside, or public. 'The maidens in the middle and the men outside' can also be seen to mimic how animal herds protect the female, children and ill members on the inside, whilst the male animals protect the perimeter. In this scene, Jason is wholly focused on Jane Pennel whom he dances with and is overcome with emotion. Masters cleverly builds up the sexual excitement and tension, having the dance work as a metaphor for eroticism and sexuality, until the dance comes to an abrupt end by the birth of a calf of one of Jason's cows. Not only could this be read as a warning about sex leading to pregnancy, but also reaffirms the connection between sexuality and cow/bull

[126] Ibid, p.41
[127] Ibid, p.57
[128] Ibid, p.48-9

imagery. The animal imagery is not only similar to how Indian people were portrayed in ordered to justify rule but is also used to represent how relations between all men and women, regardless of race, show a power dynamic of predator and prey. Sexual encounters within the novel, and in life, are often battles of power, with one being the dominant, and the other submissive. This is a constant theme throughout all of Masters' novels, and also in many political, legal and colloquial discourse, that women are perceived to be a victim in need of protecting and saving, but at the same time, an object to be sexualised.

In London, we meet Mabel and Emily. Mabel is one of the only female characters who is not sexualised in this way upon her first introduction: "she was plump, dark, over forty, and alone – which was strange."[129] Even though Jason accepts Mabel as a client, he never considers her as a potential romantic interest, perhaps due to her being "dark" or "over forty". The fact that Jason also comments that a woman of her age being alone was "strange", depicts clear gender roles which to Masters transcends time. Unmarried over a certain age are of no value, and especially not for romance. On the other hand, Mabel is treated the best by Jason, reflecting a mother/son relationship.

When Jason first meets Emily however, she is described as "a girl with a mass of brilliantly golden hair falling down her back … wearing only a silk shift. Her pink skin glowed through the material."[130] Whilst Emily may have been spared the description that focuses on her breasts, Masters instead places the importance on her "pink skin" and her clothing, or lack thereof. Although the description may not be specific about the female body, it is still another female character that is sexualised. Also, Emily is definitely not let off easily, as she receives the most verbal and physical abuse from Jason, other than Catherine later on. Emily is Dick O' the Ruff's wife, and therefore regularly works as a prostitute. Masters thereby uses his literary genius to

[129] Ibid, p.75
[130] Ibid, p.70

continuously refer to Emily as a whore; "Why did Emily paint and scent and puff out her breasts? Because she was a whore."[131] Masters utilises the character of Jason continuously to present aggressive dehumanising language, especially towards women. These are sometimes out loud towards their victims, but the foulest use of this language is usually Jason's inner thoughts. It could be suggested that Masters wishes to paint an unlikable character in Jason, with his deplorable behaviour, but when looking at more of Masters novels there is continuous degradation of women through multiple scenes and by various characters. Additionally, though, Masters is once again following his theme by commenting on the female characters breasts. Continuously, Masters references breasts and there is an interesting scene at the end of the novel when Jason and Catherine visit a Buddhist monastery.

> No woman ever came into the monastery.
>
> Never. Tendong had not raised eyes to a woman along the road – not even to the half-naked ones bathing in the irrigation ditch. Tendong was old and wise; he, Jason was young and wise. He'd looked. He remembered the shapes of them very clearly. And Coromandel! The women carried polished golden pomegranates in Coromandel, and the tips stood up like soldiers when it was cold in the morning.
>
> He thought sensuously of women… Women. The devil take them for so many bags of flesh! They didn't matter … Women were nothing in the balance against this.[132]

Here, there is more fascination with breasts, comparing them with "polished golden pomegranates" and nipples with "soldiers". Masters states clearly that Jason thinks of women sexually, comparing them to the devil, placing all the onus and blame on the sex that Jason hates and does not ascribe to. The overall representation of women in Masters' novels is that of sex. One seems to not be able to be described without the other. It is not surprising then, that the events that follow these representations are gendered violence and sexual assault. Furthermore, the above quote clearly shows discrimination towards women in religion, as women are denied entry to the monastery.

[131] Ibid, p.95
[132] Ibid, p.283

## Exotic India

Masters again focuses on breasts when Jason first arrives in India and encounters the women there:

> "But – he nudged Grant beside him – the women! He muttered, 'Have a look at that!' The women wore nothing above the waist, but strutted about with their breast sticking out ahead of them, as proud of their nakedness as the Whitehall ladies of their finery."[133]

Again, Masters compares Britain to India in terms of how the characters dress. Whilst this shows differences in "races", it also varies among classes. Also, the exclamation of "the women!" to highlight not only Masters' interest, but to represent how when young men went to India, they weren't only looking for adventure and advancements in their standing, but also, as Hyam states in *Empire and Sexuality*, for sexual opportunity. Not only were Indian women considered more "exotic", where "Victorian men found beauty and sensuous appeal in a seemingly exotic East"[134], but prostitution was also considered an art form, and was encouraged by royalty, as shown in *Coromandel!*. Even though there was prostitution in England, they were not considered as valued as those in the "Exotic East". Hyam again states

> The expatriate was, in fact, more likely to resort to prostitution overseas simply because the non-European prostitute was often a much more attractive proposition than her British counterpart. The best Asian prostitutes were amusingly playful hostesses. By contrast, British whores were invariably nasty, dirty and coarse, drawn from deprived backgrounds. In India and Japan, prostitution was a more honourable estate, and not furtively conducted. Asian prostitutes were likely to be higher up the social scale, educated and with a proper training for their art.[135]
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> mil

In the next part of these gendered representations, we will see how Indian women are portrayed differently from white British women. However, although there are key differences in the

[133] Ibid, p.103
[134] Hyam, 1990, p.18
[135] Ibid, p.88

representations, what is consistent is that women, regardless of race, are inferior and subordinate to men. There is a stark difference in the Masters descriptions and representations of British women to Indian women, especially regarding their dress, or lack thereof. Following on from his contemporaries, "pictures of colonised women played heavily on the distinction between the clothed, sanctified, and largely unavailable body of the white woman and the allegedly easy sexuality of colonial women."[136] Furthermore, the above quote shows Masters purporting the stereotype and exotism of the naked Indian, by starkly comparing the description to the "Whitehall ladies". On the other hand, Masters also states that there is pride in "their nakedness" and could therefore also be mocking the Whitehall ladies who are proud of their "finery".

One of the first Indian women we are introduced to is Simon's wife, who is never dignified with her own name. "She was a slim, short girl with a deep chest and fine legs. She wore nothing but a net fastened round her waist." [137] Again, her nakedness is an important descriptor to highlight the physical and cultural differences between Indian and British. There is also another instance of sexualising women's body in Masters' descriptions. All the descriptive paragraphs of women can be read in a predatory way, with an excessive focus on their bodies and breasts. With Simon's wife, Masters displays a clear example of women only being represented as marginalised and secondary. The female characters are never really introduced as characters of their own right, but in relation to another male character, either as a wife or potential wife.

The next female character Masters introduces to the audience is Parvati, one of the only speaking female Indian characters within the novel;

> she was plump and short and shining brown. Her eyes were black and black-rimmed, the lashes picked out most clearly in black. She had three violet spots painted or tattooed

[136] Levine, 2013, p.15
[137] Masters, 1955, p.118

> on her cheeks, two on the right and one on the left, and on her right nostril was a tiny gold ornament with a red stone in the centre of it. She wore a skirt of blue and silver that was drawn in between her thighs in the universal fashion here, and showed her dimpled knees. Her breasts were hidden, but poorly, by a short silver jacket with flowered designs on it. Her mouth was deep red, deep-lined, and small. Her hair was oiled-black, drawn back tightly from her forehead, with a white flower stuck in it above her ear. Heavy silver bangles hung on her wrists; and on her ankles were silver anklets in the likeness of snakes; and her feet were long, slim, and bare. The nails of her toes and fingers were painted glossy black.
>
> Jason stared and stared, and his mouth drooped open, and words failed him. Her face was like a heart; the brown column of her neck slid down under the jacket; she was inhumanely beautiful. He had never seen, never dreamed of, such beauty – and he had dreamed much. She had a flute in her hand."[138]

As Jason believes Parvati to be the love of his life, it makes sense that Masters dedicates an entire page to her description. The description itself is highly sexualised, with the moment again focused on her poorly hidden breasts, and her mouth. This description seems different from the other female characters, as it is much more exaggerated, even going so far as to say, "inhumanely beautiful." Masters' otherworldly description would have added to the mysticalness that surrounded India in the British public's imagination. The jewellery description and style of dress is typical of "devadasi" or "nautch girls" which becomes Parvati's overriding character trait. A devadasi or nautch girl was an experienced prostitute trained in sexual arts, and "in an address to the Anthropological Society of London in the late 1860s, Dr J. Shortt declared the dancing-girls of South India attractive enough to 'meet the admiration of the greatest *connoisseur*'"[139] as if women are a form of commercial consumption.

Jason also continuously uses the term "Princess" or "Devadasi" instead of Parvati's name, such as, "He knew her name already – Princess Devadasi."[140] The very term that Jason uses to express his extreme admiration for his "Princess Devadasi" is the same term he uses later on

[138] Ibid, p.108-9
[139] Hyam, 1990, p.89
[140] Masters, 1955, p.111

to abuse Parvati and judge her for her lifestyle. In making Parvati almost supernatural with her exotic beauty and princess status, Masters represents how, "Indian titles always impressed the British, and Kitty's reputation as the daughter of a 'Hindoo Princess' (Khair un-Nissa [Indian wife of a British Indian Company Officer] was of course neither 'Hindoo' nor a princess) seems to have done as much as her relations, beauty and fortune to ease her passage in English society."[141] Regardless of Masters trying to make Parvati a more suitable and respectable choice of suitor for Jason to the Western reader, her being associated to 'devadasi's' or 'nautch girls' was harder to assimilate. The connection between 'devadasi's' or 'nautch girls' and sexual violence is evident whereby the following scene unfolds;

> There was a girl shrieking behind the violet curtain at the king's back, all hidden, only her toes showing under the curtain. The king had a hairy chest and a barrel of a stomach and fat breasts. He showered gold coins on the dancers, at the feet of the shrieking singer, in jason's palm. The drummers drummed, the fluters fluted, the girls' navels went round, and – jerk – round."[142]

Masters' description of sexual violence is unproblematic and naturalised. On the over hand, Parvati's description of what it means to be a Devadasi definitely has a religious undertone, whilst still baring similarities to prostitution:

> 'We dance before the god in the shrine, morning and evening. We sing in the temple. We take men for what they will pay, and give half to the priests for the god. We walk with the king and other important people when they are calling on each other. We are wives of the god. *Our* god is Shiva… our parents give us to the god when we are babies. I have never seen my mother or father. At the proper age the god marries us. *We* will never become widows!'[143]

Parents offering up their young children to the church in sacrifice, to marry them to a God, who in turn profits off their sexual work. It is also stated later on that these priests also make sure that these young girls are unable to procreate. "The Brahmins saw to it that none of them had

[141] Dalrymple, 2002, p.478
[142] Masers, 1955, p.164
[143] Ibid, p.136

any children."[144] Although this may be factual and an actual reality of devadasis' lives, Masters in describing so adds to the British public's imagination of a barbaric and uncivilised nation; one that is in need of protecting its young women.

Jason's inner dialogue adds to this idea of imperialist ideas being pressed onto native states and also hints at Masters doubt of these imperialist practices. For example, "Was it, after all, a noble thing to be a devadasi? It was he, her English lover here, who had put that doubt into her mind"[145]. By putting the idea into Parvati that her profession was something immoral or dangerous, Masters portrays that Parvati is a victim of her "culture" and in need of saving. Typical of imperial discourse,

> By maintaining women's subordination they could show that India was not yet fit for Independence. By liberalising women's position they demonstrated the Western culture's superiority in relations between men and women.[146]

This is further highlighted when Masters has Jason believe that "perhaps she'd been waiting all these years for a man to come who would love her for herself. He could be the man. Perhaps she had hoped from the first that he meant to save her."[147] Masters represents here the idea that Jason or men know best or better than their female counterparts. It suggests that women are just waiting for men to fulfil their lives, that women are just waiting for their saviour, for their knight in shining armour to come and save her. This ideology that Masters represents perpetuates the gender role of women being the victim or damsel and men being the saviour and source of knowledge.

[144] Ibid, p.173
[145] Ibid, p.173
[146] Liddle & Joshi, 1985
[147] Masters, 1955, p.137

A complementary angle to the representation of gender in a colonial context is the risk of white women to go native. Elizabeth Sophie Plowden, an Englishwoman residing in India, had claimed to have "gone native" by dressing as a nautch girl but,

> was at pains to assure her sister that the costume she wore was "perfectly decent," a comment that very quickly served to distance Plowden from any negative connotations that would have come from dressing as a South Asian dancing girl, a figure the British commonly associated with prostitution and licentiousness.[148]

The understanding that women can only be one of two things (the prostitute or the virgin) is explored in Marquis de Sade's 18th century works of *Justine* and *Juliette*, who unsurprisingly was arrested for sexual violence against women. For "ideals of the virgin bride and chaste wife could be sustained only by the services of the prostitute!"[149] This binary representation of women heightens the sexualisation and objectification of women even today. However, this can be seen within the devadasis.

> for in that strange link between piety and prostitution that existed all over India at this period – both among the devadasis* (*literally 'slave girls of the gods': temple dancers, prostitutes and courtesans who were given to the great Hindu temples, usually in infancy) of the great Hindu temples and the Muslim courtesans who used to pick up their clients in the great Sufi shrines – this was a festival especially associated with the tawaif¸ the cultivated and urbane dancing girls who were such a central feature of late Mughal society.[150]

or as a marriage prospect, and this is apparent throughout all his novels. The idea that women are only useful in terms of sexual or marital terms is iterated by Parvati when she says, "'You're just like the other men, after all, you don't want to hear me read.' She crouched on the cushions, and suddenly her arms wound out and coiled about his neck, and her skirt slipped loose, and her eyes glowed large an inch from his."[151] Masters here again uses animal imagery, to liken

[148] Nechtman, 2006, p.14
[149] Dalrymple, 2019, p.62
[150] Dalrymple, 2002, p.221
[151] Masters,1955, p.137

Parvati to a snake "coiled" ready to pounce, as if sex is an animalistic matter of predator and prey, again another notion Marquis de Sade explores.

Jason seems to also struggle with this binary idea when thinking about Parvati. Masters has Jason flick between lust and anger regularly thinking when about women, and Parvati is no exception. Upon Jason first meeting Parvati, he gets confused about her identity. With the above descriptions, Jason first sees Parvati in a temple and mistakes her for a princess. Then when the Indian King that Jason is staying with sends Jason a prostitute, it is none other than Paravati. Masters clearly depicting how royalty were accepting of sex workers, and actively engaging with them, and purchasing women and sex slaves for guests as if they were gifts. The woman's needs are completely ignored throughout the novel. Jason, however, is not as accepting of prostitutes, despite having been one himself, stating angrily, "A whore, the king was sending him! She would be subtle and fierce, dark, debased, acrobatically lustful."[152] Jason become s most explosive when talking about "whores" and prostitution. The words used to describe the unknown prostitute is a clear representation of what British men expected of the women in India: "subtle and fierce, dark, debased, acrobatically lustful". Despite Jason's anger and obvious disgust, he still considers sleeping with the prostitute and the consequences that will pursue: "What would the princess think if she knew he had lain with a strumpet here in her own capital city?"[153] Again, the irony that Jason is fretting that he will not be accepted by the "princess" if she knows he has been sexually promiscuous with a "strumpet" of all people, only to find out that the princess and strumpet are one and the same.

Here it can be seen that Masters represents the hypocritical nature of British attitudes towards sexuality and how it relates to gender. Jason so far throughout the novel has had multiple sexual partners with no repercussions, and if anything, every new partner slightly improves his station.

[152] Ibid, p.133
[153] Ibid, p.133

On the other hand, the British and Indian women he has relations with are usually left in a worse position, with their dignity being taken, and their supposed chastity ruined. Additionally, as stated previously in this chapter, a common motive and perk of explorers and travellers was the sexual opportunity.

> there was a flourishing free trade in prostitution. But alongside this often insensitive activity, paradoxically the British had another export too, and a very counterbalancing one: its official prudery. Practice and theory diverged. Britain had 'an ultra-squeamishness and hyper-prudery peculiar to itself': narrow, blinkered, defective and intolerant attitudes towards sex which it all too successfully imposed on the rest of the world. One of the worst results of the expansion of Britain was the introduction of its guilty inhibitions about sex into societies previously much better sexually adjusted than perhaps any in the West.[154]

The idea of India being more sexually expressive prior to British involvement can be seen when Jason first arrives in India, when he first meets Parvati in a temple. Masters here displays his representation of what he understands an Indian temple to be in the 17th century, one with many sculptures and depictions of sexual acts. Here is Masters' description of the engravings that Jason finds in the temple:

> And here was a war, with men fighting, and among them a troop of women with breasts as round as water-melons. That was wrong. They ought to know better *here*! He'd never seen a woman like that, and he'd wager no one else had either. And – God's blood! God's very bones! Here was the act of a man swyving a woman, and another, and another – hundreds of times, over and over.
>
> He walked on, peering in amazement. Men and women, bulls and cows, monkeys, elephants – and the bodies twisted in so many lascivious ways.[155]

In the statement above, you can again see commentary on the female body again, comparing them to "watermelons" or something to be consumed. Masters also gives a clear statement here that women fighting in war is "wrong. [and] they ought to know better *here*!" Not only is this another comparison of Britain to India, but also shows the importance of knowledge to exert

[154] Hyam, 1990, p.3
[155] Masters, 1955, p.108

dominance. “They ought to know” the western gender roles, of creating stark difference between women and men. If women cannot fight for themselves, they need someone to fight for them, giving men power and purpose. Additionally, the above shows disdain for India’s history of being more open sexually, and highlights Britain’s history of silencing sexual discourse and imagery. Seeing as this scene is set in a temple that is the heart of this town, and it is adorned with sexual statues, one would assume that this was not only accepted in this Indian town, but revered, making Jason’s shock problematic.

Furthermore, by adding on “bulls and cows” in the middle of the list of “bodies twisted in so many lascivious ways”, Masters seems to play down the emphasis he is placing on this sexual imagery. It could be argued that Masters is referring to how in the Hindu faith the cow is worshiped as a sacred animal. Yet by continuously referencing it, it seems Masters is trying to add this idea to the standardised image of the native Indian to the British and US audiences. Additionally, as we know about Jason’s previous relationship with his cows back home, Masters seems to encourage a commonality of perversion within sexuality. Hyam in *Empire and Sexuality* states

> the British became ever more interested in a 'discourse of sex' as a scientific problem than in its practice as a pleasurable art. Foucault indeed suggests that the truly original feature of Western culture is the specification of notions of 'perversity', and the creation of corrective psychiatric mechanisms, which stigmatised a large number of unorthodox sexual practices. Some of these 'deviant' categories were spurious, notably 'homosexuality'; sex between males is, however, so widespread in the world as not to be at all unorthodox. For the rest, the new stigmatised categories were mostly of wholly peripheral significance, almost less than fringe phenomena (zoophilia, gerontophilia, coprophilia, coprolalia, urolagnia).[156]

As Masters is writing in the 1950s, his depictions of these subtle ‘perversions could be due to him trying to be truer to the era in which the novel is set. However, as Masters uses significant animal imagery when describing sex in all his novels, there is a clear pattern demonstrated of

[156] Hyam, 1990, p.57-8

animals and their behaviours being considered less than or savage, and thereby, Indians and women are too. Later on in this chapter, we will discuss how these 'deviant' behaviours often flourished within public schools and the military.

Similar to Jason's shock at the temple, is his shock upon discovering Parvati is not a princess, but a prostitute. In creating this somewhat comical scene, it could be read as Masters mocking this double standard, or instead perpetuating it further. I would argue that it is definitely emphasising these gender roles as the scene progresses to a furthered aggressive sexualisation of Parvati and her profession:

> She would wriggle in, already half undressed, with jewels on her bosom and a ruby in her navel. She would wait for him to give some sign of passion. No, she would sway into him, reeking of woman's scent, and fasten hot lips on him. He practised receiving such an assault. Oh, blood and death, it was going to be impossible to resist her if she came at him like that. She was faceless, beautiful, lascivious, diabolically skilled. She was hotter than the whispered yarns in the forecastle at night, when the sailors talked of bouts in Hispaniola and Barbary and among the blonde Swedes. He could feel her liquid lips, her clinging arms.
>
> How could he ever think himself worthy of the princess if he could not control himself before a whore? [157]

In this passage, Masters creates and builds sexual tension, as if the character is getting aroused at the thought of unwanted advances. Masters suggests that whilst Jason is saying 'no' and rejecting these imaginary advances, he does deep down want to succumb, an idea commonly used to combat rape accusations. Jason delivers a monologue about control and sex, something through his actions, he seems to lack. Moreover, this paragraph also highlights that prostitution during this time in India, was considered an art form and "impossible to resist" and yet ultimately, still from Jason's perspective "She was a whore!"[158] and not worthy of respect. From a British colonial perspective however, "Prostitution … was defended as a lesser evil

[157] Masters, 1955, p.133-4
[158] Ibid, p.137

than 'going native'."[159] However, due to the setting of the novel, intermarriage was more likely, but as Masters is writing from a postcolonial perspective, he presents how

> By the beginning of the nineteenth century, interracial marriage gradually came to an end, though the native concubine or bibi continued to be kept and interracial sexual liaisons continued to be widely and openly practiced. Indeed, as late as 1858, a Military Officer could openly write in his letter home about his "Eastern princess", a "mistress who answered all the purposes of a wife without any of the bother".[160]

For Jason this is a reality, as he is continuously turned away from considering marriage to Parvati due to her skin colour, but yet still continues to use her sexual services. For example, when Jason is being offered Catherine to wed, the latter's father says: "Well, if you insist on having your black mistress listen to my daughter's shame, I cant prevent you. I have come to make you a formal offer of marriage on her behalf – fifty thousand and pieces of eight.'"[161] Even though at this time Jason was pursing the idea of marrying Parvati. The need to include 'black' when discussing Parvati is unnecessary in this moment, except in to express the racist undertones of anti-interracial marriages. Masters here also slightly touches on the thoughts surrounding shame and family shame, especially concerning daughters' marriage capabilities. Dhonchakf shows this further by saying "the relationship between caste, gender, and class in India is centered around stringent control over women's sexuality not only for the maintenance of patrilineal succession but also the purity of caste, an exclusively Indian institution".[162]

During this scene, Parvati is listening in whilst remaining 'behind the curtain', "That phrase 'behind the curtain' meant 'in the women's quarters.'"[163] Masters here subtly hints towards the Islamic practice of purdah, the physical veil or curtain that separated the women's quarters from the men. The purdah was an important tool of discussion, when colonisers spoke of

[159] Hyam, 1990, p.107
[160] Hyam in Pawha, 2004, p.286
[161] Masters, 1955, p.176
[162] Dhonchakf, 2019, p.43
[163] Masters, 1955, p.176

liberating the women of India from what they believed to be an oppressive Islamic practice, regardless of many women saying it was a source of safety. Pawha comments

> Many strands weave the complex social labyrinth of colonial India: (1) the problem of intermeshing of racial and gendered categories, miscegenation of white man and Indian wife or bibi; (2) the prurience and prejudice arising out of the construct of the sensual Indian woman due to her mode of dress, i.e., the sari and its subsequent transculturation; (3) the preoccupation with the purdah, perceived as an impenetrable barrier; (4) "the White Woman", being subjected to age-old patriarchal notions of female subservience and about white female racial segregation; and (5) the rise of "Women's Question", which marked the beginning of a resistance against subordination on the part of women.[164]

Through Masters novels, he demonstrates that it was not as strict as the British public perceived. As shown later on in the novel, and as well in Dalrymple's novel *White Mughals*, different men can access behind the curtain, depending on their relationship with the women behind, or the men in front. For example, "One way of getting around the stricture of purdah was for a woman or a group of women formally to adopt the man in question as their 'brother'."[165] Although Masters presents a more liberal view of purdah, he still shows that it revolves around the men's choices. Additionally, purdah became "the white man's sexual fantasy, projecting the gendered "Other" as excitingly sensual".[166]

Catherine is the second female character we are introduced to once Jason has reached India. She is the daughter of the Portuguese ambassador and is described as follows: "She was slight and dark-haired and not at all beautiful. Her eyes were strange – wide-set, brown, and fully open under dark, questioning eyebrows. She had an olive skin and long thin hands."[167] Masters describes Catherine differently from the other female characters, as due to Jason's lack of interest, she is not entirely sexualised. Ironically, she is the one who goes on to marry Jason,

[164] Pawha, 2004, p.283
[165] Dalrymple, 2012, p.416
[166] Pawha, 2004, p.293
[167] Masters, 1955, p.111-2

and perhaps not so ironically, the one who receives the most abuse from Jason, as if a women's looks equates to the respect that she deserves.

## Gendered violence

Masters clearly displays representations of women, and femininity, as weak and inferior. When Jason struggles internally and mentally, he deems this to be a feminine ailment, calling himself "Softy! Booby! He must be weak in the head!'"[168] Masters displays Jason in a state of inner turmoil, where Jason is verbally abusing himself with insults that have gendered background. "Booby" which we know refers to breasts, with Masters continued obsession throughout the novel, but now instead of being a source of distraction and excitement, they are something to mock and use as an insult. Comments like this led to a toxic masculinity, where a stereotypical male gender role is to be strong and a protector, someone who can never be weak and is always in control. These ideas surrounding protectiveness and control are common symptoms of domestic abuse. Catherine also seems to claim his abuse of her "never been much more than masculine pique."[169] Masters awareness through Catherine of Jason being insecure with his gender and portraying his masculinity through his anger, could be shown as a criticism of toxic masculinity. However, as Masters continuously displays signs of toxic masculinity in his male characters, and based off of his education, it is safe to argue that these are Masters representations of gender and their roles. Furthermore, through the depiction earlier of Parvati and the support of prostitution, Masters highlights how "the female figure, through its simultaneous connections with commodification and trade on the one hand, and violence and difference on the other, plays a central role in the constitution of [a] mercantile capitalist

[168] Ibid, p.192
[169] Ibid, p.240

ideology."[170] Through the casual use of women for the military, and through the East India Company setting up sex trafficking links early, we see how women are represented as commodities, and thereby their humanity is stripped.

Another representation of women as victims is depicted most clearly in Masters' character of Catherine. She is the perfect character for the protagonist, as she is a European woman of high class, yet still is considered weak, due to her disability. When Jason and Catherine are on the run, later in the novel, Catherine adopts the dress of Indian women, to better hide from her pursuers and whilst in this dress she is compared to Indian women and therefore is held to a much higher standard. For example:

> She wore nothing above her waist. Her breasts were small and high, and her belly flat; her cotton skirt swung with the movement of her hips… He stared at her naked torso as she came close. He had seen a thousand Indian women like that since he landed in Coromandel – but this was the Portuguese grandee's daughter, who wore high-necked dresses and long sleeves.[171]

Not only does the above show again how much of Masters' descriptions of women is sexually charged, but also reinforces the synonym of Indian and nakedness. In this case, nakedness also suggests vulnerability. Shortly after Jason meets Catherine and her father, Don Manoel, Masters displays differences between European countries, especially in terms of marriage customs:

> 'Your English customs are somewhat different in this matter, but among us a father arranges the marriage of his daughter, and, if he is well-to-do, provides her with an ample dowry. The gentleman she married would also expect a high position in his father-in-law's household…In the case of a daughter who is perhaps not so beautiful as one would hope, or who has had the misfortune to be born with a limp or other defect of body, the dowry would be considerably increased. A father would only wish to feel sure, in such a case, that he was linking his blood with blood of an equivalent rank. We have been hereditary grandees for two hundred and fifty years… *My* son-in-law, for instance, would expect to become my principal lieutenant here. let us suppose you were

[170] Nechtman, 2006, p.114
[171] Masters, 1955, p.201

> the man. Should we reach an agreement on the larger matters already discussed, there would be considerable advantages to you, to me, and to Catherine, if you were her husband and so my relative.'
>
> Jason said, 'You would force Catherine to marry me?'…
>
> Don Manoel became more obviously embarrassed. He said, 'I – really, I hesitate to tell the truth lest you should think my poor daughter is – she is *virgo intacta*, I assume you, and not at all forward or improper.' [172]

When knowing that Jason eventually marries Catherine, Masters emphasises in this scene an ideal scenario. Not only will Jaso receive a high standing position in society, and in work, but he will also receive a large dowry, more bountiful due to Catherine's disability. It is also considered important that Catherine's virginity is intact, proving she is a worthy wife. Words such as "rank", "well-to-do", "gentleman", "grandees", "high position", even "father" or "father-in-law" all demonstrate how class and the patriarchal structure was an important and strong factor when considering who to marry, and less so considering a wife as an equal counterpart. The idea that a woman unmarried is a danger to society, spreads further to a woman alone is at risk. Jason early on states "This is no place for a maid at night, and alone. There isn't a man with you, is there?' he finished, suddenly suspicious."[173] This is a common assumption for women, not only in this novel, but also still today in some rape cases. A woman is presented from birth as a victim, someone in need of protecting. Instead of focusing on the men that could potentially attack a "maid at night" the onus is put onto the woman, and the men that should be looking after her. The woman is not presented as someone who is autonomous in her own right. In addition, Masters creates a perception of women in just two short sentences; "is there not one of you here who thinks there might be someone wishing him ill at this moment, using the pins on him like? A wife, by chance – it may be a shrewish wife? A girl who mistook your meaning when - ?'"[174] It highlights that it was common for wives to

[172] Ibid, p.150-1
[173] Ibid, p.36-7
[174] Ibid, p.43

think ill of their husbands, and also perpetuates the stereotype of women being "shrewish". On the alternative side, unmarried women may make the mistake of misunderstanding a man's advances. Again, this is putting the onus on the woman, and how it could not possibly be a man's fault.

There are many instances within *Coromandel!* where sexual, emotional, and physical abuse takes place, and it is almost always made to seem trivial and somewhat deserved. For example, when Jason and Emily become acquainted, they have the below discussion, where Emily states;

> 'Don't tell me you've never undressed in front of a woman before, even if you do come from Wiltshire. But no tricks, mind!' Her voice hardened and grew shrill. 'You try any tricks, and ill give you more than you bargained for.'[175]

The above quote shows that it is a common occurrence for a man to play "tricks" on a woman, which I understand to mean some form of sexual assault or violence. Emily's character is trying to protect herself from Jason by acting tough, as though she has had to make these statements previously.

Jason is a violent man, assaulting numerous women throughout the novel, brewing with the disrespect towards leading Mary on, the uncomfortable situation with his sister Molly, and picking up when he "slapped [Emily's] face hard"[176]. Masters does not portray this as a character flaw but seems to describe these actions as natural course of life. However, at times, Masters does depict these acts of violence as linked to a more basic animalistic need, such as "He thought he was going to have the barbaric satisfaction of seeing her wailing and crying in anguish."[177] Masters' although is stating the above is a "barbaric" thought, he still presents in his novel the idea that Jason takes pleasure in seeing a woman in distress. This can also be seen

[175] Ibid, p.71
[176] Ibid, p.90
[177] Ibid, p.92

within *The Deceivers*, whereby the protagonist takes pleasure out of violence and glorifies it. There will be more on this in the next chapter.

Furthermore, there is a disturbing scene where Emily is thrown by Jason during a public dance, and falls to her disgrace. Jason, just before this moment, realises his love for Emily, and seems to lash out at his own sentimental feelings by embarrassing her further.

> He let go. Emily flew across the cleared space, cannoned into a table, fell over it, lay on her face among the broken glass, spilled ale running down her legs – kicking, showing all her legs and more than her legs, her big white woman's cheek. The men shouted wildly, crazy with laughing and seeing that. Jason walked over and slapped her sharply on her naked buttocks.[178]

The fact that bystanders find this situation amusing is even more disturbing, showing that this is accepted ad common behaviour.

Catherine, however, definitely receives the most abuse, as if Masters wants to depict that a wife is definitely deserving of abuse by her husband. Although, the following scene happens directly after a disastrous meeting between all the political agents in Coromandel, leading to the death of many of the said agents, it is still not understandable how in Jason's panic he can treat Catherine in the following way, when she is dealing with the above situation as well, with one of the dead political agents being her father. I feel as though today the following scene would come with a trigger warning.

> 'Shut your mouth!' Jason yelled. He hit her on the side of the head with his open hand, he was trembling violently. She stumbled and fell to her knees and stayed there on all fours, her head hanging and her hair trailing in the mud.
>
> Cursing monotonously, Jason picked her up in his arms and carried her to his hut. Her body was warm and her face calm. She was already asleep. He laid her down and knelt beside her head, glowering bitterly at her dark eyelids.
>
> She was helpless. She must have some money hidden away somewhere. She was in love with him, for all her abuse. By God, she spoke to him like a mother, or like Molly, telling him what he had done, what he must do. But by God, she was a slender figure of a woman, lying there in his hut. He was standing in a trance when the old woman

[178] Ibid, p.85

> shuffled in and said, 'Let her sleep now. She's a pretty one, isn't she, but thin. Why is she so thin?'[179]

Masters provides a stark insight into the mind of an abusive male character. To start, it is interesting the focus on the fact that Jason, although hitting Catherine, that he did so with an "open hand" as a slap is considered less severe than a closed fist. Regardless, the hit is enough to cause Catherine to fall unconscious. There is also a description of Catherine here that hints at rape, linking this abusive behaviour with sexual desire. Jason's inner dialogue after this incident is unnerving, as he describes his victim as "helpless". He plans to rob her and escape, and ultimately gaslights her by accusing her "for all her abuse". Yet in the next breath thinks of her "slender figure…there in his hut", even though it is a hut they share possession of. Again, the abuse and the desire are hand in hand. Its worrying to think what could have happened, or what Masters suggests might happen, if an "old woman" emphasis on the "old" didn't happen to "shuffle" in and usher Jason away. Jason then goes on to describe Catherine as "his slave", and it is typical of slavery to go hand in hand with abuse, specifically sexual abuse, with Hyam stating "rape was legal while slavery existed."[180]

> "But why did he want her to stand there, ten feet from him, the skirt clinging to her thighs and the blue hint of evening on breasts and cheek? He could have her whenever he wanted to. He could keep his dislike for her. She was his slave, or she would not be here. She would not have stood so carelessly before him."[181]

Jasons stunted emotional immaturity is on display here as if he does not understand his own emotions. Perhaps Masters is giving Jason a reason for his anger, as a suppressed love he has for Catherine. But as we have seen Jason express previously with Parvati and Emily that sex and love are synonymous, with Catherine, Jason finally differentiates: "he loved her, but not with earthly desire."[182] However, Masters does also display the sexual power play between

[179] Ibid, p.202
[180] Hyam, 1990, p.93-4
[181] Masters, 1955, p.203
[182] Ibid, 258

these two characters, where we see Jason refer to Catherine as "his slave" and declares "he could have her whenever he wanted to", all whilst keeping "his dislike for her." Masters continues this by showing Catherine's submissive nature, when she says "'I am glad you hit me, because I don't think I could have slept otherwise.'", and Jason perhaps ashamed of his earlier behaviour, or maybe to protect himself replies with "'Don't talk about it. I lost my temper.'"[183] All of the above depicts Masters representations of gender roles, whereby women are blamed for the abusive actions of men, and even going so far as to say they benefit from it. To diminish Jason's abusive behaviour towards Catherine to a "temper", also shows Masters simple dismissive attitude towards gendered violence. The next scene, we see Jason's sexual urges growing, as if he is losing self control;

> He began to answer with anger, but she moved her arms in a small gesture of embrace – not to him, but to the sea and the indigo sky and the whispering dunes – and the pectoral muscle stood out for an instant, pulling up her breast, and he though: I will have her now…He could not wait a moment longer… He tried again, assaulting her slight body with kisses and hard arms. She did not turn stiff against him, and she did not struggle. She even kissed him, but he could not lie with her.[184]

Masters again depicts Jason contemplating rape, and even going so far as to "assaulting her slight body with kisses and hard arms". Although Jason was the one who went to Catherine in attempts to lie together, and was the one who thought about her sexually whilst she lay unconscious from his doing, and with Catherine previously explicitly saying she would not lie with him, Jason still finds reason to accuse Catherine for his abusive behaviour, stating that

> God's blood, he had wanted her for a minute back there, but that was only because she was a woman and had had the obscenity to prance around undressed in front of him. He hated her. Let her laugh now, or smile, or so much as speak, and he'd strangle her.[185]

[183] Ibid, p.203-4
[184] Ibid, p.204
[185] Ibid, p.205

Masters displays a common theme in many court cases, where the victim is blamed, and her dress is called into question, as if the physical naked body is the cause for sexual assault. Also, Masters again displays Jason's inner dialogue as very aggressive towards Catherine, juxtaposed once again against his sexual desire. The continuation of liking sex and violence together, shows Masters creating a pattern of representation where women are portrayed as the victim. Furthermore, by using Catherine to receive most of the abuse shows Masters emphasising a woman's vulnerability in sexual dynamics. As stated above, Jason uses Catherine's disability as an insult, and he does this again to show her worth: "'What good's a blind woman who won't lie with me?'"[186] Masters again expresses how another key gender role for women is to be of service to men's sexual desires. Another example of both Masters representation of women as vulnerable, and also responsible for the abuse is when Jason "looked at [Catherine] with the purest hate. Blind, thin, weak, half naked, female, and helpless – and she was forcing him to do what he did not want to do."[187]

After all the abuse that Catherine receives, she still is able to hold love for Jason, even going so far as to saying "nothing, holding herself in check."[188] Masters displays here yet another gender role of women being seen and not heard, similar to a parent and child dynamic. Representative of the patriarchal structures, Catherine relies on Jason as a father, despite her having more money, class, and education. Jason for this part of the novel seems intent on dwelling on his hatred of Catherine, looking to cause her the most harm possible without physically attacking her;

> Once he became sure that she loved him he went more often to the strumpets, and told her where he was going. Several times he had brought a woman to their roadside camp. She went away as long as the woman was there, but otherwise she said nothing, did nothing, and thought she showed nothing. He paid the women with her money."[189]

[186] Ibid, p.208
[187] Ibid, p.209
[188] Ibid, p.213
[189] Ibid, p.214

Not only is he exploiting her love for him but cruelly mocking his perceived view of her helplessness. To add insult to injury, he also uses her money to purchase prostitutes. It could be argued that Masters is trying to explore Jason's feelings of inadequacy, as stated previously by Catherine's father, he is of a lower class. Similar to the idea of double bind, internalizing this self-hate Jason has for being low born, means he projects it, potentially ending in violence, "but as Fanon notes, this destructive behaviour is not "the consequence of the organization of his nervous system or of characterial originality, but the direct product of the colonial system."[190] Even after all of this behaviour, it is still Jason who is refusing Catherine's hand in marriage, whilst Catherine seems intent on it. However, Jason does use the term of "wife" for Catherine, whilst they are both in hiding, and he claims it is for her own reputation:

> 'My wife is tired.' She bridled self-consciously. He had taken to calling her his wife, where before he had referred to her as his woman. He had said with a surly mien one night that she must not think he really meant to marry her, just because he called her his wife; only he did not want people to think she was a loose woman.[191]

Again, Masters uses more possessive pronouns when describing the women relating to Jason; "my wife", "his woman". Jason insinuates to Catherine that he only describes her as his wife to protect her dignity and virginity, perpetuating the idea that the best way to prevent unwanted advances from men is to lie and pretend another man has already claimed you, as a man will respect another man's possession more than the words of a woman saying no. Additionally, this can be seen again when a villager is speaking with Jason about Catherine, stating "'Your woman can live in one of our villages while you are on the road. We do not permit women to travel with us.'"[192] Not only is this further evidence of Masters using possessive pronouns to represent women as objects, but also shows further discriminatory exclusion of women from

[190] Smith, 2005, p.13-4
[191] Masters, 1955, p.241
[192] Ibid, p.223

public spaces. Masters emphasises this further, when Catherine is dismissed as holding a lower position than Jason, simply because of her gender; "Publicly this clod of a husband of yours must be the councillor, because you are a woman."[193] Although Masters maybe trying to be representative of the times in the 17th Century where women were not allowed to hold important positions of council, Masters does not need to include the blatant disdain and disrespect that exudes from the assumption that the councillor could not possibly be a woman, even when the alternative "clod" is a much less likely scenario. Moreover, Masters again displays women as objects of their husbands. Furthermore, at the start of the novel, Masters depicts this idea in the character of Mabel, "she said, 'My father would not have me taught, because I was a girl. Then I asked both my husbands, and they forbade me. They said, "What does a woman want with reading?""[194] This is again reiterating that Master's understanding of women is always as a secondary character, and only understandable in relation to a man. If it is not a woman's father, it is her husband, who controls her life.

The theme of marriage is both prevalent and prominent in all of Masters' novels. The marriages are all with European white women, even though all the novels are set in India. Drawing from Butler, Masters seems

> To guarantee the reproduction of a given culture, various requirements, well established in the anthropological literature of kinship, have instated sexual reproduction within the confines of a heterosexually-based system of marriage which requires the reproduction of human beings in certain gendered modes which, in effect, guarantee the eventual reproduction of that kinship system. As Foucault and others have pointed out, the association of a natural sex with a discrete gender and with an ostensibly natural 'attraction' to the opposing sex/gender is an unnatural conjunction of cultural constructs in the service of reproductive interests.[195]

In order to follow the concept explained above, there needs to be two defined binary genders, to be able to implement a "heterosexually-based system of marriage". Alternatively, it also

[193] Ibid, p.230
[194] Ibid, p.87
[195] Butler, 1988, p.524

suggests that anything other than heterosexual marriage is deemed incorrect or 'perverse'. Typical traits however, that Masters assigns to women, other than 'wife', 'victim', 'prostitute', or 'old' is definitely linked to being entirely separate spheres from men. For example, "she was a woman and not supposed to understand too much of men's affairs."[196] This is a clear and simple statement defining a role for women. Ultimately, "sexism, racism, misogyny, and heterosexism underlie and fuel social and political institutions of rule and thus often lead to hatred of women and (supposedly justified) violence against women."[197]

## Class representations

Throughout *Coromandel!* and the representations of race and gender, there is always an element of class. By using racial classification to create a hierarchal structure of men to justify colonisation, we see the promotion of a superior white class. By representing the ideal family structure as patriarchal to create women oppression, we again raise the station of men. In *Coromandel!* we see how Jason, as a representative for the East India Company, was given the opportunity of raising his position from working-class. Dalrymple in *The Anarchy* shows how the Company "was answerable only to its shareholders. With no stake in the just governance of the region, or its long-term well-being, the Company's rule quickly turned into the straightforward pillage of Bengal, and the rapid transfer westwards of its wealth."[198] For Jason rightly believes that treasure, or financial gain, will change his class. Masters represents this further, as upon arrival in India, Jason believes he has met a Princess.

The term 'nabob' originated from these British men that would make their fortunes suspiciously through the East India Company. But it wasn't just British men that found

[196] Masters, 1955, p. 172
[197] Mohanty, 2003, p.3
[198] Dalrymple, 2019, p.27

wealth in India, as there was a small community of 'nabobinas', and "Such nabobinas as Marian Hastings complicated the imperial process because they destabilized the order of masculine imperial authority."[199] These people were an example of how money can change your class, yet you still can not escape your race or gender. For example, the Nabobinas "determination to have Indian luxuries no matter the cost threatened the racial stability of Britishness itself."[200] When it comes to gender, women were rarely viewed as anything more than a sexual commodity. Especially in Masters' novels, the women are seen as less than working class, they are seen as the product. Nechtman states that

> According to The General Evening Post of London, there was no shortage of women who aspired to be nabobini. "We are sorry to learn by account from Bengal," the paper reported in 1786, "that several fair adventurers are to be re-shipped for Europe; the market being already overstocked, and many samples of beauty remaining on hand!"49 The English Chronicle echoed The General Evening Post on 15 June 1786, when it advised all "India ships" that "the Asiatic market is overstocked with British Beauties, and that the price falls daily."[201]

Due to this representation of women as a product, men in the binary opposition represent the consumer.

With higher class comes more rules and regulations relating to your race and gender. For example, "purdah connoted elaborate codes of seclusion and feminine modesty" but "these Hindu notions of feminine modesty were (and often still are) widely accepted by upper and middle class families, and families that wished to emulate them as a sign of status."[202]

*Coromandel!* also shows representations of class as other adventure novels of the period. Masters seems to almost mimic the *Boys Own* magazines, first released in 1879. These magazines were popular, especially among public school boys, as they were considered to be the male equivalent of *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*, which was a novel for

[199] Nechtman, 2006, p.20
[200] Ibid, p.21
[201] Ibid, p.21
[202] Pawha, 2004, p.289

women on how to run the perfect household. Unironically, the *Boys Own* magazine, was started by Samuel Beeton, the above-mentioned Mrs Beeton's husband. These magazines included adventure stories, where a young boy of the 19th Century could learn what it means to become a man, and what traits and morals this would entail. If that is to believed, then Masters' *Coromandel!* shows that the making of a man consists of elements that could equate to toxic masculinity. For example,

> "He was twenty, and he could use a bow, sword, sling, and halberd. He had fired guns and lain with girls. He could sing a madrigal and tune a fiddle; he could dance the Moorish dance at Whitsun and join in the Ring at the harvest fair. He could drink to King Charles in ale or brandy or wine – just as he wished. He could ride a horse and milk a cow and plough a straight furrow with two oxen at the plough. Sickle, billhook, and scythe wrought comfortably in his hands, and his fingers could hold the bull by the nose. He could not read or write.
>
> He was a man. Boys played at make-believe; for a man, it was silly. Perhaps it was even sinful, but he couldn't help it."[203]

Masters here clearly depicts what he believes consists of being a man. It could even be argued that Jason is a loose adaption of Masters himself, with all the skills of a military man, representing Masters military education. Here as well we can see Hyam's idea of "'Boyishness' was actually an admired quality, and it has been pointed out that 'many of the great men of the Empire were essentially boy-men' who had 'never been able to outgrow their boyhood ideals'."[204] Perhaps the encouragement to remain "boyish" was due to the sexualisation of young boys. As the empire was a strictly masculine affair, it also makes sense that male on male relationships were common. Therefore, it is not surprising that "the predominant form of male prostitution was military…with Eton boys, cadets and subalterns most exposed to it."[205] Also there was a multitude of evidence that showed "prominent British soldier[s] … liked small boys,"[206]

[203] Masters, 1955, p.9
[204] Hyam, 1990, p.47
[205] Ibid, p.63
[206] Hyam, 1990, p.3

There always seems to be a link between colonialism and the top public schools of India. Either the company's officials or servants attended these schools, or they try to set up something similar in India. Within public schools not only is there a strict ranking system with prefects and masters, but also spaces there are usually reserved for those of higher class. Moreover, within the military there are obvious class representations in their hierarchal structures. From these institutions, a set of rituals are spread throughout international societies. Not only their order of men and sexualisation of women but also

> English theatres and libraries were being built alongside churches modelled on St. Martin-in-the-Fields. English newspapers were opened, English card games were played and English balls and masquerades were thrown. The Freemasons opened a Lodge, the Old Etonians started an annual cricket match, and by 1774 there was even a Calcutta Hunt Club.[207]

Furthermore, the Company was an extension of the public schools and there is a clear pattern in British history of elite men with powerful positions that aided colonisation, exhibiting behaviours that are disrespectful to children and women. The acceptance of prostitution as a necessary evil lead to it being a lucrative trade within colonisation. Dalrymple depicts how

> at the centre of Calcutta lay the Writers' Building, where the young Company officials were lodged while they underwent their initial training. In form it was a little different from the British public schools from which most of the Writers had recently been drawn, and its inhabitants continued to behave as if the building occupied a loop of the Thames rather than a bend in the Hoogly. The favourite after-dinner toast was to turn the traditional ditty 'Alas and Alack-the-Day' into 'A Lass and a Lakh* a Day' – a succinct comment on the motives that led most of these to come out to India in the first place.[208]

In Hyam's book he details many high officials of the East India Company partaking in this sexual opportunity, with one William Gladstone, former UK president, being praised for remaining "a faithful husband" whilst also "seeking out (beautiful) prostitutes for 'rescue'." Robert Clive, the first British Governor of Bengal however, definitely embraced this

[207] Jaffer, 2001, p.28-9
[208] Dalrymple, 2012, p.323

opportunity, up until his marriage. “Wellesley notoriously lived a life of sexual tempestuousness; his brother Wellington (certainly no abstainer himself: ‘Publish and be damned!’) was so shocked as to wish him castrated.”[209] Not surprisingly, most of these historic figures were educated at public schools, where there has been a reported history of sex being used as power dynamics between the upper and lower students. For example, “on arrival at Charterhouse in 1817, Thackeray found the first order he received from a schoolmate was ‘come and frig me’.”[210] Furthermore,

> Harrow in 1854 was recalled thus by J. A. Symonds:
>
> Every boy of good looks had a female name, and was recognised either as a public prostitute or as some bigger fellow's 'bitch'. Bitch was the word in common usage to indicate a boy who yielded his person to a lover. The talk in the dormitories and the studies was incredibly obscene. Here and there one could not avoid seeing acts of onanism, mutual masturbation, the sports of naked boys in bed together.[211]

The above shows not only the sexism prevalent within public schools, but also the commonality of rampant sexuality within them. However, these practices later became prohibited, with laws being put in place to ban homosexual acts. “By banishing male affection from ‘normal’ life and experience, men in general were impoverished, even diminished. More particularly, male-oriented sex became ever more cultic and romantic. The tendency to effeminacy (by no means an inevitable feature) was reinforced.”[212] In creating femininity and homosexuality synonyms, both become positions of inferiority and wrongness. On the other hand, prostitution continued to flourish as a trade, and as shown above, many elite British men were in the business. Moreover, it can be seen in Masters’ character of Jason and his aversion to femininity. Using Freud’s ideas of sublimation, it can be argued that this suppression of femininity, heightens the supposed masculine traits of aggression. Lawrence Stone, a historian, states

[209] Hyam, 1990, p.28
[210] Ibid, p.59
[211] Ibid, p.59
[212] Ibid, p.67

> The sublimation of sex among young male adults may well account for the extraordinary military aggressiveness, the thrift, the passion for hard work, and the entrepreneurial and intellectual enterprise of modern Western man.[213]

Public schools wanted to breed the perfect imperial soldier with military prowess, which harks at Masters' background so its undeniable he would be influenced by this in his writing.

## Conclusion

After analysing Masters *Coromandel!*, there are a few themes that are prevalent, and are later seen represented again in Masters other novels. Primarily, through Masters' writing we see racialised descriptions and writing, whereby Masters consciously or unconsciously demonstrates the overriding commitment of the British public, that white and European was considered superior to other races. This unwavering and confirmed understanding allowed for the formation of the British Empire, as many believed their way of life and culture was more civilised, and therefore needed to be spread to these so called 'lesser' colony territories.

These racially charged descriptions are not the only indicator of the racism that was rife throughout these Anglo-Indian communities. Additionally, to these descriptions, Masters uses a very small number of characters with leading roles that are of colour. This could have been a conscious and wise decision, as Masters could not represent the voices of these marginalised people, but it also represents the reality of the times, where people of colour were not considered to have leading positions in the community. We see this through Masters' novels, as the characters of colour are used for specific purposes, usually to purport racial stereotypes.

Regardless of the racial undertones throughout the whole novel, and the novels to come, the women in the novels, regardless of colour, are always presented as secondary characters, and

[213] Stone, 1979, p.54

usually in relation to a man's love interest. As seen in the analysis in this chapter, the themes that we see relating to gender highlight that not only was white and European seen as superior, but so was being a man. Many gendered stereotypes are presented throughout *Coromandel!* mainly that women are only used for sexual or marital purposes, especially for our male protagonist.

Then finally, my analysis of *Coromandel!* ends with focusing on Masters representations of class throughout the novel. Class is an intrinsic part of analysis when considering race and gender, as Masters presents that one could almost (emphasis on almost) transcend their race or gender if they are of higher class. All these topics of race, gender, and class are all linked to how people define themselves and their identities.

Ultimately, Masters representations of superiority, and thereby inferiority, in race, gender, and class could demonstrate the thoughts and feelings of the times of him writing. As Masters was writing in 1955 after India had gained independence, a sense of loss can be detected throughout his novels similar to other imperialist British authors. What I want to highlight as important throughout my thesis, is that although these thoughts and ideas are reflective of an earlier time, they are presented to the mass public in their current times and are sublimely introduced to their readership. By doing this, Masters continues to purport and spread ideas of toxic masculinity, and feminine victimhood. As we know Masters received a public-school education, it is fair to say that his own ideas would have been heavily influenced by this. Overall, these stereotypes regarding women are spread and accepted by the public, contributing to a rape culture.

## *The Deceivers*

'God is love,'[214]

The second instalment in John Masters' Storytellers saga is *The Deceivers.* Published in 1952, but set in 1825, thereby preceding the official formation of the British Raj, this novel focuses on the protagonist William Savage, an official of the East India Company. The East India Company was created in the 17th century to promote trade in in the Indian Ocean region; countries considered to be of the 'orient'. During the period of the novel however, the East India Company ruled over most of India. Shashi Tharoor, a former Indian international civil servant and historian, wrote in his book *Inglorious Empire* released in 2017, that:

> Till an open revolt occurred against them in 1857 … the East India Company presided over the destinies of more than 200 million people, determining their economic, social and political life, reshaping society and education, introducing railways and financing the inauguration of the Industrial Revolution in Britain.[215]

Tharoor depicts a Company that was more than trade. The above quote shows how the EIC not only drained India of its rich resources to sustain the Industrial revolution in England, but also shows that as time went on the Company took more interest in all aspects of Indian life, purposefully influencing many ideals and morals. This chapter shows how the novel, *The Deceivers,* can be used as a representation of life in British India in the lead up to this Mutiny, specifically regarding the ideals and morals of an official of the East India Company. In this representation, Masters depicts strict gender roles, as well as racial stereotypes, that are heavily influenced by Western Christianity and colonialism. Overall, these representations enforce the

[214] Masters, 1952, p.222
[215] Tharoor, 2017, p.5

idea of white male supremacy and thereby justifying the colonisation of India. Primarily, the novel is an interesting representation of what Masters believes India and its people are like.

As a descendant of the Savage family, Masters continues on from his previous novel *Coromandel!* , whereby William is a long distant relative of Jason Savage. In *Coromandel!* we saw the emerging and early development of the East India Company, with Jason representing the piracy and plunder that sustained the Company's business venture. In the previous chapter, Masters presents a complex and devious character in Jason, which could highlight how "the whites of lower social order emerged as a political challenge to the colonial ruling classes because of their non-bourgeois behaviour. The colonial representations of them as 'criminal', 'licentious', 'diseased', and ultimately 'degenerate' were not mere prejudices but were constitutive of various institutional measures such as policing, imprisonment, and deportation."[216] The "degenerate" nature of Jason represents how many young men that joined the company took part in depraved behaviour in India. On the other hand, this chapter explores how the above language used to describe the British ruling class in India was turned around. Instead, this language was used to describe tribes in India, ultimately leading to the creation of the Thuggee Act in 1837, which allowed courts to try and sentence those suspected of thug activity. This later developed into the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871 that restricted the movements of once nomadic tribes. The fact that the Acts were written in English represented a double form of colonial supremacy. Both the British legal system and the use of English were aliens to India. As part of a mainly nomadic tribe in India, English literacy may not have been a skill. Even Masters states "They had written nothing down on paper. The spoken word could be forgotten, disavowed. It was an inborn habit of India's poor, bred over turbulent centuries of intrigue, when the shifts of power made it safer to forget than to remember."[217] Typically of

[216] Mizutani, 2011, p.8
[217] Masters, 1952, p.98

Masters, the above is a representation of a stereotypical India, blaming the lack of writing to be a criminal attribute. General William Palmer voiced his disagreement about how legal practices were inaccessible for Indians, especially when no Indian people were consulted in the creation of these systems, but were instead excluded.

> I observe with great concern the system of oppressing them adopted by the present government and imitated in the manners of almost every European. They are excluded from all posts of great respectability or employment, and are treated in society with mortifying hauteur and reserve. In fact they now have hardly any social intercourse with us. The functions of magistrate and judge are performed by Europeans who know neither the laws not the language of the country, and with an enormous expense to the company. The Head Molavy in each court, on whose information and explanation the judges must decide, has a salary of Rs.50 a month. And this I believe one of the most trustworthy and lucrative employments which a Native is allowed to hold in the Company's service. What must be the sensations of this people at our thus starving them in their native land?[218]

Whilst General Palmer might have shown concern,

> Cornwallis did not think even one Indian fit to be a part of the steel frame of the British empire and therefore completely shut the doors of office to them. As for Macaulay, he despised the Indian character almost as much as he despised Eastern learning and literature. His opinion of the Hindu race was that it had been completely debased by 3000 years of despotism, combined as it was by priestcraft, slavery and superstitions.[219]

There are multiple examples of how Indian people were excluded from the European communities in India, yet this further demonstrates the hypocrisy of the British as "religion and personal law as we know them today are a negotiated reality, a colonial invention, and an institution to perpetuate social injustice and structural patriarchy."[220]

Within *The Deceivers,* the protagonist infiltrates an Indian gang of murderers and thieves, known as *The Thuggee*, or 'thugs', by pretending to be one of them. The word 'thug' as known

[218] General William Palmer in the Hastings Papers, BL Add Mss 29,178, Vol. XLVII, 1801-02, 10 October 1802, pp.277-8, in Dalrymple, 2002, p.273
[219] Roychowdhury & Randhawa , 2015, p.100
[220] Dhonchakf, 2019 p.44

in the English language today as 'deceiver' or 'swindler'[221], originates from this part of colonial history and the Hindi term of 'thag'. As the British placed importance on the caste system in India, they believed it would be reasonable to assume that due to castes being based on profession, and these professions were passed down through generations, that it was safe to say that the criminal profession was also hereditary. Masters even states this within the novel, claiming ""the gang itself must have been kept alive for a century and more by new blood, by descent from father to son perhaps."[222] These perceptions would be long lasting and influence many people, including the creation of certain laws, such as the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871, whereby these people were then allowed to be legally monitored and arrested. James Fitzjames Stephen, an English lawyer and philosopher, testified,

> When we speak of professional criminals, we...(mean) a tribe whose ancestors were criminals from time immemorial, who are themselves destined by the usage of caste to commit crime, and whose descendants will be offenders against the law, until the whole tribe is exterminated or accounts for in manner of thugs.[223]

According to Masters' postscript

> the facts about the Deceivers (the *Thugs*) and all the details of their cult and their operations (called collectively *Thugee*) are accurate. They did flourish for many centuries, they did believe in their religious call, they did live by omens and ceremonies described, they did kill travellers in the manner and the numbers suggested. It is thought that, first and last, *Thugee* must have murdered well over a million people.[224]

Masters, however, later states that although one man was credited with the downfall of *Thugee,* named William Henry Sleeman of the Indian Political Service, he did not infiltrate the tribe as described in the novel, and states that "William Savage is in no sense a portrait of William Sleeman". [225] Without having the character of William Savage and his infiltration of the

[221] Gandhi, 2013
[222] Masters, 1952, p.60
[223] Knafla, 2002, p.12
[224] Masters, 1952
[225] Ibid, p.223

*Thugee*, a lot of the racial depictions in the novel would have been lost, with Masters even stating it outright;

> never in his life had he been among Indians without their knowing it and adjusting their talk and their attitudes accordingly. They had not seemed to, but he knew that they had, and what he saw now proved it...He was glad to be here, below the surface of the district. He was learning something.[226]

In the above quote, Masters claims that Indian people act differently when around company officials. Although Masters can be seen at times to be sympathetic to Indian people, he still purports stereotypes, and ultimately longs for and accepts his imperialist past.

## Synopsis

The novel starts with William Savage bringing home his new wife, Mary, home to the village in India that he rules over as a company official. William is called by the company to prevent an act of Suttee by one of his villagers, who believers their husband is dead. In order to prevent this from going ahead, William dresses as Gopal the Weaver, the supposed dead husband. Although this does prevent the Suttee at first, William is then mistaken as Gopal, by the Thuggee gang, or "Deceivers", which Gopal is a part of. Whilst dressed as Gopal, William witnesses the gang in action, killing a group of travellers and robbing them. William at first reports these crimes "To: The Agent to the Governor General for the Kaimur and Mahadeo Territories." Mary's father is the said Governor General, showing the nepotism of the empire and government, as although the marriage contains love, it was definitely a political arrangement, "Your father will like this… he'll be expecting to hear that the woman at Kahari became suttee, but this is even better. This is just about what he's always been expecting from me, isn't it?"

[226] Ibid, p.36

Instead of the suttee going ahead, William discovered an ancient, but regularly used gravesite of the Thuggee gang, with no less than "sixty-eight skulls. None could tell how many bodies there might have been. Some had lain here years beyond reckoning, two centuries perhaps. The newest was not more than a week in the earth." [227] In response to the report sent to the Governor General, another potential love interest for Mary is sent in the form of Mr. George Angelsmith who "was the way a man ought to look— tall and fair, immaculate as the morning, riding a wide-nostriled Arab with a long tail and long mane."[228] Upon George's arrival, he tries to warn William from investigating the crimes, and instead asks him to focus on his Collector duties of taxes and revenues.

Here Masters emphasises that the priority of the East India Company was profits and not the protection of the land or people that the Company was plundering, as it was "first conceived as a joint stock corporation, open to all investors."[229] However, William ignores these warnings and instead goes undercover once again as Gopal to penetrate, and hopefully eradicate the gang. For William he is successful in his goals, as he is easily and readily accepted by the Deceivers, as he already bears a liking to Gopal, and after covering himself in dirt, he also bears Gopal's colouring. Whilst off on his unofficial duties to the company, Mary remains at home pregnant, under the watchful protection of George. The jealousy this produces in William leads to a night at a brothel, where he justifies the use of a prostitute, to the potentiality of his own wife having an affair. Not only does this moment bond William with the Deceivers, but also the acts of killing other travellers inspires in William a bloodlust which he certainly enjoys. The blame is ultimately put on Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction, who Masters represents as leading the Thuggee gang in their crimes, and definitely not on William who is acting with nature. Dash in his novel *Thug,* he claims "The prisoners' motives were also distorted, and in particular

[227] Ibid, p.51
[228] Ibid, p.58
[229] Dalrymple, 2019, p.42

far greater stress was placed on their religion, and their devotion to Kali, the Hindu 'goddess of destruction', than had been the case when the Thugs themselves were brough to trial."[230] William also ends up killing Gopal who he discovers whilst undercover, and believes he had to kill Gopal for his own protection. Because of this, the end of the novel shows William confessing his duplicity to Gopal's wife, and helping her light the pyre beneath her, so she can perform suttee. The ending of the novel also shows that although William has put an end to the ritual killing of the gang, William learns that everybody was involved in the running of these crimes.

*The Deceivers*, shows William Savage trying to imitate a 'typical' member of the *Thugee* gang, and in doing so, Masters displays supposed obvious differences between Indian and English, such as "only by being Indian and thinking Indian and feeling Indian could he hold any hope that he would return at last to his English ways and his English wife."[231] Additionally, William is continuously overstepping his job role as a company official, to enforce upon his Indian counterparts his own morality, such as "'what does the rule of law matter to the man who gets killed? Or to his wife and children?' William said bitterly. 'How can a rule of law flourish where people call themselves "servants of Kali" and kill because a goddess orders them to?'"[232] However, William does participate in gang activity, and Masters depicts a sense of enjoyment when William is committing the violent and murderous acts. Whilst there are many instances throughout his novels, in which Masters seems to be sympathetic to Indian struggles, the author still emphasises a colonialist representation of stereotypical Indian characters, trying to further the idea of Indian inferiority and thereby justifying British rule. Masters also constantly references Indian stereotypes to create a typical Indian that his British protagonist can mould into. It seems for Masters, and also Kipling "the absolute unchanging essence of Orientals,

[230] Dash, 2005, p.ix
[231] Masters, 1952, p.112
[232] Ibid, p.103

blacks, primitives, women were more or less undebatable, unquestioned axioms of modern life."[233] The first part of this chapter will look at how the racial representations within *The Deceivers* show more examples of comparisons of Britain to India, creating a sense of 'them' and 'us'.

The next part of this chapter will discuss gender representations, particularly how women are again represented as secondary and marginalised characters, with their roles in the novel only to support the male characters, either for sex or marriage. The theme of marriage is key in the analysis of gender roles, due to the traditional understanding of the heteronormative concept. Additionally, through the theme of marriage, Masters also demonstrates racial undertones because as I have stated previously, that even though Masters' protagonists will consider and engage in sexual activity with Indian women or women with mixed heritage, these women never become their wives.

Within *The Deceivers* William Savage disguises himself as Gopal the Weaver, a local villager who is believed dead by his wife. Because of this, and the traditional Hindu practice of Suttee, "the wife of Gopal the weaver"[234] (she is never given her own name throughout the novel), plans to sacrifice her life by burning on a pyre to join her husband in the afterlife. William, as an official of the 'honourable' East India Company, tries to prevent this Suttee by pretending to be Gopal, as it was deemed a barbaric practice by the East India Company; "He was a servant of the Honourable East India Company, and that huge organization was as torn by indecision as he was. Suttee was the people's custom and religion; only an act of despotic power could abolish it. Yet, could Christians, having power, tolerate wilful self- murder?"[235]. Whilst William is originally successful in preventing Gopal's wife from committing suttee, William is later carried away by his actions in the Thuggee gang, where he ends up murdering the real

[233] Said in Kipling, 1901, p.30
[234] Ibid, p.26
[235] Ibid, p.19

Gopal, leading ultimately to Gopal's wife's immolation. These novels seem to be a direct commentary of the East India Company and the conflicts they faced, as in 1829 the Bengal Sati Regulation made the practice of suttee illegal in all of British India.

The gender representations, however, will also include an analysis of the masculine traits that Masters seems to value and emphasise; traits that seem to transcend race and class, but never gender. Whilst pretending to be Gopal the Weaver, William ends up discovering the murderous thugee gang in the middle of an attack on some travellers. Luckily, Gopal was a member of the gang, and instead of being murdered himself, William is greeted with the secret welcome:

> Greetings, brother Ali… William had learned that the form of greeting was the challenge and countersign of the Deceivers. Ali was no particular person; the Deceivers used the name in their salutations, adding a Hindu or Mohammedan [Muslim] phrase according to the religion of the speaker. He remembered when he had first heard it and clenched his fists involuntarily. He had wondered then who Ali was but had since come to understand that an Indian so greeted would not even notice the phrase unless his own name was Ali, or he was a Deceiver. Most sects and many areas of India had their own customary form of greeting; a Sikh would work in the word Khalsa, a Mohammedan Allah, a Hindu Ram.[236]

Whilst the Thuggee brotherhood would allow in a man of any religion, or class, it was a gang strictly of men, similar to the brotherhood of freemasonry. "The women can't actually be Deceivers of course".[237] The masculine traits are always represented as superior, and the Thuggee gang allows Masters to live out violent and sexual fantasies, almost hinting at a nostalgic longing for imperialist times. The ritualistic killing of travellers on the roads of India is not enough for the gang depicted in Masters' *The Deceivers*¸ as after an attack they go and celebrate by visiting brothels. Again, this furthers the idea of women being secondary and marginalised characters, only in the story for a sexual interest or in victimisation.

[236] Ibid, p.115
[237] Ibid, p.189

Finally, this chapter will look at class representations within *The Deceivers* with references to other British novels depicting the Thuggee of India, particularly from those having received a public-school education, similar to Masters. The intention of placing Masters among his literary contemporaries is to show how a public-school education taught a general consensus of white superiority, elite superiority, but predominantly male superiority.

## Racial Representations

### Stereotypes

At the start of the novel, Masters displays William as a stereotypical British male, in order to show the audience a dramatic switch when William pretends to be Indian. Masters states outright that he "tried in the Western fashion to separate the good from the evil"[238] to demonstrate clear divisions and depictions between East and West. William acts as a mouthpiece for Masters thoughts and criticisms of imperialism in India, furthering this idea by stating that "If he failed to understand, he could work only from a single sweeping generalization: that Indians were fatalistic, brutal, and loveless. That was the depth of untruth, in spite of the many who believed it."[239] It's hard to decipher whether Masters supports the "sweeping generalizations" made throughout his novels, as he states that they are "the depth of untruth." But, in highlighting these stereotypes Masters ultimately spreads these assumptions, or at least demonstrates what "the many" were thinking at this time; "that Indians were fatalistic, brutal, and loveless." Rather than criticise this depiction of the Indian stereotype, as generalised and dangerous, Masters instead shows William finding an affinity with these traits whilst infiltrating the gang. Not only does he enjoy them, but Masters seems to glorify these actions as a natural instinct and trait of not Indians, but males. As we know of Masters' military

[238] Masters, 1952, p.18
[239] Ibid, p.19

background, having these aggressive traits would have been considered advantageous in times of battle and war. Interestingly, commonly in other British novels, these traits when associating with people of colour, usual are not regarded as advantageous, but more as "savagery". Similar to *Coromandel,* Masters discusses the idea of civility as a reasoning for British rule. Within *The Deceivers* Masters states "the people are civilized. Here'— he leaned farther over— 'there are savage jungle dwarfs, with blowpipes and poisoned darts!'"[240] The differentiation between 'here' and 'there' relates to 'us' and 'them', where the civilization remained within William's community and control, and the savages outside in the wild nature yet undominated.

Masters does seem to mock some of the British ways within India, such as when William is bringing home his new wife, Mary, to the district he manages, and the village greets them with music; "'This Eastern music is fascinating and weird. Do you know if this tune they're playing has a name?' 'Yes. "Rule, Britannia."'"[241]Masters uses ironic comedy to emphasise how when British people first arrived in India, they were expecting a huge difference from their own culture, looking for the "weird" and "fascinating", only to realise that the Indian people were not that different from themselves. Alternatively, or additionally, Masters shows the influence of Britain in India.

Throughout the novel, Masters includes many stereotypes of Indian people in order to justify the East India Company's domination of India and its people. One key tactic in enforcing this, is by creating clear divisions between Britain and India, and representing Indians as 'them', and the English in India as 'us'. For example, right after declaring to his wife that he "couldn't murder anyone", William goes onto claim that

> Other, material fears closed in on him. Armed men roamed the roads, and he would be unarmed. Everywhere men died by violence, or died gently, their blood clogged by snake venom, or died in a ditch, excreting their life in cholera and dysentery. He saw

[240] Ibid, p.35
[241] Ibid, p.14

> the road now as an Indian saw it, and for the first time knew he would have to find the Indian, not the British, type of courage to face it.[242]

Not only does Masters state a clear difference between British and Indian in courage and viewpoint, but he also reinforces a stereotype of disease and violence, as if this was part of the Indian character. Another instance is "The people here were not as a rule an obsequious lot; or perhaps it was only he among their rulers that they treated so offhandedly."[243] Grouping them together as 'lot' and then describing them as 'obsequious' which literally translates to "obedient or attentive to an excessive or servile degree" demonstrates the relevant stereotypes that were placed on natives to India, in order to allow a possible justification for colonisation. If Indian people were represented as servile, then in this binary idea, English people were represented as rulers. The above quotations may not seem extreme and justify this analysis, but Masters does go on to include much more derogatory language to show the separation, such as

> 'Get back, you daughters of darkness! Do you think the great lord Collector- sahib wishes to smell your stinking carcasses in the same boat with him?'[244].

Here in this quote, Masters uses the character's skin colour as an insult and as reasoning for why the white British Company Official is superior. Colourism is prevalent throughout all of Masters' novels, with insults being creating though terms of colour, and all descriptions of characters starting with the colour of one's skin. Dixon and Telles argue that "Colourism is a form of prejudice and discrimination based on skin shade penalizing those with dark skin"[245] and the characters with a darker skin tone are treated as inferior, with less significant involvement in the movement of the plot. Like the female characters, the people of darker skin are usually represented as secondary or marginalised. As a big part of the novel revolves around

[242] Ibid, p.111
[243] Ibid, p.9
[244] Ibid, p.11
[245] Dixon and Telles, 2017

William pretending to be a different race, Masters highlights many stereotypes that are assigned to races;

> Yet always his race had held him back from complete absorption in it. He had been physically unable to see or hear or smell beauty without noticing the dirt and disease that were part of it. Then, when he noticed, his love changed to something else— to reforming zeal, desire to raise up, to alter.[246]

Here Masters blames his race for associating India with dirt and disease, but ultimately states that he loves India. Even though this shows signs of Masters sympathy and affinity to India, the above shows clear racial depictions of a stereotypical India as dirty and diseased. Furthermore, if those descriptions are associated with India, then the alternative would apply to Britain, that of being clean and civil. On the other hand, Masters' usually uses characters of colour to say the most damning things about colour and race, which could either alleviate the blame of racism from the white characters and therefore Masters' himself, or it could represent the double bind of those of colour, "measuring oneself by the means of a nation that looked back in contempt".[247] Masters clearly displays society's racial underpinning, with his Indian characters unable to separate their colour from their identity, showing signs of self-loathing. For example;

> 'Sahib, I came to know her in these months, and I am her servant. For a time I did not understand. She will tell you. Then I understood, for she is skilful and brave. She heaped fire on my head, and I knew I was only a foolish, jealous, black man.'
>
> Kala admi— black man. How often had William heard Indians use the words in self-depreciation? Was it the conquering British who had led them to exaggerate and despise the colour of their skins? Or was it other conquerors of long ago, Alexander's olive-skinned phalanx?[248]

Not only does the above quote show the 'self-depreciation' of Sher Dil, William's butler, but Masters also Hints at the negative impact of colonialism on the Indian self. There are several

[246] Masters, 1952, p.112
[247] Dubois, 1903
[248] Masters, 1952, p.202

times when Masters uses the colour of someone's skin as an insult or as an example of inferiority; "Yet where the English have their grip they treat all men as equal, the blackest damned sweeper from Comorin, the palest twice- born Brahmin."[249] Here, even though Masters is claiming that the British treat all men as equal, he highlights that some considered black as low and pale as high. Also, historically, it is obvious that British certainly did not treat all men as equal. It is also making for an uncomfortable and distasteful watch, when in the film adaption, Piers Bronson (who plays William) smears his face with mud, in order to become Gopal.

## Religion

During British colonisation, race and religion become synonymous. As discussed previously, this can be seen in the British insistence on the Hindu caste system being paramount to life in India. Within *The* Deceivers, the same is done between the Thuggee gang and Kali. The representation of Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction, is also regularly described as "the dark- blue goddess with the dishevelled hair and the cincture of bloodstained hands and the tongue protruding from her bloodstained mouth— Kali, who ordered her servants to kill."[250] Not only is her skin colour emphasised, but so is the violence. Additionally, in the film adaption, many people criticised the representation of Kali due to the continuous connotations of murder and violence. This is also evident within the novel, as though

> Perhaps nowhere else was this web of cultural complexities more unsettling to the coloniser than in the figure of Kali, whose worship was constructed as full of "licentious songs and lewd dances," with the tantric rites often invoked as proof of Hindu sexual depravity. This disturbing black figure with its complex associations of destruction,

[249] Ibid, p.37
[250] Ibid, p.103

> blood, sacrifice, thuggee, as well as female empowerment, came to be inscribed by the end of the century as politically subversive as well.[251]

Kali was represented to the British public as an icon of depraved behaviour that English Christians would have looked down on. Even Masters has an Indian character, Hussein, who places Christianity above of Islam and Hinduism;

> 'Give me a cross, then. Allah and Mohammed his prophet have failed me against Kali. Give me a cross. Your God is a foreigner and does not know Kali's strength, and will fight better against her than ours, who do, and are frightened. We must fear, but we must not fall. Give me a cross.'[252]

Not only does Hussein, a member of the thugee gang, assume that the Christian God could defeat Kali, he also turns the symbol of the cross into a ward of safety, and at one point in the novel, he believes it has physically protected him from an attack. William's wife, Mary, hands over her own

> tiny cross of English oak she wore inside her bosom, snapped the thin gold links of its chain, and gave the cross to Hussein. Hussein fingered it and muttered, 'Wood. I was afraid it would be silver or gold. Wood is better.' A spurt of affection for the man warmed William's heart. Hussein too knew what the feel of plain wood meant; silver was something else, subtle, superior.[253]

We again see here Masters affection, sympathy, and relation to the traits usually assigned to the stereotypical Indian, even if it is considered inferior, yet "It has to be noted that Masters' protagonists appear to be free of racial prejudice but not of racial pride."[254] Alternatively, we also see how because wood is more related to nature, and gold to mercantilism, it is considered inferior, displaying the imperialist idea of not only conquering land and people, but nature itself. Through colonisation, and throughout Masters novels, there is clear evidence of classification and rankings. In the above passages, we almost see a ranking of religions, with Christianity being at the top. Not only does Masters portray stereotypical representations of

[251] Oman in Pawha, 2004, p.286
[252] Masters, 1952, p.110
[253] Ibid, p.110
[254] Arguec, 2012, p.10

Indians, but also of religions. For example, “So the two black goats died, one in the Mohammedan manner, the halal, and one in the Hindu manner, its head struck off at a single blow.”[255] Although this may be accurate information, to the British or American reader in 1952, these representations of Hinduism and Islam become a much bigger part of the image of Indians, than in reality it actually was. In doing this, Masters hints at his own time of writing, post partition of India, where there was physical divide created by the British Empire between Muslims and Hindus. Hinduism was an important and exaggerated tool used for colonisation, specifically “excessive sexuality undergirded Anglo-Indian perceptions of Hinduism, which was constructed in colonial discourse as arcane, ritualistic and vile, with erotic underpinning.”[256] This can certainly be seen in Masters representations of the Thuggee, as they regularly take part in ritualistic and sexual acts. Through the emphasis on Kali in every action the Thuggee’s make, Masters displays how Hinduism, and thereby India is represented as dangerously committed to religion. However, although Masters does condemn these acts, he also glorifies them. Furthermore, Masters also states that “‘All Sikhs are warriors’”[257], once again showing his generalised language. Masters certainly fits “the British interpretation of India as a society driven by religion and their own description of its glorious past compelled the colonial authorities to accommodate traditional/religious laws of the religious communities within their efforts to secularize and "enlighten" Indian society.”[258]

## Caste

The comparative nature of Masters’ writing continues when describing the driving force behind the Thuggee’s behaviour. The excuse of this behaviour as we will go on to see, is based off of

[255] Masters, 1952, p.152
[256] Pawha, 2004, p.286
[257] Masters, 1952, p.35
[258] Chitnis & Wright, 2007, p.1318

their caste. We later find out in the novel that the ferryman is part of this 'Thuggee cult', but earlier on he states "'Your worship is a great king,' the ferryman said, bowing briefly. 'The quality of your honour's magnificence is such as to dazzle the eye.' He broke off to kick a young farmer out of the way."[259] Whilst at first reading this may seem as a critical comment regarding the nature of how East India Company officials follow King George IV, which in itself has clear religious and hereditary roots, it could also be read as an understanding as to why the Thuggee cult commits their murderous crimes. The ferryman's worship goes to the goddess Kali and this leads him into killing and stealing from thousands of people. By comparing this worship and behaviour to that of the East India Company officials, Masters displays a representation of murder as a holy and just act. Although this may seem like a stretch, later in the novel we see further depictions of killing in a glorified and romanticised depiction. Concurrently, by including "'the quality of your honour's magnificence is such as to dazzle the eye'", one could also suggest that the magnitude of wealth displayed by the monarchy is used as a distraction from the crimes that they commit. All this aesthetic language is contrasted harshly against the break in adulation to beat a subordinate.

One key stereotype that is perpetuated throughout Masters novels, and throughout British history, is the importance of the caste system within India. Even within the hereditary caste of Thuggee, was there further rankings according to Masters, defining hierarchies; "These were the men of the bear troupe, by rank humble diggers of graves and therefore inferior to the rest."[260] As discussed in the previous chapter regarding *Coromandel!*, there were many laws created based off the Indian Hindu caste system, and in *The Deceivers*, we see the build up to the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871. Through the act, tribes were forced to stay in specific areas and even went as far as sending the children of these tribes to reform schools. These reform

[259] Masters, 1952, p.12
[260] Ibid, p.151

schools were based off of the public school in England, and attendees were usually forced to change their name to a Christian one and were banned from speaking their native language. By forcing children of Indian people to assimilate with British "culture" the British empire furthered the difference between parent and child, allowing for easier rule and domination. Divide and Conquer is apparent throughout all of colonisation. Knafla describes aspects of the Criminal Tribe Act;

> Once a tribe was officially notified, its members had no recourse to repeal such notices under the judicial system. From then on, their movements were monitored through a system of compulsory registration and passes, which specified where the holders could travel and reside, and district magistrates were required to maintain records of all such people.
>
> An inquiry was set up in 1883, to investigate the need for extending the Act to the rest of India, and received an affirmative response. 1897 saw another amendment to the Act, wherein local governments were empowered to establish separate "reformatory" settlements, for tribal boys from age four to eighteen years, away from their parents.[261]

These "reformatory" settlements weren't just used to eradicate Indian culture, in favour of a European one, but also to create strict gender roles. In a similar fashion to public schools, ideas of masculinity were taught, with the idea of creating a competitive and war-ready force. Additionally, the Criminal Tribes banned all behaviour considered "suspicious," warning that anyone found engaging in traditional *hijra* activities like public dancing or dressing in women's clothing would be arrested and/or forced to pay a fine. In doing this there is a clear attack on women and femininity. In a similar way to the Thuggee gang being considered hereditary due to the caste system, so "for a long time hermaphrodites were criminals, or crime's offspring, since their anatomical disposition, their very being, confounded the law that distinguished the sexes and prescribed their union."[262] Anything outside of the strict biological patriarchal system was considered deviant or criminal. In perpetuating these stereotypes in his novels, Masters tries to create an Indian "culture" that was accepting and in need of rule. Furthermore,

[261] Knafla, 2002, p.12
[262] Foucault, 1976, p.38

““Tradition” and “culture” is invoked by ruling class politicians to consolidate the support of dominant classes, castes, and religions. But it is also invoked to create a fictitious unity of men across classes.”[263] We can see this clearly in *The Deceivers*, as not only are stereotypes emphasised and repeated in regard to Indians, but also of men and women. In particular, the Thuggee gang becomes recognised by William as a legitimate fraternity or brotherhood. Yet the actions of these men are held accountable to the goddess they follow, highlighting again the stereotype of the importance of Hinduism. Perhaps because Christianity was so paramount in British “culture”, the Company assumed India would be the same. In this way “Gender came to be deployed as a tool for reinforcing a racist ideology in Anglo-India, with all the Indians being constructed as contemptuous of women in general.”[264] Not only was the caste system used to categorize tribes as criminals but also “the regulation of women’s sexuality is essential to the reproduction of caste domination.”[265] This can be seen clearly in the sexual representations of Kali, as we will go on to explore. Typical also in Masters’ novels, is how “the "native" woman's relations with the coloniser was that at one level, she was essentially perceived as a sexual object.”[266] As stated previously, Masters never has his male protagonists marry an Indian woman, representing that not only has marriage long been defined by sexuality, but also race. In the early days of the East Indian Company, officials were actually encouraged to take an Indian lover in order to assimilate to India, and to learn their subjects better. Additionally, to the British imagination “The figure of the South Asian female had distinctive connotations in late-eighteenth-century Britain. She was the concubine, the unfaithful lover, the dancing girl, the seducer, and perhaps even the prostitute.”[267] But, “by the beginning of the nineteenth century, interracial marriage gradually came to an end, though the

[263] Krishnan, 2015, p.256
[264] Pawha, 2004, p.297
[265] Paik, 2017, p.1186–1187
[266] Pawha, 2004, p.286
[267] Nechtman, 2006, p.14-5

native concubine or Bibi continued to be kept and interracial sexual liaisons continued to be widely and openly practiced."[268] Although, interracial marriage was discouraged, sexual relations with Indian woman, in the form of "concubines" or "bibis" shows the sexualisation of the Indian woman. And

> judging by the wills they left, many Englishmen were serial monogamists, moving on from one partner to another, sometimes at speed, and a substantial number kept two *bibis* simultaneously. A few indeed had large harems, even by contemporary Indian standards. …Williamson writes of one case of one Company servant who kept no fewer than sixteen concubines. When asked what he did with them all, he merely muttered: 'Oh I just give them a little rice and let them run around.'[269]

The above shows that many of the Company officials were happy interacting with Indians, and especially Indian women. However, the language used to describe the bibis is definitely discriminatory towards women, and depicts possessive attitudes towards, as if they were pets. Fears started to surface, whereby "an Indian mistress came to be constructed as a threat to white cultural hegemony, eroding the cultural identity of the Englishman by making him "go native" and threatening to dismantle racial hierarchies."[270] These racial hierarchies were important to the colonial effort, as it promoted rule, and enforced the idea of white supremacy.

The answer to these fears and with help from advancements in travel due to the industrial revolution, British women were invited to India. "They came, the great majority, to be wives; and they found in existence a tightly knit community which gave them the simple choice of joining or staying outside. It was not much of a choice. Outside meant loneliness or India, and India frightened them." [271] Additionally, "the newly arrived generation of white women was, at one level, positioned as sexual rivals to the Indian bibi."[272] The wives of the company

[268] Pawha, 2004, p286
[269] Williamson in Dalrymple, 2002, p.37
[270] Pawha, 2004, p.287
[271] Macmillan, 1988, p.20
[272] Pawha, 2004, p.287

officials made a real difference on the Anglo-Indian culture. Masters reiterates the important role of a British woman as an Official's wife as he states "his happiness rested in his own hands, and his wife's if he was married. Many English women hated district life so much that they turned their husbands into embittered drunkards."[273] Again, we also see here that the blame is placed upon the woman for her husband's behaviour, even though there is clear evidence that before the wives went, the early company officials were a part of "the scene of some of the earliest and wildest English debauches in India."[274]

In the nineteenth century, the Victorian era was just starting and these British women coming out looking for husbands, certainly brought with them Victorian ideals. Interestingly,

> women's simultaneous associations with luxury, consumption, and mercantile capitalism as well as the difference implicit in the female form made it possible to position the female figure so that it could "bear the responsibility for empire." Women's desire for novel goods, in short, became the explanatory impetus for European imperial expansion around the globe.[275]

This seems an unfair representation, seeing as prior to British women's arrival in India, the Company had already plundered many parts of India in the name of profit. However, historians do seem to have a negative perception of these women, or 'memsahibs', and once again women get a lot of blame for the social segregation between the British community in India and the natives.

This idea is further enforced by the fact that before joining William in his district, Mary resided in her father, the Governor General's district Sagthali;

> Sagthali was a 'station'— a place where, beside but apart from the Indian community, there had grown up barrack cantonments for the army and bungalows and offices for the headquarters of the civil administration. In a station there were never less than ten English families, and often many more. Sagthali had over forty…In a station, suburban

[273] Masters, 1952, p.55
[274] Dalrymple, 2002, p.441
[275] Brown in Nechtman, 2006, p.10

> England enclosed you, and you saw India only through those windows of the mind that you chose to scrub clean and look through.[276]

The above description depicts clear segregation between the English community residing in India, and Indian peoples, between supposed civilisation and savagery. It also again highlights the stereotype of India being "dirty" in need of England to "scrub clean". Before coming to William's district, Mary might as well have been in England, for all her contact with India and Indians. In describing Mary in this way, Masters displays clear representation of how the British woman in India became the stereotypical memsahib. Women, and memsahibs in particular, are regularly used in colonial history to show the social distancing between the British and Indians in India and were purposefully used by the Company.

With the arrival of the wives, came "the hybrid Anglo-Indian domestic culture [that] intended to demonstrate the colonizers' mystery and dominance in the private arena of the empire as in the public sphere"[277] Masters clearly represents this domestication of Anglo-India, through the homesick rhetoric of many of his characters, especially the women. For example, the description of William's home in his Indian depicts a replica of England within India; "The bungalow had a fireplace in every room, not so much to disperse the raw cold of January and February evenings as to remind the man who had built it of his home in England."[278] The idea of the English bungalow became essential to the idea of Englishness and "culture", and as it was deemed as the private sphere being a woman's realm, the company declared women were to uphold company values, using the home as a political space. Furthermore, by having British women come over from England to join the British men in India, made it easier for Company officials to notice and highlight differences within women's rights. As we saw above, many officials were accepting of prostitution and sexual promiscuity, representing stereotypes of

[276] Masters, 1952, p.54
[277] Ibid, p.16
[278] Ibid, p.101

India. Yet, with the arrival of British women it was clear that British women should not partake in said activities. Under the guise of trying to free Indian women from the oppression of Indian patriarchal practices, the Company started to question and prevent acts such as Suttee, deeming it to be barbaric, and "They claimed a policy of non-interference in Indian culture at the same time as claiming credit for liberalising women's position."[279]

## Gendered Representations

### Suttee

In *The Deceivers,* Masters demonstrates examples of strict gender roles. Primarily, there are only a handful of women within the novel, and they are clearly depicted as secondary with one character not even having her own name and is instead referred to as Gopal's wife. Not only does it make the women seem inferior or in addition to the man, but also is possessive in language. Gopal's wife, in the novel, is preparing to end her life by burning on a pyre to follow her husband, who she believes is dead, in a Hindu act known as Suttee. Again, the importance placed upon Hinduism is emphasised, as "Hinduism required an ascetic widowhood."[280] In the novel, Masters describes Suttee as;

> a Sanskrit word meaning 'a virtuous woman'; hence, along a road of thought fitfully brightened by the Hindu spiritual values, 'a woman who burns herself alive on her husband's funeral pyre; the custom which expects her to do so.[281]

During the time of the East India Company, and as Masters depicts in the novel, Suttee was regularly up for discussion, on whether Britain would rule it as an illegal practice. The colonial effort was represented as tool to liberate oppressed women. But only to liberate so far as "The

[279] Liddle & Roshi
[280] Chitnis & Wright, p.1336
[281] Masters, 1952, p.18

Indian "New Woman" was to be modelled on the pattern of the Victorian English Woman."[282] In this way, the Indian woman, similar to the Victorian English woman, had two options: Wife and mother, or spinster and prostitution. Yet, to the Indian woman, this was presented as liberation whereby

> Education was perceived as a means to equip Indian women to be good wives and mothers. The Calcutta Review (40), in 1864 argued that "education need not oppose nature, which has framed her to be a wife and mother" and simultaneously urged the importance of "the connection between extension of education and morality".[283]

Here, not only is education displayed almost as a weapon, but the idea that gender roles are predestined by biology is also enforced. Moreover, the hypocrisy of the colonisers is displayed, as the Company claimed to be supporting Indian womanhood, when in reality they were enforcing a "Victorianization" of the Indian Woman.[284] There are many more aspects to this idea surrounding gender roles. Particularly, Masters displays many stereotypical representations of women which bare similarities to the representations of Indians. As discussed previously, there is a representation of servile and self-sacrifice behaviour in Indians, and now in women, and especially Indian woman. The act of Suttee being emphasised as an example of this is clear with *The Deceivers*, as the novel revolves around this act. Suttee also "united the Hindu female's ideal of self-sacrifice with the Victorian lady's ability to contribute to the furtherance of her husband's career with her moral goodness, basic education, and social presence, apart from also being his companion and helpmate."[285] Furthermore, the above clearly depicts that ideas surrounding morality are taught, and with colonisation there was an education of a supposed superior British morality. Later in this chapter we will also see how this idea is represented in the public-school education.

[282] Pawha, 2004, p.291
[283] Ibid, p.291
[284] Ibid, p.299
[285] Ibid, p.291

In the period of this novel, “Suttee was not against the law— yet.”, but Masters still has the character William pondering “How could he have prevented her?”, as if it is part of his moral duty.[286] There is clear evidence throughout Masters writing, that he is heavily influenced by Christianity, and thereby his ideals and morals would be influenced similarly. For the character William, Masters uses Christianity to draw parallels and to understand or condemn the practice of suttee;

> man died; his wife had loved him, perhaps as Eve loved Adam—‘ he for God only, she for God in him’; then her spirit, which was a part of his, had no house on earth; she became a husk of flesh, untenanted, blown through by cold winds; only when her body had gone to join her spirit, which was with him, could she live again. Was there any concept more beautiful? But why, then, was not man a part of woman? Why did a man who had loved his wife not go to her in the same way?[287]

By using Adam and Eve to compare Gopal and his Wife, Masters shows not only the importance of religion, but also the inherent sexism of Christianity. Masters displays in his writing that women are always secondary as they are only to be used sexually for the male characters, and not in their own right. However, in the above quote, Masters introduces a nuanced reflection on gender roles in the Book of Genesis, asking “But why, then, was not man a part of woman? Why did a man who had loved his wife not go to her in the same way?” A very skilful writing technique of Masters is to have his characters express these moments of doubt and reflect on their identity. Though in this moment it may seem as though William is sympathetic to the sexism women face, he does not show in his own writing an alternative. Additionally, by including “love”, Masters displays the romanticism of post colonialist writing. Masters even goes on to ask, “But what if the woman was young, what if there had been no love?”[288]. The concept of dying for love is ancient and everlasting but is also needed especially

[286] Mastes, 1952, p.6
[287] Ibid, p.18
[288] Ibid, p.18

in military. Knowing Masters military background, this is a purposeful added technique to allow a justification for murder, in the name of love for your God, country or husband.

The idea of love is also used by the character "Chandra Sen, Jagirdar, Patel of Padwa and Kahari … a very important man"[289] to describe the East India Company; "'Life has changed under your benevolent government. Much is for the better. But the people want this changed and that left alone. In this matter of suttee they are ready for violence here.'"[290] As Chandra Sen is a member of the Mughal Empire, Masters uses this character to show the close relationship that the East India Company had with the Mughal Empire. By describing the British influence as "benevolent government", depicts a wanting for rule, comparing Britain to a godlike entity. Additionally, the claim that "much is for the better" shows the western superior entitled attitude that their culture is best. On the other hand, Masters here shows how the Company were overstepping and getting too involved in matters that was clear Indians wanted left alone. Again, this is also emphasised by the self-doubt of William, and his sympathetic nature towards the Indian people. However, as Masters follows in the footsteps of other authors by selecting a hot topic deemed different and opposite to Britain, such as suttee, or the Thuggee, Masters is further enforcing a stereotype of India being savage and inferior.

Monica Fludernik argues that suttee was an "'invention' of the British" due to the western orientalist teaching that the ancient texts provided the truth, and thereby used the Vedas, the ancient Hindu texts, to legitimize suttee.

> By thus involving the Brahmin scholarly elite, the British indirectly conferred religious sanction on a rite that could then be revived by nationalist opposition as a time-honoured sacred Hindu custom which could provide a rallying point against impious Western interference… The British not only thus indirectly rekindled the native enthusiasm for sacrificial immolation; they additionally compromised their rejection of the rite by unwittingly conferring sanction on the custom when they insisted on placing

[289] Ibid, p.11
[290] Ibid, p.20

> official observers at each immolation to ensure the voluntariness of the wife's suicide by fire.[291]

Masters also comments on these observations. Not only does William previously state that he was unable to stop a suttee he was observing, but Chandra Sen states that,

> 'It is a— a test. Without the physical presence of the dead man's corpse they— we'— he lifted his large eyes, not apologetically—'we cannot feel that our religion is being deliberately insulted. But this rests on the woman alone, as we feel it always does and always should. She might not have dreamed her dream. There is no earthly power that could make her tell of it if she did not want to. So it is she, by herself, who cries out from her spirit to join her husband. There is no law written anywhere that she should not be allowed to. The people are determined that she shall do as her spirit wishes.'[292]

In both the above quotes, the importance is placed upon the woman's choice and her own wishes to burn on the pyre after her husband's death. To suggest that the woman in question would not be influenced by her upbringing, her religion, and her surrounding environment, is to suggest she is free of the subliminal and obvious sexism within societal pressures. Having said that, Masters again could be trying to show how he is supportive of women's rights and his liberalism is emphasized as he has an Indian character showing this.

Typically, a colonial argument was that the treatment of a society's women proved their level of civilisation, yet here Masters represents Chandra Sen as respectful of women and their wishes. Interestingly though, Masters does display Chandra Sen as also confused by his own identity, as at first, he seems to align with the East India Company and the British when saying "they" to represent the Indian people, and then flips to say "we" as if he remembered who he is. Masters seems always have a character similar to Chandra Sen in his novels, of an assimilated Indian to his British rulers. Due to this, Chandra Sen's attitude towards suttee is clearly influenced by both sides, and the pressure he faces at being in the middle. It also shows that class and money are paramount, because Chandra Sen is given much more value and

[291] Fludernik, 2000, p.149-150
[292] Masters, 1952, p.22

standing throughout the novel than other Indian characters, and the main difference is his wealth. Also, most importantly, this discussion is between two male characters, and a woman in the novel is never adding her voice to the discourse on suttee. Masters dramatically ends the novel with William not only failing to prevent the suttee but lighting the pyre himself. Masters' representation of suttee is romanticised and linked to the honour and religiousness of marriage.

> The woman knelt, facing the east. She cried out with lyrical passion, her voice strong and sure. 'I see you in your place beside the sun, my darling and my lover. They have kept me from you where you sit in majesty and honour. I love you, my lord, I worship you with my body and spirit. I am your wife and your servant. I come to our bridal bed, to lie with you in the sun.' The sun sprang over the eastern rim of the world, and the woman stepped into the flames and lay down and held out her open arms. In a flash the fire ripped her clothes off her, and the marks of age, and her long hair, and for a blinding second she lay naked, golden, again young, on the cushion of flames, her arms out to William, her eyes on him and the sun in him and Gopal in him.[293]

The description definitely has religious tones, with "knelt, facing the east" and "my lord, I worship". By having the sun rise at the same moment Gopal's wife steps into the fire, Masters presents suttee as a natural event, worthy of praise. Masters also continues the idea that it was the woman's choice as she is "strong and sure" of her decision. The relationship between a husband and wife here, is comparable to the relationship between a god and his worshipper. To also have "wife" and "servant" as close descriptors, shows how Masters represents a typical gender role for women and wives, and it is similar to that of the Indian stereotype of being servile.

## Marriage

Additionally, the above discussion about suttee, relies upon the institution of marriage. At the start of *The Deceivers* the very first line is "Wilt though, William, have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony?"[294]. From

[293] Masters, 1952, p.221
[294] Ibid, p.3

the beginning, Masters places importance on marriage and this is seen throughout all of his novels. In *Coromandel!* Jason's marriage prospects are one of the main themes, and by Masters starting off *The Deceivers* in a similar fashion clearly demonstrates marriage is vital. For Masters, and many others, marriage and religion go hand in hand. Traditionally, the purpose of marriage was coverture, the act of binding a woman to a man, to legitimize any heirs, and in the act of marriage, the woman became the property of the man. However, for centuries, marriage and religion has been bound together, allowing extremists to claim specific rules and regulations to prevent anyone outside of a heteronormative couple to wed.

Foucault claimed that "there were two great systems conceived by the West for governing sex: the law of marriage and the order of desires."[295] Additionally, Foucault also states that "one of the first to be "sexualized" was the "idle" woman."[296] This idea and concept can be seen throughout Masters novels, as any woman unwed within the novel is sexualised, as these characters are usually prostitutes. By having the focus on the Suttee act within *The Deceivers* shows how even a widowed woman would be better following her husband, than to remain behind single. Chitnis and Wright emphasises this by saying

> Nowhere was the Indian woman's interest in sexual autonomy and control over property protected. And British feminists did not provide the vision and protection they claimed because they accepted the English norm that unattached women-redundant women-were a problem.[297]

Moreover, the wives within the novels, are almost treated as a holy entity, that should remain near virginal. William, when discussing his wife Mary, ponders "Surely he didn't want Mary to take off her clothes?"[298]. Marriage and sexuality are interlinked as Foucault depicts in his books *History of Sexuality.* Whilst Foucault focuses on medicine, politics and history to

[295] Foucault, 1976, p.39-40
[296] Ibid, p.121
[297] Chitnis & Wright, 2007, p1338
[298] Masters, 1952, p.5

understand sexuality, Judith Butler, looks at a more intimate level, such as every day acts that mould gender identities. Butler states that;

> To guarantee the reproduction of a given culture, various requirements, well established in the anthropological literature of kinship, have instated sexual reproduction within the confines of a heterosexually-based system of marriage which requires the reproduction of human beings in certain gendered modes which, in effect, guarantee the eventual reproduction of that kinship system.[299]

Masters within *The Deceivers* promotes this "heterosexually-based system of marriage", and also discourages interracial marriages as stated previously.

The common theme throughout is the dominant representation of women in two categories: the wife or the whore. Almost as if by being married, and by being associated with a man raises your station. Masters uses the term "harlot" consistently throughout his novels, including *The Deceivers.* When William is under cover as Gopal, he travels with the gang to "a whorehouse, and anyone had a right to come."[300] The description of the women in the brothel are norm ally always described as "girls" or "harlot" which gives a sinister undertone depicting the inferiority and the abuse.

Said in the introduction to Kipling's *Kim* reinforces this idea with

> to be always pestered by women, Kim believes, is to be hindered in playing the Great Game, which is best played by men alone. So not only are we in a masculine world dominated by travel, trade, adventure and intrigue, we are in a celibate world, in which the common romance of fiction and the enduring institution of marriage have been circumvented, avoided, all but ignored. At best, women help things along: they buy you a ticket, they cook, they tend the ill, and . . . they molest men.[301]

Said's analysis of *Kim* has many parallels with this analysis of *The Deceivers*. As stated previously the only women that appear within Masters novel are for a man's purpose. Regardless of whether the purpose is marriage or pleasure, both are sexualised. Sigmund Freud

[299] Butler, 1988, p.524
[300] Masters, 1952, p.149
[301] Said in Kipling, 1987, p.12

also expresses a similar sentiment in his essay *Deviant Love*, where he explains that there are two male object-choices, where the "keenest opposition between the 'mother' and the 'whore'". The male agnostic gaze consists of women who are the property of other men, such as wives and mothers, and they remain chaste and proper. On the reverse, men express a 'love of whores' who epitomise deviance, sexuality, and potential fidelity. [302]

Masters represents women within *The Deceivers* in a Victorian idealistic way, by continuously having the wives and the women in the novel remaining in domestic spheres, such as "The women stood in the doorways of the houses, their hands or an end of clothing thrown up to cover their faces."[303] Masters also gives direct statements in these definitions writing "They made a superb pair, one fair, one dark, both young and alive, both effortlessly capable in their spheres and sex."[304] Coupling statements like this with the fact that William's wife Mary, remains in the home for almost the entirety of the novel, barefoot and pregnant, the ideal Victorian woman. Masters is clearly influenced by "The Victorian doctrine of "separate spheres" located domesticity and the home as the woman's realm where she would remain "protected from all danger and temptation" and the world outside as the combative arena of man."[305] The contingent of protection and safety was control. Women were protected and safe and therefore so were their bodies and their sexuality. These ideals can derive from fears over deviant female sexuality. On the other hand, "female domestic confinement was the denial of higher education to women, the argument being that medical studies had clearly indicated the harmful effects of excessive study, which disturbed female menstrual cycles and affected a woman's ability to conceive."[306] Within *The Deceivers* Masters highlights this by having his pregnant wife behind the confines of his home, whereas the goddess Kali, and the Indian

[302] Freud, 2007, p.7
[303] Masters, 1952, p.15
[304] Ibid, p.59
[305] Ruskin, p.17 in Pawha, 2004, p.296
[306] Pawha, 2004, p.297

prostitutes and their rampant sexuality are out in the jungles and villages, and are associated with the murderous thuggee gang.

## Prostitution

As discussed above, in Victorian England, as well as in Masters novels, women are represented as either "wife" or "whore". *The Deceivers* is actually set before the Victorian era, but it is clear from Masters own time, how he was influenced by these ideals, especially with his background at military school, and public school, which certainly would have been. Realistically, during the early nineteenth-century, there was much more sexual freedom, or debauchery. Hyam describes how the empire was a great opportunity to explore sexuality where

> Greater space and privacy were often available; inhibitions relaxed. European standards might be held irrelevant. Abstinence was represented as unhealthy in a hot climate. Boredom could constitute an irresistible imperative. The Indian army conveniently arranged for prostitutes. Local girls would offer themselves; or boys, especially in Ceylon. The white man's status put him in a strong position to get his way.[307]

But with the social Purity Campaign in the 1880s, sexuality was oppressed based off of Christian morality. Initially, the campaign wanted to abolish prostitution, after a serious increase of venereal diseases within the army, but also attacked sexuality. However, prostitution was considered a necessary evil, one that kept soldiers from acting out. Through colonisation, prostitution flourished, and again with the advancements of steamboats and railways, the movement of sex trafficking increased. This was not an accidental byproduct, but a thought-out aim. It was considered a part of military life as Liddle and Joshi state;

> So the British not only increased demand for prostitution through their view that the troops had a right to sexual services, but also facilitated it notably through the Contagious Diseases Act. They provided Indian women, and attempted to regulate and control them, for this purpose, but concerned themselves solely with the welfare

[307] Hyam, 1990, p.88

> of the male soldiery. The Indian women who were prostitutes constituted expendable commodities in this process.[308]

Like the Thuggee Act, 1837, the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871, and the Bengal Sati Regulation, 1829, the Contagious Diseases Act, 1864, and the Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856, was a law put in place to monitor and restrict Indian people, specifically Indian prostitutes. Liddle and Joshi go on to say that

> Between 1795 and 1937, they liberalised the laws on six major issues of relevance to women. Sati (widow-burning) was prohibited in 1829, and widow remarriage allowed in 1856. The age of consent to sexual intercourse was fixed at 10 in 1860 and raised to 12 in 1891. Female infanticide was prohibited in Acts of 1795, 1804 and 1870, and child marriage for bidden in 1929. Various laws improving women's inheritance rights were passed in 1874, 1929 and 1937, culminating in the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, which gave limited rights to widows only[309]

Similar to the Thuggee Act, the Criminal Tribes Act, and the Bengal Sati Regulation, the Contagious Diseases Act was a law put in place to monitor and restrict Indian people, specifically Indian prostitutes. The idea was to prevent the rampant venereal diseases that were spreading among the military in the colonies, as well as the administration. Whilst the act worked to some degree, as it forced prostitutes to internal examinations, and limited their movements, the men using their services were free to roam and spread as they wish. Before the act "reports had come of Company servants 'dangerously disordering themselves with drink and whores', while another letter begs that the directors attempt to recruit 'civil, sober men' and that 'negligent or debauched persons or common drunkards should be discarded."[310] The above certainly echoes Josephine Butler, a feminist reformer, who argued against the Contagious Diseases Act:

> The objections to the compulsory examination system were that it legalised the 'double standard' and assumed prostitution was necessary and ineradicable, that it tended to professionalise it, making it harder for the amateur to escape, that it increased the power and interference of the State, that it gave powers of arrest to special plainclothes 'morals

[308] Lidde & Joshi,
[309] Ibid
[310] Dalrymple, 2019, p.47

> police', and that it inspected only prostitutes and not their clients. Compulsory and painful examination by vaginal speculum was held to constitute 'instrumental rape by a steel penis', and the campaign harped upon 'medical lust in handling and dominating and degrading women'.[311]

Ultimately, the act shows how men were perceived and treated as superior to women, and women as only a commodity. The act also highlights how much importance and power was given to education, medicine, and the military, as "This was pre-eminently an imperial system devised by the military-medico establishment to protect the soldiers of the empire, but Oxbridge dons also expressed interest in it."[312] Within these institutions, ideals were spread, especially regarding gender, and stating these ideas as fact.

The term Masters seems to favour for prostitute within the novel is "harlot", which ironically has British origins as a slur of "of abuse for a male beggar or villain"[313] However, the word evolved to describe promiscuous women, but still held on to the abusive nature of the language. There is a continuation of degrading language and descriptions when Masters depicts any women, especially prostitutes. Masters first introduces to these Indian women as follows:

> 'Friend, which way are the women?' The spice merchant laughed good- humouredly and waved his hand up the street. 'Up there, second turning on the right. You can't miss them.' 'God be with you.' They pushed slowly on through the crowd. The harlots displayed themselves, each squatting on a cushion, in open- fronted rooms at street level. The rooms were bare, except that in some a small clay image of Krishna stood on a pedestal in a back corner. In all, an open staircase at the side ran up out of sight to the second storey. The old retired crones who were the harlots' body- servants leered toothlessly down through half- drawn curtains from the upper balconies.
>
> Always a dim lamp on the floor shone up under the harlot's chin and into her face, erasing the lines of age and transmuting into living flesh the heavy mask of make- up. Every harlot wore a layer of white powder on her face and circles of violent rouge on her cheekbones; black antimony ringed their eyes. They stared unseeing at the crowds that jostled up and down the narrow slope of street before them. Occasionally, without fervour or coquetry, a harlot's eyes locked with a man's. Occasionally a man stepped over the low sill and squatted close to the woman inside and talked. The passers- by paused to hear them haggle about the price. The woman gestured unemphatically, the man argued. An old peasant beside William said clearly, 'Thank God my loins no

[311] Butler in Hyam, 1990, p.64
[312] Hyam, 1990, p.64
[313] Oxford Reference

> longer squander what my fields produce!' and went on his way, shaking his head. The haggling customer shrugged at last. The woman rose and stalked up the stairs, her head high. The man followed her. Above, the old crone jabbered, pulled her head back, and closed the curtains.[314]

The way Masters describes the brothels shows how they have run as a long-standing business. As the brothels are described as crowded, it can also be seen as a successful enterprise. There is a tradition depicted above of older women managing the younger woman, again as if it passed down through generations or is hereditary. The women are also in bare rooms, with maybe only an emphasis on their Hindu religion, with the "clay image of Krishna". "Every harlot wore a layer of white powder on her face" shows how Masters generalises the prostitution, but also the forced European culture. Furthermore, the descriptions of bartering show the commonality of the sale, and the disregard of a woman's consent and respect.

Sadly, Masters goes on to describe some prostitutes that are clearly children, which is representative of the true state of the business. In this particular scene Masters shows how the children have no control over their own fate, as Hussein goes on to speak with the men surrounding her

> 'Greetings, brother Ali. How much does this one cost? She ought to be good.'
> … The man spoken to turned, nodded, and said, 'I don't know. She makes my loins tighten. So young! She is like our southern girls before they are blessed by children. Like a boy almost.'
> 'She is too expensive for the likes of us, brother. Two rupees.' Hussein laughed. 'I must wait then, and curb my appetites. That's what the maulvi says: "What the harlot gets, the servant of Allah loses." Perhaps there are as lickerous girls farther north.' [315]

Not only does Masters show the lack of autonomy for the prostitute, but also shows how children were prized in the business, as they were worth more money. Child prostitution showed even further the disregard of any life that was not a European white man to the colonial effort. However, this was also the reality in England where

[314] Masters, 1952, p.114
[315] Ibid, p.115

> The age of consent for girls was twelve until 1875 (when it was raised to thirteen), and did not apply to boys. In London there were brothels which specialised in supplying girls under thirteen, and girls as young as eight or nine were on the streets, particularly in the early nineteenth century. Two hundred child prostitutes under twelve were recorded in Liverpool in 1857. Child labour in factories was a major source of recruitment.[316]

Although William and Hussein refuse this young girl, they still go on to have relations with prostitutes only a little older.

> 'The girls,' he said. 'One each for you, and me, and Hussein here. Those two'— he pointed his chin at Yasin and Piroo—' are woman- haters, they say. Come on in!' The three girls were young. One was sultry and heavy-lidded, and as she walked seemed to sway from the top- heavy weight of her breasts. She squatted down next to the Jemadar. He grabbed her, and she leaned invitingly away from him. The second girl had a hard, thin face and lips avaricious for things other than love. She sat down beside Hussein and began to ply him with liquor. The third girl closed the door, hesitated, and came slowly toward William. She was not beautiful; she had a plain, pleasantly round face, full hips, strong legs, and brown cowlike eyes.[317]

There are a few worries shown above, not only their age, but particularly "leaned invitingly away from him". The oxymoron is a representation of how women are assumed to always want sex, even if saying the opposite. The age of consent was another thing Josephine Butler fought for, arguing to raise the age from 13 to 16. She ultimately won her case in 1875, but not without upsetting many in the House of Lords. In the last part of this chapter, we will look at how these strictly male institutions not only supported male superiority, but actively engaged in the oppression and sexualisation of women and children.

Uncomfortably, again Masters uses cows and bull imagery to describe sexual activity, similar to *Coromandel!*. For example, "'Careful now, my beautiful bull.' She whispered in his ear, part drunken harlot, part loving country girl, part mother" and also "this cow- eyed girl had willing hips, but she was just pretending to be a harlot.". As before, Masters seems to liken sexuality not only to cows, but animals in general, showing it as a natural and uncontrollable act.

[316] Hyam, 1990, p.62-3
[317] Masters, 1952, p.154

Interestingly, the same similarities are prevalent when describing natives in need of colonisation. Yet, William, a British male, certainly succumbs to these animal instincts.

> She did not know the powers that Kali gave. She would whimper under the lash of his strength, and call him 'lord,' and on her cries he would ride in power over the whole world... The rumal was in his hands, it circled her neck. The muscles were taut in his wrists. Death and love surged up together in him, ready to flood over together, and together engulf her. [318]

Masters once again links sexuality and power, as he shows that he is in charge, eradicating the woman's position. Calling him 'lord' further enforces this, and the fact that the prostitute is whimpering highlights how power always leads to abuse. Moreover, we see Masters linking the ultimate act of violence with sex, as the result of the scene is William murdering the prostitute. Whilst Masters can be seen at times as being critical of the British in India and imperialist attitudes and ideals, he never seems critical of the treatment of women. Instead, Masters displays clear examples of sexism, and at times even seems to invoke violence, particularly sexual, towards women. For example, in the following scene we see William after taking part in rituals of the Thuggee gang. William is deep undercover here, even having gone so far as to kill Gopal, as to not reveal his true identity. After finishing a ritual killing, some members of the gang have gone to a brothel;

> William drank, and tried to push away the vision of the dead weaver; but when he had done that a worse memory remained: the lovely warmth of the killing. He thought suddenly of Mary, wet-lipped and hungry in the darkness. It was like that, and his knees melted as he thought of her. But it was horrible – and passionately desirable. It was the open-armed, sucking-soft body of Kali, and her embrace.[319]

The above quote is a clear representation of Masters glorifying violence and murder, even highlighting the sexual pleasure he derives from it, highlighting the "twin myths of sensuality and devotion."[320] Similar to how Masters has romanticised suttee, the murderous acts of the

[318] Masters, 1952, p.158
[319] Ibid, p.154
[320] Pawha, 2004, p.294

thuggee are romanticised. Even though William has chosen to commit such acts, the blame still resides with Kali. As we saw earlier Kali is racialised, but Masters also clearly sexualises her too. Kali not only leads Masters to kill and steal, but also to bed prostitutes, regardless, or because, of his pregnant wife.

> He had eaten the sugar. Kali was Death. Kali was a woman. The zither urged him to spend desire. The girl's hands demanded him and crept over him. He put down the beaker, and touched her, and found her full, warm, and waiting[321]

Whilst a woman's role seems to be to tempt the man sexually, the man's role is to always succumb, similar to the story of Adam and Eve. Even in Indian- English there is a term called 'Eve-Teasing' which ranged to incorporate all manners of sexual assault from men to women, based off of this temptation. The representations of what it means to be a man are prevalent throughout all of Masters' novels, and especially *The Deceivers*. There are many instances when Masters characters outrightly state what is expected of masculine behaviour, down to minutia, such as "sometimes people didn't understand a man who lived alone with a cat and a carpenter's bench,"[322] or the more religiously damning such as "He gave the spirit to men, and of the spirit women gave birth, and the world began to be peopled."[323] The idea that men are biologically predestined to be more competitive, aggressive, and everything associated with empire and military dominance, is purposefully spread throughout the colonies and in schools. Hyam even states that "A key instrument of the Purity campaign, was the growth of the public schools dedicated to the doctrines of late-Victorian manliness."[324] Before the introduction of the Purity campaign, British men were more accepting of having more feminine attributes, such as sentimentality. The Purity campaign was also against homosexual relationships, whereby when raising the age of consent, a clause was added to ban sodomy. Previously, both the

[321] Masters, 1952, p.157
[322] Ibid, p.56
[323] Ibid, p.1956
[324] Hyam, 1990, p.72

military, public schools, and the empire, were prime places to live out your sexual fantasies. However, with the end of these relationships, and with the representation changing to one of taboo, homosexuality was linked to femininity, in the same way Hinduism was claimed to be ""effeminate" as deficient in "manliness" and "character"."[325] There is one scene in *The Deceivers* which is unnerving, as William uses a sexual assault as a form of revenge.

> Rikirao ordered his men to probe each traveller's rectum, which was a common hiding-place for gems. Chandra Sen turned white with anger when he heard the order given, and William intervened to save him from this last indignity. With a touch of malice, remembering the vicious dogs, he did nothing to help the watchman. The hubbub from the travellers rose to a crescendo of outrage as they undid their loincloths and bent over.[326]

Whilst it shows maybe the malicious sexual games that were played within public schools to gain dominance, it also shows the indignity acts like this can cause. However, when Masters talks about women being sexually assaulted he does not use similar language such as "indignity", as if it is more harmful to a man. If femininity was deemed inferior, masculine traits were prioritised and valorised. Within strictly male institutions such as the military and public schools, there was an insistence of male attributes, such as power, aggression, and competition. In this way, these institutions produced ideal soldiers for empire, and also for oppression of others.

## Class Representations

Masters is not alone in his representations of women, nor is he alone in his representations of the Thuggee gang. The concept of a murderous gang following a dark religion capt ured the British imagination and allowed for an acceptance of rule over India. Other authors with a similar background to Masters also wrote books on this topic, such as the original Phillip Meadows Taylor's *Confession of a Thug* (1839), who was in the military alongside the William

[325] Pawha, 2004, p.285
[326] Masters, 1952, p.93

Sleeman, noted for his efforts in ending the Thuggees. Additionally, there's Allan Mallinson's *The Tigress of Mysore* (1988), and several film adaptions. The narrative of the Thuggees helped to reinforce the British belief in their civilizing mission. Reliably, the four men responsible for putting the Thuggee Act together in 1837 were all educated in significant public schools: Henry Hardinge, 1st Viscount Hardinge at Durham School and Sevenoaks school, James Broun-Ramsay, 1st Marquess of Dalhousie at Harrow, Edward Law, 1st Earl of Ellenborough and George Eden, 1st Earl of Auckland, both at Eton. The intertwined histories of the military and public schools created a foundation for strict gender roles to be shaped and enforced, focusing on masculine traits of duty and discipline. Not only did this help with colonial control, but also influenced literature that emerged to justify it. In both the representations of the Thuggees and of women, we see Masters, and his contemporaries perpetuate and reinforce colonial ideologies which would have been taught in these institutions.

Dress and how it related to race, sexuality, and particularly class, was another focus taught in the military and public schools. Previously, we have discussed how nakedness was associated with Indianness and thereby evidence of savagery. Alternatively, the decadence and detail of dress within the above-mentioned institutions emphasises how clothing could denote class. For example, Hussein places the East India Company on a pedestal and aspires to be like the officials and own his own "red coat", and in doing so disowning his band of brothers in the thugee gang.

> 'You've been in a uniform all your life— red coat, fine hat, sword! You've been one of a band! All the English here are a band. You've had a place in the Company, been sure of friends, sure of help when you wanted it ... I can go back to Kali, but I don't want to, I am afraid. Please understand. I want a red coat, I want to be safe in it.'[327]

For Hussein, the Company represents safety, comradeship, and a uniform. The "lovely red coat with the arms of the Company on it"[328] is constantly repeated and mentioned. Whereas Jason

[327] Masters, 1952, p.74
[328] Ibid, p.108

Savage's aim in *Coromandel* was treasure, Hussein's is the coat. The coat represents British superiority. Masters again shows his preference for India, by dismissing Hussein's wish, stating that "the man so simple that he preferred a red coat to the embrace of a goddess."[329] Additionally, this again brings up the connotation of Indians and nakedness. Hussein's obsession with clothing, suggests a lack of his own, and is further reinforced by Masters stating that "Chandra Sen did not think Gopal the weaver had worn anything on his feet, but William's soles were soft and European, and he could not have walked the distance barefoot."[330] To make the separation greater, "Fredrick Shore [a civil servant and judge of the East India Company] found that his adoption of native dress so enraged the increasingly self-righteous officials of Calcutta that a government order was issued explicitly forbidding Company servants from wearing anything except European dress." [331]

Regardless, through Hussein's fear of his own gods and country, and aspire so passionately for a life in the East Indian Company, Masters represents India as inferior and Britain as superior.

> When you have seen, and learned to fear our gods, you will understand everything. You will understand why I want above all else to have a red coat and be like ordinary people. You must leave your law behind and become an Indian.[332]

The opposite to Hussein wanting to dress like a company official is seen in William's portrayal of a thuggee. William clearly depicts times of enjoyment whilst parading as Gopal, but in reality "a government order was issued explicitly forbidding Company servants from wearing anything except European dress."[333]

Furthermore, we see the importance of clothing to Masters, as he is continuously commenting on dress within his novels. In his autobiography *Bugles and a Tiger*, he writes almost a page describing his uniform in the military. Similarly, there was a strict dress code in public schools, which Masters certainly would have adhered to. Hyam comments on how these "Old-school-

[329] Ibid, p.105
[330] Ibid, p.25
[331] Dalrymple, 2002, p.50
[332] Masters, 1952, p.108
[333] Dalrymple, 2002, p.50

tie loyalties, clubland fellowship and gang fraternities seem to have been almost a more important emotional prop than marriage for many servants of empire."[334]

Additionally, clothing, or lack thereof, had a class aspect when in relation to gender. Women of lower class, especially those working in agriculture, would have been more open to nudity. Whereas Dhonchakf explains [Like all young girls from respectable families," the gopals "considered the embarrassment of appearing naked before a young boy to be worse than giving up their lives."[335] Master reiterates this sentiment, when discussing Gopal's wife as

> She had ripped her bodice from neck to waist so that her young breasts forced out. She had torn down her hair, and it hung about her shoulders. Her large eyes strained up to see something in or above the treetops. William tightened his fists. By these acts she had cut herself out of society. To the men about her she was already dead.[336]

Not only did nakedness signify ruin, but certain clothes could also denote profession. For example, Masters claims that "a loose bodice of the pattern common with harlots."[337] What clothing certainly represented was class, whereby "Subordinate and sexually accessible women (almost literally so: knickers came into use only after about 1850) thus surrounded the future servant of empire from his boyhood."[338] Furthermore, with the Victorian dress reform movement, clothing was meant to signify modesty and it "cited the body of the "native" woman as its domain"[339], depicting the interplay, or race, gender and class.

## Conclusion

In emphasising certain aspects of Indian life, such as the Thuggee gang and Suttee, in popular literature, Masters creates a collective image of the stereotypical Indian as barbaric or savage. Masters also creates stereotypes surrounding women and their gender roles, as weak, feminine

[334] Hyam, 1990, p.46
[335] Dhonchakf, 2019 p.46
[336] Masters, 1952, p.27
[337] Ibid, p.155
[338] Hyam, 1990, p59
[339] Pawha, 2004, p.293-4

and sexualised. Alternatively, Masters displays masculinity and all that entails as glory, conquest, and power. In this way Masters purports toxic masculinity, which creates a hierarchy of superiority that encourages abuse and sexual violence. Specifically, Masters represents the thuggee gang as a brotherhood, almost similar to a military operation. Dalrymple comments how

> India became a decentralised and disjointed but profoundly militarised society. Almost everybody now carried weapons. Almost everybody was potentially a soldier. A military labour market sprang up across Hindustan — one of the most thriving free markets of fighting men anywhere in the world — all up for sale to the highest bidder. Indeed, warfare came to be regarded as a sort of business enterprise.[340]

The fact the novel was adapted into a Hollywood movie shows the wide reach Masters had, and also the interesting link between Britain and the United States and their representations in the media. Furthermore, most of Masters' novels, except *Coromandel!*, revolve around a significant event that occupied the British imagination and was used as a common plot and basis in many popular literature texts and films. *The Deceivers* focuses on the supposed ending of the murderous "thuggee", the gang that William infiltrates, and therefore allows Masters to depict Indian people as barbaric and violent, and therefore in need of management and rule. This is important, as these events in colonial Indian history, such as the destruction of the thuggee gang, the Indian Mutiny in 1857, and the partition of India, were used within popular media to promote the cause of British rule and superiority. Even though *Coromandel!* and *The Deceivers* differ chronologically, the themes that Masters highlights throughout the novels are very similar, especially in regard to race, gender, and class. The differences between India and Britain are continuously made, to emphasise the superiority of the colonisers, and to justify their actions.

[340] Dalrymple, 2019, p.79

What I think is most important in the representations in *The Deceivers*, is that Masters suggests that thuggee gang was a conspiracy. Similar to how freemasonry, public schools, and even the military rely on secrecy, so did the deceivers, and in this way Masters found an affinity to it. At the end of the novel, Masters states

> The Deceivers' worship of Kali was genuinely religious. Indians of an older generation might have felt it impiety in them not to help these seekers after salvation, even if the Deceivers' way to grace was not their own... Probably the old rulers had received their percentage of the spoils too, in return for keeping their troops away and their eyes and ears shut. The close interlocking of so many self-interests formed a conspiracy of silence as effective as the conspiracy of murder. In the nine years of the English Company's rule nothing had been done against the Deceivers. But William realized now that most Indians knew at least of the existence of the Deceivers; and, knowing, they could not believe the English did not also know; therefore the English officials too were sharing in the spoils; so what was the use of informing? He had found Kali on the road, and followed her, and found her in palaces, and now in hovels. Kali's hand truly lay over all India.[341]

[341] Masters, 1952, p.190

## *Nightrunners of Bengal*

> Colleen was a symbol herself—a country-bred carriage horse, trotting peacefully down a road made in some dim past by Indian slaves, rebuilt and maintained now by English engineers.[342]

In this chapter, we explore the novel *Nightrunners of Bengal* by John Masters, paying close attention to the representations of gender, race, and class. Masters fits into the group of British imperialist writers who, who, created negative cultural representations of otherness that provided legitimacy to colonial rule over India. *Nightrunners of Bengal* is Masters' first novel and was released in 1951, only four years after the partition of India in 1947. Up to 1 million people died during the partition, and 14 million more were displaced. ""Partition itself was an act of violence and in more than symbolic ways … in the case of the experience of abducted women, violence at the physical, the emotional, the legal, and the political level."[343] Regardless of India having a history of Muslims and Hindus living harmoniously side by side, the British Raj in its last official final act, decided to divide once more, by having Hindus reside in the new India, and Muslims live in Pakistan. This is the lasting legacy of the British Raj.

For Masters, the partition of India meant the end of his military career in the Indian Army. After trying unsuccessfully in a career of hiking in the Himalayas, Masters moved to the United States and tried his hand at writing. His first novel revolves around an event that took place ninety years prior to India's independence, with Masters being ultimately influenced by the rampant sexual violence that occurred during the partition of India, what with the heavily graphic scenes he depicts in his novel.

[342] Masters, 1951, p.16
[343] Levine, 2007

*Nightrunners of Bengal* is set during the Indian rebellion mutiny that took place in India in 1857. The name of the event is disputed, as British history recorded the event as the Indian Sepoy mutiny, downplaying the resistance as a small military rebellion, whereas the Indian term of First War of Independence or Liberation depicted a large and organized resistance against British rule in India. Ironically, this Rebellion led to an increased British rule in India and the start of the British Raj.

**Synopsis of Novel**

The novel, therefore, is set in the time of the East India Company (EIC), and its de facto rule over India. Rodney Savage is the protagonist, and he is serving as an official of the EIC, running "his regiment, the 13th Rifles, Bengal Native Infantry"[344]. Now the 13th Rifles are a fictional army, but the parallels between Masters own military background and the portrayal of life in the army within the novel is obvious, and in this way acts as a piece of social history. However, whilst Masters yet again depicts a sympathetic character to the Indian cause, especially his sepoys and those of his village, Rodney maintains the idea of British and white superiority and supremacy, and ultimately misses the rising rebellion. Masters sets the scene by having Rodney arrive home to his village of Bhowani, astride his horse, after completing his company duties. From his position, Rodney looks down on the:

> Brown naked children splashed in the puddles. Women glided down to the river, carrying bundles of clothes on their heads. The holy man sat on a raised earth platform, revetted by loose stones, which had been built up round the bole of the peepul tree.[345]

The above description focuses first on skin colour, and then dress, showing the importance Masters places upon these details, especially when differentiating characters. As seen in his other novels, Masters regularly pinpoints a character's skin colour and emphasises this further when used in slurs or in an attack. Additionally, following British literary tradition, Indian and

[344] Masters, 1951, p.7
[345] Ibid, p.7

nakedness are synonymous. Within this early description of Bhowani, Masters covers multiple stereotypes as 'the holy man' is also prominent here. Although the reader later discovers 'the holy man' is in fact an Irish man, and not an Indian man, Masters attributes him with an exotic and mystical description:

> The holy man faced north, sitting erect, his legs crossed under him and his hands limp at his sides. He was naked except for a dirty loincloth well below his navel…The holy man's body glowed in the diffused light under the tree. The rain had cut runnels in the ashes and dirt, and there the brown skin was wrinkled gold, the leprous patches smooth silver.[346]

The holy man throughout the novel is a source of foreshadowing of the events of the Indian rebellion, and even on the first page he seems to summon multiple crows to sit at his feet. As Masters claims that this symbol is a bad omen, the holy man spooks both Rodney and Miss Caroline Langford. Masters describes the latter as "a mere visitor to India"[347], who is staying with her sister, the wife of an officer. Ultimately, Caroline becomes one of Rodney's suitors, despite Masters initial introduction:

> Miss Langford…was young, and of medium height, and the severity of her grey jacket emphasised her slightness of body. A hard black hat perched on the front of her head, which was small, and she carried a riding crop in her hand; her wrists were thin and brittle-seeming…She was so cold, so English, against the warm colours.[348]

The stark difference between Indian characters and their nakedness, with the English characters and their specific style of dress highlights the importance of clothing on defining one's identity. Through colonialism, nakedness denoted savagery, and especially in Victorian England, when lack of clothing showed lack of modesty. Masters even outrightly states "naked savages" within *Nightrunners of Bengal.*[349] Additionally, fashion in Britain, after the influx of cheap cloth from India, became more accessible to the poorer classes. Vivienne Richmond, in her novel *Clothing the poor in nineteenth century England* says that "clothing could indicate - or disguise – the

[346] Ibid, p.7-8
[347] Ibid, p.8
[348] Ibid, p.7
[349] Ibid, p.245

wearer's occupational or regional identity, age, gender, religion and social allegiance. It determined inclusion or exclusion, denoted conformity or differentiation, conferred or withheld respectability, attracted admiration and derision and could be the key to advancement or degradation."[350] Additionally, within *Nightrunners of Bengal*, identity and race are inexplicably linked. Similar to Masters other novels, and the genre of imperial romance and bildungsroman, the theme of identity leads the novel. Rodney is no different, because although he is in a position of power, has a wife and son, and loves the country he lives in and its people, he struggles to fit all of these together, in almost a representation of how Britain tried to fit into India. In a patriarchal fashion, Rodney longs to have a life like his father, William Savage, who found glory eradicating the Thuggee Gang in India. Even though Rodney has not yet achieved a feat like this, he is still treated a similar respect. When Rodney first enters his home, he is treated almost godlike, with his servants tripping over themselves to serve him.

> Sher Dil, the butler, tottered rheumatically out on to the front verandah and stood there in bent, dignified immobility, the general of the servant army. Lachman, the bearer, hurried down to take Rodney's cloak. The assistant cook, the dishwasher, the water-carrier, the washerman, and the dogboy, who were smoking rolled-leaf cigarettes by the stable wall, scrambled to their feet, bowed, and put both hands to their foreheads in salaam. From inside the kitchen the cook shouted, "The sahib has come." The gardener, crouched two hundred feet away among a mixed bed of larkspur and pink Clarkia, straightened his back and stood in meditation. The untouchable sweeper, squatting with basket and broom on the verandah outside a bathroom door, rose and made salaam.[351]

Not only does the above reinforce the stereotype of Indians being servile, but also portrays a respect for the rule, or maybe fear. Furthermore, Rodney himself is set apart from the Indian characters with the first description of his clothing:

> bottle-green tunic from his back, then knelt, pulled off his spurred boots and strapped green trousers, and pushed slippers on to his feet. A smoking jacket of maroon velvet hung on the back of a chair, the tasselled cap on top, the trousers underneath.[352]

[350] Richmond, 2016, p.3
[351] Masters, 1951, p.11
[352] Ibid, p.11

The clothing Rodney wears is luxurious and screams comfort. However, compared to the heat of India, must have been stifling. As stated above and in the previous chapter, in Britian fashion and dress has always denoted one's class, and in Anglo-India this was further emphasised. Where the two communities amalgamated is where differences such as clothing and race are exaggerated. The same can also be said for gender, specifically in regards to a women's modesty. Rodney's wife, Joanna, who we are next introduced to, is outraged when learning "Miss Langford wasn't wearing gloves, or a cloak, or a veil?", yet modestly goes on to explain her own outfit for the Company ball:

> a low-topped dress, the satin slip shimmering through white tulle, three deep flounces at the left side caught up with loops of pearls. "And that will be over hoops, of course, and I'll wear my big pearl earrings and the triple necklace with the sapphire pendant, and one of the fillets in my hair."
> Rodney did a quick sum in his head; five months' worth of his pay, transmuted into pearls, would be on show with the dress.[353]

Rodney does not have much love for his wife, and Masters uses Joanna to show Rodney's disdain at the British culture within India. For example, "after six years in India, Rodney's wife Joanna knew twenty words, and could use her verbs only in the imperative mood."[354] Within the novel, Masters represents Joanna as a stereotypical British wife, or 'memsahib' residing in India. She seems to only care about gossip and fashion, and maintaining the separation between Indians and Britons, unless in a servant/master relationship. In this way, *Nightrunners of Bengal*, poses as a romance novel, as "romance in its initial form represents the ideals of patriarchal society, and particularly the imperial romance reinforces the view of the empire as a masculine enterprise, a world, as projected by imperialism, where gender roles were clearly defined."[355] Furthermore, the first sentence we hear from Joanna shows her ignorance when she is ordering Rodney about looking after their son Robin: ""Rodney, put his hat on, please.

[353] Ibid, p.13
[354] Ibid, p.8
[355] Araguec, 2012, p.7

He'll get sunburnt and brown, like a subordinate's child.""[356] Again Masters focuses on skin colour, but also outrightly states that brown is less than, or "subordinate". Although Rodney does go on to argue with Joanna about these comments, the novel is still filled with these racist depictions. Joanna may represent a majority of Britons in India, but Masters uses Rodney to condemn her actions;

> "That young lady must be spoken to. I'm surprised Lady Isobel hasn't done it already. She must not be allowed to let us all down in front of the blacks."
> "Joanna, will you please remember to call Indians by their race and caste, or, if you don't know, 'natives'?" He became angry, as he always did when this familiar subject came up, and he gripped the brandy glass more tightly. "God damn it, you ought to know better. We of the Company's service live here all our working lives. We do our work and enjoy ourselves and lord it over the country entirely by the goodwill of the average native—especially the native soldier, the sepoy. If you even think of them insultingly, of course they know it and resent it——"[357]

Here, Masters is foreshadowing the Indian Rebellion, explaining the sepoys resentment of their treatment by the British in India. Masters draws similarities to other British authors writing about India, in representing the "White Man's burden". Whilst Rodney seems opposed to racism and his wife's attitude towards Indians, he still thinks the company's work is needed and admirable. In a similar way to the civilising mission, Masters, and thereby Rodney, accepts that Indians are inferior as a fact and thereby in need of help. Masters glorifies the East India Company and thereby agrees with Britain's right to rule.

> "Colleen, the carriage mare, trotted incuriously past all these symbols of the colossal empire of the Honourable East India Company. Rodney had been born in and of that empire, but still it took his breath away when he considered the power created by those English merchants who had striven here and made themselves the masters of princes. Two hundred and forty-eight years ago their envoys had come to Agra and begged the Great Mogul to let them build a trading post beside the sea. A century ago they bowed and scraped for the favour of the King of Oudh. Today, by luck and aggressive skill, by courage and persevering deceit, their footholds had so expanded that their Presidency of Bengal alone extended seventeen hundred miles from Burma to Afghanistan, and seven hundred miles from the Himalaya to the Nerbudda. Their other two Presidencies, Bombay and Madras, had swallowed the rest of India; the heir of the Moguls existed only as their pensioner; the King of Oudh had no kingdom. The map of India was a

[356] Masters, 1951, p.11
[357] Ibid, p.12

> daub of British red, patched by yellow islands to mark the states of the remaining rajahs. On British sufferance, these states ruled themselves, but were forbidden to treat with each other or with any foreign power. The Company had become a weird blend of trading corporation and administrative engine, and the English government in London controlled it. It traded as it wished, and dictated treaties. It minted money, made laws, collected taxes, and executed criminal and civil justice. It kept the peace—and made war from Persia to China. The man who was its chief representative in India, the Governor General, had direct and almost unlimited power over a hundred million people, and indirect power over other millions living in the states. When the Governor General spoke, the largest volunteer standing force in the world moved to compel obedience. In fact the Governor General controlled three armies; each of the Presidencies maintained its own, and together they numbered 38,000 British and 348,000 native troops, with 524 field guns. The native soldiers, the sepoys, served under British officers in regiments raised by and belonging to the Honourable East India Company. The Company also maintained in each Presidency a few all-British regiments; but the majority of the white-skinned soldiers in India were in Queen's regiments, those raised by and belonging to the Queen. The English government hired out the Queen's regiments to the Company, for a spell of duty in India while they were on their rounds of the other British colonial possessions overseas.[358]

The above description not only shows Masters attention to detail, in terms of administration and military, but also the idea of British superiority. Masters displays a racial pride using Rodney, the ever loyal and honourable soldier, who in ignoring any wrongdoing, shows his grandiose admiration of the British Empire or "Honourable" East India Company.

However, British rule in India also posed a threat to the British residents. Reflecting on a sight of Indians Miss Langford points to these tension:

> "Worried all the Indians who were by the tree – so it ought to worry us, because we're supposed to be their friends, as well as their rulers."
> Joanna was annoyed; she said, "Come Miss Langford, we will begin to think you have quite gone native. It is no use bothering about the natives' superstitions, my husband says – don't you dear?"
> Rodney felt trapped and unhappy; that was not at all what he meant when he said, as he often did, that some things in India were inexplicable.[359]

The idea of "gone native" has been touched upon in previous chapters and will be explored further when discussing racial representations. Whilst at the ball, a handful of officials are pulled out to a conference room where they are told the news that the Rajah of Kishanpur has

[358] Ibid, p.15
[359] Ibid, p.20-1

been found assassinated. At the time of the novel, the British enforced "the annexation policy 10 of the EIC, according to which a principality was annexed if the prince died without leaving a legitimate male heir."[360] However, the historical Rani of Jhansi fought this policy, and Masters gives this figure an obvious representation within his novel as "there was no Englishwoman in the world quite like Sumitra, Rani-Regent of Kishanpur."[361] Many other British authors also chose to depict the Rani of Jhansi, and following in a similar suit, Masters represents her as a highly sexualised, almost demonic Indian woman. The story continues with Joanna encouraging Rodney to work with Sumitra in order to keep peace among the Company and the Indians. Rodney at first wishes to decline the opportunity for fear of Joanna having a suspected affair, yet as Rodney does not have much love for his wife he goes on to enjoy the separation and goes ahead with assisting the Rani, and thereby the EIC. Whilst Rodney does this he begins a romantic and sexual relationship with the Rani, who tries to convince Rodney to stay and lead her armies. Rodney, ever the loyal soldier, refuses in order to continue serving the company. Even though Joanna, and therefore the rest of the British community in Bhowani, suspect Rodney of this relationship, they never discuss it, reflecting the British stereotype of 'a stiff upper lip'. If Joanna is painted as the quintessential Anglo-Indian wife, then Sumitra represented the Indian prostitute, regardless of her high status.

In all of these scenes Masters creates a building tension amongst the Indian characters leading to the violent night of the Indian Rebellion. When the event finally takes place, the violent consequences on the English characters are vividly depicted. Death and sexual violence are graphically described. Interestingly, "by the 1890s most professional British historians of the Mutiny agreed that English women were not raped during the Mutiny, but most British and Anglo-Indian novels about it continues to repeat these disputed stories about the torture and

[360] Arargueс, 2012, p.5
[361] Masters,1951,, p.49

rape of English women."[362] Within *Nightunners of Bengal*, Masters represents the Mutiny no different, strictly depicting only Indian characters raping and murdering, usually using animalistic imagery, such as "mad dogs"[363], "snarled like a dog"[364] and "the crowd breathed, all together, like a huge animal"[365]. A few of the British characters in the novel survive the attack, including Rodney and his injured son, but not before Rodney has to endure watching his wife Joanna be raped and murdered whilst he lays hiding. Caroline Langford also survives, and the trauma of the event ultimately sparks a romantic relationship between herself and Rodney. At this point of the novel, Rodney's sympathetic nature towards Indian people changes to rage and hatred, especially as he sees his own regiment partaking in the rebellion. However, through the help of some Indian villagers, and his relationship with Caroline, Rodney ultimately returns to sanity as he returns to British order. In a final battle between British forces and Indian cavalry, and due to a small amount of Rodney's loyal Indian soldiers, Britian diffuses the rebellion and begins the almost 100-year rule of the British Raj.

Similar to the previous chapters, I will start by looking at the representations of race in order to lay the groundwork of the novel, and to show the historical context needed to understand why the British Empire thought they had a right to be ruling in India. By suggesting that people of colour are less than, "barbaric", or animalistic, they are in need of help and civilisation. Again, similar to Masters other novels, there is a focus in the descriptions of Indian characters on their skin colour, and skin colour is also used consistently when trying to insult a character of colour. Said's *Orientalism* is also used within this chapter, not only in the comparisons made between England and India, but also in the depiction of Indians as barbaric in the events that supposedly took place during the Indian Rebellion. Even though there is evidence that British officials were sexually assaulting Indian women, the narrative that was presented to the British

[362] Paxton, 1992, p.19-20
[363] Masters, 1952, p.196
[364] Ibid, p.189
[365] Ibid, p.194

public, was that Indian men were raping "our" white women. This leads on to the next part of the chapter, where we will explore the gender representations within the novel. Masters once again uses women as secondary characters that are highly sexualised, and as stated previously, as possessions of the male characters. The very graphic depiction of the sexual violence during the Indian Rebellion seems unnecessary, even for the novel's entertainment purposes. Masters seems to glorify the violence as an innately animalistic instinct that all males have within themselves. In *A Bugles and a Tiger,* John Masters' autobiography, this idea of violence being a necessary part of the male experience is also portrayed as a part of army life, and again is shown in Masters, *The Deceivers*. Finally, this chapter will look again at this shared male experience, in similar literature to Masters, *Nightrunners of Bengal*. In particular, by authors who also attended a public school and/or a military school, similar to Masters. Uniform and dress are a key theme in all three representations of race, gender and class, and how it relates to identity, one that Masters uses to perpetuate the idea of a British patriarchal structure. The theme of identity is also repeated in each representation, primarily that of Masters own self-reflection and post-colonial consciousness.

## Racial Representations

### Us and Them

We will start of by exploring the racial representations in Masters' novel, by looking at the continuous comparisons of Britain to India culminating in a perception of "us" and "them", similar to the orientalist depictions seen in Said's novel *Orientalism*. In highlighting the differences between Britain and India, and particularly in assigning certain less favourable traits to Indians, Britain maintained a "positional superiority."[366] For example, the idea that Indians were incapable of ruling themselves is highlighted in Rodney's discussion with

[366] Said, 1978, p.7

Caroline Langford. Different to Joanna, Caroline is represented as an intelligent, but unlikable woman, who is in constant criticism, especially of the British in India. In this particular discussion, Caroline is commenting on how the British remain segregated from their Indian subjects, but Rodney gives the excuse that it is in both India and Britain's best interest to remain separate.

> "Miss Langford, they do their best. We all do. But to feel India in the way you say your Kishanpur friends do, you must become Indian, gain one set of qualities and lose another. As a race we don't do it—we can't. Women, now—English ladies have to be careful. Indian customs are very different from ours, and we do not want any misunderstandings to spoil things." He avoided her eyes. "As for us officers, we know the sepoys, which means we know the classes and castes they are enlisted from. The Bengal sepoy is the salt of the earth, the most wonderful person anyone can have the privilege of knowing—though I suppose there are just as fine men in the other Presidencies——"
> He caught himself up and looked sharply at her. He always did it, always gave these damned visitors and Queen's officers their opening to sneer at Anglo-Indian enthusiasm, to say something about "faithful blacks" and "doglike devotion."
> "*You* love them, don't you?"
> He hesitated, analysing himself more carefully than he had ever done.
> "Love? That's a strong word. One man here loves them – colonel Bulstrode, oddly enough. He loves them – as a father loves a pack of half-witted sons"
> "But don't you ever feel that you and the sepoys might be pulled in opposite directions – oh by religion, or politics?" …
> "It would have to be something so fundamental that we wouldn't have sufficient faith – loyalty, trust, whatever you like to call it – to bring it out into the open. Remember that every single native soldier is a volunteer. The people have for centuries been the toads under the harrows of a lot of vicious rajahs. Never again. They can look forward to peace for about the first time in the whole of India's history. Think what that means to a man who needs all his energy, all his life, to get a living out of this soil."
> "Is that really all he thinks of?" The girl interrupted quickly. "Doesn't he want to be his own master?"
> "Perhaps, if it were possible. But first he wants peace, and protection – which means power – and we're giving them to him."[367]

There are many things to pick out in this scene, like again the comparison of Indians to animals with "doglike devotion", not to mention the perpetuating of the servant stereotype. Primarily, the above scene depicts what Kipling referred to as the 'White Man's burden', as Masters states that only Britain can be responsible for giving Indians power, peace and protection. Moreover,

[367] Masters, 1951, p.21-23

Masters likens the Indians to "half-witted sons" depicting Indians of clearly lower intelligence, and also highlighting that Britain was apparently acting out of love for Indians, and not for the reality of the massive profit that Britian made out of India's goods. Where I wish to focus specifically in this scene, is the importance for the English ladies to be careful. In a similar way to how Indians are portrayed as needing peace and protection, so are the British women. Although Masters acknowledges that the Indian customs are different from Britain, that does not stop his male characters from attributing some of these traits to themselves to assimilate. On the other hand, women had to remain British and in this way were used to uphold the separation of rulers and ruled. Additionally, the above has multiple instances of labelling Britain as "us" and "we", and India as "them" and "theirs".

**Colourism**

As in all of Masters' novels, *Nightrunners of Bengal* has a multitude of descriptions of Indian characters whereby he places an emphasis on the colour of their skin. "A potbellied brown infant ran out of the bushes and stumbled howling in his path."[368] "A slight dark Indian stood in the outer doors"[369]. "His skin was brown, shiny, and paper-thin, and knots stood out at every joint; he was naked except for a pair of cotton drawers."[370] All of these examples of colourism show how Masters not only notices colour but actively acknowledges it, in order to paint an image of a stereotypical Indian character. In the early pages, Masters introduces the audience to a handful of characters, and way Masters describes the British characters vary from his descriptions of Indian characters. For example,

> Colonel Bulstrode had levered himself up on to the table so that his vast buttocks, tight in the blue trousers, bulged over its edge. Major Swithin de Forrest, the commanding officer of the 60th Bengal Light Cavalry, in silver and grey, sat on the higher of the two banks of leather-padded spectators' benches, and looked down like a malarial death's head. Gerald Peckham, the brigade major, sat on the lower bank; he was fair and

[368] Ibid, p.10
[369]Ibid, p.23
[370] Ibid, p.176

> pleasantly good-looking; a staff officer's notebook lay opened on his knees. Eustace Caversham, Rodney's own commanding officer, stood a little aside, his narrow head bowed, his fingers fiddling from nervous habit with the braid on his jacket.[371]

What is important to notice in the above description, is the lack of words used to describe the company officials skin colour. Compared with the Indian characters, the officials of the company are people in their own right, without needing skin colour as an identifying factor. Not only does this show the implied white superiority, but also emphasises how appearance and clothing is used to differentiate between class, race and gender. On the same page Masters goes on the describe the Dewan of Kishanpur, and these stark differences are evident.

> "The sixth man Miss Langford had recognised as the Dewan of Kishanpur. He turned quickly to face the door as it opened, and Rodney saw that smallpox had scarred the texture of the dark skin. The wide-set eyes examined him with the too alert interest he associated with a mind not firmly balanced. Red mud and rain had soiled the yellow coat and white jodhpurs. Rings twinkled on the Dewan's fingers as he played with the hilt of a sabre in a jewelled scabbard. In his right hand he held his slippers; on his head he wore a hard wide-brimmed black felt hat shaped like the flattened sail of a dhow, one side up, one side down, and decorated with pearls and diamonds."[372]

Although the Dewan is adorned with jewels, he is depicted by Masters as "scarred", "dark", and dirty, which differs from the well detailed and impeccably dressed company officials. Additionally, the above quotes can be seen to be adding to additional classifications, such as being outside in nature, as opposed to British indoor society, and this goes hand in hand with the attention to Indian nakedness compared to the British finery. In *Nightrunners of Bengal* Masters emphasises this comparison, when depicting the Indian characters in their sepoy uniforms, with "their red coats and brown faces vaguely seen, their white crossbelts, cuffs, and collars standing out sharp."[373] Again, there is a concentration on the colour "brown", and by stating that the skin colour, "standing out sharp" against the stiff and ordered nature of the company's uniform, highlights how the Indian characters are represented as different and

[371] Ibid, p.25
[372] Ibid, p.25
[373] Ibid, p.15

thereby inferior. A theme we regularly see in colonial discourse is the asserting of dominance over nature, and by looking at the company's uniforms we can see this. As Indians were depicted as wild due to their lack of clothing, the binary opposite for the British would be that they are civilised due to their strict code of dress. Masters continuously represents this in his depiction of Indian characters with "the mahout, naked but for turban and loincloth" and again with "a shikari, one of the state's paid hunters, crowded into the howdah with them; he wore a patched black coat and a loincloth, and stank of garlic."[374] Masters creates a precedent whereby all Indians were naked, save for a loincloth, emphasising the stereotype of the naked Indian. Even "the headman, a square youngish man with a heavy face and dark skin. Like the other village males, he wore only a white cloth tied loosely round his loins and up between his thighs, and fastened in front."[375] The headman would have been the leader of the village highlighting further the stereotype, as class and caste did not change the nakedness of the Indian. Again, we also see more emphasis on the Indian characters skin colour.

Further instances of Masters' racialised language can be seen throughout the novel, and particularly builds after the incident of the mutiny. Rodney loses all his sympathies, and almost liberal views of Indians, and dives straight into outrageous racism.

> He jumped forward; the mad glare crackled in his eyes, and his voice blared. "If you touch a hair of Robin's head, I'll break your son's skull in front of your eyes. By God, I tell you we're coming back in blood and fire. We'll burn you black bastards alive over slow fires; we'll quarter you, and hang you on gallows, and rip your filthy guts open with steel."… A red vision blurred his eyes, where Indians writhed, contorted in agony, and his own face laughed madly at their tortured antics.[376]

After Rodney has witnessed the violent acts of the Indian Sepoys his attitude towards Indians changes, similar to how Britain evolved to create the British Raj after the Mutiny. However, Rodney's approach also becomes more violent and racially charged, which can be seen with the term "black bastards". Masters also starts using racial slurs here, such as ""One shout, and

[374] Ibid, p.70
[375] Ibid, p.239
[376] Ibid, p.222

I'll kill you, you nigger devil!""[377] The sympathetic nature gone, Masters shows his true intentions in his novel of justifying colonial rule.

Moreover, Masters does display some of the Indian characters using similar language as above to describe the white characters during the acts of the Mutiny, as if Masters is qualifying the language, as it goes two ways. For example, ""I'm looking for my sahib. I want to kill him, or at least stick this into his corpse, the bullying white swine!""[378]. Yet, as the Indians never oppressed the British, the language does not have the same effect. Similarities can be seen today with the rhetoric of "All lives matter", and "#notallmen". Whilst both sentiments might be an actuality, it diminishes the impact of the movements "Black Lives Matter" and "#MeToo", as it ignores the history of the oppression of black people and women, and in this case Indians.

Moreover, Masters uses another English character to pretend to be Indian, similar to in *The Deceivers*. The 'holy man' mentioned in the synopsis who foreshadows the Mutiny, is discovered at the end of the novel to be "English. Leprosy and exposure to sun and wind had effectively disguised the colour of his skin. The part under the loincloth he had probably stained in some way; then there were the ashes with which he usually covered himself."[379] Not only does this character perform Blackface, similar to William Savage when infiltrating the thuggee gang, but also once again Masters perpetuates the naked stereotype, as making the wearing of a loincloth integral in the portrayal of being Indian.

**Stereotypes**

As seen in both *Coromandel!* and *The Deceivers*, Masters again places importance on the Hindu caste system, making it synonymous with India. Usually, Masters depicts the caste

[377] Ibid, p.231
[378] Ibid, p.194
[379] Ibid, p.132

system in a negative light, showing how it treats those of a lower caste unkindly, particularly sweepers. For example,

> "Hut! Low-caste ape, lump of defilement!"…The sweeper dodged the flung stone and jeered. "Low-caste ape? Lump of defilement? Listen to who's talking! Why, you have no caste left yourself, licker of cow's fat!"[380]

The low caste of the sweeper is not only met with abuse, but is also likened to an animal, as we will go on to see, many Indians are within Masters novels. Furthermore, Masters here depicts one of the core causes of the Indian Rebellion. There were many reasons for the growing unrest that lead towards the Indian Rebellion and one that Masters mentions within the novel and hints at above consists of a change in the production of bullets:

> an altercation which took place in January between a sepoy of the Thirty-fourth and a low-caste coolie employed in the Dum-Dum ammunition factory. Apparently the coolie taunted the sepoy by saying that the cartridges for the new rifle are greased with a mixture of pigs' fat and cows' fat. As it is customary, of course, for the sepoys to bite off the end of the cartridge and pour the powder into the barrel, the story has spread with great rapidity. The grease would defile Hindus and Mohammedans alike—in other words the whole Native Army—if the story were true.[381]

The story was true and shows that although the Company, and thereby the British, used the caste system to stereotype and classify Indians, it disrespected and disregarded the fundamental nature of it. However, Masters goes on to display how another stereotype placed upon Indians was their servile attitude, as Major Anderson declares that "Johnny Sepoy will do what we tell him – always has, always will…Make 'em all use the cartridges, *and* like 'em."[382] Moreover, if the sepoys, or Indians are depicted at servants, then the British are represented as Masters, and this can be seen continuously in *Nightrunners of Bengal,* with Masters declaring it outright: "In fact he felt well, strong and merciless and master of himself; soon he'd show these swine he was their master too."[383]

[380] Ibid, p.88
[381] Ibid, p.108
[382] Ibid, p.108
[383] Ibid, p.238

Throughout the novel, Masters makes statements that add to the idea of the stereotypical Indian. Statements like "blew his nose with his fingers like any other Indian"[384], "their knees always a little bent in the Indian manner"[385] and also "deceptive like all Indians."[386] These assumptions add to the classifying nature of colonialism, whereby traits were imposed on the colonial subject to allow for rule. A common stereotype placed on Indians, was that of a lying or deceptive nature. Within Said's *Orientalism*, he claims that "Want of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of the oriental mind",[387] allowing for anything an "oriental" says to be discredited. In emphasising this, Masters shows how Indians could not be trusted, not even in the management of their own affairs. In comparison, Rodney the ever-Honourable company official, is displayed as honest and "besides, no Indian could fool him, Rodney; he had a superhuman faculty of insight and he knew when they were lying, which was always."[388]

Furthermore, Masters also uses animalist imagery to describe the Indian character, particularly the word "swine". This can be seen when Rodney is in a rage, and is displayed in the next two violent passages:

> Rodney swung the stone down with all his force. Prithvi Chand's skull cracked, and he beat and pounded at it, his words jerking out. "Filthy—black—swine! Swine! Swine!" He stopped and felt the pulp at the back of Prithvi Chand's head, and drew down his lips in a crooked smile.[389]

Again, we see the focus on race, but also the animalistic metaphors and the pleasure out of violent acts. Masters increases this discourse, to include the lasting legacy of the British empire.

> Treacherous, murderous swine. The first and last task now was reconquest. The English were conquerors here, not friends, and it was a ghastly mistake ever to forget it. There must be no peace and no quarter until every last Indian grovelled, and stayed grovelling. A hundred years hence the inscriptions must be there to read on the memorials: Here English children were burned alive in their cots, and English women cut in pieces by

[384] Ibid, p.112
[385] Ibid, p.166
[386] Ibid, p.234
[387] Said, 1995, p.38
[388] Masters, 1951, p.234
[389] Ibid, p.232

> these brown animals you see around you. DO NOT FORGET. A hundred years would not be enough to repay the humiliation.[390]

The above is an interesting insight into Masters feelings towards British rule. Masters even states that "a hundred years would not be enough to repay the humiliation" and his anger within *Nightrunners of Bengal* proves this. As the novel was written in 1952, almost a hundred years after the Indian Mutiny, Masters in influenced by his longing for his imperialist past and uses the Mutiny to blame the Indians for the fallout. He also again purports a stereotype of Indians likening to animals, and also servile behaviour with the insistence of "every last Indian grovelled, and stayed grovelling." In this manner, Masters also highlights the insistence of British rule and superiority. The language used to describe the behaviour in the mutiny is also dramatized and exaggerated to encourage the reader to have a similar attitude to Masters. It would be hard to ignore or even remove the images that Masters creates with "here English children were burned alive in their cots, and English women cut in pieces by these brown animals you see around you." Masters intensifies this in the actual depiction of the Mutiny, which we will see next in the gender representations of this chapter.

## Gendered Representations

### Memsahib

There are multiple instances where Masters uses racialised language, and as in *Coromandel!* and *The Deceivers*, it is usually said by the Indian characters. However, in *Nightrunners of Bengal*, the racist outbursts are mainly produced by British female characters, and particularly Joanna, to represent how the "memsahib" was responsible for maintaining a social distance from the Indians, on the basis of racial purity. For example, Joanna makes statements like "you told that black woman not to invite me to the tiger hunt!"[391] and "Don't li' being lef' 'lone here

[390] Ibid, p.235
[391] Ibid, p.91

at ni'—all these blacks."[392] In this way, Masters displays how the British women in India did not have much to do with their Indian counterparts, except with their servants, and even then "[Joanna was] not in the habit of getting familiar with servants."[393] Even Caroline, who is not represented as a typical British woman in India as she is unmarried and inquisitive, is still subjected to this separation, with Masters stating "An English girl had no business to involve herself with gurus and fakirs and the edges of magic."[394] As discussed in the previous chapters, the above quote represents the separation of not just British and Indians, but men and women. A woman had no place outside the home, especially in India where, as Masters goes on to depict, they were at risk of sexual violence from Indian men. In reality, there is a vast history of British men being sexually aggressive and disrespectful to Indian women, yet "colonial discourse has always been haunted by the figure of a white woman raped by a dark man."[395] This is clearly evident in Masters representations of the Indian Mutiny, and was used by other British authors after the event to strengthen British rule in India.

The risk of a woman being raped was supposed to decrease if they were married, as they would have the protection of her husband. Masters represents husband as "protector" throughout his novel, and alternatively that represents the wife as "victim". For instance,

> She must be unconscious and nearly dead—Joanna, whom he had sworn to love and protect; Joanna whom he did not love and had not protected, his wife and Robin's mother, who had not liked to be left alone with Indians.[396]

When we look at the middle ages, and during Arthurian legends, chivalry was a dominating aspiration for all manhood, and this can also be seen as a treasured attribute in the military, with the term "gentleman" being regularly used. Women were seen as needing protection, but also as something to be fought for and thereby gained. The aim in life, as stated by most

[392] Ibid, p.182
[393] Ibid, p.95
[394] Ibid, p.10
[395] Paxton, 1992, p.6
[396] Masters, 1951, p.196

religious texts, is to reproduce, to survive. During these times, women were revered and protected as only they could be seen to do this. As time went on, the magic of childbearing and birth was significantly lost on men, almost in correlation with loss of respect for nature. Once men also found out that they had a role in this gift of life, the women's magical power diminished. Now, the reason for her protection becomes unrelated to love, worth, and necessary to survival, but because she is deemed weaker and less intelligent to do it herself. Although the Company and the British Empire insisted on protecting the white woman, there was no such protection for the black woman. Hyam shows this in *Empire and Sexuality*:

> Under the Southern Rhodesian Immorality Act (1903) differential treatment was patent. A white prostitute accepting a black customer would get two years' imprisonment, while the African male got five years'. The law was designed to protect white women but not black. Despite the fact that sexual relationships between white men and black women were much more common, there was little public disapproval of them. Similarly, the Europeans in 1926 in Papua New Guinea cynically imposed the death penalty for the rape, and even the attempted rape, of a white woman by a black man, with life imprisonment for indecent assault; but black women got no such protection from European men.[397]

The acts described show that the importance is not the protection of women, but the protection of the man's property. Gender seems to transcend race as even the Rani claims "a woman without a husband is always badly served."[398]

## The Rani

The representation of the Rani of Kishanpur, who is based off of the Rani of Jhansi, within the novel is the epitome of the sexualised Indian woman. Similar to Parvati's representation in *Coromandel!*, Masters depicts the Rani as "immanently polluted with sexual sin." [399] The Rani of Jhansi is an important figure in colonial Indian discourse as she is "crucial to disciplinary discourses that produce the historical subject within the colonial and postcolonial

[397] Hyam, 1990, p.106
[398] Masters, 1951, p.77
[399] Smith, 2005, p.10

conceptualisations of gender, political power, and resistance."[400] The Rani in both the novel and history, is a strong independent woman, who after the death of her husband takes on the responsibility of rule. Within *Nightrunners of Bengal*, Masters suggests that the Rani killed her own husband to gain power. However, even though the British did not recognise her position, the Rani still fought against British rule, labelling her in Indian history as "the figure of the warrior queen."[401] Yet within the novel, Masters depicts the East India Company as defending the Rani's position, with Rodney being sent her to protect her son, and train her soldiers. Despite her high status as a ruler, and despite her powerful history, Masters however, once again depicts this woman as a sexualised object, only to be thought of in relation to a man. For example

> He could not imagine what kind of human being it was who could tear apart the chains of her sex and widowhood. According to the rules, she should have become a person of no account, a woman by custom considered dead.[402]

When we are first introduced to her, she is currently residing in her zenana "where no adult male was permitted"[403], the Islamic and Persian practice of a woman's quarters in the home. From the moment we meet the Rani, the focus is on how she is different to English women, and especially Joanna. Firstly, this is seen with the zenana, then with clothing. The Rani, also named Sumitra, is described as wearing a "white burqa, the one-piece, top-to-toe garment worn by all Mohammedan and some high-caste Hindu women."[404] Once again, Masters uses clothing to denote one's identity, specifically highlighting here how it is usually racialised and gendered. Moreover, Sumitra also differs from Joanna with her open sexuality. Rodney claims he is sexually frustrated telling Joanna "You didn't let me have you for four months before I went off, not even on my last night." [405] On the other hand, Sumitra is presented to Rodney as

[400] Singh, 2014, p.1
[401] Ibid, p.2
[402] Masters, 1951, p.40
[403] Ibid, p.37
[404] Ibid, p.44
[405] Ibid, p.90

basically a prostitute. Although the Company start out supporting Sumitra, there are rumours immediately circulating that she is a murderer and a whore. Many other British authors have depicted the Rani in a similar fashion to Masters, and Maria Jerinic claims it is to do with "British discomfort with ruling women and consequently with their own queen. This interest in the Rani is tied to an imperialist vision, one that looks with suspicion on all female political involvement, British as well as Indian."[406]

When Rodney and Sunitra are first intimate, Rodney blames not only the Rani's sexuality, but also race:

> she had flaunted her sex at him, loading her slightest gesture with invitation, letting her body touch him on-purpose-by-accident. It had amazed and alarmed him. When he knew her better, he concluded that she was goading herself to wipe out a sense of race superiority she presumed him to have; that she wanted to force him to acknowledge beauty in an Indian woman, and desire it. If he had been another kind of Englishman, he would have felt degraded by such desire, and she had intended to degrade him. There had been a wall of nothing behind her eyes in those days—like the nautch girl just now. It was as well. His little fence was weak; he had a passionate love of women's bodies, and Joanna would not—could not?—give it release, Oh, such embarrassment![407]

As we can see here, similar to in rape cultures, the woman is blamed for sexual advances, suggesting that she was playing a subtle game in tempting the man. Furthermore, the above quote shows how British women and Indian women were seen as sexual rivals, where the Indian woman represented a sexual freedom, and there by the British women represented a sexual restriction. In this way, we see how Masters portrays the sexual violence to take place within the rebellion would have been seen as even more horrific, due to the above representations.

## Sexual Violence

Another example of Masters portraying the Indian woman as a hyper-sexualised trope, is through his depiction of nautch girls. In Masters own words, a nautch girl is "a dancing girl, a hereditary harlot"[408]. In the same way that the Thuggee gang was represented as a part of the

[406] Jerinic, 1997, p.123-139
[407] Masters, 1951, p.59
[408] Ibid, p.143

caste system, with one unable to escape their birthright and status, being a nautch girl was a profession passed down through generations. As seen in *The Deceivers,* the term nautch girl was synonymous with Devadasi, even though their roles were different. Whilst a devadasi had religious aims, nautch girls were depicted as aiming to pleasure men. Masters in *Nightrunners of Bengal* describes nautch girls in the following scene

> Six girls danced; their hands writhed, slowing as the music slowed. Each girl wore two anklets on her right ankle; the anklets chimed, chink-chink, chink-chink. Shields and swords gleamed like silver ciphers on the walls. The light dimmed. A brown girl trembled in the centre of the floor. She wore no anklets, or swinging skirt, or tight-drawn bodice. As her naked body moved, the glancing curves of light moved, and Prithvi Chand slept. The outer verges of darkness had swallowed the other dancers. Perhaps they lay beyond the light, locked with soldiers or courtiers, like the spread-eagled women of the temple carvings and the gods who grasped them with many hands—locked for ever, carved of one stone. The girl was an arrow, straight and taut. She arched her back and was a bow, bent, straining to let go. The bow released; she was a woman and twisted in slow ecstasy. Her breasts pointed the way for her seeking, hesitant feet; her mouth drooped slack and wet and her eyes were blind. She twined around him, her restless body so slight it could not escape. His hands went out and took hold of her buttocks. He dug his fingers into her flesh; the flesh yielded. [409]

In the scene, Masters firsts comments on the dancers clothing, or lack thereof, which as discussed previously, has long been a potent symbol or race, gender, and class. Not only does the dancers lack of clothing show her vulnerability, but also demonstrates how her sexualised body becomes the object of male gaze and control. Rodney also seems to lose control, simplifying the dancer into “flesh”. To Masters nautch girls are the same as prostitutes, ignoring the fact that prized courtesans were forced into prostitution due to the incoming of Victorian ideals. As Masters describes her movements, "She was an arrow, straight and taut. She arched her back and was a bow, bent, straining to let go," the dancer’s body becomes a metaphor for both entrapment and desire, a space where pleasure and domination intertwine. The power of her sexuality is undeniable, yet it is immediately seized by the male figure in the scene. Her physicality is shaped and controlled by the forceful hands of the man, emphasizing

[409] Ibid, p.51

the tragic dichotomy of women's sexuality in a patriarchal, colonial society—where it could be both a source of strength and a means of subjugation Additionally, by Masters likening the dancer to a "bow and arrow", he depicts her sexuality as a weapon. Later on in the novel, Masters also states that Caroline

> would ask him man's questions; he would try to fob her off with platitudes; she would correct him, goad him to astonishment and interest in her. He must have recognized her militant feminism and chuckled to see a woman angrily reject the extra weapons her sex gave her.[410]

By doing this, Masters again reduces the female figure down to a purely sexual object, and almost seems to mock feminism. Comparing this to the scenes that follow depict a bleak circumstance for both British and Indian women alike. Masters goes on to blame the above dancer for his sexual assault of her as he claims

The next part of the gendered representations will focus on the sexually violent acts that Masters depicts, during the Indian rebellion. Masters portrays this in *Nightrunners of Bengal* by showing multiple characters stories simultaneously. Each seen definitely is seen to have a racial cause. For example, "A gang of sepoys of the 88th marched by, dragging the body of a white woman by the heels"[411] and also "the dark faces closed in.."[412] The reason why white women are used as the victims in this event and in the following scenes seems to represent what Smith states.

> Because Indian bodies are "dirty", they are considered sexually violable and "rapable," and the rape of bodies that are considered inherently impure or dirty simply does not count. For instance, prostitutes are almost never believed when they say they have been raped because the dominant society considers the bodies of sex workers undeserving of integrity and violable at all times. Similarly, the history of mutilation of Indian bodies, both living and dead, makes it clear that Indian people are not entitled to bodily integrity.[413]

[410] Masters, 1951, p.29
[411] Ibid, p.200
[412] Ibid, 189
[413] Smith, 2005, p.10

With the purity campaign, there was a stive to represent 'cleanliness', creating a clear difference between the British and the supposed "dirty" Indian. Throughout all these representations, Master is always highlighting the differences. By doing this, Master creates the following scenes so horrific, especially for his British audience who may not know the reality of India and its people. The next scene is depicted in such an extreme way, by Masters using a pregnant woman to intensify the horror and indecency of rape.

> Lady Isobel Hatton-Dunn clenched her hands until the nails cut her palm, and lay still with eyes closed. She screamed continuously, but not too loudly. She and Priscilla Atkinson had come straight from the party to the van Steengaards', to await the arrival of Dotty's baby. Almighty and most merciful God, give me strength and mercy. It was dark, and Priscilla lay in the corner, crumpled, half-naked, raped, and dead. Assistant-Surgeon Herrold was dead. Their blood ran sluggishly across the floor and under the bed, where Dotty hid. She hadn't had her baby yet; the waters had broken an hour ago, and travail had begun. If she, Isobel, could make noise they wouldn't hear Dotty's groans. She kept up her screams, not feeling the man who grasped her and sweated to his climax. Scream again, carefully, just right. Let another sepoy replace the first—no, the fourth, that was. Make a noise carefully, just right. Geoffrey must be dead, Willie dead, Priscilla dead, Rodney dead. Scream, but not too frantically, just right, so that they will keep on, and not kill me and drown my cries. She opened her eyes suddenly. They were dragging Dotty's grotesque body out from under the bed. Lady Isobel cut her scream short and began to fight in desperate silence. The man rolled off her and did not fight back. All struggling stopped, and they watched a baby's birth. She lay panting and tried to hope. The sepoys' faces were tender. They were farmers, and their faces became shining and alight. One knelt to help the struggling girl Another sprang with tormented eyes out of the shadows. He swore, kicked the helper aside, fired his rifle, and stamped with his booted feet. Isobel watched the muzzle come round on her, and felt the bayonet point slide in.[414]

The above scene makes for a hard read, as it shows a pregnant woman, the epitome of life and vulnerability, being subjected to such horrific acts. What is interesting is that upon the birth of the baby, Masters depicts the Indians as once again human, noting this life being created, but that is still not enough. In this way Masters clearly represents women as spoils of war. At one-point Masters even outrightly states ""She's a spoil of war and is about to be ravished—dashed if I don't think it would do her a world of good.""[415]

[414] Masters, 1951, p.191
[415] Ibid, p.61

## Class Representations

As stated in previous chapters, and in both racial and gendered representations, there is a classification that takes place in colonial discourse. We see in the racial representations of *Nightrunners of Bengal* how the importance on the caste system mirrors the importance of class. Primarily we see the class representations play out in the character Joanna who was proof that Women could move up a class in India as there was a smaller community. There was also the opportunity to make money quick, again raising your station. Also, in a smaller heightened environment, that was British India, the class, race, and gender worries were amplified. For example, she asks her husband,

> Rodney, why don't you ask for employment under the civil? Mr. Dellamain would recommend you—though you're not very polite to him. Or go on the staff? They get much better pay." "Perhaps." So that he would be considered a more important person in Anglo-India! Nothing would induce her to give up this life and return to middle-class nonentity in England.[416]

Again, in *Nightrunners of Bengal*, class representations are vividly depicted through various social markers, one of the most notable being dress. The novel highlights how clothing serves as a symbol of power, identity, and status within the colonial context. For example"The two men were dressed so fashionably as to be all but foppish"[417] and again with

> "No one could tell boys and girls below six apart, unless he knew them, because all wore white dresses and several petticoats, and all had long curls flowing over their shoulders. The bigger girls looked like dolls which might have been made by women of another generation, for they were dressed in the adult fashions of twenty years before; their skirts were shorter and less full than the modern crinolines, and showed their pantalettes beneath."[418]

British officers and colonial elites are consistently depicted wearing uniforms or Western-style clothing that signify their authority and superiority over the indigenous population. These

[416] Ibid, p.17
[417] Ibid, p.162
[418] Ibid, p.168

uniforms, with their meticulous tailoring and symbolic regalia, mark the wearers as representatives of the British Empire—agents of a colonial regime that imposes its values on the subjugated masses. In contrast, the Indian characters are often shown wearing traditional, simple clothing, which reflects their position within the lower rungs of the colonial hierarchy. The disparity in dress becomes a visual representation of class and power, where the British colonizers are set apart from the Indians, reinforcing the rigid class structure that underpins colonial rule. Additionally, the disparity in dress is a reflection of the wider cultural divide, with British soldiers and civilians associating their clothing with civilization and modernity, while viewing Indian attire as indicative of a more "primitive" or "backward" culture.

The concept of being a "gentleman" is another key class marker in *Nightrunners of Bengal*, particularly as it relates to British officers and their sense of superiority. For the British in the novel, being a gentleman is not just a matter of manners or education, but a demonstration of one's rank and entitlement within the colonial system. There are rules that come with this title, such as British officers, many of whom come from elite backgrounds, define their identities not only by their military prowess but by their adherence to a code of conduct that separates them from the local population. An example is "Riding, however, is an accomplishment—or knack—that all gentlemen are born with"[419]. Expressions such as these highlights Masters educational background where public schools are the basis for many "Gentlemen Only" clubs. At the same time, Indian characters in the novel, particularly those in lower social classes, are often denied access to this ideal of gentility, their dignity compromised by the harsh realities of colonialism. The tension between British notions of gentility and the brutal reality of their actions highlights the moral contradictions of colonialism, where class distinctions are enforced not just by wealth, but by a deeply ingrained system of racial and cultural superiority. Thereby,

[419] Ibid, p.98

the above class representations not only show white gentlemen as superior, but also looked to exclude women.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, *Nightrunners of Bengal* by Masters offers a powerful portrayal of the Indian Rebellion of 1857, examining the intersecting dynamics of race, gender, and class in the midst of colonial violence. Masters, drawing from his personal experiences as a British officer in colonial India and his education in British public schools, infuses the narrative with a deep understanding of the military structure, colonial attitudes, and the complex racial hierarchies that shaped this period. Through his firsthand knowledge, Masters presents the brutalities of the rebellion, where the racial and cultural divisions between the British and the Indians are starkly highlighted. The violence depicted in the novel, particularly the instances of sexual violence against Indian women, serves as a chilling reminder of the dehumanizing effects of colonial oppression. The women in the story are often subjected to brutal acts of sexual violence, underscoring the ways in which gender and race intersect in colonial exploitation. These portrayals not only expose the rampant abuse of power by the British soldiers but also reveal the brutal treatment of Indian women, who become symbolic victims of both racial and gender-based violence.

The class disparities within both the Indian and British communities also play a significant role in shaping the characters' experiences. The British, as the ruling class, are depicted as both privileged and oppressive, while the Indian soldiers and civilians experience immense suffering and alienation. The tension between the British officers, many of whom share Masters' military background, and the native Indian population, forms the backbone of the rebellion’s violent clashes. Masters does seem to shy away from showing the flaws and cruelty of British military

officers, and at times seems to romanticize the Indian rebels and their cause; however, whilst in reality the rebellion was a complex picture, where both sides commit atrocities in the name of resistance and control, Masters focuses mainly on the attack of white women by Indian soldiers, to further the imperial aim of rule.

Masters' background in the British military and his education at a public school likely shaped his nuanced approach to representing these power dynamics. His portrayal of the Indian Rebellion is marked by a degree of sympathy for the Indian experience, even as he remains embedded within the imperialistic framework. Ultimately, *Nightrunners of Bengal* offers a critical exploration of the brutality of colonial rule, while examining the deep-seated racial, gender, and class-based divisions that played out in both the violence of the rebellion and the everyday lives of the colonized and colonizers alike.

## *Bhowani Junction*

> The Presidency Education Trust, which was over a hundred years old, was a group of English businessmen who had got up funds to help give a good education to us Anglo-Indians and our children. Mind, we paid too, as much as we could. In 1887 the Trust built St Thomas's, a boarding school for boys, at Gondwara.[420]

In this chapter I will explore the representations of life in Colonial India by analysing Masters' *Bhowani Junction* and focusing on race, class, and gender and how these factors affect identity. The key aim of this chapter is to describe the ways in which gender and their respective roles were represented in the novel. *Bhowani Junction* is a valuable text through which to explore these representations as it is written from the viewpoint of three protagonists: an Anglo-Indian man, an Anglo-Indian woman, and a British man so readers get to see both representations of the sexes at an intimate level. However, it is a shame that there is not any representation of Indian experiences, male or female. Although, there are many Indian characters throughout the novel, they are marginalised and represented with racist stereotypical traits. Whilst Masters may have chosen to omit Indian voices for a variety of reasons, it is fitting of Colonial Indian Literature to focus on the supposed superiority of the English characters. Anglo-Indians are an interesting and complex community to use as an example, or exaggerated representation of life in Colonial India, as we see British perceptions of Indians and vice versa, and the problems in identity this causes. Here I want to iterate what I mean by the Anglo-Indian community, as there are a couple definitions. The term 'Anglo-Indian' was not coined until 1911 after the term 'Eurasian' became associated with the derogatory idea of "'miscegenation' in an era of scientific racism". Additionally, these terms always related to those of mixed heritage, but British through their paternal sides.[421] The term can refer to those of mixed heritage of both

[420] Masters, 1959, p.26
[421] Mizutani, 2011

English and Indian descent, but it can also describe those of only English ancestry but who were domiciled in India. For the context of this chapter, Anglo-Indians will refer to those of mixed heritage, relating to two of the protagonists.

The novel *Bhowani Junction* is set in 1946, shortly after the end of World War Two, where the Indian army was under British command. Concurrently, the Indian elections were taking place, and the result was mainly divided between two groups: the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. Even though both groups had vastly different ideals and policies, they both agreed on one thing: the British rule had well and truly run its course.

This sets the scene for the start of the novel, where Britain is preparing to evacuate India, ultimately resulting in the partition of India. The story mainly focuses on the return of Victoria Jones, the female protagonist, who has recently been on duty in Delhi, where she served in the Women's Auxiliary Corps India, (WAC (I)). Her home is *Bhowani Junction*, a fictional town in India, where "there are really three separate Bhowanis – the Railway Lines, the cantonments, where the English live, and the city, where God knows how many thousand Indians are packed in like sardines"[422]. Masters' uses this fictional town to emphasise his own feelings on the state of India and even from the description, we immediately see the separation, and how the groups were divided through a British ideal representation. When these English travellers settled in India, they set up something familiar to what they experienced back home and these were in the shape of cantonments, similar to the ones represented in the novel:

> The cantonments were intrusions of unadulterated Englishness in the utterly Indian landscape. Here the two youths went shopping in a 'Europe Shop' – an emporium which sold only imported luxury goods from England – consulted a European doctor (about Elphinstone's severe clap) and went to see an English farce at a makeshift open-air regimental theatre. They went shooting … attended regimental balls, gambled and played whilst, billiards and backgammon in the officers' mess.[423]

[422] Masters, 1959, p.9
[423] Dalrymple, 2002, p.287

By setting up these cantonments, and mock European cities, the British were able to feel at home in another world, whilst simultaneously excluding the natives. This helped add to the feeling of white and British superiority among the expats, which they have done internationally, most recently in Spain.

The story also contains two male protagonists, that of Patrick Taylor who works for the Railway meaning he is also Anglo-Indian, and that of Rodney Savage who is a British lieutenant-colonel. The separation between the British and Indians is expressed vehemently by Patrick in the first section of the book, as he struggles with his mixed identity. Said's ideas of the creation of 'them' and 'us' being a fundamental tool in colonialism is also reiterated immediately by Patrick on the very first page of the novel: "Perhaps I ought to say too that 'Wogs' is a word for Indians, and when I say 'we' or 'us' I mean the Anglo-Indians. Sometimes we're called Domiciled Europeans. Most of us have a little Indian blood – not much, of course"[424]. Not only does the character Patrick Thomas display the assumed personality traits of the 'Indian' but he also criticises his fellow Indians for the same traits. Said's 'Orientalism' will be key when analysing Patrick's sections in *Bhowani Junction* for "Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them")" and this is something we continuously see throughout the novel.[425]

Therefore, for the first part of this chapter I will be exploring Patrick Taylor's character as he represents the double bind of the Anglo-Indian community, and the racial hatred that he inflicts on himself due to British imperial representations of Indians. Mainly Patrick Taylor displays the identity crisis that many of mixed descent would have struggled with during

[424] Masters, 1959, p.10
[425] Said, 1995, p.43

these racially charged times. W.E.B. De Bois, author of *Souls of Black* Folks, encompasses these issues, with

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.[426]

This idea of double consciousness will also be explored further in the first part of this chapter.

After the analysis of Patrick Taylor's chapter, I will move on to explore Victoria in more depth. Although she has similar representations when it comes to her mixed heritage, I will instead be focusing on the gender assumptions placed upon her and how that differs due to her perceived race. Following on from the majority of this thesis, Victoria's character perfectly describes the intersectionality of race, gender and class, which throughout all my analysis is indivisible. Whilst gender will be the prominent feature of my analysis, what is important to remember in this section is that the author, John Masters, is a male, and therefore his representations of Victoria will be through a 'male gaze'. Once this has been established, we can then explore what Masters represents as ideal feminine qualities, the objectification of women with a link of animal imagery, and finally how uniform and dress plays a part.

This will bring the chapter to its final section, where I will focus on Colonel Rodney Savage, whose character I will argue is most aligned with Masters' personal history. The character of Rodney is represented as being of superior standing, with an elite educational background and superb military skills, and according to Victoria's father, Mr Jones, is the epitome of a "proper gentleman": "'now there is a real gentleman for you. No swank, you see, but he will

[426] Du Bois, 1997 [1903]: 38

always be treated like a gentleman, because he knows he is one.'"[427] In this final section, I will again be looking at the difference in the gender roles assigned to this male character and how this is affected by his race, but I will also enquire into his educational background of attending both a public school and a military school and how this translates into his representations of race, gender and class. Masters has made the analysis somewhat easy by splitting the novel into three parts and from three viewpoints of each protagonist. From the opening page of the novel, and at the start of each 'Book', there is an introduction to each of the main characters:

BOOK ONE

*PATRICK TAYLOR*

*male, thirty-six, Eurasian, unmarried; a non-gazetted officer in the Traffic Department of the Delhi Deccan Railway*

BOOK TWO

*VICTORIA JONES*

*female, twenty-eight, Eurasian, unmarried; daughter of Thomas Jones, driver, Delhi Deccan Railway*

BOOK THREE

*Rodney Savage*

*male, thirty-four, English, unmarried; lieutenant-colonel commanding 1st Battalion 13th Gurkha Rifles, Indian Army*

[427] Masters, 1959, p.53

BOOK FOUR

*PATRICK TAYLOR*

*male, thirty-six, unmarried; under notice of dismissal from the service of the Delhi Deccan Railway*

Based on these descriptions, we learn what Masters considers as key identifiers for classifying people: gender, age, race, marital status, and job title. The first three are more surface and can usually be noticed instantly. The last two, however, are dependent on social status, moral standing, and cultural differences. In the UK today, these are questions that are generally asked on any form, questionnaire, or survey. It is fair to say that these classifications are fundamental still today and are seen as important determining factors. The first three are determined by biology, and the last two through society.

As stated previously, gender will be the prominent focus throughout and how this affects almost every aspect of our lives. In particular, I will be exploring the defined gender roles and what traits are expected and associated with masculinity and femininity. Through language, symbols, and character creations, we can see these representations very clearly in novels. The key aspects will involve how one is supposed to dress, learn, work and display sexuality, according to their assigned gender role.

Age will not really be discussed in this thesis, except in how it affects attitudes towards sexuality and marriage. However, it is undeniable that even today there are policies and actions that are fundamentally ageist, but that is a thesis for another day.

Race will absolutely play a role, not only in the representation of Patrick and Victoria, but also in Colonel Savage's supposed white superiority.

Marriage in the novel is pivotal in determining how Victoria will live out her life. Whilst the male protagonists are focusing on their countries' status or trying to catch a terrorist, the female lead is deciphering which of her three suitors she should settle with, which I will explore later in the chapter. This alone hints at a suggested gender role that Masters represents; that of a woman as a bride or wife, nothing more or less, whereas the male is a stand-alone entity. What's also interesting, is that Victoria's job identifier is "*daughter of Thomas Jones, driver*", even though she has her own job with the Women's Auxiliary Corps India (WAC(I)), suggesting she is only represented as a product of her father, furthering this idea of females being supplementary. Additionally, the title of 'Auxiliary' meaning additional help or support also emphasises this, even though Victoria in the novel shows great sign of intelligence. This also relates back to one of Oakley's four issues for women, that of women's work being belittled or ignored. On the other hand, both Patrick and Rodney have their own jobs identifying themselves, and their job titles are key in determining their status and identities. Rodney is a military man, similar to Masters' personal background, and he is greeted with respect wherever he goes within the novel. Patrick, alternatively, works on the railway, which was paramount to the Anglo-Indian community, with even Victoria being labelled "a railway girl"[428]. This line of career gave the men of the Anglo-Indian some prestige over the local Indians, and incidentally more separation. Patrick also prides himself on his work, as that allows him to demonstrate his masculinity; "when we are on our jobs we are real men, as good as any Englishman, especially the drivers."[429] As stated above, marriage and work will be a key area in exploring gender roles throughout.

I will explore the above issues by doing close analysis of each of the three main characters. I will use Patrick Taylor to mainly explore the issues concerning race and colonialism, I will use

[428] Masters, 1959, p.16
[429] Ibid, p.38

Victoria primarily to explore the themes relating to gender, marriage, and sexuality, and finally I will use Colonel Savage to explore class. Obviously, there will be some overlap, for example, Patrick exhibits problems arising from class and education, and both Savage and Patrick show differing attitudes towards sexuality and gender, once more highlighting the intersectionality of race, gender and class in colonialism.

## Racial Representations

### Patrick

Throughout the novel, Masters displays a colonial representation of Indians being inferior. In order to maintain rule and justify it to the British public back home, the Indian population needed to be considered as ineffective rulers. There were numerous accounts of commentary on the Indian persona by *memsahibs*, British administrators, traders and more. What accounts I am choosing to focus on, are that of novels, written by British men who were living in Colonial India. John Masters, for example, was a Colonel in the British Indian army and considered himself an Anglo-Indian. His heritage is not easily confirmed but it is accepted that he was born in Calcutta, so one could assume that he potentially has some Indian blood. If this is the case, the character of Patrick Taylor is interesting, as he could easily represent Masters' inner dialogue of struggling Anglo-Indian identity.

Within *Bhowani Junction* the English and their culture through the use of Rodney Savage are represented as superior, and the Indians and their lifestyles through the character of Patrick Taylor are represented as inferior. On the other hand, Patrick is aware of this struggle, and Masters philosophically verbalises it; "There are other ways to live, and I've seen them. You don't realize how fresh and free it is to be English – or Indian. Why must we torture ourselves

with ideas that we are better than some people and worse than others?"[430] This part is interesting as it moves the colonisation agenda to a more personal level. Through Patrick, Masters' highlights how the idea of 'them' and 'us' starts with each individual. Although governments can push an agenda for larger groups and purport stereotypes, each person is guilty of comparing themselves to others and succumbing to jealousy. In that instance you are classifying people as better or worse. Again, this could also be applied to gender as we will explore later on in the chapter.

The first part of the novel is dedicated to exploring Patrick and the double bind of him being an Anglo-Indian. With this mixed heritage comes a disdain for half of his being, a mimicry of the British that he considers to be superior. His extreme imitation of the racism that the Indians face from the British stationed in India spills over into hatred of himself, and ultimately a rejection of his Indian roots which he stresses is typical of Anglo-Indians; "Most of us have a little Indian blood – not much of course."[431] Not only does Patrick deny his Indianness, but he also aspires to be more British, and in doing so separates himself from both cultures. In this double bind Patrick has an identity crisis, not associating with either part of himself which ultimately leads him to a series of problems due to him not being sure of who he is. The idea of a double bind could also be used to explain gender, where being a female you are told to be feminine, and therefore if you inhabit masculine traits yourself is considered incorrect. I will explore this idea further later in the chapter. Another example of Patrick Taylors' double bind is in his attitudes to other Indians:

> "'Brother, brother, what's happened?' she whined.
>
> I didn't answer. I could have sworn at her in Hindustani, which I speak very well, but that would have justified her calling me 'brother'. Besides, although she certainly meant to insult me by suggesting that I was an Indian like her, can you really insult anyone by

[430] Ibid, p.28
[431] Masters, 1954, p.10

> calling him your brother? I feel you can't, and yet I don't want people to think I'm an Indian."[432]

The above is a perfect example of double consciousness. We hear Patrick's inner dialogue of confusion, of being insulted by the intimacy of his Indianness, but also the injustice of insulting someone by relating to them. He knows that the woman does not mean him harm, but his worry of being considered Indian overrides his emotions. Being British is the most important aspect to Patrick. The potential reason for Patrick feeling this way could be due to the stigmatizing stereotypes that were placed around the Indian character.

An example of Patricks favouritism of the British over Indians is demonstrated by who Patrick would rather associate 'his' girls with:

> "I asked if the new battalion would be British. I wanted to know because it was good fun when we had the sergeants and Tommies coming down to our Institute, even though there were always plenty of fights and half our girls got in trouble one way or another.
>
> But Govindaswami thought it was sure to be an Indian battalion, and personally I've never trusted them in this kind of show. After all, they're Wogs themselves, even if they are in uniform."[433]

This statement is very important in depicting attitudes towards both Indians and women. Even though Patrick himself admits that British soldiers fight and get 'our girls' into trouble, he would still rather this over Indian soldiers, who he does not trust regardless. By using the phrase 'After all' also insinuates that this is a common trait of Indians, that of being untrustworthy. The phrase implies that this is an unchanging definite of the Indian character, and combined with the racial slur, Masters' emphasises the disgust Patrick has for the perceived inferiors; "These images of Indians are recurring- either a morally less evolved, devious, unscrupulous, lying brute, or an inscrutable mystic, communing with his pagan gods and immersed in his Eastern spirituality."[434] Additionally, the way Masters and Patrick uses the possessive 'our' to describe the 'girls' as opposed to the women, highlights the common trope of women being

[432] Ibid, p.17
[433] Ibid, p.35
[434] Roychowdhury & Randhawa, 2015, p.100

objectified. Stating that "half our girls got in trouble one way or another" is very sinister, with "one way or another", suggesting that consent was not guaranteed and the term "trouble" being a popular phrase for pregnant. Finally, by adding on 'even if they are in uniform', Masters shows the importance placed upon uniforms and how they can improve one's social standing, which we will explore further later in the chapter. Moreover, Patrick also displays representations of the British personality when he states "I'd seen plenty like him. He was hot and tired, and he was acting superior because I'm an Anglo-Indian."[435] Whilst this is potentially stereotypical of British attitudes, it could also be due to Patricks' personal identity crisis, as he could be reading into the other persons perception. He feels he is inferior as an Anglo-Indian and projects this into all his interactions. Patrick literally states that "it is stepping down to pretend to be an Indian. Indians are dirty and lazy, Victoria. They will run around like chickens with their heads cut off if the English Government ever left them to their own devices."[436] And this attitude of Patrick carries throughout the novel and leads Patrick into humiliating and disastrous consequences.

We see throughout Patrick's sections in the novel, of him describing typical ways of his being, things he cannot change, and that he recognises in his fellow Anglo-Indians. For example, "this thing of saying too much or too little, or being too rude or too polite, is partly just me and partly something that nearly all our people have."[437] This characterization from Patrick is more polite, as he is referring more to his mixed heritage as opposed to one of the other. We can see how his attitude changes when he speaks of characteristics caused by his Indianness;

> I was ashamed because Victoria stood there with that queer look on her face, and we were making more noise than the Wogs. We always do when we get excited. The English people never do. It put me in a bad temper with myself, deep down.[438]

[435] Masters, 1954, p.40
[436] Ibid
[437] Ibid, p.35
[438] Ibid, p.37

This quote not only highlights once again the superiority that Patrick lends to the British of the inferiority of the Indian, but it also shows Patrick's hatred of himself due to the confusion and struggle of his identity.

Another issue that is associated to Patrick's identity is his concept of Home. As the political climate within the novel is coming to a crescendo and the British soldiers are preparing to leave, the Anglo-Indians are concerned with their future in India. They have been taught from their education and from British influences that Britain is a superior choice of 'home' and that the land they were born in is not only inferior but will also not accept them. They are binary people. Both superior and inferior, both native and outsider. They are taught from a young age to hate the land they were born to and love a land they've never seen.

> 'We think god fixed everything in India so it can't alter. The English despise us but need us. We despise the Indians, but we need them. So, it's all been fixed – the English say where the trains are to go to, we take them there, and the Indians pay for them and travel in them.'[439]

From this quote, we see how Masters uncovers the tensions underneath Patrick's sense of identity. The British not only organized the trains but also huge aspects of Indians lives. Interestingly, the issue of where the Anglo-Indian community will end up residing was impacted by the individuals skin colour. If an Anglo-Indian was fairer, they would have had better opportunities in England. There are so many instances in the novel where Patrick's anger at his ethnicity is reduced to racial slurs;

> her own skin was the same colour as mine, perhaps a little browner, less yellow. We – Anglo-Indians, Eurasians, cheechees, half-castes, eight-annas, blacky-whites. I've heard all the names they call us, but I don't think about them unless I'm angry.[440]

[439] Ibid, p.25-6
[440] Ibid, p.14

One place, however, that Patrick did relate to 'Home', was that of the mock British Public school of St Thomas. Unfortunately, at the start of the novel, the reader learns that the British government in India are planning to close the school;

> St Thomas's was in the same kind of trouble as the rest of us – the trouble being that we Anglo-Indians didn't want to sink to the level of the Indians, and the Indians hated us for being superior to them, and St Thomas's was kind of a symbol of the whole thing, because it was only for Anglo-Indians and Domiciled Europeans.[441]

By comparing the British school to the fate of Anglo-Indians, shows the value Masters places on the public school system. He literally states that it enforces the superiority of the British and western education over the Indian population and Eastern practices. There is never a discussion or thought as to why or how the Indians are inferior, it is just a confirmed fact within the novel. The notion of colonialism is based on the idea of civilising the inferior, and from the first chapter Masters defines Indians as being inferior not only to British people, but also to Anglo-Indians. But "what those Englishmen in Bombay didn't realize was that we couldn't sell St Thomas's, because it was in our hearts. It, the idea of it, was part of us. Without it we'd just be Wogs like everybody else."[442] This private boarding school 'St Thomas' was considered the 'heart' of the Anglo-Indian community in Bhowani Junction, probably due to the connection the school had with the British. St Thomas represents the literal copycat public schools that were set up in India to replicate the British public educational system. These schools were only open to the elite classes, and this was something the Anglo-Indian community aspired to, a chance to change their class and move up the social rankings. This sentiment is heightened by the use of a racial slur against Indians, furthering the fictional distance between Patrick and his Indian heritage. The English had given the Anglo-Indian community this 'idea' of being

[441] Ibid, p.12
[442] Ibid, p.26

different and superior to Indians, but the above also highlights how the 'Englishmen' could easily take this status away from the Anglo-Indians. However, Dalrymple states that

> it was widely and probably correctly believed at the time that the only way Anglo-Indian children had the chance of making something of their lives was if they received a pukka English public-school education. English racism against 'country born' Anglo-Indian children was now becoming so vicious in India as to make this provision very necessary. Without it, their options were limited in the extreme, and they were condemned to sink to the margins, pushed away and ostracised by both British and Indian society.[443]

There is a sense of unease among the Anglo-Indian community in the novel, as they worry about their standing in India once the British leave. There options are limited. They can either follow the British to a land they have never been to, though it is frequently referred to as 'home', or they can stay in India where their positions are potentially precarious. Throughout the novel we see both Victoria and Patrick battle with this duality of identity, yet they both handle this pressure in vastly different ways. Whilst Patrick is always angry with his 'Indianness' and strives to be more British, Victoria leans into and explores her Indian roots and then later also to her British heritage, allowing Masters' to explore representation of both groups in Colonial India.

Overall, by presenting as British, Patrick hopes to improve his life in many aspects. By attending an English-speaking public school, Patrick has hopes of gaining a great career, similar to that of Rodney's. By trying to act more British, Patrick hopes to win Victoria's hand in marriage and the acceptance of her father. Marriage within colonial India, as we have discussed previously, changed over the years. Originally, many British men in India took Indian wives or 'Bibi's' which ultimately led to Anglo-Indian communities as represented within *Bhowani Junction*. However, as time went on there was "encouragement by the government of white resident wives."[444] This notion can also be seen through both Patrick and

[443] Dalrymple, 2002, p.381-2
[444] Pawha, 2004, p.287

Rodney's attitudes towards Victoria's dating; "I said to myself, He thinks it is degrading for a British officer to play around with an Anglo-Indian girl. His thinking that was degrading for us, I suppose, but I didn't care. If he thought we and they couldn't mix, he was on my side."[445] In this quote, we see more iteration of 'us' and 'them', and ultimately the possession of women. Although Patrick feels Rodney and himself are worlds apart, they both find commonality in their aversion to miscegenation. For once, Patrick is happy of his heritage because he thinks this will 'win' him Victoria, and ultimately does.

## Gendered Representations

### Victoria

The representation of Victoria Jones in *Bhowani Junction* is the most crucial analysis to this chapter. The author, John Masters, is the prominent focus of our analysis, as Victoria is his creation. What we see in Victoria's gendered characterization could be argued to be Masters' representation of gender in his life; That of colonial India. Through this male gaze, Masters empowers men and masculinity by representing them as dominant saviours of not only women, but also the country. At the same time, through this male gaze, women and femininity are either deemed devious and sinful or highly sexualised.

Patrick introduces the reader to Victoria and her family, so although these may not be an example of Victoria's ideas, it is certainly the way her family is represented to operate:

> Mrs Jones, whom they always called Mater – as their father was Pater – was really only interested in cooking, and in their position they couldn't let her cook, because she was three-quarters Indian and only knew how to cook native food.[446]

[445] Masters, 1959, p.56
[446] Masters, 1959, p.25

Interestingly, Victoria Jones as an example for an Anglo-Indian family, calls her mother and father 'Mater' and 'Pater' which is a British term as they originate from Latin, which would have been taught in British education. These words are linked to Matriarchal and Patriarchal, however would have probably been terms only used by upper middle or upper middle classes, or those that received private education. Additionally, the above hints at the caste system (or even racism) with the rules around who could prepare food, and in an Anglo-Indian household this would translate to the more Indian blood you possessed the lower the class you would be considered. Furthermore, through the use of the definitive 'couldn't', Masters implies that this is rule or law, that would be unthinkable of breaking. Finally, there is a slight hint of disdain for 'native food' and a repression and rejection of their own culture. Again, this could be a lingering of Patrick's own impressions, or more probable, that of Masters' own opinion. Regardless of where the representation originated from, what is notable here is that Victoria is always being viewed through a male lens.

As Patrick is the first book in the novel, he gives the first details and descriptions of Victoria. Additionally, as she is a love interest of Patrick's she is viewed in quite a biased way, but Masters in this way gives the representation of how men viewed women they believed to be in love with:

> I don't want to talk about her figure, because I love her, but she has a figure like a film star's, only better. I was not even thinking of her figure then, only of how much I loved her.[447]

By stating that Patrick does not want to talk about her figure because he loves her, Masters insinuates that her body, and thoughts and speech about that are somewhat taboo. Patrick loves her in spite of her body, as opposed to the norm. There is a hint of fear in the above, adding to the usual trope of women being represented as forbidden fruit. This is a continuous theme throughout, starting in Modern puritanism with an obsession with "taboo, non

[447] Ibid, p.11

existence, and silence."[448] Additionally, this is a continuation of Patrick's confusion and denial, as he clearly is thinking about her figure but is trying to deny the truth. Patrick then continues on and questions Victoria's life choices, based on the fact that she has yet to succumb to his advances; "I didn't know what was the matter with her. She was twenty-eight then, and she couldn't go on being a spinster much longer."[449]

The main aspect of the gender representations in Bhowani Junction is through Victoria's incident of almost being raped. Victoria, unusually, becomes her own protector and kills her perpetrator. However, this is not Masters showing a liberation for women, but instead is used to show the violent nature of Victoria's Indian heritage. After acting in self defence, Victoria escapes and hides with some Indian friends, where Victoria begins to embrace her heritage, which is signified by her adoption of the sari. However, the discourse that surrounds these events, places the blame on Victoria for having "led on" the British soldier that attacked her, Although written over fifty years ago, this rhetoric is still seen today in many modern cases.

## Class Representations

### Rodney

Within the novel, Rodney Savage represents the perfect imperial soldier. At times, there are obvious suggestions of this military training, as well as evidence to a public-school education. For example,

> "what does your Colonel McIntyre know about St Thomas's? was he there? He was at Eton School, I bet!'
>
> Victoria said, 'He knows nothing about St Thomas's! But he thinks the English will leave india very soon,' and I shouted, 'They wont leave, man! How can they leavem

[448] Foucault, 1976, p5
[449] Masters, 1959, p.23

> with the bloody Mohammedans and the bloody Hindus cutting each other's bloody throats every day'"[450]

This also links to another representation of class in the practice of sending Anglo-Indian children to England for their education, a practice that underscores the class and racial divides within colonial society. The children, often caught between two cultures, represent the privileged yet conflicted status of the Anglo-Indian community, who were neither fully accepted by the British nor the Indians. This practice of sending them to England reflects the colonial mindset of maintaining a distinct British identity, even in post-colonial India. The separation of children from their Indian roots and their education in England emphasizes the social and racial hierarchies that defined colonial relationships and the sense of belonging that the Anglo-Indian community struggled to reconcile.

Furthermore the above quote shows the importance of public schools when considering empire building. Linking both to freemasonry is also shown within the novel, in the subtelty and secretive nature of talk between Alumni. For example;

> "he said to savage, almost as though he wanted to change the subject, 'im afraid were in for a thin time, Savage.'
>
> Savage stood up. He said, 'In fact, Collector, you suspect there will be dastardly outrages?' he spoke in a funny, precise way.
>
> Govindaswami stroked his chin and said, 'I am sure of it, Savage.'
>
> Savage said, 'Govindaswami, you are marvellous.'
>
> Govindaswami said, 'Elemenantry, my dear Savage. I rely on you, old fellow. The scoundrels will stop at nothing.'
>
> Savage was smiling by then. He said, 'Cheltenam and Balliol?'
>
> Govindaswami said, 'Correct. Wellington and Sandhurst?'
>
> Savage said, ' correct – but that's not a guess, that's a bloody certainty.'"[451]

[450] Ibid, p.27
[451] Ibid, p.73-4

‘Wellington and Sandhurst’ is representative of Masters education, The same as John Masters education. This could mean that Savage was influenced by Masters himself. But as we know that Masters is Anglo-Indian, we could also say that Taylor’s fears and musings on the state of being an Anglo-Indian, was reflective of Masters’ own opinion. Personally, from my reading of Bhowani Junction, and a some understanding of Masters’ personal background, I would argue that Masters’ representation of Savage is that of someone who he aspires to be; Strong, charismatic, good with the ladies which is the polar opposite of how Patrick describes himself in the first chapter. But, seeing as Patrick ends up with Victoria, the prize, if it were, Masters’ could vision this as the suitable ending for himself.

## Conclusion

To conclude, *Bhowani Junction* is a grand display of life in Colonial India, in the lead up to decolonisation. The Anglo-Indian community are an interesting representation of the “complex interplays of racist and class-chauvinist worldviews—both of which were simultaneously gendered— [and] were at the very heart of the colonial construction of whiteness.”[452] Masters offers a nuanced exploration of race, gender, and class through the complex characters of Patrick, Victoria, and Rodney Savage. Patrick’s character reflects the intricate dynamics of race in colonial India, where his mixed-race background highlights the struggles of those caught between two identities. As a half-Indian, half-English man, Patrick embodies the tension of racial divisions, struggling with both societal rejection and his internal conflicts. His experiences reveal the complexities of racial identity during British rule and the deep-seated prejudices that accompany colonialism.

Victoria, as a female protagonist, brings forth a powerful representation of gender in the colonial context. Her character, caught in the expectations of both British and Indian societies,

[452] Mizutani, 2011

navigates the oppressive forces of patriarchy, class, and cultural expectations. Her personal journey of love, independence, and self-realization reflects the limitations imposed on women and the desire for autonomy within a patriarchal framework. Victoria's experiences also underscore the intersection of gender and national identity, as her relationship with both colonial and native characters highlight the contradictions of colonial society.

Finally, Rodney Savage's character exemplifies the representation of class within the novel. As a wealthy British officer, he represents the colonial elite, benefiting from the social and economic systems that oppress the native population. His actions and attitudes toward the locals reflect the sense of superiority and entitlement that defined the British colonial class. However, his personal flaws and the moral dilemmas he faces expose the underlying tensions of privilege and its eventual unravelling in the face of post-colonial change.

Together, these characters provide a rich and multifaceted portrayal of the complex layers of identity in the colonial context, showing how race, gender, and class intertwine and influence personal and societal conflicts. Through Patrick, Victoria, and Rodney Savage, *Bhowani Junction* highlights the persistent effects of colonialism, with each character's journey revealing the lasting legacies of race, gender, and class within the changing social landscape of India.

## Conclusion

The books by John Masters (*Coromandel!, The Deceivers, Nightrunners of Bengal, and Bhowani Junction*) have been analysed in this research as cultural works that represent the colonial imagination of class, gender, and race. Each chapter has demonstrated how Masters' literature simultaneously reflects and perpetuates colonial violence by reproducing and navigating the symbolic order of empire. This conclusion synthesises the findings of each chapter and shows how Masters' works collectively depict the intertwining of class hierarchies, gendered subordination, and racialised power, and how these representations still have resonance in the current legacies of gendered violence.

The first of the novels, *Coromandel*!, uses the motifs of effeminacy, barbarism, and nudity to express colonial difference. Women are constantly reduced to supporting parts that are determined by their sexual availability or domestic duties, whilst Indian characters are portrayed as morally deficient, unreliable, or exoticized. The story legitimises the white male protagonist's dominance by constructing others as inferior on the basis of race and gender. Masters' ambivalence is also evident in the narrative, which continuously reasserts British power while at times giving Indian characters little agency. The chapter illustrated how *Coromandel*! creates the model of class division, gender subordination, and racial stereotyping that Masters replicates in his subsequent writings.

These themes are continued in *The Deceivers*, where Masters emphasises machismo, corruption, and secrecy. William, a character who struggles with identification and self-control, serves as an example of how military, discipline, and dominance were used to create colonial masculinity. The infantilisation, infirmity, and sexual fragility of the female characters—especially Catherine—highlight the colonial narrative that associated femininity with dependency and weakness. This examination demonstrated how Masters' portrayal of

masculinity was inextricably linked to both the subjection of women and the disciplinary systems of empire.

Masters examines the 1857 uprising, a crucial moment in colonial history, in Nightrunners of Bengal. Here, the graphic portrayals of sexual assault combine gender and racial representations. British women are portrayed as violated victims, Indian men as animalistic attackers, and British men as protectors whose power is upheld by violence. The imperial myth of the "Mutiny," in which graphic stories of rape were used to justify colonial power and demonise Indian opposition, was reproduced by Masters in this chapter. The focus on sexual violence in the book draws attention to the connection between gendered violence and colonial brutality, demonstrating how the two were mutually reinforcing. Class, on the other hand, serves as another structural principle: Indian soldiers and citizens are portrayed as lacking in discipline and dignity, whereas British officers represent a "gentlemanly" culture derived from elite education.

Lastly, Bhowani Junction places its story in the decolonisation era and uses the characters of Rodney Savage, Victoria Jones, and Patrick Taylor to highlight Anglo-Indian identity. Here, class, gender, and race are intricately entwined. Being caught between racial exclusion and colonial privilege, Patrick personifies the dual awareness of mixed-race identity. As a female lead, Victoria exemplifies the intersection of racial marginalisation and gendered subordination, with her body serving as the platform for debates over national identity, cultural belonging, and allegiance. Although Rodney Savage is a prime example of colonial elitism, his moral quandaries highlight the inconsistencies of imperial masculinity during the end of empire. This chapter demonstrated how Masters' literature perpetuates racialised and gendered prejudices while dramatizing the breakdown of colonial hierarchies.

When combined, these studies support the main contention of this dissertation, which holds that colonial depictions of race, gender, and class in Masters' books were not merely incidental

or ornamental but rather formed part of the empire's ideological machinery. The feminisation and sexualisation of women, the animalization and demonisation of colonised men, and the elevation of white male authority as "gentlemanly" and civilised were all components of colonialism, as these writings show. By clearly connecting colonial brutality to gendered violence, these depictions served to legitimise the subjugation of women as well as the dominance of colonised peoples.

Additionally, Masters' work contributes to a broader colonial record of rape culture, as the dissertation emphasises. Masters' works contribute to a discursive environment that normalises gendered violence by frequently portraying males as powerful, aggressive, and entitled, and women as weak, dishonest, or sexually available. Subaltern feminist writers like Spivak and Mani remind us that the objectification and silence of women in these discourses was essential to the operation of colonial power and was not an aberration. Intersectionality sheds additional light on the ways in which class, gender, and race combined to create exacerbated systems of dominance and vulnerability. Ultimately, Masters books show how literature served as a medium for colonial discourse, forming cultural imaginaries that endure today.

The results of this dissertation shed light on the lasting effects of colonial discourse in modern society, going beyond Masters' works. India's ongoing battles with systemic sexual violence, which are frequently characterised as proof of a widespread "rape culture," are inextricably linked to colonial histories that positioned women as symbols of honour, community, and country while also making them susceptible to oppression and abuse. These logics of gendered violence were further solidified by the widespread kidnappings and attacks that occurred during the partition of India and Pakistan. The patterns of representation seen in colonial literature are still evident today in the enduring victim-blaming, the silence of survivors, and the cooperation of political and judicial institutions.

Colonial legacies also influence how gendered violence is portrayed and dealt with on a global scale. By portraying women in the Global South as defenceless victims and disregarding local agency and knowledge, Western feminist discourses continue to run the risk of perpetuating imperialist frameworks. Subaltern feminist theory's warning is still crucial: if we don't examine the colonial foundations of representational systems, we run the risk of reproducing the exact inequalities we are trying to overthrow.
This dissertation emphasises the necessity of a critical re-engagement with cultural texts, both past and present, by highlighting these continuities. Masters' books serve as a reminder that representations are tools of power. In order to combat gendered violence in the modern day, we also need to address the colonial narratives that support it.

My argument is not solely the impact of John Masters novels on representations of gender, race, and class, but that literature as a whole has a massive impact on society's concept of gender, race, and class. Specifically, the literature produced from colonisation has a direct correlation with a promotion of capitalism. Capitalism wants mass consumerism. This filters into every aspect of our lives, such as meat consumption, fashion, and entertainment. All of these aspects centre around a disrespect of nature, placing human at the top of nature's hierarchal structure. Through the industrial revolution, this dominance over nature was emphasised and encouraged faster production through colonisation. I believe that the disrespect towards nature is synonymous with a disrespect for women, and that this is behaviour taught through public schools, military, science, religion, and primarily literature.

This dissertation supports postcolonial feminist critique and larger initiatives to undermine the long-standing systems of dominance that Masters' books so potently reveal by highlighting the links between colonial and gendered violence. The hierarchies of empire were both reflected and reproduced in literature, and its effects can still be seen in our contemporary cultural

imaginations. In addition to challenging these narratives, the current challenge is to produce fresh representations that uphold justice, equality, and agency.

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