

“THE BLOODIEST RECORD IN THE BOOK OF TIME”:
AMY HORNE AND THE INDIAN UPRISING OF 1857, IN FACT AND
FICTION

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Abstract

This dissertation comprises a novel and a critical study. It is an exploration of the possible literary and historical representations of the Horne narratives, a collection of documents from the 1857 Indian uprising. Amy Horne, a young woman of mixed European and Indian descent, was a survivor of the massacre at Cawnpore. Converted to Islam and married to an Indian soldier, she spent ten months in captivity with the rebel forces, before returning to British-controlled territory. She subsequently produced several different accounts of her experiences.

The critical study is a detailed examination of these narratives, the contexts of their composition and their position within the contemporary historical record. My research, which has included archival reading in India and England, has uncovered both contradictions within the narratives and supporting evidence for their claims. I argue that in order to use such contentious material effectively in fiction, a full recognition of the possibilities of interpretation is vitally important. I further suggest that a close and comparative reading of the narratives, informed by an awareness of Horne's own cultural and ethnic status within British society, reveals a dissonant relationship with the discourses of Imperial history, and allows a potentially subversive understanding of Horne's story.

This process of research and exploration has directly shaped the composition of my novel, *The Division of the Blood*, a fictional reconstruction of Horne's experiences. As a work of the imagination built on a foundation of dedicated critical study, this novel attempts to be both a dramatically engaging story and a fully considered response to the ambiguities of historical narrative.

Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii

Part One: Critical Study. “The Bloodiest Record in the Book of Time”

Title Page	1
Introduction	2
Chapter 1: <i>Amy Horne and the Historiography of the Indian Uprising</i>	7
Chapter 2: <i>Amy Horne and the Social Context of Anglo-India</i>	28
Chapter 3: <i>The Amy Horne Narratives in Historical Perspective</i>	48
Chapter 4: <i>The Amy Horne Texts: Mutiny Memoirs or Captivity Narratives?</i>	83
Conclusion	115
Bibliography	125

Part Two: Novel. “The Division of the Blood”

“The Bloodiest Record in the Book of Time”

Amy Horne and the Indian Uprising of 1857, in fact and fiction.

Ian Breckon

As time rolls on, and the events of 1857 become historical, the details of the dreadful scenes enacted at Cawnpore, Delhi, Futtehghur, and other places, which must ever sound sadly and horribly in English ears, are brought before us more clearly, and can be viewed more distinctly, if not more calmly.

Line upon line, here a little and there a little, we shall soon know nearly all that can be known about that “bloodiest record in the book of time”.

William Howard Russell, Special Correspondent in India.

The Times, 8 December 1858

Introduction

“Reading ... is always this: there is a thing that is there, a thing made of writing, a solid, material object, which cannot be changed, and through this we measure ourselves against something else that is not present, something else that belongs to the immaterial, invisible world, because it can only be thought, imagined, or because it was once and is no longer, past, lost, unattainable, in the land of the dead ...”

Italo Calvino. *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*

‘The reality of the Indian Mutiny’ writes J.G. Farrell in the Afterword of his 1973 novel *The Siege of Krishnapur*, ‘constantly defies imagination.’¹ For the writer of an acclaimed novel on that very subject, a work of literary imagination which later won the Booker Prize, the statement seems extraordinary. Farrell is referring to the sheer volume of documentary accounts of the 1857 uprising in India, the ‘mass of diaries, letters and memoirs written by eyewitnesses’: a body of detailed evidence, anecdote and opinion so comprehensive, he suggests, as to seriously curtail or even neutralise the novelist’s freedom of invention.

In this thesis I will examine one particular collection of documents from the uprising: the series of narrative accounts written by Amy Horne, one of the few survivors of the massacre at Cawnpore (now Kanpur).² Ignored or disbelieved at the time, and for more than a century afterwards, Horne has been rediscovered by more recent historians, and propelled to the front rank of eyewitness reporters in

¹ J.G. Farrell, *The Siege of Krishnapur* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1973), p. 314

² For the purposes of clarity, and accordance with my sources, I will use the most commonly accepted 19th-century forms and spellings of Indian place names, thus Cawnpore rather than the modern Kanpur, Oudh rather than Awadh, and Calcutta rather than Kolkata.

contemporary Mutiny historiography. It would now seem a striking omission for any historian writing of the events at Cawnpore not to mention her, and rely to some degree on her description of what happened.³ Despite this, the documents she produced have neither been compared, nor studied in any depth; at least one of them has never been studied at all. These accounts have obvious value as survivor testimonies and eyewitness descriptions of scenes and incidents otherwise neglected in the historical record. But much about them remains dubious and even controversial.

My novel, *The Division of the Blood*, is an account of Amy Horne and her experiences, rooted in a detailed reading of this documentary evidence. The novel and critical study are parallel responses to the same historical narrative. I hope to demonstrate that the process of analytical research outlined here has been vitally important in writing fiction both accurate to its sources and alert to the nuances of interpretation.

A detailed exploration of the wider background to the 1857 uprising in India lies outside the scope of this work. After a century and a half, much about the causes and the direction of the conflict remains a matter of debate. Even the naming of the conflict itself is a divisive issue. Bearing this in mind, I have opted for a distinct terminology in this thesis.

³ See, for example, Pat Barr, *The Memsahibs* (Secker & Warburg, London 1976); Christopher Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny, India 1857* (Penguin, London, 1978); P.J.O Taylor, *A Star Shall Fall* (Indus, New Delhi, 1993); Jane Robinson, *Angels of Albion: Women of the Indian Mutiny* (Viking, London, 1996); Andrew Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered: The Cawnpore Massacres and the Indian Mutiny of 1857* (Holt, New York, 1996); Saul David, *The Indian Mutiny: 1857* (Viking, London, 2002); Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *The Indian Mutiny, 1857-58* (Osprey, London, 2007); Donald Sydney-Richards, *Cawnpore & Lucknow: A tale of two sieges* (Pen & Sword, London, 2007); Julian Spilsbury, *The Indian Mutiny* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2007).

The historical events of 1857-58 I shall refer to as the uprising. These comprise the initial mutinies of Indian soldiers of the East India Company army, the subsequent widespread popular revolt against British control, and the series of British counter-insurgent military campaigns. The capitalised term Mutiny I shall reserve for the connected 'event', literary and historiographic rather than strictly historical, created by the discourses of British writing on the rebellion: a nexus of imagination, imperial anxiety and popular propaganda, which arguably consumed and obscured the historical events it presumed to describe.

I begin this study with an introduction to the rebellion and massacre at Cawnpore, and an exploration of Amy Horne's place and significance in this wider historical narrative. Combining the various accounts subsequently attributed to Horne herself, I attempt a reconstruction of her experiences after the massacre. Where possible I compare them with other available evidence, and conclude with a note of the emphasis placed on Horne and her writings in recent historical works.

The next chapter focuses on the background and social status of Horne herself, and investigates the ways in which her survival, and the various accounts of her experiences, were received in British India at the time. My argument is that Horne's position as a narrator cannot be appreciated without consideration of her ethnic and gender position within British colonial society of the mid nineteenth century.

Following this, I provide a detailed textual analysis of the five accounts attributed to Horne. My method here has been to consider each as a separate attempt to negotiate experience: thus they are inherently contradictory rather than complementary. By attempting to give a framing context for each narrative's composition, I chart the metamorphosis of the text from a highly subjective witness statement to an apparently objective engagement with the discourses of British imperial history.

The fourth chapter opens with a comparison of the Horne texts with other survivor accounts of the uprising, particularly those by women. While there are obvious similarities, I suggest that Horne's various accounts are much closer to those of another genre, the 'captivity narrative'. The key themes of the captivity narrative can therefore be used to highlight the discursive tensions within Horne's writings, and their implicit subversion of the codes and conventions of colonial ideology.

Finally, I look at the possibilities of appropriating the Horne texts in fiction, and the potential of the novel to provide a new and illuminating interpretation of such fragmented and contradictory material.

It is my belief that the imaginative processes that allow a recreation of the past in fictional form are indivisible from the processes of historical research and analysis. A critical study tracing the course of this research therefore acts as a seedbed for the production of the novel itself. To site fiction within a contentious historical field, it becomes necessary to return to the original source documents and dig deeply, working through the accumulated layers of exposition and elaboration to reach new and unstudied raw material. The course of my research has led me to archival sources in both England and India, and to documents that have never before been studied or incorporated into the fabric of historiography. These in turn have fed directly into the composition of my novel.

The following chapters, then, will be simultaneously a summary of original historical research, an investigation of the analytical and critical paths that enabled me to recreate Amy Horne's story in fiction, and a dramatisation of the imaginative freedoms and constraints that I encountered in the course of that study.

Hayden White, in *The Content of the Form: narrative discourse and historical representation* (1987), describes the texts and contexts of the historical record as being ‘not a window through which the past ‘as it really was’ can be apprehended but rather a wall that must be broken through if ‘the terror of history’ is to be directly confronted.’⁴ In this sense, Farrell’s ‘defiance of the imagination’ is enacted not so much by the reality of the historical event as by the historical record itself, and can only be countered by the novelistic tracing of fault-lines and marks of erasure in that same record, and the application of critical pressure to the point of collapse. The act of creation must therefore be preceded, and thereafter driven, by an act of demolition.

⁴ Hayden V. White, *The Content of the Form: narrative discourse and historical representation* (John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1987), pp. 81-82.

1. “*A Romance of the Mutiny*”

Amy Horne and the Historiography of the Indian Uprising.

I. A Survivor of Cawnpore

On the 7th of April 1858, at Allahabad in northern India, a ragged young woman presented herself at the house of an indigo planter named Nicholas Flouest. The woman was seemingly deranged, and apparently unable to speak English, and it took some time for Flouest to be convinced of her identity. She was, he realised, his own teenaged grand-niece Amelia (Amy) Horne.⁵

The previous summer, Indian troops of the East India Company, outraged and terrified by rumoured assaults on their religion and culture, had risen in mutiny against their white officers.⁶ This ignited a widespread rebellion across the plain of the Ganges. When the uprising broke out, Amy and her family were living in the city of Cawnpore (modern Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh). Together with the rest of the European community – nearly a thousand, of whom less than three hundred were professional soldiers – they entered a hastily-constructed entrenchment redoubt on the old parade ground. In the humid pre-monsoon heat, they endured a three-week siege and

⁵ *Bengal Hurkaru*, 23 April 1858. Quoted in Amelia Bennett, ‘Ten Months Captivity after the Massacre at Cawnpore’, *The Nineteenth Century and After*, No.437, July 1913, II. p.89.

⁶ Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, London, 1994, p.202), analyses the ‘contagion of rumour’ in the context of the uprising. J.A.B. Palmer’s *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut in 1857* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1966) and Kim Wagner’s *The Great Fear of 1857* (Peter Lang, London, 2010) both describe the confusion surrounding the issue of new rifle cartridges, and the escalation of initial mistrust into open revolt.

bombardment by an Indian army of four thousand men under the nominal command of the Nana Sahib, a disinherited Mahratta raja from nearby Bithur. Finally, with ammunition running out, and food and water almost gone, the British commander agreed terms of surrender. The besieged would be permitted to leave with their arms, and boats would be provided to carry them in safety down the river to Allahabad.

On Saturday the 27th of June, the parched and bloodied survivors of the entrenchment straggled down to the river at Satichaura Ghat. As they boarded the boats that would carry them to safety, troops massed on the banks opened fire. Out of the estimated six hundred survivors of the siege, only four British soldiers escaped the subsequent massacre, battling their way downriver to the territory of a loyalist landowner. About a dozen others, all of them Eurasians, managed to disguise themselves as Indians and conceal themselves in the native city.⁷

Those who had not died in the initial attack on the boats were herded together on the muddy shore. The men were killed, and the women and children marched back into the city to be imprisoned as hostages. Two weeks later, as a long-delayed British relief force finally reached the outskirts of Cawnpore, the remaining hostages – around two hundred – were massacred in their prison house by butchers from the city bazaar. Their bodies were hacked to pieces and piled into a dry well in the compound outside. When British soldiers discovered the well and its grisly contents, an already savage campaign of retribution against the rebels became an hysterical desire for vengeance.⁸

⁷ Although the term ‘Anglo-Indian’ was formally adopted by Indians of mixed ethnicity in 1911, and remains in use to this day, I have used the word ‘Eurasian’ throughout this work, as it matches more closely the original sources quoted. In the mid-nineteenth century, a variety of terms were employed, with ‘Eurasian’ being the most common, whereas ‘Anglo-Indian’ commonly referred to the British residing in India.

⁸ Andrew Ward’s *Our Bones are Scattered* (1996) offers the most comprehensive recent examination of the massacre. Rudrangshu Mukherjee’s *Spectre of Violence: The 1857 Kanpur Massacres* (Penguin

The massacre at Cawnpore, together with other less extensive slaughters at Meerut, Jhansi, Delhi and elsewhere, became the rallying motif for the merciless. Stories of the depravity of the rebels multiplied: to basic murder were added torture, gang-rape, mutilation and even cannibalism. Crimes against women in particular were circulated widely: ‘overwhelming horrors ... too appalling for description’.⁹ ‘Remember Cawnpore’ and ‘Remember the Ladies’ became the battle-cries of the British troops as they pushed their advance deeper into the Indian heartland.

The mood of the home country was similarly bloody, captured in a poem by the popular jingoist Martin Tupper, *Avenge O Lord Thy Slaughtered Saints!*:

*And, England, now avenge their wrongs by vengeance deep and dire,
Cut out this canker with the sword and burn it out with fire.
Destroy these traitor legions, hang every Pariah-hound,
And hunt them down to death in all the hills and cities round.*¹⁰

Like so many others, Amy Horne had long been presumed dead, disappeared into the maelstrom of massacre, slain on the bloody riverbank, or swallowed by the gruesome well. News of her survival spread rapidly. She was at this point the only woman known to have survived the massacre, the only ‘slaughtered saint’ to return from that mass grave. The public were to be disappointed – Amy was quickly secluded behind

India, New Delhi, 1998), also provides a valuable interpretation. The preceding account is largely based upon these sources.

⁹ Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny* (London Printing & Publishing Company, London, 1858), vol I, p.298.

¹⁰ *Naval and Military Gazette*, 5 September 1857, quoted in Michael Edwardes, *Red Year* (Cardinal, London, 1971), p. 176.

the barriers of her extended family. But even so her survival created ‘a profound sensation’ throughout India, and in England.¹¹

The few reports concerning her which reached the press did little to appease the popular hunger for witness statements. A week after her arrival in Calcutta, the *Bengal Hurkaru* wrote that Amy was ‘in great distress of mind; often in tears, has forgotten much of the English language, and looks prematurely aged.’¹² Nevertheless, by the end of that month Amy had sufficiently regained her command of English to compose a letter to the Government of India. This letter, addressed to the Governor’s secretary, Cecil Beadon, and dated April the 30th 1858, is held today in the National Archives of India:

I am one of the survivors of the unfortunate garrison of Cawnpore. When after the capitulation we were taken to the Boats, I was forcibly taken ashore again & brought back to Cawnpore – I was subsequently carried into Oude & kept there a captive for 10 months, when lately I succeeded in making my escape to Allahabad. The whole of our family must have been cruelly killed & of course all our property is lost. I take the liberty of thus addressing you as I am given to understand that Government has graciously allowed two thousand Rupees compensation to all persons situated like myself – [lost] so kind [lost] to order such [lost] to be made over to me or to Messers Durrschmidt GroB & Co, No. 5 New China Bazaar Street. I have the honour to be,
Your most obdt serv.
Amy Horne.¹³

¹¹ *The Times*, 11 August 1858, p.6.

¹² *Bengal Hurkaru*, 23 April 1858. Quoted in Bennett, ‘Ten Months Captivity’, *The Nineteenth Century and After*, No.437, July 1913, II. p.89.

¹³ National Archives of India, *Home Department Proceedings (Public)*, 14 May 1858, No. 1-2.

The letter includes a covering note from a Mr Durrschmidt (a Calcutta merchant), briefly stating that ‘Miss Amy Horne was taken away by a sowar of the 3rd Irregular Cavalry from the ghat, at the time of the slaughter of the male portion of the unfortunate garrison [...] She was afterwards kept in a hut close to the assembly rooms.’¹⁴

But if Amy hoped that her celebrity as a survivor of Cawnpore, and the massive symbolic charge that had gathered around the massacre and its female victims, would recommend her to the charity of Government, she was to be disappointed. Over a week passed before the reply came from Government House, illegibly signed by an anonymous clerk and providing only the coldest of official sympathy:

Madam, In reply to your letter dated the 30th Ultimo professing a claim to compensation for losses suffered by the mutinies, I am directed to inform you that the Resolution of the Government of India of the 13th November last published in the Calcutta Gazette of the 21st idem page 1809 does not provide for the grant of compensation to the families of Europeans not in the service of Govt killed in the mutinies, but under the 18th para of the Resolution, pensions are given to the destitute members of such families. Application for one of these pensions must however be made to the local Civil Authorities.¹⁵

The Baptist Minister Mr Leslie, meanwhile, in a letter to Beadon dated July the 3rd, reports that his daughter had once met Miss Horne while she was living with her step-father Mr Cooke (actually Cook) in the town of Raneegunge, presumably some

¹⁴ National Archives of India, *Home Department Proceedings (Public)*, 14 May 1858, No. 1-2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

time in late 1856. Cook and the rest of the family were killed at Cawnpore during the uprising, Leslie relates, but Miss Horne survived:

She was carried off by some native, kept by him for some months, and then was set adrift by him. She found her way to Allahabad, dressed in native clothes and from there was sent to Calcutta, where, I believe, she now is. She is able to give a very connected account of things up to the massacre, but whenever she reaches that point she becomes mad. My daughter has not seen her since she arrived, but we have the above information from those who have seen her.¹⁶

Amy's 'madness' had already been alluded to in press reports. On the 20th of May, *The Friend of India* reported that 'she has as yet been unable to give a connected narrative of that dreadful occurrence, the recollection is still too overpowering.'¹⁷ *The Times* of London later stated that although 'the unhappy victim of treason and brutality was scarcely capable of giving a connected or intelligible narrative of her sufferings ... she was undoubtedly a living witness of scenes which were thought to have left no survivor.'¹⁸

Horne's celebrity endured for only a few months, coloured by misgivings. Writing from 'the British camp near Hissampore, Buraech' on the 13th of January 1859, *Times* correspondent William Howard Russell noted that 'a statement respecting the massacres ... purporting to be the work of a lady' had appeared some time before in the British and Indian press. The lady in question is genuine, he assures his readers, although she is 'the daughter of a clerk. And is, I believe, an Eurasian, or has some

¹⁶ National Archives of India, *Home Department Proceedings (Public)*, 14 May 1858, No. 1-2.

¹⁷ *The Friend of India*, 20 May 1858, reprinted in *The Times*, 11 August 1858, p.7.

¹⁸ *The Times*, 11 August 1858, p.6.

Eurasian blood in her veins. It would be cruel to give her name, though the shame is not hers ... this unhappy girl ... is at Calcutta, and reports of her insanity are false.'¹⁹

Russell's mention of 'Eurasian blood' is crucial. The impurity of Miss Horne's testimony is unmasked by the impurity of her background. She is no English lady at all, in fact, but a clerk's daughter of dubious ethnic status and doubtful sanity. Miss Horne, it is inferred, is mere flotsam of war, a desperate figure trying to maintain her status in society, to be pitied, perhaps to be provided for, but certainly not to be believed.

Meanwhile, another Cawnpore survivor had provided what appeared to be an authoritative account of the uprising, siege and massacre. Captain Mowbray Thomson was one of only two British officers to escape the slaughter at Satichaura Ghat. His initial report on his experiences, suitably expanded, was published in 1859 to great acclaim.²⁰ William J. Shepherd, a Eurasian commissariat clerk who had escaped the entrenchment before the massacre disguised as an Indian, composed his own eyewitness narrative of the event for a Indian newspaper; it was finally published as a book twenty years later.²¹ Thomson does not mention Amy Horne, while Shepherd merely lists her as one of the survivors of the siege. The decades following the rebellion saw the launch of a flotilla of histories, many of them multi-volume epics. None of these works, exhaustive as they appeared to be, mentioned Amy in connection with the terrible events at Cawnpore. Miss Horne, and whatever might have survived of her story, seemed utterly forgotten.

¹⁹ *The Times*, 24 February 1859, p.9.

²⁰ Mowbray Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (Richard Bentley & Sons, London, 1859).

²¹ William J. Shepherd, *A Personal Narrative of the Outbreak and Massacre at Cawnpore during the Sepoy Revolt of 1857* (London Printing Press, Lucknow, 1879).

II. The Horne Narratives

In fact, unregarded by the assiduous historians of British India, Amy Horne composed several versions of her experiences during the uprising. These narratives consist of five separate textual accounts, plus a possible sixth account known only from references. The earliest of them is a handwritten witness statement given to a Calcutta society called the India Reform League, dated the 29th of June 1858, and now kept in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. This statement, signed by Amy herself and written only two months at most after her return from captivity, is sparing in the extreme. Nonetheless is the only one of these documents which can be regarded as incontestably genuine.²²

On the 11th of August 1858, *The Times* of London carried a short anonymous account written by a young female survivor of the massacre, forwarded from India by a Mr W. Knighton of The College, Ewell, Surrey. From behind a barricade of caveats, the *Times* editorial described the narrative as ‘purporting to proceed from the sufferer’s own mouth’, while admitting that ‘room seems to have been left for what in scholastic language would be called a corruption of the text.’²³ Apparently composed by a Calcutta journalist, the account contains details that could only have derived from a personal interview with Amy herself, probably relatively soon after her return to British India, at the time she was ‘unable to give a connected narrative’ of what had happened. It could perhaps best be regarded as a ghostwritten version, or elaboration, of her experiences.

²² School of Oriental and African Studies. *MS 380667, Dodwell, 02: Various Documents.*

²³ *The Times*, 11 August 1858, p.6.

The third narrative is a handwritten manuscript, originally composed *circa* 1858, under the pen-name of Amy Haines. It survives only as an 1890 copy by a Mr R. MacRae in the Oriental and India Office Collection of the British Library, and contains errors that suggest either faults in transcription or original composition.²⁴ An expanded and heavily embroidered version of this account was published in 1913 in the magazine *The Nineteenth Century and After*.²⁵ Together these provide what appears to be the most comprehensive description of events.

In tone, these two texts are very different from the earlier account in the *Times*. In contrast to the near-levity of the latter, they are cold and bitter. Each displays the particular concerns of its era – the later one more firmly attuned to the sensibilities of an Edwardian India once more facing native unrest. Neither are great literature by any standard; they are often prolix, hyperbolic and self-important, vague in places and naggingly particular in others. They are encumbered with pathetic appeals and vain protestations of superiority and good breeding, and shot through with a vitriolic racism that defies modern sympathy. Throughout, however, there are scenes and descriptions of striking visceral power, all the more extraordinary in their rejection of the accepted models of mutiny reportage.

Elements of Horne's story first appeared, anonymously, in Sir George Forrest's *A History of the Indian Mutiny, reviewed and illustrated from original documents* (1904). In his introduction to the first volume, Forrest states that his description of the events at Cawnpore, 'a tale of disaster and unutterable woe, illuminated by gallantry and patient, heroic courage', was compiled partly from Mowbray Thomson's

²⁴ Oriental & India Office Collection, British Library, London. *Ms. Add.41488*: 'Letters and papers relating to the Indian Mutiny', ff. 53-95, by Mrs Amy Haines'.

²⁵ Amelia Bennett, 'Ten Months Captivity after the Massacre at Cawnpore', *The Nineteenth Century and After*. Part I: No. 436, June 1913, pp 1212-1234 and Part II: No.437, July 1913, pp 78-91.

published work, and partly from ‘an account written for me by one of the two women who escaped the massacre at the bank of the river.’²⁶ The few lines he quotes from it are identical to those found in the British Library manuscript; in fact, the latter might even be the very same account.²⁷ ‘Her name, for the sake of her family,’ Forrest explains, ‘cannot be disclosed, [but] the story of the woman has been minutely compared with the voluminous evidence before me, and of its substantial accuracy there can be no doubt.’ Forrest uses none of the material covering events after the massacre at Satichaura Ghat; there being no ‘voluminous evidence’ with which to compare it, this section might have been thought too subjective to be used in a serious historical work. In his footnotes, however, Forrest provides a detail that has escaped any of the other narratives, and gives a very different aspect to them. Quite possibly, this detail was gained in conversation with Amy herself.

The final narrative also contains certain elements that clash with the story told elsewhere. In 1872, a Muslim cleric named Liakat Ali was arrested and tried in Allahabad, accused of involvement in the murders there in 1857. Amelia Bennett, *nee* Horne, stood as one of the defence witnesses. Perhaps, like the footnote in Forrest’s book, the report of her trial statement allows the story to escape the controlling hand of its author(s). Here too there are strange errors and mystifications: fifteen years after the event, the facts of what happened to Amy Horne still have the air of the dubious. As the court reporter has it, ‘the story ... is a romance of the Mutiny.’²⁸

²⁶ G.W. Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny, reviewed and illustrated from original documents* (William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh & London. 1904), vol. I, p.x.

²⁷ Rudrangshu Mukherjee, in *Spectre of Violence* (1998, pp.87-92), gives a comparison of the Forrest text with the 1913 magazine article by Amelia Bennett. The discrepancies he identifies are not present in the British Library Manuscript.

²⁸ *The Times*, 28 August 1872, p.10.

The repetition of these accounts, and their steady metamorphosis in tone and content, might cast doubt on the ‘substantial accuracy’ of much of their detail. Nevertheless, by comparing the narratives it is possible to arrive at a probable sequence of events, an ordering of Amy’s experiences, that best accords with the differing interpretations in her writing. In a very few instances, it is also possible to connect details given in the narratives with events evidenced in other sources, and so provide an approximate chronology for at least some parts of the story.

The earliest scenes described in the narratives concern Amy’s stay in Lucknow, capital of the recently annexed kingdom of Oudh. She arrives in the city, where her stepfather Mr Cook has a job as agent of the North-Western Dak (mail coach) company, early in 1857. Moving once more to Cawnpore a few months later, Amy witnesses the outbreak of mutiny and joins the flight of the European residents to General Wheeler’s hastily-constructed entrenchment. Together with her mother, stepfather and their five children, she endures the twenty-day siege, which she describes in graphic detail in her two longer narratives. With the surrender of the garrison, she joins the column in the march down to the river, and boards one of the boats at Satichaura Ghat.

During the massacre that follows, Amy is first robbed and assaulted by looters, then seized by a sowar (Indian cavalry trooper) who rides up alongside the boat. Thrown into the water, she is dragged to the shore by the sowar and concealed in the hut of a subedar (native officer) some two miles from the river. Later the same day, she is brought before a pair of Maulvis (Islamic clerics), who preside over her conversion to Islam. After being returned to the subedar’s hut, she remains concealed for several days.

Despite her complete seclusion, she hears rumours of the captivity of other women and children nearby, and learns ‘horrid tales’ of their treatment: they are being ‘subjugated, old and young, to horrors and cruelties which the tongue may not name.’²⁹ She also describes hearing the ‘booming of guns and musketry followed or preceded by the heart rending shrieks of unfortunate victims or the fiendish yells of the sepoy and the rabble.’ The guns may actually have been the Nana Sahib’s state review, held on June the 28th, which featured the firing of gun salutes in celebration of his victory over the British. But the musketry is also well attested: on the 10th of July twenty prisoners, male fugitives from Fatehgarh, were executed by firing squad against the wall of the Commissariat Office.³⁰ Amy’s ‘subedar’s hut’ was probably only a few hundred yards from the scene of the massacre.

When the rebels march out of Cawnpore, heading for Allahabad, Amy is taken with them, pretending, she claims, that she will act as their guide to Allahabad and ‘show them the easiest approaches to the Fort; which they intended to take.’³¹ This note is perhaps intended to conceal her true position. By this point, she had probably been married to her captor, and was taken along as part of his zenana.

Two days later, the rebel force meets the vanguard of the advancing British column, and is forced to retreat after a brief battle. The location is given as Futtehpoore; the battle of Fatehpur was fought on July the 12th, with General Havelock’s advancing relief column defeating the rebels with great loss.³² During the panicked retreat of the rebels back up the Grand Trunk Road, through Cawnpore and northwards again, a false

²⁹ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

³⁰ Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered* (1996), pp.369-371.

³¹ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

³² George Dodd, *The History of the Indian Revolt, and of the Expeditions to Persia, China and Japan, 1856-7-8* (W & R Chambers, London, 1859), p.250.

rumour is received that Delhi has been recaptured by the British, and the rebel column turns back to Farroukabad.

Here, Amy reports, the Nawab had ‘a few days previous, massacred 21 Europeans.’ She describes at length the sufferings of the final victim, a young girl similar, we are encouraged to presume, to herself. Although the description is clearly based on hearsay, the event itself is historically attested: the notorious ‘parade ground massacre’ occurred in Fatehgarh rather than neighbouring Farroukabad, on the 23rd of July. The number of the dead, Europeans and native Christians together, was actually thirty two.³³ At Farroukabad, Amy’s identity is discovered, and she is threatened with a spectacular execution: she is to be blown to pieces by a cannon on the parade ground before the assembled troops. From this terrible fate she is saved by the imposition of one of the Maulvis who oversaw her conversion. He orders her sowar captor to remove her secretly from the city and take her to Lucknow.

At Lucknow, Amy is concealed in a dyer’s hut close to the Residency compound, which by this time is under siege. She remains in this hut for two months before being discovered by local women, who threaten to inform the rebel authorities of her presence. The sowar takes her from the hut and transports her to the Observatory, or Taronwali Kothi, the temporary headquarters of the Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah, another Muslim religious leader. Here she records another massacre: ‘some ladies and children about 14 in number, together with a few native Christians’ are taken from the cellars of the building and murdered somewhere close by.³⁴ These killings too can be linked to evidence outside the text: on September the 24th, the day before Havelock’s relief

³³ P.J.O Taylor, *A Star Shall Fall* (Indus, New Delhi, 1993), p.120. William Edwards, (*Personal Adventures during the Indian Rebellion in Rohilcund, Futtehghur and Oude*, Smith & Elder, London, 1858, pp.126-127) gives the number slain as sixty-five to seventy.

³⁴ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

column entered the city, seventeen European and Eurasian prisoners and five Muslims were taken from the nearby Qaisarbagh palace and murdered in a dry nullah close to the Observatory. Their number included Miss Georgina Jackson and Mrs Greene, fugitives from the uprising at Sitapur, together with Mohamed Khan, the city *Kotwal* or police chief.³⁵ Amy's claim to have heard the killers' gunfire is less easily accountable. If she moved to the Observatory before Havelock's force passed close by, she would surely have been aware of it. More probably, this second massacre was also known from rumours circulated after the fact.

Following an unsuccessful attack on the Residency – conceivably one of the failed assaults on the new British perimeter around the Khas Bazaar and Chatar Manzil palace, between October the 28th and November the 8th - Shah deserts the Observatory and Amy is left alone in the building.³⁶ Two days later it is occupied by feuding bands of rebel soldiers, and she hides in the kitchen until she is rescued by the arrival of the sowar. This time she is taken to the house, or palace, of one of the mothers-in-law of the deposed King of Oudh, Wajid Ali Shah. The identity of this woman is rather obscure, as the ex king had around forty wives and a corresponding number of mothers-in-law, but she was apparently a relative of the sowar. At first she promises to shelter Amy, but shortly afterwards she turns against her guest and denounces her to the Begum of Oudh, then acting as regent for her son, the new rebel king. Hearing that the Begum is sending soldiers to arrest her, Amy contacts Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah

³⁵ Ritzi & Bhargava (eds), *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh, Vol.II (Awadh)*, (Lucknow Information Dept, Publications Bureau, Uttar Pradesh, 1961), appendix, pp.644-654, 'Extracts from the Trial Proceedings of Raja Jy Lall Sing'.

³⁶ Noah Alfred Chick, *Annals of the Indian Rebellion, 1857-58, Containing Narratives of the Outbreaks and Eventful Occurrences and Stories of Personal Adventures* (Sanders, Cones & Co, Calcutta, 1859), p.915.

and requests sanctuary from him. Conveyed by the sowar to Shah's new palace at Gaughat in the northern suburbs, she is installed as a *murid*, or disciple, of the Maulvi.

There is no indication provided of the period of time that Amy spends with the unfaithful mother-in-law; she implies that this lady's treachery occurs very soon after her arrival. The chronology given in the *Times* article is inconsistent, and should not be given much credence. Other sources, however, suggest that Ahmadullah Shah finally gave up his position at the Observatory when he was driven out of it by the advance of Colin Campbell's troops on the 17th of November.³⁷ He then relocated to the Gaughat palace, but the evacuation of the Residency and the temporary retreat of British forces was not complete until 25th. Assuming that Amy was not being transported about the city with a battle in progress, she must have remained with the mother-in-law for a month or more. We might wonder what she was doing during that time. The dubious account printed in the *Times* is perhaps closer to the truth than Amy's later version of events: as 'a Lady of the Household ... in every respect I was well cared for and treated.'³⁸ She certainly appears to have had servants attending her, one of whom apparently aided her escape to the sanctuary of the Maulvi's protection.

Amy gives a very detailed appraisal of Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah, who she appears to have found a remarkable individual. He is, in fact, the only figure in these narratives to be given any background or developed personality. While his role as leader of the rebel forces in Lucknow is adequately noted, his exact relationship with the other leaders in the city at that point is overlooked. In fact, it seems from evidence collected by the British after the conflict that there were deep divisions in the rebel leadership, and that on several occasions Shah was in a state of open war with the

³⁷ Ritzi & Bhargava, *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh, Vol.II (Awadh)* (1961), p.254.

³⁸ *The Times*, 11 August 1858, p.7.

Begum.³⁹ This internal conflict included a ten-day siege of the Gaughat palace by forces loyal to the Begum and the ‘court party’ in the Qaisarbagh.⁴⁰ Dating these events is difficult, but while it seems strange that Amy did not notice or report what was happening, this does at least explain how the Maulvi was able to shield her from the Begum’s death sentence.

If Amy’s account registers nothing of this civil war amongst the rebels, she does notice certain other tensions in their ranks. Her stay at the Gaughat palace ends after a month, when Shah begins to suspect his own followers of plotting to assassinate her. He sends her back once more to the house of the mother-in-law, who fortunately is away visiting relatives. The sowar, who reenters the story at this point, bribes the sole remaining slave (or servant), and Amy manages to live for some time in the house undetected.

Finally, with the British advancing into Lucknow, the sowar removes Amy from the city altogether and takes her out into the countryside of Oudh. After a lengthy journey of twenty days, apparently conducted largely on foot, and capture and brief imprisonment by a suspicious Zamindar (landowner) at Rae Bareilly, Amy arrives at the sowar’s home village of Guthni (now Gotni, Uttar Pradesh), near the Ganges about forty miles west of Allahabad. According to her own narratives, she remains at Guthni, living with the sowar’s other wives and extended family, for about a month.

The chronology of her story at this point is distinctly hazy: as we have seen, she could not have joined the Maulvi at Gaughat before the end of November 1857. By her own account, she left his palace a month later, around the turn of the year. She claims that while the sowar was taking her from Lucknow, she could actually see the British

³⁹ Henry Kavanagh, *How I Won the Victoria Cross* (Ward & Lock, London, 1860), p.126.

⁴⁰ Saiyid Jafri, ‘Profile of a Saintly Rebel’, *Social Scientist*, 26 (1998), p.45.

soldiers advancing nearby. This could only have been the final conquest of the city, in late March. A British observer on the 16th of March reported a large number of rebels escaping the city across the stone bridge, ‘flying in thousands - horse, foot, guns, and baggage, men, women, and children.’ This accords with Amy’s description of the defeated rebels’ ‘confusion and flight’.⁴¹ But between the 16th of March and Amy’s reappearance at her uncle’s house in Allahabad on the 7th of April, there are only twenty-three days. Either her perception of time during this period was decidedly confused, or she left Lucknow much earlier than she implies.

Eventually, hearing that British troops are combing the countryside searching for mutineers, the sowar agrees to let her go free. A proclamation has been issued, promising leniency for anyone proved to have sheltered fugitive Christians. Hoping to gain a pardon, the sowar insists on Amy writing a letter to exonerate him from all his crimes during the uprising. ‘Joy lending me both courage and speed,’ she leaves Guthni, crosses the Ganges into the British-controlled district and presents herself at the nearest Thana (police post).⁴² From here she is carried by dhoolie, or litter, down the Grand Trunk Road to her uncle’s house outside Allahabad. At first, her relations do not recognise her: ‘Ten long months of suffering, together with my native costume, had so altered my appearance that even when I gave my name they could scarce believe that one they had numbered with the dead stood before them.’⁴³

⁴¹ Anon. *Narrative of the Indian Revolt, from its Outbreak to the Capture of Lucknow by Sir Colin Campbell* (George Vickers, London, 1858), p.400.

⁴² British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

III. Recent Histories

The full story of Amy Horne and her experiences first appeared in secondary sources in 1963, in the book *The Sound of Fury* by Richard Collier, a heavily dramatised account of the uprising which freely prowls the uncertain border between fact and fiction.⁴⁴ Collier might have been less concerned than Forrest about the ‘substantial accuracy’ of his material, but in recent years even the most scrupulous historians have begun taking the Horne narratives at something close to face value. Indeed, several recent publications have quoted one or other of her accounts at length, privileging their testimony even over that of the previously-incontestable Thomson and Shepherd.

Almost a decade after Collier, James Hewitt’s *Eyewitnesses to the Indian Mutiny*, a brief compendium of original source material, included an edited version of the 1913 magazine article published under the name Amelia Bennett.⁴⁵ Pat Barr, in *The Memsahibs* (1976), introduces Horne, ‘a lively, pretty, resourceful eighteen-year-old’, and her experiences as part of a survey of white women’s lives in British India.⁴⁶ Again, she uses only the 1913 account as a source. It was Christopher Hibbert, in his 1978 narrative history *The Great Mutiny*, who cemented Amy Horne’s testimony into the larger edifice of Mutiny historiography, awarding her an authority as a witness denied by earlier historians.⁴⁷ Hibbert’s book was seen as authoritative for nearly two decades: while P.J.O. Taylor revisited Horne’s story at length in *A Star Shall Fall* (1993), he took Collier’s dramatised version as a starting point and produced further

⁴⁴ Richard Collier, *The Sound of Fury: an account of the Indian Mutiny* (Collins, London, 1963).

⁴⁵ James Hewitt, *Eyewitnesses to the Indian Mutiny* (Osprey, London, 1972).

⁴⁶ Pat Barr, *The Memsahibs* (Secker & Warburg, London 1976), pp.114-119.

⁴⁷ Christopher Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny, India 1857* (Penguin, London, 1978).

elaborations upon it, inventing extra details and even passages of dialogue lacking in the original accounts.⁴⁸

Jane Robinson's *Angels of Albion* (1996), a study of female experiences during the uprising, more commendably quotes Horne directly, using both the 1913 account and the earlier manuscript from the British Library. Curiously, Robinson believes that the 1858 *Times* narrative is not by Horne at all, but rather an otherwise-unknown 'Miss G -'.⁴⁹ Andrew Ward's monumental *Our Bones are Scattered* (1996), which remains perhaps the most exhaustive narrative reconstruction of the events at Cawnpore, promotes Horne as one of the principal witnesses, and quotes widely from her 1858 and 1913 accounts.⁵⁰ More recent historians follow this lead: Saul David, Gregory Fremont-Barnes, Donald Sydney-Richards and Julian Spilsbury all mention Horne and quote her accounts of events of Cawnpore.⁵¹ None of these publications, however, extend their coverage of Horne's story beyond the two principal narratives: the manuscript version from the British Library and the 1913 account published in *The Nineteenth Century and After*. None make any attempt to compare the two narratives, but instead regard them as perfectly complementary. Aside from Robinson's objections to the story in the *Times*, and Ward's brief examination of the papers held in the National Archives of India, there is no context provided for any of Horne's accounts, or apparent awareness that there may be other versions of the story available.

⁴⁸ P.J.O Taylor, *A Star Shall Fall* (Indus, New Delhi, 1993), pp. 80-107.

⁴⁹ Jane Robinson, *Angels of Albion: Women of the Indian Mutiny* (Viking, London, 1996), p.89.

⁵⁰ Andrew Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered* (1996).

⁵¹ Saul David, *The Indian Mutiny: 1857* (Viking, London, 2002); Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *The Indian Mutiny, 1857-58* (Osprey, London, 2007); Donald Sydney-Richards, *Cawnpore & Lucknow: A tale of two sieges* (Pen & Sword, London, 2007) and Julian Spilsbury, *The Indian Mutiny* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2007).

Perhaps there is in this evidence of a change of sensibility, both in regard to history itself, and more particularly to the history of the British empire. Horne, after all, provides us with a voice from the margins. Quite distinct, we assume, from the loud assured testimonies of military officers like Thomson, or upstanding civilian officials like Shepherd; different even from the volumes of first-hand accounts by (usually upper-class) female survivors of the uprisings at Gwalior and Delhi, and the siege of Lucknow. All these had been readily absorbed into the grand narrative of imperial history – they were the voices of the ruling class, the ruling race. Amy Horne, however, was both young and of mixed ethnicity. She was a marginal figure, both in the society of her day and in the events of the uprising itself. But she represents the great host of other marginal figures in history, who together comprise not the margins but the centre ground of historical events, the unregarded mass, the forgotten many.

Her story, too, concerns not only the events at Cawnpore – already described by Thomson and Shepherd – but what followed, and her life inside the rebel camp itself. For historians starved of reliable testimonies from the Indian side of the conflict, the Horne narratives provide a bridge. An incomplete bridge, but tantalising in the suggestion of where it might lead.

It is no surprise, then, that the story of Amy Horne has gained such prominence, and such critical acceptance. There are still dissenters from this new orthodoxy, who see the inconsistencies in the Horne narratives, and their occasional divergences from the accounts given by others, as a potentially fatal flaw in their reliability.⁵² Real doubts still remain about the provenance of these narratives. Shadowy figures seem to

⁵² E.g. Barbara English's reference to 'the absurd comments of Amelia Horne' in 'The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857', *Past & Present*, 142 (Feb 1994), p. 177.

lurk between the lines. Can texts so potentially compromised, so corrupted and man-handled, be seriously regarded as factual evidence?

In order to read them, it will first be necessary to establish some ground upon which such a reading could take place, and to try and determine a context in which they might have been written. To identify these narratives, and their competing agendas, we must first identify their presumed author. Who was Amy Horne? Or, perhaps more pertinently, who was she not?

2: “*Here was I, a young, cultured English girl...*”

Amy Horne and the Social Context of Anglo-India

I. A Portrait

The photo has been removed from the digitized thesis due to potential copyright issues.

The photograph is a daguerreotype or early albumen print, probably taken in one of the many small studios lately established in Calcutta. Despite the subject’s funereal costume, this is a wedding portrait. It was taken, one of a pair, to record the union of the sitter and the widower William Bennett, a railway engineer more than twice her age. Amelia Anne Bennett, *nee* Horne, was married on the 20th of September 1858, fourteen months and twenty-four days after her mother, step-father and family were murdered at Satichaura Ghat, Cawnpore.⁵³

‘She is in great distress of mind ... and looks prematurely aged.’ The *Bengal Hurkaru* believed Amy to have been sixteen or seventeen when she arrived at the gates of her uncle’s house near Allahabad; in fact she was nineteen. As she sits for her portrait, however, she shows no signs of distress. She is neither defensive nor ashamed, but confronts the camera directly and proudly. This is the portrait, not of a victim, but of a survivor; a young woman who has passed through extreme violence, extreme trauma and loss, and emerged with her mind and body intact. The photograph

⁵³ The photographs used here, and the information on their provenance, were supplied by Anne Callahan, a distant relative of Amelia Horne, in private correspondence. Background information on photography in Calcutta is taken from Pinney, Christopher, *The Coming of Photography in India* (British Museum Press, London, 2008) and Dehejia, Vidya, *India through the Lens* (Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington DC, 2001).

is a record of her victory over the odds, her hard-won respectability and position in Anglo-Indian society. Meeting her levelled gaze, we would be inclined to agree with William Howard Russell's Calcutta correspondent: *Reports of her insanity are false*.⁵⁴

I was born in the year 1839, being the eldest daughter of Captain Frederick William Horne, R.N., and was consequently only eighteen years of age when the great Indian Mutiny of 1857 broke out. My father having died when I was about a year old, my mother married again one John Hampden Cook, who was, in June 1857, the agent of the North-Western Dak Company at Cawnpore. My mother, by her second marriage, had two sons and three daughters, of tender ages, ranging from ten months to ten years.⁵⁵

So Amy introduces herself at the start of her 1913 account; a brief sketch of her family background that most subsequent histories have adopted. The date of her birth – January the 9th 1839 – is recorded in Calcutta church records.⁵⁶ Her mother's maiden name was Emma Elizabeth Smith, her father F.W. Horne. From this point, however, the family tree flowers rather more colourfully than Amy's own bland *précis* suggests.

'(She has) some Eurasian blood in her veins', reported Russell for the *Times*, and his correspondent's information was accurate enough. Emma Elizabeth Smith was the daughter of John Smith of Purneah and Marie-Anne Smith, *nee* Flouest.⁵⁷ Both the Smiths and the Flouests were prominent indigo-trading families, and both were

⁵⁴ *The Times*, 24 February 1859, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Bennett, 'Ten Months Captivity', in *The Nineteenth Century & After*, I.1230, 1913.

⁵⁶ India Office, N/I/53.f.221 (Bengal).

⁵⁷ June Wilmshurst provides this genealogical information on Amelia Horne, her own great-great-grandmother, in her article 'Cawnpore Massacre: Amelia Horne's Story', *Indiaman* 10 (June 1998), pp. 32-36.

Eurasian: the Smiths Anglo- and the Flouests Franco-Indian. The exact proportions of their blood, as it would have been assessed at the time, is probably impossible for us to determine, the families themselves being understandably reticent, but Amy herself would have fallen into that category. Four ‘removes’ from an ‘Asiatic’ were required to establish ‘European blood’. Amy could boast, at best, only three.⁵⁸

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, indigo trading was one of the few businesses open to Eurasians – the sons of the original British and French planters. By 1833, the largest indigo manufactories in India were owned by ‘half-castes’, many of them situated in outer areas of Bengal, such as John Smith’s home district of Purneah.⁵⁹ But there was more to Miss Horne’s pedigree than the society of the plantations. She was, after all, the daughter of a Captain Frederick William Horne, R.N.: indisputably an Englishman.

That Amy Horne’s father was an officer in the Royal Navy has been widely accepted.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, however, it proves to be far from true. His marriage record gives his profession only as ‘mariner’, and a later *Times* article calls him ‘the commander of a vessel’.⁶¹ Clearly Amy’s father was a seaman – but certainly not a Royal Navy captain.

The death notices of the *Colonial Magazine and Commercial-Maritime Journal* for May of 1840 provide a terse witness to his identity: ‘Horne, Captain F. Country

⁵⁸ Hawes, Charles J., *Poor Relations: the making of a Eurasian community in British India, 1773-1833* (Curzon, Richmond, 1993), p. 67.

⁵⁹ Great Britain. House of Commons. *Appendix to the Report of the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, 16th August 1832 – II*, Commercial - Minutes of Evidence. p. 624.

⁶⁰ By, for example, Andrew Ward (*Our Bones Are Scattered*, 1996); Jane Robinson (*Angels of Albion*, 1996), Christopher Hibbert (*The Great Mutiny, India 1857*, 1978) and Saul David (*The Indian Mutiny: 1857*, 2003).

⁶¹ *The Times*, 28 August 1872, p. 5.

Service, on 18th March, at Calcutta.⁶² The Country Service had been established by the East India Company in the eighteenth century, as a sort of mercantile auxiliary fleet: small vessels, often owned by Indian or Armenian merchants, licensed by the company to trade in eastern waters. Their commanders would have been tried and trusted seamen.⁶³

F.W. Horne's place of birth is unknown, but church records helpfully, and scrupulously, note his age at death as '36 years, 4 months, 18 days';⁶⁴ he was therefore thirty-four when he married the indigo-trader's daughter at the Old Church, Calcutta, on February the 5th 1838. Emma Elizabeth Smith, however, was born on the 10th of May 1824: she was only thirteen years old when she became the captain's wife.

The records of Calcutta shipping in the 1830s make only two brief mentions of Captain Horne, as commander of the schooner *Flora MacDonald*, in 1846 'noted in the Calcutta river not only for her smartness, but as the smallest craft sailing out of that port.'⁶⁵ On the 10th of January 1839 – the day after the birth of his daughter Amy, back home in Calcutta – he departed Rangoon.⁶⁶ Two weeks later, after navigating the *Flora MacDonald* safely across the Bay of Bengal, Horne brought his little ship to Kedgerree, a post station at the mouth of the Hooghli river.

⁶² *The Colonial Magazine and Commercial-Maritime Journal*, Vol 2, No.7, May 1840. p. 381.

⁶³ See Anne Bulley, *The Bombay Country Ships 1790-1833* (Curzon, London, 2000), pp. 207-227 for a summary of various Country Service captain's careers in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

⁶⁴ India Office, N/I/58f.10 (Bengal).

⁶⁵ Description of the *Flora MacDonald* taken from Colesworthy Grant, *Rough Pencillings of a Rough Trip to Rangoon in 1846* (Thacker & Spink Co. Calcutta 1853).

⁶⁶ *Calcutta Monthly Journal and General Register*, 1840. p.15.

Captain Horne was to spend little time with his wife and new-born child. By the 3rd of May, he was back aboard his schooner, passing Saugor island at the river's mouth on a return voyage to Burma.⁶⁷ Less than a year later, he was dead.

Amy's statement that her father was a naval officer appears only in the 1913 article in *The Nineteenth Century and After*. Perhaps by then, at the age of seventy-four, she had convinced herself that this was true. Perhaps she had always believed it: F.W. Horne had died when she was a baby, and was away at sea for most of the brief period before his death. Her widowed mother might have concocted the fiction to give her husband some posthumous status in society. It seems unlikely, though. In the peacetime service of the 1830s, an officer attaining the rank of Post Captain would have been a well connected man, certainly a gentleman; the maritime equivalent of a Lieutenant Colonel in the army, with all the honour and dignity that the position bestowed. The idea of an R.N. captain marrying a child bride from a Eurasian indigo-planting family from the backwoods of Bengal would have seemed absurd. There was a gulf of difference between such an exalted figure and the master of a colonial trading schooner like the *Flora MacDonald*.

It is perhaps significant that the 1913 account which opens with the fiction of F.W. Horne's naval background also contains the most vigorous and sustained protestations of ethnic and social superiority. 'Here was I,' the narrator states, describing her captivity, 'a young, cultured English girl, forcibly clothed in native costume.'⁶⁸ As I will demonstrate in a later chapter, there are distinct possibilities that this 1913 article was at least partially the work of a ghostwriter. But, by claiming that her father was a naval officer, Amy (or her ghostwriter) establishes clear blue ocean

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 84.

⁶⁸ Bennett, 'A Survivor of Cawnpore', *The Nineteenth Century & After*, I.1233, 1913.

between herself and the muddied, miscegenated waters of her true origins. With one simple statement, she cleanses her own ethnicity and makes herself the ‘cultured English girl’ she wishes herself to have been.

II. The Eurasian Demimonde

Emma Elizabeth Smith’s age at the time of her wedding suggests that her family may have been more Indian in their outlook than European. Child marriage was a cultural institution in many Indian communities; the British administration made successive efforts to regulate it later in the nineteenth century, raising the legal age of wedlock to eleven, and then twelve. The East India Company’s stipend to the orphaned or abandoned illegitimate daughters of its officers was cut off at the age of fourteen – clearly by then they were expected to have found a husband to provide for them.⁶⁹

In the early decades of its dominion, the Company had supported and even encouraged cohabitation and marriage between its officers and their native Indian *bibis*, or mistresses, believing that such liaisons would help root Europeans more securely in India. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, this mood of easy tolerance was already beginning to evaporate, and the native *bibis* and their hybrid offspring came to be regarded with distaste, the ‘shameful vestiges of a vanishing way of life.’⁷⁰ ‘Of the manners and customs of these Anglo-Indians, I know but very little,’ wrote G.W. Johnson, advocate of the supreme court of Calcutta, in 1843, ‘for a

⁶⁹ Andrew Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered – The Cawnpore Massacres and the Indian Mutiny of 1857* (Holt, New York, 1996), p.14.

⁷⁰ Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered* (1996), p. 14.

necessity, arising from the difficulty of knowing where to draw a distinctive line, renders their almost total exclusion from European society imperative.⁷¹

This drawing of distinctive lines, the incremental separation of the ‘pure’ European from the fully native, developed into a social mania in Bengal, where those ‘with the slightest taint of half-caste are ignored completely ... the eye gets educated to detect the least trace with a celerity that is astonishing.’⁷² A system of nomenclature was adopted to distinguish these divisions of purity: as a silver Indian rupee comprised sixteen copper annas, the child of a white father and an Indian mother was said to be an ‘eight anna’, the child of a European and a Eurasian a ‘twelve anna’, and so on up and down the scale. This system also prevailed, of course, within the Eurasian community itself, fiercely caste-conscious and all too aware of its tenuous racial status. To the stigma of blood was added the constraint of class, with the children of ‘poor whites’ and natives subservient to those of wealthier background. Between the axes of racial and social status, individual identities were plotted with mathematical rigour.

Officially forbidden until 1831 to own land, many Eurasian families nevertheless prospered in trade, and especially in the indigo industry.⁷³ Calcutta, seat of government and bastion of white rule, was home to several thousand Eurasians by the 1830s, and very occasionally wealth allowed brief and discreet breaches in the racial barriers. ‘They inhabit very handsome houses’, wrote a Calcutta observer, ‘and see a great deal of company ... The few Europeans who are occasionally entertained at their parties are

⁷¹ G.W. Johnson, *The Stranger in India; or, Three Years in Calcutta* (Henry Colburn, London, 1843), vol. I, p.181.

⁷² Ward, p.13, quoted from Ketaki Kushari Dyson, *A Various Universe* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1978), p. 324.

⁷³ Hawes, *Poor Relations* (1993), p.38.

literally astonished by the multitude of dark beauties with which they are surrounded.’⁷⁴

Not everyone was charmed or ‘astonished’ by the culture and society of the entertaining Eurasian. The sardonic advocate G.W. Johnson, despite claiming to have nothing to do with them, still felt able to comment on the sartorial and cultural gaffes of Anglo-Indians: ‘Their love of tinsel, and their mistake of the florid and bombastical for the appropriate, appear in their dress, in their language, and even in their children's names.’ He goes on to relate the anecdotal experience of a friend who ‘was in a room where five Anglo-Indian ladies assembled, one of whom bore with her the names Amelia Wilhelmina Rose; the second was Christiana Aurora Comfort; the third Jemima Clement; the fourth, Amelia Theodosia Clarissa; and the fifth, Augusta Diana Noel Babington.’⁷⁵

For all the mocking scorn in these passages, it is possible to discern a deep anxiety in their description, as in the obsessive categorisation of Indo-European society as a whole. White observers encountering Eurasians were apt to see themselves reflected in a mirror distorted only by their own prejudice; in so many ways, it was the Eurasian who seemed more suited to succeed in India, more suited even to rule. Homi Bhabha, in his essay ‘Of Mimicry and Man’, suggests that the signs of otherness used to codify the ‘westernised native’ – their ‘love of tinsel’, for example, or their extravagance – act as fetishes in the construction of a racialised colonial identity. In the gaze of the partly-native, ‘the ambivalence of mimicry – almost but not quite’, the

⁷⁴ ‘Indigo Planters’, article in *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India...* Vol XIX, Jan-April 1836. W.H.Allen & Co, London, 1836. p.115.

⁷⁵ Johnson, *The Stranger in India*, Vol. I, p.183. Amy Horne’s maternal aunts were named Delia Louisa and Cecilia Evalina.

coloniser finds himself observed and copied, uncannily: a resemblance close enough to the original to be threatening.⁷⁶

The phrase ‘dark beauties’, often used, as in the passage quoted above, to describe Eurasian ladies, denoted more than the reputed good looks of the Anglo-Indian. With their sanguinary link to the (supposedly) wild and licentious native world, Eurasian women in particular were often held to be far more sensual than their white half-sisters. Sensual, in fact, to a potentially dangerous degree.⁷⁷ The very origin of the Eurasian community in India suggested, to the pious European mind, illicit sex: outside racial boundaries, outside the confines of marriage, outside any sense of decency. This threat was posed not only to the white European male, whose moral fibre might be so easily softened in the tropical heat, but also to the division between the European world and the native.

In common with successive generations of her family, Amy most likely attended the convent school of Nossa Senhora de Rosario, at Bandol on the Hooghli, close to the old French enclave of Chandernagore.⁷⁸ The principal language of tuition was French, and she would have spent her childhood and adolescence in a largely French-speaking milieu. She apparently had a fine singing voice, performing plaintive French songs and accompanying herself on the piano.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Homi Bhabha, ‘Of Mimicry and Man’, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, London, 1994), pp.90-91.

⁷⁷ Dennis Kincaid (*British Social Life in India, 1608-1937*, Routledge, London, 1938, p.238) mentions ‘the wiles of such people [i.e. Eurasian women] and the snares that they set for the young unmarried officer.’

⁷⁸ June Wilmshurst, ‘Cawnpore Massacre: Amelia Horne’s Story’. *Indiaman* 10, June 1998. p. 34.

⁷⁹ Wilmshurst, ‘Cawnpore Massacre’, p. 34.

By the time Amy left school, her family was dramatically altered. In February 1847 her mother had remarried, to one ‘John Hampden Cook, Gentleman, of Dhurumtollah, Calcutta’, and by the summer of 1856 Amy had five step-siblings; the eldest aged seven, while the youngest was a new-born baby. By December of that year, Mrs Cook was pregnant again.

John Hampden Cook was a young man, only twenty when he married the captain’s twenty-four-year-old widow, and he too was the son of an indigo planter, born in Calcutta.⁸⁰ He may also have been Eurasian. By the year of his marriage he had established himself as a merchant; he is listed as the ‘Bengal wholesale agent’ for Holloway’s Ointment, a popular quack remedy of the day, presumed to cure everything from mosquito bites and sunburn to rheumatism and gout.⁸¹ The following year, one directory lists him as a ‘merchant and commission agent’, of the firm of Cook, Briant & Co, Calcutta.⁸²

The letter from Mr Leslie the Baptist Minister to Cecil Beadon following the uprising indicates that, at some point, Amy Horne was living with Cook and his family in the town of Ranigunj.⁸³ It was here that Leslie’s daughter met and became ‘acquainted’ with Amy. Perhaps by this date Cook was already working as agent of the North-Western Dak Company, and his position somehow connected with the annexation of the state of Oudh in February 1856. This might explain why, towards the end of that year or the beginning of 1857, he chose to uproot and transport his family five hundred miles further up the Ganges to the city of Lucknow.

⁸⁰ India Office, N/I/14 f.83.

⁸¹ *Allen’s Indian Mail*, 1847. p. 478.

⁸² *Scott & Co’s Bengal Directory and Register: with Almanac and Appendix*, 1848. p. 431.

⁸³ National Archives of India, *Home Department Proceedings (Public)*, 14 May 1858, No. 1-2.

The photo has been removed from the digitized thesis due to potential copyright issues.

Another photograph, perhaps produced in the same studio that later recorded Amy's wedding pose. There is no date, but it must have been taken around 1856, shortly before the family departed Calcutta. Amy, aged sixteen or seventeen, sits at the centre of the group. She appears awkward, even morose. The names of the children have survived: Florence, Ethel, William and Herbert, aged between three and eight. In the lower right-hand corner, almost eclipsed by a glare of white light, sits baby Mary, only a year old.⁸⁴ Within eighteen months, all these children would be dead, murdered at Satichaura Ghat on the 27th of June 1857, or during the midnight slaughter at the Bibighar house two weeks later.

Little in her testimonial accounts provides a picture of Amy Horne in the years before the uprising; she was, she claims, 'reared in the greatest comfort and luxury ... the petted and spoilt child of loving parents.'⁸⁵ This may have been true, even if it sounds rather an idyllic fantasy of childhood. Whatever she might have felt her national and ethnic identity to be at that age we cannot say, but she was certainly far from the 'English girl' that she later describes herself as being, at least in the terms that her readers would have understood it. What genuine bond could she have felt to a home country that she had never visited, thousands of miles away across an ocean that she had probably never seen?

⁸⁴ There is some discrepancy regarding the ages of the children. The accompanying notes to the photograph provided by Anne Callahan give the oldest child as Florence, born in 1849, with the youngest born in 1855; Horne's own account states that Florence was five years old at the time of the massacre, and her step-siblings 'of tender ages, ranging from ten months to ten years'.

⁸⁵ Bennett, 'Ten Months Captivity', *The Nineteenth Century & After* II.81, 1913.

III. 'The shadow of coming events'

'Three or four months before the mutiny,' Amy writes, 'we were residents of Lucknow.'⁸⁶ Until that point, for the first eighteen years of her life, she had lived entirely in Bengal, either in Calcutta, at school in Bandol, at Ranigunj or perhaps at one of her relatives' indigo plantations. The society of Bengal, as we have seen, while often hostile to Eurasian advancement, was nevertheless firmly under the control of a white, Christian British ruling caste. Eurasians were relatively numerous, they had a place within this social structure, and were able to maintain a sense of distinction from the native Indian life surrounding them. Amy's journey to Lucknow would introduce her to a quite different, and very challenging, version of India.

A year previously to her arrival, at midday on the 7th of February 1856, the East India Company had announced the annexation of the Kingdom of Oudh, and marched an army across the Ganges from Cawnpore to seize control of its capital, Lucknow. But there is nothing in Amy's description to suggest that the city was under British control during the period of her stay. By contrast, it appears in this account as vibrantly, jubilantly Indian; there is nothing British, nothing controlled, about it.

From the very beginning of her account of life in Lucknow, which occurs only in the handwritten narrative now in the British Library, Amy's disgust is clear:

[The city] was so different from anything I had ever seen, the houses so strange, the streets so narrow and the people so unlike those in Bengal that I used to feel as if I had got into another world ... the streets are never known to be swept, and flies

⁸⁶ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

abound in such numbers that sometimes the shops can only be opened at night – to every window and door of our dwelling houses are chinks [bamboo blinds], without these there would be no existing.⁸⁷

The contrast drawn between Lucknow and Bengal is telling: Amy's Bengali home was a different reality to this new, *Indian*, India, a place 'of such discomfort that we longed to get back to a more civilised part of the world.' There is, perhaps, some exaggeration here: the Cooks' Lucknow house ('nothing but a glass room, surrounded by a wooden verandah') was clearly a bungalow, albeit a shabby one, of the type common all across British India. Her implication is that, back in Calcutta, she lived in a European-style mansion.

Certainly Amy found the noise and clamour an assault:

We lived close to the bridge, which being a perfect thorough-fare allowed us a full view of every procession, and of these there seemed to be no end. Night after night without exception was one of merrymaking and rejoicing and little sleep could we obtain. Hours have I spent staring out of the windows at the richly caparisoned Elephants, the splendidly decked horses, the numbers of grand weddings, and all these odd sights that used to distract me almost out of my senses.⁸⁸

There is a powerful sense of threat here. In the hot shuttered gloom of her closed house, Amy finds herself defenceless against the abundance of Indian life. Written only a few years after the events portrayed, this description is necessarily coloured by subsequent experiences. Seen through the dark lens of her own later captivity in the city, Lucknow becomes a hellish place, the inversion of the 'civilised' world of

⁸⁷ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

⁸⁸ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

Bengal. In its repellent noise and filth and obscenity, it is already the prison that it will later become: less a place than a state of mind.

Despite spending most of her time, apparently, besieged in her house by the cavalcade of native life, Amy clearly did ‘venture out’ on a few occasions. Her account is frustratingly vague about her social life in Lucknow. She does, however, provide one brief and arresting detail, an alarming encounter rendered faintly absurd by the passivity of her prose: ‘walking out on a moonlight night it was not uncommon to have garlands of flowers thrown over you, and this being done to a party with whom I was one evening walking, my father decided to leave Lucknow.’⁸⁹

Again, the brevity of this description is baffling. Was it really ‘not uncommon’ for passing Europeans to be accosted like this? If so, it could almost be seen as a deliberately subversive act, a campaign of absurdist provocation by some anti-British activist group: the daubing of British bodies with the signs of Indian exuberance.

For a Eurasian like Amy Horne, though, this incident of the flower garlands would have been more than an offensive prank. Conditioned from birth to regard herself as superior to the ‘native’, and yet conscious always of her uncomfortable ethnic proximity, the invasive physicality of this gesture would have seemed close to a violation. Personal space, personal propriety, and the decorum that set her apart from India and Indians had all been obliterated. A simple garland of marigolds was a cultural snare, roping her to the ‘native’ world.

Amy departed Lucknow ‘with no very favourable impression; it certainly is no place for any Christian to dwell in.’ The North-Western Dak, of which Cook was agent, ran mail coaches (*dak gharries*) on a regular eight-hour service between Lucknow and Cawnpore. Amy writes that his business ‘promised fair’, but Cook

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

seems to have decided that he could manage the affairs of the company just as well from the other end of its route. Lucknow, in its gathering state of unrest, may have proved a vexing place to do business. Whatever the real reason, Amy herself had no doubt of the cause: ‘in the insolence of the natives’ her step-father saw ‘the shadow of coming events.’⁹⁰

IV. After the Uprising

In the year or so following the crushing of the uprising, determined efforts were made by Government to lift the veil on the ‘mysteries of blood’, and to determine, hopefully, that nothing so very fantastical lurked behind it. This was a period of consolidation and reconciliation, and the need to quell the more lurid rumours of what had actually taken place at Cawnpore, Delhi and Meerut was obvious. Commissioners were appointed to interview and to interrogate, to take depositions and to discover the facts: about the mass rape, for example – or ‘dishonour’ – once widely and loudly proclaimed to have been endemic. No evidence of rape was discovered at all.⁹¹

All of this did little to acquit Amy Horne of the suspicion of fabulation. In fact, the more cold water was poured on the fires of recrimination, the less her statements of suffering were noticed. Henry Dundas Robertson of the Bengal Civil Service complained in 1859 of ‘some unfortunate Eurasians, not yet recovered from the effects

⁹⁰ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

⁹¹ The introduction to G.W. Williams, *Depositions (on the mutiny of 1857) taken at Cawnpore under the direction of Col. GWW* (Allahabad, 1858) provides a summary of findings.

of the scenes through which they had passed ... falling into the hands of illiterate men, anxious to make out a good story,' and thereby producing, 'with the assistance of the latter, evidently exaggerated statements of their sufferings at the hands of the natives.'⁹²

Already in June of 1858, Mr George Campbell believed that 'we have not in a single instance recovered, or even had information of, any pure European woman who has gone through such scenes [of dishonour] ... the few cases which every now and then furnish the scanty foundations for mysterious and terrible paragraphs in the papers are those ... in which the sufferers were more or less natives or *allied to natives*.'⁹³ This tactic of subdividing the sufferers of violence into those of 'pure European' blood and otherwise effectively safeguards the purity of the martyred dead, while casting into obscurity the impure, undeserving of notice or pity. To be 'more or less native' by blood was, inevitably, to be 'allied to natives' – those Eurasians who survived the massacres did so not by virtue of luck or faith or endurance, but rather because of their natural affinity for Indians and Indian ways.

Even those who persisted in believing the worst of their former sepoy enemies had little compassion for the sufferings of the racially impure. 'As to dishonour,' wrote Henry Dundas Robertson,

So far from its not taking place, my investigations firmly convinced me that it was as a general rule the case whenever the prisoners were not too emaciated by hardships to become objects of passion, as, it may be thought fortunately, was almost always the case with those of pure European extraction... But all over the country there are a few scattered Eurasian women who were permitted to live after dishonour; and their account,

⁹² Robertson, Henry Dundas, *District Duties during the Revolt in the North-west Provinces of India, in 1857* (Smith, Elder & Co, London. 1859), p.181.

⁹³ George Campbell, 'Sepoy Atrocities'. *The Times*, June 5 1858. My italics.

or that of their husbands, is almost invariably the same... but enough has already been brought to light to satisfy all but the morbidly inquisitive. Except where the ends of justice are to be satisfied, a veil might well be dropped over so disagreeable a subject, which can only increase irritation on both sides, and be of no advantage to either party.

94

The use of the passive is significant. To be granted such ‘permission’ implies a complicity in, or at least an acquiescence to, the violation which had taken place. Those, therefore, like Amy Horne, who presented themselves alive after the massacre, no matter how much their accounts may gloss over the grisly details, were living in a state of shame. William H. Russell – often a compassionate commentator – may have stated that ‘the shame (was) not her own’, but clearly his views were not widely held in the increasingly racially-divided society of post-Mutiny India.⁹⁵ To have survived, it seemed, was to have entered into an accord with the native. Perhaps even to have invited ‘dishonour’ itself. British India, it seemed, preferred her saints neatly slaughtered.

Returning to Calcutta after her long captivity, ‘a homeless destitute orphan’,⁹⁶ Amy Horne would have had little sense of homecoming. Her immediate family had been destroyed in the massacre, and she was denied that ‘safe return to those Anglo-Indian spaces that were invaded by the rebellion’ that Gautam Chakravarty describes as the redemptive phase of Mutiny memoirs and fictions.⁹⁷ Even following her marriage to

⁹⁴ Robertson, *District Duties* (1859), p.182-183.

⁹⁵ *The Times*, 24 February 1859, p.9.

⁹⁶ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

⁹⁷ Gautam Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 2005), p.113.

the railwayman William Bennett, which occurred very shortly after her return, Horne would still be described, and would describe herself, as ‘a survivor of Cawnpore’ – for the rest of her life she would be possessed by the violent incidents of those ten months in 1857-58: ‘My aching heart now bears only the images of the dead, and no spectre could haunt me more than the thoughts of the past,’ as her 1913 account puts it.

After five children and nearly twenty years of marriage, Amy was widowed in 1877, and lived for some time in Howrah, a suburb of Calcutta. In her own words a ‘pauper’,⁹⁸ she apparently supported herself by giving piano lessons.⁹⁹ But it is fitting that the last known image of Amy Bennett, *nee* Horne, is an undated photograph taken at Cawnpore itself, in the fifty-acre memorial garden that surrounded the site of the massacre well.

The photo has been removed from the digitized thesis due to potential copyright issues.

She had returned to the city at some point after 1913, to live with her youngest daughter Ruby and son-in-law William Savedra, who are probably the couple standing with her in the photograph. Even in her seventies, Amy’s identification with Cawnpore, and with the sepulchral well that stood as the last memorial to the slain, still endured. Perhaps in the end, the associations of the place were too much for her: in the last years of her life she moved to Shimla with her daughter, and died there in 1921, aged 84.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Bennett, ‘Ten Months Captivity’, in *The Nineteenth Century & After*, II. p.84.

⁹⁹ Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered*, p.541.

¹⁰⁰ Information supplied by Anne Callahan, a distant descendent of Ruby Savedra, in private correspondence.

Beyond the photographs, and the few scraps of biographical and genealogical data, little remains of Amy Horne but words: the four or five narrative accounts she left of her experiences. But to read these narratives with foreknowledge of their author's background is already to glimpse something of the historical and political forces that may have warped them out of strict objectivity.

In the next chapter, therefore, I will turn from Amy herself to the records of her testimony; narratives that may have escaped her control, and might tell us more about their author, and her experiences, than she intended.

3. “A text which has been so handled”

The Amy Horne Narratives in Historical Perspective

I. Statement Made at Calcutta, 29th June 1858¹⁰¹

I remember, shortly after my arrival in Calcutta in 1858, having been asked to give evidence in regard to mutilation, before a Society named the ‘Reform League’, which consisted of the leading Government officials and mercantile men of Calcutta. The sittings were held in the Town Hall.¹⁰²

This note, in the published 1913 account of Amy’s experiences, appears to provide context for the brief narrative, handwritten on two sheets of pale blue foolscap, now held in the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. The account is prefaced by a list of official witnesses, comprising two barristers, the secretary of the Assam Company and the secretary of the ‘Indian Reform League’ itself.

The latter society – more properly the India Reform League – was formed in Calcutta in 1857, during the panicked opening months of the uprising. Backed largely by private traders and other concerned individuals, its ostensible purpose was to prosecute the East India Company for indirectly causing the uprising through the maladministration of its Indian territories – Amy appears to have been mistaken about

¹⁰¹ *SOAS MS 380667, Dodwell, 02: Various Documents*. Henry Herbert Dodwell (1879-1946) was professor of the history and culture of the British dominions in Asia at the School of Oriental and African Studies from 1922 until his death.

¹⁰² Amelia Bennett, ‘Ten Months Captivity after the Massacre at Cawnpore’, *The Nineteenth Century and After*, No.437, July 1913, II. p.91.

the ‘leading Government officials’.¹⁰³ If India was to be opened to free trade and private initiative, the supporters of the League argued, the iron hand of British judicial retribution must not be removed from the perpetrators of rebellion.¹⁰⁴

In order to justify this position, it was necessary to prove that the actions of the rebels were excessive and inhuman, rather than reasonable responses to oppression: the diabolical acts of savages deserving only the harshest penalty. In particular, offences against women would demonstrably lie outside the limits of civilised warfare: by attacking, ‘dishonouring’ and mutilating women, the Indian rebel revealed himself as a degenerate sex criminal. Reports of just this kind of atrocity were at first given unquestioned credence in both the British and Indian press and public opinion: ‘day by day,’ claimed the Earl of Shaftesbury in *The Times*, ‘ladies were coming into Calcutta with their ears and noses cut off and their eyes put out.’¹⁰⁵

‘Evidence in regard to mutilation’ – or what passes for it – actually comprises the bulk of this witness statement. But if the Reform League wanted direct first-hand corroboration of the ‘prodigious and almost indescribable outrages’ of the rebels, they were to be disappointed.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps they should not have hoped for too much – a letter from ‘an honourable and intelligent resident in Calcutta’, later printed in *The Times* and dated July the 1st 1858, states that ‘(t)he young lady who survived the Cawnpore massacre is now in Calcutta. Her mind is still unsettled, and she cannot bear to be spoken to on the subject.’¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ *The Calcutta Review*, 30, Jan-June 1858, p. 230.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *The Times*, 2 November 1857, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ The phrase comes from Charles Ball, *History*, quoted in Gautam Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005), p. 38.

¹⁰⁷ *The Times*, 17 August 1858, p. 6.

Whatever the state of Amy's mind at the time, her description of the events of the uprising, and the experiences that followed, is related in surprisingly spartan prose, rather in the manner of a formal police interview. The events of the siege are given no mention, and the massacre at the river briefly concluded with the only actual mutilation directly witnessed by Amy herself: the unnamed gentleman 'fearfully mangled' while struggling in the water.¹⁰⁸

Following this, however, there is little but rumour. 'I did not see any acts of cruelty,' Amy says of her period of incarceration in Cawnpore. Later, during the functional précis of her time spent with the rebel army, she describes herself 'obliged to walk beside [the] horse on which a sowar rode, my arm being [tied] by a cloth, one end of which he held. [In] one day, I walked 14 miles barefooted in the sun, in this way being dragged behind the horse – my feet were very much lacerated.'¹⁰⁹ But the tone of this passage possibly suggests hardships endured rather than a deliberate act of cruelty or 'mutilation'.

The three instances of atrocity recounted in the narrative are all quite clearly stated as reports rather than direct observation. In each case the informant is identified: 'a native Christian', 'a sowar' and, interestingly, 'the servants who attended me'. These reports concern the sepoys at Cawnpore 'tantalizing' their starving captives with food, the torture and murder of a European girl at Farroukabad, and the slaughter of fourteen woman and children by the rebels in Lucknow. In each case the stories are told simply and without any attempt at interpretation. There is no implication that they may not be strictly true, or that the informants were exaggerating. Neither is any

¹⁰⁸ SOAS MS 380667, *Dodwell, 02: Various Documents*.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* The page is torn in the bottom corner and several words are missing – my own reconstructions are given in brackets.

evidence provided to support their veracity. Whilst in Cawnpore Amy ‘frequently heard the shrieks of persons who were being slaughtered’, but neither she nor her informants give any further enlargement upon this allegation.

Intriguingly, in the last two reports of atrocity Amy also describes attempts *by the rebels themselves* to stop the cruelty. At Farroukabad a sowar – Amy names him as Kulleem – intervenes to try and save the life of the European girl, but is threatened by the torturers. At Lucknow, ‘the Moulvie of Fyzabad, named Shah Ahmoodillah’ attempts to stop the murder of the captives in order to ‘make terms with the English’. This is the same Ahmadullah Shah who, Amy later claimed, gave her sanctuary and protection during her stay in the city. The Moulvie receives further exoneration in the longer and more detailed narratives composed later, but the incident of Kulleem’s attempted humanitarian intervention is erased completely.

Whether the India Reform League were satisfied with Amy’s statement or not, they do not appear to have given it any further circulation or publicity. Meanwhile, however, it would appear that Amy, unsettled mind notwithstanding, had already either written or contributed to the composition of a separate account. ‘I have heard of several other mutilations, [and] cruelty,’ she writes at the end of her statement to the League, ‘which I shall detail in a narrative [of] my captivity now preparing for publication.’ We might wonder why Amy chose not to report these other ‘mutilations’ she had ‘heard of’ to the League, who would surely have been interested to learn of them. Meanwhile, in the absence of other evidence, it is certainly conceivable that this ‘narrative of captivity’ was at the root of the extraordinary story presented in *The Times* six weeks later.

II. “The Cawnpore Massacres”: Narrative. *The Times*, 11th August 1858¹¹⁰

A few months ago a profound sensation was created in India by the announcement that a young English lady had survived the dreadful massacre of Cawnpore and that after undergoing incredible privations and passing through adventures without parallel she had been at length restored to her friends ... To this tale of painful interest we are now enabled to give a considerable development, for a full and complete narrative, purporting to proceed from the sufferer’s own mouth, has been placed in our hands.

So wrote the editorial of *The Times* on the 11th of August 1858, which goes on to stress the potential fallibility of the account:

We have also been made acquainted with the name and connexions of the sufferer herself, but we cannot feel confident that the narrative, although conveyed in the shape of direct personal testimony, is to be received in all its parts as evidence at first hand. On the contrary, we are informed that the person assumed to have taken it down from the lips of the speaker did expand it by additions of his own, and though we are told that these additions have been struck out, it is impossible to rely upon the literal purity of a text which has been so handled.

Certainly, in comparison with the sparse summary given before the India Reform League, the remaining ‘additions’ to this text appear to be substantial. The editorial does, at least, provide a clue as to the production of the document. William Knighton, who forwarded the account to the newspaper, was formerly professor of History and Logic at the Hindu College, Calcutta, and probably the author of *The Private Life of an Eastern King* (1855), a muckraking account of the debaucheries of the royal court of

¹¹⁰ *The Times*, 11 August 1858, p. 6.

Oudh.¹¹¹ He had returned to England in 1856, and was a friend of Carlyle. Amy's interlocutor – presumed to be Mr George W. Stuart of the Sudder Court, Alipore, once a pupil of Knighton's in Calcutta – assembled the account from notes taken during a verbal interview. He used the scanty details of her experiences and expanded them into the 'connected narrative' that she was unable, at this point, to provide. This, then, is essentially a work of fiction. Based on the evidence given in the other narratives, however, it might be possible to excavate some of the original inspirations behind the invention.

It would be tempting to imagine that the supposed ghostwriter had taken the bare details of Miss Horne's witness statement to the India Reform League and elaborated upon them. But the fastest mail service from India in the 1850s was provided by the regular P&O steamship service via the Red Sea and Suez; the last consignment of India mails prior to the 9th of August reached Southampton by the steamer *Pera* on the 31st of July, and had left Calcutta on the 19th of June, ten days before Amy made her statement to the League.¹¹² Mr Knighton's 'Calcutta correspondent' must therefore have interviewed Amy and composed his account before she made her official statement on the 29th. The *Times* story, while fantastical in many of its details and certainly wrong in others, may yet contain the traces of the earliest and most vivid description of Amy's ordeal.

The initial discrepancies can, perhaps, be put down to error: the narrator's age is given as sixteen 'at the time of the mutiny', and she is reported as accompanying 'my sister and her husband to Cawnpore.' The earlier report in the *Bengal Hurkaru* mistakenly gave Amy's age as seventeen at the time of her rescue, and quite possibly

¹¹¹ William Knighton, *The Private Life of an Eastern King* (Hope and Co, London, 1855).

¹¹² *The Times*, 1 August 1858, p.10.

the interviewer has taken this as fact and merely deducted a year. The muddled family background, too, might be the product of a simplification or reduction on the part of an author keen to move on to the more compelling aspects of his story. Similarly, the confusion of dates given throughout the narrative – the *Times* editorial labels them ‘opposed to probability’ – could be the attempt of the author to impose a sense of chronology upon an otherwise disjointed and circling verbal testimony.

But there are other details within the story that resist this sort of reasonable explanation. If we can assume that the additions and amendments of the author were in the interests of adding structure, drama and internal cohesion to the original account, then any inherently dramatic and coherent aspect of the original would surely have been incorporated. The most dramatic episode in the story must certainly be the massacre at the riverbank, but here the *Times* account is curiously vague. Significantly, the figure of the sowar, or cavalryman presumed to have bodily taken Amy from the boat and dragged her away as a captive, is completely missing. The sowar appears nowhere in the account, although the introductory letter from Mr Knighton mentions that ‘the young lady was taken captive by the same Sowar who carried away Miss Wheeler’ (the daughter of General Wheeler, widely supposed to have been abducted and later to have committed suicide).¹¹³

Instead of the scene of abduction (or perhaps rescue) by the sowar, then, the *Times* account resorts to a sort of narrative haze to explain the survival of its protagonist: ‘My senses had very nearly forsaken me. I was in a sort of stupor ... I felt dizzy and sank on the deck ... I fell by degrees into a sort of drowsy fit.’ Amidst this dizzy blur, the narrator appears to survive merely due to accident or absent-mindedness

¹¹³ Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: the figure of woman in the colonial text* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993, p.72), provides a perceptive survey of the myth of Miss Wheeler’s self-sacrifice.

on the part of the rebels. She falls into the water and manages to scramble onto the riverbank. After crawling ‘about half a mile’ she meets Miss Wheeler, in similar straits. Only then, an hour or more after the massacre, are they captured by ‘a party of the enemy’ and dragged away in different direction.

Taken to the rebel camp ‘in a state of near nudity, for my clothes had been torn to pieces’, the narrator is next mocked and humiliated by an undifferentiated chorus of rebels: ‘Clapping of hands and cries of ‘Khoob Kea!’ (‘Well done’) burst upon my stupefied senses. A circle formed round me. I sank on the ground and buried my face in my hands. Oh, the agony of those moments!’

At this point, however, one of the strangest figures in the story appears upon the scene: an African eunuch, formerly employed by the King of Oudh. We later learn that he has arrived in Cawnpore as a courier with dispatches to Nana Sahib from the ‘Moulvie of Fyzabad’ in Lucknow. The eunuch takes pity on the narrator, covering her with a *chadar* and telling the persecutors to spare her. This ‘sable benefactor’ then cares for the narrator, taking her to a tent and giving her clothes, Indian food and a bed, before once more disappearing. The African reappears later in the story, however, to expedite the narrator’s introduction to the Maulvi.

It is true that African eunuchs were employed by King Wajid Ali Shah of Oudh, and that some of them joined the rebel cause. One of them, named ‘Bob the Nailer’ by the British garrison in Lucknow, later became one of their most effective snipers.¹¹⁴ However, the ostensible reason for this man’s appearance in the story is palpably absurd: at this time (late June 1857) the Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah was still a prisoner of the British in Faizabad, and it would be several months before he exercised any

¹¹⁴ Ruutz Rees, L.E., *A Personal Narrative of the Siege of Lucknow* (Longman, London, 1858), p. 196.

political authority.¹¹⁵ The narrator's 'kindly African', however, seems to function as a mask for various other figures within the wider story.

All the other narratives have the sowar, later named as Mohammed Ismail Khan, dragging Amy from the river, taking her to a hut and later feeding her. She is taken to the tent of the Maulvi Liakut Ali, who provides her with a set of 'native' clothes as part of her ritual conversion to Islam. The footnote to Forrest's history relates that Azimullah Khan, advisor to Nana Sahib, takes pity on her suffering in very similar terms to those used by the African. It is the sowar, again, who carries her message to the Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah. All of these men, however, are Indian rebels. By disguising them as the fictional 'kindly African', their sympathetic gestures are separated from the 'heartless and cruel' mass of mutineers. By introducing this figure, ethnically distinct from the Indian rebels, yet still 'other', the writer escapes the potential ambiguity of sympathies: the rebels can be portrayed as wholly bad, and the narrator's survival shown to be entirely divorced from any redeeming actions on their part.

African eunuchs, of course, are totemic figures within the art and literature of Orientalist fantasy; fittingly, they function as harem guards. Desexed, and yet suggestive of captive sexuality, the figure of the black eunuch in this story serves both to highlight the narrator's sexual vulnerability – her state of 'nudity' and 'shame' – and to guard her against the implied threat of rape.¹¹⁶ The *Times* editorial remarks that the 'unspeakable issue of sexual violence against captive white women receives but little solution from this unexpected report.' The anxiety remains, however; with the frequent

¹¹⁵ Jafri, 'Profile of a Saintly Rebel', *Social Scientist*, 26 (1998), p. 43.

¹¹⁶ Mary Roberts, *Intimate Outsiders: the harem in Ottoman and Orientalist art and travel* (Duke University Press, Durham, 2007), p. 104.

disappearances of the African ‘harem guard’, the narrator is left to the implied rapacious attentions of the other rebels. This is a narrative that constantly suggests and then defers sexual threat, while never confronting it directly.

The remainder of the account comprises a lengthy and rather picaresque series of adventures and travails. If William Knighton, who supplied the story to the newspaper, was the author of the scurrilous *Private Life of an Eastern King*, and Mr Stuart, the supposed editor of the account, was his pupil, it is perhaps not surprising that events and incidents in the rebel court of Oudh figure so heavily. There is a constant ambiguity and mutability of protection and threat: ‘In every respect I was well cared for and treated by the Begum’, and yet this same Begum later transforms into ‘a grim and suspicious woman (who acts) with prompt cruelty’. Similarly, the Maulvi, despite being ‘a good, feeling, warm hearted man’, was still ‘a despot, (who) could order any person under him to be put to death.’ The inherent fickleness of ‘oriental’ character and morality, the dishonesty and inhumanity of Indian leaders, and the apparent inevitability of ‘native’ tyranny and excess are all displayed to the full.

Following the British capture of Lucknow (here given as the 12th of November, although in reality this was only the initial relief of the garrison), the narrative emerges from the confines of Orientalist palace fantasy and enters an altogether stranger landscape. Unable – or perhaps unwilling – to surrender herself to the British forces, the narrator instead accompanies a band of mutineers fleeing into the Oudh countryside. After their chastisement by the British, these rebels are portrayed as ‘contemptible’, no longer menacing or threatening. ‘I was strong, I was well treated and able to bear any amount of fatigue’, the narrator states. This strength is mental as well as physical; with the rebels ‘in a fearful state of mind’ and ‘exceedingly stupid’ (i.e. stupefied), the narrator is able to effectively dominate her captors. ‘I spoke to

them and called for a council. They were eager to hear me.’ The subsequent subterfuge, in which the narrator presents herself as the cousin of the magistrate of Allahabad, is given as evidence of the beaten and subjugated state of the rebels. It also, of course, shows the narrator, as a ‘white’ woman, possessed of an inherently masterful spirit. She is, even in extremity, a *natural* leader.

This strange episode of survivalist cunning leads to her release – with an armed escort of rebels, no less – and return to British society, where ‘my Mohammedan costume, sunburnt face and emaciated form tended effectually to disguise me.’ Even here, at the moment of liberation, the curious doubleness of the narrative is accentuated; only when finally ‘clasped (in the) warm embraces’ of her family can the narrator resume her position as a protected white woman, ‘as happy and comfortable as I could wish to be.’

It is easy to see why the peculiarities of this story might render it dubious. ‘(An) ingenious writer,’ the *Times* editorial muses, ‘might have conceived without difficulty the case of a lady’s escape, and composed a plausible story for his imagined heroine.’ It is, of course, an anonymous account. But while the similarities with the better attested Horne narratives make her identification as the presumed author hard to avoid, it is impossible to know how much of the story is based on her own words. As an interpretation, however, and one almost certainly based on verbal testimony, the newspaper account provides a tantalising and provoking glimpse of certain ambiguities and nuances perhaps lacking from the other versions of the story.

III. The Narrative of ‘Amy Haines’. British Library.¹¹⁷

This lengthy handwritten account, comprising over forty pages of foolscap, could be regarded as one of the two central texts in the Amy Horne story. It was not, however, written by Amy herself. Signed off as ‘True Copy / R MacRae / Lucknow on 30th Jan 1890’, it is drafted in more than one hand, and neither of them similar to that of the 1858 witness statement or the letters kept in the National Archives of India. It appears under a pseudonym; although Mr MacRae doubtless knew Amy’s true identity, when the original was written she was recently married. She may have wished to guard her new family respectability from imputations of dishonour.

Chronologically, this account falls somewhere between the brief witness statement dated 1858 and the published narrative of 1913. Towards the end of the account there is a note of ‘the terrible scenes which have marked the last year’, implying that it was written within twelve months of the initial uprising at Cawnpore. Drafted at a time when the story of the Mutiny was still inchoate, still a Babel of contending eyewitness accounts, in its raggedness, its awkward syntax and lack of narrative shaping, this manuscript carries the raw edge of lived experience.

The principal addition to the other narratives is the lengthy opening passage concerning the narrator’s stay in Lucknow. The witness statement for the India Reform League is sparing on the details (‘We were obliged to leave Lucknow about the month of April in consequence of the threatening aspect of affairs’). The 1872 trial report is similarly brief (‘In May, 1857, the witness, with her mother and stepfather, and five brothers and a sister, removed from Lucknow to Cawnpore for protection, there being

¹¹⁷ Oriental & India Office Collection, British Library, London. *Ms. Add.41488*: ‘Letters and papers relating to the Indian Mutiny’ ... ff. 53-95, by Mrs Amy Haines’.

rumours of an intended outbreak'), while the *Times* article and the 1919 magazine account omit the episode entirely. The omission hardly seems surprising; Amy's stay in Lucknow predates the uprising by several months, and aside from the odd incident of the flower garland 'assault' contains nothing pertaining to the events that are to follow. Instead, this passage appears to serve as a vehicle for Horne's outrage and disgust at Indian manners and culture: the 'indecent, abusive' people, the filthy streets, the obscene paintings, even the depravities of the resident 'monkies'.

This emphasis is significant. In one sense, the opening passage about Lucknow sets the tone for the entire account. For here, instead of the relative levity and equanimity of the story published in the *Times*, with its 'kindly African' and 'good, feeling, warm hearted' Maulvi, there is nothing but bitter scorn and contempt for India and its inhabitants. The Maulvi is transformed into a psychopath, demanding the deaths of women and children; there are no sympathetic portrayals of Indians at all.

After the narrator's arrival in Cawnpore, the entrenchment siege is rendered in a series of vivid impressions. The events described – the initial bombardment on June the 6th, the midnight sally by the heroic Captain Moore to spike the enemy guns, and the burning of the hospital barracks the following day – are all attested in the accounts of Mowbray Thomson and William Shepherd.¹¹⁸ Overall, though, it is the physical and psychological experience of life in the entrenchment that Amy's narrative conveys most acutely: the demands of thirst and hunger, the filth and discomfort, and the steady erosion of hope. In contrast to the individuated experiences of Thomson and Shepherd,

¹¹⁸ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (1859), p.112. He states that Moore's foray happened after the burning of the barracks, which leads Ward (*Our Bones are Scattered*, 1996) to presume that there must have been two such attempts. Thomson, however, spent the majority of the siege stationed in an outlying piquet, and his chronology of the events inside the entrenchment may not be as exact as he implies.

both involved directly in the action of the defence, Amy's prose is typified by a passive detachment and a frequent use of plural pronouns. She is bearing witness here not to her own experience alone, but to that of the whole body of the besieged. Her account is the articulation of collective suffering, on behalf of those denied active agency in warfare.

Reading this narrative alongside those of Thomson and Shepherd, the concordances are often striking: within the packed enclosure of the barracks and the trenches, single incidents impact the lives of many. The wounding of an Indian servant is reported by Thomson: 'An ayah, while nursing the infant child of Lieutenant J. Harris, Bengal Engineers, lost both her legs by a round-shot, and the little innocent was picked off the ground suffused in its nurse's blood, but completely free from injury.'¹¹⁹

What could well be the same scene is experienced directly, and far more personally, by Amy: 'Our stress for water can imagined when on one occasion we were obliged to drink it, mixed with human blood, which had fallen into our vessel from the wounds of an Ayah who was close by it when the bursting of a shell carried away both her legs.'¹²⁰

The comparison is even more telling in the differing stress placed on another incident. 'Now and then our scanty and poor dietary was improved by the addition of some horse-soup,' writes Thomson. He then relates the shooting of one of the stray rebel horses, 'an old knacker ... shot like lightning, brought into the barrack, and hewn up.'

¹¹⁹ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (1859), p.102.

¹²⁰ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

Lump, thump, whack, went nondescript pieces of flesh into the fire, and, notwithstanding its decided claims to veneration on the score of antiquity, we thought it a more savoury meal than any of the *recherché* culinary curiosities of the lamented Soyer ... The head, and some mysteries of the body, we stewed into soup, and liberally sent to fair friends in the intrenchment . . .¹²¹

This rather witty description, complete with onomatopoeic flourishes, stands in stark contrast to the desperation in Amy's account:

Our last meal was a horse, but neither myself nor my dear Parents partook of any, my poor little brothers and sisters did, they were dying of hunger and would have eaten the most loathsome thing; before we came to this point, I recollected throwing a bit of meat, which after a few days I carefully looked for, and finding it fortunately, shared it amongst the children.¹²²

The sense of trauma imposed on the garrison, and particularly the women and children, by the enforced passivity of siege is obvious in this narrative. Mowbray Thomson recalls that some of the civilians 'were sinking into the settled vacancy of look which marked insanity. The old, babbling with confirmed imbecility, and the young raving in not a few cases with wild mania; while only the strongest retained the calmness demanded by the occasion.'¹²³ Amy's experience, again, is more direct:

I witnessed most painful scenes, half our number lost their reason, and amongst them my poor dear mother. I had to sit and listen to her ravings, her miseries broke my heart and haunt me even now ... I cared little what I suffered, but I could not bear to look on

¹²¹ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (1859), pp. 82-83.

¹²² British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

¹²³ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (1859), p. 88.

their agonies, and often I had turned away feeling my own mind bordering on destruction.¹²⁴

In the scene that follows, however, as the survivors commence their departure from the entrenchment under the white flag, Amy's narrative diverges more sharply from Thomson's. As the ragged garrison assemble for their march down to the river, the rebels 'rushed into our barracks terrifying us to death by their rude and rough manner, – Our bundles, money and what little valuables we had were forcibly taken away – Captain Kempland was savagely beaten by some of the Cavalry, his musket snatched out of his hands, and many other officers served in like manner.'¹²⁵

Thomson, one of those same officers, records a very different scene: a sharp altercation between a rebel and one of the British soldiers 'was the only semblance of an interruption to our departure.' In his account, the rebel troops behave with surprising cordiality towards their former colonial masters.¹²⁶ Eliza Bradshaw, the Eurasian wife of a bandmaster and another survivor of the massacre, also relates that the rebels 'said nothing to us, they did not abuse us.'¹²⁷ This apparent contradiction led Barbara English to dismiss entirely 'Amelia Horne's absurd remarks, recorded many years later';¹²⁸ although, as we have seen, this particular narrative was probably written only a year later at most, and conceivably before that of Mowbray Thomson.

Rudrangshu Mukherjee, writing in reply to English's comment, makes the sensible observation that, in a scene of such chaos, it is entirely possible for different

¹²⁴ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (1859), p.163.

¹²⁷ Deposition of Eliza Bradshaw, in Williams, *Depositions* (1858).

¹²⁸ English, Barbara, 'The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857', in *Past & Present*, 142 (Feb 1994), p. 177.

eyewitnesses to gain a quite different perception of events.¹²⁹ In Amy's case, however, the tone of her portrayal may be coloured as much by what she felt as what she saw. Witnessing Captain Moore (an Irish officer of the regular army who features in the narrative as a paragon of heroism and male virtue) abused by the rebels 'in so gross a manner that it made the ears of all tingle,' Amy reacts with savage disgust:

Worse [the soldiers] could not have suffered and if every native was extirpated from India, it would not avenge them – woman though I am, every feeling is roused into fury, and my blood boils to think that the people of England are so incredulous, and will not be convinced of the insults and brutality we have experienced at the hands of the 'Mild' Hindoo and Mahomedan.¹³⁰

This genocidally-inclined passage is the apogee of all the anger and bitterness in the narrative. 'The unbelieving people of England, the sympathisers of the 'Mild' Hindoo,' Horne writes later, after recounting the alleged torture and murder of a girl at Farroukabad, 'will not be convinced without the evidence of mutilations – what better proof can they have of the barbarity and cruelty that characterises the natives of this land.'¹³¹

Since Amy at this point would have had little idea of the views of the 'people of England', it is possible to assume that the disbelief she complains of in these passages refers more to the attitudes of the English residents of Calcutta, and the Government of India who had so recently refused her compensation. To the very end of this account, she stresses her loss and her miserable condition. Even writing the narrative has 'made

¹²⁹ Mukherjee, Rudrangshu, 'The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857: Reply' *Past & Present*, 142 (Feb 1994), p. 188.

¹³⁰ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

¹³¹ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

me live my sufferings over again, reviving scenes and incidents I would give worlds to forget – none know how bitter are my remembrances, nor the desolation that presses so heavily upon my spirits, my aching heart now bears only the image of the dead, and no spectre could haunt me more than the thought of the past.’

This is a long way from the figure pictured at the end of the *Times* narrative, ‘in the midst of friends and relatives at Calcutta ... as happy and comfortable as I could wish to be.’¹³² Instead, this desperately anguished account ends with its narrator ‘a homeless destitute orphan, bereft of the affection of a kind father and a dear tender mother,’ and a grief expressed in some garbled stanzas of poetry: a few lines from a William Cowper hymn, a few from a 1693 verse entitled *Penitential Cries*, and two verses of the Victorian sentimental poet W.H. Bellamy’s *My Own, my Gentle Mother*, from the popular collection *The Wide, Wide World* of 1853. It is a suitably inconclusive end to a narrative entirely lacking in any sense of justice or redemption.

This could easily have been the last that British India ever heard from Amy Horne. Very soon after writing the original version of the account, she was married to William Bennett and began a new life as an apparently unremarkable wife and mother. Fourteen years later, however, she was to revisit her experiences in quite a different way.

¹³² *The Times*, 11 August 1858, p. 6.

IV. The Trial of Liakut Ali, Allahabad: Report in *The Times*, 28th & 29th of August 1872.

The British Library manuscript provides the first description of Amy's conversion to Islam, which immediately followed her abduction at the river. 'I was carried before two moulvies, whose names I afterwards learnt were 'Leakut Ali' and 'Ameer Ali', men well known for their mutinous conduct in Allahabad.' Later, when she is threatened with death at Fatehgarh, these men make another appearance: 'the same Maulvees who had converted me were heading the Rebels ... and these men in very compassion, sent for the sowar who took me from the boat and consorted with him for my escape.'¹³³

Maulvi Liakat Ali was a former infantry soldier from the town of Mogaon, and later either a mendicant or a schoolmaster. Perhaps he was the master of a madrasa or religious school.¹³⁴ He was appointed leader of the rebels in Allahabad following the mutiny there on the 6th of June. Following the British recapture of the city on the 15th, Ali made his way to Cawnpore and joined the massed rebel force under the nominal authority of Nana Sahib. That he must have exercised a considerable authority himself, especially among the Muslim troopers of the 2nd Cavalry, is evidenced by his presiding over Amy's conversion. By the time the troops from Cawnpore reached Fatehgarh, Nana Sahib had departed on his own, and Liakat Ali could indeed have been heading the entire rebel force.

After the collapse of the rebellion Ali became a fugitive, but in 1872 he was identified and arrested. A large crowd assembled at Allahabad railway station as he was brought back for trial, and 'upon the appearance of the arch-rebel he was greeted

¹³³ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

¹³⁴ Hargrave Lee Adam, *The Indian Criminal* (Milne, London 1909), p.170.

with hootings, hissings, and groanings.’¹³⁵ Ali’s trial was conducted at Allahabad Sessions Court in late July of 1872. He pleaded guilty to the charge of rebellion, and to having been in command of Allahabad during the uprising, but claimed that he had taken control to protect law and order, and had ensured that no European lives or property were harmed. In corroboration of this, he mentioned that he had saved the lives of several European women; one was later delivered to a relative named Flouest. By this detail, his defence traced Amy Bennett, *nee* Horne, and called her to testify.

Amy’s statement for the defence survives only as a report printed in *The Times* of the 28th of August 1872. The following day saw a second piece in the same newspaper, but this appears to repeat the account given in the initial article, and further confuses some of the details. These details are, unfortunately, quite confused enough already. In reading the narrative we must bear in mind that it would originally have been a series of verbal answers to questions posed by the lawyers, taken down in note form by a reporter in a hot crowded courtroom. Mrs Bennett’s age is given as thirty-three, which was correct, but the claim that ‘she resided in Calcutta with her father, Captain Horne, who commanded a vessel’ is clearly mistaken. Frederick W. Horne had been dead over thirty years by 1872. Presumably Amy was responding to questions about her identity and background, and the reporter conflated two separate answers.

This same confusion of detail appears more crucially in the description of the massacre at Cawnpore, and the events that followed:

[The] witness was seized by a native, and forcibly taken away just before the boats were fired upon; in fact, she was barely saved from the massacre She was taken before the Moulvie, Liakut Ali, the prisoner, she believed, though he was not then grey, and he gave her choice of becoming a Mahomedan or dying. She elected to die, and thereupon

¹³⁵ Adam, *The Indian Criminal* (1909), p.175.

the Moulvie ordered her taken away and fed. [...] At this time she could hear the firing and death-knell of her friends. There is some discrepancy in the reports as to whether the firing had or had not actually begun when she was taken away from the fort, but in any case it would, if the prisoner speaks truth, appear to be merely a question of moments.¹³⁶

The reference to a 'fort' perhaps implies the workings of the reporter's imagination; Liakat Ali occupied at best a large tent. Far more serious is the implication that Amy was taken from Satichaura Ghat *before* the massacre, not during it. If true, this would undermine the credibility of all the other Horne narratives, which feature vivid eyewitness accounts of the killings.

The remainder of the witness statement follows the other narratives fairly closely, and even adds additional details. Amy 'made the journey to Futtehghur on horseback, riding as a man rides, for fear of recognition. Her dress was that of a Mahomedan woman, though many in the army believed her to be a native Christian, the sowar's property.' When the troops at Fatehghar threaten to blow her from a gun, 'she made her escape by night with the sowar who had her in charge, but, she felt confident, with the connivance of the Moulvie, whom, however, she never saw again after her first interview with him, till she saw him on his trial at the Allahabad court.' Following her flight from Lucknow she lived 'a month or two' at the village of 'Goothnea ... several native women (whether relatives of the sowar or not) being also inmates of the house.'

'This,' the report concludes, 'is the curious story told by the principal witness on the Moulvie's behalf, 15 years after those bloody days at Cawnpore.' Amy's testimony, and that of another two women also protected by Liakat Ali at Allahabad, perhaps saved the prisoner from the gallows but did not exonerate him. Denounced as

¹³⁶ *The Times*, 28 August 1872, p. 5.

‘a cowardly rebel’ by the judge, Mr A.R. Pollock, Ali was sentenced to transportation, and spent the rest of his life imprisoned at the penal settlement of Port Blair in the Andaman Islands.¹³⁷ In the trial report Ali is compared to Nana Sahib; with the Nana himself, and so many other major leaders of the uprising, missing and presumed dead, it is not surprising that the British authorities chose to make an example of Liakat Ali. It is, however, surprising that Mrs Amy Bennett chose to speak as she did in his defence.

Fourteen years after the events that had marked her life indelibly, Amy finally faced one of the rebels in a court of law. This was one of the men who, directly or otherwise, had caused the massacre of her family and her own abduction, forced marriage and religious conversion. The 1857 rebellion had, indisputably, wrecked Amy’s life, and her previous narrative accounts bear witness to the loathing she felt for the ‘diabolical, bestial’ Indian rebels. After fourteen years of being ignored and disbelieved by the British authorities and public alike, she was allowed to speak, and tell her version of what had happened. And yet she ‘expressed to the court her strong belief that there was no intention on the part of the prisoner to put her to death.’

Furthermore, the report suggests at least a certain confusion as to whether she witnessed the massacre at all. This is a long way from the forthright declarations of her 1858 statement to the Reform League, or her written narrative of that year. Of course, the confusion could have existed only in the strained comprehension of the court reporter, trying to make sense of a possibly rather muted and fragmented testimony. But the possibility remains that she altered, or allowed to be altered by a subtle defence lawyer, the chronology of events. If Liakat Ali was busy converting Amy Horne to Islam at the precise moment, or even before, the massacre was taking place at

¹³⁷ Adam, *The Indian Criminal* (1909), p. 177.

Satichaura Ghat, then he could not have been responsible for, or connected with, that terrible and notorious crime.

This trial report is, however, the only one of these narratives in which the controlling hand of the protagonist-narrator is effectively removed. There is another sort of framing device of course: the unknown reporter. But here, muddled by the imperfections of comprehension and the expediencies of composition, we hear a distant echo of Amy's own voice.

V. Footnote in George Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny*. 1904.¹³⁸

Not a narrative by any description, this brief footnote nevertheless preserves a trace of another verbal account given to the historian Sir George Forrest, and is worth quoting in full:

One of the two women who survived the Cawnpore massacre told me that when she was brought before Azemoolah he said to her, 'Why are you crying? The Moghul Emperor has taken Delhi and driven the English from Northern India; when we take Cawnpore and Lucknow we will march to Calcutta and be masters of Southern India, and your husband [the sowar who captured her], who has now been made a Colonel, will then be a great man and you a great woman.'¹³⁹

Azimullah Khan, the ostensible subject of this note, was the *vakil*, or chief advisor, to Nana Sahib, and reputedly one of the masterminds of the initial uprising

¹³⁸ George Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny, reviewed and illustrated from original documents* (Blackwood and Sons, London, 1904), vol I, p. 421.

¹³⁹ Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny*, Vol.I, footnote to p. 421.

and the two later massacres at Cawnpore.¹⁴⁰ He was a man of some culture, spoke English and French fluently, and had visited England a few years before the rebellion.¹⁴¹ At the trial of Liakat Ali, Amy reported that the Nana ‘would certainly have put her to death if he had heard of her.’¹⁴² So why does this meeting with the Nana’s chief advisor escape mention anywhere else?

That Amy Horne was the woman featured in this note is almost certain. As Rudrangshu Mukherjee points out, Forrest’s quotations from his unnamed source are identical to those in Horne’s surviving narratives.¹⁴³ Mukherjee, however, believes that Horne’s memory of the meeting with Azimullah Khan was faulty. ‘It is possible, of course, that she had such a conversation with someone she thought to be Azimullah. Later [i.e. in the 1913 narrative] she realised that the person may not have been him.’¹⁴⁴ This theory, however, does not account for the incident being ignored in Horne’s earlier narratives as well.

An alternative explanation might lie in the similarity of Forrest’s ‘Azemoolah’ with ‘Ahmad Ollah’, Horne’s phonetic rendering of the name Ahmadullah in the 1858 British Library manuscript. Horne did meet and converse with Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah, and she presents him as fairly sympathetic to her plight. Quite possibly, then, Forrest merely misheard the name and transposed the incident. Whatever the truth might have been, the fact remains that this incident was not related in any of Horne’s written narratives. Leaving aside questions of faulty memory, the reason for this lapse

¹⁴⁰ Francis Jarman, ‘Azimullah Khan - A Reappraisal of One of the Major Figures in the Revolt of 1857’, in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 31, 3 (2008), p. 439.

¹⁴¹ Jarman ‘Azimullah Khan’ (2008), p. 422.

¹⁴² *The Times*, 28 August 1872, p. 5.

¹⁴³ Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Spectre of Violence* (Penguin India, New Delhi, 1998), p. 89.

¹⁴⁴ Mukherjee, *Spectre of Violence* (1998), p. 92. Jarman (‘Azimullah Khan’, p.442, n.136) disputes this explanation as ‘somewhat glib’.

may lie in its presentation of rebel authority, and Horne's own position in relation to that authority.

Throughout her other narratives, Horne portrays herself as a fugitive and a captive, regularly threatened with death. Here, on the contrary, we have a senior rebel commander – whether Azimullah himself, Ahmadullah Shah, or some other figure – treating her with apparent kindness, if a measure of condescension. More importantly, Horne is accepted as the wife of the sowar, and he is referred to as a *colonel*. Not only that: once the rebels are 'masters of India', Horne will be 'a great woman'. This is not the attitude of a dominator to a captive, but rather indicates that Horne was accepted among the rebels, as an officer's wife, and as an Indian. It is not surprising that this evidence of assumed complicity was erased from the accounts she presented after her return to British India.

VI. "Ten Months Captivity after the Massacre at Cawnpore". *The Nineteenth Century and After*, Nos. 436-437, June-July 1913.

By the opening decades of the twentieth century, the Indian Mutiny had become firmly cemented into the foundation mythology of British imperial rule in India. Set down in copious multi-volume histories and a mass of first-hand accounts, it nevertheless had an uncanny power to disturb and disrupt.¹⁴⁵ The Edwardian Raj might have seemed as secure as ever before, but the threat of native violence was still present, and gaining a new focus with the growth of nationalist organisations aimed at ridding India of British rule. On the 23rd of December 1912, Lord Hardinge, Viceroy of India, was badly

¹⁴⁵ Kim Wagner, *The Great Fear of 1857* (Peter Lang, London, 2010), p.xxiv.

wounded in a bomb attack in Delhi, newly appointed as Imperial capital.¹⁴⁶ This attempted assassination was the latest, and boldest, in a series of nationalist terrorist attacks in India and in Britain. In both countries there was anger and public alarm.

Six months after the attack on Lord Hardinge, a London gentlemen's periodical called *The Nineteenth Century and After* published a two-part article entitled 'Ten Months Captivity after the Massacre at Cawnpore', under the authorship of 'Amelia Bennett, Howrah'. The article was prefaced by a short introduction, referencing recent events:

The organised unrest that is now spreading through the length and breadth of India has prompted me to place this reminder before my fellow-countrymen of the horrible atrocities perpetrated on our women and children in those dark days of 1857 ... The misplaced sentimentalism dealing with Indians to-day, and in the face of the repeated discovery of the existence of secret societies having for their object the overthrow of British rule, is opening a way for the addition of an equally terrible chapter to Indian history ...

I trust therefore that the following narrative, the greater part of which was written the year immediately following the Mutiny, will be the means to awakening the rulers of India to a more befitting sense of the present situation, lest the tragedies of fifty-six years ago are enacted once more.¹⁴⁷

Here again is an echo of the anguished 1858 narrative, with its complaints about the disbelieving people of England. But the story now is reconfigured as a warning. What follows, in fact, is essentially very similar to that previous narrative, and in

¹⁴⁶ Peter Hopkirk, *On Secret Service East of Constantinople: the Plot to Bring Down the British Empire* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001), p. 49.

¹⁴⁷ Bennett, 'Ten Months Captivity', I, p.1212.

places approaches a straightforward redrafting. Throughout, however, there are expansions and additions, passages rewritten to give added emphasis, drama or clarity.

The introductory passage, concerning the unrest in contemporary India and quoting from John Kaye's monumental *History of the Sepoy Revolt*, already suggests an interpretative frame for the narrative. Throughout the story, there are further editorial incursions, providing support from outside sources. 'Before I continue with my personal narrative,' the author states at one point, breaking off her description of the siege of Cawnpore, 'I should like to place before my readers, especially those not quite familiar with Indian history, an account of that arch-fiend and traitor, Nana Sahib, than whom no bloodier monster existed since the creation of the world, except, perhaps, Nero, the Roman Emperor.'¹⁴⁸ The following passage includes not only a biographical sketch of the Indian leader, but quotes from his proclamations, taken from the *Illustrated London News* and *Calcutta Gazette*. Later, Mowbray Thomson's own eyewitness account of the Cawnpore siege is also quoted, together with a copy of a letter from General Wheeler to Sir Henry Lawrence in Lucknow, and some snippets of 'interesting information' contributed by one Mr R. MacCrea.¹⁴⁹

Clearly, this account aims at something greater than a mere 'personal narrative'. Rooted in the established facts of an historical narrative constructed over the previous half century, this version of the story is determined to establish its objective status as history rather than personal testimony. This in itself is not unusual: Gautam Chakravarty notes that memoirs written some time after the events of the uprising 'often expect corroboration or seek more information from historiography,' and he references the 1913 Amelia Bennett article in this respect.¹⁵⁰ Compared to previous

¹⁴⁸ Bennett, 'Ten Months Captivity', I, p.1212.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.1216-1217.

¹⁵⁰ Gautam Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination* (2005), p.127.

versions of the story, however, this additional historiographic information has another effect. By integrating her experiences with the wider narrative of the Mutiny, and by prefacing them with a didactic appeal to historical knowledge, the author of this account supplies it with a distinct shape and meaning. As Rudrangshu Mukherjee puts it, the article ‘affirms the narrative’s identification with a politico-social order, in this case the Raj,’ and so ‘establishes a dialogue between the author’s present and the past, thereby providing the narrative with a moral force.’¹⁵¹ This moral force, or apportioning of historical meaning and importance, gives the text precisely the sense of completion lacking in previous versions of Horne’s story.

The frequent editorial interventions and the buttressing of quotations from reputable sources may shape the narrative into a more satisfying whole, besides supplying a powerful aura of authority, but they also call attention to the need for such support. A more critical reading of the ‘personal narrative’ itself reveals substantial embellishments to the original 1858 version of the story, not on the level of incident and observation but rather in the form of dramatic, even sensational, appeals to the reader. Many of these bear more relation to melodramatic fictional representations of the events of 1857 than to anything supportable from outside evidence. The description of the massacre at Satichaura Ghat, for example, includes the following scenes of atrocity:

The air resounded with the shrieks of the women and children and agonised prayers to God for mercy. The water was red with blood, and the smoke from the heavy firing of the cannon and muskets and the fire from the burning boats, lay like dense clouds over and around us. Several men were mutilated in the presence of their wives, while babies

¹⁵¹ Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Spectre of Violence* (1998), p. 90.

and children were torn from their mothers' arms and hacked to pieces, the mothers being compelled to look on at the carnage! Many children were deliberately set fire to and burned, while the sepoy's laughed and cheered, inciting each other to greater acts of brutality!¹⁵²

This scene is related as first-hand testimony, but none of this torment is mentioned in any of Horne's previous writings, including her statement to the India Reform League 'in regard to mutilation'. Nor does it appear in the accounts by Thomson or the witnesses interviewed at Cawnpore by Lt-Colonel Williams. Stories of babies being chopped to pieces before their mothers' eyes, on the other hand, featured prominently in the more lurid rumours circulated in the newspapers soon after the uprising, that 'series of prurient and ghastly fictions' that the historian George Trevelyan complained about back in 1866.¹⁵³

Sensationalised appeals to the sympathies of the reader occur throughout this text. 'Reader, can you picture the scene,' we are asked during the account of Amy's conversion to Islam, 'and the frightful insolence conveyed in the attitudes of the principal *dramatis personae*? Here was I, a young, cultured English girl forcibly clad in native costume.'¹⁵⁴ This objectified, almost fetishistic presentation of the narrator as passive and vulnerable to racial threat appears to anticipate and directly address a white masculine audience. Later in the narrative, Amy's reactions to her liberation from the clutches of the sowar are related in a similarly sentimental and stereotypically feminine form:

¹⁵² Bennett, 'Ten Months Captivity', I. p.1231-1232.

¹⁵³ George Trevelyan, *Cawnpore* (Macmillan, London, 1866), p.212.

¹⁵⁴ Bennett, 'Ten Months Captivity', I. p.1233.

Surely the sun seemed to shine much brighter to-day than it ever had before; or was it that my glazed eyes were now free of the mist – created by the many bitter tears I had shed – that has clouded them before? Oh, my heart, my heart, how it beats, as if refusing to be any longer imprisoned in the limited confines of my frail body! What though I was an orphan? Outside my barred and dismal cage the sun shone, the birds sang, and all Nature rejoiced; and life was sweet!¹⁵⁵

Other details in the text raise additional problems. This article is the sole source for the erroneous identification of Horne's father as a Royal Navy captain. After the conversion scene with the Maulvi Liakat Ali, the narrator notes that he was later 'tried and sentenced to transportation for life, I being the principal witness against him.'¹⁵⁶ This is demonstrably wrong: Horne, as we have seen, spoke for the defence at Ali's trial. In the 1858 manuscript narrative in the British Library, Horne describes the village of 'Goothnee' (Gotni), the home of her sowar captor, as 'very near Allahabad'. By Indian standards, this might be thought reasonable: in fact Gotni is forty miles west of Allahabad and on the other side of the Ganges. The 1913 article, on the other hand, describes the village as being 'on the outskirts of Allahabad', which it most certainly is not.¹⁵⁷ Surely nobody who had made the journey between village and city, at least two days on foot and by litter, as Horne apparently did, could have made such a geographical mistake?

One inevitable possibility, considering these errors and expansions, would be that there is another voice speaking through this narrative, imposed over that of the presumed author. Could it be that some, or even all, of the additions and alterations to

¹⁵⁵ Bennett, 'Ten Months Captivity', II. p. 88-89.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, I. p.1233.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, II. p. 87.

this text are the work of an editor, and not the words of Amy herself? The initial introduction, with its partisan political focus and timely warning from history, the passages of interpretative information about Nana Sahib, even the exaggerated descriptions of the Satichaura Ghat massacre and the sensational reportage of the narrator's emotional and psychological state, could indeed be mere embroidery by some outside party, over the fabric of a later and more complete version of Horne's 1858 text.

Mr R. MacCrea, whose 'interesting information' is quoted liberally here, is described by Andrew Ward as 'a local Cawnpore historian'. His mother was a Mrs Wrixon, who died in the Bibighar massacre, and he later provided circumstantial evidence of the survival of the famous Miss Wheeler.¹⁵⁸ Could MacCrea, with his interest in tracing and rehabilitating female Cawnpore survivors, have been the editor and ghostwriter of this article? But *The Nineteenth Century and After* was published in England, and apparently intended for a male British readership – the July 1913 volume, containing the second part of Amelia Bennett's story, also features articles entitled 'How to Restore Military Efficiency' and 'The Greater Agriculture'. It is perfectly possible that 'Ten Months Captivity After the Massacre at Cawnpore' is the work of a British writer, basing his work on a manuscript copy of Horne's narrative, perhaps even the one used by George Forrest in his 1904 history.

Unless such a manuscript – a missing link between the 1858 text and the 1913 article - is discovered, it is impossible to determine what, if anything, has been added to this account by other writers. Impossible, too, to determine what is genuine. Bearing this in mind, it must be concluded that 'Ten Months Captivity' cannot be relied upon

¹⁵⁸ Andrew Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered*, p. 657 / p. 682, n.520. Ward gained the information on MacCrae in an interview with Zoe Yalland, a more recent and reliable Cawnpore historian.

as the undisputed testimony of Amy Horne. It could, in fact, be regarded as no less fictional than the anonymous 1858 article printed in *The Times*. Once again, it is ‘impossible to rely upon the literal purity of a text which has been so handled.’

VI. Summary

The five – or even six – accounts left by Amy Horne might initially be taken to construct a self-supporting original narrative, a reflection, more or less accurate, of a series of real events. ‘Language’s failure in any narrative form to communicate the truth of extreme and moral violence,’ writes Chris Daly, ‘means that writers can at best circle around the inexpressible and come at it from multiple narrative approaches, in the hope that each approach might reveal some new dimension of the experience, that the many approaches combined might provide a greater sense of truth.’¹⁵⁹

But examination of these accounts reveals faults and discrepancies, details added or erased. Clearly, these texts were not intended as complementary. Each was written, quite distinctly from the others, as a unique documentary record intended to be as authoritative as any of the other Mutiny testimonials being composed at around the same time. To read one beside another is to reveal the artifice of that endeavour, and to uncover, not the truth of events, but rather the aspects that these narratives attempt to conceal. In particular, the nature of Amy’s relations with her captors becomes increasingly problematic: just who did take her from the river, and was he rescuer or abductor? What was her status within the rebel army, and later in the palaces of

¹⁵⁹ Chris Daly, ‘Atrocious Privilege: Bearing witness to war and atrocity’, Alex Vernon (ed), *Arms and the Self: War, the military and autobiographical writing* (Kent State University Press, Kent, 2005), p. 182.

Lucknow: was she a concealed fugitive, a privileged hostage, a disciple, or something rather like a guest?

The writings Amy Horne produced, or those produced in her name, are inherently conflicted, shot through with shame and guilt and the desire for exoneration. Each, in its way, is an attempt to gain public recognition for what she has suffered, and social acceptance as a survivor. By insisting on her status as a victim of atrocity, Horne is effectively reinventing herself as representative of the martyred dead of Cawnpore. More importantly, however, the repetition of the accounts, their gathering focus and detail, are attempts to counter the author's initially dubious reception by the Indo-British community. In their insistent demand that we believe the truth of what is being described, these are stories with something, quite literally, to prove.

They are also a record of extremely violent and traumatic events, originally written at no great remove. After siege and starvation, the gruesome massacre of her entire family, her own captivity and probable rape, we could hardly expect Amy's accounts to be entirely objective. At the time of their composition, she herself was reported to be 'insane'; in fact, this apparent madness might have been the physical symptoms of what would now be diagnosed as traumatic disorder, the shaking, sweating, disorientation and trancelike gaze characteristic of survivors of rape and kidnapping.¹⁶⁰ Quite apart from the shock and disorientation of the events themselves, which preclude a clear appraisal of the situation, the disruptive effects of extreme violence on memory and witness testimony have been well documented.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography – Trauma and Testimony* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2001), pp. 30-31.

¹⁶¹ In, for example, Cathy Caruth, 'Violence and Time: Traumatic Survivals', *Assemblage* 20 (1993), pp. 24-25.

Leigh Gilmore describes trauma as ‘the self-altering, even self-shattering experience of violence, injury and harm,’ and goes on to cite the crucial problems raised by the ‘multiple difficulties that arise in trying to articulate it.’¹⁶² These difficulties, expressed in the Amy Horne narratives by the repeated attempts to adequately describe violent scenes already stated to be ‘indescribable’, necessarily create an inherent evasiveness, even an intrinsic falsehood, in the patterning of the documentary account. Added to this is the awkward positioning of Amy herself as both privileged narrator and aggrieved victim: as *The Times* put it, she was ‘undoubtedly a living witness of scenes which were thought to have left no survivor.’¹⁶³ Her agency as author is constantly undermined by her passivity as victim. These difficulties, and their repeated renegotiations of the relation between individual experience, historical fact, rumour and fantasy, situate the Horne narratives upon what Gilmore calls ‘a crucial limit in autobiography, (not just) the boundary between truth and lies, but, rather, the limits of representativeness.’¹⁶⁴

In the repetition of these accounts, and the inherent unreliability suggested by their steady metamorphosis, we might detect a bid for what contemporary popular psychology would call closure. Narrative, after all, in the words of Lewis P. Hinchman, puts ‘the individual in the position of being author of his or her own story, an active shaper of outcomes, rather than a passive object acted upon by external or internal forces.’¹⁶⁵ The ‘sense of isolation’ caused by the ‘breaking of individual

¹⁶² Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography* (2001), p. 6.

¹⁶³ *The Times*, 11 August 1858, p. 6.

¹⁶⁴ Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography* (2001), p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ Lewis P. Hinchman, *Memory, Identity, Community – The Idea of Narrative in the Human Sciences* (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1997), p. xix.

knowledge and mastery of events' can only, in this analysis, be overcome by the reconstruction of those events in narrative.¹⁶⁶

But perhaps contrasting the 'traumatised' narratives of Amy Horne with the supposedly more objective published accounts of other survivors and participants in the uprising is itself misleading. Ranajit Guha, in his study of British reactions to peasant rebellion in nineteenth-century India, takes issue with claims to the neutrality and objectivity of 'primary sources'. On closer inspection, these writings prove to be embedded with subjective interpretation and comment, revealing the anxieties, fears and 'moral disapprobation' of their authors. Description of the activities of the insurgents, Guha maintains, is 'tainted at its source by the prejudice and partisan outlook of their enemies', and historians who fail to take account of this are themselves victims of the 'optics of a colonialist historiography.'¹⁶⁷

In this way, the Horne narratives could be seen as less a record of real individual experiences and events, and more an ongoing dialogue with the evolving historiography of Imperial India. The shifts in emphasis and alterations in testimony from one account to the next are quasi-political maneuverings of focus, and attempts to gain leverage against the gathering weight of an historical master-narrative. In the next chapter, I intend to examine this wider historiographic discourse. To what extent do Amy Horne's writings fall within comparable textual parameters? If differences exist, could the Horne narratives actually be read in opposition to this discourse, and what form might this opposition take?

¹⁶⁶ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1996), p.136, n.21.

¹⁶⁷ Ranajit Guha, 'The Prose of Counter-Insurgency', Guha (ed), *Subaltern Studies II* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1983), p. 17.

4. *“Like some trapped animal in a cage ...”*

The Amy Horne Texts: Mutiny Memoirs or Captivity Narratives?

I. Mutiny Memoirs

The period immediately following the 1857 uprising, and into the early decades of the twentieth century, saw the publication of a large volume of memoirs, diaries and other first-hand accounts by survivors of the conflict. Penelope Tuson has estimated that around fifty of these accounts were left by women, predominantly the wives, sisters and daughters of the military and administrative class.¹⁶⁸ She includes Amy Horne in this number. There are similarities between Horne’s writings and those of other female survivors, and in this sense her narratives can certainly be seen as part of the wider genre of mutiny memoir. But they also exhibit critical differences from these other works, just as Horne herself occupied a distinctly different social and ethnic position to the other memoirists. How, then, are the Horne narratives different, and can these differences provide insights lacking in the other accounts? Are the differences, in fact, so great that they escape the boundaries of the mutiny memoir genre and enter a new, and perhaps more nuanced, field of writing?

Reading these accounts, it is possible to identify a recurring pattern, adopted unconsciously or otherwise to give form and dramatic structure to the experience. That this basic pattern occurs in so many of the memoirs is hardly surprising: the writers

¹⁶⁸ Penelope Tuson, ‘Mutiny Narratives and the Imperial Feminine: European Women’s Accounts of the Rebellion in India in 1857’, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 21, 3 (1998), p. 296.

were mainly British, of a similar class and background, experiencing very similar events. Distilled, the pattern takes the form of a dramatic plot in several acts:

- I. Life in India before the uprising, often characterised as a period of calm. This period is further distinguished in many accounts by unusual or uncanny events, and strange behaviour amongst Indians: the circulation of chapatis, for example, noted by Thomson, Sherer and others. These, in hindsight, prove to be, in Thomson's words, "occult harbingers" of the rebellion.¹⁶⁹
- II. News of disturbances at other locations, closely followed by the outbreak of mutiny amongst the native troops. This initial outbreak is characterised by a breakdown of normal life, the experience of flight or siege, and in some cases by the threat of capture and captivity.
- III. The endurance of siege conditions, or of open warfare against the rebels.
- IV. The relief or rescue of beleaguered garrisons, battlefield success against the rebels and the restoration of British control over rebellious districts. In several accounts this culminates in an actual return to England, while in others the restoration of order is dramatised by the punishment of rebels and the institution of direct Imperial rule over India.

Within this basic pattern or plot, there are significant differences between the accounts of male and female writers. Male writers, whether military or civilian, occupied positions of authority and responsibility in British India before the revolt; for these men, the act of description becomes in part a reassertion of their control over India itself. In many cases, there is an acknowledgement that they are writing for the historical record, an awareness that their own individual experience counts towards the creation of an overarching narrative. A perception of themselves as actors within a

¹⁶⁹ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (1859), p. 24.

particular historical moment allows the male memoirists the freedom to widen their accounts from the details of individual experience to a discussion of more general political and cultural themes. Martin Gubbins, formerly Financial Commissioner of Oudh, devotes three chapters of his own account of the Lucknow siege to a point-by-point analysis of the 'Causes of the Mutiny', and a general background on political developments in Oudh following the British annexation.¹⁷⁰

In contrast to this, the female memoirist occupied a much more constrained position. Rather than the supposed objectivity and analysis that characterises the writings of their husbands and brothers, the accounts of female survivors emphasise subjective experience, often to the complete exclusion of wider concerns. 'I have not the slightest intention,' writes Lady Julia Inglis, a survivor of the siege of Lucknow, 'of giving any history of the events relating to the Indian Mutiny.'¹⁷¹

Ruth Coopland, a clergyman's wife who escaped the massacre at Gwalior and took shelter at Agra, writes that her own story 'pretends to no other merit than that of being a plain unexaggerated account of the sad events which came immediately under my own eye', and again, 'In this simple narrative I have, of course, confined myself strictly to scenes and occurrences that have fallen under my own eye; many of which, as far as I am aware, have not hitherto found a narrator.'¹⁷² Perhaps the most succinct expression of this denial of wider historical analysis comes in the introduction to *Day by Day at Lucknow* by Adelina Case, widow of Colonel Case, the commander of the 32nd Foot:

¹⁷⁰ Martin Gubbins, *An Account of the Mutinies in Oudh, and of the siege of the Lucknow Residency* (Richard Bentley, London, 1858), pp. 47-100.

¹⁷¹ Julia Inglis, *The Siege of Lucknow, a Diary* (Osgood, McIlvaine, London 1892), p.1.

¹⁷² R.M. Coopland, *A Lady's Escape from Gwalior and Life in the Fort at Agra during the Mutinies of 1857* (Smith, Elder, London, 1859), dedication and preface, p..iii-iv.

As I do not aspire to the ambition of an author, I feel that I shall be exempted from that criticism which invariably attends works of a more pretending character. It cannot but fail (for no woman is equal to the task) to do justice to the heroism, or to describe in adequate terms the great sufferings, of the gallant defenders of Lucknow, but it will [...] partially gratify the curiosity of those who have sympathised with us in our severe trials, until some more able and more practiced person shall undertake the task of favouring the world with a complete and detailed history.¹⁷³

That ‘more able and practiced person’, the note implies, would be a male historian. It is perhaps significant that the accounts of the seven women who described the siege of Lucknow all take the form of diaries, journals or collections of letters.¹⁷⁴

In its insistence on the details of everyday life and travail, the diary format preserves the individual experience of the siege, while not seeming to trespass on the supposed male domain of historical analysis and discussion. Rather than detailing the hand-to-hand fighting at the fortifications of the Residency compound, or the tense negotiations with native allies and approaching British columns, these female accounts are principally concerned with the hardships of life under siege, and the ongoing attempts to maintain the health and security of the narrator and her family. Writing several years after the uprising, Helen MacKenzie strictly delineated this separation between male and female areas of concern. The woman’s role, MacKenzie writes, is as

¹⁷³ Adelina Case, *Day by Day at Lucknow: A Journal of the Siege of Lucknow* (Richard Bentley, London, 1858), p. iv.

¹⁷⁴ Case, *ibid*; Inglis, *ibid*; Colina Brydon, *The Lucknow Siege Diary of Mrs C.M. Brydon* (fforde, Okehampton, 1978); Maria V Germon, *Journal of the Siege of Lucknow* (Waterlow and Sons, London, 1870); Mrs G Harris, *A Lady’s Diary of the Siege of Lucknow* (John Murray, London, 1858); Mrs A.E. Huxham, *A Personal Narrative of the Siege of Lucknow* (London, n.d.); Katherine Bartrum, *A Widow’s Reminiscences of the Siege of Lucknow* (James Nisbet & Co, London, 1858).

“help-meet to her husband under all circumstances”; courage and heroism, for the woman under siege, lies in calm forbearance of suffering and avoidance of disgrace.¹⁷⁵

This emphasis on passive domesticity is clear throughout the female accounts of the Lucknow siege, with descriptions of cooking, cleaning, childcare, regular prayer meetings, Bible readings, and even dinner parties. Sometimes these accounts can acquire an almost farcical quality: Adelina Case’s anxiety about having her tablecloths freshly laundered, for example, or the ongoing difficulty in finding servants to pull the *punkahs*.¹⁷⁶ It is this sort of attention to the details of social nicety while under imminent threat of attack that J.G. Farrell was to satirise in his novel *The Siege of Krishnapur*, and a modern reader is perhaps less likely than the Victorian public to regard these concerns as exemplary of womanly ‘patience and fortitude’.¹⁷⁷ But these domestic details can often obscure the very real suffering of the siege itself. The contrast between the stoical endurance of extreme danger and the tedium of household duties can be illustrated in a single entry from Maria Germon’s diary:

“*Thursday, August 20th*. No news again. The night had been very quiet – as I was sitting at the front door making a petticoat a European was shot at the gun in our garden, right through the head – Mr Cunliffe was wounded. I had a very bad boil on my hand for which I made an *attah* poultice – our dinner this day was stew – *dal* and rice and *chuppattees*.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Helen MacKenzie, ‘Englishwomen in the rebellion’. *Calcutta Review*, 20 (1859) p.108-126. pp.lxx-lxxx. Quoted in Tuson (1998), p. 297.

¹⁷⁶ Case, *Day by Day at Lucknow* (1858), p. 180.

¹⁷⁷ Quotation from a letter from Lucknow, *Englishwoman’s Review*, 12 September 1857, in Alison Blunt, ‘Embodying War: British women and domestic defilement in the Indian ‘Mutiny’, 1857-8. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26, 3 (2000) p. 418.

¹⁷⁸ Maria Germon, *Journal of the Siege of Lucknow* (1870), p. 79.

Not all the women who experienced the uprising did so in such relative security, of course; some were forced to take a more active part in their own survival, and there are many accounts by both men and women of periods spent in flight and intermittent captivity, and of having to rely on the often dubious charity of Indians, or their own wits, to survive. Even in these cases, the sanctuary of British protection is close at hand. There are very few accounts that detail substantial periods of time spent outside the fortifications and boundaries of British control. The domesticity of the Lucknow ladies was not solely informed by the perception of a woman's role; surrounded by hundreds of miles of rebel territory, menaced by imminent assault, it was also a visible and conscious enactment of civilised behaviour, and an assertion of the endurance of British life and British standards under siege.

For those few who did cross into enemy territory, there was never any doubt as to their consistent identification with, and allegiance to, British rule. Fugitives like the Eurasian Julia Haldane, or the district magistrate Mark Thornhill, may have been obliged to adopt native costume during their escape, but in both cases these were temporary and voluntary expedients.¹⁷⁹ Thornhill, and the Irishman Henry Kavanagh, disguised themselves as Indians to pass through the rebel lines, but beneath their greasepaint and turbans both men remained patriotically white Britons.¹⁸⁰ Their successful disguise becomes, in narrative form, evidence of their mastery over Indian life: the white man is able to simulate the visible signs of the native, while retaining his core identity. In all these cases, then, the narrative of mutiny and survival is a

¹⁷⁹ Julia Haldane, *The Story of Our Escape from Delhi in 1857* (Brown & Sons, Agra, 1888); Mark Thornhill, *Personal Adventures and Experiences of a Magistrate during the rise, progress and suppression of the Indian mutiny, etc* (John Murray, London, 1884).

¹⁸⁰ Henry T Kavanagh, *How I Won the Victoria Cross* (Ward and Lock, London, 1860).

narrative of purely British experience. There is little, if any, sense that the fabric of Britishness itself is threatened by the uprising.

One possible exception to this general rule is the unpublished account left by Madeline Jackson, the niece of Coverley Jackson, former Commissioner of Oudh.¹⁸¹ Following the mutiny at Sitapur, Jackson spent several months in hiding with her brother and other fugitives, before being captured and taken as a prisoner to Lucknow. For all her suffering and discomfort, however, Jackson was a privileged hostage; once inside the Qaisarbagh palace, she and her fellow prisoners were kept in isolation, and Indian life had no purchase upon them. There was never any question of her assimilating to a native existence, nor any attempt to convert her from Christianity.

Madeline Jackson's captivity ended with the final British recapture of Lucknow, and her rescue by Gurkha soldiers led by a pair of young English officers. Here, as in the other female accounts of the siege, male agency alone provides deliverance. In the diaries and memoirs of the ladies of Lucknow, for all their recounting of hardships stoically endured, the active heroism of the British male defenders of the Residency is constantly underlined and never doubted. This heroism is only matched, in fact, by the heroism of the troops of the relief column under General Havelock. The threat to British lives, and British primacy in India, is only countered by male British force, which of course proves invincible. Female narrators' deference to this male force, both in the form and the content of their narratives, can be seen an assertion of the stability of British rule following the uprising. The plot of the narrative is resolved by the active exhibition of overwhelming masculine authority, and the safe return to a territory firmly under British control.

¹⁸¹ Anna Madeline Jackson, *A Personal Narrative of the Indian Mutiny, 1857* (Haig Papers I, Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge).

If the siege of Lucknow provided the post-Mutiny British public with a narrative of indomitable survival and civilised fortitude, then Cawnpore provided its sobering inversion. The story of the massacre of the British garrison at Satichaura Ghat, and in particular the subsequent slaughter of women and children in the Bibighar, became, in novels, news reports and early historical works, symbolic of the uprising as a whole: womanhood, representative of British domestic civilisation, was violated by the enemy. At Cawnpore, the fragile edifice of British military control had been toppled; by surrendering the entrenchment, General Wheeler had allowed those in his charge to be betrayed, and, as George Trevelyan puts it, ‘placed beneath the heel’ of Indians.¹⁸²

More than the initial killings, it was the spectacle of white women helplessly in the power of Indian men, and all that this power might connote, that roused the greatest abhorrence. If, as Jenny Sharpe asserts, the white female body was an ‘allegory of empire’, then Lucknow saw the successful maintenance of that body, and the boundaries of civilisation and morality.¹⁸³ Cawnpore, conversely, saw the boundaries breached, and it was the fate of women, the implied torture, rape and murder of women, that became the principal scene in a narrative of disaster.

The threat of captivity is very present in female memoirs of the uprising. Katherine Bartrum records that her husband ‘would destroy me with his own hand rather than let me fall into the power of those brutal sepoys,’¹⁸⁴ while Adelina Case reports that ‘some of the ladies keep laudanum and prussic acid always near them,’ in case the Lucknow Residency fell to the enemy.¹⁸⁵ Captivity and its inevitable

¹⁸² G.O. Trevelyan, *Cawnpore* (Macmillan, London, 1866), p. 139.

¹⁸³ Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993), p. 4.

¹⁸⁴ Katherine Bartrum, *A Widow's Reminiscences of the Siege of Lucknow* (James Nisbet & Co, London, 1858), p. 10.

¹⁸⁵ Case, *Day by Day at Lucknow* (1858), p. 118.

consequences were a fate worse than death. ‘No English General ever,’ said Sir Charles Napier, in a Parliamentary speech of October 1857, ‘would permit women, still less his own countrywomen and their children, to be so outraged if he himself had the means of terminating their lives at once.’¹⁸⁶

Early reports of the massacre conjured a freakshow of gory scenes. The *Illustrated London News* even reported that the women and children of Cawnpore had been sold at a slave auction, then ‘after being treated with the highest indignities, [...] were barbarously slaughtered by the inhabitants.’¹⁸⁷ But a more pious appreciation of the event quickly took hold. What had happened at Cawnpore was *unspeakable*, and best passed over in respectful silence.

John Sherer, one of the first Britons to enter the Bibigarh after the recapture of the city, derided those who would seek to elaborate on the scenes of slaughter. ‘The whole story was so unspeakably horrible,’ he wrote, ‘that it would be quite wrong in any sort of way to increase the distressing circumstances which already existed.’¹⁸⁸

But even Sherer describes what he saw that day:

From this dreadful place we passed down the garden to the narrow well into which many of the bodies of the victims of the assassination had been thrown ... When we got to the coping of the well, and looked over, we saw, at no great depth, a ghastly tangle of naked limbs. I heard a low cry of pain, and saw Bews almost crouching with a sickening anguish. There is no object in saying more.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Hansard (Parliamentary Debates), CXLVIII, 507, quoted in Blunt, ‘Embodying War’, (2000), p. 420.

¹⁸⁷ *Illustrated London News*, 5 September 1857, p. 238.

¹⁸⁸ John W. Sherer, *Daily Life during the Indian Mutiny: personal experiences of 1857* (Swan Sonnenschein & Co, London, 1910), p. 78.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.79-80.

‘An account of atrocity,’ writes Chris Daly, ‘is a narrative of lost words.’¹⁹⁰ Compared to the volumes of personal testimony recorded by survivors of the Lucknow siege, the silence of the women of Cawnpore is significant. The few written scraps allegedly discovered inside the Bibighar itself – a bloodstained Bible, a treatise entitled *Preparation for Death*, a short note scribbled on the flyleaf of ‘a mutilated prayer-book’, and a brief list of the successive deaths of members of the Lindsay family¹⁹¹ – bear eloquent testimony to the end of communication itself. These scraps, and the few last letters sent before the uprising, became relics in an emerging martyrology: with their physical bodies reduced to a ‘ghastly tangle of naked limbs’, their individual voices too were reduced to one significant absence. All that remained, and all that a traumatised British public could reasonably offer in response, was a kind of mute religious awe.

As one of the few female survivors of a massacre popularly described as total, Amy Horne already occupied a troubling position in the emerging narrative of the uprising. Up to the point of the massacre itself, the plot of her own account follows the pattern described above: she witnesses the initial stirrings of native unrest and the outbreak of mutiny, then passively endures the siege of the entrenchment. After this, her story enters a new and unfamiliar terrain. If it was the threat of native captivity, and violence at Indian hands, that kept the narratives of the Lucknow women in fearful suspension, then for Amy Horne the worst had already happened.

Alone amongst the memoirists of the mutiny, Horne is carried across into the native camp, and her immersion in Indian existence is total. With her previous life utterly destroyed, she is cut off from the influences of British society, and cut off also

¹⁹⁰ Chris Daly, ‘Atrocious Privilege’ (2005), p. 182.

¹⁹¹ Thomson. *The Story of Cawnpore* (1858), p.216.

from the supporting structure of comparable British narratives. Rather than the diary format of the Lucknow memoirists, with its regular notation of dates and even times, Horne's narrative is chronologically vague. Between the Cawnpore massacre on June the 27th 1857 and her appearance at Allahabad on April the 7th 1858, the account has only an internal patterning of time, events being approximately dated a few weeks or months before or after other events. Outside of British society, outside the linear structure of British chronology, from the moment she is hauled from the river by an Indian soldier Amy Horne moves outside the frame of mutiny memoir. From this point on, her account becomes an unmapped journey, written into the silence of the martyred dead.

II. Captivity Narratives

Tales of captivity and survival at the imperial fringe, the trauma of individuals caught between the forces of colonialism and its discontents, have come to represent a particular theme in the contemporary historiography of Empire. Captivity narratives, whether from North America, Africa or India, dramatise the crossing of boundaries, national, racial and cultural, and the sudden violent confrontation between individuals and the native other.

The genre has received considerable study, initially relating to accounts of captivity by the natives of North America, but more recently with a wider international scope.¹⁹² Kay Schaeffer, discussing the supposed captivity of the Englishwoman Eliza

¹⁹² Prominent works on North American captivity include Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: the mythology of the American frontier 166-1860* (Wesleyan University Press, Middleton, 1973), Christopher Castaglia, *Bound and Determined* (1996), and John Demos, *The Unredeemed*

Fraser amongst Australian aborigines, characterises these accounts in terms of binary oppositions, ‘perilous ordeals and salvation, pitting civilisation against wilderness, white against black, self against other.’¹⁹³ Like the archetypal mutiny memoir, many of these accounts conform to a basic plot: some of the earliest, from puritan New England, are actually configured as metaphors of the journey towards salvation. Implicit in this journey, and the underlying plot of even the more irreligious accounts, is the physical removal of the captive from the safety of home into the dangerous and uncertain territory of the enemy. The puritan captive Mary Rowlandson divides her 1682 account into numbered ‘removes’, each one taking her further from Christian (Protestant) civilisation and deeper into the darkness of heathen (or Catholic) native life, before her final deliverance and redemption.¹⁹⁴

‘Removed’ from the safe and familiar, the captive is therefore carried into another world, with other rules. After rescue or escape, the captive then translates the experience back into narrative, making it digestible to her readers. But Amy Horne, having survived the transformation of her civilian existence by the warfare and atrocity of the entrenchment siege, is unable to return to the comfortable security of family life before the uprising. Instead, that life is destroyed, as her family is destroyed, and she is once more ‘removed’ into the alien world of native India.

Horne’s anxious and repeated assertions of this identification with Englishness – her inherent loyalty to Britain and her adherence to Christianity – find an echo in the captivity accounts of even those with impeccable ethnic credentials. ‘Every returned

Captive: A family story from early America (Vintage, New York, 1995); a more international appraisal is offered by Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1800* (Pimlico, London, 2003).

¹⁹³ Kay Schaeffer, *In the Wake of First Contact* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995), p. 49.

¹⁹⁴ Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: the mythology of the American frontier 166-1860* (Wesleyan University Press, Middleton. 1973), p. 109.

captive,' writes Joe Snader, 'faced an audience suspicious of the possibility that the author had gone native, forced by the situation of captivity to participate in the alleged depravities of an alien culture.'¹⁹⁵ As I have shown, female survivors of the uprising believed to have cohabited with natives were threatened with a similar stigma.¹⁹⁶

The necessity for an 'aggressive assertion of national character' is demonstrated throughout the Horne narratives, in their various permutations, particularly in the depiction of Indians.¹⁹⁷ The rebels are 'degenerate, filthy, loathsome, demoniacal natives,' their religion the 'abominations of a false faith'; even Indian women are 'at heart as much monsters as the men.'¹⁹⁸ After the slaughter of her family and the rest of the British inhabitants of Cawnpore, and her own abduction, forced conversion and probable rape, Horne's repugnance towards native Indians is hardly surprising. In the stridency of her denunciations there is also an urgent desire to set herself apart from the native world, denying any possibility of sympathy or identification with it.

It is significant in this respect that the incident described in the 1913 account as 'the most dramatic episode of my life'¹⁹⁹ was not the massacre at the riverbank, nor the moment of Horne's captivity, but what followed shortly afterwards:

Behind me stood a horde of wild-looking, fanatical Moslems who had assembled to witness the *tamasha*; while towering over me, with a drawn sword in his hand, was another fanatic who seemed to be the Master of Ceremonies. The bright, mid-day sun lighted up the scene and the countenances of the actors and audience, some expressive

¹⁹⁵ Joe Snader. *Caught Between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction* (University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, 2000), p. 97.

¹⁹⁶ See p. 45.

¹⁹⁷ Snader, *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Bennett, 'Ten Months Captivity', II. p.87, and British Library, *Ms. Add.41488*.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, I. p.1234.

of sullen indifference, other of religious frenzy and cruelty, and a few of vulgar curiosity at the sight of an English 'Misset' being placed so entirely in their power.

A deadly silence reigned, and the followers of the Prophet began the ceremony of my forced 'conversion' to their faith.²⁰⁰

Horne is made to eat half of a 'blessed pomegranate', then bathed and 'made to adopt the Oriental costume', before reciting the Islamic prayer of conversion. The drawn sword, and the Orientalist colouring of fanaticism, frenzy and cruelty, attest to this transformation being involuntary – Horne is violently carried across into the native realm, all the tokens of her previous life, from clothing to religion, erased. For the captive, as Richard Slotkin suggests, to partake of native religious sacraments was 'to un-English the very soul.'²⁰¹ From this point on, Horne is immersed in the world of rebel India.

But the description above also points to an additional tension present in all captivity texts: in order to fully depict the insoluble separation between the subjugated self and the alien culture of the other, the narrator must first demonstrate a knowledge of that culture in order to direct scorn upon it; this knowledge, however, serves to underline the intimate relationship that has existed between the captive and captor(s).²⁰² The use of the Urdu word *tamasha*, meaning a spectacle or entertainment, or the word *kulma* later used in describing the Islamic recitation of faith, may have been inserted by a hypothetical ghostwriter but nevertheless highlights the underlying tensions between the repudiation of an alien culture and the privileged access of the narrator.

²⁰⁰ Bennett, 'Ten Months Captivity', I, p.1234.

²⁰¹ Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence* (1973), p. 98.

²⁰² Snader, *Caught Between Worlds* (2000), p. 101.

Joe Snader has suggested that this knowledge of another culture represents the captive's 'primary acquisition.'²⁰³ Certainly, some of the Horne narratives are deliberately framed with the suggestion that their narrator has important information to impart: the witness statement given to the India Reform League 'in regard to mutilation', for example. The ostensible purpose of the 1913 account was to give a warning, based on experience, of the continuing dangers of underestimating Indian brutality. This sort of knowledge could be a valuable currency for a returned captive.

But, as we have seen, there is evidence that full extent of this knowledge, and Horne's intimacy with Indian culture and society, was suppressed or altered within the texts themselves. The note provided by George Forrest, based on verbal testimony, describes an apparently amicable meeting between Horne and at least one member of the rebel high command. This scene is missing from all the surviving written narratives. The 1858 witness statement includes the remark that the narrator was given servants to attend her while in Lucknow, and thus was presumably living in fairly comfortable surroundings at the time. Regarding her stay in the dyer's hut at Lucknow, the 1872 trial reports quotes her as saying that 'I lived in a native house by myself, the sowar alone being there.'²⁰⁴ Her other accounts imply that she was entirely alone in the hut. We might also note the discrepancy between the 1913 comment that Horne had been principal prosecution witness in the trial of Liakat Ali, and the actual record of that trial, which reveals her to have spoken for the defence.

Evasiveness of this sort about Horne's relations with her captors is, of course, symptomatic of a greater factual suppression within the texts as a whole. Captivity by the rebels, as seen in the quotations above, was widely regarded as synonymous with

²⁰³ Snader. *Caught Between Worlds* (2000), p. 277.

²⁰⁴ *The Times*, 28 August 1872, p. 5.

rape, itself coded as ‘outrage’ or ‘deflowering’. Christopher Castaglia suggests that the captivity genre was pruriently directed at ‘an audience fascinated by stereotypes of the bestial savage and the raped and tormented white woman.’²⁰⁵ It is not surprising that the Horne narratives provide no direct information about the nature of sexual relations with her captor: if she was already assumed to have been raped, there would be little purpose in stressing the point. Even by the time of the first witness statement, the issue of rebels raping white female captives had become contentious, with many commentators countering earlier claims of endemic sexual violence with assertions that nothing of the sort had ever happened.²⁰⁶ Against this background, the textual silence on the matter is understandable.

III. Captors and Captive

We know from George Forrest’s footnote that, among the rebels themselves, Horne was considered to be Mohamed Ismail Khan’s wife. Presumably this marriage, like the conversion to Islam that immediately preceded it, was not entirely voluntary. It would be naive, therefore, to imagine that no sexual contact, violent or otherwise, took place between Ismail Khan and his captive. June Wilmshurst, in fact, speculates that Horne may have been pregnant when she returned to Calcutta, the effects of a forced abortion procured by her family contributing to the ‘insanity’ later attributed to her.²⁰⁷ We have seen how the 1858 article printed in *The Times* substitutes Ismail Khan (and other rebel characters) with the African eunuch, a desexed figure suggestive of alien

²⁰⁵ Castaglia, *Bound and Determined* (1996), p. 3.

²⁰⁶ See p.43.

²⁰⁷ June Wilmshurst, ‘Cawnpore Massacre: Amelia Horne’s Story’, *Indiaman* 10 (June 1998), p. 36.

sexuality. When Horne's captor does make an appearance in the earlier narratives he remains anonymous, described as 'the sowar who took me from the boat.'²⁰⁸ Only the 1913 account provides his name, and a suitably fearsome personal description:

He was named Mohamed Ismail Khan, and was a sowar belonging to the 3rd Cavalry. In age he was quite young, numbering about twenty-eight years; of medium height, and quite sallow complexion. His face was badly pitted with pock, and was adorned with a black beard divided in the centre. His eyes were the most striking feature in his face, being black and piercing, and capable of driving fear into one. The expression of his face was not by any means pleasant, and when roused to anger it was terrible to behold..²⁰⁹

As I have suggested, this account may have been an elaboration on the previous narratives, and Ismail Khan's description therefore a work of the imagination. The sowars of the Cawnpore garrison came from the 2nd Bengal Native Cavalry; the 3rd Cavalry, notoriously, had led the mutiny at Meerut and later spearheaded the rebel capture of Delhi.²¹⁰

Speculations about Horne's captor are liable to be defeated by the opacity of her text. His name may not even have been Mohammed Ismail Khan; the erasure of his identity in the earlier narratives may have been intended to protect him. As a prominent mutineer (Forrest's note describes him as a Colonel in the rebel forces),²¹¹ apparently related to the deposed royal family of Oudh and in some way intimate with

²⁰⁸ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

²⁰⁹ Bennett. 'Ten Month's Captivity', II. p. 78.

²¹⁰ J. Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut in 1857* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1966).

²¹¹ Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny* (1904), vol.I note to p. 421.

the Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah, even Horne's dubious letter of exoneration could not be expected to shield him from arrest, trial and possible execution.

There are actually few instances provided in the narratives of deliberate cruelty by the sowar. The 1858 witness statement describes him towing her behind his horse, although elsewhere Amy describes riding on her own horse, or in a dhoolie (a litter commonly used to transport women). Similarly, both the British Library manuscript and the 1913 account describe a nightmarish twenty-day journey on foot after leaving Lucknow, during which Horne was weak with fever and suffering from lacerated feet: this is presumably the same incident, although the length of the journey is much extended. In both cases, it appears to be an unusual and desperate expedient.

The early accounts mention Horne's *captivity*, but the word *captor* is entirely absent. Ismail Khan is only described in this way at one point in the 1913 narrative, although Horne calls herself *his captive* in the British Library manuscript. In part this may be a symptom of the obscurity that cloaks the sowar throughout those early narratives, and an unwillingness to admit him as a genuinely significant figure. But there is nevertheless an ambiguity in the way he is presented in these texts that perhaps reflects a wider ambiguity in the narrator's feelings towards him. Ismail Khan's various appearances in the story are principally connected with movement: he is the agent of Horne's frequent removals from one place to another. But these removals in turn are connected with moments of imminent danger, and the movements themselves configured as rescue rather than further abduction. The sowar's very first appearance is at a moment of just such danger.

Trapped on the grounded boat at the riverbank in Cawnpore as the infantry sepoy begin to loot, Amy readies herself for certain death:

(W)e knew it was the Lord's will, and tried to prepare ourselves for what was coming, feeling sure that hour was not distant when we should have to stand before His dread presence. Even the lips of the youngest moved in prayers, and my poor little sister was crying upon our God for mercy and help ...

It was just then, I was beckoned to by a sowar, who was on his horse along side of my boat, the water up to his very saddle girths [...] he levelled his gun at me, but finding it had not the effect of frightening me, and not able to come near enough himself, ordered another rebel, who was on board at the time looting, to throw me into the water ...²¹²

This incident remains one of the most pivotal, and most obscure, in the whole narrative. It is apparent from other sources, including Thomson and several of the witnesses interrogated by Colonel Williams, that the officers and men of the Bengal Cavalry were the driving force of the rebellion in Cawnpore at this point. Thomson specifically mentions that the troopers of the 2nd Cavalry fired the first shots of the massacre.²¹³ We can hardly assume a humanitarian motive for Amy's rescue. The silence of the account is perhaps merely an averting of the narrative gaze from the inadmissible: we are intended to infer that Amy was taken from the boat as sexual loot. It would appear from the depositions collected by Colonel Williams that a number of women were taken from river by sowars that day, with the fabled Miss Wheeler widely believed to be amongst their number. Significantly, all of these women were Eurasian.²¹⁴

²¹² British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

²¹³ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (1859), p. 166.

²¹⁴ See for example the depositions of William Clarke, Khoda Bux, Gobind Singh, Sheik Elahee Buksh, Ghouse Mohamed, Elizabeth Spiers, Mrs Bradshaw and Mrs Letts, and Futteh Sing, in Williams, *Depositions (on the mutiny of 1857) taken at Cawnpore* (No listed publisher, Allahabad, 1859).

Whatever his reason, the sowar's action certainly saved Horne's life. Later, in the rebel camp at Farroukabad, the sowar intervenes once more – albeit at the command of the Maulvi Liakat Ali - to rescue Horne from a threatened execution. Williams' *Depositions* provides another piece of intriguing background information here: at Farroukabad the rebel force from Cawnpore, led by the principally Muslim troopers of the 2nd Cavalry, met another contingent from Sitapur largely comprising the Hindu soldiers of the 41st Native Infantry. A three-way rivalry developed between these two units and the local nawab, Taffazzul Hussein Khan, which threatened to erupt into open warfare. According to John Fitchett, a Eurasian drummer travelling with the rebels, the principal cause was the refusal of the 2nd Cavalry sowars to surrender a 'European lady' in their charge.²¹⁵ Whether the intended spectacular execution was true or not, Liakat Ali's order to Ismail Khan to remove Amy from the city seems designed to avoid further discord.

Following her flight from Farroukabad, Horne was taken to Lucknow, but her stay in the city is divided into five successive removals, each a response to threat. From the dyer's hut, where 'some women discovered my place of concealment [...] and were about to betray me,'²¹⁶ the sowar took her to the Observatory, or Taronwali Kothi, at that time the headquarters of the Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah. The Maulvi in turn deserted the Observatory, and it was soon reoccupied by a party of feuding rebel soldiers:

Momentarily I expected them to wreak their vengeance upon me – the din and confusion, together with their looks, which were something fiendish from the effects of

²¹⁵ 'Deposition of John Fitchett, Drummer, late 6th Native Infantry', in Williams, *Depositions* (1859).

²¹⁶ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

Bhang, almost took away my reason. To elude observation I stood behind the kitchen pillar for more than 24 hours, my terror was so great that I was afraid to sit down, nay even to breathe ... From this perilous situation, I was released by the sowar.²¹⁷

Presumably Ismail Khan had been away fighting at the front line during the intervening period, and his frequent absences and reappearances are not unsurprising. He was, after all, a senior rebel commander.

The next removal, to the house of Ismail Khan's relative, 'one of the Mothers-in-Law of the King of Oude,' was terminated when that lady informed the royal authorities of Horne's presence. Hearing that the Begum was sending soldiers to arrest her, she 'entreated most piteously of the sowar' to remove her once more to the new headquarters of Ahmadullah Shah at the Gaughat palace. Her residence there ends with 'some differences arising between [Shah] and his followers.' For the third time, Horne's presence amongst the rebels seems to coincide with the appearance of conflict between them. In this case Shah 'had strong suspicions that some of his men would either poison my food or murder me secretly,' and Horne once more departs for the mother-in-Law's house. This removal is the only one not explicitly engineered by Ismail Khan, although we afterwards learn that he accompanied her, and successfully bribed the lady's servant to leave her 'unmolested.'²¹⁸

Horne's stay in Lucknow ended with the final taking of the city by the British army, and this removal is the only one which suggests that Ismail Khan, 'determined my captivity should not end,' used some force or coercion upon her. In fact, the fall of Lucknow was a bloody and chaotic sacking, and since Amy, by her own admission, entirely resembled an Indian woman at this point we might imagine her chances of

²¹⁷ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

safely presenting herself to the rampaging British troops to be slim. Nevertheless, she remained with Ismail Khan throughout the following arduous trek across the devastated countryside of Oudh, being once more rescued by him from the clutches of a suspicious Zamindar, or local landowner ('I managed my escape at night, with the assistance of the sowar').

Only at the very end of her captivity, during the stay at the village of Guthni, does Horne speculate on the sowar's possible motives, and the workings of his mind. Reports of the continuing British pacification of Oudh 'frightened' the sowar, but a proclamation gave hope of pardon for those who had sheltered Christians. This proclamation, actually issued at Allahabad on the 14th of March 1858, promised that 'those who have protected English lives, be specially entitled to consideration and leniency,' but also noted that those who had participated in murder were excluded from mercy.²¹⁹

'Now was the time for the sowar to make use of his captive,' Horne writes:

I am confident foreseeing this he had spared my life. I saw actually, he was in a dilemma, afraid to trust the Proclamation and take me into Allahabad and as much alarmed about my being found with him, they were both evils he could not combat with, so he chose the lesser, and told me he would release me, provided I would plead in his favour and obtain a pardon for all the atrocities he had committed no matter of how black a dye.²²⁰

The 1913 account adds the note that Ismail Khan was 'perplexed ... as, treachery being the breath of his nostrils, how could he abstain from imagining the British of

²¹⁹ 'Awadh Proclamation', S.A.A. Ritzi and M.L. Bhargava (eds) *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh, Vol.II (Awadh)* (Publications Bureau, Uttar Pradesh, 1961), p. 328.

²²⁰ Bennett. 'Ten Month's Captivity', II. p. 78.

being guilty of a ruse to reclaim their white brethren?’²²¹ Whether the sowar breathed treachery or not, Horne’s suggestion that he had captured her back at Cawnpore with the idea of one day using her as collateral in his pardon is hard to believe: she suggests something similar of the Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah, but there is no evidence of the rebels attempting to negotiate with the British for the release of hostages like Madeline Jackson, or of the British expecting or prompting any such negotiation. We must assume that the rebels fully expected themselves to be victorious in the uprising, and only in hindsight would it have seemed wise to capture white women as bargaining material. The matter of the sowar’s motivation in holding Amy for so long remains, therefore, obscure.

Ismail Khan’s supposed atrocities are similarly undisclosed, aside from his presumed participation in the riverbank massacre. As I have shown, Horne mentions the barbarous actions of the native troops regularly throughout her narratives, but never admits to having personally witnessed any such scenes after her captivity begins. In her reports, the various tortures and executions are attributed only to the undifferentiated mass of ‘mutineers’ or ‘rebels’, or in one case ‘a mob’. These rumoured atrocities could be conceived as standing in for other, perhaps more personal, violence that Horne does not wish to disclose, but they also function to stress the moral and cultural gulf between the narrator and her captors: the division between British and Indian, Christian and Muslim, civilisation and barbarity. But this identification and codification of otherness itself raises problems: no matter that Horne attributes her salvation to God, and constant prayer, the fact remains that individual rebels themselves are the agents of her survival.

²²¹ Bennett. ‘Ten Month’s Captivity’, II. p. 78.

As I have described in the previous chapter, there are several instances in the narratives of named individuals being presented in an ambiguous, or even sympathetic light: the sowar Kulleem, mentioned in the 1858 witness statement, whose attempted intervention in the torture of a woman at Farroukabad was written out of later accounts, or Azimullah Khan in Forrest's anecdote, who appears to take pity on Amy's sufferings. The Maulvi Liakat Ali is attributed 'compassion' at one point, and certainly saves Horne's life at Farroukabad, as she would go on to testify at his trial. Perhaps the most ambiguous of these figures, and certainly the most significant in the story as a whole, is Ahmadullah Shah.

Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah, alias Ziahuddin, alias Horne's 'Sha-ah Hum o Dilla', has proved quite an enigma to British historians. 'No one was sure,' writes Christopher Hibbert, 'or ever afterwards discovered, who the Maulvee was.'²²² Commonly supposed to have been an Oudh *taluqdar* from the region of Faizabad, dispossessed of his lands by the British revenue surveyors, he often features in accounts of the revolt as 'the Moulvie of Faizabad'. But, unknown to British scholarship for over a century, there was a far more complete witness to the mysterious Maulvi's identity.

Written in 1863, *Tawarikh-i-Ahmadi* is a verse biography of Shah by one of his former disciples, Fath Muhammed Taib. Published in Lucknow in 1925, this work has since been studied by a number of Indian and Pakistani historians.²²³ Taib's account confirms the evidence of the Horne narratives: far from being a dispossessed rural

²²² Christopher Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny, India 1857* (1979), p. 370.

²²³ No English translation exists of this text, but a summary is provided in Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri's article 'The Profile of a Saintly Rebel: Maulavi Ahmadullah Shah', *Social Scientist*, 26, 1-4, (Jan-April 1998).

landowner, Ahmadullah Shah was actually the son of the Nawab of Chinapattam in Madras province. As a youth, he travelled to London, where he was presented to the king and other ‘notables of the kingdom’, displaying ‘his use of arms at his own request.’²²⁴ After adopting a messianic strain of sufiism, Shah transformed himself into religious leader of considerable charisma and prestige, and spent several months in Lucknow, inciting the people to jihad against the British.²²⁵

Shah’s divinely inspired leadership gained him a renewed following after the uprising, especially amongst the army and the urban poor, and by the time of Horne’s initial captivity in the city he was operating as unofficial commander of the rebel forces, in direct and often physical conflict with the authority of the Begum of Oudh and her young son.²²⁶

Horne’s portrayal of this man, who was still commanding an army against the British at the time of her earliest accounts, is dramatically contradictory. In the 1858 witness statement, she mentions him in connection with an alleged massacre in Lucknow:

I was informed that about 14 Ladies & Children who had secreted themselves had been discovered and that the Moulvie of Fyzabad, named Shah Ahmoodillah, wished to preserve them to make terms with the English, by delivering them up afterwards, but the sepoys insisted upon killing them & they were taken out & shot to death. I heard the firing. I was afterwards informed by the servants, who attended me, that they were stripped, their limbs hacked to pieces & strewed about, to be eaten by the dogs & the birds.

²²⁴ Jafri, ‘The Profile of a Saintly Rebel’ (1998), p. 40.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, p.41-42. See also Gautam Bhadra, ‘Four Rebels of Eighteen-Fifty-Seven’, *Subaltern Studies IV* (Oxford India, Delhi, 1985), p. 264.

²²⁶ Ritzvi and Bhargava (eds), *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh, Vol.II (Awadh)*, pp. 142-44.

The *Times* article expands on this rather neutral appraisal of the Maulvi's motives, stating that although Shah had 'a very great antipathy towards Christians, especially English,' he was nevertheless 'in every way a good, feeling, warm-hearted man, and had declared his intention of protecting women and children. As a steadfast believer in the Koran, he thought it outrageous to harm them.' Despite being 'a despot', who 'could order any person under him to be put to death, and his orders would be cheerfully carried out,' the Maulvi could read and write English, and possessed 'a somewhat distinguished mien.' As a rare mark of approval for a rebel military commander, the article also notes that Shah 'had won the respect and confidence of his men.'²²⁷

The British Library manuscript, probably composed within a year at most of the witness statement, presents 'Ahmad Ollah Shah' in quite a different light, as the instigator rather than the opponent of massacre. At Faizabad, the narrative reports, 'every European [...] had been brutally murdered by him,' but these were not his only victims:

In Lucknow he added to the list by putting to death some ladies and children about 14 in number, together with a few native Christians. They had concealed themselves in the Tykhana of the above-named house, were dragged out by a mob, barbarously served, then shot, after which their bodies were hacked to pieces and left to be food for birds of prey. I was so close to the scene of bloodshed that I distinctly heard the firing, every report telling one that some soul had been sent to its eternal home.²²⁸

²²⁷ *The Times*, 11 August 1858, p. 7.

²²⁸ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

Clearly Shah could not both have 'wished to preserve' the victims and also ordered their deaths. The reversal of his role in the killings is perhaps intended to firmly secure the Maulvi's identity as a brutal oriental despot, and dispel any possible sympathetic reading of his character and motivation. That this intention fails, and Shah remains a distinctly nuanced and ambiguous figure, is illustrative of the anxieties of representation running throughout these narratives.

IV. A Subversive Narrative?

In the accounts left by female survivors of the Lucknow siege, the writers portray themselves as essentially passive. Protected throughout by the courage of the male defenders of the Residency, their endurance of extreme discomfort and suffering is finally redeemed by male force. Men, overwhelmingly, are the heroes of these narratives; the authority and military superiority of British men allows the narrative to reach a point of closure, with the rebellion crushed and order restored.

At first reading, the Horne narratives appear to present a similar passivity in their protagonist. This, moreover, is the passivity of the captive, condemned to be carried around like loot, exposed to dangers with no means of defence. Horne repeatedly underlines this fact: she is 'a weak defenceless female who was entirely in their power', forced 'to live like some trapped animal in a cage.'²²⁹ But this passivity is quite different to the besieged state of the Lucknow ladies. In these narratives, capture by rebels is not a threat held at bay by British force, but a present reality to be endured. Prior to her capture, during the siege of the entrenchment, Horne mentions the bravery

²²⁹ Bennett, 'Ten Months Captivity', II, p. 81.

of the British defenders several times; Captain Moore of the 32nd Foot is particularly praised for his valour, and is presented as the ideal of masculine courage.

But even this bravery is insufficient to prevent the massacre at Satichaura Ghat. It is undermined, too, by implied criticisms in the two longer narratives of the British commandant of Cawnpore. General Wheeler, the British Library manuscript claims, ‘could not be brought to believe there was any danger.’ Only after lengthy delay does he take heed of the gathering threat: ‘it at last dawned on General Wheeler,’ the 1913 article continues, ‘that the fears which the whole white community entertained were not entirely groundless; that there might be something in it.’ But Wheeler ‘laughed off’ the suggestion of his officers that he should open fire upon the mutinous troops. Later, after his son is decapitated by a roundshot, Wheeler retires to the barracks, unable to ‘sustain this dreadful shock.’ These unusual allegations of weakness, or even incompetence, in the British military command find no parallel in the Lucknow narratives.

Cawnpore, in later historical accounts and in the popular consciousness of the day, became synonymous with the death and mutilation of women. It is striking, therefore, to find in the Horne narratives several visceral depictions of the death and mutilation of men:

An officer had just come into the barracks from the trenches, and had taken a seat in the verandah to rest himself... He hadn't sat down for more than a minute when a shot struck him full in the face, taking his head clean off. His body continued to remain seated, his hands falling by his sides, the blood gushing from between his shoulders like a fountain, and falling on those who rushed to his rescue.²³⁰

²³⁰ Bennett, ‘Ten Months Captivity’, II, p. 1223.

This sanguinary image occurs only in the more detailed 1913 account, but is possibly corroborated by Mowbray Thomson, who describes the death of an artillery officer while sitting in the barrack verandah in similar, although far less graphic, terms. The death of Reverend Haycock of the Church Missionary Society is also mentioned by Thomson, but again Horne provides a more vivid description. The Reverend, she says, ‘died raving mad through the combined effects of heat, exposure and fear, and used to walk about stark naked. His condition was pitiful to see.’²³¹

The death of Mr Kirkpatrick, a Eurasian ‘trader in country produce’, during the riverbank massacre is related in almost all of the Horne narratives. Kirkpatrick is ‘very horribly mutilated while wading to the boat... [the rebels] made several cuts at his neck, chopped off his hands, which he held up to protect his head, the swords being blunt and the blows awkwardly dealt, this poor man’s tortures are beyond description.’²³² Why was this particular death so significant? It becomes almost the central motif of Horne’s descriptions of the massacre, the severing of Kirkpatrick’s hands turned into a metonym for the violence of entire event. At the end of the British Library manuscript, Horne notes that ‘our poor old General, Sir Hugh Wheeler’ suffered the same fate: his ‘hands were cut off, as soon as he was brought from the boat.’ The act becomes a symbolic emasculation: with their hands cut off, the power of British men is nullified.

Taken together, the deaths of Kirkpatrick and General Wheeler, of Reverend Haycock and the unnamed officer in the verandah, present an image of the physical and psychological destruction of British male authority. Military officer, churchman,

²³¹ British Library. *Ms. Add.41488*.

²³² *Ibid.*

merchant and General are alike dismembered, alike rendered impotent. Their protection is demonstrated to be useless. Part of the anxiety that runs through the Horne narratives derives from the fact that this image of destruction is never countered by any redeeming image of the reimposition of male authority. No columns of Highlanders or British-led loyal Gurkhas rescue Amy from her captivity; she is protected, and her life preserved, by the same rebel soldier that snatched her from the river, and by other Indians similarly opposed to the British. Her deliverance is due to an act of bargaining and negotiation with her captor that demonstrates not only the ambiguous relationship between them, but also her own apparent powers of persuasion. ‘I was ready to promise my captor anything and everything,’ the 1913 narrative rather suggestively claims, ‘and to do all that a woman’s wits and ingenuity could suggest in effecting my release.’²³³

Christopher Castaglia has pointed out that female captivity narratives often implicitly challenge the ideological assumptions of patriarchal colonial societies, depicting their protagonists as ‘possessing strengths not usually attributed to white women.’²³⁴ Amy Horne’s apparent passivity, in her own narratives, could be seen as concealing just this sort of strength. Leaving aside the more outlandish 1858 account from *The Times*, which has its narrator being elected leader of a band of rebels and tricking them into dispatching her as their ambassador to the Governor of India, the narratives attest to a resilience and fortitude in survival against extraordinary odds. Beyond this, they also demonstrate the destruction of confidence in male British authority, and the narrator’s compensating ability to effectively save herself. That Horne’s return to Calcutta was so coloured by suspicions and allegations of insanity,

²³³ Bennett, ‘Ten Months Captivity’, *The Nineteenth Century and After*, II.88-89.

²³⁴ Castaglia, *Bound and Determined* (1996), p. 26.

or even collaboration, further highlights her insecurity within colonial society following the uprising.

‘The captivity archetype,’ writes Richard Slotkin, ‘demanded that the ordeal culminate in both a physical and a psychological rescue from the devil, but for most captives the latter was either incomplete or impossible ... Most were simply so stricken by the horror of their ordeal that their minds were permanently impaired and they became prey to strange guilts and torments.’ We are reminded of Horne’s reported ‘insanity’ in the months following her return to Calcutta. ‘Their fellow citizens could have no conception of the ordeal or their response to it, and thus their experience alienated them from their fellows.’²³⁵

Slotkin goes on to describe the obsession of many returned captives with public confession – or narration of their experiences – as a way to overcome the ‘dense accretion of residual horror’ left by their experiences. The captive, by confessing or narrating what had happened, ‘hoped to ingratiate himself with his society by portraying himself as its symbolic martyr and scapegoat, yet at the same time he wished to express his sense of alienation and to release his hostility and contempt for his society and its smug ignorance of his true plight.’²³⁶

This insecurity, and this lack of confidence in British ability to control India, creates an awkward tension running through these texts. The archetypal form of the female mutiny memoir, with its safe return to British control and British male authority, worked to support the structures of colonial dominance; Horne’s narratives, with their depictions of British defeat and dismemberment, their lack of any conclusive redeeming demonstrations of vengeance or enacted justice, and their

²³⁵ Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence* (1973), pp. 128-129.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

underlying anxieties of social and racial identification, effectively challenge and subvert those same structures.

Clearly, then, these texts depart quite quickly from the linear narrative structure that typifies the mutiny memoir. Their internal tensions and contradictions repelled easy assimilation into the traditional British historiography of the uprising, but these same aspects appear intriguing to historians of a more recent era. An age that welcomes ambiguity and distrusts passivity is perhaps inclined to find more worth in the Horne narratives than in the more obvious piety and fortitude of the ladies of Lucknow. Even so, in their obscurity of detail and motivation, their repression or alteration of facts, there is much in these narratives that resists any sort of incorporation into wider discourse, whether historical or literary. However they are labelled, and however they are read, the Horne narratives remain shimmering and elusive.

Conclusion

Novels arise out of the shortcomings of history.

Novalis, *Fragmente und Studien, 1799-1800*²³⁷

Amy Horne passed only briefly across the stage of history. We have the date of her birth, the year of her death; we have photographs of her youth and her old age. Beyond that, we have a series of stories: textual accounts of that brief period of ten months when she inhabited the violent epicentre of uprising and conflict.

But Horne's stories, even those written in her own hand and authentically dated, cannot supply us with the true voice, or true experience of the woman herself. Kay Schaffer, writing of her own researches into Eliza Fraser, a nineteenth-century victim of abduction in Australia, is quite clear about the difficulties facing even the most diligent historian. The subject of study, she writes, 'is not there to be found behind, beyond or at the bottom of the detritus of documentation – she has been constructed in, by and through the remaining narratives of the event. She has no knowable life beyond that ... The belief that she somehow stands behind it all and can be rescued by the historian or biographer may be a belief necessary to the task, but it is an illusion.'²³⁸

We do not experience our lives as historical; the shape and form of our own times is not available to us, but will be formed by the historians of the future. History provides a method and a set of conventions for retrieving the lost events of the past and

²³⁷ Quoted in A.S. Byatt, *On Histories and Stories* (Chatto & Windus, London, 2000), p. 62.

²³⁸ Kay Schaffer, *In The Wake of First Contact* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995), p. 14.

making them comprehensible, allowing us to appreciate complexities and connections of which the inhabitants of that time were unaware. Fiction, conversely, attempts to reconstruct the confusion and unknowing of individuals living in the present, unaware of the great historical forces that warp their lives and drive their experiences. ‘Against the force of history, so powerful, visible and real,’ Don DeLillo says, ‘the novelist poses the idiosyncratic self ... the only thing that can match the enormous dimensions of social reality.’²³⁹

To recreate in fiction the experience of an individual living amid the confusion and violence of historical conflict is to attempt to lift that life and experience from the surrounding matter of history, and to restore the sense of urgent uncertainty that we find in ourselves in our reactions to the events that surround us.

Amy Horne’s story would seem to present a fruitful subject for fiction, with a strong dramatic arc, colourful incidents and exotic locations. But, as I have demonstrated, the texts that construct this story are themselves situated on the uncertain divide between fact and fiction. At least two of them, the 1858 *Times* narrative and the 1913 magazine article, show the hand of an outside editor in their composition and detail. In the metamorphosis of the story from a spartan initial witness testimony to a fully developed narrative, complete with sensational descriptions and sentimental appeals to the sympathies of the reader, we can trace the distillation of direct experience into crafted prose. The story of Amy Horne comes to us pre-digested, already blended and flavoured with artistic construction, authorial prejudice and the desire for resolution and closure.

²³⁹ Don DeLillo, ‘The Power of History’, *New York Times Book Review*, Sunday, 7 September 1997.

But just as the discipline and philosophy of history itself has developed under the influence of contemporary theory, which brings into question the claims of historical narratives to objective truth and factual analysis,²⁴⁰ so the historical novel form has grown to exceed the parameters it once occupied. No longer could a story set in the past be described, as Georg Lukács once put it, as ‘an artistically faithful image of a concrete historical epoch.’²⁴¹ The historical literature of the twenty-first century is rooted in the idea that we are implicated in the past, and that as both writers and readers we are fully complicit in the construction and maintenance of identifiable images and narratives of history. As the New Historicism of the late twentieth century brought into focus the operation of subjective processes in the composition of historical texts, the interpenetration of literature and the fabric of fact, so contemporary novelists are aware of their art not as a mirror held up to an immutable past, but rather as a contribution to the shaping and expression of history itself.

Dipesh Chakrabarty has suggested that there are certain historical areas or subjects which cannot be successfully apprehended by the conventional methodology of the academic historian. These areas, lying at ‘the limits of the discourse of history,’ he calls *subaltern pasts*. As a ‘penumbra of shadow to the area of the past that the method of history successfully illuminates, they make visible what historicising can do and what its limits are.’²⁴² Drawing on Chakrabarty’s concept, Rudrangshu Mukherjee has referred specifically to the massacres at Kanpur (i.e. Cawnpore) as examples of just this sort of liminal event, resistant to the sober analytical discipline of history: in

²⁴⁰ Onega, Susana (ed), *Telling Histories: Narrativizing History, Historicizing Literature* (Editions Rodopi BV, Amsterdam, 1995), p.12.

²⁴¹ Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (Merlin Press, London, English edition 1962), p.19.

²⁴² Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 33, 9 (Feb. 28 - Mar. 6, 1998), pp. 477-8.

the magnitude and intensity of the violence, the destruction or unreliability of witness testimony and the corresponding lack of historical contextualisation, the massacres remain a contested site, unclaimed and unclaimable by historians unable, or unwilling, to step across the boundary of verifiable historical evidence and enter the shadows of the subaltern past.²⁴³

This may suggest that the depth and complexity of the past, and the inherent evasiveness of historical truth, leave fiction as a more coherent medium of engagement with certain subjects than either conventional narrative history or thematic analysis. Indeed, Chakrabarty himself notes that some scholars have recently opted to ‘perform the limits of history by fictionalising the past.’²⁴⁴ Creating fictions of the past necessarily involves an imaginative and empathetic leap beyond the field of study available to the historian. But while this act has the potential to escape the confines of such study, and bring the events of the past into the realm of genuine lived experience, it creates a corresponding danger of misrepresentation, simplification and pseudo-historicism: a version of the past informed more by the discourses and preoccupations of the present, and of intervening centuries, than of genuine history. The richness and depth of previous eras becomes compromised, dependant on their performability in the novelistic imagination. Subject to constant revision in the ebb and flow of contemporary concerns, any core authenticity the past might possess would be lost to a relativistic subjectivity of depiction. If history can be anything we want it to be, it can also be nothing more than fantasy.

²⁴³ Mukherjee, *Spectre of Violence* (1998), p.161.

²⁴⁴ Chakrabarty, ‘Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts’ (1998), p. 478.

In composing my own novel, *The Division of the Blood*, which attempts an imaginative reconstruction of Amy Horne and her experiences during the uprising, I was necessarily alert to the issues outlined above. Even at the commencement of the project, I was aware that Horne's story, for all its appearance of cohesion and its dramatic appeal, was only a thin and rather frayed thread, stretched across a gulf of unknown depths. Quite apart from the textual discrepancies in the Horne narratives themselves, there was much that was left out of the account: often this missing detail, the unspeakable or inexpressible detail of emotional and sexual violence, trauma and the psychological effects of captivity in an alien culture, was vitally important in making sense of the whole.

How, then, could I present Amy Horne herself as a real and sympathetic character, rather than merely a passive observer of a sequence of terrible episodes, a victim lacking agency? Could I find a narrative voice or register that would allow me to articulate this material without replicating the forms, and the attendant ideologies, either of the original documents or of nineteenth century historiography? Conversely, could I create a dramatic portrait of the uprising without imposing an ahistorical post-colonial sensibility upon it, either by reversing the moral polarity of the more partisan nineteenth century histories and recasting the British as the 'diabolical' Other, or by constructing a more sympathetic romantic relationship between captor and captive? How could I restore to the narrative of Amy's experience the horror, fear and confusion – both moral and sexual - that she, for obvious reasons, omits? How, in short, could I speak the unspeakable?

In the process of researching and writing the novel, I soon discovered that in these apparent problems lay the greatest strengths of this material. Undisclosed facts, unspeakable actions and repressed desires, what Margaret Scanlon calls 'the signifying

absences in our discourse' provide, after all, the principal motive force for much contemporary fiction.²⁴⁵ To pay close attention to these absences, and to those stubborn and intractable tangles of contradiction or obscurity in the source texts that refuse to be dissolved into comprehensible narrative, is to gain an awareness of, and potentially an access to, the concealed depths that lie beneath the historical record. Rather than seeing the difficulties of the Horne narratives as problems obstructing the free flow of imagination and creativity, to be either resolved or ignored, I therefore came to treat them as spurs to invention.

My method in composing the novel was, from the start, to research Amy and her story to the furthest borders of documented proof, and to use that scaffolding of fact as a guide to invention when I entered the disputed territories of the unknown.²⁴⁶ Every detail noted in the source narratives would therefore be incorporated in some way; only in cases where such details are in direct opposition or are demonstrably false have I been selective, and then I have attempted to suggest possible significances in this conflict in representation.

Some of the episodes described in the narratives found their way very easily into the story: the incident of the flower garlands in Lucknow, for example, which forms the dramatic core of the second chapter in the novel. In my description of the siege of the Cawnpore entrenchment I was able to draw not only on the lengthy statements in Horne's own narratives but also on complementary accounts by Mowbray Thomson,

²⁴⁵ Margaret Scanlon, *Traces of Another Time: History and Politics in Postwar British Fiction* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1990), p. 15.

²⁴⁶ This method is similar to that described by Margaret Atwood in her note to *Alias Grace*, as 'accommodating all possibilities wherever feasible. Where mere hints and outright gaps exist in the records, I have felt free to invent ...' (*Alias Grace* (Anchor Books, London, 1997), p. 465).

William Shepherd and some of the witnesses interviewed by Colonel Williams.²⁴⁷ The difficulty here was in digesting this mass of information and anecdote into a chronological narrative, and presenting the siege as a sequence of lived experiences rather than a collection of fragmented memories.

Other incidents, treated in a more cursory way within the source texts, presented a different challenge. Towards the end of both of the longer narratives, Horne briefly mentions her capture by a Zamindar, or landowner, near Rae Bareilly and her escape by night ‘with the assistance of the sowar.’²⁴⁸ This episode is described in three sparse sentences, and little context or colour is provided: by this point, Amy has left Lucknow, and her story is shaping towards a conclusion. From a structural point of view, the scene appears to serve little purpose, and it would have been easy to ignore it and move the story directly from Lucknow to the village of Guthni. Regarded thematically, however, this brief episode gained an importance lacking in the original narratives: this is the first time that Amy and Ismail Khan are travelling alone, and this scene shows both of them united against a common enemy. The captor aids in the escape of the captive.

While attempting not to ignore details, I was also keen not to overwrite verifiable fact with my own invention, however satisfying or tempting that might be. I could not, for example, alter the chronology of events at Cawnpore to place Amy at the Bibighar during the more infamous of the killings: she only hears of this later, second hand. There are actually a series of unseen massacres, both of Europeans and of Indians, reported to Amy during her travels, and I wanted these to run together, like a constant off-stage noise and threat. While it would have been more dramatic, maybe, to present

²⁴⁷ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (1858); Shepherd, *A Personal Narrative of the Outbreak and Massacre at Cawnpore* (1877); Williams, *Depositions* (1858).

²⁴⁸ Bennett, ‘Ten Months Captivity’, II, p. 87.

them directly, to do so would rupture the empathetic concord I had built up with my sources and my subject.

Early in the composition of the novel, I had begun to introduce fragments of source material – extracts from newspapers, letters and proclamations – into the narrative, either providing a background to the events of the story or lending an ironic highlight to the situation of the protagonist.²⁴⁹ These quotes, in their original form rather than a fictionalised reworking, are intended to give a sense of an ongoing moment in time, presenting a wider and more public view of history quite distinct from the fabric of Amy's individual experiences. I wanted the constant underpinning of documentation to create a sense of how an historical moment is appreciated by those caught in the middle of it.

This textual interplay reflected the increasing interest in a critical analysis of the source materials themselves that I had developed over the course of my research. In particular, my discovery of the handwritten witness statement in the SOAS archives, and the copies of original photographs of Amy herself and her family, suggested an enticing fictional engagement with the actual transmission of the narratives, and the public persona of a survivor of the uprising.

The novel opens with a scene in a photographer's studio: the moment, in September of 1858, that Amy sat for her wedding portrait. The reader first encounters her as an image, framed in the glass of the Daguerreotype camera, silent and almost motionless. The closing chapter concerns the composition of the 1858 witness statement: Amy's inability to speak effectively of her ordeal is countered by her ability

²⁴⁹ A similar strategy is used to good effect in Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* (Secker & Warburg, London, 2003) and Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (Anchor Books, London, 1997). J.G. Farrell similarly uses newspaper excerpts to suggest a surrounding historical moment in *Troubles* (Jonathan Cape, London, 1970).

to write. This sort of narrative manoeuvre, I hope, places the story within the context of its own sources, bringing those sources, and the mass of other supporting texts, into the frame of the novel itself. By reaching outside of the boundaries of the story in this way, I wanted to dramatise the sense of an engagement with history – rather than merely with historical fiction – that I felt during my own research, but do so with all the imaginative freedom of the novel form.

Nevertheless, any novelist basing fiction on real historical events must be aware that at some point their imaginative reconstruction will depart from the available documentary evidence. All fiction is necessarily a simulation, and novels set in the past are more obvious in their artificiality, dependent on a set of narrative conventions to create an illusory window into the lives and experiences of past eras and dead people.

My years of study and writing have brought me a great familiarity with my protagonist: in London and in Delhi I was able to read letters written and signed by Amy herself, and I have also corresponded with descendents of her family; in India I visited many of the sites in modern Kanpur and Lucknow that formed the location of her experiences, and spent a week living in a small village in rural Madhya Pradesh. By studying other documents and histories of the surrounding events, and of the patterning of life in the India of the mid-nineteenth century, and by reading more recent accounts of captivity and survival in Lebanon, Chechnya, Afghanistan and Colombia,²⁵⁰ I have been able to colour some of the voids in Horne's testimony, and provide a cohesive

²⁵⁰ Camilla Carr, *The Sky is Always There* (Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2008); Dayna Curry, *Prisoners of Hope* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 2002); Brian Keenan, *An Evil Cradling* (Hutchinson, London, 1992) and Ingrid Betancourt, *Even Silence Has An End* (Virago, London, 2010).

background against which her story can develop. But for all my imaginative empathy with her, I know that the ‘real’ Amy Horne is absent to me, and not waiting to be discovered, narrated or ventriloquised, either through fictional writing or factual research. My portrait, for all its conscious attention to detail, is necessarily a false one.

But to write a novel is to attempt more than just an accurate reflection of life, or of a single individual within any historical or contemporary setting. Just as the historian is able to expose connections and significances in past events that may have been invisible or obscure to the participants, so the historical novelist, by attending closely and critically to the fabric of the past, can potentially reach through it and expose the truths of genuine experience. By the medium of storytelling, description, suspense and imaginative empathy, the narratives of the dead can be reinvigorated with the vivid sensations of the living present, in all their rich and bloody complexity. ‘Fiction,’ writes Don DeLillo, ‘is all about reliving things. It is our second chance.’²⁵¹

²⁵¹ Don DeLillo, ‘The Power of History’. *New York Times Book Review*. Sunday, 7 September 1997.

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