

CULTURES OF CORRUPTION: BRITISH
LIBERTINISM AND ITS COLONIAL
MANIFESTATIONS

By

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INTRODUCTION

In Restoration drama the rake's dashing wit and outlandish lifestyle remain in focus, and his schemes drive the action, which is never complete until he has achieved his ends. It is not difficult to trace the rake's influence on numerous and diverse character types such as Samuel Richardson's egotistical and vicious Lovelace, Henry Fielding's extravagant Tom Jones, and Oscar Wilde's dandies, Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff. Additionally, as Harold Weber points out "important aspects of the rake characterize figures as diverse as Byron's early Romantic heroes, the frightening villains of gothic fiction, and the Wickhams and Crawfords of Jane Austen's prose comedies of manners" (H. Weber 184). The uninhibited, self-indulgent, exhibitionist spirit of the rake, however, was not confined to the Western world or its literature. Nearly two hundred years after his existence in England, the rake became well known in colonial Calcutta as a new class of young, educated, and self-absorbed men embarked on a life of libertinism that clearly resembled the hedonistic, rebellious, and riotous manner in which the Restoration rakes had lived their lives. The fact that the Restoration rake's way of life was taken up again in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta attests to his ability to find resonance well beyond the borders that time, culture, and geographical distance may have fashioned.

This study's purpose is to examine libertinism in a cross-cultural context that forwards an examination of the Restoration rake from a new perspective by showing his influence on Indian culture; it also introduces an influential group of Bengali men who are little known in the West to examine the manner in which libertinism was exported through the medium of colonialism. It will contribute to an enrichment of our understanding of the fascinating culture and literature of libertinism as it extends beyond the standard figures that one normally encounters in texts dealing solely with Western libertinism. This is especially true to date no one has attempted to draw the Bengali libertine and the Restoration rake together to explore how the libertinism of the latter figure influenced the libertine lifestyle and aesthetics of the former.

The rake, as presented in Western literature, is bold, resourceful, and entirely self-indulgent. His lifestyle is one of adventure, leisure, and pleasure. In literature, his actions generally bear no negative consequences, which suggests that one could lead this libertine lifestyle and enjoy its benefits without having to face any grave and long-lasting consequences. Indeed this representation sorely troubled Jeremy Collier, who complained in his remarks on *The Relapse* that those who are ignoble and wicked are not punished in Restoration comedies but are ultimately rewarded. Collier writes: "To speak freely, a lewd character seldom wants good luck in comedy," and cites Young Fashion whom he considers a rake as an example (J. Collier 137). The rake also taps into the fantasies of the theatre-going audience of the Restoration by enjoying any number of pursuits that most audience members with the smallest sense of decorum would avoid at all costs especially if they felt that society could find them out, ridicule, or chastise them. According to Robert Hume: "contemporary audiences enjoyed the titillation without

actually approving of what it saw” (R. Hume *Development* 90). The rake allowed the British audience to live vicariously, which accounted to a large extent for his popularity in the literary and theatrical culture of the time. In this regard Liza Picard notes: “the [theatre] doors opened at noon, when theatre-goers could pay their money, push their way to a seat and wait for three hours or more, as boxes and rows of benches filled to capacity and beyond” (L. Picard 215). The Restoration audience obviously enjoyed what it witnessed and a large measure of enjoyment came from the rakes portrayed on stage. Comedies, of course, formed only one of the types of plays this audience with diverse tastes saw, but Hume points out that there was a “boom in sex-comedy which had been escalating through the mid-1670s” which points to the popularity of its central character (R. Hume *Rakish* 56). Weber notes that the “rake was one of the most popular of stock theatrical types,” and a large portion of the entertainment value and popularity of a play was derived from the main character (H. Weber 6).

The aforementioned reasons that allowed the rakes to become popular figures in England were also important aspects that accounted for the popularity of their lifestyle in an orthodox society such as the one in colonial nineteenth-century Calcutta where “imitation of the West was seen as a way of escaping the degraded present of Hindu society” (R. Vrudhula 56). In the context of a predominantly conservative Bengali culture that favored restraint and wisdom over freedom and whimsy, the rake became the symbol for a new age of possibilities for many of Bengal’s rich and Western-educated youths. These youths, however, did not wish to simply live vicariously through the rake; they wanted to experience and embody his revolt against mainstream society and cultivate his individualistic viewpoint. They were the first generation of libertines in Calcutta and their

libertinism was “a revolt against society’s customs, conventions and institutions in favor of a more naturalistic state which allowed an individual free and uncensored expression of desires and drives” (B.A. Kachur 12). Adopting the decadent lifestyle and aesthetics of the Restoration rakes, these men were called “babus” and appeared throughout nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta.

Tapan Raychaudhuri, renowned Indian historian, writes that the babus were the “first Asian social group of any size whose mental world was transformed through its interactions with the West” (T. Raychaudhuri *Europe* ix). As the first generation of Indian men that was raised under British rule, the babus believed that being educated in Western literatures and possessing qualities such as suavity, sophistication, and progressive-mindedness—traits often associated with the rake— would earn the admiration of the British. Therefore they actively sought to represent themselves in a manner that would enable them to achieve their desired goals of gaining some measure of recognition from their colonizers. Horace Wilson, an influential Victorian scholar, claimed: “Orientalists wish Indians to study so that they may elevate their own culture, religion, and morality” and the babus agreed with the Orientalists’ view (D. David 126). The babus realized they could only receive acceptance if the British perceived them as being socially and culturally evolved. Aware that the British considered “European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures,” the babus comprehended that they could use their money as a means to display their

refinement and social status proving that the negative opinions the British entertained were unfounded (E. Said 7).¹

Because of this desire for acknowledgment, the babus cultivated a subculture whose chief characteristics were personal advancement, eminence, liberation, and liberalism—characteristics strongly similar to those the rake cultivated. The chief approach they adopted in order to ostensibly embody such values was to adopt a libertine lifestyle, one which inevitably led them to quickly run afoul of orthodox Indian society, and receive little in the way of praise or favorable recognition from both their own people and their British idols.² Of this censure Subir Raychaudhuri, professor of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University in Calcutta, correctly writes: “the sahibs applied [the word babu] to Indians in a derogatory fashion...the word reflects all the contempt of the ruler for the ruled” (S. Raychaudhuri 69). Krishna Datta adequately sums up Bengali horror of the babu phenomenon: “To the alarm of the older generation, [the babus] became haughty and iconoclastic, speaking and writing only in English wearing only European clothes, drinking alcohol and eating beef [forbidden for Hindus]—and even converting to Christianity” (K. Dutta 43).

The Restoration rake, possessing a desire to shock and seeking pleasure in all he strove to do, had an image of himself in his mind that he endeavored to project in society. As Weber notes, “his love of disguise, need for freedom, and fondness for play all

¹ Chapter I of this dissertation provides a sustained look into how the babus’ fathers made fortunes which then supported babu culture. Also see Sumanta Banerjee’s book *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth-Century Calcutta* for a discussion on the rise of *dewans* and *banians*, Bengali agents of British businessmen.

² The babus received heavy criticism from contemporary mainstream society. Chapters III, IV, and V detail and examine the censure that they received and account for why there was such a strong anti-babu feeling in colonial Calcutta in the nineteenth century.

establish the complexity of the rakish personality” (H. Weber 3).³ In his mind he was suave, irresistible, debonair, witty, clever, and rebellious—a man of rare qualities. George Etherege’s Dorimant, for instance, holds such an elevated opinion of himself. Dorimant obviously has won the admiration of other young and rakish men like Medley and wishes to retain it; he is flattered to learn that Lady Woodvill has heard of him and fears his success with young ladies of the town and is mortified when he thinks Mrs. Loveit may actually prefer the foolish Sir Fopling to him, since it would destroy the image of himself as pursued, cherished, and desired lover that he has so carefully constructed. As my analysis of the crucial aspects of the babu’s life will show, the babu, like the Western rake, carefully chose his activities, his companions, and his conquests to bolster a similar image of himself that he worked diligently to craft. My study, then, looks at the rake not merely as a character in a play that is indicative of certain aspects of British culture, but as a potent agent of change in nineteenth-century Bengali society and, in a very real way, the collective spirit of libertinism as it manifested itself in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta.

The luxurious lifestyles and libertinism of the babus were not copied from the British without alteration but rather the lifestyle the babus’ adopted was filtered or reworked through existing cultural factors such as education, economy, social structure, and religious beliefs. The “colonial mimicry [of the babus was, in essence,] the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other *as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite*” (H. Bhabha 86). The babus, in essence, absorbed the foreign culture and redefined libertinism. Significantly, however, many astonishing parallels between the babus’

³ For discussions on the different kinds of rakes, see Harold Weber’s *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England*.

lifestyles and aesthetics and those of the Western libertines do occur. Like their Western counterparts the babus dissipated their inherited wealth in meaningless pursuits, eschewed conventional work at all costs, were interested in money-minded marriages which would boost their fortunes, indulged in frivolity and entertainment, were obsessed with fashion, and pursued multiple sexual relationships. The primary texts of literature about the babus which are examined in this dissertation repeatedly focus on the above-mentioned features which characterized the social phenomenon of babu culture.⁴

Surveying the babus' adoption of rakish manners and behavior allow us to see the libertine in a new light and examine some of the under-explored effects of colonialism, such as the focus on ostentatious display by the Bengali rich, the widespread introduction of alcohol, an increased popularity of theatrical productions, the proliferation of prostitution, and the shifting of centuries-old social hierarchies including, in some instances, acceptance of lower-class prostitutes. Michael Madhusudan Dutt's play *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* or *Is this Civilization?* (1860), one of the most important texts of literature about the babus analyzed in this study, for example, presents the babu Nobo who delights in drunken carousing with prostitutes. In *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England* Harold Weber states: "the Restoration rake-hero's most distinctive, and therefore most important characteristic is his sexuality" (3). As will be evident, sexual pursuit and conquest were important and engrossing activities for the babus as well.

⁴ The primary texts of babu used literature in this dissertation are all in the Bengali language. For more details on their plots, critical receptions, and biographies of the authors, refer to the Appendix.

Sources Used in the Dissertation

In discussing the Restoration rake, I have mainly analyzed him as represented in literature by seventeenth-century playwrights with only occasional references to real rakes like the Earl of Rochester. The Restoration rake was often modeled after real-life rakes in seventeenth-century London society. Moreover, as Virginia Ogden Birdsall writes: “[the characters of Restoration comedy] were rakes, libertines, wits, gallants, painted with realistic strokes from living models; and court society, so one critical argument goes, merely thronged to the theatre to see and admire themselves upon a stage” (V.O. Birdsall 3). Robert Hume further opines that with “some caution and due allowance,” “plays can be used as historical evidence” (R. Hume *Rakish* 8). Since, as Hume continues, “[the plays are] a realistic presentation of contemporary society” and “Brett Smith and Fujimura both believe that major Restoration comedies exhibit something very near ‘photographic realism,’” I have utilized the fictional rakes to study the nature of libertinism in Restoration England (R. Hume *Rakish* 51). My study, however, makes limited use of real rakes and focuses mainly on the fictional representation of libertines in Restoration comedies. In those rare instances that I have referred to the Earl of Rochester, I have kept Hume’s and Birdsall’s comments in mind and have used him as a real representative of the fictional types featured in comedies from Charles II’s reign.

Several important secondary sources on the Restoration rake form significant portions of this study. Harold Weber’s *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England* and Warren Chernaik’s *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature* have been key texts in discussions involving the

rake's predatory sexual and controlling nature. Weber and Chernaik insightfully show that the rake was one of the first characters in British literature who derived his character from his sexual energy (H. Weber 3). Their studies are useful in establishing that many of the rake's activities, such as entertainments that he indulged in and lifestyle choices that he made, can be traced back to his overly sexual nature; Chernaik's analysis of the rake is also vital in exploring how the desire for liberty and liberality were salient features of the libertine lifestyle that caused the rakes to rebel against rules and norms of the society that they inhabited.

B.A. Kahur's *Etherege and Wycherley* offers insightful comments on the particular rakes these playwrights portrayed, and I have referred to this work frequently when discussing topics as diverse as the lamentable plight of wives in Restoration comedies and the rake's penchant for self-display. Robert Hume's *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century* and *The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama 1660-1800* are well-known texts that present insightful analyses on the audience of the Restoration, the meaning of the plays, marital discord in the plays, as well as offering insightful studies of individual plays. In "The Country Wife: Anatomies of Male Homosocial Desire," Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick provides an astute study of what motivated a rake to cuckold other men proving that this was a competition between the witty and charming rake and the jealous and ineffectual husband, a competition in which the wife was no more than a pawn.

The literature on the babus also uses both primary texts and historical accounts. The primary texts are all written in Bengali, the babus' native language. The babu was a social type; he was a real figure in nineteenth-century Bengali society. Chhatu babu, Latu

babu, Ramtanu Datta, Nabakrishna Deb, and Nimlani Haldar, just to name a few, were famous babus of their days of whom Chitra Deb writes in her essay “The ‘Great Houses’ of Old Calcutta.”⁵ This social phenomenon gave rise to a literary tradition and babus such as those in *Nobo Babu Bilash* or *The Drolleries of the New Babu* (1825) and *Nobo Bibi Bilash* (bibi meaning prostitute) or *The Drolleries of the New Bibi* (1831), Motilal in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* or *The Spoilt Child of Rich Parents* (1858), and Nobo in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* or *Is this Civilization?* (1860) were literary representations of the social type. In this dissertation, evidence from literature is used in conjunction with historical texts dealing with general social conditions that were responsible for the formation of the babu identity. Social satirists of the day such as Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay, Tekchand Thakur, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt used social facts in their writings to give a well-developed and detailed picture of the prevailing atmosphere of the time; hence, as Sudhosotto Basu and Jotindra Dasgupta, editors of Dutt’s *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* point out, “historians agree that such literature can be taken as very authentic social documents” (S. Basu et al. 42). Before beginning the babu’s tale, the writers often give a

⁵ The babus’ houses were indeed “great.” Krishna Dutta writes, “To name a few, [of the babus’ houses] there is the dilapidated Sovabazar Rajbati; the well preserved house of the sons of the merchant Ramdulal Day—Chhatu Babu and Latu babu—on Beadon Street; and the Victorian building, Dhurjathidham, near Belgachia tram depot. These houses, and many others, embody a free mixture of architectural influences: Hindu, Islamic, and neoclassical. Usually the front of the house boasts large Corinthian or Ionic pillars with a baroque architrave. Entering the courtyard, you see the traditional Hindu *thakur dalan* (hall of worship) and the *nat mandir* (temple of dramatics). Then you encounter *the baithakkhana* (formal reception room) and the *jalsaghar* (the music and dance hall). Look upward from the courtyard and there are arabesque grilles on the verandahs leading to the zenana or the women’s wing—an Islamic adaptation. Some of the rooms have Dutch tiles set half way up the wall or oak paneling; many of the windows are of colored glass for decorative effect and to reduce the glare of the tropical sun; the floor is either of marble or a mosaic (34). The babus’ love for luxury is evident from their houses.

general sense of the real social atmosphere of the time in which they set their tales. In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, for instance, Tekchand Thakur writes:

When the British first came to conduct business in Calcutta, the Setts and Basaks were existing businessmen of the time but no one in Calcutta knew English. The use of sign language was prevalent when communicating with the British regarding business matters...slowly, with the aid of sign language, some English words were learned. Later, because of the establishment of the Supreme Court the necessity to learn English in order to conduct legal matters increased (T. Thakur 17).

From this broad description of the conditions that existed in reality Thakur transitions into talking about the education that Motilal, the fictional future babu of his tale, receives. The texts themselves draw on real social conditions of the time and then put their fictional babus into that setting. As the primary texts blend the facts with the fiction, so does this dissertation. The real and the fictional both provide the basis on which I make many of my claims in this study. Thus the lifestyle of Nilmani Haldar, a babu who actually lived in nineteenth-century Calcutta, and that of Motilal, the babu Thakur brought to life in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, are both utilized in this study as evidence.

Another factor that justifies the use of evidence from the real and the fictional is that the latter was a faithful representation of the former. Michael Madhusudan Dutt's play *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* or *Is This Civilization?* was so realistic in its portrayal of the babus that the real babus of the nineteenth-century initially did not allow its performance. Gopa Majumdar notes:

The so-called 'modern' and educated class saw themselves caricatured in [*Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*]...As soon as rehearsals started for [*Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*], the influential Western-educated class learned about it. They were the very people who [Dutt] lampooned in this play. They urged the [Sinha brothers, rich and influential brothers who owned a theater for which the play was written] not to perform this farce and thus ridicule the whole of Western-educated society. (G. Majumdar 127)

In this play, the “modern and educated class” that Majumdar writes about is represented by a group of babus who drink, make elaborate speeches in English, and carouse with prostitutes. *Hutom Panchar Naksha* or *Sketches by the Barn Owl*, written in 1862, also tells the tale of a babu who is extremely similar to the drunken babus portrayed by Dutt. Thus since fictional representations of babu culture drew heavily on existing contemporary situations, and drew very accurate pictures of it, this dissertation too employs the same method and makes use of evidence from both the real and the fictional to make its arguments clearer.

My study first examines the Restoration rake in seventeenth-century British drama and then charts his influence on the babus to study libertinism in a Bengali context. To do this, it primarily looks at the representation of the Restoration rake in seventeenth-century drama, and then shifts the focus to Bengali society. It analyzes primary texts written in the native language by Bengali writers and secondary material which deals with several relevant aspects of Britain’s colonization of India. Additionally, it utilizes criticism by twentieth-century Indian and Western scholars who examine British influence on economic, cultural, educational, and religious conditions that existed in Bengal during the nineteenth century.

The primary texts in Bengali, which are discussed in the Appendix in some detail, are very important social documents from the nineteenth century because it is from these primary texts that we gain an understanding of the actual conditions prevailing at the time. They are of additional importance because they portray the babu phenomenon, using fictional babu figures, in a very realistic way that allows us to see why this social type was significant in Bengali society in a political, cultural, literary, and historical

context. Through the development of the babu persona, a group of young Bengali men made a political statement of support for foreign rule geared towards gaining British approval at a time when India's struggle for independence was at its nascent stage.

Anindyo Roy points out that the British were aware of this advantage. In his speech

“Government of India,” Thomas Babington Macaulay maintained:⁶

that it was not ‘possible to calculate the benefits that [the British] might derive from the diffusion of European civilization among the vast population of the East.’ Among these ‘benefits’ was of course ‘loyalty to the state’ which could be elicited from colonized subjects through education (A. Roy 2).

The babus formed the chief segment of the population in India, especially in Calcutta which was the capital of the British colony, who received Western education and hence “had genuine enthusiasm for the regime” (T. Raychaudhuri *Europe* 16). Additionally, they made a social statement by advocating for momentous changes, such as widow remarriage and female empowerment.

In the literary context, they are of great consequence because contemporary Bengali literature heavily and negatively focused on them and presented their lifestyle choices as cautionary tales. This sustained literary focus on babu culture is seen in the first Bengali novel, *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* (1858), which treats babu culture extensively, and in a host of other primary texts with which this study concerns itself. Historically they remain significant because in spite of heavy censure the babus were the harbingers of modernism in Bengal since, as Tapan Raychaudhuri points out, their experiences “mediated at least some of the new ideas and influences which shaped modern Indian life” (T. Raychaudhuri *Europe* x) . The primary texts focus on all these different aspects

⁶ Thomas Babington Macaulay served in India as President of the Committee of Public Instruction.

of the babu personality and allow us to see why the babus received the kind of sustained and negative criticism that they did.

The secondary sources dealing with Calcutta society look not only at the social, political, and economic conditions of the time in a general way but also at the specific manner in which these factors influenced, or were influenced by, the babu phenomena. I have used Gauri Vishwanathan's book *Masks of Conquests: Literary Studies and British Rule in India*, for instance, to establish that the babus studied British literature, and even specifically Restoration literature, in schools and hence were aware of the lifestyles of the Restoration rake as presented in seventeenth-century drama. Kenneth Ballhatchet examines another influence on the babus, the Eurasian tutors, while Chitra Deb studies the manner in which the babus rose as a direct result of the presence of the East India Company in "The 'Great Houses' of Old Calcutta." The babus' influence on Bengali society is also examined by a host of critics and writers, only some of whom are mentioned here. In her essay "A World of Learning: The Material Culture of Education and Class in Nineteenth-century Bengal," Tithi Bhattacharya looks at the influence babu lifestyle had on the city of Calcutta and concludes that with the passing of the ostentatious and luxury-loving babus due to early death or debts, the splendor of the city too came to an end since their lavish ways of living manifested by imported carriages, foreign clothes and goods, and sumptuous parties perished with them. In *Under the Raj: Prostitution in Colonial Bengal*, Sumanta Banerjee illustrates how the number of prostitutes increased in Calcutta, and how this became a feasible and profitable business for previously ill-treated and neglected Bengali women due to the patronage of the babus.

Most of the secondary sources that deal with literature about the babus come from contemporary Bengali critics although some Western critics such as David Kopf, Deidre David, and Kenneth Ballhatchet briefly address the babu phenomena and the conditions leading up to it. As mentioned earlier, however, the significance of my study is that it draws together two libertine lifestyles that have never been examined in conjunction with each other. Additionally, this is the first study that examines the babus purely as libertines. In doing so, it provides an in-depth look at a libertine figure largely unknown to Western academic audiences while it casts a better known libertine figure like the rake in a new light by charting his influence on world culture.

Outline of Study

My study focuses on the babus' "imitative tendencies" which gave rise to a new hybridized identity (B. Zachariah 336). The babus took "on aspects of Western identity [in order to] attempt to assert an identity" which, as the following analysis shows, was largely similar to and derived from the one Restoration rakes consciously crafted for themselves (R. Vrudhula 215). Hence, when taken within the context of Bengali society which had not known libertine ways of life previously, the babus were viewed as leading a lifestyle that was new and alarming; yet, in truth, they were following a long tradition of libertinism that the Restoration rakes had firmly established before them.⁷ In a very real sense, then, the babus were vanguards of an emerging Western culture within their

⁷ Although there is a tradition of libertinism in Western literature before the rake, such as the Wife of Bath, the babu was the firstly strongly libertine figure that emerged in Calcutta, a fact that partially accounts for the violence of feelings roused against him. Additionally, not having any predecessor, Bengali society viewed the babus as much greater deviants than Restoration society viewed the rakes.

own community. Yet, they seemed little more than overwrought and easily manipulated “mimic m[e]n” to their colonizers (H. Bhabha 87).

This study includes an in-depth look at two figures who played significant roles in the babus’ lives: their fathers and prostitutes of nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta. These two figures and their relationships with the babus are analyzed from various standpoints. In Chapter I, I argue how the fathers’ were unwittingly responsible for turning their sons into babus because they had amassed great wealth which had supported the babu lifestyle. Additionally, the fathers had sent their sons to English schools where the babus were first exposed to Western libertine lifestyles. The babus’ relationships with their fathers are dealt with from a different angle in Chapter III which analyzes the revolt of the sons against their fathers to examine the problematic relationship that the babus’ had with authority figures.

The relationship between the babus and the prostitutes of nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta is also examined from two different standpoints. Chapter III looks at the prostitute figure as an entertainer without whom the babus’ debauches would not have been complete. Many prostitutes of the time were trained singers and dancers, and hence a visit to a brothel often included more than just sexual gratification. Chapter V returns to the prostitute figure to argue that the prostitute was just as adept at exploiting the babu’s weakness for her as he was of exploiting her for sex. I argue that the babus’ and the prostitutes had a symbiotic relationship in which each utilized the other to attain their ends. It was at the brothel that the babu was able to indulge in most of the activities that characterized the babu lifestyle. In examining why most babus, as presented in nineteenth-century Bengali literature, were unable to reform, I argue that the Bengali

writers of the babus tales stressed the babus' relationship with their prostitute-mistresses to show that the babus' great dependence on their prostitute-mistresses made it difficult for the babus to reform.

In particular, I argue that the cultural influences brought about by British education, art, and commerce created a social climate which made the rise of the babu figure inevitable. Gauri Vishwanathan's study of education in nineteenth-century schools and colleges in Calcutta show that Western education introduced babus to the Restoration rakes. Because of their identification with the Restoration rakes, the babus chose to mimic many of the qualities associated with the Western libertine which accounts for many of the outright adoptions in general behavior and outlook that we see among them. Some of these adoptions include indulgence in drinking, sexual competitiveness, defiance towards established social and religious norms, "adopting European dress, customs, manners and consumption patterns embodied in tea, tobacco, and automobiles" (B. Zachariah 336). This situation, however, did not lead to a mere transference of the rakish mode from one culture to another; nor did it lead to a uniform sense of libertinism among the babus. Like the rakes, the babus possessed varying degrees of sophistication and success based upon their resources, wits, the social environments that they occupied, and the varying degrees of Western education they received.

The babus inhabited a more conservative world than the Restoration rakes, and issues such as class, caste, and religion all generated a dynamic atmosphere that, along with the rake's influence, informed the babus' unique identity. Of the environment in the city that shaped them Judith Walsh rightly points out:

As much as any city in India, Calcutta was the meeting place for two powerful and antithetical traditions. The first of these may be represented,

in sum, by the lifeways and ideologies of the Hindu religion; the second, a foreign intruder, may be similarly represented by the ideologies, lifeways, and organizational structures of British colonial power in India, that is, by the British Raj (J. Walsh 32).

The identity of the babus integrated “Western and Indian discourses in the very process of identity construction” which accounts for its hybridized nature (R. Vrudhula 6). The existence of these Bengali libertines would have been impossible without the influx of great wealth into Calcutta. Cultural influences certainly contributed to their emergence but those influences alone would have had limited significance without the money required to live the lavish lifestyle necessary for true libertinism. Sumanta Banerjee points out: “a large number of these Bengali [businessmen] who operated from Calcutta in the early years of the eighteenth-century amassed fortunes through ...collaboration through the British traders” (S. Banerjee *Parlour* 22).⁸ These businessmen were the babus’ fathers who provided them with the wealth necessary to maintain a libertine lifestyle.

Unlike rakes such as Rochester who, although cash poor, had a title, the babus, as mentioned elsewhere in this introduction, were not born into the highest Indian castes. No matter how rich, they would always remain socially below their British rulers, and hence relied solely upon wealth to acquire social standing in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta. In such a situation, commodification became a way of life— one that was indeed further supported by the British commodification of India itself. In this regard Percival Spear writes: “Nor were the English the only Europeans in the field. They were

⁸ Percival Spear’s book *The Nabobs* gives detailed descriptions of British men who had careers in India and amassed huge fortunes in trade in Calcutta.

only one of many rivals, all competing for the India trade” (P. Spear 2).⁹ India had become a place where money could be made easily, and hence money became the chief focus of the colonial presence in India. Not only did the babus understand that the new system functioned through the commodification of goods and even customs which led to profit, they also understood that it functioned through the commodification of human relationships. Such commodification was manifested in their dealings with their parents, wives, and prostitutes. The wealth brought by the British presence in India empowered the babus, but ironically, as with the rakes, this empowerment soon became a cycle of enslavement to vices and addictions. Caught up in drinking, drugs, and visits to prostitutes, the babus, like the rakes, could no longer critically examine where their wealth came from and where it was leading them. In the end, of course, it led them to debt, destruction, and early death, much in the manner of their Western heroes after whom they had modeled themselves.

Chapter Outline

The babus came into existence primarily because the British colonized India in 1757, and especially since they made Calcutta, the babus’ home, the capital of this colony.¹⁰ The borrowing of “attitudes and ideas...by a new elite from a foreign power” facilitated their rise (S. Banerjee *Parlour* 6) Local factors such as different levels of education and exposure to the British caused the babus to mimic their colonizers which,

⁹ The Dutch, the French, and the Portuguese all occupied parts of India but they never exerted the kind of control over the country that the British did. India was truly a British colony. In comparison, other countries had very little power.

¹⁰ For entertaining essays on the founding of Calcutta, refer to “Calcutta: The Name” and “The Site of Calcutta: Geology and Physiography” in Sukanta Chaudhuri’s *Calcutta: The Living City* (Oxford U P 1990).

in turn, made them agents of change within Bengali society. My dissertation offers a causal analysis of the factors influencing the babus' rise, their lifestyle choices and relationships with authority figures and women, and the impact of those choices and relationships on Bengali society, which gives us a fuller look into libertinism in a Bengali and colonial context. The lifestyle of the Restoration rakes remains the model against which the libertinism of the babus is examined since the rakes are one of the most prominent libertine figures in literature.

Chapter I, "Through the Splintered Looking Glass: Defining the Bengali Babu," focuses solely on the babus and examines the historical factors that contributed to their emergence. This chapter provides a clear definition of the term "babu," and studies the two different types of babus who are the focus of this work. The word "babu" did not initially have a derogatory meaning, and Chapter I aims to illustrate the manner in which it began to convey a pejorative meaning and account for this change of perspective. The chapter highlights the differences between the banian babus and the Young Bengal babus but also stresses the manner in which both types essentially led the same lifestyle. The banian babus chronologically preceded the Young Bengal babus by a few years. Their source of wealth, like that of the Young Bengal babus, came from trade, but they were less aware of Western literature than the Young Bengal babus were. Motilal in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* or *The Spoilt Child of Rich Parents* (1858) is a banian babu and, as will be seen, he was less educated than Nobo, the Young Bengal babu in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* or *Is This Civilization?* (1860). Another primary difference between these two types of babus was that while the Young Bengal babus agitated for social reforms such as the emancipation of women and the abolition of the caste system, the banian babus did not.

This chapter argues how, in several very key ways, the British presence in Bengal was directly responsible for the formation of both these groups of young men who, in spite of some differences, led very similar lives rooted in hedonism and the pursuit of pleasure.

The East India Company's presence in Bengal was responsible for a tremendous influx of money which made many Bengali businessmen in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Calcutta millionaires in a very short period of time. Tapan Raychaudhuri points out: "The working of the colonial government ...altered the material bases of [the lives of Bengali businessmen] (T. Raychaudhuri *Europe* xi). These businessmen were the babus' grandfathers and fathers, and the cash they made bestowed a buying power on the babus that was very significant in several ways. Firstly, even though their forefathers had belonged to the trading and mercantile classes, the ready money at their disposal allowed the babus to form a new leisure class that could, at least initially before they dissipated their estates, avoid work of any kind. Of the babu's lifestyle Krishna Dutta writes: "the young babu's rich father provided him with palanquins and expensive clothes and he spends his days foppishly smoking the hookah in company of sycophants and supplicants and his nights with dancing girls and prostitutes" (K. Dutta 35). In this way of living there was no room for serious work of any kind.

The primary texts of babu literature likewise do not depict the babus seriously considering any work or business. Motilal in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* and the unnamed babu in *Nobo Babu Bilash* try their hand at business, but having neither training nor business acumen they fail and give up making any more efforts to make money. This, in turn, permitted them to lead a life of pure hedonism without giving any thought to

responsibilities that they should have shouldered as sons and husbands. Tekchand Thakur, for instance, presents Motilal who strikes his mother and abandons his wife while Bhubhanchandra Mukhopadhyay, a lesser known writer of the nineteenth century, presents a drunken son who insists that his old and horrified father accompany him to the brothel (K. Sinha *Hutom* 238). Secondly, the possession of tremendous wealth inculcated an exhibitionist attitude in them, and babus sought to outdo each other in lavish displays of pomp. This competitive attitude was seen in many babus of Calcutta. Ramtanu Dutta and Nilmani Haldar, two famous babus of the time, provide a case in point. Dutta's "entire palace was washed down daily with rose water, and all his utensils were of gold and silver. His rival in madness was Nilmani Haldar, who drove a coach and eight" (C. Deb 59). Finally, the power money bestowed was partly responsible for the partial breakdown of the caste system.

Although the babus often were not upper-caste Brahmins by birth, they were able to command the services of such men as Brahmin priests because they could lavishly pay for the services they demanded. *Under the Raj: Prostitution in Colonial Bengal* quotes from a nineteenth-century account of a priest's visit to a brothel, illustrating the manner in which lower caste babus, at the request of their prostitute-mistresses, could command Brahmins to enter and perform religious ceremonies at a brothel; this is an act that, if not for the high fees the babus were willing to pay, would have been unthinkable for a priest who, according to scriptures, loses his purity and caste status by entering into a house of ill-repute. An important result of the rise of the babus was this shift from a caste-based society to a class-based one. Chitra Deb notes that most of the families that gave rise to babus were Kayastas and not Brahmins, which is, of course, the highest caste (C. Deb 57).

Yet, “in the eyes of humble men, [the babus’] quick fortunes gave them high status” (C. Deb 56). This important shift is explored throughout this study and its implications and repercussions on Bengali society are studied in considerable detail to further strengthen the argument about the profound and far-reaching impact that the babus had on Bengali society of the time.

Chapter I also examines the babus’ exposure to Western schools of thought and charts the influence that Western institutions of higher education had on them. Vrudhula points out that:

the study of English literature in particular helped to form a sense of connection between ruler and ruled, and yet it also served to perpetuate the babu stereotype. It accomplished this by presenting a vision of idealized Englishmen and Westerners as the universal standard which all enlightened persons should strive to attain, and by attempting to point out the failings of Bengali character through rationalistic discourse” (R. Vrudhula 89).

The babus, already dissatisfied with the strictly codified and stultifying society in which they lived, latched on to British education in the belief that it would make them sophisticated and would allow them to become superior to the rest of conservative society, and hence they “sought English education with an enthusiasm unmatched for many years by those [inhabitants] of the other [Indian] provinces” (R. Vrudhula 88). Additionally, this chapter looks at the figure of the Eurasian tutor, a figure in Bengali society who also finds fictional representation in some texts such as *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* and *Nobo Babu Bilash*. The Eurasian tutor, like the one in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, often represented a young babu’s first contact with the ways of the West. Eurasians who were born to European fathers and native mothers could often find no other employment but to become tutors for the babus, as Kenneth Ballhatchet shows in *Sex, and Class Under the*

Raj: Imperial Attitudes and their Policies and their Critics 1793-1905. Hence they were the initial figures that the babus admired and sought to emulate.¹¹ Often, as I argue, such figures had a negative influence on an impressionable mind and predisposed it towards accepting a life of hedonistic waste. Drawing from Gauri Vishwanathan's detailed study of Western education in colonial Calcutta, Chapter I also proves that texts about and from the Restoration were included in the curriculum of the schools that the babus attended; furthermore, books on the Earl of Rochester's life were popular, and the *Spectator's* critical reception of Restoration plays was taught in schools. Moreover, Sudhosotto Basu and Jotindra Dasgupta help to establish the fact that the theatres in Calcutta staged plays by Restoration playwrights such as William Congreve. The babus were familiar with the figure of the Restoration rake and hence his influence overcame the boundaries of time and space and manifested itself in colonial nineteenth-century Calcutta almost two hundred years after the rakes' appearance in England.

Finally, the chapter examines the manner in which the British were again directly responsible for the rise of the babus by consciously educating them to be a class of people who shared their tastes, likes, and dislikes, and who would support their rule. Quoting from Thomas Babington Macaulay's minutes of February 2nd 1835, it studies the British motivation for actively contributing to the formation of the babus. Macaulay's expectation was that Bengalis "who had acquired a knowledge of western literature and science' would be motivated as much by 'an enlightened conviction that their welfare

¹¹ Kenneth Ballhatchet's book looks in some detail at the Eurasian figure in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta. It also looks at British efforts to deal with and restrict prostitution in Calcutta in some detail. This was a serious problem for the colonizers since, as Ballhatchet shows, many of their soldiers were often infected with sexually-transmitted diseases caused by visits to brothels.

depended on a continuance of existing relations” (qtd in A. Roy *Civility* 2). Their propagandist techniques worked in their favor since the babus, awe-struck by the ruling class, believed them to be superior in every way and blindly mimicked them. These incendiary techniques, disseminated through education and laws, also went far in undermining solidarity among the colonized natives, further causing them to embrace the ways of life of their subjugators, forming as Cromer maintained, “a stronger bond of union between the rulers and the ruled” (qtd. in E. Said 36).¹²

Chapter II, “Clashing Colors: Colonial Perceptions and Fashioning the Self,” studies several facets of the rakes’ and babus’ lifestyles and examines correspondences in their ways of living. It begins with an examination of mirror-images of immorality that the West and the East held of each other. Beginning with John Dryden’s *Aureng-zebe* (1675), the only Restoration play set in India, I illustrate the manner in which the Restoration viewed India as a decadent and corrupt country that was in dire need of the West’s, especially England’s, civilizing influence. Ashish Nandi writes: “The Raj saw Indians as crypto-barbarians who needed to further civilize themselves” and this is precisely the fashion in which the Indians are represented in Dryden’s play, eighty-two years before the establishment of British rule in India (A. Nandi 7). The natives of India as presented in this play have fallen away from their Golden Age and are corrupt, dissipated, incestuous, and power-hungry. Ideas of the East as corrupt and decadent had not changed much in the following eighty years when the British invaded India and set up their dominance in 1757.

¹² Lord Evelyn Baring Cromer was England’s representative in Egypt from 1882-1907 (Said 35). Curzon and Cromer were also “enthusiastic members together of a departmental committee formed in 1909 to press for the creation of a school of Oriental studies [at Oxford]” (Said 214).

The West, as Edward Said points out, had always represented qualities such as control, measure, reason, and courage (E. Said 40). It was only through their positive influence that the East could, to some extent, hope to climb out of the slough into which it had fallen, though, as Jyotsna G. Singh maintains in “The English Nabobs: Eighteenth-Century Orientalism,” it could never aspire to return to its Golden Age (J.G. Singh 53). As Nandi again points out, the colonizers “saw British rule as an agent of progress and mission” (A. Nandi 7). I argue that Dryden’s play was successful in portraying Indian natives in such a way because people in Restoration England truly believed that Easterners possessed the negative qualities that Dryden exhibited them displaying in the play. Hence, to them, the play merely mirrored the reality of the profligate Orient. Bridget Orr writes: “The disorder of the Mughal empire is represented by inversions and ruptures in familial relations of a specifically “Indian” kind” (B. Orr 111). The English, as Orr’s use of quotation marks around the word implies, were not surprised to see such corruptions in the Eastern society portrayed in the play since, in their minds, India, or the Orient, was synonymous with corruption, decay, and decadence.

Yet, ironically, far from viewing the British as messiahs who would civilize and Christianize them, mainstream Bengali society of the nineteenth century viewed the British in much the same disapproving manner in which Restoration England viewed Indians. Orthodox Bengali society held the East India Company and its officers responsible for the corruption of their youth and blamed the rise of the babus directly on the influence and education of the West. As Tapan Raychaudhuri points out, mainstream Bengali society believed that Western education had “destabilized established norms and mores of intra-family relationships” (T. Raychaudhuri *Europe* x). It is extremely ironical

that while England viewed itself as morally and intellectually superior to Indians, Indian society, two hundred years after the Restoration, similarly viewed themselves as better than the colonizers who had come with the avowed purpose of Christianizing them and bettering their condition. To the Bengalis it was the British who had introduced their youth to corruptions and self-indulgences that had ultimately eroded age-old customs and cherished traditions.

Erosions of customs and traditions are manifested in specific adoptions and adaptations that marked the babus' lives. Among the particular aspects of the libertine's lifestyle that the chapter examines the first is clothing that was often used by the Western and Eastern libertine as a form of display that allowed them to not only exhibit their personal attractiveness but also their refined taste and wealth. I examine how "selves were fashioned and understood (as well as misunderstood) through material appearances..." (Munns et al 9). As the rakes were influenced by French fashion, the babus borrowed their fashions from the clothes worn by the British colonizers. I examine the motivations behind these borrowings and illustrate the manner in which the British fop and rake, as well as the Bengali babu, utilized clothing to gain entrance into an elegant and stylish world, membership in which boosted their self-confidence. The British and the Bengali libertine drew a large measure of their identity from external appearances, and hence clothing became an extremely important indicator of the manner in which they viewed themselves and wished others to view them. Additionally, the chapter examines the effective manner in which the colonizers utilized the babus' penchant for Western clothing to gain their support for British rule. Drawing from laws they passed, I argue that the British undermined national unity which had previously been

expressed through the wearing of traditional Indian clothing. The babus were staunch adherents to British rules of dress and the chapter illustrates how exhibitionism, a basic aspect of libertinism, had, in this instance, further political implications.

The use of language, another aspect examined in this chapter, bears certain similarities with the use of fancy clothing. While characters in British plays of the 1660s utilized French in an effort to appear sophisticated and cultured, the babus liberally sprinkled their conversations with English words in order to prove that they were intelligent and capable of competently communicating with their colonizers. For both the rake and the babu, then, as with clothing, the successful mastery of a foreign language was meant to impress and prove their worthiness of being accepted by another culture which they admired and found superior. An important distinction which the chapter examines, however, is that while the French-British relationship was not born out of colonization, the Bengali-English relationship was. Hence even though some of the motivations for adopting a foreign language remained similar in the two cultures, there were other considerations involved with the choice the babus made which were not pertinent for the Frenchified characters in Restoration drama. This discussion illustrates that cultural accoutrements such as dress and language are components for a libertine lifestyle regardless of the society in which it appears. These commonalities, in particular, define the libertine mode of existence.

Chapter III, “Wayward Sons: The Search for Self Outside of Tradition,” explores the libertine’s attitude towards authority figures such as parents which is fraught with complications because, as Chernaik points out, libertinism is “a rebellion of the sons against the fathers” (W. Chernaik 25). As with the rakes, the babus often inherited their

wealth from their fathers, although they did not inherit titles as many rakes did. All the primary texts dealing with babus, such as *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* and *Nobo Babu Bilash*, portray the babus' fathers as astute businessmen obsessed with building up their fortunes. In both literatures, the libertine and indeed younger characters view authority figures as blocking figures and both make choices in a conscious effort to subvert their control. Authority figures often represent the values of the dominant mainstream culture and younger characters in both literatures strive to break away from their principles, standards, morals, and ethics, and stage their own rebellions. In both cultures, fathers and mothers stand in for mainstream society's values, and Chapter III studies the extremely limited control that such figures were ultimately able to exert on their progeny in spite of their best efforts to gain greater control and rein in their truant offspring. Additionally, drawing from *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* which discusses the formation and follies of a banian babu, I examine the manner in which fathers, especially those of the babus, were ironically responsible in a large measure for the rebellion of their sons by failing to guide and discipline them during their childhood.

The libertine's lifestyle in both cultures included overindulgences and dissipations which included gambling, excessive drinking, and visiting prostitutes. Many of the pastimes of the Restoration rakes found their way into colonial nineteenth-century Calcutta, and Chapter III also examines how the babus modified, adapted, and adopted these pastimes. The babus chose to cast off ties to their families and began seeking the attention and approval of the British, their fellow libertines, and prostitutes in place of their families. The babus did not direct their energies at maintaining or building their families' positions within traditional society; rather, they sought to fully invest

themselves in every form of dissipation and diversion at their disposal. In addition, the fervor and respect the babus would have normally directed towards authority figures such as fathers were transferred to the idolization of commodities, including the worship and maintenance of their mistresses who ostensibly gave them the emotional fulfillment they might have otherwise obtained through a deep engagement with their families and community. Along with the seeking of pleasure, the element of exhibitionism persisted in both the Western and Eastern libertines' lifestyles, and I argue that the libertine consciously chose his entertainments with an eye towards not only impressing and shocking mainstream contemporary society but also competing with other libertines who were their friends or acquaintances.

Chapter IV, "The Bonds of Matrimony: The Price of Being A Libertine's Wife," examines the libertines' relationships with the women whose lives he affected and who, in turn, affected his life. Arguably a libertine's most prominent characteristic is his obsession with obtaining sex from women of every variety regardless of marital status or station. This chapter illustrates the truth of Weber's comment "Characters such as Wycherley's Horner and Etherege's Dorimant maintain no past that cannot be encompassed by a list of previous mistresses; their appetites are so immense and indiscriminate that all differences are annihilated by the simple mechanism of desire" (H. Weber 3). A common thread that runs through rake and Bengali literature about the babus, and which has been discussed in great detail by critics of Restoration drama, is the rake's commodification of human relationships which is seen in his pursuit of money-minded marriages. In her essay "Gender, sexuality, and marriage," Pat Gill calls wives "valuable possession[s]" (P. Gill 203) and P.F. Vernon points out that writers of

Restoration plays often have guardians conduct arranged marriages in the language of business, thereby heightening the pecuniary nature of human relationships in the libertines' lives.¹³ In both the East and the West this focus on money manifests itself in the fact that the libertine's primary interest in selecting a bride depended on her fortune or her dowry.

Drawing from Restoration plays such as *The Country Wife*, *The Rover*, and *The Way of the World*, the first section of the chapter explores the disadvantages of making such important decisions based solely on economic considerations. I argue that the cunning rake, knowing that possession of the fortune depends on winning the heiress's heart, will often offer her a show of affection and hence these affections are not guaranteed after the fortune has been achieved through marriage. The babus' marriages, on the other hand, did not even involve the courtship process that Restoration marriages did. Rochona Majumdar's study on the "commodification of marriage" through the giving of dowry by the bride's family to the groom's finds explicit illustration in the negotiations that the babu's father conducted with the father of the bride who offered the greatest dowry (Rochona Majumdar 3). Considerations of the nature, character, temperament, and general suitability of the prospective bride were all secondary to the money that she would bring.

An examination of the dismal plight of the libertine's wife follows the examination of money-minded marriages. Quite dependent on their husbands both financially and emotionally, wives in Restoration England and nineteenth century Calcutta often led miserable lives deprived of the power to seek redress for their wrongs.

¹³ See P.F. Vernon, "The Marriage of Convenience and the Moral Code of Restoration Comedy," *Essays in Criticism* 12 (1962): 370-81.

Since, as Liza Picard maintains, there “was no legal divorce” during the Restoration, the plight of the Restoration wife was indeed unenviable (L. Picard 232). But, as Katherine Mayo’s horrific tales of the plight of Bengali wives in *Mother India* show, the babus’ wives’ fates were worse than that of their Western counterparts in the seventeenth century. Drawing from the babu’s wife in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*, I argue that her position within the household and in society was made even more unbearable by the complete lack of a support system. The babu’s wife could look for no sympathy or empathy from figures such as sisters-in-law and mothers-in-law. In fact Sudhosotto Basu and Jotindra Dasgupta rightly point out that instead of being sympathetic towards her daughter-in-law, the babu’s mother only incites fear in her (S. Basu et al 82).

Additionally, I examine how the babus tempted their lonely wives by placing male servants in their bedrooms. This sinister act not only placed the wife in a dangerously compromising situation but, I argue, allowed the babus to break the class as well as the caste system. While the breakdown of such rigid social hierarchies is laudable, the babus did not act out of the commendable purpose of championing the cause of the socially inferior. Their actions were based on selfish motivations, and they primarily sought to exploit the social system to attain their own ends, rather than create equality in society.

A common feature that runs through both literatures is the cuckolding of unsuitable and incompetent husbands. In Restoration literature, of course, Wycherley’s *Horner* is the quintessential giver of horns. Utilizing Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s study of *The Country Wife* I argue that the bond of cuckoldry exists between the rake and the husband and that the wife is no more than a pawn in the rake’s game. For the rake, the pleasure of cuckolding lies more in shaming the husband than possessing the wife.

Literature on the babus contrarily offers a unique example that, I argue, illustrates the way in which a cuckolded husband can turn the situation to his advantage, and place the babu in a weaker position. In this text, *Duti Bilash* (1825), the babu begins in a position of advantage but unlike the husbands in Restoration drama, the Bengali husband is able to cunningly manipulate not only his wife, but also her babu-lover into attaining his ends without the least inconvenience to himself.

Yet, paradoxically, I also argue that the rakes' and babus' mistreatment of their wives was responsible to a large measure for prompting the rakes' and babus' wives to stand up for their rights, think for themselves, question their husbands' complete authority over them, and sometimes break away from their husbands and attempt to live independent lives. Occasionally, then, the mistreatment proved to be advantageous for the rakes' and babus' wives because the abuse they had to endure ultimately ended up liberating the rakes' and babus' wives to varying degrees.

Given the monetary nature of such marriages it is not surprising that in both literatures extramarital affairs abound and Chapter V, "Strange Bedfellows: The Libertine's Infidelities and Inability to Reform," scrutinizes these affairs. There are important fundamental differences between the extramarital affairs of the rakes and those of the babus. For the rakes, Restoration playwrights sometimes held out hopes for a reform after marriage. Those plays that end with a rake's marriage, such as *The Man of Mode* or *The Rover*, hold out the hope that Dorimant and Wilmore will reform and be suitable husbands for Harriet and Helena respectively. In case of the babus, however, the writers of their tales do not hold out any such hopes for reform. I argue that the Bengali writers held certain biases against the babus that the Restoration playwrights did not hold

against the rakes. The writers of texts focusing on the babus had the main aim of discrediting the babus, and they consistently took a didactic, critical, and moralistic tone in their writings. Additionally, the Bengali writers' motivations in writing about the babus differed from those of the Restoration playwrights, and such factors were important in their less optimistic portrayal of the babus.

While prologues to Restoration dramas often indicate that the plays were written to amuse and entertain, Bengali writers were writing "cautionary tales," and hence had a different outlook towards and response to the babus' way of life (J.C. Ghosh 127).¹⁴

Another very marked difference was that unlike the rakes the babus are only portrayed as having extramarital affairs with prostitutes. Meredith Borthwick and Tanika Sarkar point out that in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta women were mostly confined to the inner chambers, and hence a Belinda, available to Dorimant in *The Man of Mode*, or a Berinthia, willing victim to Lovelace's seductions in *The Relapse*, were not available to the babus. The last chapter examines some of the reasons why the rakes and the babus are unable to reform. The Western and the Eastern libertine both constantly looked for new escapades and excitements and their weak characters made it difficult for the rakes and the babus to resist temptations that were placed in their paths. The rakes, and especially the babus, did not consider reformation as long as they had money at their disposal with which they could purchase their pleasures. In the case of the babus, the Bengali writers placed a large measure of the blame for the babus' inability to reform at the door of their prostitute-mistresses. Drawing from several texts, I argue that the Bengali writers presented the babus as weak libertines who were too dependent on their prostitute-

¹⁴ In the prologue to *The Man of Mode*, for instance, the author begins by saying that he fears that his play will be ill-received by the audience who will not find it entertaining.

mistresses to be able to resist the easy access to temptations that the prostitutes offered at their brothels. But, while illustrating the addictive nature of the libertine lifestyle, the Restoration playwrights refrained from criticizing the rakes for leading a rakish lifestyle. Because the Bengali writers wished to use the babus' tales as stories which would warn other young and educated men from becoming babus, the Bengali writers highlighted their view that there was no way to amend once one had become a babu.

Dealing with several aspects of the libertine's lifestyle, Chapters II, III, IV, and V first examine the Restoration rake's actions, aesthetics, responses, and attitudes towards a variety of societal, domestic, and political situations. Then the dissertation looks at the babu through the lens of the Restoration rake to examine the manner in which the babus reacted to the same type of situations and constraints. Home Bhaba writes, "in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (H. Bhabha 86). In looking at the babus, the dissertation not only highlights the similarities between the rakes and the babus, but also highlights the differences between the Western and the Eastern libertine that allowed the babus to successfully mimic Western models. The study also examines some of the excesses the babus indulged in that were related to the rakish mode of existence, but not an essential feature of it. Such a method allows for the juxtaposition of the rake's lifestyle with that of the babus and clearly allows us to see the similarities and differences between Western and Eastern libertinism.

The conclusion considers the long-lasting influence of the Restoration rake on heroes in Western plays and novels who followed him. I examine why the rakes proved to be a strong character whose influence survived and was felt in nineteenth-century colonial Bengali. The conclusion also examines what the babus accomplished, and sums

up their impact on Bengali society. To this day babu culture remains talked about in Calcutta, and books like Sumanta Banerjee's *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* and Bishnu Basu's *Babu Theatre* examine the babu phenomena while a collection of essays on "old Calcutta" such as those in *Calcutta: The Living City* pays considerable attention to the babus. Primary texts, too, remain quite easily available in Bengali bookstores. The shadows the babus cast are still visible in twenty-first century Calcutta, and the conclusion considers why this is the case. I also consider factors such as debt and early death that led to the demise of the Restoration rakes as well as the babus; harbingers of modernism, breakers of rules and traditions, apparent champions for women's rights, the babus had a lasting influence on Bengali society which is examined in the conclusion.

The dissertation closes with an Appendix section that introduces the important primary texts of babu culture that have been used in this study. Since in making arguments the dissertation does not go into plot details, the appendix aims to give the reader a better idea of the general storyline of the texts. Additionally, it provides brief biographical information about the writers and social satirists who dealt with this social phenomenon through a literary medium. Furthermore, it provides brief information about the critical reception of the texts, not only when they were initially published but also as they are viewed by contemporary critics of Bengali literature.

CHAPTER I

Through A Splintered Looking Glass: Defining the Bengali Babu

This chapter defines the term “babu,” discusses the various figures that fall under this term, and traces the development of the babu figure. The word “babu” is rich in complex meanings, and can be used as an umbrella term to cover two related figures that fall under this broad category: the banian babus and the Young Bengal babus. This chapter also argues that British figures such as the Restoration rake and mixed-race Eurasian tutors became models for the kind of libertinism that developed in Bengal under British rule in the nineteenth-century.

Additionally, this chapter examines various influences that made a significant contribution to the rise of the babus. The advent of the East India Company opened up diverse opportunities for the native populace to make fortunes, and the prospect of attaining Western education was considerably aided by British men who opened schools and institutions of higher learning in Calcutta, the capital of the British Empire in India and the babus’ home. I argue that the babus’ fathers unwittingly played a significant role in the babus’ rise by exposing the babus to Western education and providing them with money; money played a significant role in the formation of the babus, and greed for wealth played a divisive role in many Bengali families where the babus waited for

their fathers' deaths in order to get their hands on the wealth so that they could pursue their libertine lifestyles. Furthermore, I argue that the babus' identity and his sense of self-worth were dependent on his wealth, and hence the babu lifestyle was a result of the booming economic conditions that prevailed in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta.

English education was another vital factor that led to the babu phenomenon since Western education introduced the babus to Western libertinism. I shall examine the avenues of contact with Western literature that were open to the babus, and shall argue that the British presented their culture in an idealized form that made it attractive to the babus who often felt oppressed by the conservative society they inhabited. Furthermore, the system of education the British introduced sharpened the babus' critical thinking skills, causing them to question their society, culture, mores, and traditions. The dissatisfaction that resulted prompted the babus to adopt a libertine lifestyle which, as we shall see, the babus hoped would contribute towards the achievement of social progress in Calcutta. Opportunities for making a fortune and exposure to Western education were, then, the chief factors responsible for the growth of a colonial mentality among educated, rich, young men in colonial Calcutta that caused these men to blindly mimic the British. This chapter, primarily historical in nature, will account for the factors that led to the rise of the babus' brand of libertinism in nineteenth century colonial Calcutta.

The babus became noticeable in Calcutta only after British rule had been well established in India. The British consolidated their rule with victory at the Battle of Plassey in 1757, and one of the earliest books to deal with the babu phenomenon, *Nobo Babu Bilash* or *The Drolleries of the New Babu* by Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay, was written in 1825. Before the advent of the British, the social, economic, and intellectual

condition of the Bengalis were not conducive to the formation of the babu. In *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth-Century Bengal*, Tapan

Raychaudhuri points out that the British brought about a “close contact between two entirely different cultures of which one was perceived to be dominant,” and this supremacy proved the catalyst that prompted a segment of young Bengali men to mimic their colonizers which, in turn, contributed to the rise of the babus (T. Raychaudhuri *Europe* ix).

In Bengali literature, there is no thorough discussion of any sort of libertine figure before literature on the babus was produced after the advent of the British. In his book *Bengali Literature*, J. C. Ghosh mentions that the modern period of Bengali literature began with Western influence, and that it was during this modern period that “literature [became] secular” (J.C. Ghosh 12). Indeed, there was no proper Bengali literature before this period since most texts were composed in Sanskrit. *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* (*The Spoilt Child of Rich Parents*) discussed in the Appendix, was hailed as the first Bengali novel, and it was written in 1855. Literature before this time often had a high moral tone, and was almost always, as J.C. Ghosh implies, religious in character.¹⁵ Even when this literature depicted passions as Kalidas’s *Sakuntala* did, it was generally in the form of love stories where true love eventually overcame all obstacles.¹⁶ Furthermore,

¹⁵ J.C. Ghosh provides a succinct overview of Bengali Literature in his book which bears the same title.

¹⁶ *Sakuntala* is Kalidas’s masterpiece and one of the most well-known texts to have come out of India. It tells the story of King Dushyant who falls in love with a girl from a lower caste, Sakuntala. Eventually, the king has to leave to attend to matters of state and gives her a ring as a token of their love. Sakuntala offends a saint and he curses her which causes her husband to lose all memory of her. The saint, however, relents that he will remember her again once he sees the ring. Sakuntala loses the ring while bathing and a

economically it was not until the arrival of the British that huge fortunes were quickly made, and since this wealth contributed significantly to the rise of the babus, it is not surprising that the babus did not exist till the East India Company had enabled their families to amass huge fortunes. Exposure to Western literature, another very important factor, came only with the British. The British, then, caused changes in several socio-economic fields that made it possible for such a figure to develop.

Loss of Face: the Emergence of a New Identity

The word babu could have several meanings. According to the *Hobson-Jobson* dictionary the definition of the term is as follows:¹⁷

l.cBABOO, s. Beng. And H. babu [Skt. vapra, 'a father']. Properly a term of respect attached to a name, like Master or Mr., and formerly in some parts of Hindustan applied to certain persons of distinction. Its application as a term of respect is now almost or altogether confined to lower Bengal...In Bengal and elsewhere, among Anglo-Indians, it is often used with a slight savor of disparagement, as characterizing a superficially cultivated, but too often effeminate, Bengali. And from the extensive employment of the class, to which the term was applied as a title, in the capacity of clerks in English offices, the word has come often to signify a 'native clerk who writes in English.' (*Hobson-Jobson* 44)

Initially the word did not have derogatory meanings, but during the latter half of the eighteenth century and then in the nineteenth century it began to be used as a pejorative term. In *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in Late Nineteenth Century Studies*, Mrinalini Sinha notes this point:

fish swallows it. Fortunately the king's fisherman catches the fish and shows the ring to Dushyant. His memories of his wife return and everything ends happily.

¹⁷ *Hobson-Jobson: Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive* was a dictionary of Anglo-Indian terms used during British colonial rule in India. It was published in 1886 by Henry Yule and Arthur C. Burnell. It has over two thousand entries.

The *babu*, an old Bengali word of Persian origin, did not always have negative connotations for the British. In fact, well up to the second half of the century, ...the term was used as a title of respect for men who had no other titles, very like its English equivalents 'Mr.' or 'Esquire.' The origins of a more negative meaning of the word, as Christine Baxter points out, can be traced to the works of early nineteenth-century Bengali social satirists. These early Bengali social commentators used the term '*babu*' to satirize the culture of the *nouveau riche* in Bengali society; the term was associated with Bengali parvenus who had adopted...Anglicised manners for upward economic and social mobility. When the British first adopted this negative usage of the *babu*, its connotation of social-climbing or money-grubbing continued as an important theme into British satires of the Bengali *babu*. (M. Sinha 17)

For the purposes of this study, the term *babu* will mainly encompass two types of figures.

The first type, as found in works like *Alaler Ghorer Dulal (The Spoilt Child of Rich Parents)* by Tekchand Thakur and stories such as Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay's *Nobo Babu Bilash (The Drolleries of the New Babu)*, were the sons of *banians* and *dewans*, Bengali middlemen and agents of the British who accumulated huge wealth because of their professional relationships with the colonizers.

The first type of *babus*, though possessing some knowledge of English, was not very well-versed in Western literature. Motilal, the *babu* in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, is proof that the fathers of these *babus* had tried to educate them in English and in the ways of the West but had failed to give them the kind of thorough knowledge of English that the later *babus* possessed. British officers and Eurasian tutors generally formed libertine models for these *babus*. This first class of *babus*, sons of the *banians* and *dewans*, shall henceforth be called *banian babus* since such was the line of business which was responsible for the wealth that allowed these young men to become *babus*.

The second class of *babus* had quite a different type of influence working upon them. Sudhosotto Basu and Jotindra Dasgupta, editors of Dutt's *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*

(*Is This Civilization?*), call this second type of babus the descendants of the banian babus since chronologically they followed the banian babus while maintaining a similar lifestyle (S. Basu et al 53). These babus too were from families whose wealth had sprung from working with or for the British; but the main and very important difference between banian and Young Bengal babus was that the latter were better educated than the banian babus, and usually had a solid Western education in British administered schools and the famous Hindu College.¹⁸ These types of babus are found in plays like *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* (*Is this Civilization?*) by Michael Madhusudan Dutt, farces like *Hutom Panchar Naksha* (*Sketches by the Barn Owl*) by Kaliprasanna Sinha, and essays like “Babu” by Bankimchandra Chatterji.

This second class of young Bengali men, given the curriculum in the schools and colleges they attended and the plays they went to, knew about the Restoration rakes. It is however, erroneous to assume that every young man of this second, more educated type became a libertine. There were indeed some young and westernized men who indulged in drinking, eating beef, and occasional visits to dancing girls, but there were others who went beyond being just libertines. Caught up in the Young Bengal Movement started by the Eurasian professor Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, some western educated men questioned the beliefs of Hinduism, as well as the orthodox nature of Bengali society, and

¹⁸ Hindu College was established purely out of the need to educate sons of wealthy families. It had many famous instructors such as Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and D.L. Richardson. It produced some of the most illustrious men and women in Indian history such as Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, noted journalist M.J. Akbar, and actress Aparna Sen. Re-named Presidency College on June 15 1855, it continues to be the best institution for undergraduate studies in India.

sought to liberate and uplift men's minds.¹⁹ But not every young Bengali male who came under Derozio's influence was of this illustrious stamp. Bankimchandra Chatterji, the author of "Babu," made the distinction between the two types of men who belonged to the Young Bengal movement:

The country is overrun with men of this sort, [the babu as represented in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*] and Mr. [Michael Madhusudan Dutt's] picture is true to life; but they must not be confounded with the really cultivated class, who, in spite of all that has been said regarding the spread of English education, are comparatively few in number (qtd. in R. Vrudhula 162).

One type of babu who came under Derozio's sway was the one Bankimchandra Chatterji lamented were too few in number; these were men who occasionally indulged in some aspects of the babu lifestyle but who were also earnestly interested in reforming Bengali society. The second group of babus, the Young Bengal babus as this group shall be called to distinguish them from the banian babus, were mere imitators of the British and made no real effort at uplifting society beyond making grandiose speeches and indulging in forbidden pleasures.

The Young Bengal babus ostensibly sought to reform society by drinking alcohol, eating forbidden foods, and going to attend dances by women of low repute forgetting that, as Swapan Majumdar points out in his essay "Literature and Literary Life in Old

¹⁹ Henry Louis Vivian Derozio's (1809-1831) father was Portuguese. Derozio was appointed Professor at Hindu College in 1826 but was soon dismissed since the fathers of his students complained that he was leading their sons astray by making them question and turn away from Hinduism. The Young Bengal Movement was comprised of his students and they came into prominence after the 1830s. Due to his revolutionary ideas and the scare it caused his students' conservative father, Derozio was tried and lost his job at Hindu College. His friends brought him a printing press and he published a newspaper for a while before dying of cholera. For a biography, see Thomas Edwards, *Henry Derozio*, Calcutta: Riddhi, 1980.

Calcutta,” “to modernize society did not necessarily imply giving a rude shock to others’ beliefs and principles” (S. Majumdar 110). Unlike some of Derozio’s other students who made genuine contributions to Bengali society, rooted out some of the superstitions of the Hindu religion, and fought for the emancipation of women and widow re-marriage, the Young Bengal babus, according to their critics, did not have the discipline, firmness of character, or self-control to go beyond being mere libertines. Sudhosotta Basu and Jotindra Dasgupta point out that the Young Bengal babus viewed the superstitions of the Hindu religion in a negative light and tried to free themselves from these superstitions, but in attempting this they led reckless and undisciplined lives aimed at appalling mainstream society with their activities (S. Basu et al. 75).

Even though there are two types of babus—the banian babus and the Young Bengal babus—most of their lifestyle choices overlapped. Because of this overlap, when the generic term babu is used in this study it will refer to both types and the general libertine lifestyle both pursued. In *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta*, Sumanta Banerjee offers a definition that is closer to the purposes of this study since it can be applied to both types.²⁰ He notes:

In the nineteenth century, the babu, as he appeared in the farces and the sketches, was the pampered son of a British agent who having inherited his father’s wealth dissipates it on drinking, whoring and other amusements with a host of sycophants. (S. Banerjee *Parlour* 180)

²⁰ Sumanta Banerjee’s book, *The Parlour and the Streets*, provides an excellent insight into the popular culture of nineteenth-century Bengal. Banerjee looks into the elite culture prevalent in Bengal at that time and gives a very succinct look into the condition of society, the entertainments available in the city of Calcutta, the popularity of songs, painting, and theatre. He also looks in some detail at the babu culture of the time. Replete with examples from popular songs, paintings, citing incidences from the history of Calcutta during the nineteenth century, his book is a very good look into the lives and cultures of the Bengalis during that time.

Young Bengal babus, like the banian babus, were indeed pampered sons and in this respect there was no difference between the two types of babus. Additionally, Young Bengal babus did indulge in the entertainments Banerjee mentions, just as the banian babus did. The banian babus and the Young Bengal babus, however, differed ideologically. The banian babus, for instance, did not seek to liberate the country from superstitions, nor were they familiar with Restoration literature and rakes as the Young Bengal babus were. Yet, taken as a whole, they both contributed to what is now popularly termed “babu culture,” and any discussion of this social phenomenon must include both types.

The Price of a New Respectability: the Rise of the Babus

Financially, as Shib Chunder Bose writes in *The Hindoos As They Are*, the British had a direct hand in the formation of babus. It is undoubtedly true that “almost every respectable family of Bengal[i] Bab[u]s...[was] more or less indebted to [the East India Company] for its status and distinction, position and influence, affluence and prosperity” (S.C. Bose 196). The advent of the East India Company allowed Bengalis many opportunities to amass large fortunes within a lifetime that would have been impossible if positions such as those of the banians and dewans had not been occasioned by British needs. In her essay, “The ‘Great Houses’ of Old Calcutta,” Chitra Deb rightly says of Bengalis who filled such positions: “Unusually too, their wealth came not from hereditary trade or landed wealth but from new sources allied with nascent British colonialism” (C. Deb 56). Since Calcutta was the capital of British India, it was the Bengalis who initially had the greatest contact with the British. Babu culture was based in

Calcutta and Bengali-dominated. The communication barrier between the British and those natives with whom they conducted business opened up avenues of profit for many. Sumanta Banerjee notes that the British rulers “had to depend on interpreters and intermediaries—a role which a heterogeneous group of Bengalis came forward to play” (S. Banerjee *Parlour* 21). Often these agents also became providers of local goods that the British needed for subsistence. The agents undertook all types of business ventures with and for the British ranging from transactions in salt, wood, gold, and silver. The agents helped the British in their jute businesses, and handled and interpreted petty matters in British administered courts in Calcutta. There was no dearth of avenues for making money, and “wealth flowed from skillful tending of British interests, [and] the advantages lay with the commercial and legal literati, and with those who could act as middlemen and manipulators...such as the *d[e]wans*, *banian*, *vakil*, and *mutsuiddi*” (C. Deb 57).²¹ Since the British were extensively building in Calcutta, construction was also a very lucrative business.

Numerous texts from the nineteenth-century such as *Nobo Babu Bilash*, *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, and “Babu” repeatedly stress the opportunities made available after the arrival of the British and how this was, to a large extent, responsible for the establishment of *nouveau riche* families that produced the babus. The beginning of Bhabhanicharan Bandhopadhyay’s *Nobo Babu Bilash*, which discusses the follies of a newly formed banian babu, stresses the role which the British played in the formation of this libertine group in Calcutta:

The British government made many avenues for making money. It is usually men whose fathers and brothers have a fortune who become babus

²¹ Indian terms for various types of business agents,

when they grow up. Their fathers and brothers worked in many different capacities—goldsmith, leather workers, jute business, furniture makers, wood and brick business, cheating, and lying. The arrival of the British in India gave Indian businessmen great opportunities to amass large fortunes. The men were often intermediaries between the British and the local entrepreneurs and they were able to make a lot of money... The young son of such a man eventually became a babu and wasted the money his father had accumulated (B. Bandopadhyay 35).

The socio-economic history of Bengal is replete with names of “banadi” families that rose to great wealth due to their transactions with the British.²² Such banadi families include the Basaks and the Seths, all pioneering businessmen who gathered great wealth that was handed down to their descendents.²³ In this new high stakes marketplace, some Bengali businessmen took full advantage of both their own people, and the British in an effort to line their pockets. All manner of dubious dealings and exploitations were conveniently overlooked by these ambitious insiders, creating a business culture wherein the ability to employ cut-throat tactics remained a requisite for success.

Since their British masters did not pay large salaries, these Bengali businessmen took recourse to, as Sumanta Banerjee points out, “bribery, embezzlement of funds, forgery of documents [which] became the order of the day among this new Bengali elite who seemed to be inspired by the single, obsessive motive of making money as fast as possible” (S. Banerjee *Parlour* 25). Such wide-spread corruption and pervasive sense of entitlement certainly started with the babus’ fathers; however, the most visible

²² The word “banadi” comes from “buniad” meaning foundation. Many families in present day Calcutta can trace back their lineage to this period. Even though often their wealth does not match up to what their ancestors used to have, these families still often own palatial houses.

²³ Ratan Sarkar began life as a humble washer-man. He learned a few English words, became an interpreter, amassed quite a large fortune, and was the founder of one of the “banadi” families.

manifestation of this unethical and self-aggrandizing approach to life exhibited itself most visibly with the businessmen's sons, the babus, who took what they learned from their fathers to a truly ostentatious pitch unseen in the previous generation.

In her book on Calcutta, Krishna Dutta says of the fathers, the banians and dewans:

When the [East India] company began to trade in the region, some of these already-prosperous Hindus became moneylenders to the Company, along with the Armenians who were already in Bengal. Less prosperous but equally enterprising Bengalis, [banians] (tradesmen) such as the Basaks and the Seths, became contract suppliers of goods. (K. Dutta 23).

These agents were indispensable to the British, and being indispensable meant that the avenues of making money were endless since the British were quite dependent on their Bengali agents. The British were not always keen business men; they left matters largely in the hands of their Bengali banians and dewans and were satisfied as long as a steady and regular income was sent every month with which they could maintain the lavish lifestyles they fast became accustomed to once in India. In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, for instance, Mr. John leaves his business largely in Motilal's inept hands. Motilal soon gets the business into dire trouble, but most banians such as Motilal's father knew how to exploit the situation for their own good. The fathers knew that they would make money as long as business was good, and the British and the Bengalis both thrived because of this symbiotic relationship. It is not necessarily true that trust was always abused, but there were indeed cases where huge fortunes were made in questionable ways in very short periods of time. A description of how business was conducted gives a fair idea of the freedom given to the banians. Sumanta Banerjee gives such a detailed description:

Both the ‘Dobhash’ [interpreters] and ‘Banyan’ being secured, the English started their business in right earnest and in regular style...The Banyan hired a species of broker, called a Gomastah, at so much a month, The Gomastah repaired to the aurang, or manufacturing town, which was his assigned station; and there fixed upon a habitation, which he called his Cutchery. He was provided with a sufficient number of peons, a sort of armed servants...by his employer. (S. Banerjee *Parlour* 21)

This description makes it clear that not only did the banians and gomasths have a certain amount of independence in the transactions that they made, but also that such independence which was quite unsupervised gave the Bengali agents ample opportunities to make money.

The means to achieving this success led to the undermining of native culture in ways that these clever Bengali businessmen who were the babus’ fathers could not imagine. The babus’ fathers were the first generations embracing an opportunistic working relationship with the British. They were only able to work for the British because they were able to communicate with the colonizers, and these banians and zamindars, as Percival Spear notes in *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India*, “were ubiquitous and in constant contact with the Europeans” (P. Spear xii). Such prolonged contact caused the fathers to bring home basic knowledge of the English language and a general awareness of British culture without which they themselves would not have been able to work for the colonizers. The babus’ fathers prepared their sons for further interaction with, and investment in, Western ways. Although the fathers undoubtedly intended in part to help educate their sons regarding their British masters so that the sons could carry on with the family business, the fathers did not want any intrinsic change in their sons; nor did the fathers want British culture to encroach upon their traditional ways of life. In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, Motilal’s father

“wished to teach him English” (T.Thakur 12), but later regretted his Motilal’s babu lifestyle, telling his friend that he had no hopes for Motilal since Motilal had “become dissipated” (T. Thakur 80).

Nobo’s father in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* likewise sent Nobo to live in Calcutta and learn English, but later deeply regretted this decision which, the father believed, transformed his son Nobo into a lascivious and drunken babu. As Tapan Raychaudhuri points out, the fathers’ wishes can be summed up as one “conservative thinker summed up his advice... ‘we should learn from Europe only their skills in matters practical, and nothing else. It is better that we learn nothing else from the West’” (T. Raychaudhuri *Perceptions* 9). Consequently, while the fathers sought to strengthen their sons’ positions in an emerging economy, they also managed to undermine their own cultural values, and in some cases compromised the reputations and financial stability of their own households. *Nobo Babu Bilash* provides a fine example of this irony. Jagatdurlabh, the babu in *Nobo Babu Bilash*, is exposed to a Eurasian tutor in the hope that Jagatdurlabh would learn the language of the colonizer so important to continue business with the British in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta. The narrator writes: “The young babu is very impressed with this Anglo-Indian tutor’s style of dressing and eating and begins to blindly imitate him” (B. Bandopadhyay 39). The budding babu only emulates his tutor’s bad habits and bad language, and instead of using his limited language skills to bolster his father’s business, Jagatdurlabh becomes a babu and dissipates his family’s wealth.

The waste of wealth proved particularly painful to the fathers because they had primed their sons to acquire honor and wealth but the fathers ended up witnessing their babu-sons spoiling the family image and squandering sizeable amounts of money.

However, had the fathers thought through the examples they set at home and the values that they imparted to their children, they would not have been shocked by the immoral and outrageous activities of their progeny. The sons were raised in a climate of superficiality, hypocrisy, and corruption where money, power, and social status choked out any sense of ethics and fidelity to the emotional needs of family members and the social needs of a deteriorating community. Motilal, the banian babu, is brought up “in an environment where money was paid more respect than education or religion,” and watches his father put aside Motilal’s mother and marry a second time for a dowry (T. Thakur 33). The babus, then, were raised in an atmosphere that almost made their emergence inevitable. From their childhoods the babus had witnessed the worship of money while values, emotions, and ideals were laid aside. Hence, it was not surprising that they led corrupt lifestyles and focused on the attainment of superficial pleasures. Growing up in an environment where money and material possessions were highly valued, it was not unexpected that the babus acquired these skewed values, many of which centered on the acquisition of possessions like rich clothing, foreign goods, and carriages that would ostensibly give their lives meaning.

The babus’ fathers were obviously opportunists who found particular niches in the economy that allowed them to exploit both sides of the colonial equation. In order to distinguish themselves from the mass of laboring Bengalis and ostensibly to close the gap between themselves and the British through financial and social eminence, the fathers took advantage of the social and economic upheaval that British rule occasioned. They took a mercenary approach to this wide-spread paradigm shift often resorting to, as Chitra Deb writes: “violence and extortion [towards the natives]...to keep up their positions” (C.

Deb 57). Deb mentions that Gobindaram Mitra, founder of a rich family that later produced babus, took recourse to dishonest means to increase his fortunes. (C. Deb 57). The babus were essentially experiencing an accelerated journey to libertinism due to the rapid accumulation of wealth that their fathers were able to procure. Hence, they embodied an almost grotesque version of the Western libertine who had generations of money and influence behind him that helped fund his libertinism. A later rake and gambler, Sir Kit from Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800), is a case in point. A member of the aristocracy, Sir Kit uses the rent his tenants paid on his inherited land to finance his wasteful sojourns in London and have lavish parties at the castle. The babus, then, effectively acquired the means to enjoy an aristocratic position and lifestyle in Bengali society in a dizzyingly brief amount of time because their fathers were able, during their lifetimes, to acquire huge properties.

The babus' fathers, though, were less disoriented by the sudden rise in status and wealth. However, the fathers were clearly fixated to the point of miserly obsession in continuing to build their miniature empires. David Kopf rightly notes: "these mid-eighteenth century figures were members of an economic elite,... their generation...[was] far too preoccupied with trade and finance" (D. Kopf 61). In fact, they were so focused on making money that the thought of a libertine lifestyle was a distraction and a detriment in a world where wealth was available for any man with sharp business acumen. The narrator of *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, for instance, writes thus of Motilal's father: "Babu Ram babu's [Motilal's father; here the "babu" is used to indicate "Mr."] only paid attention to avenues of making more money" (T. Thakur 7). Such men as the babus' fathers were more grounded and practical than their sons and were not quick to

squander money on useless entertainments. As Chitra Deb says: “[t]he founder of a great house is often not himself a great Babu. This role is assumed by his sons and perhaps his grandsons” (C. Deb 62).

Given the practical and in many cases miserly attitude of the fathers, a great rift between the generations became unavoidable when the fathers observed their offspring becoming utterly careless men who not only shamed the family but squandered so much of their coveted money. In *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*, when the babu Nobo comes home drunk and calling for dancers of low repute, his father’s disgust and frustration is made evident in the question he puts to his wife, Nobo’s mother: “Could you not have fed him salt and killed him when he was conceived?” (M.M. Dutt 107). Rather than having such a son to carry on the family name, Nobo’s father would rather have no son even if it means the extinction of his family line. Psychologically, it was excruciating and even maddening for money-obsessed fathers to observe their sons revolt to such a degree that the sons ended up in debtor’s prison. Jagatdurlabh’s father in *Nobo Babu Bilash*, for instance, makes Jagatdurlabh remain in debtor’s prison for two months before paying off his debts and releasing him (B. Bandopadhyay 54). Not being short of cash, the father could have paid to have his son released much earlier if he so wished; but he delayed in the hope that the imprisonment would serve as a form of punishment that would make the babu-son reconsider his wasteful ways (B. Bandopadhyay 54). From the babus’ perspective though having observed their fathers absolutely consumed with concerns regarding money to the point that they could hardly ever discuss anything unrelated to business, the notion of breaking away and living a worry-free life of leisure and pleasure was welcomed.

The greater was the miserliness of the father, the greater was the son's propensity to break away from his father's cares and concerns, thereby causing great unrest in the domestic sphere. Motilal in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* is a case in point. Motilal wishes for his father's death so that, as the eldest son, he can get his hands on the property and then indulge in the babu lifestyle in a free and unhindered manner (T. Thakur 49). Therefore, money, which potentially can be a harbinger of family harmony, if used judiciously by soothing away worry and financial stress, wields the opposite effect in this instance. The differing obsessions of fathers and sons overrode all concerns and divided families.

Even though the babus had the advantage of being backed by great wealth, their wiser fathers tried to make provisions for them so that the babus could continue to earn or at least secure what they inherited. In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* and *Nobo Babu Bilash* the relatively uneducated fathers made every effort to educate Motilal and Jagatdurlabh. Realizing the importance of acquiring the English language that Motilal would require to secure his future, his father sent him to village schools, found Persian tutors, and finally sent him to school in Calcutta for an English education while Jagatdurlabh's father in *Nobo Babu Bilash* found his son a Eurasian tutor to teach him English. But the banian babus had no interest in education and hence Motilal learned nothing. Motilal tells his Brahmin tutor who is also their household priest:

If you come near me again to teach me useless stuff I will knock down the household deities and will put an end to your main source of livelihood. And if you complain to my father then I will climb to the terrace and drop a heavy object on your head (T. Thakur 9).

Motilal as well as the banian babu in *Nobo Babu Bilash* are aware that the money their fathers had accumulated would be enough to last them their lifetimes and hence, being

spoilt children of rich fathers, they refuse to learn anything substantial that would allow them to continue earning as their fathers had done.

As a result, these banian babus placed themselves in precarious positions because their babu lifestyles could only continue as long as their fathers' money lasted. Their dependence on this wealth was great, but they had no way of increasing it since they were unable to add to the fortune. The banian babus could not initially grasp the instability of their positions; but, as Motilal's and Jagatdurlabh's story bear out, they only grasp the reality of their unsteady positions when it is too late. The banian babus could only assume this lifestyle as long as they had the funding available to continue it, and hence the babu identity was dependent to a very large extent on the availability of wealth.

In fact, Motilal was so deluded by his wealth he failed to even comprehend that education could have benefits besides those of making money. However, it was not entirely the babus' fault that they reduced education to simply the procurement of a position in the business community since, after all, such an equation was made repeatedly by their highly pragmatic fathers whose main intention in sending their sons to school had not been to enlarge their minds through education, but to give them the language skills necessary to conduct business. Interestingly, this situation partially explains why the babus revolted against their fathers' wishes by focusing less on practical learning and concentrating on the arts, in particular theatre, which appeared more entertaining, enlightening, and satisfying than simply learning how to competently maintain a ledger book.

Not only did the babus generally have no interest in business, they usually did not have the head for it either not having paid any attention to their training in that field.

Consequently, most business ventures that they undertook failed. Jagatdurlabh in *Nobo Babu Bilash* tries his hand at business and loses money hand over fist. The babu would:

would mostly just enjoy himself at the brothels, but sometimes he would also think of conducting some business. He would then buy clothes for Rs. 500 and sell them for Rs.250. He bought a car for Rs. 1000 and sold it for Rs. 400. He only incurred loss in business and his debts mounted. Soon he fell into huge debts... (B. Bandopadhyay 51)

This indeed was the general pattern of business the banian babus conducted. In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* too Motilal fails. Motilal is, however, luckier than the banian babu in *Nobo Babu Bilash* insofar as there is still money left for him in the end, but for the banian babu in the latter novella there is only poverty and misery at the end of his life because he chooses to spend his huge fortune on wine and women.

The banian babus misspent the educational investment their fathers afforded them as well as their youthful energies on activities that had absolutely no return but a moment's pleasure. The banian babus had no understanding of the sort of long-term goals that would allow them to pursue pleasure throughout their lifetimes, albeit in a much less piquant and more tempered fashion. In their minds, every experience had to outshine the previous ones; every moment had to be infused with the utmost titillation to be of any value. Motilal and his group of banian babus in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* "wanted only color, leisure, and pleasure" from their lives, but such a mentality and lifestyle, of course, not only ultimately jaded the banian babus but also left no provisions for the future (T. Thakur 67). To their fathers, who were steady, future-minded men, the banian babus' approach to life appeared unconscionable.

The case was slightly different for the Young Bengal babus. Their wealth was a safety device for them which allowed them to occupy positions right below those held by

the British. Contrary to the banian babus, however, the Young Bengal babus did not usually try their hand at business since they believed they had nobler social aims such as agitating for female education and widow re-marriage. Nobo, Dutt's Young Bengal babu in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*, never tries his hand at business but instead makes speeches aimed at bringing about social progress. Although most texts on the banian babus mention some sort of failed attempt to make money, those on the Young Bengal babus do not. Young Bengal babus aimed at saving the country from the darkness of superstition, and hence had no time to buy and sell. The Young Bengal babus knew they could rely on their wealth, and so chose to divert themselves by lavish spending and mouthing hollow resolutions that would bring about social progress, as illustrated by Nobo who makes grand speeches for educating and emancipating women (M.M. Dutt 101). In some ways, the Young Bengal babus were indeed more deluded than the banian babus because they felt that their selfish rebellions somehow impacted society for the better. This self-serving sense of idealism, of course, oftentimes exposed the Young Bengal babus' hypocritical nature as their words were not followed by actions. While Nobo in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* makes grand speeches for the emancipation of women, he carouses with low-class dancers and has an oppressed wife with whom he hardly maintains relations. Nobo never stops to think that instead of merely making speeches, he could actively improve women's conditions by championing the cause of low-class dancers, and giving his wife basic rights and freedoms. As the pampered sons of rich men, this form of faux social consciousness was little more than another way of calling attention to themselves with the goals of appearing socially-aware, individualistic, and modern.

The fathers had already made money and the babus had it at their disposal. Like the Restoration rakes, there is no account in babu literature of a true babu, be it of the banian babu class or the Young Bengal babu type, who worked hard for a living. The babus would not have existed without the influx of money that occurred with the arrival of the British. If the British had arrived but there had not been the tremendous opportunities to make money that their arrival engendered, the babus would not have been able to emulate the British even if they wanted to. The babus needed the wealth to lead a life of leisure, and so the birth of the babu was directly tied to the market-place economy of the 1800s. The babus could not exist without the funding that their fathers provided and the fathers were funded by British businesses. It was, then, the British who directly made the babus' spending capacity possible. Because they had huge amounts of money at their disposal and no need or desire to work, the babus became the new leisure class funded by the British. With the eventual loss of the money, there came the loss of the babu identity. The spirit of libertinism in nineteenth-century Bengal was heavily dependent upon the ability to purchase the trappings of the leisure class. Although the British mocked the babus and had a derogatory attitude towards them, they were indeed responsible to a very large extent for the babus' rise.

Between the Book and the Bottle: the Babu's Education and Influences

With the arrival of the British, Bengalis got their first glimpse of Western culture. Bengalis had several avenues of contact with Western literature open to them and R. C. Majumdar writes that "[Bengal] became the first province in India to feel [the] impact of English education and Western culture, which was the most important factor in the

cultural evolution of India in the [nineteenth century]” (R.C Majumdar 3). Before the British arrived in India, there was virtually no English education. In “Education in Old Calcutta” Poromesh Acharya informs that schools were small affairs conducted in mud huts or open spaces²⁴ with a few male students and “were usually single-teacher schools” (P. Acharya 86).²⁵ In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, Tekchand Thakur gives us a somewhat exaggerated and comic picture of the imparting of education in Bengali schools that were not administered by the British. He writes:

The teacher would put his feet up, hold the whip in his hand, lean against the wall, doze and say “write, write”. Motilal [the student and the future babu], in this interval, would stand in front of him, dance and make faces. The teacher is sleeping and does not pay any attention to what the student is doing. (T. Thakur 8)

Although this is indeed an exaggerated picture and not all teachers were of this stamp, the general quality of teachers and education was indeed low and students seldom learned anything useful. There were few or no texts; chalks and slates were the only writing implements that were available although sometimes “the native mode of writing on sand, palm leaves, and plantain leaves [was] adopted” (P. Acharya 86). As *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* shows, there was hardly any discipline and school hours were flexible. Additionally, “the teachers were also mostly ignorant and absolutely unsuited for their

²⁴ Solvyn’s picture of a “pathshala,” a village school, (1808) in the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta shows a single male teacher teaching a few male students in an open space before a mud hut.

²⁵ These village and local schools were called pathshalas and there was seldom anything of note taught in these schools. The educational system in India can almost said to have been revolutionized by the advent of the British. Sons of rich men, especially in cities like Calcutta, were often sent to British and Eurasian administered schools. Over a short period of a few years a number of such schools had been established in Calcutta. See Poromesh Acharya’s “Education in Old Calcutta” for more details. Education in India still largely follows the British model.

tasks. They could hardly exercise any moral influence over their pupils” (R.C. Majumdar 12). It was only after the arrival of the British that a considerable change took place, and a systematized education began to become available for Bengali boys.

The highly structured and disciplined British educational system served two main purposes. Firstly, it provided a well-rounded and thorough introduction to Western literature; secondly, the General Committee of Public Instruction, formed in 1823, aided by providing a highly regimented learning atmosphere that was further strengthened by Sir Charles Wood’s Despatch of 1854 “which suggested a comprehensive educational structure and process” (P. Acharya 91). Furthermore, the British system strove to eradicate Eastern culture while simultaneously indoctrinating male Bengali students through the use of propaganda techniques that painted Western ways, particularly those directly associated with the British, in a glorifying light. The General Committee of Public Instruction, for example, did not “show any concern for vernacular [Bengali] education” (P. Acharya 91). Such propaganda techniques proved seductive for the babus compelling them to cast off any vestige of their native ways and embrace British modes and models for emulation. Since the British “were at the apex of India’s social pyramid, they were naturally objects of imitation especially among the educated Bengalis” (T. Raychaudhuri *Europe* 59).

The British system introduced a focus on independent thinking and critical analysis, the study of broad literary and philosophical traditions, and a tendency to embrace experimental or novel developments in many fields which represented a shift from the less liberal and individualistic curriculum and methodology that informed the Indian educational system. Rajiv Vrudhula points out that under the educational system

the British introduced “new importance [was] placed on Western forms of systematized knowledge—eg. the grammar book, the dictionary, the codification of law and privileging of it over custom—which in turn led to an emphasis placed on western style education and ultimately the importance placed on English” (R. Vrudhula 23). The focus laid on critical thought proved very important since it made the babus, especially the Young Bengal babus, reevaluate their society and the culture of nineteenth-century colonial Bengal as well as the Hindu religion. This critical thinking caused the babus to reject or seek reform for several traditions for which they were heavily censure by orthodox mainstream society.

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, one of the foremost teachers in nineteenth-century Calcutta, for example, “impress[ed] upon his pupils the sacred duty of thinking for themselves” (qtd. in R. Vrudhula 56) and Nobo, the Young Bengal babu in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* credits his critical thinking skills to his education: “Gentlemen, we were all born in the land of the Hindus, but due to our education we have cut ourselves free from the shackles of superstition...the light of education has dispelled the gloom of ignorance” (M.M. Dutt 101). Over time Western influences served to undermine aspects of Bengali social life that had been important to its older more conservative members while also bringing about some truly necessary aspects of reform such as the abolition of the caste system and sati.

British professors skilled in teaching and Eurasian educators with varying levels of Western education gave the Bengali youth their first glimpse into the world of libertinism and its accompanying hedonistic luxuries. These educated British men opened schools of various sizes, were professors at the renowned Hindu College, and were often

private tutors to sons belonging to rich families. Additionally, there were books sold at auctions which Bengalis had access to, all of which led to an exposure to British life and libertinism. Before the arrival of the British, the language of business was Persian. Babur, the first Mogul emperor of India, had conquered Northern India in the fifteenth century, and ever since then there had been a Mogul king on India's throne in Delhi.

Understandably then Persian literature and language had flourished during that time.

Percival Spear notes:

Over the Mogul empire, and thus over the whole of Indian public life was cast a mantle of Persian culture. The language of the Court and of public business, of diplomacy and polite society was Persian. Taste in the arts, in literature and in public deportment and etiquette, was influenced by Persian models...both Muslims and Hindus of the upper classes studied Persian as a language and a literature. (P. Spear xiv)

We see Motilal's father in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* making an attempt to teach his son Persian. But, as his father is quick to realize, the days of Persian's cultural dominance were over. English was becoming the language of business and it was because of a basic knowledge of English that Bengalis could act as agents and intermediaries of the British. Motilal's father hastens to teach his son English and engages a Eurasian tutor for Motilal. Clearly the babus' fathers recognized this shift in their culture and exposed their children to Western thought and language. However these fathers, at this early point in their children's lives, could not anticipate the unintended consequences of their choice. When their sons embraced the babu lifestyle, the fathers placed the blame squarely on British education overlooking the fact that they themselves had advocated that same system. Although they wanted their sons to operate successfully in this new business environment they did not desire them to change in any fundamental way.

Although the fathers blamed British education in the abstract for this change in their sons, the Eurasians tutors who were born out of unions of British men and Bengali women proved to be, in many instances, a great influence on their children, not only since these tutors exposed the young sons to new ideas but because the tutors, in many ways, served as close personal mentors to the budding babus.²⁶ Eurasian children were plentiful in Bengal because many British soldiers, officers, and servicemen formed temporary and sometimes permanent liaisons with Bengali women. Kenneth Ballhatchet notes in *Race, Sex, and Class Under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and their Policies and their Critics 1793-1905* that these mixed-race Eurasians were mostly treated as being of color and yet they were usually better educated than the natives (97). Sometimes, as Durba Ghosh points out, British fathers took limited responsibility for these Eurasian children who, even though not treated on an equal footing with the colonizers, often knew the manners of the British (D. Ghosh 100). As a result, Eurasians, being to various degrees intimately familiar with their connection to the ruling class, often distanced themselves from their native mothers and sought to present themselves as British as the tutor in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* does.

Coming into contact with such Eurasian men provided the banian babus with models they could draw from in constructing their new identities. Rich, young Bengali men were impressed by their Eurasian tutors' access to British culture as evidenced by their Western mannerisms, their lighter skin, their knowledge of the English language, their Western clothing, and these budding banian babus based their lifestyles on

²⁶ According to Sumanta Banerjee: "English missionaries from the beginning of the 19th century were found to be increasingly voicing concern over the rapid rise in the number of children 'born to Europeans by native women' since 'to provide employment for them has already become a matter of serious consideration'" (S. Banerjee *Under* 28).

Eurasians who were often engaged as their tutors. The Eurasians were, then, the first offspring born of the pairing of Eastern and Western cultures in India. They represented a transition into a new era where these two cultures existed simultaneously. Eurasians were hybrids of the two cultures who, as Dolores Chew puts it “[had] inherited the blood of the colonizer, but were also identified with the colonized” and represented the realities of that coupling to the babus and exhibited to them the way in which two cultures could merge in one person (D. Chew 5). Eurasians provided an opening for the babus to observe and then emulate European modes of existence. The babus, having spent a considerable portion of childhood under the tutelage and influence of these Eurasians, naturally latched on to many of the characteristics they saw in their mentors.

Such tutors were found in plenty in India and they came with various levels of expertise. Derozio, for example, was a skilled and selfless teacher. But there were plenty of Eurasians for whom “the sense of not quite belonging was displacing,” and who could only become a tutor to a rich man’s son (D. Chew 4). Usually such compulsion meant that the tutors came encumbered with bitterness towards their social positions (for which they did not consider themselves responsible), and a disinterest in imparting learning as well as an inability to become an effective educator. Eurasians did not belong to either the ruling or the ruled class, and they occupied a very unstable intermediary position in a society in which they could claim kinship with neither group. Mixed-race Eurasians were not accepted by conservative mainstream Bengali society, and the British government distanced themselves by discriminating against the Eurasians and debarring them from posts in the administration (K. Ballhatchet 97). The problems that this group faced only

grew as the years went by because there were very few places where they could find any profitable work or sense of social legitimacy. This was even more the case since:

many possibilities of prosperous employment had been closed to them by government policy, their lack of prosperity was often cited as evidence of fecklessness and lack of enterprise, and the fact that few Eurasians attained positions of eminence was often cited as evidence of a lack of ability and energy. (K. Ballhatchet 99) ²⁷

Thus, Eurasians were often a disillusioned and cynical set of men who took what jobs they found, and often the only somewhat respectable job with decent pay that was available to them was to become tutors of rich but spoilt children whose fathers wanted to teach them the English language and some aspects of British culture. Eurasian tutors would live in their ward's houses; their living expenses and food were paid for, and they received a small salary in addition.

It was such a Eurasian man who is engaged as tutor for Jagatdurlabh, the young boy who eventually grows up to become a banian babu in *Nobo Babu Bilash*, and hence it comes as no surprise that the young boy learns nothing important. After an initial stab at teaching his son Persian, Jagatdurlabh's father decides that the son will now learn English:

It is decided that an English tutor will be hired to teach him English at home. No Englishman, of course, would condescend to such a job. Finally, an illegitimate son of an Englishman and an Indian prostitute is produced and accepts the job.²⁸ The young man is very impressed with this Eurasian

²⁷ From Bessie Sinclair Fenton's journal, Ketaki Kushari Dyson notes: "Bessie reports on the increasingly 'precarious position' of the half-castes in the British society of India and on the way in which they were being snubbed, both by individual members of that society, including those in clerical circles, and by the Government" (244).

²⁸ Durba Ghosh writes: "High-level officials were discouraged from keeping Indian companions and lower-level soldiers and employees of the [East India] company were allowed and enabled to turn to prostitutes to satisfy their heterosexual impulses" (D. Ghosh 9). The tutor is probably someone born out of such a union.

tutor's style of dressing and eating and begins to blindly imitate him. His English education comprises of words like: rascal, very good, nonsense, and go to hell. He mixes Bengali words with these English words and begins to speak a very strange language, and also begins to pretend as if he can write letters in English. (B. Bandopadhyay 39)

This is the first contact the child has with the English language and with someone he believes belongs to the ruling class, the ways of whom many young Bengali men sought to emulate at the time believing them to be sophisticated and admirable. The background of the tutor and the words that the child learns are indicative of the quality of education he gets. Regrettably, this was often the type of men who were models for children who later grew up to become banian babus. It is a short step to connect the tutor's vocabulary, the history of his unfortunate birth, the sordid atmosphere in which the tutor grew up, and the tutor's presumably flamboyant style of dressing to his other activities, the moral standards of which may well be doubtful.

An early exposure to such a tutor has a lasting impression on a child's malleable mind, and since the pupil is only too pre-disposed to imitate his tutor, it is not difficult to guess at the rakish activities that the child glimpsed at through his tutor. Additionally, since such were the moral principles of the figure who was placed in a position of authority over the child and was admired, the child grew up with a compromised and indeed weak sense of morality which, in addition to the life of leisure he could lead because of his father's wealth, pre-disposed him to become a libertine, a babu. As later events in his life bear out, the child does indeed become a banian babu with a pre-disposition towards spending money lavishly on frivolous entertainments. His life and his later misfortunes makes one think of the early influence of his tutor on his life which inclined him to live a life of waste and fruitless leisure.

Along with the dubious education the previously mentioned banian babu receives, formal education was also available. This was the sort of formal education in British administered schools that the Young Bengal babus were exposed to. With the Charter Act of 1813 the British actively began to introduce English education into India.²⁹ The Act had some important clauses as Gauri Vishwanathan shows in *Masks of Conquests: Literary Studies and British Rule in India*: “one was the assumption [by the East India Company] of a new responsibility toward native education” (G. Vishwanathan 23) and the other was that “a sum of not less than one lac of rupees shall be annually applied to the renewal and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India” (G. Vishwanathan 38).³⁰ The British hoped to root out folk superstition and religious values that they perceived as superstitions from among the natives and forge stronger loyalties by educating the young men of Bengal so that the colonizers could depend upon having an educated and progressive group of young men who would aid them in managing their empire. J.C. Ghosh correctly writes that the British were “anxious that India, by receiving the benefits of the Western arts and sciences, should be bound to Britain by ties superior to those of politics and commerce” (J.C. Ghosh 111). Inculcating the natives in this respect helped ensure the health of the empire. The Young Bengal group of babus came under the influence of schools and colleges the opening of which had been facilitated by the Charter Act. Men belonging to this group were educated in

²⁹ The main responsibility for the Charter Act of 1813 lay with the Marquis of Hastings and Lord Wellesley. The Act gave the Company power over all of India, except Punjab and Sind. It renewed the Company’s charter for a further period of twenty years, declared that the British Crown was sovereign over the territories the Company held in India, and finally opened up India to missionaries. Refer to John Keay for more on the Charter Act of 1813.

³⁰ About 10,000 pounds annually.

English literature among other subjects since their fathers were rich men who could afford to send their sons to British administered schools where Western literatures were taught.

Since the dissemination of English language and literature was of paramount importance in the formation of the babus, it is imperative to examine some of the schools where the future babus gained access to Western education if they wished to function, let alone thrive in this new society. David Hare's school, for example, was one of the finest institutions where Western literatures were taught.³¹ Hare school was, and still remains, one of the best institutions of learning in Calcutta. From *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* we learn the names of some more schools that had opened in Calcutta: "Sherbourne sahib also opened up a school which was very similar to the one run by Franco and Aratoon Pitrus. Only sons of rich men went to these schools" (T. Thakur 18). Prasannakumar Thakur who was the son of an exceedingly rich family, for instance, went to Sherbourne's school which was established in 1784. Other private schools were Farrel's, Lindstedt's, and Hutterman's (E. W. Madge 3).³² Another important school was Drummond's which was

³¹ David Hare (1775-1842) was a Scottish watchmaker and a philanthropist. He was instrumental in the establishment of various schools of very high standard in Calcutta, some of which exist even to this day. He arrived in India in 1800 and struck by the deplorable conditions of the poorer classes in Calcutta, he decided to stay back in Calcutta and dedicate himself to their betterment. He sold his business and used the money to establish schools. Hare was also the founder of the School Book Society which published books in English and Bengali. Calcutta was enveloped in gloom when he died of cholera on 1st June 1842. For more on David Hare, see *Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Banga Samaj (Ramtanu Lahiri and Contemporary Bengali Society)* by Sivanath Sastri

³² Some Bengalis cashed in on the opportunity to establish English schools. From "Education on Old Calcutta" in *Calcutta: The Living City* we learn, "...the first Bengali-run English school was probably set up before 1774. Ramram Mishra, a Bengali, knew a few English words. One of his students, Ramnarayan Mishra, opened an English *pathshala* at Shobhabazar. The students were taught by Thomas Dice's Spelling Book, and charged four to sixteen rupees according to their means. Ramjay Dutta's English

opened in 1810 and taught “English literature and Latin classes” (P. Acharya 90). These were the types of schools where the Young Bengal babus got their first taste of Western literature. While the precise curriculum used at these schools is not available now, based upon the British educational practices of the time we can assume that the babus became well-versed in English in these schools, and that this facility with English allowed them to grasp more complex works of literature when they graduated to colleges.³³

Another important institution that should be mentioned along with Hare School was Alexander Duff’s school.³⁴ Alexander Duff was the first Scottish missionary that the Church of Scotland dispatched to India, and Duff opened two schools where he taught English literature.³⁵ Duff’s school, which was opened on April 13 1830, was very popular. In *The Educational Policy of the East India Company in Bengal to 1854 D.P.*

Sinha notes:

school followed in 1791 at Kalutola. Rammohan Napit, Krishnamohan Basu, Bhushanmohan Datta, Shibu Datta and others also opened English schools. Murray’s Grammar and Murray’s Spelling Book were the two texts generally followed” (90). The standards of these schools varied drastically from each other.

³³ While I have not been able to obtain specific syllabi that were followed in the schools, for a detailed discussion on the books that were included in the curriculum and methods of teaching, refer to Gauri Viswanathan’s *Masks of Conquests: Literary Studies and British Rule in India*.

³⁴ For a detailed study of English education in India and the effect it had on the Bengalis, refer to Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquests: Literary Studies and British Rule in India*. Viswanathan’s book defines the manner in which the British used the study of English Literature and Language as a tool for managing the natives and keeping them bound to English rule.

³⁵ Gauri Viswanathan examines Alexander Duff’s contributions to the study of English in some detail in her book. Duff was born in Scotland in 1806 and arrived in Calcutta, after two shipwrecks, in 1830. He wrote a pamphlet titled *New Era of the English Language and Literature in India*. Duff’s first institution was called General Assembly’s Institution, and later he opened the Free Church Institution. These two were later merged to form the present day Scottish Church College. For more on Duff refer to Ghulam Murshid’s *Lured by Hope* (trans. By Gopa Majumdar).

the hall, which held only about one hundred and twenty was completely filled in three days” without any publicity or advertisement. The rush for admission was so great that “it was announced that a selection would be made and that every application must be made in writing and be accompanied by a special recommendation from some respectable native or European gentlemen.” The rush, however, continued and at the end of the week the list had to be closed in order to avoid over-crowding (D.P. Sinha 156).

The desire to learn English was indeed great among Bengalis. They possessed a genuine love for learning that was noted by men like Charles Grant.³⁶ Additionally, there was of course the desire to be familiar with the ruler’s tongue not only in order to conduct business with them, but also to appear sophisticated and intelligent. This desire to learn was fuelled and satisfied by the British, yet again establishing more institutional authority than they had already acquired through British military presence and their control of the marketplace. In a very real sense, while education did indeed bring about some needed changes in Bengal, it also served as a tool to win the hearts and minds of certain segments of the young male native population who became babus. The British consistently presented themselves as intellectual authorities, thereby re-orienting the belief systems of the babus in such a way that their loyalties begin to progressively shift in support of their colonizers.

The babus, as Tapan Raychaudhuri mentions “encountered Europe mainly through books” (T. Raychaudhuri *Europe* 6). From Gauri Vishwanathan we further learn what some of these books were. Duff, for instance, began with teaching the English alphabet but also had several advanced courses at his Free Church Institution which

³⁶ D.P Sinha writes: “Grant had arrived in India in 1767, and after serving in various capacities, had been made the Fourth Member of the Board of Trade with the superintendence of all the Company’s trade in Bengal” (4). For more on Grant, refer to Ainslee Embree’s *Charles Grant and the British Rule in India*, Columbia U P, 1962.

included the study of texts such as Cowper's poems, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Bacon's *Moral and Civil Essays* and *Advancement of Learning*, Richardson's *Poetical Selections* (Goldsmith, Gray, Addison, Pope, and Shakespeare), Addison's *Essays*, and Hallam's *Literary History of the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (G. Vishwanathan 54) and Addison's *Spectator* papers (G. Vishwanathan 86). Thus, those who attended this school were certainly familiar with writers who lived during the Restoration period such as Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. The *Spectator* had several essays that discussed Restoration drama from a critical point of view, and it is likely that these essays had been studied as part of the course since Addison's journal was included in the curriculum. Institutions of higher education, then, were certainly teaching complex texts which formed the English canon. The babus were consistently exposed to the classics of British literature which were presented as the most glorious or the greatest representatives of literature. Lacking any cultural reference point by which to weigh these works against lesser ones, the babus were naturally inclined to perceive British culture as a series of successes and view the British as a superior people worthy of emulation.

The inclusion of Hallam's *Literary History of the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* is also a very important indicator that the educated Young Bengal babus knew Restoration rakes, and might have then used them as models for their own brand of libertinism. The third volume of Hallam's work includes an entire section on Restoration literature and includes discussions of important writers from the Restoration period such as John Dryden as well as elaborate discussions of the merits of Restoration playwrights such as William Wycherley, William Congreve, George Farquhar, and John Vanbrugh. Importantly, there is also discussion of the merits and demerits of the Earl of

Rochester's poems. From this we know that the babus had knowledge of the ways of the Restoration rakes. Vishwanathan also points out another interesting and important point:

Curious to see what books were bought at a public auction, one writer was dismayed to find that there was no demand for the histories of Greece, Rome or anything of "serious or national character." On the contrary, Indians had bought up all the copies of *Sorrows of Werther*, *Life of Rochester*, [and] Scott's *Poetical Works* (G. Vishwanathan 162)

She further writes: "many of the books sold in public auctions originally belonged to East India Company officials, who brought them to India as part of their cultural baggage. When they left India, they either auctioned them off or donated them to libraries" (G. Vishwanathan 186). Biographies of Rochester's life and accounts of his death-bed conversion began to be published as early as 1680, the year of his death. Editions of Rochester's biography continued to come out in 1692, 1707, 1709, 1741, 1782, 1787, 1805 and 1820. Since the *Life of Rochester* was mentioned as one of the books sold at an auction it is clear that one or more of these publications were brought to India where Bengalis bought them at auctions. Some of these were only accounts of Rochester's death-bed conversion as reported by Gilbert Burnet, the Bishop of Salisbury, who attended Rochester at his death-bed, but there were also others that gave full details of the rakish life Rochester had lived.

Schools that were opened by Europeans became responsible for not only introducing new ideas, but also teaching the babus to think critically, which resulted in making them dissatisfied with Indian ways of life and Hindu beliefs. Thus, Nobo in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* credits his education, claiming that western education had helped him break the shackles of superstition (M.M. Dutt 101). Schools and colleges served as the environment where the babus began their experiments in identity, and it was here that

these cultural mutations first began to manifest themselves. This play with identity soon extended itself into the wider world, and colored every aspect of the babus' lives and soon found its way into the Bengali literature of the day which criticized the babus. Curiously then, the babus were inspired by Western literature that they encountered, and however inadvertently, they soon started to inspire Bengali literature which was concerned with providing tales of caution against them and their lifestyles. Through the figure of the babu, a thread of discourse between Western and Eastern literature was created. Not only was a thread of discourse created between these two worlds, a particular figure, the libertine, soon became a mainstay in Bengali literature as it had been in British literature for the past one hundred and fifty years. In a direct way, then, Western literature helped introduce what would soon become a stock character that had not previously existed in Bengali literature. As we shall see in following chapters, the babu was quickly stereotyped and became an oft-represented antagonist in nineteenth-century Bengali literature.

The theatres in Calcutta were another contributing factor that gave the babus knowledge of the Restoration rakes. Kironmoy Raha writes: "Like the city itself, Calcutta theatre was a British creation, and Bengali theatre took shape under the influence of European drama and dramatic techniques" (K. Raha 186). There were several British theatres in Calcutta as well as Bengali ones. Raha further writes: "for their knowledge of the English theatre [the English-educated upper crust of Bengali society] did not have to rely only on reading or report. The first of many English playhouses, the Calcutta Theatre, had been built as early as 1775...Indians gained entry from the early nineteenth century," indicating that the babus attended these plays (K. Raha 186). Plays were

performed regularly and the theatre enjoyed great success from its patrons.³⁷ Several accounts in Bishnu Basu's book, *Babu Theatre*, indicate that performances were well-received and that sets were of a fairly professional standard. The theatres were in the houses of prominent babus of the time. From Bishnu Basu's book we learn that babu Kaliprasanna Thakur opened the Hindu Theatre in 1831. Pratapchandra and Ishwarchandra Sinha, for whom Dutt wrote *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota* and *Buro Shaliker Ghare Ro*, also had a theatre at their residence. Most important, however, is the fact that William Congreve's plays featured prominently in this theatre scene. In their critical notes on the play *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota? (Is This Civilization?)*, the editors Sudhosotta Basu and Jotindra Dasgupta write:

In some of the theatres that were run by the British there were regular comedies that were directed by the British...Congreve's, Goldsmith's and Sheridan's plays were regularly acted on the stages in Bengal... works by Congreve, Sheridan and Goldsmith were topics of discussion for the educated of Bengal. Thus, when Iswarchandra who was the founder of the Belgachia theatre requested Madhusudan to write plays fashioned after the English model, it is not difficult to surmise that Madhusudan used these plays by Congreve, Sheridan, and Goldsmith as his models. (S. Basu et al 35)

Michael Madhusudan Dutt was one of the main contributors to Bengali literature in the nineteenth century, and his plays indeed have elements that are strongly reminiscent of the Restoration plays. *Buro Shaliker Ghare Ro (The Dotard Sports a Plume)*, for example, has a character who may well have been modeled on Old Bellair from

³⁷ Many rich babus opened up theatres in their own homes at great expenses. Stories of babu culture are replete with tales of enormous spending towards putting up single plays for one night. Kironmoy Raha notes that babus such as Prasannakumar Thakur, Nabinchandra Basu, Pratapchandra and Ishwarchandra Sinha, Ashutosh Deb were some of the prominent babu figures who were associated with the theater in Calcutta during this time.

Etherege's *Man of Mode*. Like Old Bellair who takes a keen interest in Emilia in Etherege's play, Bhaktaprasad babu, an older but lecherous babu makes an attempt to debauch several young wives who reside in his village. Dutt's play was particularly reminiscent of Restoration plays because Dutt used the same kind of tricking tactics based on disguise that Restoration plays oftentimes employed. Bhaktaprasad babu very closely resembled an older hypocritical vicious rake who could be and indeed meant to be truly harmful. Like many of the vicious rakes in the Restoration comedies, he too is exposed in the end and his evil purposes are defeated.

We can, then, begin to see that works about and by the Restoration rakes were readily available to the educated reading public in India. It is very possible that even though we find no specific mention of rakes in the works about the babus, it was indeed the rakes who were the babus' models for emulation. There are so many parallels between the lives of the rakes and the lives of the babus that an exploration of them affords an interesting, unique, and fruitful study. A criticism made by Gauri Vishwanathan further points in this direction: "English education came to be criticized for its imitativeness and superficiality and for having produced an uprooted elite who were ...imperfect imitators of the West" (G. Vishwanathan 159). The babus were indeed an "uprooted elite" who clung to the rakish lifestyle of their models making the rest of Hindu society afraid of the dangers into which they were bringing themselves and their society by refusing to follow Hindu traditions and blindly emulating the British (G. Vishwanathan 159). Even though it is undoubtedly true that Western education enlightened many minds, ushered in new ideas, and in some measures was responsible for rooting out problematic practices, it came to be largely blamed for producing this

class of young men whom the vast majority of Bengalis found threatening to their culture, to their traditions, and to their religious principles.

Another practical measure that the British took was also responsible for the formation of the babus. As briefly mentioned elsewhere, as businesses and administrative concerns grew in Calcutta the British needed clerks who had some Western education. Rajiv Vrudhula points out that the British needed the “babu clerk [who] was a product of British education, and of British policy insofar as the need for cheap labor for the colonial bureaucratic machine goes” and they took an active role in educating men to fill these lowly paid positions, thereby bringing about an even greater exposure to their culture (R. Vrudhula 9). The British strictly controlled the education and training of these clerks, and their instruction was consciously designed in such a way that this class of men would come to view the British as their superiors, and would strive to emulate and form stronger bonds with them. Illustrating the control the British exerted, Vishwanathan notes: “the 1835 English Education Act of William Bentinck...officially required the natives of India to submit to the study of English literature, irrevocably altering the direction of Indian education” (G. Vishwanathan 45). Aparna Basu notes that Bentinck declared: “the great object of the British government in India was henceforth to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India” (A. Basu 57), and that “all funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone” (A. Basu 57). The natives were forced to learn English, and this had the two-fold advantage of not only producing cheap labor but also of strengthening British rule in India by having educated and consequently indoctrinated supporters of such rule.

The fact that “out of any seventeen essays written for the [Hindu College Literary Society] ten would have been on the merits of Pope, two on Milton’s *Paradise Lost*...two on Shakespeare’s tragedies, and one on Kalidas” goes a long way in illustrating how far the English had succeeded in presenting themselves as a highly advanced culture and gaining supporters among the educated native youth of Calcutta (G. Vishwanathan 161). These Western educated youths rejected their traditional Bengali culture and the literature that it produced, and showed their whole-hearted support for foreign rule by immersing themselves in an alien culture, thereby suggesting in most cases that they believed that the superiority of the colonizers would uplift the country, and hence deserved their support. In “Babu,” Bankimchandra Chatterji writes of the babus: “The English will be their supreme Gods,” (B. Chatterji 12) and indeed the babus worshipped, supported, and “blindly imitated the English” (S. Raychaudhuri 68).

The British quickly realized the benefits of educating a new class of babus. Indeed, the British provided “a form of governmentality that in marking out a ‘subject nation,’ appropriate[ed], direct[ed] and dominat[ed] its various spheres of activity” (H. Bhabha 70). One of the many spheres of Bengali life that the British appropriated, directed, and dominated was, of course, education. In his famous Minutes of 2 February 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay, President of the Committee of Public Instruction, made his aims clear. Macaulay stressed that English literature and sciences should be taught instead of Oriental literature and sciences so that the colonizers might successfully produce “a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect” (D. David 129). British educational and administrative policy was directly responsible for the formation of the new class of clerk-babus; many babus

whose fathers had great wealth took these opportunities to come into closer contact with the rulers. The jobs were ill-paid but very easy. The banian and especially the Young Bengal babus did not need the money and so they took such clerical jobs where they would attend their offices for a few hours a day, gossip with other babus, perform some trivial copying work, and then stop by the prostitute's house before returning home. The incentive for upper-class Bengalis to embrace the ways of those subjugating them remains very obvious. The British, for their part, needed natives who would present a familiar face to the larger public while adhering to the dictates of their employers, thereby creating a situation where business could be successfully mediated between the masses of un-Westernized natives and the alien ruling class.

The rejection of everything Oriental and the superimposition of a foreign culture slowly led the English educated babus to ridicule and disparage their own culture, traditions, and literature. In spite of the babus' disdain, many Bengali social reformers who were older than the babus and yet like the babus stood apart from mainstream, conservative society started to view English education as the means to guide the youth out of age-old superstitions, and encouraged the large-scale dissemination of English literature and Western thought. Ketaki Kushari Dyson rightly points out in *A Various Universe: A Study of the Journals and Memoirs of British Men and Women in the Indian Subcontinent, 1765-1856* that "it was through his [Macaulay's] vigorous propaganda as well as the wishes of the Indian intelligentsia that higher education in India under British auspices received its overwhelmingly anglicized character" (K. K. Dyson 24).³⁸ This

³⁸ Ketaki Kushari Dyson's book looks at the letters and personal journals of British men and women who lived or traveled in India during the colonial rule. She looks at approximately forty-five examples beginning from 1765 to 1856. The book offers a view

relationship, in time, began to be viewed as a symbiotic one. For the British, it solved the problem of finding inexpensive clerical workers and bound the natives strongly to the ruling class, thereby lessening the likelihood of revolt. For the educated babus, it gave them employment, gave them Western education, and they believed that it also elevated their minds and aided them in leaving behind the superstitions of their religion. Western education also, however, ensured that the babus became increasingly isolated from the rest of Bengali society both in terms of their sensibilities and social stature.

This sense of separation bound the babus together and led them to create their own codes of conduct and behavior. Unable to identify with mainstream culture by which, as Swapan Majumdar points out they “considered themselves persecuted,” the babus formed their own sub-culture of libertinism which allowed them greater freedoms than those afforded by traditional Bengali culture (S. Majumdar 110). Such a sub-culture fulfilled the need for socialization without subjecting the babus to censure. They could freely drink and carouse with men of the same stamp and find ready acceptance among their peers. Outside of those social situations, however, the babus were, at best, viewed as misfits, and at worst as pariahs. The babus were indeed cut-off from age-old norms and were, to some degree, forced to accept certain Western ways and adapt them to the local climate.

of what the Europeans thought of Indian dances, religious rituals, inter-mingling of the Europeans and Indians, the plight of the half-castes, hazards of traveling in India, difficulties of raising babies in India, and advice on making European recipes with Indian ingredients among others. Touching on a wide variety of subjects, *A Various Universe* gives a very clear and first-hand account of the manner in which Europeans lived their lives in India.

Conclusion

The nineteenth century was ripe for the birth of a libertinism that, as Subir Raychaudhuri writes, grew out of “an imperfect encounter with the West” (S. Raychaudhuri 75). Although there were men like David Hare and William Carey who genuinely cared for the people of Bengal, these were not the men who made a mark on the babus.³⁹ The babus saw the corruptions within British society in India and chose to imitate them. British corruption grew to be a concern not only for the Bengalis who felt that their youth were being led astray but also for the British themselves, especially because one of the main aims that the colonizers used to justify their presence in India was their mission to civilize, Christianize, and better the natives, which in this instance, failed to transpire. Vishwanathan notes “the extravagant and demoralized lifestyles of the East India Company servants, combined with their ruthless exploitation of native natural resources, had begun to raise serious and alarming questions in England about the morality of the British presence in India” (G. Vishwanathan 24). Clearly any moral justification that the British put forth for the colonization of India tended to collapse in the face of the immoral actions associated with sections of the British population, such as the young and unrestrained soldiers of the East India Company who engaged in all manner of dubious behavior.

³⁹ William Carey (1761-1834) was a Baptist minister. He translated the Bible into Sanskrit and Bengali. He was one of the founders of the Baptist Missionary Society which, in 1818, founded Serampore College. Native ministers could train at this college but it was also open to the common public regardless of caste or creed. He was also one of the agitators against sati where a Hindu widow immolated herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. For a biography, see Arthur C. Chute’s *William Carey, A Sketch of Beginnings in Modern Missions*. Chicago: Goodman and Dickerson, 1891.

The question that arises at this point is: why do we see the babus in colonial Bengal almost two hundred years after the Restoration rakes made their appearance? The very simple answer to this is that before the mid to late 1800s Indians knew nothing of the British libertine lifestyle having had no intimate contact with the literature or ways of living of the West. Of the formation of Calcutta John Keay says: "...in or about the year 1690 it fell to Job Charnock, an old and respected servant of the East India Company, to found the future city of Calcutta. That much is certain" (J. Keay 148). It is also true that Catharine of Braganza's dowry brought Bombay under Charles II's control, but that was merely a business relationship, not an educational one which introduced texts from the Restoration to young Bengali men.⁴⁰ John Keay also mentions that through a series of charters Charles II allowed the British East India Company sole rights to trade in Bombay, but that was the extent of British activities in India.

Although Calcutta, which became the capital of British India and the center of its business and financial world, was founded during Charles II's reign, there was no contact with Western education at this point since Persian was still the language widely in circulation, and at this point the Bengalis felt no need to learn English and the British felt no need to impart Western education to them. Tekchand Thakur rightly says: "When the British first came to conduct business in Calcutta, not even a single person knew English" (T. Thakur 17). It is only when in the mid-1800s the British felt the need to communicate

⁴⁰ Bombay was unknown to the British at that time. David Ogg reports that some educated men thought it was a fort situated in Brazil. According to the eleventh clause of Charles' marriage treaty, Bombay "with all rights, profits and territories thereto belonging" were given to him (Ogg 659). Humphrey Cooke took over as Bombay's governor in 1665. But far from being profitable, Bombay was a headache for Charles, costing him 17988 pounds in 1666. Thus in 1667, he rented Bombay to the East India Company for a rent of ten pounds a year (Ogg 660-61).

with the local businessmen and traders that schools were opened and Western education was imparted. Later missionaries generated greater interest to impart Western education and save the natives' souls by introducing Christianity. It is then that English books were sold at auctions, Western literature was taught at Hindu College, and the Western educated youth of Bengal first learned of the libertine lifestyle, bringing to fruition their unique form of libertinism based upon exposure to the West.

In a very real sense, the mentality and lifestyles that the babus embraced closely resembled those found in a boomtown. Because of this boomtown atmosphere and general sense of social upheaval, the degree of permissiveness and license extended to the libertines of Bengal made debaucheries all the more tempting and tenable. Without established mores, rules, and laws afforded by a stable community, the only limitations to indulgence were those that the individual placed upon himself. The babus, who were never exposed to or encouraged to adopt personal discipline throughout their lives, easily allowed a moment's whim to turn into a lifetime of addiction.

Formed as a result of a contact with the British, the babus mimicked their flawed colonizers just as the rakes mimicked many of the French customs and manners. Both figures paid almost no regard to the disapproval that more staid members of their societies felt towards them. Surveying the various cultural parallels and adoptions allows for the emergence of a more composite picture of the rakish mode of life. The babus followed the rakes in their bid to gain sexual, intellectual, and moral freedom from the constraints that society had imposed upon them, and they can be viewed as riotous successors of the Restoration rakes. Finally, because of great wealth and Western education, a new class that shocked and alarmed the society they lived in had been born.

The banian babus and the Young Bengal babus might have had different levels of Western education, but their activities were so similar that together they contributed to the evolution of babu culture in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta. The city was a place where riches could be made in a day; it was a place of opportunities, of art, of education, and of culture. Yet, according to Nobo's father in Michael Madhusudan Dutt's play *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* Calcutta was also a "city of vices," place where corruption was rampant, prostitution was a serious social problem, and the Hindu religion was losing its influence on young people's hearts and minds (M.M. Dutt 108). Formed as a result of the positive as well as negative forces within contemporary Calcutta, babu culture could not be ignored. The babus, much to society's alarm, made their voices heard, and in spite of violent criticism carried on with their freedom and their lavish lifestyles.

CHAPTER II

Clashing Colors: Colonial Perceptions and Fashioning the Self

Wealth and Western education were two of the main factors that caused the Bengali babus to create new identities by emulating the British. This chapter examines the ways in which the babus and the Restoration rakes imagined, fashioned, and displayed their identities, highlighting that for both the Restoration rakes and the babus a loss of self-possession was involved in the construction of new identities that the rakes and the Bengali libertines projected to the outside world. Inhabitants of the Restoration world as presented in Restoration drama as well as babus as presented in babu literature wanted to depict themselves as being modern, progressive, suave, sophisticated, and cultured. Desirous of presenting an elegant and refined exterior, characters in Restoration plays as well as Bengali babus sought to recast themselves in a new fashion. The adoption of foreign clothing and foreign languages proved the most effective ways of allowing members of the Restoration world as well as the babus to create and portray new identities. These new identities were important to the Restoration rakes and the babus because the British and the Bengali libertines judged their self-worth and value based on these identities. The rakes and the babus hoped that the sophisticated external façades they projected would also signify their inner worth and would win them acceptance and admiration from those they wished to impress.

In this chapter, I begin by examining British conceptions and representations of the East, especially of India, and views that conservative nineteenth century Bengal held of Britain to illustrate how these impressions mirrored one another, causing tensions not only between the colonizers and the colonized, but also between older and younger generations of Bengalis. Drawing from Dryden's *Aureng-zebe* (1675), I examine the manner in which the Restoration playwright presented India as a corrupt land which was in need of civilizing. I then look at mainstream Bengal's view of the colonizing West to illustrate that, ironically, orthodox Bengalis saw the colonizers not as civilizers and saviors, but as decadent foreigners who were ruining Bengal's youth. These two opposing views, each highlighting the corruption of the other culture, show the disjunction that the babus attempted to negotiate through their lifestyle choices, which aimed at forging new identities. These choices included adopting flamboyant Western garb and employing the English language. These preferences were more than a simple attempt to pass for British; the babus were, in fact, trying to obtain the colonizers' acceptance while also forming a new identity that could combine both East and West.

Some of these divergences in clothing and language from the supposed norm that the babus' fathers adhered to can clearly be attributed to the inevitable gaps that occur among generations, such as changes in fashion and the adoption of certain colloquialisms and slang. However, given the particularly disruptive nature of colonization, these generation gaps appeared more consequential than they otherwise might have in a stable society. Adoption of foreign clothing and the neglect of the native tongue in favor of English were some of the specific instances through which, according to older Bengalis,

Britain was corrupting the babus. In such adoptive practices, the babus' fathers saw a rejection of Bengali culture and tradition and, by proxy, of themselves.

Images and Impressions: Restoration and Colonial Mimicry

In his groundbreaking work *Orientalism*, Edward Said maintains: "Knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense, *creates* the Orient, the Oriental and his world" (E. Said 40). According to Said, unquestioned and unlimited administrative, religious, and cultural control over the Orient caused a severe power asymmetry that allowed the British to represent the colonized in any manner that furthered their aim of building the empire. Since one of the most commonly professed reasons for British occupation of India was to prompt the natives to embrace Christianity and become progressive and civilized, the shortcomings of the natives were often highlighted in British representations of the East. Jyotsna Singh notes: "the appropriate goal for the British was to civilize and rule eighteenth-century India. This imperative...was aimed at saving the Eastern colony from itself, that is from its fallen state" (J. Singh 53). India, the British believed, had had an "ancient, glorious past, from which the natives had fallen" (J. Singh 53). Sir William Jones had acknowledged "...how degenerate and abased so ever The Hindus may now appear...in some early age they were splendid in arts and arms, happy in government; wise in legislation, and eminent in various knowledge" (qtd. in D. Kopf 39). The British believed in the "necessity of such rule which which is justified by those moralistic and normative ideologies of amelioration recognized as the Civilizing Mission or the White Man's Burden" (H. Bhabha 83). However, according to the British, the country had fallen so far from that ideal state that

it was not possible, even for progressive and Christianized Britain, to return it to that glorious condition. Although there was no “possibility of returning India to its glorious past,” the colonizers believed that there was hope that through British rule some of the corruptions and shortcomings could be arrested and others mended (J. Singh 53).

Such shortcomings took various forms; the British, for instance, condemned corruptions within the Hindu religion and practices like sati.⁴¹ Sumanta Banerjee notes that Macaulay had haughtily and erroneously boasted that “a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia” (S. Banerjee *Parlour* 4), and Deidre David points out that the British considered Bengali men to be “feeble even to effeminacy” (D. David 23). These ideas, as Ketaki Kushari Dyson points out, were commonly circulated through official and unofficial correspondences and letters between British men and women, as well as in English plays and novels, creating an image of a decadent and degenerate East.⁴²

The tainted image of India that the British so commonly accepted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is seen as early as 1675 in John Dryden’s *Aureng-zebe*, the only Restoration play set in India. In Dryden’s play, the Empress Nourmahal’s uncharacteristic and unfeminine yearning for her stepson becomes a strong condemnation of women who overstep their boundaries, not only in their feelings and physical desires,

⁴¹ Sati is the name given to the age-old practice of the immolating of Hindu women on the funeral pyres of their husbands. This barbarous practice was banned by the British government, an act for which they received much criticism from uneducated and conservative Hindus, mainly in villages where the practice was sometimes still carried on. Conversely, the British government was staunchly supported by educated Hindus in cities. For British women’s reactions to sati, refer to Ketaki Kushari Dyson’s *A Various Universe*.

⁴² For a very detailed study of correspondences between British men and women living and traveling in India from 1765-1856 refer to Ketaki Kushari Dyson’s *A Various Universe*.

but also in their ambitions. Of Nourmahal the Old Emperor says: “A Spirit so untam’d the world ne’r bore, ” and through her incestuous desires for her stepson, Nourmahal gives ample proof of her wild and destructive nature that brooks no obstacles that stand in her way (Dryden 135). The hero of the play, Aureng-zebe, and Indomora, the heroine who is the captive princess of Kashmir, are noble, loyal, courageous, and generous-minded; they, however, are the only two characters besides Melesinda, Morat’s dutiful wife, whose actions are not motivated by self-serving lust. All the other main characters in the play—the Old Emperor (Aureng-zebe’s father), Morat (Aureng-zebe’s stepbrother), and Nourmahal (Aureng-zebe’s stepmother and Morat’s mother) choose to consistently focus on their physical desires, and thereby bring destruction on their own heads.

Nourmahal sums up the Western conception of lustful Oriental love when she says: “Promiscuous Love is Nature’s general law,” and in the rest of the play Dryden goes on to illustrate just how promiscuous the love of Orientals can be (Dryden 157). The Old Emperor’s and Nourmahal’s marriage vows become a burden, and Morat is unwilling to take back his faithful and loving wife. The Old Emperor remarks: “’Tis true, of Marriage bands I’m weary grown,” and the only bond to which he wishes to surrender himself is that of illicit love (Dryden 132). Morat is unhesitant to insult and spurn his loving and loyal wife, Melesinda, telling her: “Would you force Love upon me, which I shun?/ And bring coarse fare, when appetite is gone,” and wants to abuse Melesinda’s friendship with Indamora by having Melesinda forward her husband’s suit to Indamora (Dryden 160). The Indian court is rife with corruptions prompted by sexual longings and ambitions which have complete control over the lives of the characters. It is true that

those who indulge in these reckless passions are destroyed in the end, but the interesting point is that Dryden's play depicts a corrupt Indian court, suggesting that India as a whole is a decadent country where adulterated passions are indulged in to the fullest extent despite the consequences.

Discussing references to India in British literature of the seventeenth century, Bernard S. Cohn points out that "India was found to be the land of Oriental despotism, with its cycles of strong but lawless rules, whose inability to create a political order based on anything but unbridled power led inevitably to its own destruction in a war of all against all, leading to anarchy and chaos," and indeed this is exactly the kind of world that Dryden portrays (B. S. Cohn 79). The chaos in the microcosm is mirrored in the macrocosm by the civil war that envelops the country. Unrest reigns not only in the lives of the rulers but also among the lives of the common men whose lives are torn apart by the caprices and vagaries of corrupt and degenerate rulers as the latter fight to satisfy their lusts and gain ascendancy to the throne.

Dryden's play bears little or no resemblance to actual history. The Old Emperor, contrary to Dryden's portrayal of him, was devoted to his wife Mumtaz Mahal for whom he built the Taj Mahal. Nourmahal is a fictitious character, as is Indamora.⁴³ Despite

⁴³ Shah Jahan, the Old Emperor, had three known wives— Akbarabadi Mahal, Kandahari Mahal, and Mumtaz Mahal. Nourmahal is an unknown figure and does not show up in his biographies. Mumtaz Mahal was Shah Jahan's third and chief wife whom he loved significantly more than his other wives. She died while giving birth to their fourteenth child. Other historical inaccuracies of Dryden's play include Aureng-zebe's character. He was not the loyal, obedient, and loving son Dryden portrays. Percival Spear writes of him, "he demolished temples, he taxed Hindus, he provoked the Marathas...[he had] climbed to power over the bodies of father, brothers, and a son (xii). Aureng-zebe had rebelled against an old and sick Shah Jahan and had executed his brother, Dara Shikoh. When Shah Jahan recovered from his illness, Aureng-zebe had him imprisoned for life at the Agra Fort where he died. He was buried with Mumtaz Mahal at the Taj Mahal.

infidelity to historical events, then, Dryden was able to put such tumultuous and immoral passions into the hearts of Indians and make them believable to Western audiences because such an audience, believing that the East bred such debaucheries, would expect to see such happenings as they did in the play. Dryden's audiences' mindset and its preconceived notions of the heathenish and unguided East would allow them to find his India believable. Texts other than Dryden's, such as Bernier's *History of the Late Revolution in the Empire of the Great Mogol* (1671), were widely available in Restoration England, and such readings prepared the audience to believe Dryden's fictitious account as a true representation of India's inglorious past.

Bridget Orr points out that Bernier's *History of the Late Revolution in the Empire of the Great Mogol* was probably the source Dryden depended upon most heavily when writing *Aureng-zebe*. Bernier writes: "the decay of the Empires of Asia proceeds from thence, that the Children of the Kings thereof are brought up by only Women and Eunuchs....So raised, these rulers indulge in 'cruelties,' 'drunkenness,'[and] 'unreasonable luxuries...with their concubines'" (qtd. in B. Orr 111). This is indeed the atmosphere that pervades Dryden's play. There is no drunkenness, but there is extreme cruelty shown by a father to his children, by a brother to his sibling, and by a husband to a wife. Lust for Aureng-zebe's lover, Indamora, makes the Old Emperor forget his duties as a father, and his selfish and unlawful love make the Old Emperor declare: "Much to

Aureng-zebe married Rabbia Durrani and Indamora is as much of an unknown figure in Mogul history as Nourmahal is. Shah Jahan's four sons were Dara Shikoh, Shah Shuja, Aureng-zebe, and Murad Baksh. They are all sons of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal. Dryden's "Morat" maybe Murad but he was not Aureng-zebe's stepbrother, both being born of Mumtaz Mahal. When Shah Jahan fell ill, Murad joined forces with Aureng-zebe and they defeated the other two brothers. Murad was later betrayed by Aureng-zebe, tried on a trumped-up charge for murder, and executed. For more on Shah Jahan, refer to *Shah Jahan: The Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire* by Fergus Nicoll.

my Son, more to myself I owe” (Dryden 121). Aureng-zebe’s brother Morat exults that he will kill Aureng-zebe and become Indomora’s lover. Morat tells Indomora that Aureng-zebe must be alive because Morat must be the one to kill him: “He must [be alive]: I kill’d [Aureng-zebe] not: and a less fate’s unjust/ Heav’n owes it me, that I may fill his room; /A Phoenix-lover rising from [Aureng-zebe’s] Tomb. In whom you’ll lose your sorrows for the dead/ More warm, more fierce, and fitter for your Bed” (Dryden 170). The sinful pleasures of the flesh that can be enjoyed through illicit love are held in far greater esteem than lawful, wedded love. It is a commonly accepted idea that those in power, like the royalty that the Old Emperor, Morat, and Nourmahal represent, should be of the purest untainted nature so that they may become models for emulation since their sphere of influence is great. Chaucer’s Parson in *The Canterbury Tales*, for instance, succinctly emphasized the need for purity in those who wield great authority when he asked “if gold rust, what then will iron do?,” and yet the court in *Aureng-zebe* is one that is primarily run through sexual intrigues; the only other motivating factor which guides the Orientals in Dryden’s play is Morat’s reprehensible desire to usurp the throne (G. Chaucer 16). Morat boasts: “I scarce am pleas’d I tamely mount the Throne: / Would Aureng-zebe have all their souls in one: / With all my elder Brothers I would fight/ And so from partial Nature force my Right (Dryden 143). Morat’s sense of entitlement is so complete that he feels justified in wresting control that does not belong to him. Like his parents, Morat continues to be exceedingly selfish, forgetting that he is laying selfish claim to a right that is not his. He even welcomes a civil war that would disrupt the lives of those over whom he wishes to rule if that would bring him the throne.

Finally, order is brought by Aureng-zebe, who possesses many of the qualities that were associated with the West. The British view is well summed up by Said: “The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’” (E. Said 40). According to Dryden, Aureng-zebe is courageous, rational, loyal, a skilled leader, loving, and merciful. Although he is an Indian, Dryden makes Aureng-zebe stand apart from his family and his countrymen by giving Aureng-zebe characteristics that belong to the Europeans. In doing so, Dryden clearly marks Aureng-zebe as a virtuous individual who does not belong to the depraved world that the rest of his Indian family inhabits. The villains, on the other hand, have qualities commonly associated with the East: they are slothful, irrational, covetous, and lascivious. Primarily, too, the Old Emperor, Nourmahal, and Morat lack self-control, which, of course, makes them unable to command their desires and activities and which, in turn, prompts the need for an external source of control to govern them and maintain peace. Bridget Orr insightfully writes that “The heroic plays [of the Restoration] deploy an emergent Orientalist discourse of despotism, irreligion, and sexual license against which England could be defined as civil politically, religiously, and sexually,” and it is this representation of the East that finds expression in Dryden’s play (B. Orr 10). The East was uncivilized, and hence lacked order and harmony. According to the colonizers “who possessed the virtues necessary to dominate the world,” civility in every sphere of life and governance was what the West could bring to the Orient, thus saving it from the ruin that its own inherent qualities of sensual decay were bringing upon it (A. Greenberger 11).

As early as the seventeenth century, then, Dryden was portraying the East in the dissolute manner in which the later centuries viewed it. Michael Mann rightly points out that this negative impression of India had not changed much: “From the beginning of their colonial rule in Bengal, the British regarded Indian society as inferior to Western concepts and ideas of civilization” (M. Mann 46). Additionally, Dryden was generating a falsehood that the empire-building British were quick to latch onto because it justified their presence in India: namely that Orientals are luxurious, indolent, and immoral, and therefore are in need of a superior culture and civilization to lead them to a life of virtue and spiritual fulfillment. According to the British, then, it was their civilizing influence that would root out the degenerate qualities that Indians possessed; hence, according to the colonizers’, British presence in India would prove beneficial for the Indians.

The British viewed India as a land where opportunities were endless but also as one where indulgence in vices was the native’s way of life. Yet, far from viewing the British as a favorable presence that would uplift Bengali society, the older and orthodox Bengalis, on the other hand, viewed British rulers as models of corruption. In Dryden’s play, India is ruled by a set of natives who are corrupt by nature; paradoxically, orthodox Bengalis believed that it was the foreign rule that had been imposed upon them that was decadent, dissipated, and responsible for the moral shortcomings of the young men who came into contact with Western civilization. Contact with the colonizers and their education bore a large measure of this blame. Dipesh Chakrabarty observes:

That English education often brought in its trail a sense of crisis in Bengali families—a certain degree of waywardness in young men that led to their neglecting their duties towards their families and the elders—was a most commonly voiced complaint against the Young Bengal [babus] of the early nineteenth century (D. Chakrabarty 373).

Parents such as Nobo's father in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota*? who had unwittingly sent their sons to receive English education lamented when their sons came home drunk and calling for prostitutes, and blamed British decadence for the dismal state of affairs. Priests blamed British influence when the babus "greeted the goddesses Kali with 'Good morning, Madam,'" and Bengali writers criticized British fashion when traditional Indian clothing was cast off in favor of Western garb (P. Sinha "Calcutta" 38).

The view that the West entertained of the East was, then, the parallel view that the older members of Bengali society held of the West; the decadence that the British professed to have come to remove was the same decadence that traditionalist members of the colonized society held the colonizers culpable for introducing into Bengali culture. Tapan Raychaudhuri points out that mainstream Bengali society "saw [the Westerners] as a licentious people who also happened to be immoderate, shameless, and unclean in their physical habits" (T. Raychaudhuri *Perceptions* 7). The British and the Bengalis were thus oftentimes working at cross purposes. The more the British attempted to create Macaulay's "class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect," the more resistance they met from the older members of Bengali society (D. David 129). British conceptions of the debauched East, then, were highly ironical and paradoxical because British ideas of the East were mirror images of the manner in which older, more orthodox members of mainstream Bengali society viewed the colonizers who had professedly come to enlighten and educate the Orientals.

Babus, however, reacted quite differently to the British influence. To them, Western ways of life afforded a degree of freedom by allowing "unprecedented

departures from established patterns of responses even in the most intimate areas of life” that they had never believed possible before (T. Raychaudhuri *Europe X*). Taking sanction from the British ruling class and modeling themselves after the British, the babus thus did not view Western ways of life as dissolute; instead they saw in these ways a degree of liberty that the orthodoxy of Hindu culture would never permit. The babus did not objectively judge the practices of the West that they adopted and neither did their traditionalist fathers. Not all adoption of Western ways, such as excessive consumption of alcohol and neglect of the native tongue, were indeed beneficial for the babus or their culture; but the independence and excessive pleasures that imitation of the British permitted them proved attractive to the babus.

The older generations, on the other hand, tended to stand against all European ways. The enormous social and religious changes brought about by British occupation frightened traditionalists and entrenched them further into their native culture, which they felt was being threatened not only by the British, but also by their own sons. For instance, Tapan Raychaudhuri points out that the older generations comprised of the babus’ fathers felt that:

[contact with the West] destabilized established norms and mores of intra-familial relationship. The belief in one’s inalienable duties to a large kinship group, especially one’s parents and one’s own siblings and their progeny and the prescribed distance between parents and children and husband and wife—the two props of Bengali family life—were shaken to their foundation (T. Raychaudhuri *Europe x*).

Conservative mainstream society was quick to defend the Bengali ways of life, manners, and customs without pausing to weigh the possibility that some of the newer forms and practices that their sons were embracing would prove advantageous for Bengali society’s

progress. They felt traditions and valuable aspects of their culture and religion were being destroyed by blind mimicry. But the babus themselves were similar to their fathers in that they too did not pause to consider the value of all their adoptions. They emulated the British blindly and became “mimic m[e]n” who unwittingly contributed to the importation of British decadence into Bengali society (H. Bhabha 87).

The following sections of this chapter will look at the manner in which the babus took advantage of the comparatively free environment brought about by the British presence in Bengal and adopted, adapted, and sometimes transformed customs, habits, and mores of the British colonizers. The Restoration remains the cultural model that is analyzed in depth to highlight similarities and differences between adoptions and adaptations of foreign manners and mores in nineteenth-century British occupied Bengal. The babus, of course, did not adopt seventeenth-century British libertinism in its entirety. Existing cultural, social, political, and religious factors were responsible for the changed face of libertinism in Bengal, and for that reason the philosophy and lifestyle of members of the Restoration period were imported into a uniquely Indian context.

In particular, I shall analyze the use of fancy clothing and foreign speech, two areas that orthodox Bengalis felt were being corrupted by the colonizing West, to illustrate the manner in which members of both Restoration and Bengali cultures used these in a similar fashion to create the identity that they wished to project to the outside world. I argue that the utilization of clothing and the adoption of foreign speech were important aspects of the carefully constructed polished world of sophistication that men and women of the Restoration and the babus inhabited. Such adoptions were not only intended to impress those who inhabited the Restoration world and the world of the

babus, but were also important factors that contributed significantly to the way in which these characters viewed themselves and evaluated their sense of self and their self-worth. It is particularly important to consider the choice of clothing and language while examining the newly constructed identities of characters in Restoration plays as well as babus since adoption of foreign clothing and a foreign tongue were particularly important aspects through which members of the Restoration world and the babus attempted to present themselves as cultured and sophisticated. Foreign clothes and a foreign tongue allowed characters in Restoration plays and babus to present an elegant façade on which their identities and their evaluation of self-worth largely depended.

Tailoring the Self: the Rake's and Babu's Clothing

Characters in Restoration plays and babus utilized clothing to portray various identities. In Restoration plays, clothing was used to present a stylish exterior that, the wearer hoped, would earn him acceptance and admiration from those whose opinion he valued based on his external appearance alone. Clothing, then, was meant to stand in as an indicator of internal worth, and the wearer trusted that his acquaintances would judge him favorably as someone worthy of belonging to a polished society because he dressed the part. Thus, in a very vital way, characters in Restoration dramas used clothing not only to portray a chic exterior but also to create an identity that signified inner worth and good taste. Babus used clothing in exactly the same manner; the babus adopted the fashions of the West to create an identity that too was meant to give evidence of their discernment to the British, and the Bengali libertines hoped that their elegant exteriors would allow them to make a favorable first impression that would cause the colonizers to

view them as being progressive and cultured. In addition, the rakes and the babus also used clothing to disguise their true identities as lusty libertines in their efforts to gain access to their mistresses. Dressing up as women, the rakes and the babus created new personas for themselves, which allowed the British and Bengali libertines to satisfy their sexual desires. Clothing thus became a very important signifier of identity for the rakes and the babus. The rakes, babus, and their acquaintances imagined themselves as refined and polished, and clothing afforded one of the primary ways through which these libertine figures, both in the West and the East, could portray such an image to the outside world.

Decoration for the body has always been a way of signifying status, and the wealthier a society is, the more emphasis it places on fashionable clothing as a means of creating subtle social demarcations. Daniel Roche insightfully notes that “clothing is a good indication of the material culture of a society, for it introduces us immediately to consumer patterns” (D. Roche 160). An increase in wealth allows for greater conspicuous consumption, and one of the first areas in which this excessive consumption manifests itself is in the production and increased sale of fashionable clothing. Stylish clothing is often a passport that, if worn with grace and style, gives one entrance into exclusive society by implying an understanding of the rules of membership of a fashionable society. Conversely, when worn with awkwardness, high fashion makes a man gauche setting him up as a laughable poser incapable of embodying the finer aspects of the society he wishes to join.

Clothing is a form of advertisement—not only of one’s physical attractiveness, but also of one’s financial and cultural cachet. Clothing borrowed from a foreign culture

is even more attractive because of its novelty and freshness. In Restoration plays, the foreign fashion is mostly imported from France. Fancy clothing became a signifier of the amount of wealth that one had at one's disposal for spending on non-essentials. In the Restoration, as Virginia Ogden Birdsall points out, clothes often had to do "in part with style as a manifestation of self" (V.O. Birdsall 79). Clothes could be used to give expression to the innate stylishness and aesthetics of a man in which case they complemented nature; or as in the case of Sir Fopling Flutter in George Etherege's *The Man of Mode*, as Birdsall points out, mindless adoption of the clothing of a foreign culture could result in the replacement of nature by style (V.O. Birdsall 79).

French clothing proves especially attractive to Fopling who goes to great lengths to procure the finest French fashions. Wearing French fashions, Fopling believes, allows him to align himself closer to, as Dorimant says, "the people of quality of France," thereby linking him with those whom the King himself favored during his exile. (Etherege 534). Speaking of the French style in clothing that was attractive to Charles II in *Royal Charles Ruler and Rake*, David Loth writes of the "sweeping plumes of hats, the long curls of periwigs, the fancifully embroidered coats, the laces and the ruffles and ribbons and chains" (D. Loth 219). Fopling talks of his suit, garniture, shoes, periwig, and gloves in his conversation with the other characters of the play, boasting that all these items of clothing have come from the best boutiques of France (Etherege 553). Fopling is unable to understand that it is not the clothes *per se* that will gain him entry into the world of the witty rakes that he so desires to join. He hopes that appearing to be a "pattern of modern gallantry" will be sufficient to create a persona that others of his fashionable world will admire.

Fopling lacks mental dexterity and hopes to compensate for that deficiency with clothing that ostensibly will gain him the camaraderie and respect of the group he wishes to join. In their book *The Clothes That Wear Us*, Jessica Munns and Penny Richards make the point that “Bodies and clothes endlessly redefine each other to forge, adapt, adopt—and deny—varieties of selfhood” (Munns et al. 9). Fopling adopts French clothing but, as Munns and Richards mentions, he does this to deny his true character, which is that of a foolish fop. The truth about Fopling is that as Dorimant says, “he went to Paris a plain, bashful English blockhead and is returned a fine, undertaking French fop” (Etherege 567). Fopling wishes he were a rake and calls Dorimant and Medly his friends, but he ends up becoming a fop who gains no respect or acceptance from any of the characters in the play. Fopling is a foolish character, and the audience laughs *at* him as he preens about the stage in his Frenchified clothes, badly approximating the true rake, and aspiring to an identity as a man of taste; but, as Dorimant says, being “a person of ...great acquired follies” instead, Fopling will never be able to live up to the identity of a witty man about town that he so desperately wants.

Fopling makes an effort to take on a role that sits heavy on his inept shoulders. Medley correctly points out his true identity: “[Fopling] is, like many others, beholding to his education for making him so eminent a coxcomb” (Etherege 535). Fopling wishes he were a truetype, a rake, true friend of Dorimant, and a connoisseur of fashions. He hopes that he can be an “intimate” friend of Dorimant’s since no other man of his acquaintance “retains as much of Paris as [Dorimant does]” (Etherege 552). Fopling wishes to forget that he is essentially an English bumpkin with cash to spare, and instead hopes to appear progressive and cultured because he wears the clothes of a fashionable country. Since

French clothing, paintings, language, and cuisine were the vogue at Charles II's court, it is naturally an easy choice for Fopling, and he adopts it part and parcel without reflecting whether, as the saying goes, "the clothes make the man." He hopes that external appearances will speak for him and gain him acknowledgement in a society in which he is only known for his foolish foppery. Fopling is unaware that Dorimant, whom Fopling admires for his taste in clothing, thinks of Fopling as an object of amusement. Dorimant says: "Soothe him up in his extravagance. He will show the better" (Etherege 552). To this society, the, Fopling is no more than a pretender who wishes to project an identity that is far removed from his real character. In an essay on Etherege, B.A. Kachur states that "Fopling is a harmless, risible caricature of society's obsession with fashion and mode: he is all surfaces, oblivious to the laughter he provokes and capable of regarding only external signs as the true reflection of one's inner self" (B.A. Kachur 126). Therefore, Fopling becomes a fop rather than a rake and stands as a warning to those who endeavor to use their shallow outward facades to signal their inner worth.

For all his gestures towards rakish culture, Fopling never gains the success that Dorimant very easily does. While Dorimant, as Medley says, is an "oracle" when it comes to women, Fopling cannot even engage Mrs. Loveit's attention for an entire evening (Etherege 587). Fopling is used as a pawn in the game between Dorimant and Mrs. Loveit, who soon grows weary of Fopling's silly mannerisms and jokes, calling him "the most foolish inconsiderable thing" (Etherege 586). Fopling fails because he lacks the rake's confidence and suavity, essential elements in giving authenticity to the garb of the rake. In truth, Fopling knows that he is a pretender who will never be attractive to women. His clothes, in effect, were not made for a man of his meager qualities, and it is

no surprise that he does not wear them well. Fopling tries to hide his discomfort with his outward trappings by boasting of the money spent on them and by dropping the names of Parisian boutiques where they were purchased. In this regard, Bridget Orr writes: “These Francophile fops of whom the Man of Mode, Sir Fopling Flutter, is the most famous example, are amusing but contemptible Englishmen whose complete subordination by French manners suggests a loss of self-possession whose political equivalent is slavery” (B. Orr 223). Fopling is indeed a slave to French fashions and will never own his clothes in the way Dorimant does. The fop will always be uncomfortable in his clothes, but will persist in this fashion in an attempt to convince others, and by extension himself, that he is worthy of their company.

Similarities between Fopling and Dorimant have often been noted.⁴⁴ They are both obsessed with clothing and Young Bellair rightly says that “no man in Town has a better fancy in clothes” than Dorimant does (Etherege 534). Yet, the essential difference is that Dorimant does not need to let his clothes proclaim his wit, as Fopling does; rather, the clothes help to accentuate his rakish charms. Dorimant knows himself and his qualities well, and he can confidently proclaim: “I love to be well-dressed, sir, and think it no scandal to my understanding” (Etherege 534). The other young men of the town, such as Young Bellair and Medley, gladly give Dorimant their friendship and even admiration not because he merely wears fashionable clothes, but because he unfailingly represents the rakish spirit. Medley salutes him as “Dorimant, my life, my joy, my darling sin!” (Etherege 529) in a tone of obvious admiration, and Young Bellair admires his

⁴⁴ B.A. Kachur, for example, notes some of the similarities between the rake and the fop in his chapter on *The Man of Mode*. Kachur cites “their fastidiousness over their dress,” “their use of French words, their composition of songs,...their graceful bows and languishing glances” as some of the similarities between Dorimant and Sir Fopling (125).

“mighty pretty suit” (Etherege 534), knowing that even without his fancy clothes, Dorimant would not be the figure of fun that Fopling is; Dorimant’s wit, intelligence, self-control, and attractiveness all complement his clothes and, in his case, his clothes highlight the positive qualities of his character. Thus, according to Emilia, Dorimant is a “very witty man,” according to Medley, Dorimant has “been the first in many ladies’ favors,” and according to Lady Townley he is “a very pleasant acquaintance” (Etherege 550). With Fopling, on the other hand, the elegance of his clothes actually serves to fulfill a purpose contrary to what he desires. Instead of presenting him as a man of mode, they highlight the fact that he is “the pattern of modern foppery,” drawing ironic attention to his foolishness and his blind mimicry of rakish fashions (Etherege 534).

Fopling and Dorimant both use their external appearances to make statements about their inner worth, but fortunately for Dorimant, he possesses more qualities than good taste in clothes, which allows Dorimant to gain the admiration of others. Fopling, on the other hand, hopes that he will be admired because he has, as Medley says, “arrived piping hot from Paris” (Etherege 534). Fopling optimistically expects that his arrival from a fashionable city in fancy clothes, will be enough to signal an appreciation for elegant things, and will reflect on his character by announcing him as a man of rare qualities. Dorimant and Fopling both have the same aim in mind: they both wish to project the suave and debonair identity of the witty man about town, and Dorimant and Fopling are both aware that they can use external appearances to make the first good impression. It is indeed because Dorimant is aware of the impact good clothes can make that he takes so much time and effort and spends so much money to present himself well. Dorimant knows that his clothes will initially make him attractive, and he can then use

his wit to lure women to him. Fopling hopes that his clothes will confer upon him an identity that he aspires to. In both cases, however, fancy clothing serves the same purpose: Dorimant and Fopling both hope that their clothes will allow them to project the polished and suave identity that they would have their acquaintances judge them on.

The babus of colonial Bengal too used clothing for similar purposes. With reference to playing a role on a stage, Munns and Richards remark: “Since dressing as that which you are not is an integral part of performance, the stage provided an important site for the exploration of clothing as an *unstable* marker of identity” (Munns et al 10). Although they make this remark in the context of playing a role on a stage, it is one which can be applied to the babus rather well. The babus were indeed trying to pass for what they were not: they were trying to be as English as the colonizers themselves, ignoring the fact that this would never be their true identity. The babus hoped that their use of western clothing would align them closely to the British forgetting that “to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English” (H. Bhabha 87). Just as with Fopling, the babus were trying to express an affiliation through the medium of clothing. Since clothing makes an “unstable marker of identity,” the babus hoped that they could successfully persuade the British to overlook deeper, more substantial differences by *appearing* like them on a superficial level. Hence, as Krishna Dutta quotes from an essay by Bankimchandra Chatterji, the babus “exchanged...the tight-fitting jackets and loose-flowing chapkans of [their] grandfathers for shirts à l’anglaise and chapkans that are everyday steadily approaching towards the shape and size of English coats” (K. Dutta 36). It was indeed a “performance,” (as wearing of trendy clothing often is), one designed to imply or even create a sense of affinity between themselves and the colonizing British.

The babus saw their ability to buy and wear western clothes as a ticket out of Bengali society, and a potential passport into British society. To them, Bengali society was old fashioned and orthodox. It was clinging on to traditions that shackled it instead of joining the progressive world. In their minds, Britain and everything that it represented, on the other hand, was the epitome of progress and development since they “believed that Western civilization was superior to anything the Indian had to offer” (A. Greenberger 73). The babus wanted the British to understand that their act of discarding traditional clothing for Western wear was an act of rebellion that proved they embraced Western culture and progressive views; the change in clothing was the outward manifestation of this inner change. Edward Said writes: “In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (E. Said 2). The “contrast” that Said talks about is precisely what the babus were trying to diminish. It was this contrast that daily reminded the babus of their second-class status in their own land. Wearing western clothing was, then, a means to ingratiate themselves with the rulers of the land in an attempt to lessen the degree of alienation that was born out of tremendous differences in all aspects of life. Through their use of clothing, then, the babus sought to present a refined and elegant exterior; they wished the colonizers to view them in a favorable light, and clothing proved one of the most effective ways through which the babus could project a suave and genteel façade that implied their cultivated taste.

The proclivity of the babus for posturing was, however, somewhat unstable because it remained contingent upon their ability to purchase the latest fashions. Since neither finances nor fashions remained fixed as time passed, the babus faced a fickle

marketplace of self-definition. In many respects, the strength of their identity was tied to their purchasing power. With the loss of their fortunes came not only the loss in ability to procure new clothing, but also the need to sell what they possessed. The ability to dress well, one of the most strongly marked features of a libertine, was in the case of the babus directly linked to their wealth. The British, then, not only provided the fashions that the babus strove to wear, but they also provided the financial opportunities which, as discussed in the previous chapter, enabled the conspicuous consumption that marked all activities of the babus.

The babus too preferred foreign clothing to their native attire. With the advent of British rule and the amassing of great wealth, the babus began spending lavishly on clothes. British clothing stores in Calcutta, such as Gibson's, became vastly popular among the babus. The influx of wealth allowed the babus to indulge every whim, and clothing was no exception. An essay on the babus quoted in Rabindra Kumar Das Gupta's "Old Calcutta As Presented in Literature" describes them thus:

[their] heads [are] covered with a profusion of waving curls, [they wear] pieces of thin black-bordered muslin round their waists, [their] cambric vests are made so as to show their figures to best advantage, [they wear] neatly folded scarves thrown over their shoulders, [their] shoes are ornamented with broad buckles (R.K. Das Gupta 121).

In *Hutom Panchar Naksa*, the narrator who is Hutom the barn owl, reports that "the babu immersed himself in pondering the diverse costumes he would wear on the four days of the communal festival" (K. Sinha 24).⁴⁵ The babu's haircut was called the "Albert-cut"

⁴⁵ The communal festival refers to the festival of the Mother Goddess Durga which falls in either September or October. It is the Bengalis' greatest festival and the community comes together to celebrate her. Durga is not only the Mother-Goddess but she is also the destroyer of "ashura," the demon, and the symbol of female power or *Shakti*. The four

because it resembled the hairstyle of Queen Victoria's consort, Prince Albert (K. Sinha 9). The babus had tremendous wealth; their wealth sometimes even exceeded the riches that the British accumulated in India.⁴⁶ However, the babus never lost sight of the fact that on the social scale they ranked below the lowest British soldier since, as Allen Greenberger points out: "anyone white was better than anyone Indian" (A. Greenberger 30). Their immense wealth, rich clothing, and lifestyle choices made the babus the elite within contemporary Indian society, but, in spite of the elegant exterior that the babus cultivated and projected, they knew that they were the colonized race who would never be the elite of the land as long as the British remained in India.

Clothing was one of the last vestiges of eminence and libertinism that the babus held on to when they were losing their wealth. Even when they had dissipated most of their resources on frivolous activities, the babus retained their clothing for as long as they could, and they were mocked for such acquisitiveness. Of the babus who have dissipated their wealth, Baidyanath Mukhopadhyay writes in *Babu Gourober Kolkata (The Babu's Magnificent Calcutta)*:

the babu presents an elegant exterior, but he is hollow inside. He wears a hat on his head. There are tassels on the hat. His shirt is shaped like a pineapple. In his hand he holds a silk handkerchief. There is an expensive chain around his neck...the babu leads a reckless lifestyle but he is homeless...sometime he dines at his aunt's house and [having no home to return to] sleeps in a temple (B. Mukhopadhyay 79).

days not only celebrate her victory over evil but it is also believed that on those four days she descends from heaven to visit her worshippers on earth. The Himalayan mountain ranges are believed to be Durga's father and the festival celebrates Durga's visit to her father's house. Nowadays, entire communities come together to pool in money for funds out of which the expenses of the festival are paid, but in earlier times, many of the babus' could bear the entire expenses alone.

⁴⁶ In "The 'Great Houses of Old Calcutta,'" Chitra Deb mentions that Lakshmikanta Dhar, for instance, was so rich that the East India Company borrowed money from him. He also lent money to Robert Clive (58).

Clothing became even more important when the babus had no money because it allowed them to continue to project the identity that they wished to cultivate. The babus wanted, at all times, to present themselves as men of refinement; as long as their dapper appearance suggested that they had the money to buy expensive clothes, the babus could continue to portray themselves as rich men with good taste. Eventually, even the sumptuous clothing was sold but it was among the last of their possessions to go since the babus tried to keep up the appearance of wealth and dress provided the easiest external means to do so. A “pat” painting displayed at the Victoria Memorial Museum in Calcutta, for example, shows a babu elaborately dressed with a flower in one hand and a walking stick in another while in the background we see a room in which muskrats are engaged in singing and playing instruments.⁴⁷ The painting suggests the hollow superficiality of the babus, and also points out that besides the fine clothing, probably bought on credit, the interior of the babu’s house is as empty as the babu himself since all his furniture and coveted possessions have been sold.

⁴⁷ In his book, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta*, Sumanta Banerjee discusses *pat* paintings at length. He writes, “these were paintings done on cheap paper in water colour, by a community of *patuas* (traditional folk painters who used to draw on canvas scrolls known as *jadan-pat*, or square-shaped canvas known as *chouko-pat* in the Bengal villages) who had settled in Kalighat in south Calcutta, near the famous Kali temple... The Kalighat pats can be broadly divided into five groups: (i) pictures of mythological characters and tales; (ii) of nature and still life; (iii) of historical events—both past and contemporary; (iv) description of everyday life and characters; and (v) caricatures... The fourth and fifth groups were the most interesting since they dealt with contemporary characters and everyday life in a humorous vein. Here we find the familiar figures of *khemta* dancers, and prostitutes carousing with the *babus* over wine and music... Some of the paintings illustrate proverbs satirizing the foppish babus like ‘Bairey konchar patton, bhitore chhunchor ketton’, showing the *babu* with the tuck of his *dhoti* flowing, a flower in one hand, and a stick in the other, ambling along, while in the background we see an interior where the musk-rats are engaged in a chorus (Banerjee *Parlour* 130-133). It is not difficult to procure “pat” paintings in contemporary Calcutta.

Although the British encouraged Westernization of the babus in almost all aspects since it served as a means of control by allowing the colonizers to create a group of people “Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect,” their real attitude towards the babus was quite similar to the attitude that the rakes had towards the fops (D. David 129). In the colonial context, the British took the place of the rakes while the babus represented the fops. The colonizers were aware of what the babus were trying to accomplish, but they were also aware that the babus were not completely comfortable in the clothes of a foreign culture. The babus’ studied efforts to look and feel comfortable in Western clothing were an indicator that the babus were trying to affect an appearance of being “almost the same [as the British] but not quite...almost the same but not white” (H. Bhabha 89). As with the fops, the babus had the money and the clothes, but they did not have the ability to wear them quite as well as the British did.

There were several reasons that made this emulation advantageous for the British, and that explains why the colonizers supported the babus’ adoption of British clothes through their policies. Promoting western clothing and footwear became a device of acculturation that the British used effectively as part of their “divide and rule” policy. In

Babu Gourober Kolkata (The Babu’s Magnificent Calcutta) (1975), we read:

After the establishment of the Hindu College the Young Bengal began to imitate the British. They began wearing coats and pants and paid great attention to their shoes. They began wearing Wellington shoes which were British favorites...So the Wellington shoes took over and our native shoes were forgotten. Lord Dalhousie issued an order, “Native who dress like natives and wear slippers should leave them on the threshold according to

native customs.” But if they wore Wellingtons, then they did not need to remove their shoes (B. Mukhopadhyay 95)⁴⁸.

British policies actively sought to replace Indian clothing and shoes with British-made articles. A policy like Lord Dalhousie’s made it problematic and annoying for the Indian populace to wear Indian shoes because it was required that the Indian shoes be removed before entering many public institutions like the Courts and museums.⁴⁹ To avoid

⁴⁸ Lord Dalhousie was the Governor-general of India from 1848-1856. He is best known for the Doctrine of Lapse under which the British annexed any state that was left without a direct male heir after the death of the last ruler. The Doctrine did not accept relatives of the ruler or adopted sons as heirs. This was very unpopular with the Indian princes and led to numerous conflicts between the English and the native rulers, the most notable among which was the battle between the English and Rani Laxmibai, the queen of Jhansi, whose husband had died without a biological heir. The English refused to recognize her adopted son and the queen led her troops into battle and died while defending the fort at Gwalior. Some of the reasons for the first Indian revolt of 1857 (the Sepoy Mutiny) have been attributed to Lord Dalhousie’s policies. Today, the downtown financial district of Calcutta, Dalhousie Square, still bears his name. For more on Dalhousie, refer to *The History Of India Volume 3: From The Earliest Period To The Close Of Lord Dalhousie's Administration* (1867) by John Clark Marshman Kessinger Publishing, LLC December 22, 2008.

⁴⁹ In *Babu Gourober Kolkata*, we are told of an incident concerning Bidyasagar, one of the foremost educators and social-reformers of the time. Baidyanath Mukhopadhyay writes, “Harishchandra [author, translator], Surendranath Banerjee [prominent politician and freedom-fighter] and Bidyasagar went to the Calcutta museum. Harishchandra and Surendranath were wearing boots and Bidyasagar was wearing Taltala [a locality in Calcutta] slippers...the museum refused to let him in unless he took off his slippers. Bidyasagar refused and waited in the car. This news reached the office of the Asiatic Society. The Assistant editor, Pratapchandra Ghosh, requested Bidyasagar to come back but he did not. Bidyasagar wrote a letter to the Honorary Secretary to the Trustees of the Indian Museum, H.F. Blanford. He wrote ‘I do not understand the issue with the slipper. The museum belongs to the public. The slipper is condemned there. When the museum is not carpeted then what is the reason for this condemnation? When those who are wearing shoes but have come on foot are allowed entrance then why those who are equally well-off are not allowed to enter only because they are wearing slippers?’ But the trustees of the museum did not pay much attention...Blanford informed Bidyasagar through letter that the rule would not be changed. But the common people were enraged and hurt by this behavior meted out to the educator. The newspapers, *The Patriot* and *The Englishman* protested against this slight. *The Englishman* said, ‘A native gentleman of learning, modesty, and merits and whose reputation extends far beyond the bounds of

problems, many took to wearing British shoes and neglecting the Indian slipper, which was the most common and comfortable form of footwear in a hot and humid city like Calcutta. In an important way, policies like these were being used to undermine national unity, and the babus were the chief supporters of the British because they were the first to adopt foreign clothing while actively denouncing anything Indian in their bid to present an elegant and progressive exterior. Such an attitude often placed them at loggerheads with their more orthodox parents and elders. The British strategy proved useful, time and time again, to place aspects of British culture above traditional culture which aided in creating the idea, especially among younger men like the babus, that the British way of life was preferable in every way. Through rules like this one, the British secured the support of the cloying, image-conscious, blindly mimicking babus, and gained the support of a solid group of educated and rich young men.

The older generations of the native populace viewed situations such as these as a way to further erode Bengali culture and tradition, and writers like Kaliprasanna Sinha who wrote *Hutom Panchar Naksha* criticized the babus for their abandonment of traditional Bengali clothing in their bid to create a new and Westernized identity for themselves. The national dress of an Indian male is the *dhoti* and *punjabi*.⁵⁰ Every state

Asia, such a man like Bidyasagar was not allowed to enter the museum because he had on slippers and the Council claims that they did not know how to react in this matter.’ They further wrote that if such a man as Bidyasagar was insulted in this fashion then would any other member of the Asiatic Society want to go to the museum? In the *Sadharoni* newspaper, there was a farce on the slipper saying how unfortunate it was that even through the influence of a man like Bidyasagar it was not allowed to enter the museum. In every line of this farce there was scorn thrown on the British and their civilization...the question even reached the Indian government but no solution was reached” (97-99).

⁵⁰ The punjabi is a long, usually full but sometimes half-sleeved garment that is worn on the upper body. It somewhat resembles a shirt but is longer in length. The dhoti consists

has slight variations on this garment, but in every state before the advent of the British, Indian males wore such a simple, unostentatious costume. The babus, of course, discarded the *dhota* and *punjabi* in favor of the fashions of the West. Judith E. Walsh quotes from a contemporary writer: “[the babus] have abandoned the *dhota* and have taken to wearing tunic, pants and black leather boots that come in all different shapes—high heels, plain head, blunt nose—complete with shoe laces” (J. Walsh 35). Even when the babus wore the *punjabi*, it was cut after a Western fashion that was heavily criticized by traditionalists. In *Hutom Panchar Naksha*, Hutom, the narrator speaks of the babus’ shirts which had cuffs and collars, two additions to the babus’ shirts that were not part of the traditional *punjabis* worn by Bengali men (K. Sinha 13). The portrait of a dandified babu at the Victoria and Albert Museum (Catalogue Reference VAA/IS. 257-1953) further shows the Westernized cut of the babu’s shirt. Referring to the babus in the context of their clothing, Hutom goes on to say: “Calcutta is a diverse city, one can find all kinds of animals in it” (K. Sinha 13). Traditionalist Bengali writers severely criticized the babu’s new Westernized identity, which was partly based on the babus’ preference of Western clothing. Bengali writers hinted that the babus’ desire to emulate the West in all spheres of their lives in order to present themselves as a progressive and cultured group of young men, in fact, made the babus slavish and unthinking imitators of an alien culture.

The continued wearing of native clothing stressed a difference between the colonizers and the colonized that many Bengalis wanted to maintain, knowing full well

of a long piece of cloth that is worn in a particular and complicated fashion around the waist. The style of wearing the *dhota* differs from state to state. In contemporary India, the *dhota* is not seen much. Except for festivals and weddings, the practice of wearing the *dhota* has been diminished considerably. The *punjabi* is still worn, often with pants (sometime jeans!) and sometimes with the *pyjama* which is an Indian version of Western pants.

that otherwise the foreign rule that had been imposed forcefully upon them would penetrate into their oldest and most cherished traditions, including traditional clothing. But Western education made the babus think in a different way. The babus began to emulate the British in a way their fathers never did. In order to maintain the new and refined identity that they strove to maintain, the babus abandoned other items of traditional clothing that Bengali men had been accustomed to wearing. The narrator of *Hutom Panchar Naksha*, for example, regretfully says:

These days, those who have been given a Western education...wear different clothing. The wearing of turbans has almost become an obsolete practice now. There are a few old fashioned men who still hold turbans in their former esteem and continue to wear them. When these men retire, then we will not see turbans in offices anymore. The primary fault of the turban is that if worn, the babu's fancy Albert-style haircut is hidden under it (K. Sinha 9).

Such abandonment was a source of alarm for many members of the older generations as well as for some of younger generation who had not become babus. As mentioned earlier, it was the efforts of the older generations that resulted in the fortune that supported the babus. The fathers and grandfathers of the babus, though they made their wealth because of the British presence in India, did not support such digressions from the traditional way of life. In their opinion, as Tapan Raychudhuri points out: "if through the contact between the Indians and the British, the British and not the Indian character had undergone a change that...would have been for the best" (T. Raychaudhuri *Perceptions* 9). Often, though, when the fathers realized the harm that had been done, it was too late to rectify it. Motilal's father in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* despairs too late that Motilal has been led astray, and wishes to marry again so that there may be another "son or two who will continue the family name with dignity" (T. Thakur 80), and Nobo's father in *Ekei Ki Bole*

Sobhota? laments: “why did such an unfit son have to be born into my family?” (M.M. Dutt 108). The fathers sent their babu-sons to Western institutions of education, hoping that a greater ability to speak the language of the colonizers would enable them to enhance the family fortune by continuing the family businesses, but when their sons returned home as babus who cared little about working, the fathers and grandfathers lamented the outcome of Western education which caused the babus to forge new identities for themselves by “blindly imitat[ing] the English” (S. Raychaudhuri 68).

While in Restoration plays there is an element of admiration for the rake, who is distinctly different from the foolish fop, the babu is often satirized for his somewhat Westernized style of clothing. The rake is never made an object of ridicule merely because he is well-dressed, and neither is it implied that the rake should be considered effeminate because of his attention to clothing and the latest fashion of the time. As Kaliprasanna Sinha’s application of the word “animals” to the dandy babus indicate, the babus, on the other hand, were ridiculed since Bengali writers implied that they were copying the clothing of a foreign culture which does not suit them (K. Sinha 13). Additionally, Bengali texts often highlighted the manner in which the babus paid excessive attention to their clothing in order to point out how such an obsession was not in keeping with their gender. In *Hutom Panchar Naksha*, Hutom says:

The babu is trying on his clothes in the dressing room. Four or five servants are choosing forty different types of hats with tassels and satin costumes. The babu is pondering which one he would look best in and such serious thinking is tiring him. Perhaps he wears one costume but takes it off again. He wears a hat and looks in the mirror but does not like it. The servant puts another hat on his head but he does not like this one either. Sometimes he is asking his sycophants: “Should I wear this?”...After much consideration, the babu decides on his clothing. He then applies pomatum, lavender perfume, chooses his ring, chain and stick

and comes from the dressing room to the drawing room after two hours (K. Sinha 164).

Hutom's mocking tone is common among writers who deride babus for wasting their time and money in this futile manner. By criticizing babus in this way, Bengali writers were using the common stereotypical views that the British held of the effeminacy of Bengali men to shock mainstream society, as well as the babus, into realizing the follies of their youths. Revathi Krishnaswamy, for instance, writes: "My first and foremost application of the term [effeminacy] relates to its historical use in colonial India as a derogatory label applied specifically to the elite, Hindu, Bengali male" (R. Krishnaswamy 20). Although definitely not all, many of these "elite, Hindu, Bengali male" were the babus. The effeminate Bengali babu had become a stereotype in nineteenth-century British India. The Bengali writers were attempting to point out specific instances of behaviors which were enervating the country by taking advantage of negative views held by the colonizers. In an effort to startle the babus out of their obsession with clothing, novelists and essayists were pointing out that instead of being admired for their clothing as they hoped, the babus were being derided and likened to women.

The writers wanted the babus to realize that the babus' excessive attention to clothing was producing an effect that was contrary to the one that the babus wished to produce. The babus were looking to create a façade that would gain admiration and even envy; the Bengali libertines were gaining such reactions from men similar to themselves who valued shallow self-display, but in the process they were also being heavily derided for their effeminacy and lack of involvement with weightier issues worthy of their

attention. Thus, the aforementioned babu in *Hutom Panchar Naksha* is surrounded by his sycophants who flatter his sense of style by telling him: No other babu in Calcutta can carry off his clothes as you can,” but the narrator’s scathingly contemptuous tone tells the reader in what light to actually view the effeminate babu who, ignoring weightier social and cultural issues, is obsessed with his fancy clothes, which the babu hopes, will give him an elegant façade which will further give indication of his wealth and his discernment (K. Sinha 164). As with Fopling, these babus too wanted to gain admiration; hence, like Fopling, they were not averse to spending time and money in procuring those accoutrements which would allow them to project a well-decorated exterior which would also signal their wealth and their sense of style. These babus imagined themselves as fashionable men, and they used expensive clothing to fashion the identity of a well-dressed man about town.

There was an important difference in attitude between Restoration and Bengali writers: the Restoration playwrights admired the rake for his sense of style, and the Bengali writer derided the babu for the attention the babu paid to clothing. This difference in attitude points to a cultural difference that in many ways strips the aura of daring and sexiness from the babus who so desperately wished to be taken seriously. It also points to an often unspoken Indian view of the British as corrupt and ridiculous conquerors. British rulers of India, like Jos Sedley of Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*, were often more concerned with showing themselves off at balls in Calcutta than efficiently running their districts and caring for the natives placed under them. The presents they took home reflected their obsession with clothes as when Jos Sedley gives “two magnificent Cashmere shawls” to his mother in England as gifts (W.M. Thackeray 16). Jos never

worries about bettering the lot of the poor natives of Boggley wallah, over whom he has been placed as Collector; he only worries about having beautiful suits tailored for him to wear to parties in Calcutta, and accumulating enough money to afford such suits and all the other luxuries that the dismal district of Boggley wallah could afford him. Of Jos's activities in Bengal, Thackeray writes: "But there is no such swell in Calcutta as Waterloo Sedley, I have heard say: and he had the handsomest turn-out, gave the best bachelor dinners, and had the finest plate in the whole place (W.M. Thackeray 589). Elderly Bengalis often viewed such officials as corrupt looters of indigenous Indian goods. They rightfully understood that the true reason the British were in India was to exploit it financially and that, as Tapan Raychaudhuri points out, the "Company's servants indulged in an orgy of loot" (T. Raychaudhuri *Perceptions* 161). It was not surprising that when these dishonest men became the babus' models for emulation, the babus were largely attacked and criticized for failing to see the true nature of the men whose ways of life they were adopting so blindly.

Finally, as Munns and Richards comment, in Restoration as well as babu literature clothing confuses issues of gender when used as a disguise (Munns et al. 13). Wearing the clothes of the opposite gender allowed the rakes and the babus to ironically conceal their identities as virile men in order to satisfy the sexual desires they felt as libertines, who were powerful sexual beings. In this case, rakes and babus donned women's garb in order to gain access into their mistresses' rooms. Rakes and babus would wear women's clothing to disguise their real identities as libertines devoted to the pursuit of sex in order to present themselves as women, an identity which made it easier for rakes and babus to satisfy their sexual desires which, ironically, stemmed from their real identities as

libertines who were obsessed with sex. In Aphra Behn's *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, for instance, Sylvia gives Philander a private assignation in her room at night. He is unable to have sexual intercourse with her due to temporary impotence and is forced to leave the room in Sylvia's maid's clothes for fear of discovery. He is met by her father who mistakes him for Melinda, the maid, and subsequently asks him for sexual favors. In *Duti Bilash*, Srideb, the hero, dresses up as a maid to enter his mistress Anangamanjari's house. In another incident, he dresses up as Anangamanjari's sister-in-law who has come from the village to visit. The narrator writes: "Anangamanjari and her aunt tell Srideb to come to Anangamanjari's house dressed as a woman. Because they are having a jatra [play] many women will come, and Srideb can pretend to be one of them" (B. Bandopadhyay 127). Srideb has better luck than Philander because in both instances his disguise secures his pleasure. But importantly, in both cases, the disguises emasculate the men who have worn them in order to indulge in sex and prove their masculinity. In Philander's case, it even makes the rake the victim of sexual advances from an older, lecherous rake.

Paradoxically, Philander and Srideb assume inferior positions in terms of gender and social rank in an attempt to indulge their libertine desires. Libertinism is an expression of a rake's or babu's masculinity; yet, women's clothing detracts from the Western and Eastern libertine's masculinity when they wear the clothing of the weaker sex that is usually presented as the rakes' and the babus' victims. Additionally, the babus' position of dominance is further compromised when they disguise themselves as maids and village girls who occupy social positions far below those of the city women that the rakes and babus usually seek to seduce. The case of the maid, on the lowest rung of

Bengali society, is obvious; in nineteenth century Bengal, village girls often held social positions that placed them below their city counterparts. When he dresses up as a village girl, the text presents Srideb as a simpleton who will be dazzled by refined city entertainments and who is too shy to speak with city women. The narrator writes:

The other women who had gathered at Anangamanjari's house to watch the play begin to ask who the new woman is, and Anangamanjari tells them that she [Srideb] is her aunt's nephew's wife who lives in the village. Anangamanjari says that she [Srideb] has come from the village but does not talk to anyone and when it is evening she [Srideb] becomes sleepy. Anangamanjari takes Srideb by the hand and tells the other women who had gathered at her house to watch the play that since she [Srideb] is from the village and has not seen the city-theater Anangamanjari hopes she [Srideb] will enjoy it. (B. Bandopadhyay 130).

Therefore, Srideb occupies one of the lowest positions that existed: that of a simple village girl. It is unfortunate that being placed in positions of less power does not aid in the libertine's understanding of, and empathy towards, members of such positions. To the libertine, the disguises only represent a means to gain a measure of self-satisfaction.

Srideb's disguise as a village girl further compromises his appearance as a man of sophistication. Earlier in the text the author Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay describes Srideb as a handsome, fashionably dressed, and appealing youth to whose charms women often proved susceptible (B. Bandopadhyay 69). But, as a village girl, he is simple and dressed in a rustic fashion. Srideb is neither charming nor a suave and wealthy city gentleman in this disguise; he is a simpleton waiting for city life and city entertainments to dazzle him; he is waiting for coaching in the ways of the city rather than being a master in exploiting the opportunities that city living throws in his way. Additionally, in order to have sex, Srideb has to employ disguises which cause him to lose the identity of a virile babu that he has carefully constructed. It becomes ironical that he has to

relinquish the very attributes that made him attractive to the opposite sex in order to gain admittance into their rooms. But, Srideb's use of disguise to mask his true identity of a lusty libertine proves more successful than Philander's since Srideb does have sex where Philander does not. The absurdity of the situation, however, is heightened primarily because Srideb is forced to publicly conceal his true identity as a babu in order to satisfy assignments of a sexual nature which he indulges in *because* he is a babu.

In many ways, then, clothing served important functions for the rakes, the fops, and the babus. The babus are particularly interesting because, in addition to possessing rakish qualities in matters of dress, they also resemble fops and dandies. Clothes allow the wearer to assume or deny characteristics in an endeavor to appear what they are not, and can therefore be used as a tool by a wearer and as a means of criticism by those who oppose such pretences. Dress not only has the ability to signify gender, but also age, status, cultural affiliations, and nationality—all markers of identity. The rakes and the babus understood the power of clothing and sought to exploit it to attain their ends. The purchasing of clothes became a form of conspicuous consumption on which money was spent lavishly because, in diverse ways, it helped the libertines construct and define their identity. The rakes, members of the rakish world, and the babus imagined themselves as suave and debonair trendsetters, and it was clothing that allowed both the Eastern and the Western libertines, as well as their foppish acquaintances, to project an identity that implied their urbane sophistication to the outside world. The identity of the members of a libertine world was, of course, drawn to a large extent from their self-conception as fashionable men about town, and it was clothing that allowed the British libertine and his acquaintances as well as the Bengali libertine to portray themselves in the manner in

which they wished the outside world to view them. Keeping up a well-decorated exterior was of paramount importance to the rakes and babus because the stylish exterior was meant to indicate valuable inner qualities such as good taste, progressiveness, and sophistication, all qualities on which the rakes and the babus judged their self-worth.

The Definitive Word: Culture, Language, and Literature

As with clothes, the use of foreign language also allowed members of the Restoration world as well as the babus to further portray themselves as sophisticated, cultured, and genteel. Since French was the fashionable language of the Restoration period, fluency with the French language allowed characters in the Restoration plays to create the same sort of identities that the rakes were able to create with their fashionable dress sense. In this case, the ability to speak and appreciate the language enabled the speaker to appear polished and intelligent. The babus too made the greatest effort to speak in English fluently because they viewed familiarity with the English language as an accomplishment that would cause the British to view the babus in a positive light. In this case too, there is a loss of self-possession since playwrights of the Restoration like Dryden and Bengali writers like Michael Madhusudan Dutt point out that often characters in Restoration drama and babu literature sought to project this cultivated identity based on the acquisition of a foreign language at the expense of ignoring or demeaning their own native language. Certain characters in Restoration literature thus prefer French to English, and the babus prefer English to Bengali. Some characters in Restoration dramas and babus, especially of the Young Bengal variety, largely judged their self-worth on their ability to speak foreign languages, not acknowledging that there was any loss of

self-possession involved in this choice. As with the use of clothing, particular characters in Restoration plays as well as the babus believed that speaking in a foreign language allowed them one of the surest ways of creating a sophisticated identity. Since these Restoration characters as well as babus largely judged themselves based on the external appearances they presented, fluency with a foreign language, especially one that was influential in the respective worlds that they lived in, was very important to them because, along with their well-made clothes, mastery over a foreign language added to their identities as refined and elegant members of a genteel world.

The use of language has certain similarities with the choice of clothing. As Ben Ross Schneider writes: “it is not a large jump from foppery in dress and bearing to foppery in words. Clothes were something you added to the naked body to present it effectively; wit was something you added to the naked truth for the same reason” (B. R. Schneider 121). Just as clothing can be utilized to present a dignified and sophisticated external appearance, fluency in languages can serve to present the speaker as cultured and learned. Dress is often used to display one’s body to its advantage, and mastery over languages is used to display one’s intelligence. Additionally, as in the case of the babus and their fathers, if used well language could be used to exploit advantages created by political and cultural circumstances. French influence was largely seen in Charles II’s court, not only in clothing, but also in drama, music, masques, fruit growing, and cuisine.⁵¹ This influence was not only the result of Charles’s exile spent at the court of the Sun King but also due to the influence of his French mother, Henrietta Maria, who

⁵¹ David Ogg says, “French influence after the Restoration may have accounted for the greater vogue of the plum, the pear, the peach, the nectarine, and the melon” (Vol II 62).

had married Charles I and come to England in 1625.⁵² Therefore a leaning towards French customs, manners, etiquette, and language had manifested itself in the English Court even before the Restoration, which was only heightened with Charles's return. At the court, of course, French was the language of the fashionable. Liza Picard notes: "French catchwords were fashionable from 1660-1680" (L. Picard 201). Charles himself spoke French fluently and had French mistresses such as Louise Renee de Querouaille, further making all associations with French fashionable.

Restoration drama amply used French words and mannerisms. Playwrights who often formed part of the Court circle were aware of the prevalence of the language at court, and mirrored such usage in their plays. David Ogg, for example quotes Dryden from his *Defence of the Epilogue* to illustrate the manner in which Dryden directly traced back the sophistication of the Court to foreign influences:

Whence is it that our conversation is so much more refined? I must freely and without flattery ascribe it to the Court; and in it particularly to the King, whose example gives a law to it. His own misfortunes and the nation's afforded him an opportunity which is rarely allowed to sovereign princes, I mean of traveling and being conversant with the most polished courts of Europe (D. Ogg Vol II, 708).

One of the "polished courts of Europe" where Charles spent the majority of his exile was, of course, France, and Dryden was undoubtedly referring particularly to French influences at Court and the influence that France had on the general improvement of

⁵² According to Kathleen Lynch: "The French queen, Henrietta Maria, had the hardihood to impose on her followers a highly specialized system of formal etiquette, destined to have lasting effects, not only on the court literature of her own day, but also on court literature in the reign of her son, Charles II. The *précieuse* fashions authorized by the queen had a particularly significant influence on court drama, providing it with a social mode which vastly increased its resources for the study of manners and from which, through gradual stages, the social mode of Restoration comedy developed" (43).

speech in England. Dryden was, then, in favor of the use of the foreign language at court when done in a reasonable and judicious manner. The poet and playwright, however, was also aware, that like clothes, language could be used in a superficial manner that detracted from the attractiveness of the speaker, rather than enhancing it. As with most things that are fashionable at any given time, those who wish to give an impression of suavity and elegance, an impression that they are moving with the times, will attach themselves to the latest trend, whether they are able to carry it off successfully or not.

Dryden presents just such a poser in Melantha in his play *Marriage à la Mode* (1671). Although not a rake, I have chosen to focus on Melantha because she is a prominent figure in a Restoration play and is one of the best examples in Restoration plays of the manner in which language can be used in an attempt to impress and create a new identity and, in this regard, she resembles the babus closely. In her mind, Melantha wishes to be considered a sophisticated lady of the court, and she uses her facility with the French language as one of the chief ways through which she can exhibit such a genteel identity to her acquaintances, to her lovers, and to the court where she wishes to make her mark.

In his *dramatis personae*, Dryden describes Melantha as “an affected lady” and goes on to highlight how ridiculous and unappealing such affectation may become when carried to an extreme (Dryden 330). Melantha’s obsession with the French language is as absurd as Fopling’s penchant for the clothing of that country, and they are both intended to serve the same purpose: make the wearer and the speaker appear sophisticated since that is the identity they both wish to exhibit to the outside world. Rhodophil rightly points out: “No lady can be so curious of a new fashion as she is of a new French word. She’s

the very mint of the nation and, as fast as any bullion comes out of France, coins it immediately into our language” (Dryden 334). Melantha spends all her time and effort learning the language and speaking in it with all her acquaintances. In this regard, Ronald Wardhaugh writes: “[language] determines how speakers perceive and organize the world around them, both the natural world and the social world. Consequently, the language you speak helps to form your world-view” (R. Wardhaugh 225). In Melantha’s world-view, every aspect of French culture was superior to that of her native country.

Melantha’s conversation is thus liberally sprinkled with French words, and she considers knowledge of the language, French customs, poetry, dancing, and singing infinitely superior to those of her native land, as evidenced when she tells Palamede: “[French] *menuets* are to a miracle! And our Sicilian jogs are so dull and fade to’em” (Dryden 340). As with French dances, she prefers the French language to her own, and she even goes so far as to hire Philotis to supply her, as she says, “with new [French] words for [her] daily conversation” in the fear that she would begin “to speak like one of the vulgar” if she did not have new French words in her conversation every day (Dryden 351). Being able to speak the French language, she hopes, will make her acquaintances view her as genteel and well-mannered. To Melantha, being viewed in this manner is of supreme importance since she wishes to make her mark on a royal court, and because she judges her self-worth on her sophistication, being able to command an elegant language like French contributes significantly to the way in which she views herself.

Melantha’s words and social preferences give evidence to the fact that she considers her time ill-spent unless it can be spent with persons belonging to nobility and, like social-climbers, familiarity with royalty ranks high among her priorities. Even while

with Palamede, new suitor who is going to become her future husband, Melantha runs off to make her “court” to “the sweetest prince! So obligeant, charmant, ravissant ” (Dryden 340). She gives greater priority to paying her respects to a member of the royalty than getting to know the man she is going to marry. Melantha obviously considers the court a place of refinement and polish, and the language she speaks is designed to make her a fitting member of this royal world. Her world-view is colored by her notion that French customs are superior in every way, and therefore exhibiting knowledge of the language will bring her the level of familiarity she desires with the prince and his retinue. Such familiarity with royalty, in turn, will boost Melantha’s self-image since, she hopes, the fact of her personal acquaintance with the prince would make others regard her as a gifted lady well suited to a genteel court. Melantha wishes to give the impression of being an accomplished lady, and she chooses to display her mastery of the French language in order to give proof of her skills and talents.

Melantha aims at self-improvement but her efforts are not made because she wishes to acquire knowledge for its own sake; she only wishes to learn new words because the appearance of superiority that they will give her will gain her entrance into the court. She tells Philotis: “And well, are you not a most precious damsel to retard all my visits for the want of language...” (Dryden 351). Melantha thus does not wish for self-improvement when she learns new words; rather she learns them so that she may use French words in her conversations during her “visits” so that she may impress those she is visiting. Dryden gives Melantha ridiculous lines such as “I’ll sacrifice my life for French poetry,” not because he is against a rational and practical adoption of French which accentuates the speaker’s natural talent and grace, but because he wants to

highlight the manner in which adopting aspects of foreign culture can be done in a silly fashion to fulfill selfish and superficial aims (Dryden 366). Melantha is Fopling Flutter's counterpart in the use of language, and uses language much in the same manner in which he uses clothes, that is, to impress others and gain admiration for the façade she exhibits. The reactions that she gets from the other characters of the play are similar to the manner in which Fopling is derided by those he wishes to impress.

The play makes it clear that Melantha is attractive as a mate in all other aspects but that the passion for French and the desire to constantly be at court are her flaws, making an otherwise sensible woman appear ridiculous and superficial. Artemis repeatedly asks Melantha to relinquish her efforts to raise herself in court by correctly pointing out that Melantha subjects herself "to these affronts by coming perpetually to court, where [she has] no business nor employment" (Dryden 349). But Melantha wishes for royal acceptance as much as Fopling wishes for admittance into the rake's circle, and Melantha's and Fopling's admiration for the court and the rakes respectively cloud any judgment they might otherwise have been able to employ. Melantha imagines herself to be a genteel and sophisticated lady, and desire to present such a façade overtakes reason. So desirous is Melantha of being recognized as a member of the court that she unreasonably claims that she would "rather of the two, be *raillied*, nay, *mal traitée* at court, than be deified in the town" (Dryden 349). As with Fopling, Melantha lacks self-knowledge and self-possession. She has set a high goal for herself, but fails to realize that the court is not her proper sphere in life. Rhodophil rightly points out that she "has one fault that's almost unpardonable: for, being a town lady, without any relation to the court, yet she thinks herself undone if she be not seen there three or four times a day with the

Princess Amalthea” (Dryden 334). Instead, Melantha makes every effort to put on an appearance of sophistication through her speech, hoping that it will hide her other flaws, such as, as Palamede says, being a “newsmonger” and a “passionate lover of a court,” (Dryden 341). Others, however, whose natural position is at the court, can see the desperation for acceptance behind her efforts and see through her shallow pretence and reject her company. Melantha’s affectation, like Fopling’s, begets the very opposite reaction from the one she wants. Like Fopling, she wants to be considered cultivated, but in reality, she fails to see the derision with which she is treated by members of the court like the Princess Amalthea, who rejects Melantha’s company on walks.

Melantha is undeniably a social climber. In this regard, Judy Dyer points out: “A whole language or just one linguistic form can become an index of, or a pointer to, a speaker’s social identity, as well as of typical activities of the speaker” (J. Dyer 102). Melantha’s speech and activities give the audience a clear insight into the sort of social identity she wants to create for herself and become a “pointer” that shows the audience what sort of superficial accomplishments she considers necessary to gain success in life. Melantha’s entire social identity is based on gaining social success; it is only, as she says, when she has “been once or twice at court [that she begins] to value herself again” (Dryden 350). Melantha is aware that acquiring a desirable language is equivalent to gaining social and cultural capital which will lead to greater acceptance in polite and enlightened circles like the court and which will, in turn, raise her social rank.

Since language is the essence of a culture because it is the essence of communication, mastery over it represents mastery over other cultural aspects of a society. There is no indication that Melantha has actually traveled to France; her

comments imply that she has not, but speaking French allows her to give the impression of being a well-traveled young lady. Melantha attempts to give the impression that mastery over the language indicates mastery in other aspects of French cultural life, such as poetry, dancing, singing, and clothing. Since fluency in a language is often a difficult acquisition, Melantha wishes to portray herself as a cultured lady who has a vast and in-depth knowledge of the arts and culture of a refined foreign country since such a portrayal would, she hopes, cause others to view her as a fashionable lady who rightfully belongs to a royal court.

Melantha's obsession, in a way, puts her in the position of a colonized race. She deems a foreign society, its mores, and traditions superior to her own and allows it to control her thoughts and ideas. An invasion by means of culture is often one of the first steps towards colonizing a country since such incursion allows for the controlling of the minds of the native populace, something which is imperative in order to gain any substantial dominance over them. Melantha enslaves herself to French culture and mannerisms, which dominate all aspects of her life and guides all her actions. This dominance makes her resemble a colonized native who has realized that it is advantageous for her to align herself with the ruling power in whatever way possible since this gains her cultural capital which might raise her worth in the colonizer's view and bring additional advantages. Edward Said talks of the Orient as "something [that Europe] discipline[d]" and this applies to Melantha rather well (E. Said 40). Melantha has allowed France and its culture to train and discipline her so totally that she can do no more than parrot its praises as if her existence depended on such obsequiousness. She

recognizes France as her master, and thoroughly allows France to control and colonize her.

Yet, there is much value in one's own culture and national identity, and that is the point Dryden makes by mocking Melantha. Doralice mocks Melantha's pretentiousness and passion for French when she says: "You are an admirer of the dull French poetry, which is so thin that it is the very leaf-gold of wit...And to be an admirer of such profound dullness, one must be endowed with a great perfection of impudence and ignorance" (Dryden 366). Dryden, after all, is "Neander", the new man, a spokesman for the concerns of his generation and an embodiment of their tastes. Three years before writing *Marriage à la Mode* in 1671, Dryden had penned "An Essay of Dramatic Poesie" (1668) where he had supported the superiority of British culture, specifically drama, over French. He had maintained, for instance, that the British are much better at imitating the passions, which is one of the most difficult aspects of performing in a play. The French, he pointed out, are trying to imitate the English in this since their plays are passionless and cold. With Melantha's character Dryden argues that aping foreign manners, modes, mores, traditions, and ways of life can indeed be overdone to the detriment of one's own nation. Indeed, if used with caution, such adoptions might very well serve to refine the English even more but, if used unthinkingly and for unfruitful ends, they will be awkward and will make the nation susceptible to criticism. Melantha uses the French language in an unproductive manner in order to appear sophisticated since that is the identity she wishes to project, but instead, she, like Fopling, is mocked and insulted by those she wishes to impress because they can see her affectation in her desperation to appear cultured.

In babu literature, Young Bengal babus exhibit a similar sort of penchant for the English language, causing them to disparage their own native tongue, Bengali.

Melantha's obsession with French is mirrored in the Young Bengal babus' fixation with English. Indeed "English [was] the adopted language of a Bengal[i] bab[u]" (S.C. Bose 204). There are, however, important differences between Melantha's fixation with everything French and the babus' passion for learning English. Melantha, while resembling a colonized native, is in reality not so; the babus were members of a colonized country governed by a foreign power that had been imposed upon them forcibly. Language and the ability to communicate had been the primary reason why the babus' grandfathers and fathers had been able to amass large fortunes. The lifestyle that the babus were able to pursue thus can directly be linked to the rudimentary acquisition of English by their grandfathers and fathers. As David Kopf writes:

[they] soon realized that the road to financial gain was through the European who controlled the money but needed the menial, clerical, or linguistic assistance of the native. If the Bengali was resourceful he would learn some English and persist in his effort until he found employment with the European. By serving his master well and by adapting his work habits, the Bengali was well on his way to a life of relative ease (D. Kopf 212).

These men also possessed sharp business acumen which, coupled with limited ability to communicate, ensured their financial successes. Yet, there were marked differences between them and their sons. The older generations saw the British rule only as an opportunity to make money even while seeking to maintain their own identity and heritage. Tapan Raychaudhuri writes: "one notes an all-pervasive concern, almost obsessive, in [the Bengalis'] social and intellectual life—an anxiety to assess European culture in the widest sense of the term as something to be emulated or rejected" (T.

Raychaudhuri *Europe* xi). Both the older and younger generations of Bengalis evaluated the foreign culture, and the older generations only sought to emulate the Western work ethic, which ultimately resulted in the acquisition of large fortunes. The orthodox older generations of Hindus had not grown up amidst the clash of two distinct and separate cultures, as the younger generations had. The babus' fathers exposure had been limited, and had come at an older age when their minds were not impressionable.

The younger generations of Young Bengal babus, on the other hand, viewed Western society as advanced, and sought to emulate the freedoms they associated with the West. They were living in a society where, as R.C. Majumdar points out, "faith and superstitious reverence for *sastras* [scriptures] or what came to be regarded as such took the place of reason and free judgment," and hence, under the influence of a Western society, they viewed such restrictions as oppressive (R.C. Majumdar 16). The fathers realized too late that Western education had turned their sons into progressive beings who derided Bengali traditions and values. Edward Said maintains: "Culture, of course, is to be found operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent" (E. Said 7). It cannot be denied that Britain was definitely the dominant partner in the British-Bengali colonial relationship, but what Said terms "consent" was provided by the Young Bengal babus. Cultural incursion manifested itself with the neglect of the native language and admiration of the foreign tongue. The education system under which the Young Bengal babus studied was that of the dominant culture, but to this must be added their willing consent to learn the language of the colonizers. In "Babu" Bankimchandra Chatterji says of the babus that "they can speak many languages," referring primarily to

the Young Bengal babus' eagerness to learn the English language (B. Chatterji 10).

English was able to become the dominant tongue among the Young Bengal babus because it had their full support and because they made every effort to master the foreign tongue.

The educated babus, however, cannot be wholly blamed for holding a negative view of their native literature. The British had realized that "education is one instrument by which colonial powers [could] maintain and strengthen their domination over dependent areas, and with Macaulay's aid, the British implemented an education system that methodically introduced the Young Bengal babus to the best Western literature" (A. Basu 53). These Young Bengal babus were able to appreciate this literature, but when they sought its equivalent in Bengali they found very little. Although Bengali literature has developed a rich heritage now, in 1855 when the first Bengali novel, *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, made its appearance, the Young Bengal babus did not find the kind of rich literary heritage in their own language that they did in English. As J.C. Ghosh points out in *Bengali Literature*, there were many rich Sanskrit texts but there was little in Bengali that was comparable. Hence, the babus had much greater exposure to the English language. Besides being the language of the ruler, the knowledge of which would make them appear progressive and align them more closely to the cultured colonizers, the babus genuinely began to admire the language and the works produced in it and began, as R. C. Majumdar points out, learning English "like their own language" (R. C. Majumdar 35).

The Young Bengal babus were well versed in English. Such a well-educated babu is presented in Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* The hero of the play is Nobo, a Western educated babu who liberally sprinkles his speech with English words.

His friend, Kali, is of a similar stamp. Although Nobo and Kali do speak in Bengali, they casually mix in English words. Words and phrases such as “abolish,” “subscription list,” “attend,” “brandy,” “pleasure,” “garrison,” “between ourselves,” “friend,” “liar,” “bravo” just to name a few, are at the tips of their tongues and are constantly mixed in with Bengali. Simpler words such as “table,” “chair,” “bottle,” “glass” were becoming part of colloquial Bengali by this time, but the types of words that Nobo, Kali, and their friends used showed a greater knowledge of the language.

The Young Bengal babus used these words in the most casual way, as if without any thought, in order to show the great ease they had with the language. When giving a speech at his the club where he and his fellow babus meet to drink and carouse with lower-class dancers, Nobo, for instance, says: “Gentlemen, this club is called Gyantarangini Sabha—we are all members of this club—we meet here and undertake activities that will increase knowledge—and we are jolly good fellows” (M.M. Dutt 101). Coming home drunk Nobo laments: “Damn father—how much longer will the old fool live? ...[After his death] won’t I enjoy myself?” (M.M. Dutt 106). All the underlined words in Nobo’s speeches, which are nonchalantly mixed in with the other words in Bengali, are in English in the text. Issuing an invitation to start drinking Nobo says: “In the name of freedom let us enjoy ourselves,” and all these words are spoken in English (M.M. Dutt 102). Numerous such examples from the text show Nobo’s and his friends’ facility with the English language. The “polyglot character” of the babus’ language thus becomes apparent in Nobo’s speeches (A. Roy *Civility* 5).

Although they did not actively engage in reform and were satisfied with making empty speeches in favor of progress, the Young Bengal babus were aware of the social

reforms that the British were bringing about; Nobo, for example, talks about educating women and ending the caste system, two social issues that concerned the ruling British (M. M. Dutt 101). Donu babu, one of the babus presented in *Hutom Panchar Naksha* who largely resembled Nobo in his drinking and disrespected his father like Nobo did, for example, “occasionally write articles in English newspapers” (K. Sinha 46). The babus were able to read English newspapers and kept themselves up-to-date with current social events. Shibchunder Bose correctly writes of the Young Bengal babus:

Some of the Bengal[i] Bab[us] read and write English with remarkable fluency, and the epistolary correspondence of most of them is commonly carried out in that language. When two or more educated bab[us] meet together...they perhaps talk of some leading articles in the Anglo-Indian or English journals or periodicals, and eagerly communicate to each other the flotsam and jetsam of advanced European thoughts, the ripest outcome in the Nineteenth Century...as if the vernacular dialect were not at all fitted for the communication of their ideas (S.C. Bose 205).

Indeed, the Young Bengal babus derived their sense of self from their ability to speak the English language and took enormous pride in their fluency, which set them apart from the rest of Bengali society. Like Melantha, the babus hoped that fluency with the English language would enable the British to view them as a progressive group of young men since progressiveness was an important aspect of the overall identity the babus wanted to project. The Young Bengal babus wanted to alter the perception that the colonizers held of them, and their mimicry proceeded “from a desire not only to be accepted but to be adopted and absorbed” (B. Ashcroft et al 4). Thus, Nobo makes speeches using English words over social issues that the British were trying to reform such as the abolition of the caste system, women’s rights, and widow re-marriage. In this regard, Judy Dyer quotes social psychologist Henry Tajfel who defines social identity as “that part of an

individual's self concept which derives from his [*sic*] knowledge of his membership of a social group or groups together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (qt. in J. Dyer 103). The Young Bengal babus were seeking to define themselves through and gain membership into a group that included the British based on an ability to communicate easily and meaningfully. As Nobo's speeches quoted earlier show, Young Bengal babus were fluent in English; they were seeking to identify themselves with the British on various levels, and one of the most important ways in which they sought to assimilate was through the use of English. The Young Bengal babus were emotionally invested in this membership primarily because they drew a large measure of their self-worth from it. In "Babu," Bankimchandra Chatterji further says of the babus that they "will oppose conversations carried out in their native language" since Young Bengal babus will prefer to speak in English, which would allow the Young Bengal babus to project an intelligent and educated façade (B. Chatterji 11). Hence, as is evident with Nobo, Kali, and their babu friends, they derived great self-assurance from speaking the language of the rulers since making speeches over social issues in English allowed the Young Bengal babus to project a socially-conscious and progressive identity. The Young Bengal babus wished to be thought of as educated, urbane, civilized, intelligent, and modern; they hoped that by showing a genuine admiration and enjoyment of English and by proving themselves capable of conversing in the foreign tongue they could alter the colonizer's negative perceptions of them as members of the heathenish race who needed to be civilized.

The Young Bengal babus were heavily criticized mainly because they began to despise their mother tongue. Indeed as Revathi Krishnaswamy writes: "The stereotypical

babu was thus an urban, English-educated, alienated ‘intellectual’” (Krishnaswamy 25). As with their choice of clothing, the Young Bengal babus overdid their devotion to English and their derision of Bengali. In “Babu,” for example, Bankimchandra Chatterji strongly underscores this criticism by writing of the babus thus: “they talk in English and oppose Bengali” (B. Chatterji 11). Paradoxically, this was also a time when some Bengalis were increasingly bending their efforts towards writing plays, novels, journals, newspapers, and essays in Bengali, but the babus had little to no interest in the formation of the canon in their native language. Indeed, Shib Chundar Bose argues that it was “a pity that the cultivation and improvement of a national literature—the embodiment of national thought and taste and the mainspring of national enlightenment—seldom or never engage[d] their attention” (S.C. Bose 206). Bengali writers understood that babus derided Bengali without knowing its value and without reading the works that were being produced in the language. Of course, it did not help matters that some of these texts, in an effort to point out the babus’ follies and the negative effects of their blind mimicry, were criticizing them heavily.

Babus made little to no contribution to the writing of Bengali literature. There are no works in Bengali literature that can be attributed to a banian or a Young Bengal babu. Their importance, however, lies in providing matter for other writers to shape into literature. Many of the early texts of Bengali literature, such as the ones discussed in this study, dealt with the Westernization of the educated and wealthy youth of Bengal. *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, *Nobo Babu Bilash*, *Nobo Bibi Bilash*, *Duti Bilash*, *Hutom Panchar Naksha*, *Kolikata Komolalay*, and *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* are all texts produced at the nascent stage of Bengali literature, and they all address the babus and their activities. In a

very direct and real way, then, the babus contributed significantly to Bengali literature. Their activities and lifestyle, including wearing foreign fashions and speaking in foreign tongues at the neglect of their own, became a concern for social critics and writers who made them the subjects of their early literary efforts. The babus did not show appreciation for this literature, and indeed it is difficult to expect them to do so when they were being satirized in it; but in a rather ironical yet noteworthy manner the babus were a very important factor in the writing of early Bengali texts. The Bengali writers needed something to work against, and the babus provided just this. The babus are significant because if they had not been Westernized libertines the literature criticizing them would not have been produced in the first place.

As with clothing, language became a marker of identity for Melantha as well as Young Bengal babus like Nobo. Characters in both Restoration and Bengali literature on the babus were aware that by appearing to be masters of a foreign language they could make an impression on those whose favors they wished to court. Melantha and the Young Bengal babus used French and English respectively with the same intentions in mind. While Dryden criticizes Melantha for carrying her obsession to ridiculous levels, the writers of babu literature censure the babus for ignoring their mother-tongue, especially at a time when Bengali literature was at its nascent stage and would have benefited from the babus' aid. For Melantha and the babus, however, such considerations were unimportant, and they consistently focused only on the impression they could make by presenting themselves as masters of a foreign language. Melantha and the Young Bengal babus had imagined themselves as refined, progressive, and genteel beings. In their efforts to gain acceptance by the court and the British respectively, Melantha and the

Young Bengal babus took recourse to speaking a foreign language because mastery over French and English, they hoped, would enable those whose admiration they wished to gain to view them in the way that Melantha and the Young Bengal babus wished to be viewed. In both these cases, then, speaking a foreign language allowed Melantha and the Young Bengal babus to create identities for themselves on which they based their self-worth; elegance and sophistication were very important aspects of the British and Bengali libertine world, and members of both worlds chose to acquire a foreign language which would give them the desired qualities that were so essential to the worlds they inhabited.

Conclusion

The rakes and babus shared many of the same activities, preferences, and philosophies during their respective ages, and it is clear that the European libertine lifestyle transcended the boundaries of space and time to find strong expression in colonial Bengal almost two hundred years after the heyday of the Restoration rakes. Ironically, however, the colonizers and the older orthodox generations of Hindus were at loggerheads with each other because of the mirror-images of corruption that they had of one another. The babus were caught in this clash, but they leaned considerably towards the culture of the British, thereby widening the generational gap between themselves and their fathers. In the babus' abandonment of native clothing and the native tongue the older more orthodox Bengalis saw the babus' blind mimicry. Moreover, the fathers also viewed these departures as concrete manifestations of the corruptions that they feared had been brought into their society by the colonizing Westerners. Fearful of losing their cherished ways of

life, the older generations were quick to criticize the babus without pausing to consider whether any of these adoptions could potentially be beneficial for Bengali society. The babus, on the other hand, despised the orthodoxy of Bengali society and, since their Western education had taught them to view everything Western in a positive light, they adapted aspects of Western society in an effort to appear progressive and cultured.

Satirized characters in Restoration plays as well as in babu literature placed great stress on the procurement of fancy clothing and mastery of a foreign tongue. For characters in Restoration plays as well as babu literature, projecting elegant façades were an important concern which occupied their time and on which they lavishly spent their money. Fopling, Melantha, and the babus were always willing to go to great lengths to display their fine clothing and fluency in a foreign language, hoping that such a display would earn them admiration and respect from more deserving members of their society who would assess their worth based on superficialities like the clothes they wore or the languages they spoke. It is not surprising that Fopling, Melantha, and the babus wished others to judge them based on such criterion, among others. Such accomplishments were important factors in the meticulously fashioned identities they wished to project, and hence Fopling, Melantha, and the babus were willing to work hard to earn acceptance based on such factors.

CHAPTER III

Wayward Sons: the Search for Self Outside of Tradition

This chapter examines the rakes' and babus' troubled relationship with authority figures such as parents and guardians and examines the activities the rakes and babus took recourse to in order to act out their rebellions against the aforementioned figures. Being willful, prideful, and self-indulgent, the rakes and babus naturally despised those who attempted to modify their behavior or control them. Obviously unwilling to break with their libertine lifestyles, the rakes and babus chose to outwit or ignore those who tried to regulate their behavior. As discussed previously, the Western and Eastern libertine sought to create a sophisticated identity through their choice of clothing and language. Further aspects of the libertine philosophy which contributed to the formation of the libertine identity in seventeenth-century England and nineteenth century Calcutta included rebellion against familial ties. Chernaik writes: "Where Hobbes and Lucretius challenged false, illegitimate authority, the libertines assumed that *all* authority was illegitimate: the state, the church, the family were institutions equally parasitic on man's fear of freedom" (W. Chernaik 25). In turning away from institutions like the family, the rakes and the babus fell back on activities like drinking, gambling, carousing with prostitutes, all of which marked their departure from conservative mainstream society's norms and rules.

The rakes' and the babus' rebellious activities were important to them because these activities brought pleasure, but these transgressions further appealed to the British and the Bengali libertine because these diversions brought the rakes and the babus a sense of belonging that wholesome familial relationships generally provide. The capacity for conspicuous consumption that allowed the rakes and the babus to purchase goods and buy services that provided them with entertainment replaced familial relationships that would otherwise have provided the Western and Eastern libertine with security and fulfillment. Thus, conspicuous consumption that was displayed in the form of drinking, possessing and displaying expensive objects and clothes, visits to theaters and restaurants, and frequenting prostitutes marked the lives of the Western and Eastern libertine. Continuous entertainments fulfilled the void that lack of familial relationships created. In addition, the rakes' and babus' choice of entertainments appealed to them because the aforementioned activities allowed the rakes and the babus to alarm society and display their radical sides.

Rather than seeking approval and comfort from traditional authority figures such as fathers and guardians, the Western and Eastern libertines found their comfort through procuring material goods that would make them formidable and enviable figures among their own circles. In a sense, they secured their reputations and derived their sense of self-respect not through fidelity to family or the doing of good deeds one would find in young men who followed more traditional paths, but by essentially purchasing the accoutrements and entertainments necessary to set themselves at a higher level than the rest of society. The Western and Eastern libertines were competing for social prominence no matter what ethical or moral lines they had to cross to get there. Hence,

the rake and the babu quickly broke relations with their families whom they found oppressive, and replaced them with friends, mistresses, entertainments, and luxuries they found liberating.

The focus of this chapter is on the strained relationships that the rakes and the babus had with their families. I argue that these uneasy relationships led the rakes and the babus to overturn the control that their families had, and in order to exert independence from authority wielding figures such as parents, the Western and Eastern libertine turned to activities that they were aware would cause their families to disapprove of them. The British and the Bengali libertine wanted to shock the societies in which they lived. In this regard, Warren Chernaik writes: “With nothing to rebel against, no taboos to be transgressed, blasphemy would lose its power to shock” (W. Chernaik 1). Rakes and babus found causes to rebel against the control exerted by parents and guardians. Hence, although there are differences in the ways in which and the degrees to which they did so, the rakes and the babus sought to overturn the authority these controlling figures exerted in order to attain their desires and freedoms. Such a move allowed the Western and Eastern libertines to not only get what they desired, but also allowed them to transgress boundaries that proved shocking to the societies they occupied. This, however, was especially true for the babus who lived in a society that was more conservative than the one the Restoration rakes inhabited.

Under the Influence: Fathers and Authority Figures

Libertine literature of the Restoration, especially that created for the stage, generates a great deal of its dramatic impact from clashes between generations; without

such clashes the libertine's actions lack the contrast necessary for both dramatic and comedic potency, which often rises from intrigues the libertine is forced to resort to in order to defeat an older character who often stands in the way of the attainment of the rake's goals. In literature on the babus, the babus too regard their fathers as obstacles who stand in the babus' way of gaining complete freedom to live their libertine lifestyles without any hindrance. Yet, the presentation of authority figures differs considerably from one literature to another. In Western literature, the rakes were not setting a precedent since there had been libertine figures before them. Harold Weber cites Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath* and Shakespeare's *Cleopatra* for their preoccupation "with sexual satisfaction" (H. Weber 4), and Warren Chernaik cites *Don Juan*. But in Calcutta, the babus were the first visible generation of libertines, and shocked mainstream society considerably more than the Restoration rakes did theirs. Hence, when Bengali writers who belonged to the dominant culture wrote about the babus, their criticism was much sharper than what Etherege meted out to Dorimant. In spite of this difference, in both cultures and literatures, the libertinism of rakes and babus are presented as rebellions against the old guard. Even though the writers of the Restoration and nineteenth century Calcutta had different views of the rakes' and babus' rebellions, both groups of authors such as George Etherege and William Congreve in Restoration England, and Tekchand Thakur, Bhabhanicharan Bandopadhyay, and Bankimchandra Chatterji in nineteenth century Bengal show that the authority figures and fathers featured in these plots bring these rebellions upon their heads by being old-fashioned, unreasonable, weak, and indulgent.

The Restoration writers sided with the Restoration rakes, illustrating that the rakes' rebellions against old and unreasonable authority figures were deserved. In Restoration plays, characters such as Old Bellair in *The Man of Mode*, and Lady Wishfort in *The Way of the World* are not presented in a kindly light, and ultimately the control that Old Bellair and Lady Wishfort wish to exert is overturned because, the writers imply, these authority figures wish to control the youthful characters of the play in an arbitrary and unfair manner, simply because by virtue of their positions as parents and guardians they can do so. Old Bellair, for instance, wants Young Bellair to marry the woman Old Bellair has chosen for Young Bellair since as the father he controls Young Bellair's fortune, and Lady Wishfort opposes Mirabell's marriage to Millamant because she feels Mirabell has slighted her, and because as Millamant's aunt Lady Wishfort controls half of Millamant's fortune. Thus, Young Bellair's, Mirabell's, and Millamant's rebellions are justified because their guardians do not present any real weighty reasons to oppose the desires of their children and wards. The misuse of power that these authority figures exhibit cause their relationships with their children and wards to become strained, causing the latter to rebel against the former's authority.

Bengali writers, while exhibiting the rebellions of the babus, do not side with the babus. Instead, Bengali writers strive to show, as Tekchand Thakur wrote in the Preface to *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* "the pernicious effects of allowing children to be improperly brought up" (T. Thakur 2). Writers like Tekchand Thakur and Bhabhanicharan Bandopadhyay repeatedly show that excessively indulging one's children too can cause children to rebel when children realize that the weakness of their fathers shield them from punishment. In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* and *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*, as the following

discussion will show, it is the lack of control that these parents exert that finally cause their sons to take their parents for granted and rebel against these parents by indulging in activities that the parents and Bengali society disapproved of. Unlike authority figures in Restoration literature who cause their children to rebel by being overly controlling, fathers in babu literature make their sons rebellious by entirely failing to control them. Overly indulged as a child, when Motilal in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* grows up, his relationship with his father too is rather strained, and he rebels against a father who has established no control over the child, but still remains a grudging authority figure because it is the father who controls the money that Motilal needs to fund his libertine lifestyle. Despite these differences, both literatures assert that fathers and authority figures are ultimately responsible for bringing about circumstances that cause their children and wards to rebel.

Death, absence, and disassociation from fathers and authority figures are recurrent themes in Restoration drama as well as babu literature. Fathers and authority figures who wield control are often either omitted from Restoration comedies, or are portrayed as tyrannical figures; if presented in Restoration literature, parents are often figures that prevent the hero and the heroine from attaining what they seek, namely, marriage and money. These authority figures, which may include fathers, mothers, aunts, brothers, and guardians, usually must be duped before the resolution of the play can be achieved and a happy ending reached. In this regard, Warren Chernaik rightly claims:

Libertinism is a young man's philosophy... The conventional, middle-aged virtues—discretion, prudence, responsibility, the patient accumulation of wisdom or worldly goods—are rejected out of hand as suitable only to those whose senses have been dulled by age or natural incapacity (W. Chernaik 25).

By its very nature, this type of libertine literature endorses revolt, whether it seems simply individualistic and capricious or justified by significant and universal human desires and emotions such as love.

When parental figures are included in Restoration plays, they are often represented as blocking figures who primarily further the action of the play, generally by forcing a crisis through their interference. Age and authority are used as antagonistic elements precisely because they are the antitheses of the rakish mode. Values such as wisdom, temperance, and tradition are of less importance than the compelling dynamism supplied by youthful daring, excess, and novelty. In essence, we see a very strict demarcation and clear opposition created between the boorish demands of the blocking figures and the blithe desires of the rake, his mistress, and his friends. Rebellion that overturns the control of the authority figures occurs when the authority figures make unreasonable demands that thwart the desires of the youthful couples of the play. These blocking figures usually force a decision upon the hero and the heroine that causes the rake to act as Lady Wishfort does in *The Way of the World*. It is through this act that we see the rake's ingenuity and his love for intrigue. The blocking authority figure, then, not only furthers the action of the play but also serves to show aspects of the rake's character which the audience would not have seen if it had not been for the obstacles that authority figures place in the rake's path.

In *The Man of Mode*, Old Bellair, knows that his son loves another, but peremptorily commands Young Bellair to marry someone else. Young Bellair despairingly says: "...he [Old Bellair] has made a match for me and bids me resolve to be obedient to his will or expect to be disinherited" (Etherege 536). As Young Bellair says,

Old Bellair “knows [Young Bellair] loves, but knows not whom” (Etherege 536).

Without enquiring whom Young Bellair does love, Old Bellair imposes his choice on Young Bellair, and perversely threatens Young Bellair with financial ruin, thereby hoping to force Young Bellair to marry the woman his father has chosen for him. Old Bellair’s injunction to his son that he must “resolve to be obedient” further shows that Old Bellair knows that his son will not welcome this imposition (Etherege 536). But, taking advantage of the fact that as the father he controls the fortune, Old Bellair obstinately presses Young Bellair to marry someone Young Bellair does not love. In this regard, Jessica Munns says:

[Restoration] comedies also registered the weakening of the patriarchal trope. It had long been traditional for strict fathers to function as blocking devices as they sought to prevent their children from marrying the partner of their choice. What now emerge are portraits of fathers and elders who are incompetent, sometimes perverse, and whose authority needs more than correction: it needs to be overturned (J. Munns “Change” 144).

The overturning of Old Bellair’s authority in *The Man of Mode* is in keeping with Munns’s assertion. Old Bellair is an old leech who wishes to marry Emilia, and in doing so usurp his son’s rightful place. Old Bellair’s desires are indeed “perverse,” and there is no doubt that he would make an incompetent and unsatisfactory lover and husband, a fact he has conveniently overlooked since it does not fall in with his wishes. As a blocking figure, Old Bellair resembles Rochester’s disabled debauchee who should have retired from the sexual game long ago. Bellair has forgotten that his time for such dalliances has passed. He says: “I am but five-and-fifty sister, you know—an age not altogether insensible!” (Etherege 538). But the world of the play is essentially a youthful one, and the defeat of Old Bellair’s lustful desires is expected and appreciated because his possession of Emilia would sap the exuberance and jollity of this world. Hence, Old

Bellair's authority must be overturned, and his son's joining of hands with Harriet in her resolution "to be disobedient" is necessary in order to overturn the authority of an inflexible, cold-hearted, and difficult father, who knowingly attempts to abuse his rights as a father, to thwart his son's entirely honorable love for Emilia.

Old Bellair is "firm in his resolution, tells [Young Bellair he] must marry Mrs. Harriet," and in the process he overlooks the fact that he is misusing his rights as a father (Etherege 538). Old Bellair believes that because he is a father who controls his son's fortune, all his wishes will be obeyed. But the play exhibits the manner in which such unfair parental control must be overthrown if the lovers wish to gain true felicity. Emilia and Young Bellair's marriage is based on love rather than financial considerations, and this is not a world in which parents find support when they oppose true love. Indeed, it is a world where the purity of Young Bellair's and Emilia's love overthrows greed, and in a world that "rebukes...any one who would forfeit true love for financial gain" Old Bellair's defeat is inevitable because though he does not wish to marry Emilia for money, he still wishes to marry her for the wrong reasons and thwart true love (P. Gill 193). Old Bellair is outraged when he first hears of Young Bellair's marriage. When he realizes his authority has been overturned and he can no longer exert control over his son's life, Old Bellair says: "Hah! Cheated! Cozened!" (Etherege 584). He realizes that not only has he been cheated from marrying Emilia, but he has also been cheated from dangling his authority over his son, and threatening to disinherit Young Bellair. Eventually Old Bellair meekly accepts the news of Emilia and Young Bellair's marriage, showing he himself was aware of the manner in which he was abusing his position when he says: "Rise and God bless you both. Make much of her, Harry; she deserves thy kindness"

(Etherege 586). Old Bellair cannot continue to be outraged because he knows that he was misusing his power, and forcing his son to make commitments that, as a father, he had no right to do. Lady Woodvill might have initially objected to Harriet's marriage with Dorimant because she had believed Dorimant to be the "prince of all the devils in Town—[who] delights in nothing but rapes and riots," but having no such valid objections to Young Bellair's and Emilia's union, Old Bellair can only bless the couple (Etherege 556).

Although he respectfully asks for Old Bellair's blessing, it remains true that Young Bellair does effectively overturn his father's unfair authority, and his marriage to Emilia without Old Bellair's knowledge or blessing constitutes a rebellion, especially since Old Bellair had been so adamant about Young Bellair's marriage to Harriet. Early in the play Young Bellair says: "When I saw I could not prevail with him to be more indulgent, I dissembled an obedience to his will, which has composed his passion and will give us time—and, I hope, opportunity—to deceive him" (Etherege 538). Young Bellair, then, never had any intention of obeying his father's unreasonable demands. Young Bellair's devious pretence at being obedient was because he merely meant to placate Old Bellair till the time was right for him to marry Emilia and be rebellious. Old Bellair's defeat is well deserved, and his acceptance of his son's marriage indicates that by the end of the play Old Bellair becomes aware of the manner in which he had been abusing his power over Young Bellair.

Another significant blocking figure is Lady Wishfort in Congreve's *The Way of The World*, and the overturning of her authority is also similar to that of Old Bellair's. Lady Wishfort is responsible for furthering the play's plot since it is her objection to

Mirabell and her guardianship of half of Millamant's fortune that sets the plot in motion. If Mirabell and Millamant had been content to marry and lose half of Millamant's fortune, Lady Wishfort would have had no power over them. But since, as Fainall says: "half [Millamant's] fortune depends upon [Millamant's] marrying with [Lady Wishfort's] approbation," and the lovers want to possess Millamant's full fortune, Mirabell is forced to begin the intrigue involving Sir Rowland aimed at overturning Lady Wishfort's authority over Millamant and her money. Lady Wishfort's objections, which are solely based on Mirabell's rejection of herself, are selfish. Fainall points out that it was "the discovery of [Mirabell's] sham addresses to [Lady Wishfort]. To conceal [Mirabell's] love to [Millamant], has provoked this separation" (Congreve 762). Mirabell, though, had been considerate, and had flattered Lady Wishfort as much as he could without debauching here since, as he says, "that [his] virtue forbade [him]" (Congreve 762). Yet, Lady Wishfort feel slighted, and since Lady Wishfort controls half of Millamant's fortune, Lady Wishfort abuses her power to control whom the fortune goes to in order to thwart Mirabell's desires by refusing his suit to Millamant.

Lady Wishfort's objections are ultimately overturned completely, and Lady Wishfort is put at the mercy Mirabell whom she had wished to ruin by marrying his uncle and disinheriting Mirabell. Of her initial desire to ruin Mirabell, Lady Wishfort says: "I'll frippery the villain; I'll reduce him to frippery and rags...I hope to see him hung with tatters, like a Long Lane penthouse or a gibbet-thief" (Congreve 781). Lady Wishfort's situation is reversed at the end of the play, and is in keeping with the turn that Munns mentioned. Unreasonable in her desire to attract a younger man like Mirabell, and perverse in her desire to ruin Mirabell and thwart true love, Lady Wishfort deserves the

overturning of her authority since she abuses the power that she had been vested with.

Lady Wishfort wished to plague the young lovers and retain control for herself, but by the fifth act she is completely in Fainall's control from which only Mirabell can save her. She laments: "Is there no means, no remedy, to stop my ruin?," and it is Mirabell who supplies the remedy, but only after Lady Wishfort agrees to put by her objections to his marriage with Millamant (Congreve 806). Lady Wishfort is forced to give up her unjustified and selfish objections to Mirabell's and Millamant's marriage. She says:

"How! Dear Mr. Mirabell, can you be so generous at last? But it is not possible. Hearkee, I'll break my nephew's match: you shall have my niece yet and all her fortune, if you can but save me from this imminent danger" (Congreve 806). Lady Wishfort is reduced so low at this point that she has to supplicate to the man she claimed was her enemy, and instead of wielding control over Mirabell and causing his disinheritance as she had wanted, tables are turned on her and she has to give in to Mirabell's demands in order to save herself and Mrs. Fainall from financial ruin.

Lady Wishfort becomes a pathetic blocking figure by the end of the play because she displays the very limited control she has over her fate and that of her daughter in a patriarchal society with no laws protecting women. Lady Wishfort might have a title, but none of the powers that would accompany such a title if she were a man; her control lies only in persecuting the young lovers, and by the end, Lady Wishfort is made well-aware of her true dependency which forces her to give up her objections, and humiliatingly plead for protection from the man whose marriage she would have blocked. Without any legal rights to protect herself or her daughter, Lady Wishfort perversely abuses what little power she has over others. Her apparent joy in torturing Mirabell is apparent when she

tells Sir Rowland, her supposed lover and Mirabell's uncle: "No, don't kill [Mirabell] at once, Sir Rowland; starve him gradually inch by inch" (Congreve 797). Lady Wishfort hoped to show her power by marrying Mirabell's uncle and influencing him to starve Mirabell to death, but ultimately she her lack of legal control over her own life causes her to lose the power she had so far wielded over Mirabell. Lady Wishfort is submissively forced to give Millamant to Mirabell with, as she tells Mirabell, "all the joy I can give you" (Congreve 808). Unlike Old Bellair who is not placed at the mercy of his son and daughter-in-law, the defeat of Lady Wishfort's plans regarding Mirabell and Millamant is even more humiliating since not only are her plans overturned but her foolish complacency is revealed.

Lady Wishfort's defeat, however, is deserved because, like Old Bellair, she too had tried to stand in the way of true love and, in the youthful world of the Restoration plays, such obstacles must be overturned before true felicity is reached. As with Old Bellair, Lady Wishfort had obstinately abused the power she had over Mirabell and Millamant, and similarly the overturning of her authority too is well deserved. Devoid of any substantial reason to oppose Mirabell's and Millamant's match, Lady Wishfort had done so just to take revenge on Mirabell. Congreve, like Etherege, implies that such meaningless exploitation of power cannot succeed, and those exerting it must be defeated if youthful lovers are to attain their happy endings.

In the Restoration plays, then, the blocking figures are defeated because they are perverse and oppose true lovers. Restoration playwrights present parents in an oppressive light, illustrating why the younger members of the Restoration world choose to rebel, intrigue against, or break away from these authority figures. In a youthful world driven

by the concerns of young lovers, the perversity of the older generations must be overturned, and baseless objections to genuine love must be rejected in order to facilitate young love. In literature on the babus, parents are presented in a different light—the babus' parents are weak, over-indulgent, and loving to a fault. The lack of discipline in their sons' lives provides Bengali writers an opportunity to clearly illustrate the fact that babus were created mainly because the parents failed to regulate their sons. Both literatures, then, argue that fathers and authority figures must bear some of the blame for the rebellion of their sons and wards. While not siding with the babus as the writers of the Restoration sided with the rakes, Bengali writers like Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Kaliprasanna Sinha, and Tekchand Thakur did not hesitate to point out that the fathers of the babus caused their babu-sons to rebel because, unlike the parents in the Restoration plays, the babus' fathers exerted too little control, which caused their babu-sons to lose any fear of punishment and prompted the babus to transgress boundaries that fear of repercussions might have otherwise prevented them from crossing. Ultimately, then, wielding too little control is just as harmful as exercising too much control, and both lead to the same results. Neither the authority figures in the Restoration plays nor the babus' fathers in nineteenth century Bengali literature are able to strike the right balance in the manner in which they dealt with their sons. While the playwrights of the Restoration sides with the rakes and justifies the overturning of the control that guardians in Restoration plays possesses, the Bengali writers side with neither the sons nor the fathers but, while considering the fathers in a compassionate light, illustrate the manner in faulty principles of child-rearing led to the rise of the babus. Restoration playwrights as well as

Bengali authors placed the blame for the rebellions of the youth of their respective countries on the shoulders of authority figures such as parents and guardians.

Fathers find greater prominence in babu literature than in Restoration dramas, but they are presented in a different light. While the authority figures in Restoration plays are interfering trouble-makers, the babus' fathers are seen in a much kindlier light even though they bear a significant portion of the blame for failing to guide their sons; fathers are represented as objects of pity since they have ungrateful and disloyal sons who wish for their fathers' deaths so that hard-earned money can be wasted on activities which the fathers would strongly disapprove. *Hutom Panchar Naksha* present just such a babu in Donu babu who drinks at home with his friends during the summer vacations, and strikes his father when the father comes to enquire about the drunken brawl the babus were making. Donu babu then tells his shocked and lamenting mother: "Mother, you don't have to worry! Let that old fool die. I do not want him. I will bring such a father that you, the new father, and I will drink together. Let the old fool die. I want a father who is quite reformed" (K. Sinha 47). Hutom mentions that the "blow of the Young Bengal babu causes his father to fall to the floor," and makes the father incapable of punishing his son (K. Sinha 47). Hutom further says that "Donu babu's father kept an eye on Donu babu's activities," and hence Donu babu often indulged in drinking on the sly (K. Sinha 46).

But, when Donu babu's father discovers Donu babu's rebellion, Donu babu is not alarmed or ashamed. Instead, undaunted by his father, Donu babu strikes him, giving the reader a good idea of how little control the father was actually able to exercise over his babu-son. Donu babu easily dismisses his father's authority, and takes his rebellion further by asserting that he would arrange for his mother to remarry once his father had

died. Widow-remarriage was another issue that the babus supported and traditional mainstream society opposed. Donu babu acts out his rebellion by insulting and hitting his father and threatening his mother with widow-remarriage. His defiant attitude and his support of issues that his parents disapproved of make clear that far from recognizing his father's authority, Donu babu takes pleasure in abusing and offending his parents. Donu babu's father obviously lacks any real control, and knowing the impotent nature of his father's authority, Donu babu can confidently act out his rebellions without any fear of being reprimanded in any substantial way.

Bengali writers partly blamed such faulty principles of child-rearing for the rise of the babus. Parents of future-babus were less apt to personally advise or discipline their children than to please and indulge them in any number of ways. In *Nobo Babu Bilash*, no matter how rebellious Jagatdurlabh (who grows up to become a babu) is at school, his tutor is not allowed to discipline him because his father "forbids the Brahmin teachers from beating or even scolding their young charge" (B. Bandopadhyay 36). Additionally, "The teachers are ordered only to praise the boy which makes the boy very happy, and since there is no fear of any punishment, he usually spends most of his time playing instead of learning" (B. Bandopadhyay 36). Parents such as those in *Nobo Babu Bilash* tended to approach the responsibility of child-rearing by throwing money at their sons rather than taking an active role in the positive formation of their characters by imparting such notions as self-control, respect for authority, and responsible money management, among other things.

In a very real sense then, the babus' parents' distancing and pampering can be viewed as negligence, which in turn debilitates the babus' characters enough to open the

door to unsavory external influences and poor decision making, which causes these pampered children to become babus and rebel against their parents and the mainstream society that they were part of. In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, for instance, without fearing his parents, Motilal acts out by drinking, taking drugs, visiting brothels, and attempting to rape innocent women. Beni, Motilal's father's friend, advises Motilal's father: "Firstly, the father should educate his son well. Then he should try to impart values to his son that will make the son an honest individual" (T. Thakur 54). Such guidance obviously requires the father to invest time and effort in the rearing of his son. Motilal's father is too busy making money, and hence lack of parental control and guidance turns Motilal into a babu who then rebels against his weak and overindulgent father.

Although the fathers would deny it, it is undoubtedly true that their child-rearing principles were based on a certain degree of selfishness. The babus' fathers did not wish to feel guilty by disciplining their sons. Motilal's father, for instance, considered him his "greatest treasure," and catered to Motilal's every whim (T. Thakur 8). In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, Beni babu (the term babu is used here as the Bengali form of "Mr."), the most intelligent, responsible, and respectable character of the novel, tells Babu Ram Babu, Motilal's father: "In order to bring up your son in a responsible fashion, he needs proper guidance inside and outside the house. The father himself has to supervise all aspects of a child's life...there are many jobs that can be delegated to others but this is not one of them" (T. Thakur 13). In return Babu Ram Babu answers: "It is my time to bathe in the holy waters of the Ganges, listen to holy songs, look after my wealth and property. When do I have the time [for Motilal]?...I will send him to you and be at peace" (T. Thakur

13).⁵³ Babu Ram Babu entrusts responsibility of his son to another and puts the matter out of his mind. His concerns are selfish as he prepares himself for old age and imminent death by listening to holy songs, and bathing in the waters of the Ganges. Though he loves Motilal and indulges him excessively, Babu Ram Babu does not take any real responsibility for his son. In reality, Babu Ram Babu neglects Motilal, although Babu Ram Babu feels that he has done his duty towards Motilal by entrusting Motilal to Beni, and sending Motilal to Calcutta to be educated. But, by neglecting to impart values, in failing to take an active role in forming his son's character, and in refraining from correcting and punishing Motilal when he is disobedient, Babu Ram Babu debilitates Motilal's character, relinquishes all control over Motilal, and hence must bear some of the blame when Motilal rebels and becomes a babu.

The babus' fathers, like Babu Ram Babu, were rich and believed that their money could protect their sons for their entire lives. Motilal himself is aware of the protection his father's wealth affords him. Motilal thinks:

My parents adore me and they will never scold me whether I learn anything or not. The purpose of an education is to earn money. My father has a huge fortune. I only need to know how to sign my name. If I spend all my time studying what will happen to my friends? Youth is the time to have fun, not study. (T. Thakur 9)

⁵³ Hindus consider the Ganges or the Ganga a holy river. It originates in the Himalayas and Varanasi, an important place of pilgrimage, is located on its shores. Hindus believe that the waters of the Ganga have purifying powers and washes off sin. It is also believed that Hindus must bathe in the Ganga at least once during their lifetime. Brahmin priests begin their day bathing in the Ganga and offering prayers while standing waist-deep in the river. Hindus also keep vials of Ganga water in their houses because of its purifying powers. For more on the Ganges, refer to *Sacred River: The Ganges of India* by Ted Lewin

At root, then, unlike in the Restoration period when parents attempted to exert too much authority, it is the negligence and irresponsibility of the fathers that contribute to the formation of the babus. The fathers do not endorse libertinism, but they also do not teach their sons how to lead respectable and responsible lives. Therefore, when the father laments the fact that his son has become a babu and is dissipating the family fortune, he has only his indulgence to blame for the deplorable state of affairs. The babus' formative years are long past, and the fathers' protest at this late stage is completely ineffectual. The formation of the babus is thus a strong indictment of rich Bengali parents in colonized Calcutta.

Motilal does not see his father's life and activities as being worthy of emulation. Thakur writes: "Motilal became so sly that he often hoodwinked his father and indulged in indecent and dishonest activities. He would constantly tell his friends that he was eagerly waiting for his father to die so that he could live the life of a babu without any obstacles or interruptions" (T. Thakur 49). The young babu lives his life by the principles of wild pleasure, and to him the life that his father lives resembles the life of a fool who spends his days in worthless business activities, even though it is his father's business that funds Motilal's libertinism. The notion of making and saving money is, at heart, a conservative one that is far removed from the rebellious lifestyle that the babus lived. Fathers and sons have such different sets of values that they could not relate on any level. Whereas Motilal's father constantly hoards money and talks about business, Motilal and his companion babus persistently "look for new forms of entertainment," and thereby remove themselves from the financial concerns with which their fathers busy themselves (T. Thakur 49). To the babus, the value of money lay in the ability to show that they

could spend it; money was only valuable when others knew they had it. In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, Motilal threatens suicide and throws tantrums constantly when his demands are not immediately met. Tekchand Thakur writes: “As soon as Motilal asked for money from his parents, they had to provide it. If they were late, he would threaten to kill himself by hanging or poisoning” (T. Thakur 49). Being sons of indulgent and weak parents, babus knew they could manipulate their parents’ weaknesses to attain their ends. The babu lifestyle could not be maintained without a lavish expenditure of wealth, and hence, ironically, it was the parents’ lenience that became responsible for funding the very lifestyle that the parents’ abhorred.

While the babus viewed wealth as liberty, the fathers, who were not born into wealth but had worked to attain it, viewed it as a form of security. Thus, in spite of being immensely rich, Motilal’s father is loath to spend excessively on Motilal’s education because the father’s acquisitive nature objects to it. When Beni tells Motilal’s father that it would cost twenty-five rupees to send Motilal to school, Motilal’s father says: “Twenty-five rupees! I have a lot of household expenses. I feed a hundred people every day. And after some days I have to get Motilal married. If I will pay so much money then why did I hire a boat and come here to take your advice?” (T. Thakur 12). Even though twenty-five rupees is not a very big sum to a man as rich as Babu Ram Babu, he is still unwilling to pay it. The father realizes that it is only wealth that has given him and his family high social standing, and uses money as a shield to protect themselves from lower sections of society, association with whom would compromise or taint the high position they had sought so hard to achieve and maintain. Thakur writes that it is only his wealth that had raised Babu Ram Babu and his family’s status in the village: “Some years ago,

Babu Ram Babu's financial position was very bad. At that time only one or two of the villagers were his friends. But once he made money, built a big house with a beautiful garden his status rose in the village, and he gathered numerous friends and well-wishers" (T. Thakur 7). But the babus, having been born into high status and wealth, did not understand this fear, and could not subscribe to the concerns of the self-made fathers. In being miserly, the fathers held on to their working-class mentality while the babus acquired the outlook of the leisure classes, leading to a distancing between them.

In babu literature the babus' fathers' are presented as tolerant and generous to a fault. Unlike parents and guardians in the Restoration period whose children and wards rebelled because the parents imposed their wills and desires on their children, the parents in babu literature cause their sons to become rebellious by being too easygoing and, to some degree, being remiss in their child rearing duties. For different reasons, indeed even opposite ones, the rakes and the babus rebelled against too much and too little authority. The parenting styles of the Restoration characters like Old Bellair and Lady Wishfort present one extreme, and that of Babu Ram Babu and Donu babu's father present the other. While parents in the Restoration demanded their children repress their desires and wills, the babus' fathers repressed their wills to cater to the babus. Neither group of parents are too invested in their children. While parents in the Restoration asked for unqualified obedience, parents in babu literature hoped that giving their sons money would suffice in raising their sons.

The babus' mothers are also presented in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* and *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* The mothers in these texts have even less control than mothers in Restoration plays do. In Bengali society of the nineteenth century, the condition of women was not

enviable. They often did not receive any education. Women had no legal rights and their place was largely within the house where they would supervise the work in the kitchens, participate in the worshipping of the household deities, and fulfill the needs of their husbands and sons.⁵⁴ Lila Majumdar correctly writes: “All their activities were, as a rule, so ordered as to serve the sole purpose of contributing to the creature comforts of men and all their codes of behavior and morality were conditioned to preserve the pre-eminence and peace of mind of men” (L. Majumdar 509). Indeed, the mothers in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* and *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* draw their identities primarily from the male figures in their lives. Motilal’s mother is referred to as “mata,” the formal Bengali word for mother, and Nobo’s mother is merely called “grihini,” or wife; they do not even have names that would confer an identity upon them separate from their relations with the men in their lives. Their entertainments and diversions were extremely limited, they often did not receive much attention from their husbands, who were engrossed in their businesses. Hence, children, especially sons who were highly valued in Bengali society, became the center of their lives. The mothers focused all their love and attention on the sons but, like the fathers, never attempted to discipline them.

Nobo’s mother in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* is so ignorant that even when Nobo comes home drunk and calling for a dancing girl, she is unable to understand what ails him. Being superstitious and ignorant, she has such a limited grasp on reality that she would rather believe that her son has been possessed by a devil or poisoned by an enemy (M.M. Dutt 107). Furthermore, she is prepared to pamper him to such an extent that she instructs her daughter to invite a dancing girl into Nobo’s bedroom in the presence of his

⁵⁴ For a detailed account of the horrific conditions under which many nineteenth-century women lived, see Katherine Mayo’s *Mother India*.

wife if that will placate Nobo. A dancing-girl, a person often placed on the same lowly level as a prostitute and who would never have found admittance into a gentleman's house and would only have met with scorn from his wife, becomes acceptable if that is what her spoiled son wants. Indulgence overrides all considerations of caste, social hierarchy, and appearance. Paradoxically, in her efforts to humor her drunken babu-son, Nobo's mother, a member of the older generation that objected to inter-caste mixing and breakdowns in the social stratification that the activities of the babus were leading to, inadvertently becomes an advocate for the very changes that she and her husband deplore. In her bid to indulge her drunken son, she is even willing to endorse his licentious desires, and Nobo's mother becomes liable for promoting her son's babu lifestyle. As his mother's pampering of his demands illustrate, Nobo can come home and make such demands without fear of angering his mother. Nobo knows that his mother's weakness for him will give him and his babu lifestyle immunity from any reproach.

Parents in babu literature often regard their children, sons in particular, as treasures. Motilal's father refers to him by that word and Nobo's mother calls him her "golden Nobo" (T. Thakur 107). "Golden" in Bengali has the added meaning of "good" and is often used to describe a person or a character trait in a positive fashion. It is ironical that the parents use such terms for children who were not "golden," and did not grow up to be so. Furthermore, the parents are themselves, to a large extent, responsible for the loss of the inherent "good" qualities that the sons possessed when they were infants. The parents stand testimony to the fact that unless parents invest themselves in the lives of their children beyond merely providing them with all material goods, truly "good" and "golden" children who can make a constructive contribution to society cannot

be produced. Mainstream Bengali society certainly did not see goodness in the babus' lifestyles. They saw such behavior as an attack on their most cherished traditions, but the parents were unable to see the harm they were doing by excessively doting on their sons until it was too late to bring about any reformation. Blindness and irresponsibility marked the babus' parents, and writers like Tekchand Thakur wrote novels like *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* with the specific aim of showing the ill effects of over-indulging children.

Tekchand Thakur and Michael Madhusudan Dutt who wrote *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* knew that reformation would have to start with the parents, and hoped to point out to indulgent parents that they must shoulder some of the blame for causing the state of affairs that they themselves deplored.

Rakes and babus in both literatures, then, view authority figures and fathers as hindrances whose removal is necessary for the attainment of unqualified liberty and libertinism. In the Restoration world, however, the presentation of the authority figures is made in such a way that the demands made by these authority figures seem unreasonable, causing the audience to side with the rakes who wish to overturn the authority figures' unjustified demands. Literature on the babus, however, presents the fathers as pitiful figures who have been burdened with disloyal and debauched sons. This difference in presentation points to an essential difference between the mentality of the writers who wrote about the babus and those who wrote about the rakes. While the fictional rakes were created by men who belonged to the court and were friends with other rakes like the Earl of Rochester and Charles Sedley, Bengali writers who wrote about the babus belonged to mainstream society and were frightened by the erosion of traditional ways of life that the babus' libertine lifestyle was causing. Restoration plays featuring the rakes

were aimed at amusing the audience, while works on the babus were meant to serve as cautionary tales. It is hence not surprising that while the rebellion of the rake against unfair authority figures is often justified, the rebellion of the babu is frowned upon. Yet, the writers of the babus' tales astutely point out that the babus' parents are very much to blame for the rise of the babu phenomenon in Calcutta. Thus, while the Restoration rakes often intrigue and defeat unfair blocking figures, the babus' rebel against weak parents who unwittingly bring ruin upon themselves and their families by failing to guide their errant sons.

Dregs and Debts: Entertainment, Leisure, and Luxury

Turning away from meaningful and fulfilling relationships with their families, the rakes and the babus took recourse to other like-minded libertines, material objects, and prostitutes to fill their lives with the sense of belongingness and security that family ordinarily provides. The libertine's entertainments came not only from those activities that were pleasurable, but also from those that allowed self-display; and hence consumption of commodities that allowed the Western and Eastern libertine to make a presentation of not only his person, but also his possessions was an important aspect of the libertine lifestyle for the rake and the babu. As we shall see in this section, there were, of course, important differences between the rake's and the babu's lifestyle, but in the West as well as the East, this lifestyle included a departure from the norms and conventions of the societies the rakes and babus lived in, and the libertine lifestyle in both cultures was also reliant on the ability to consume conspicuously. Libertine lifestyle and conspicuous consumption thus went hand-in-hand, and each was dependent on the other.

The rakes and the babus made every effort to show themselves off, and such display could not be achieved without the ability to buy material commodities. Hence the rakes' and babus' need for commodities made the Restoration world of seventeenth-century England and the babus' nineteenth century colonial Bengal periods that contributed to the rise of consumerism in Britain and Calcutta.

For the libertine, freedom, especially of action, was of paramount importance and a reward in and of itself. Chernaik notes that at its core "libertinism embodies a dream of human freedom, recognized from the outset both as infinitely desirable and as unattainable" (W. Chernaik 1). The value the rake put on a life of leisure prompted him to energetically seek out activities that not only allowed him to attain sexual gratification, but also permitted him to display his superiority over other members of his social sphere. Furthermore, the spirit of competition and one-upmanship that exists between William Congreve's Fainall and Mirabell marked the libertine in general. The rake's competitive and sexual drives and his love for liberty became apparent in the entertainments that he indulged in. Through all his choices, the Western and Eastern libertine sought to rebel against society's stultifying rules to herald in freedoms such as visits to prostitutes which, though shocking to polite society, allowed them the greatest opportunity to indulge their utmost whims and desires. This will be documented in the following section which will concentrate on the rake's and babu's most preferred diversions which included gambling, going to theatres, drinking, gossiping, and consorting with prostitutes in order to argue that the libertine lifestyle was one that was, in part, guided by the rake's and the babu's desire for self-display, and that it was their ability for conspicuous consumption that allowed the Western and Eastern libertine to successfully accomplish their self-display.

Libertines are characteristically prone to an over-indulgence in various forms of entertainments and to avoiding any manner of conventionally “serious” work unless it is somehow tied to seduction. In a letter to William Jephson, George Etherege writes: “How pleasanter it is to jolt about in poor hackney Coaches to find out the harmless lust of the Town than to spend the time in a Roome of State in whispers to discover the ambitious designs of Princes” (qtd. in H. Weber 49). As Weber points out: “Etherege’s complaints about his life as a diplomat in Ratisbon perfectly display the rake’s indifference to the great affairs of the world” (H. Weber 49). The libertine lifestyle excluded any weighty thoughts about worldly affairs; such concerns, in their minds, were a waste of time and inconsistent with their philosophy of leading a lightsome life of leisure. The British and the Bengali libertine had the time and the money to enjoy leisure activities, and any time that was not spent in such pursuits was time misspent. Suffice it to say, the rake and the babu, the latter of whom took some of his cues from his British counterparts, shared very similar attitudes regarding how leisure hours should be occupied and spent most of their time pursuing similar ends. The babus’, however, indulged in some activities that the rakes did not. Although most texts in Restoration literature do not mention the rakes’ taking drugs, babu literature stresses that the babus took hemp and marijuana. But, both libertines were fond of gambling, drinking, going for rides in their carriages, and watching bird fights, just to name a few of their diversions. The entertainments of the rakes survived over centuries, and manifested themselves in colonial India. As the babus’ buying power increased, they too indulged in expensive entertainments and became addicted to costly habits that required a large expenditure.

Libertine restlessness prompts the rake to search for diverse entertainments. He, for instance, goes from the dressing room to the coffee house, from the coffee house to the restaurant, from the restaurant to the theater, from the theater to the gambling room, and from the gambling room to the bedroom with reckless speed. The rake constantly requires something new to keep him amused, and this was particularly true of the libertines of Charles II's court. B.A. Kachur points out that the libertinism of the Restoration rakes "embodied not only a deliberate break from the past age's repressive Puritanism but also an 'in-your-face' counter-culture that many young aristocrats embraced with enthusiasm as a decisive split from all the failed beliefs and values of the broken world they had inherited" (B.A. Kachur 12). The rake's activities were chosen carefully so that they would push the senses to an ecstatic state. These extravagancies did not only please the rakes, but also alarmed the more conservative natives of London which brought the rakes no small satisfaction. Samuel Pepys, for instance, commented several times on the degeneracy of the court. His biographer quotes Pepys as asserting that "[he was] much disconcerted at the pride and luxury of the court, and running in debt." Furthermore, "it was not long before he was shocked by what he heard of the swearing, drinking and whoring at court, and still more appalled by the extravagance and the expectation of unlimited credit that prevailed there" (C. Tomalin 213).⁵⁵ Libertine

⁵⁵ Claire Tomalin's biography of Pepys uses his letters, memos, other papers to construct his life. The main source for the biography, however, remains the famous diary. Tomalin's book is helpful not only in giving information about Pepys and his wife Elizabeth but also in providing valuable information about London and Londoners of the time. Pepys often becomes a representative for these folks. The book gives an insight into various aspects of Restoration life such as what they did for entertainment, the clothes they wore, their political and social concerns, the cost of different commodities, the plans of their houses, what they thought of the king and court, and their reactions to the great fire.

activities fulfilled two related functions: they enabled the restless rake to expend his energy and fulfill his desires, even while allowing him to express himself through both novelty and effrontery.

The rake acted out many of his rebellions partly through his defiant choice of entertainments. In visiting prostitutes and keeping mistresses he was flouting conservative sexual codes that continued to govern male-female relationships in the dominant culture of his time. He defied notions of fidelity by emphasizing that a respectable relationship with a single woman was not adequate for his uncommonly intense and wide-reaching sexual desires. Furthermore, he was also violating class lines by indulging in sexual congress with actresses who were commonly considered prostitutes, or at least women of low repute. Dorimant, for instance, has had affairs with a low-class prostitute like Molly, women of higher classes such as Mrs. Loveit and Belinda, and an heiress like Harriet. Therefore, through their pleasures, the rakes both exploited and vicariously identified themselves with sections of society who were considered unsavory. Additionally, the rake drank excessively and attended riotous parties with the same aplomb, as if to make a point that he was so very alive that a common sense of sobriety could, by no means, support or sustain his energies. Chernaik rightly says: “No one woman, no one conquest can ever satisfy, and the libertine finds himself on ‘an infinite round of repetition, where each disillusionment leads to a new idealization’” (W. Chernaik 2). The rake’s hedonism defied the prevalent conservatism practiced or at least espoused by the majority of the upper- and middle-class British subjects.

However, the rakes were also adhering to the expectations and the unspoken dictates of their own subculture in which subversion was looked upon as a virtue, and not a vice. At once representing and undermining authority through his leisure activities, the rake, in many ways, strove to carve out his cultural legitimacy through the pretence of a newfound sense of liberty that would suggest an adherence to natural law. Fujimura points out Burnet's description of Rochester's views of libertinism:

And he thought that all pleasure, when it did not interfere with these [not to hurt others or prejudice his own health], was to be indulged as the gratification of our natural Appetites. It seemed unreasonable to imagine these were put into a man only to be restrained, or curbed, to such a narrowness: This he applied to the free use of Wine and Women (T. H. Fujimura 49).

The excessive nature of their entertainments that shocked the more conservative was wholly normal to the rakes who believed that withholding such pleasures would only result in a form of harmful repression. In his discussion on Rochester's poetry and the meaning of pleasure in Restoration literature, Harold Weber writes of the "Restoration metaphor of sex as appetite that consistently defines the rake's understanding of human needs" (H. Weber 50). He continues: "Our sexual desires, like our hunger for food, are fundamental to the organism, those who ignore or try to transcend their sexuality are like 'schoolboys,' unaware of the true values of life" (H. Weber 50). This is precisely what the rake understood well; he knew that libertinism, by definition, champions freedom and unrestraint, and hence the rules and laws that society sought to impose upon the individual, his pleasures, and sexual drives were considered a form of unnatural oppression against which the rakes must rebel if they wished to live an authentically natural life.

Leisure activities such as drinking, gambling, dining at expensive establishments, and dressing elegantly, of course, could not be funded without considerable expenditure, and oftentimes large sums of money were dissipated in the pursuit of pleasure, causing the rakes to ironically relinquish some aspects of their freedom by marrying for the money required to allow them to continue with their libertine lifestyle. Dorimant's expensive clothing, visits to the theatre, dining in expensive restaurants, for example, have so dissipated his wealth that he needs "a wife, to repair the ruins of [his] estate that needs it" (Congreve 585). Having full legal possession of their wives' fortunes, the rakes then proceeded to enjoy themselves with their money. A chief reason for participating in certain entertainments and activities during their leisure hours was to flaunt wealth, as well as social status. Of the rakes' lives, B.A. Kachur writes: "To them, life was an elaborate and playful spectacle aimed at the pursuit of personal pleasure, a daily, public masquerade in which everyone—from the court to the literary world—seemed to participate" (B.A. Kachur 101). This aspect of the "public masquerade," such as going for walks where he could be observed, was important to the rake who was inordinately fond of self-display.

Self-display, aimed at causing admiration and envy in others, required expenditure which could support the purchase of goods necessary to satisfy the libertine's exhibitionist nature. Dorimant, for instance, dines at Long's or Locket's, which Canfield points out were "fashionable" establishments, he owns a coach but hires a chair while his coach is sent to Locket's so that he may ride it back, and spends an inordinate amount of money on his clothes (Canfield 1974). In *Love's Last Shift*, Snap tells us that the rake Loveless, although not rich by any means, "made the tour of Europe with the state and

equipage of a French court favourite,” further hinting at the conspicuous consumption without which a proper libertine lifestyle was not possible (Cibber 711). It was the libertine, then, whose purchasing power, whether on credit or because he had his wife’s fortune at his disposal, who placed an emphasis on the importance of material goods in order to lead a fulfilling life. Instead of being fulfilled by satisfying relationships with parents or wives, the rakes looked to the purchasing and displaying of commodities in order to satisfy themselves, and hence contributed to the sense of materialism that pervades the Restoration world.

The rake’s world was very much shaped by a sense of playacting and catering to voyeuristic tendencies. The audiences at the theatres, for example, attended plays more with the desire to show off their clothes than to see the plays, further facilitating voyeurism. Gossiping and the cabal nights similar to the one Millamant and Lady Wishfort host in *The Way of the World* were part of the ordinary entertainments of the Restoration world. Thus Fainall attests to their popularity when he says “they have ‘em three times a week and meet by turns at one another’s apartments, where they come together like the coroner’s inquest, to sit upon the murdered reputations of the week” (Congreve 762). Activities such as walking or taking rides in St. James’s Park, Kensington, or at the Pall Mall, calling formally on acquaintances in the afternoon, visiting coffee houses, alehouses,⁵⁶ and theatres, most of which occur in Congreve’s play,

⁵⁶ According to Liza Picard: “It has been calculated that in the mid-seventeenth century there were 50,000 Ale houses in England, one for every 100 inhabitants. Considering the density of population in London, this added up to a great many alehouses. Further up the social scale were inns, where you could get a drink and a meal at any hour except during service time on Sundays, and coffee-houses where you could be sure of catching up with the latest news. The first coffee-house opened in the Holborn in 1650. By 1663 there

provided another incentive besides being pleasurable: fuelling the need for conspicuous consumption, the aforementioned activities provided an opportunity to observe the dress, manners, actions, and speeches of others, as well as be observed in kind. When walking in St. James's Park, Mrs. Fainall notes that Fainall would "willingly dispense with the hearing of one scandalous story to avoid giving an occasion to make another by being seen to walk with his wife," again hinting that these walks were occasions for fashionable men and women to watch and gossip about each other (Congreve 771). Mrs. Fainall's and Fainall's comments adequately showed the importance of maintaining façades in this watchful world. One's actions were noted, oftentimes embellished, and always analyzed with much pleasure, and the inhabitants of this world were well aware that one's reputation could be enhanced or ruined in the right parlors.

Similar flamboyance also marked the babus' lives. *Nobo Babu Bilash* takes the reader through the steps of becoming a babu, and mentions the luxuries that were a staple of the babu's entertainment. Sur, the babu-maker in *Nobo Babu Bilash*, advises the babu on activities he has to master in order to fully embrace the babu-lifestyle. Sur says:

A half-babu is he who has mastered the four 'p's: 'pasha' [game of dice]; 'paira' [pigeon fights, a popular form of entertainment for the babus]; 'para-dar' (extramarital affairs with married women); and 'poshak' (fine clothes). A complete babu, along with the four 'p's, also achieves success in the four 'k's: 'khushi' (pleasure); 'khanki' (prostitutes); 'khana' (banquets); and 'khairat' (charity, the sly manner of convincing the babu to waste his fortune on his toadies) (B. Bandopadhyay 45).

The road to becoming a successful babu is carefully prescribed. Methodical planning went into the organization of the leisure activities that Sur mentioned, and the babus realized that all activities must ultimately lead to the attainment of maximum pleasure.

were 82 of them in London. Coffee-houses were male haunts, the origin of men's clubs. Respectable women could go to inns, or eating-houses" (209).

Toadies, themselves old-hands at dissipation, were regular partakers in the babu's entertainments and leisure hours. The babus not only spent lavishly for their own entertainment, but also became responsible for the entertainment of others who had been babus in the past, but had dissipated all their wealth on similar fruitless activities. Moreover, as the nature of the activities Sur advised on implied, these were entertainments such as drinking, eating sumptuous foods, and visiting prostitutes that the babu could quickly get addicted to. The toadies indeed hoped for such an outcome as it guaranteed their own indulgences as long as the babu had money.

The babus did not belong to the highest castes by birth; however, because of their possession of wealth, they sought to attain a higher status than the one into which they had been born. For them, money signified high social status and they wanted the rest of Bengali society to accept their views. Often, as with Motilal's family in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, their families had possessed wealth for only one or two generations, but the babus, through their standard of living and patronizing of those members of society who were of a higher caste but had less wealth, strove to give the impression that their families came from "old-money," that is to say from a world of noble landowners rather than mundane businessmen. They could then justifiably entertain themselves and those belonging to higher castes in a lavish manner that would give proof of their high social standing. Hence the babus, who possessed substantial purchasing power, sought incessantly to acquire objects that would bear proof of their high place in society and their good taste. It was the babus' desire to own expensive objects and outdo one another in the ownership of such commodities that was responsible for consumerism among the upper class Bengalis in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta. Pampered sons of rich parents, the

babus were used to having their demands met. With regard to the unreasonableness of demands that Motilal in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* made as a young boy, Thakur writes: “Motilal would tell his father to get him the moon” (T. Thakur 8). When such young boys grew up to become babus, their demands for foreign goods, such as imported brandies which Nobo pays for with his father’s money in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*, were more accessible, and hence the babus’ fathers’ money was often spent on commodities that allowed the babus to entertain themselves and their friends lavishly. Since the babus’ leisure activities caused a marketplace for expensive goods, the babus were responsible, to a large degree, for the rise of consumerism in Bengal.

The babus immersed themselves in entertainments and luxuries that befitted their wealth. Since they had been born into money, there was no work that the babus were required to do. They usually did not join in their family businesses and as Rudrangshu Mukherjee points out, “A life of leisure born of ill-gotten profit could produce strange ways of passing the time” (R. Mukherjee 47). The babus entertained themselves in ways that are reminiscent of the entertainments of the rakes. Indeed, as Shib Chunder Bose says:

the amusements of a Bengal[i] bab[u] [were] more or less Anglicized. Instead of the traditional *jatras* (representations) and *cobees* (popular ballads) he [had] gradually imbibed a taste for theatrical performances, and native musical instruments [were] superseded by European flutes, concertinas, and harmoniums, organs and piano-fortes” (S. C. Bose 207).

In the evenings the babus went for airings in their carriages and phaetons, they went for joy rides on the river and were accompanied by their mistresses, prostitutes and entertainers, they drank heavily, they smoked marijuana and opium, they gambled, they attended lavish parties at their country houses where prostitutes were in attendance, they

bred pigeons and enjoyed watching pigeon fights, they spent thousands of rupees at their religious festivals and their cats' marriages. In *Nobo Babu Bilash*, the babus' party at his country house is furnished with:

imported fishing rods and tackle, beddings and pillows, perfumes, garlands, silver hookahs, marijuana, wine, tobacco, alcohol, meat, different types of sweets, fruits; all the best things that money can afford. Expensive clothes for the babu and clothes for the babu to present to the prostitutes who will attend are also purchased. Attendants to swing the fans and to prepare hookahs for the entertainments are also hired (B. Bandopadhyay 48).

Hutom further says in *Hutom Panchar Naksha*: "When it is five o' clock...the babus get into their phaetons, self-driving bogies and broughams and along with their friends and sycophants they go to take air" (K. Sinha 2).

The babus' airings are strongly reminiscent of the walks in St. James's Park, the chief aim of which was to show oneself off and meet and greet others belonging to the privileged fashionable circle. As with the rakes, there was a definite and strong element of self-display in these activities, since ostentation was necessary in order to wrest high positions for themselves. To the babus, their possessions, entertainments, and luxuries became status symbols that must be paraded so that they may be admired. Such admiration was tied directly to the babus' purchasing power, and hence the babus' desire for admiration caused him to spend lavishly, and thus the babus were among the biggest consumers in nineteenth-century Calcutta since they wished to make their mark by parading their possessions and exhibiting their wealth through parties where rich foods, expensive drinks, and entertainments were amply provided.

Leisure activities took a large portion of the babu's time and wealth, and were planned so that not only the greatest pleasure was produced, but also the greatest

impression was made, thus, again making them purchasers of expensive items that other Bengalis would not be able to purchase. The babus were not only looking for acceptance from like-minded babus and for pleasure, but were also competing among themselves to display their wealth and their ability to spend money with abandon. In his book on the history of leisure, Peter Borsay remarks: “making money was one thing, but in the pursuit of social position it was of little use unless converted into status. Leisure was crucial in this process, providing the arenas in which cultural consumption and display took place” (P. Borsay 90). The babus fully subscribed to this view. They gave the impression that money itself was not important *per se*; it could be made easily and represented nothing in and of itself. Jagatdurlabh in *Nobo Babu Bilash* is advised: “Do not try to calculate how the money is being spent, and so keep no accountant. That will rob you of pleasure... you will not be able to take this money with you when you die. So spend it all and have fun, and when you die your friends and the prostitutes will remember your generous nature, your parties, and will miss your company” (B. Bandopadhyay 45). The importance of money lay in the elegant things it could buy, which would be appreciated by other discerning babus, and in the opportunities it provided of not only showing off wealth but also taste and refinement. In other words, what one purchased and the manner in which one went about purchasing it reflected one’s understanding of subtle cultural distinctions, and thereby marked one as an authority on or at least an adherent of the dictates that governed the leisure class who had extra cash to spare on items that they did not strictly need.

It was with the babus’ conspicuous consumption that leisure and luxury became commercialized in Bengal. The state became increasingly dependent on the marketplace

economy not only for the inflow of steady money which could be spent, but also for the availability of products on which to spend. Tapan Raychaudhuri correctly writes: “The boom city of Calcutta under the John Company [The East India Company] had seen patterns of conspicuous consumption for which there are few precedents in the Indian past” (T. Raychaudhuri *Perceptions* 10). The babus had an excessive amount of money at their disposal and their demands rose; Bengal profited from its increasingly spoiled and dissipated sons. To give us an idea of their increasing thirst for distinction and consumption, Baidyanath Mukhopadhyay writes in *Babu Gourouber Kolkata*: “Their favorite was the Cleopatra coach and they preferred French carpets to Kashmiri carpets.⁵⁷ They had Mackeb’s cuckoo clock and Osler’s chandeliers” (B. Mukhopadhyay 10).⁵⁸ Their clothes were made by foreign firms such as Mr. Gibson’s clothing store that opened up in Calcutta and counted numerous babus as well as Europeans among its clients. The babus often scorned products made in India. Many of their possessions like carriages, phaetons, perfumes, furniture, and crockery came from foreign lands which served, in a very real sense, as brand names or signifiers of taste and wealth.

Such demands had a two-fold effect on Bengal’s economy. While the babus’ tastes and buying power opened up the market for foreign goods and profits for British firms, it also simultaneously wiped out some indigenous products and services that were

⁵⁷ Woolen carpets from Kashmir are, of course, highly sought after now. The babus’ main objection to them was that they were made in India. Hankering after everything foreign, they did not see the good quality of these carpets. French carpets were made in a foreign land and cost more. Hence, these carpets were of greater merit in the babus’ eyes.

⁵⁸ Founded in 1870 by Thomas Osler, the firm of F& C Osler of London and Birmingham became the leaders in chandeliers and lighting manufacture during the nineteenth century. Their glassworks specialized in chandeliers. Many of their products were bought for overseas markets. For more information on the firm refer to “Empire of Glass: F. & C. Osler in India, 1840–1930” by Deepika Ahlawat in *Journal of Design History* 21 (Summer 2008): 155 - 70.

provided by local workmen. The libertine lifestyle was sustained by money made through British collaboration and it gave back, financially, to the British businessmen rather than to skilled native craftsmen. Since the babus preferred foreign goods, native workers like tailors, jewelers, and carpenters lost their trade to their British counterparts. Sumanta Banerjee says: “We hear of Ajuddin Chand Mistri, a master mason; the Pals, well-known carpenters; and Shib Mistri, a famous goldsmith. They were replaced by European retail proprietors like the tailoring company of Ranken, Hamilton’s the jewelers, and Monteith’s the boot and saddle makers” (S. Banerjee “World” 77). Conspicuous consumption, in this case, was selective, and this selective process harmed the poorer sections of Bengali society whose services were no longer sought after. In most cases, conspicuous consumption of the kind that the babus enjoyed led to the enrichment and expansion of British firms since they ruled just about every area of the larger marketplace. The smaller and increasingly less stable market that sustained native workers could not survive the competition and crumbled in the face of its monstrous competition.

The demand for foreign goods already existed because of the presence of the British who surrounded themselves with objects made in their native land which would remind them of home. However, the babus’ money and taste for the same goods ensured that their demand increased. Borsay writes: “...leisure would be a major beneficiary from the tendency for a growing proportion of any extra income earned, as personal wealth expands, to be spent on non-essentials” (P. Borsay 23). The consumerist scenario that Borsay describes in which there is an excess of cash to dispose of is perfectly applicable to the babus. Non-essentials were even more important than essentials in the babu’s bid

to establish his superiority and his high social standing. These items were further proof of the babu's contempt for money and his admiration for objects that were considered tasteful markers of personal worth. The babus' desire for self-display was thus a vital factor that fuelled consumerism in colonial Calcutta.

To the babus, the non-essentials became the essentials. Some babus, in fact, became so obsessed with the idea that these ostensible essentials somehow reflected their personal essence that they went to extremes to guard against any perceived blemish in their belongings, as this excerpt from "The Great Houses of Old Calcutta" attests:

Once [babu] Nilmani Haldar bought a superior imported mirror and sent it to [babu] Ramtanu Dutta for inspection. Ramtanu noticed a small flaw in one corner, and had the mirror broken as unworthy of its master. He also sent Nilmani the cost of a replacement (C. Deb 59).

In this hedonistic lifestyle, a self-satisfied, self-gratifying mode of existence was more important than anything else. Pleasure consisted not in the maintaining of a normal lifestyle, but in excesses of all kinds. The babus' identity was so bound up with these pleasures that they derived their self-worth from the ability to host and partake in these luxuries and entertainments. Nobo in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*, for instance, derives immense pleasure from his Gyantarangini Sabha, the club where he meets with his babu friends to drink, and of which he is president because he funds many of the drinking activities from his father's money. That Nobo relishes his role as president, becomes apparent from his willingness to launch into speeches as soon as the rest of the Young Bengal babus gathered at the club ask for one (M.M. Dutt 101). Once he becomes a babu, Motilal too becomes engrossed in the babu lifestyle. Thakur writes: "At all hours of the day and night, there was singing and dancing,...merrymaking,...feasting, drinking, and drug taking. Motilal suddenly became a babu" (T. Thakur 103). The babus' wealth and

lifestyle were protections against the realities of lives lived in seeming obscurity and normalcy. The babu lifestyle certainly bore traits of an addiction wherein pleasurable superfluity and avoidance ranked well above useful obligations and engagements with the world. These Bengali libertines had an infantile view of life resembling that of a child who would greedily hoard and devour every ounce of candy in sight despite the inevitable sickness it would bring upon him. When they were children, the pampering of the babus' parents had shielded the babus from shouldering any responsibilities or gaining an understanding of proportion and self-discipline. The future babus had been used to having every demand fulfilled by doting and rich parents. As grownups, it is not surprising that they were often irresponsible in their expenditures and amusements, and succumbed to all their whims and fancies.

One of greatest pleasures with which the libertine entertains himself is, of course, consorting with prostitutes. Since seduction is an integral part of the libertine lifestyle, no discussion of it can be complete without looking at this form of indulgence. The babus' exploitative relationship with the prostitute is discussed elsewhere in this study, but here it is fitting to look at the prostitute as an indispensable form of entertainment that the babus took great pleasure in. The prostitutes that the babus visited provided them with more than just sexual delights; they stocked their brothels with expensive food, drugs, and drinks in an effort to overwhelm the senses and, in turn, exploit their unrestrained customers who were keen consumers of the services offered at the brothels.⁵⁹ In addition, prostitutes were often trained singers and dancers, making a visit to them an all-inclusive circus of titillation. Most visits to brothels began with drinking and the taking of drugs

⁵⁹ For a discussion on the relationship between leisure and drugs, see Peter Borsay's *A History of Leisure*.

while the prostitutes sang and danced for their clients. At the babu's garden party in *Nobo Babu Bilash*, "some babus drink, some babus smoke marijuana,...some kiss the prostitutes, some hug them, some sing, and the whole night is spent in this manner" (B. Bandopadhyay 51). Hence, in *Nobo Bibi Bilash*, the brothel keeper spends quite a bit of time trying to teach the fledgling prostitute how to sing and dance so that she may entertain her clients, and the brothel-keeper tells the bibi that when she goes to parties at the babus' houses she will be expected to perform songs and dances for them (Bandopadhyay 194). Prostitutes knew that profit could be made on all such miscellaneous services, and were quick to provide an entire menu of hedonistic experiences that went well beyond the act of copulation. As the demand for such experiences grew, the babus, who were consumers of all manner of addictive substances and services that the prostitutes offered, changed the manner in which prostitutes did business in Calcutta.

Prostitution had, of course, existed long before the British arrived in India, but in a conservative society like the one in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta it was not as visible as it became with the largely lavish and increasingly colorful patronage of the babus. Because a great amount of money was spent on this form of entertainment, it now became a more viable and monetarily rewarding trade for many women who left their neglectful husbands and families to become prostitutes and live an independent life. In a letter written in 1864 Fabre-Tonnerre, the health officer for Calcutta writes:

Hence the great number of prostitutes who not only swarm in the bye-lanes and back-slums of Calcutta, but who infest our principal thoroughfares, polluting the atmosphere of our neighbourhood, and who,

by their indecent conduct, scandalize the morals of the population in the midst of which they live (K. Ballhatchet 43).

Such a teaming mass of unabashed prostitutes had never been seen in pre-babu era Calcutta. Indeed, it is not even the case in the post-babus Calcutta of the present day where there are three well-known areas in which most prostitutes operate. The babus were largely responsible for this change; the selling of the fantasy that the prostitutes offered became more overt in nineteenth-century Calcutta due to the babus' patronage, and lasted only during the period in which the babus existed. The babus gave prostitutes a position and power in an orthodox society that the prostitutes had never had before and never regained after the babus' glory days were over. Indeed, prostitution became a viable occupation for women from diverse backgrounds because they were able to "[acquire] new types of clientele who were products of the colonial order," namely, the babus (S. Banerjee *Under* 1). Although the prostitutes surely had clients other than the babus, it was indeed the babus who formed the prostitute's largest customer-base, and all texts on babu literature such as *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, *Nobo Babu Bilash*, *Nobo Bibi Bilash*, *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*, *Hutom Panchar Naksha*, and "Babu" mention the babus' patronage of prostitutes. Though still shunned by the more genteel and conservative sections of Calcutta society, prostitution increasingly became a feasible occupation that poor women took to because they could count on the protection of the babus as long as they were young and pretty.

The prostitutes were mostly either *khemta* dancers or *baijis*. The *khemtawalis*, as they were known, "came from the humbler background of Bengali rural folk culture" (S. Banerjee *Under* 11). The *baijis*, on the other hand, practiced classical music and dancing which was considered more sophisticated and required more talent. While the

khemtawalis were generally Bengali Hindus, the *baijis* could be from any caste and from any religion. There were then two very distinct types of entertainments that the babus enjoyed on their visits to the prostitutes. Some *baijis* and *khemtawalis*, it should be noted, were not prostitutes and lived mainly by their vocal and dancing talents, but most prostitutes could perform either the *khemta* or the *nautch*, which was the name given to the entertainment provided by the *baijis* (S. Banerjee *Under* 11). In Dutt's *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* or *Is This Civilization?*, the Young Bengal babu Nobo and his friends are attended by *khemtawalis* at their drinking session at the Gyantarangini Sabha, the club where they hosted their debaucheries. At the meeting, Nobo, the club President gives a speech in which he declares: "educate our women...give them independence. Now it is my prayer that we put our hearts and minds together and work for the social reformation of this country" (M.M. Dutt 101). This grand speech, however, is followed by the *khemtawalis* songs, drinking, and a drunken brawl. To the babus, freedom represented the ability to enjoy themselves in any fashion that they wished. It is ironical that Nobo speaks of social reformation, and later he speaks of the emancipation of women in the presence of the *khemtawalis*. It never strikes Nobo and his supposedly progressive friends to commence the reformation by educating and liberating the very women they are exploiting for their pleasure. The ability to make impressive speeches that displayed their social awareness and knowledge of the English language was a part of the enjoyment and was indulged in merely for that purpose. It has no object beyond adding to the dissipations of the moment, and the pleasure-loving club of babus is unable to grasp the fact that the opportunity to bring about the kind of reformation they enjoy talking about is right at their door if only they could pull themselves away from the drinking table and the

prostitute's bed. Addicted to the entertainments and services the prostitutes offered, the babus were unable to tear themselves away from their consumerist tendencies and mindsets long enough to grasp an opportunity to actually accomplish what they made elaborate speeches about.

The babus were heavily criticized for some of their extravagances, such as excessive spending on futile activities and for bringing prostitution onto the surface of the society's consciousness. Yet, it is also undeniable that their activities and possessions made Calcutta a glorious city of the kind which it had not been in the past. Tithi Bhattacharya insightfully writes: "Our examples of the rich and colourful festivities of the early nineteenth-century babu, in his myriad funerals, weddings, and feasts bespoke a social connection that was very much a public language of splendour" (T. Bhattacharya 188). The babus owned the finest carriages, pure-bred horses, imported carpets, crystals, paintings, and beautiful clothes. They attended and gave lavish parties at which the choicest foods and drinks were served, and they played hosts to Europeans who thronged their entertainments. Because of their wealth and the generosity of their social functions, the babus were able to mingle with the colonizers at a level that excluded most Bengalis. With the passing of the babus, usually due to either an untimely death or debt, their magnificent lifestyle ended, as did a measure of the splendor of the city they called home.

The strong resemblances between the rake's and babu's lifestyles point to the fact that hedonism, self-indulgence, wasteful expenditure, a tendency towards conspicuous consumption, a desire to rebel, the need to display wealth, and the propensity towards hosting and taking part in lavish entertainments are all distinctive characteristics of the libertine lifestyle, no matter where they occur. It comes as no surprise, then, that such a

lifestyle is an alluring choice for those who belong to the upper classes or have attained high social standing on the strength of their wealth in any society. The babus and the rakes could afford to eschew all forms of serious business because they had not been brought up to be responsible, and had had nearly every whim satisfied from birth. Indulgences, amusements, luxuries, and leisure were important factors in the rakes' and babus' lives because they not only brought pleasure, but also because they allowed the rake and the babu to proclaim their taste, eminence, and wealth. Given the voyeuristic and exhibitionist nature in which the Western and the Eastern libertine lived, it is hardly surprising that the sense of competitiveness to outdo one another prompted the rakes and the babus to spend lavishly on leisure activities that would go a long way in declaring their superiority over others who shared their worlds and their lifestyles. As with the wearing of expensive clothes, the ability to engage in conspicuous consumption marked this sphere of their lives, and aided the libertines to project an identity to the outside world that they crafted carefully. Through their choice of leisure activities, the rakes and the babus were trying to arouse not only jealousy in their acquaintances, but also admiration. Hence, they spared no effort or money at pursuing activities and pleasures that were unthinkable for men of tamer dispositions or lesser wealth. In doing so, the rakes and the babus lived their lives in a reckless manner that, while providing temporary pleasure, burnt them out quickly and brought swift endings to their lives either through debt or early deaths.

Conclusion

The rakes' and the babus' rebellion manifested itself in their discarding of familial relationships which they found constricting. Their rebellions were made further visible

through their patronage of prostitutes and their participation in activities like drinking and gambling. In this regard, Tiffany Potter writes:

Libertinism of any period is based on the need to challenge social dogma and the assumptions of the hegemonic group. This in itself is interesting, since, of course, most of those we would now historically classify as libertines were male, upper-class members of that group. Still they felt themselves limited and even oppressed by the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and thought as outlined by...the majority of public opinion, and so they led a movement designed to procure freedom for certain aristocratic individuals to think and act according to their own judgment, regardless of convention or social constructs of morality (T. Potter 10).

Indeed the libertinism of the rakes and the babus would not have been possible if they had not been born into privileged families, since without the wealth and name that was bestowed upon them by their families they would not have been able to fund the kind of lavish expenditure that was required to live the lifestyle they had chosen. At root, the rakes and the babus were consumers who liked to parade their possessions, and hence the libertines contributed to the growth of a marketplace economy that was fuelled by their conspicuous consumption. The libertinism of the rakes and the babus was, then, ironical because they were fighting against the very fathers and families that had enabled them to assert their independence and eminence. In addition, they were going against many of the social values that their families cherished, forgetting that they were quite dependent on the wealth and name of the very families they sought to affront and break away from.

The rakes' and the babus' dependence on amusements and commodities was great not only because these allowed the libertines to project a consciously created image, but also because they found emotional fulfillment from their ability to buy and display. Having cut ties with institutions like the family, which provide emotional strength, comfort, and succor, the rakes and babus fell back on commodities to fill the void that

estrangement from families created. It is, hence, not surprising that their dependence on objects was so great, and that they focused all their money, energies, and time to the procurement and exhibition of superficial possessions with which they filled their lives.

There were, however, differences between the rakes' rebellions and the babus'. While the rakes rebelled against unfit parents, the babus took advantage of the lenience of their parents, and rebelled because they had little to fear in terms of punishment. The babus were hence more pampered than their counterparts in the Restoration, and writers of the babus' tales point out that Bengali society was being ruined by these rebellious youngsters, a point that Restoration playwrights were not attempting to make.

Of the babus, Thakur writes: "Continuing their destructive lifestyle eventually brings the babus down to the level of animals...they cannot distinguish good from bad" (T. Thakur 49). And Hutom writes: "Well wishers of this country, first take care to reform the characters of these babus and then turn your attention to improving the country. Otherwise your prayers for this country will be in vain" (K. Sinha 127). While writers of the Restoration appear to take the rake's part in his rebellions against his controlling parents, Bengali writers attempt to point out that parents who are unfit and weak will produce sons who, like their parents, will be weak, and these sons will indulge in activities that will hamper the county's progress.

CHAPTER IV

The Bonds of Matrimony: the Price of Being a Libertine's Bride

This chapter examines the rakes' and babus' relationships with women: the Western and Eastern libertines' wives as well as wives of other men to illustrate the manner in which the babu and the rake commodified human relationships and exploited women who were dependent on them. The rakes and the babus placed great value on commodities, and hence it is not surprising that they viewed relationships, even those with their wives, in terms of the advantages they could gain from human relationships. Very limited legal rights of married women placed the libertines' wives effectively under the rakes' and babus' control, and the rakes and babus, as they did with their fathers, did not hesitate to take advantage of their own as well as others' wives.

Yet, paradoxically, seventeenth-century England as well as nineteenth-century Calcutta both saw the emergence of some independent women who were inadvertently granted a sense of liberation by some of the rake's and babu's activities. I argue that even while some of the rakes and babus oppressed their wives and mistresses, this ill treatment caused some women in Restoration England and nineteenth-century Calcutta to look out for themselves and seek avenues for liberating themselves from the oppression of their men. In Restoration comedies, some of the rakes like Mirabell were, to a certain degree, willing to grant their future wives some freedoms. In colonial Calcutta of the nineteenth century, the babus, though making speeches about women's emancipation, were

not actually granting their wives freedom. But, I argue that the repression and the neglect that some babus meted out to their wives was, ironically, beneficial for the wives to a certain degree because such oppressions ultimately had a liberating effect on the babus' harried wives.

Rakes and babus often married for money, and marriages became a form of contract devoid of human emotions. Marriage became a type of business that the self-aggrandizing rake was good at; ultimately marriage was advantageous for the rake since it often provided the money to fund lavish entertainments. The rake knew how to manipulate heiresses and the guardians of these heiresses in order to get the heiress' fortunes, thereby giving proof of his resourceful nature. Rakes abhorred serious work at all cost, but they were willing to use their resources and intelligence when they were trying to get a fortune which would prevent the necessity of working real jobs. Yet, as I argue, some of the rake's wives were able to exert some measure of independence in their dealings with their future husbands by stipulating their demands in the form of provisos. The babus, on the other hand, wanted their wives' fortunes but had to do no more than depend on their business-minded fathers to conclude advantageous marriage deals for them that brought the babus big dowries and submissive wives. The babus' wives, though eventually able to attain a sense of liberation in some other ways such as when they took lovers, were, however, not allowed any provisos that laid out the wives' requirements after marriage. Hence, the babus' wives position was different from those of the Restoration heroines because while wresting some measure of self-governance after their marriages, the babus' wives had no recourse to provisos that would set out their terms

before their marriages. The babus' wives' entered marriages in a much more vulnerable state than the Restoration heroines did.

Cuckolding inept and unfit husbands allowed rakes and babus to exhibit their sexual prowess, and continue their exploitation of women, who were no more than pawns in the games the British and Bengali libertines played. The rake's and babu's relationships with women, then, were no different from any other exploitative relationships they had which they manipulated to serve their own ends. Predatory and self-obsessed by nature, the rakes and babus were unable to become loving and loyal husbands because they were not capable of the depth of selflessness and emotional attachment that successful marriages require. This chapter will examine the rakes' and the babus' commodification and exploitation of women to highlight the acquisitive and manipulative nature of libertinism. Constantly focused on themselves, the rakes and the babus failed to see that relationships with their wives could be a direly needed stabilizing factor in their lives. Instead, the British and Bengali libertines continued their reckless lives, and heaped misery on their wives whose lives were dependent on the whims and fancies of their husbands.

But, I argue that the rakes' and babus' commodification and neglect of their wives, inadvertently, turned out to be advantageous to various degrees for their wives because the ill treatment that some of the rakes and babus meted out to their wives allowed the wives to stand up for themselves. Because of the babus' neglect, some of the babus' wives, for the first time, found a voice to criticize their husbands, and question the complete control that such unfit husbands were allowed to wield over their wives. In a way, then, the mistreatment of the rakes' and babus' wives were important factors in the

rise of strong and independent women in -Restoration England and nineteenth-century Calcutta who were not afraid to break away from their husbands and attempt to live independent lives or to enter into marriages only after having made their conditions clear to their future husbands.

Wooing the Purse: Money-Minded Marriages

Restoration drama and literature on the babus both stress the importance of marrying for money, and hence the need to marry heiresses. Since the rakes' and the babus' extravagant spending habits quickly depleted their fortunes, they needed heiress wives who would refill their coffers. Courtships and marriages, in actuality, were often targeted towards gaining a fortune, the bride being quite an incidental acquisition. Frequently incompatible with the rakish husbands who had married them for their fortunes but devoid of any legal rights, women in Restoration London and nineteenth-century Calcutta became completely dependent on their husbands for their maintenance. The following section will show that the rake, the babu, and the babu's family laid utmost stress on a prospective wife's fortune to highlight the manner in which marriages in both cultures took the form of a contract between those negotiating it, thereby illuminating the manner in which both the rake and the babu commodified human relationships. Although the hero and the heroine of some comedies in the Restoration such as *The Way of the World* do love each other, none of the texts in babu literature mention that the babus married for love. Viewing their wives as commodities who were valuable because they had huge dowries to offer, the rakes and the babus gave evidence of their essentially acquisitive nature. Perennially self-focused, the rake and the babu could not cease being

selfish in their dealing with women whose lives they effectively controlled. But, because some of the heroines of the Restoration such as Millamant in *The Way of the World* were aware of the control their husbands would have over them, these heroines made every attempt to retain some measure of independence through the contracts they entered into with their future husbands. Such contracts were not allowed to the women in nineteenth-century Calcutta, but for the Restoration women, these contracts were the means through which heroines in Restoration comedies could make it clear to their husbands that even though they had no legal rights, they meant to preserve some autonomy after their marriages.

Wives in the Restoration did not lead enviable lives. As William Hogarth's painting, *Marriage à la Mode I: The Marriage Contract* indicates, parents with an eye towards increasing the family fortune often arranged marriages for their offspring. The bride and the groom remained uninterested and unattached to each other, and the wife was aware the sort of lonely life that awaited her unless she chose to take a lover. Robert Hume rightly notes that "a great many marriages of the time were made on the basis of economic considerations, and the dramatists well knew that the majority of marriages brought little happiness, however contracted" (R. Hume "Marital" 254). The rakes' motivation for marriage was money that they could then use to bolster their sagging estates. Dorimant's interest in Harriet, and Willmore's interest in Helena, for instance, increase after they learn the women are heiresses; since both Dorimant and Willmore are in dire need of money, their attentions increase not only because the women are witty and beautiful, but more so because the heiresses would bring their husbands property which could further support the rakes' lavish spending and extravagant lifestyles. Dorimant is

not hesitant to admit that he needs an heiress for a wife who will bolster his sagging estate, and had Mirabell in *The Way of the World* been content to marry Millamant without her entire fortune, he could have done so at any point without Lady Wishfort's permission, saving himself from planning elaborate schemes.

For the rakes, beauty and intelligence were certainly important in a wife, but the greatest asset that recommended her was her money. Francis Osborne's *Advice to a Son* (1685), urges: "a man is stupid to marry, unless he gains a great estate thereby," and Hume points out that according to Pepys this was a very popular volume during the Restoration (R. Hume *Rakish* 149). Osborne notes that marriages result in lack of freedom, and most Restoration rakes are prompted to give up freedom through marriages primarily because of their wives' fortunes. It does not detract from the pleasure of the contract that the wife is a fitting partner for the rake, but her money is his most important consideration.

According to the marriage laws of the Restoration, women had very few rights after their marriage. Liza Picard notes: "the titles of two sections in *The Laws Resolution of Women's Rights* say it all: 'That which the husband has is his own' and 'That which the wife has is the husband's'" (L. Picard 225). Money has the ability to bestow and protect power and position as well as bring a sense of contentment to libertines. The wife becomes a tool through which the rake's spending power may be continued. It is indeed as Robert Hume writes: "A woman was little better than a chattel, a condition emphasized by a growing desire to acquire property through marriage" (R. Hume *Rakish*

179)⁶⁰. Prospective husbands in Restoration drama often conflate their love for their future wives with desire for their fortunes, and even a rake like Mirabell who claim great love for Millamant still opts not to marry until her fortune has been gained.

Women in Restoration plays often pay less attention to their fortunes than the rakes do. The heiresses know that ultimately their fortunes will serve their husbands' wishes, and hence the heroines are not obsessed by their fortunes to the degree that the rakes are. At best, the heroine can hope for a compassionate husband who will provide for her. In *The Way of the World*, for instance, it is not Millamant who forms elaborate schemes to get control of the money. References to the fortune come much more from Mirabell than from Millamant. When Mirabell comes to tell Millamant of his plan, Millamant says: "To hear you tell me that Foible's married and that *your* plot likely to speed?" (Italics mine Congreve 777). The "plot" to gain the fortune is indeed Mirabell's, and Millamant plays no active role in it; she plays along with Mirabell and allows him to formulate a plan which will humiliate Lady Wishfort, but Millamant does not make or carry out the elaborate plan.

Mirabell, though slighted and insulted by Lady Wishfort when he is not invited to Millamant's and Lady Wishfort's cabal night, does not scheme primarily to take revenge on Lady Wishfort; Mirabell's elaborate plan's primary aim is to dupe Lady Wishfort into

⁶⁰ Hume further notes the precarious positions the wives were placed in: "Worst of all, once married, a woman had almost no legal recourse against a husband who proved vicious, tyrannical, or unfaithful. Legally, the two were one, but only the husband had any rights. The woman was barred from owning property (all she had automatically passed to her husband) or making a will. Only a marriage settlement could guarantee a wife an income of her own from her own property—though if the husband failed to pay it the woman had difficulty enforcing the contract. She could not testify in courts against her husband, could not stop him doing what he liked with "her" property or even from forcibly separating her from their children" (R. Hume *Rakish* 179).

giving him the full amount of Millamant's fortune. Mirabell already thinks of the money as his, and is unwilling to give up what he views as rightfully his own. Mirabell tells Mrs. Fainall: "...I have made you privy to my whole design and put it in your power to ruin or advance my fortune" (Congreve 774). Mirabell refers to his "fortune" or his luck, but the double-meaning of the word makes it clear how well aware Mirabell is of the degree to which his future happiness depends on Millamant's "fortune," and hence he schemes to get it with the full intention of gaining sole control of it. Mirabell is forced to manipulate the people and circumstances surrounding him to get what he wants. Harold Weber correctly insists: "Mirabell, for all his virtues, is quite as aggressive, quite as subtle in his ability to manipulate the forms of society..." (H. Weber 119). Desire for money turns Mirabell into a suave politician who orchestrates a series of deceptions and power plays to attain his ends.

The main plot of *The Way of the World* hinges on Mirabell's plot to acquire Millamant's money. Mirabell might claim that he is a "passionate lover," (Congreve 763) but we get more evidence of his interest in making Lady Wishfort "surrender the moiety of [Millamant's] fortune in her possession" than we do of his love for Millamant (Congreve 774). Even when he is with Millamant, Mirabell's first priority is still her fortune. Mrs. Fainall comes in soon after Mirabell agrees to Millamant's provisos and tells him that he has "neither time to talk nor stay" because Foible has told Mrs. Fainall that Mirabell's plan "is in a fair way to succeed" (Congreve 794). Upon receiving this message, Mirabell immediately leaves his mistress whom he has just been wooing to attend to his plan so that he may secure the money. Clearly, the fortune is on his mind more than his mistress is. Mirabell obviously knows his priorities, and manipulates

human relationships to gain a fortune. He marries Waitwell and Foible to each other not for their “own recreation” but for his “conveniency,” thereby exploiting Waitwell’s and Foible’s relationship (Congreve 778). Because Mirabell spends far more time orchestrating his plot than wooing his mistress, his actions throughout the play makes the reader wonder how much of his affection for Millamant is based on the fact that marriage to her would bring a fortune. Mirabell’s relationship with Millamant is partly based on his greed for her money, and hence he commodifies his relationship with Millamant to a certain degree because he judges Millamant’s worth by the size of her fortune which he works incessantly to get his hands on.

In comparison to relationships in other Restoration plays like Helena’s and Willmore’s in *The Rover*, the relationship between Mirabell and Millamant does seem more authentic. Millamant confesses that she loves Mirabell “violently,” (Congreve 794) and Mirabell admits that “for a discerning man, [he is] somewhat too passionate a lover, for [he] like[s] [Millamant] with all her faults” (Congreve 763). And yet, Mirabell does not marry Millamant without permission from Lady Wishfort because he would lose half of Millamant’s fortune if he does so. The relationship between Millamant and Mirabell is a loving and nurturing one, but admittedly to a lesser degree than in some Restoration plays, Millamant’s fortune is no small factor in attracting Mirabell to Millamant. If Millamant’s fortune had not been an important consideration, Mirabell would have spared himself the effort of plotting out his elaborate plan. But, he sets his elaborate scheme in motion to ensure that he can marry the woman he loves *and* get her full fortune. Millamant’s attractiveness is not lessened but is heightened by her fortune.

In Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, Willmore too swears eternal love to Helena only after hearing of her fortune. He might boast to Angellica that he "would not sell [himself]" (Behn 607), but Angellica is correct when she says "when a lady is proposed to you for a wife, you never ask how fair, discrete, or virtuous she is, but what's her fortune—which if but small, you cry, "She will not do my business" and basely leave her, though she languish for you" (Behn 608). Because Angellica frequently measures human relationships in financial terms, she knows what motivates men such as Willmore when they choose to marry. Angellica adroitly points out that "'twas [Helena's fortune] two hundred thousand crowns [Willmore] courted," and unfortunately for Helena, Angellica is right (Behn 625).

Willmore, initially unaware of Helena's fortune is content to flirt with her, but his attitude towards Helena undergoes an immediate change once he gains knowledge of the money, and it is at this point that Willmore truly wishes to be free of Angellica.

Willmore, a banished cavalier, is mindful of the fortunate change in circumstances that the money will bring about, and is loath to associate any more with a prostitute marriage to whom is unthinkable. He exults: "my Gypsy worth two thousand crowns! Oh, how I long to be with her. Pox, I knew she was of quality," indicating that he has wasted time that could have been better spent pursuing a fortune (Behn 626). Angellica might have money, and she might be generous with it, but Willmore knows that she will always retain full control over her wealth. With Helena, on the other hand, marriage will bring Willmore absolute control, and knowing the difference such control will bring in his lifestyle, it is a very astute decision on Willmore's part to choose marriage and Helena

over continuing his rakish lifestyle and consorting with beautiful but independent prostitutes.

Before he finds out about Helena's fortune, Willmore has been satisfied with making vows to Angellica (Behn 626). But as soon as he hears of the fortune, Willmore wishes that Angellica would "be angry enough to leave [him] and command [him] not to wait on her" so that he may, for the first time, devote his complete attention to the heiress (Behn 626). Helena only catches Willmore's attention when he hears of her fortune, and it is only after that point that Willmore whole heartedly gives Helena his attention. He laments that Angellica is detaining him since that would cause him to "miss [his] assignation with [his Gypsy]"; Helena's worth, like Millamant's, goes up primarily because she is an heiress (Behn 626). Like Millamant, Helena suddenly becomes a precious commodity that Willmore must gain through matrimony if he is to gain her fortune. Willmore calls their marriage a "bargain," and indeed it is one in which Willmore ends up with a good deal: a wife who is worth two hundred thousand crowns (Behn 642).

Marriages become little more than contracts between the rake and the people who are responsible for the fortunes of Restoration women. In *The Country Wife*, Pinchwife adequately sums up the bargain: "I must give Sparkish tomorrow five thousand pound to lie with my sister" (Wycherley 1045). Alithea's marriage to Sparkish, as evidenced by her brother's pecuniary attitude towards it, is based more on a financial contract between two men than on love between the bride and the groom, and this contract leaves little room for Alithea to voice her opinion. Ben Ross Schneider quotes P.F. Vernon that guardians "arrange marriages in the language of trade giving the practice the worst

possible connotation,” and Alithea herself understands the business-like nature of the relationship (B. Ross Schneider 52). She too sees it as a binding contract that she is obliged to fulfill regardless of her reservations. Alithea says: “The writings are drawn, sir, settlements made” (Wycherley 1052). Alithea never talks of loving Sparkish or being loved in return; instead she talks of settlements in which she is no more than a commodity that her brother is handing over to Sparkish. Marriages, then, were most often governed by the legal system rather than by love; the law, created by men for the protection and prosperity of men, gave the brides no opportunity to act against the men who controlled and dictated their loves, money, and choices.

None of the plays mentioned above take the reader into the actual married lives of the rake and his mistress. Although these plays leave off after the marriages have been finalized, there are other plays which take a look at the post-marriage years. Plays like *Marriage á la Mode*, *The Relapse*, and even a later play like George Farquhar’s *The Beaux’ Stratagem* (1707) all paint dismal pictures of the married state. The audience is not aware of how Helena’s, Harriet’s, or Millamant’s marriages fare but, if the above-mentioned plays are any indication, the future does not bode well for the wives.

Millamant, at least for her part, seems to be aware that problems may arise. She is also aware that she will have no legal grounds to assert herself, and hence she is more hesitant to enter into marriage. Millamant says: “Well, if Mirabell should not make a good husband, I am a lost thing, for I find I love him violently” (Congreve 794). Millamant, at this point, has no reason to doubt her future husband, but she knows how great her dependency on him will be once they are married. She is wise to at least consider that Mirabell might be false to her (he has been to Mrs. Fainall), and hence Millamant insists

on provisos that will give her some measure of independence. Robert Hume responds to this situation by noting: “worst of all, once married, a woman had almost no legal recourse against a husband who proved vicious, tyrannical, or unfaithful” (R. Hume *Rakish* 179).⁶¹ Millamant is aware of this reality, and knowing that she will have no recourse in law and will never regain her fortune, she aims at some measure of protection through the provisos, an early form of the pre-nuptial agreement.

The provisos, then, often take the form of private bargains that the heroines of the Restoration plays seek to make with their future husbands as a means of self-protection. In the plays, the proviso scene is a step through which wives try to barter a share of self-governance for themselves. Although legally her husband has all rights over her, her property, and any children she may have, provisos such as the famous one in *The Way of The World* are the heroine’s way of testing the rake to see how much leeway she can get from him once she is his wife. In this regard Jessica Munns remarks: “The new concern over marriage contracts and the position of women in marriage is also reflected in the many ‘proviso’ scenes in Restoration courtship and marriage comedies where the young couple work out their personal agreement over the distribution of power in the relationship” (J. Munns “Change” 144). Indeed Millamant is wise to propose her stipulations to Mirabell before the marriage; she is eager to let Mirabell know that she is

⁶¹ Liza Picard mentions that women had no recourse to divorce since “there was none” (L. Picard 231). However, she mentions: “For the rich and desperate, whose family line faces extinction when a bride produces no heir, there was a remedy. They could apply to Parliament for a private Act to dissolve the marriage” (L. Picard 231). This was, of course, not to the bride’s advantage since she now would not be entitled to any aid from her husband and also would not get any of her own property back. Hume and Picard both underscore how dependent women were on their husbands and why provisos took such significance before marriages. Thus, most Restoration heroines married to unreformed rakes were potentially facing dire futures.

interested in maintaining some measure of independence even though it is not provided for by law. For Millamant:

under the banter there is a sharp edge of legal and psychological fact. Millamant's lament for her "dear Liberty" and her determination never to marry 'unless I am first made sure of my Will and pleasure' are serious matters indeed to women in an audience which lived under the marriage laws of 1700 (R. Hume "Marital" 252)

Though not legally binding, the provisos represent a contract made between a husband and a wife; it is a business relationship wherein a wife can avert a total loss of agency. In return for her property, the husband grants the wife a voice in her own affairs. In lieu of a written legal contract, the provisos were, then, a verbal contract which allowed the wives of Restoration rakes some semblance of autonomy and protection after their fortunes and power had been stripped from them.

Millamant in *The Way of the World* is a strong, self-reliant woman, and she lays out her stipulations in very clear terms before the marriage so that Mirabell may know exactly what she expects from him once he is her husband. She tells Mirabell: "My dear liberty, shall I leave thee? My faithful solitude, my darling contemplation, must I bid you then adieu?...I can't do it. 'Tis more than impossible" (Congreve 793). Millamant wants Mirabell to know that she intends to maintain the independence she had as an unmarried woman even after she marries Mirabell. She does not request her future husband to grant her requests. Instead, Millamant tells Mirabell what she requires after the wedding fully expecting him to agree to her conditions.

In many cases, women in Restoration literature were commodities that were handed over, along with their fortunes, to the rakes who were interested in wooing them once they had learned that they were heiresses. Often the rakes' interest in wooing these

heiresses increased after they had learned of the fortune. These marriages were hence often based more on financial gain for the husbands than on love. The rakish husbands thus effectively commodified their relationships with their wives by measuring the value of their wives according to the fortunes they would bring. In this respect, the babus were no different from the rakes since the babus too primarily married for money. Even more than the rakes, the babus commodified their wives by valuing them by the largeness of the dowries the wives would bring.

Babu literature reflects the real position of most women within nineteenth-century Indian society and neglects much of their plight. As wives had no voice in their marriages or lives, they find very little voice in the tales written about their husbands. While heroines in the Restoration find great prominence in the Restoration plays as they flirt with their future husbands, attend theaters and walk in park, and make provisions before their marriage, wives in babu literature find very little representation in texts that mainly deal with their husbands. The “unquestioned muting of the subaltern woman” is a strong feature of literature on the babus (Spivak 91). Many texts of babu literature mention the babu’s wife only in passing, emphasizing only the dowry she brings; otherwise, wives are generally mentioned very briefly towards the end of the tales when the wives are lamenting their fates. Rochona Majumdar notes: “the incursion of money particularly affected the status of women. As daughter and bride [women in nineteenth century Bengal] were reduced into a mere conduit for cash flow and violated the imagination that saw her as the harbinger of harmony into the family unit” (Rochona Majumdar 186). It is, then, not surprising that such women, whose value was only measured by the cash they could bring, found no place in the literature; they had virtually no status in Bengali

society, and hence found none in babu literature. Writers of the babus' tales, while condemning the manner in which these wives were treated, perpetuated what they condemned by suppressing the wives' voices. Oppression and neglect deprived the wives of the opportunity to become "harbingers of happiness," and their lonely, eventless, and tedious lives find little mention in fictions of the period (Rochona Majumdar 186).

Nobo Babu Bilash, for example, only mentions the wife when the babu comes to demand the wife's jewelry so that he can take it to his prostitute-mistress, and also briefly mentions her lamentations when her husband goes to jail because of debts. The wife laments: "my parents arranged this match for me. I have stayed alone after my marriage, and my husband has not paid me any attention. I have had almost no relations with him. I know he is a babu" (B. Bandopadhyay 53). *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* gives even less attention to Motilal's wife, and when Motilal returns to his wife, Thakur writes of Motilal's repentance at having been a bad husband and we hear nothing of the way his wife feels about Motilal's reformation. In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* Tekchand Thakur goes into some detail about arranged marriages and the considerations that often drove the grooms' fathers, making clear the manner in which the wives became the means for bringing enormous dowries to the grooms' families.

Restoration women, though not empowered in any real sense, still enjoyed more freedom than the babus' wives did. Yet, as we shall see, it was this helpless situation that eventually forced some wives of some babus' to question their fates, and seek to liberate themselves from the abuse their babu-husbands handed out to their ill-fated wives. The babus' wives did not have any legal rights, but their case was worse because the babus' wives were neither allowed to make any provisos, nor were they allowed to choose and

test their husbands as some heroines of the Restoration could. Marriages in nineteenth-century Calcutta were negotiated by the groom's and bride's fathers, and love marriages of the Restoration kind were unheard of. Indeed, the wedding ceremony was often the first time when the husband and wife actually met.⁶² They had no opportunity to familiarize themselves with each other or test whether they were compatible in any way. Pradip Sinha adds: "but as etiquette forbade [the groom] to see the girl before the wedding, [the groom's] intimate friends would be deputed for the purpose. For the girl, to claim a reciprocal liberty was, of course, virtually inconceivable as yet, except among the Brahmos" (P. Sinha "Calcutta" 39).⁶³ In Tekchand Thakur's *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, the text does not mention that Motilal sent friends who could give him a report of the girl he was about to marry. That text also does not make it clear whether even Motilal's father had seen the girl who was to become Motilal's future wife. Meeting the bride and

⁶² Judith Walsh quotes from Nagendrabala Dasi, a poet born in 1878, who expressed her dissatisfactions with her lot through poetry. Walsh writes: "[In 'An Urgent Prayer' she] questioned how husbands and wives were chosen for each other. 'Shouldn't someone see once,' she wrote, 'the person on whom a weak woman's whole happiness, hope and expectations will depend for her entire life?' In asking that couples be allowed to select their own mates, Nagendrabala emphasized the difficulty of one person choosing for another: The bride's elders may consider a groom suitable and give her to him, but she may not like him—unknown to all, her heart begins to be reduced to ashes. That's why I say each person's taste is different. Hearts, too, are not of one kind. Another person can not in any way at all understand your own heart as you can. Therefore the couples themselves should be entrusted with the responsibility of testing, before marriage, whether or not each of them can become the object of the other's love" (J. Walsh 145). Of course even though Nagendrabala achieved some moderate success as a poet, her advice on this issue was not taken.

⁶³ The Brahmo Samaj was established during the Bengal Renaissance in 1828. The noted social reformer, Raja Rammohun Roy, was one of its founders. An offshoot of the Hindu religion, it is more progressive, and its members were responsible for far-reaching social reforms, such as the abolition of the caste and dowry system. Being more progressive, they also fought for the emancipation of women, and hence women belonging to Brahmo families had certain rights within their families and religious life that Hindu women did not.

enquiring after her education and manners were not important in this monetary transaction that was given the name of a marriage. As with Restoration women, the size of her dowry was often the main factor that decided how much a Bengali bride was worth.

Not being from a Brahmo family but from a conservative Hindu one, Motilal's wife, of course, had no choice but to marry the man who had been chosen for her. In his travelogue, *The Stranger in India, or Three Years in Calcutta*, George Johnson was surprised because "the present system of Hindoo marriage...does not admit of an interview between the bride and the bridegroom before the wedding night," but such was the common practice in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta, and a departure from it would not only have shocked society at large, but also the bride and the groom themselves (G. Johnson 229). Not knowing what his bride looked like, not to mention what her tastes and interests were, the groom was content to marry her just for her dowry. Their relationship was not based on love; it was based on an exchange of cash, and hence a meeting before the wedding was not required.

Motilal, the future babu in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, is married off at sixteen to a girl even younger than himself. The marriage takes the usual form where the fathers negotiate it, and the bride and groom do not meet till the wedding ceremony. As in arranged marriages of this sort, Motilal's father could have had his pick of quite a few girls since he had several offers made for his worthless son. Motilal's father mentions that Haridas, Shyamacharan, Ramhari and Madhab were among just a few who were desirous of making a match for their daughters with Motilal. The text makes it clear that Motilal is not capable of being a loving, compassionate, and caring husband. He has already

attempted a rape, and after his marriage maintains no relations with his wife. Motilal's wife later laments to her mother-in-law: "I must have sinned since my birth. I was given in marriage to my husband, but I never see his face. He never turns to look at me" (T. Thakur 130). Yet, the girls' fathers are so desirous to get rid of their daughters that they will effectively force their daughters into a potentially dangerous and altogether dehumanizing situation. Fathers in colonial nineteenth-century Calcutta frequently considered their unmarried daughters as burdens at whose weddings they would have to spend lavishly.⁶⁴ The fathers aimed to find a husband from a family with a similar background and caste and dispose their daughters. It is, then, not surprising that the husband shows no care towards the wife when she is such an object of indifference to her own father.

In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, Motilal's father, true to form, chooses the girl who will bring the largest dowry. While discussing the match with relatives and friends, Beni, the most practical, sober, respectable, and intelligent of his relatives gives Motilal's father this advice:

When arranging marriages, should you only focus on how much money may be gained? First, one should find a respectable family, then it is one's duty to find a suitable girl, and only then the profit that can be made from

⁶⁴ There are many documented cases where daughters who were aware that they might become burdens on their father committed suicide. Rochona Majumdar discusses fourteen-year-old Snehalata Mukhopadhyay's suicide. Her marriage had been fixed to a law graduate after her father had agreed to pay two thousand rupees, a vast sum during the time which would put him in dire financial straits. Snehalata, Majumdar notes, had always told her parents that they would never have to spend any money on her wedding, and on January 30 1914, she poured kerosene on herself and set herself on fire. Snehalata's tragic death received a lot of attention in the Bengali press. Majumdar mentions that details of her family, her life, and her death were published in most well-known periodicals of the time in Bengal. Immediately after Snehalata, two more girls killed themselves for the same reason and the report of three deaths in quick succession "intensified the mood of reformist critique" (Rochona Majumdar 115).

a marriage should be considered. If a profit can be made after these considerations have been met, fine. If not, then one should forget about the profit (T. Thakur 53).

Beni further cautions that Madhab, with whose daughter the marriage has been arranged, may be a rich man but is not a decent man with good manners. Instead, Beni recommends Ramhari who, though not a rich man, has paid great care to the upbringing of his daughters and who has dutiful, well-mannered, and well-bred girls (T. Thakur 53). Yet, Beni's words are not only rejected by Motilal's father, but also by their other relatives, who value money over the respectability of the prospective bride. One of them says: "One must be respectful of wealth. What would be the advantage in forming relations with a poor man? Will such a relationship fill our stomachs? (T. Thakur 54). The relatives collectively voice the opinion that the making of money must not be slighted, and that the bride who brings the greatest fortune is the most valuable (T. Thakur 54).

Having made a fortune, the babus' fathers could not look beyond considerations of money and hence allowed pecuniary decisions to over-rule all other factors in making such important choices. Of Motilal's father, Thakur writes: "Babu Ram Babu was constantly occupied with thoughts of how to increase his fortune," and hence it is not surprising that financial considerations override all others when there is an opportunity for increasing wealth through Motilal's marriage (Thakur 7). Such families were so obsessed with the thought of increasing their wealth that they were blind to good advice even when it was offered. Often being the richest among their relatives, the babus' fathers were accustomed to flattering sycophants who agreed with every decision they made. Thakur writes of Motilal's father's friends: "Just as flies swarm around sweets, flatterers swarm around a rich man" (T. Thakur 7). These false friends, drawn by the lure of money,

advised for its increase, and hence these fathers were ignorantly and arrogantly convinced that they were guided by the right set of priorities when making marriage plans for their sons.

The babus' wives were even more helpless than the heroines of the Restoration because they had no voice in their marriages and they did not have the advantage of wresting some measure of self-control through provisos. Robert Hume mentions that in seventeenth-century England divorces were "available through parliamentary decree" but such decrees were not available in nineteenth-century Bengal (R. Hume *Rakish* 180). In the case of the babu's wife, he did not even have to make an effort to pretend to love his future wife. Since the babus' fathers made all the negotiations, the babus had to make much less of an effort to get their dowries than the Restoration rakes who often had no parents and hence had to act on their own. All the babu had to do was hope that his father was a savvy businessman who would make the best deal for him, and he was right to put his faith in his father. In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, Motilal's wife never sees him till they are married, and once he gets her fortune his relationship with her ends till he reforms. Even though legally they did not hold much more of an advantageous position, the Restoration heroines were at least given the chance to display their beauty and wit to the rakes in an effort to win over their hearts, and they were allowed the provisos of the contract scenes. Their future husbands, the Restoration rakes, professed love for them, at least implying that there was more than money involved in the relationship between them. For the Bengali women, there was no pretence of even the slightest attachment, there was no legal protection, and there was no option but to submit to the business arrangement.

In Restoration as well as babu literature fortunes and dowries were of paramount importance in making matches, and marriages were primarily business contracts. Women in Restoration literature made an effort to wring some measure of self-governance through provisos, but such a luxury was not afforded to women in colonial Bengal. Writers in both cultures condemned the manner in which money was made the primary deciding factor in marriages, and attempted to illuminate the multiple problems that such a pecuniary reduction of human relationships entailed, especially for the powerless and voiceless wives who were valued according to the fortunes they would bring their husbands. In both cases, the Western and Eastern libertines commodified their relationships with their wives by marrying them for their fortunes.

There were, however, some differences between the heroines of the Restoration period and the babus' wives in nineteenth-century Calcutta. While the heroines of Restoration comedies guaranteed themselves some measure of independence by laying out their conditions before marriage, the babus' wives entered into unhappy marriages without the option of making provisions. Restoration heroines, hence, were self-reliant before their marriages and made it clear that they wanted control over their lives before their marriages. In the case of the babus' wives, however, they entered into unhappy marriages, and, as we shall see in following sections, it was only their suffering at the hands of their babu-husbands that made some of these wives break away from their husband and make an effort to be self-reliant. The babus' ill-treatment of their wives was, then, ironically, beneficial to the babus' wives in some respect because the mistreatment allowed the wives' to find their voices and question their husbands' ill treatment of them.

Divisive Liberties: the Plight of the Libertine's Wives

The rakes' and babus' wives deserve special consideration because they were the persons most affected by the lifestyles their husbands chose to pursue. The life of a libertine's wife was often unbearable due to the exploitation, humiliation, and neglect she had to face. To make matters worse, in addition to their husband's philandering ways, wives in both Restoration literature and babu literature were threatened with violence, and wives in colonial Bengal found no support or sympathy from other women such as mothers-in-law who instead lent their support to their erring sons. Indeed, Tapan Raychaudhuri points out that "Bengali nursery rhymes are full of references to the cruelty the brides suffered at the hands of the mother-in-law and sisters-in-law (T. Raychaudhuri *Perceptions* 71). The Western and Eastern libertines knew of their wives' complete reliance on them, and hence abused, neglected, and harassed their wives, again illustrating the extremely exploitative nature of their relationship with women. But, rakes' and babus' exploitative activities that were meant to oppress their wives by taking advantage of the wives, ultimately, in some cases, proved helpful for the wives because it liberated them from the oppressions that they were subjected to as wives. Unintentionally, the rakes' and the babus' thus became responsible for causing their wives to break away from them, and activities that were meant to victimize and harass their wives in the end empowered their wives.

Many Restoration plays end when a successful courtship comes to a closure through marriage but does not show what happens after the marriage. When the plays do focus on marriages, most Restoration comedies do not portray this union as a pleasant and unbreakable bond. The marriages in Dryden's *Marriage à la Mode*, Wycherley's *The*

Country Wife, Otway's *The Atheist*, Southerne's *The Wives Excuse*, Vanbrugh's *The Relapse; or Virtue in Danger*, Congreve's *The Way of the World*, and even later plays like Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem* are dysfunctional and unsatisfactory for both parties, but especially for the harried wives. Because the wives are largely dependent on their husbands financially, physically, and emotionally, the utter disregard the husbands' display towards them renders their positions unbearable. The wives' fates stand testimony to the fact that rakes do not often reform, and that marriage, already a precarious state for women who did not have any legal rights, becomes a potentially hazardous undertaking for wives when their husbands are manipulative libertines. The wife can only find release if she is strong and can find ways to liberate herself from her husband's control.

Wycherley's Margery Pinchwife in *The Country Wife* is a case in point. Pinchwife is so insecure about Margery that he is unable to make any emotional connection with her. There had been no courtship to enable the future husband and wife to get to know each other as Margery had been given to Pinchwife by her parents without asking her opinion of the match. Even more importantly, Pinchwife had married Margery for dubious reasons, never loving or cherishing her. She is in "a loveless marriage in which [she] is a sexual object whose services are accessible on demand and free of charge" (B.A. Kachur 150). Unlike many of the wives in Restoration comedies, Margery has no voice in choosing her husband, and in this instance she closely resembles the babus' wives. Pinchwife hardly ever calls Margery by any terms of endearment, primarily referring to her as "a fool" (Wycherley 1049), "Mrs. Minx" (1050), "baggage" (1074), and "tormenting fiend" (1077). Horner, who Margery wants as her second husband, too is distant on an emotional level, and he furthermore does not wish to form an emotional

connection with Margery, never having had any intentions of marrying her.

(Wycherley1097). Horner remains “the unconverted rake, whose great sexual energy remains uncontained,” and it is Margery’s misfortune that both men she finds herself involved with remain emotionally stunted and only wish to take sexual advantage of her (Canfield *Tricksters* 127). Margery is looking for an actual relationship. She says to Pinchwife: “[the parson] shall marry me to Mr. Horner, for now I believe you have enough of me” (Wycherley1098). She realizes that her husband has no attachment to her and her relationship with him does not amount to much; but she also fails to understand that neither does she have a relationship with Horner who had mainly been interested in enjoying himself and her and making Pinchwife jealous.

Neither her insecure husband nor the aloof rake-lover is capable of meeting Margery’s needs fully. Pinchwife can only supply material necessities like a house, food, and clothing. Besides material security, Pinchwife can only offer her violence. He threatens to “write whore with this penknife in [her] face” and says he “will stab out those eyes that cause [his] mischief,” and Margery can expect more of such threats and potential actions as long as she remains in his power (Wycherley1076). Horner, as a superficial lover, can project the notion of stability. The false impression of stability leads Margery to believe that Horner will be a constant and steady lover who values her as a person, but she is mistaken. Indeed, as Gerald Weales notes, Horner’s “seductions become merely mechanical. He is more like a chain smoker than a great lover” (G. Weales xii). Horner offers, in the end, even less stability than Pinchwife does, and both her involvements remain truly tumultuous throughout the play. With regard to becoming a husband Horner says, “And I, alas, can’t be one” seemingly referring to his impotence

(Wycherley1100). But indeed Horner cannot be a husband because he is unwilling to make the emotional adjustments that marriage would require. He never was interested in Margery for herself; to Horner, Margery was no more than a pawn in the games he played with Pinchwife, and Margery's failure to understand this fact dooms her by making her fall in love with a manipulative rake.

In comparison to her contemporaries, Margery begins as a much more naturally innocent character who takes situations and people at face value, but she does not retain her simplicity for long. Donald Bruce writes: "It is precisely because [Pinchwife] thinks her a fool, not because he thinks her inherently chaste, that he marries her, confident that she will never have the cleverness to deceive him" (D. Bruce 24). Yet by the end of the play, Margery has gleaned an understanding of some of the tricks of the town, learning to dissimulate when she puts her sister-in-law's name on the love letter that she writes for Horner and fabricating plausible excuses for why she had supposedly written it for Alithea, giving evidence that she has lost some of the naiveté which she had possessed at the beginning of the play. The society she is in is forcing her to tell lies claiming that she does not love Horner but said so to make her husband jealous: "Since you'll have me tell more lies—Yes, indeed bud" (Wycherley1100). Unfortunately for Pinchwife, Margery is not as much of a fool as he would wish, and neither does she value chastity as highly as Pinchwife supposes.

It is in this loss of innocence that Margery's liberation may ultimately lie. She begins to yearn for London life and the frivolities it offers, and is not averse to the fancy clothing and dancing that would expose her to men and attract them to her:

Nay, I confess I was quiet enough till my husband told me what pure lives the London ladies live abroad, with their dancing, meetings, and

junketings, and dressed every day in their best gowns, and I warrant you, play at ninepins every day of the week, so they do (Wycherley1059).

For Margery, there are only two paths that she can take. She can either suffer nobly under Pinchwife, or she can take Lady Fidget's path. If she does take Lady Fidget's path, Margery can look forward to a liberating sexual life that she will never have with Pinchwife. Pinchwife, knowing that his wife has now learned some of London's ways, will only increase his control over her, but the more Pinchwife seeks to subdue her, the more Margery's propensity to seek out illicit pleasures will increase as evidence by her slyness at writing a love letter to Horner and then blaming it on Alithea when Pinchwife forces Margery to write a letter that she does not wish to write. The dance of cuckolds at the end of the play indicates that Margery may not, in spite of her initial disappointment, remain the "country wife," and that there may be a comparatively livelier and uninhibited life in store for her. If Margery takes Lady Fidget's path and finds herself lovers, she can anticipate finding release from her oppressive life with Pinchwife.

John Vanbrugh's Amanda in *The Relapse; or Virtue in Danger* is another wife caught in a disappointing marriage, but she presents a different problem and offers quite a different solution from Margery to illustrate how to conduct oneself with dignity when married to an unfit husband. Although her husband grossly abuses her faith in him, Amanda remains an idealist who sets high standards of fidelity, virtue, and honor for herself, and she is a strong and dignified woman who is able to live up to her standards despite the temptations that Worthy places in her path, and despite the pain her cheating husband causes her. It is indeed as Helga Drougge maintains: "her virtue, which is her sexual identity, is only constituted by being under attack. How indeed can virtue come

into being and define itself without temptation?” (H. Drougge 512). Amanda stands as testimony to the fact that while it is indeed difficult to resist temptations, success can be attained even in a corrupt world if one remains strong, and has dignity and self-discipline. By the end of the play, not only has Amanda remained faithful to her philandering husband but also has converted the rake Worthy who has incessantly sought to exploit and debauch her. Worthy says: “Sure there is divinity about her/ And sh’as dispensed some portion on’t to me./ For what but now was the wild flame of love,/ Or (to dissect that specious term)/ The vile, the gross desires of flesh and blood,/ Is in a moment turned to adoration” (Vanbrugh 1538). Amanda is not only a true wife who believes in her marriage so sincerely that she will not stray to avenge a faithless rakish husband who swears fidelity to her even while pursuing her cousin, but she is one whose unblemished way of life changes those who previously followed a path much like the one her husband travels. Donald Bruce is correct when he writes: “Amanda is no sexual suffragette. She does not think that because her husband is an adulterer she should herself solicit a like ugly name. She is not so much her husband’s creature that her virtue depends on his action” (D. Bruce 84). Instead, Amanda is able to exert a much-needed calming influence on Worthy, a repentant rake and a danger to other men’s wives. She is able to show him the error of his ways, and hence in a small but significant way Amanda makes a beginning towards bettering and converting those members of London’s fashionable world whose presence in London made it a perilous city for innocent and honest women.

Amanda possesses all the qualities that her rakish husband does not. She is calm, dignified, possesses self-control, and is virtuous. However, in spite of her virtue, she suffers when her husband’s infidelity is proved to her and she realizes that her fears while

in the country were all true and she was right in being “uneasy at [Loveless’s] going to stay so long in town” (Vanbrugh 1482). Her husband is incapable of practicing the fidelity that he swears. Loveless can boast: “the rock of reason now supports my love,/ On which it stands so fixed,/ That the rudest hurricane of wild desire/ Would, like the breath of a soft slumbering babe, Pass by and never shake it,” but he falls to chasing Berinthia as soon as he sets eyes on her (Vanbrugh 1482). Yet, Amanda’s reward lies in the knowledge that she has not compromised herself and her ideals when faced with acute temptations. This knowledge is worth more to her than any momentary pleasures that may be gained from straying from the path of virtue. Indeed, as Bruce insightfully writes: “her honour is not a relative thing, but absolute to her self-respect. She will not in mere spitefulness derange her own emotional integrity” (D. Bruce 84). Unlike the rake who values momentary pleasures from superficially satisfying affairs that add to a lifetime of excitement more than making strong emotional connections with his wife, Amanda proves how different and superior she and her ideals are from her rakish husband and her slutish cousin. She can say “My love, my duty, and my virtue are such faithful guards I need not fear my heart should e’er betray me” with full confidence because she knows herself well. Unlike Loveless who finds validation in the raucous company of others similar to himself who will flatter him and share his ribald pleasures with him, Amanda finds validation and strength in her quietude and her fidelity to her morals and ideals.

Because of her ability to eschew compromising influences, Amanda proves herself far more independent than Loveless and Berinthia. Amanda does not give in to the fashionable sexual charades practiced in the city, as they do. She is not the sort of London lady who “(with the expense of a few coquette glances) lead[s] twenty fools about in a

string for two or three years together” (Vanbrugh1499). Since debauched coquetry is contrary to her morals, Amanda refrains successfully from becoming the sophisticated London lady with a lover. She sets herself apart from those surrounding her, and puts herself above and beyond any reproach or guilt. Not only does she win over Worthy but, in the process she displays a stronger, disciplined will which coquettish women such as Berinthia do not possess. Unlike Berinthia or Belinda in *The Man of Mode*, Amanda is successful in defending herself from superficial and debilitating relationships with rakes who offer no emotional attachment or stability. Amanda says: “There still is terror in the operation” when Worthy hints at his desire to have an affair with her because she knows that far from being satisfactory in any way, an affair with Worthy will inevitably bring various complications and compromises, and her honest, self-sufficient nature will not allow that to occur. Loveless knows her character well and is right when he confidently boasts that he “may dare trust [his wife]” (Vanbrugh1519). Unlike the rake, who can only define himself in contrast to those whom he has cuckolded or in comparison with others who have had experiences similar to his, Amanda does not generate her sense of self from a similar kind of validation from society. She does not need to give in to temptations to prove herself a *bona fide* city woman; she is far more comfortable in her peaceful, uncomplicated, and fulfilling country life.

In the end, however, she remains wife to a rake whom she passionately loves but who does not value her enough to be faithful to her. Amanda utters no words of reproach to Loveless when she learns of Loveless’s affair. But she knows how little Loveless means it when he boasts that he is “too fond of [his] own wife to have the least inclination to [Foppington’s]when Foppington tells Loveless that Foppington will not

mind if Loveless “has a mind to try [Loveless’s] fortune” with Foppington’s wife (Vanbrugh1540). At the beginning of the play Amanda says: “I know the weak defence of nature; I know you are a man—and I—a wife” and at the end of the play, even though she has shown herself a much stronger and compelling character than her despicable rake-husband, she has to remain married to a rake who has confirmed himself unworthy of her (Vanbrugh1482). Amanda is a wife, and no matter how superior and deserving of respect she may be, she exists in a society that deprives her of any means of redressing her wrongs and receiving her just rewards. Her rake-husband, the only man she cares for and on whose actions her peace depends, remains unconverted and unaware of her real worth, ignorant of her remarkable nature because of his cheap distractions. But, at the end of the play, Amanda remains a far more attractive, stronger, admirable, and compelling character than any of the others in the play. She finds the strength to prevent her husband’s philandering ways to drag her down to his level by indulging in extramarital affairs, and remains convinced of the superiority of her way of life.

A final case of a harried wife is that of Mrs. Fainall in Congreve’s *The Way of the World*. Unlike Margery who may look forward to a more liberating life, or Amanda who is a strong, self-sufficient woman, Mrs. Fainall remains a weak wife who does not find freedom in the end. Cast off by her lover, Mirabell, because of a suspected pregnancy, Mrs. Fainall was married off to a vicious rake whose only aim in marrying her was to secure her fortune. Mirabell’s decision to rid himself of Mrs. Fainall was motivated by a selfish desire to primarily protect himself, and only supposedly to protect her. Mirabell is indeed “the master of a cool emotional self-defense. Mrs. Fainall’s ‘Why did you make me marry this man?’ hangs over the rest of the play” (E. Burns 206). If Mirabell had truly

cared for Mrs. Fainall and not just for his reputation, he would not have cast her off on the brutal rake that her husband Fainall is. Mirabell finds Mrs. Fainall unfitting to be his wife, but finds himself untroubled at taking sexual liberties with her knowing that he will find her a husband when he is finished with her. That Mirabell does not think highly of Fainall becomes obvious when he says: "I knew Fainall to be a man of lavish morals, an interested and professing friend, a false and designing lover...A better man ought not to have been sacrificed to the occasion; a worse had not answered to the purpose" (Congreve 774). Yet "to save the idol reputation," Mirabell cunningly foists off his cast-off lover on a man he knows will prove unworthy of her (Congreve 774). That Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall had doubts regarding the kind of husband that Fainall would prove to be is further evident from the fact that Mrs. Fainall had entrusted her money to Mirabell for safekeeping. Mrs. Fainall's involvement with Mirabell at a point before his reformation ultimately leads to her bondage through marriage to another, more vicious, rake. In both instances, the rakes only think of themselves and not of her. Mirabell is motivated in his actions by a desire to defend his interests, and her husband is solely motivated by pecuniary greed.

Mrs. Fainall ultimately does not possess the power to save herself. Legally, she possesses no rights, and she has to depend on Mirabell to save her fortune, which he does. Yet, Mirabell's motive in protecting Mrs. Fainall's money does not lay solely in sheltering her. Mirabell plays the part of a friendly ex-lover because it affords him great opportunities to undercut Fainall and frustrate his schemes against Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall. The protection of Mrs. Fainall's fortunes allows Mirabell to show his opponent that not only is he a cleverer man of the world, but that Mrs. Fainall trusts, depends, and

altogether prefers Mirabell more than she does her husband. Mirabell's gesture is his way of communicating to Fainall that Mrs. Fainall might indeed be his wife, but Mirabell controls her fortune which is what Fainall longs for most. Thus even through a supposedly selfless act like guarding her money, Mirabell seeks to emphasize his superiority, and he continues to exploit Mrs. Fainall to serve his own ends. Just as he has used her to satisfy his sexual needs during their affair, Mirabell now uses her reliance on him to prove his mental dexterity and mastery of financial and legal matters.

Mrs. Fainall, like Margery and Amanda, remains bound to a boorish, vicious husband. Like Margery's husband, Fainall is a dangerous and spiteful man bent on lashing out at his wife. Fainall exits the play threatening to kill her: "I'll be revenged" (Congreve 808). The vindictive and brutal nature that Fainall has exhibited in the play leaves no doubt that he will seize every means possible to avenge his defeats. Mrs. Fainall, after all, is still legally his wife, and his control of her, despite Mirabell's efforts, will always be limitless. In addition to losing control of Mrs. Fainall's money, Fainall is now also aware of her affair with Mirabell, and these two factors will make him an even more of a brutish, cruel, controlling, and aggressive husband. In spite of this fact, Mirabell can glibly offer to "contribute all that in [him] lies to a reunion" (Congreve 809). Mirabell can now anticipate a happy and fulfilling marriage with a witty and beautiful wife; he can now look forward to total control of Millamant's fortune, and can only spare a passing thought to Mrs. Fainall's dire future.

Wives in nineteenth-century colonial Bengal fared even worse than their counterparts in Restoration England. However, in some cases, it was this suffering that was ultimately responsible for prompting harried wives in nineteenth century Bengal to

break away from their babu-husbands and look for better lives. Possessing even fewer rights, liberties, and outlets for enjoyment, they were completely dependent on their husbands who had absolute power over their lives. Women's lives in nineteenth-century colonial Bengal were indeed difficult even when they had their husband's love and support. Often married off as early as ten, they were forced to leave their fathers' houses and live among strangers. Tanika Sarkar writes: "The loss of the natal home at childhood has been described in all nineteenth-century women's writings as a traumatic experience, uprooting a child from the security of her own home and exiling her forever to the mercy and control of total strangers" (T. Sarkar 119).⁶⁵ Married life was indeed very trying. Sarkar, for example, quotes from *Amar Jiban (My Life)* written by Rashsundari Debi, the first autobiography by a Bengali woman: "My day would begin at dawn and I worked till two at night...I was fourteen years old" (95). Despite the laborious work and the difficult position that a wife maintained throughout the day, a husband could potentially provide his wife with solace and a sense of consolation if he provided her with emotional support, attention, and appreciation. The babus' wives did not receive such privileges. Babu literature represents the babus as being emotionally distant from their wives and as uncaring husbands who did not give any thought to the welfare of their wives. Motilal, for instance, initially maintains only a passing acquaintance with his wife. It is hence not surprising that even though the wives are not given a prominent voice in this literature,

⁶⁵ In *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism*, Sarkar discusses some of the important Hindu traditions that have influenced conceptions of Hindu wife and motherhood. It charts the development of cultural nationalism in nineteenth-century colonial Bengal and the contributions made to it by the Hindu middle and upper classes. Sarkar's book throws light on the condition of Bengali women during the time. Particularly interesting are the third and eighth chapters which examine the first autobiography written by a Bengali woman and the portrayal of women in contemporary literature.

when they are occasionally mentioned they are often portrayed as exploited victims lamenting their fates.

The babus who are represented in the texts with which this study concerns itself are represented as being boorish husbands with little concern for their wives. They are often drunk, they take drugs, they stay away from their wives at night, they maintain prostitute-mistresses who are brought the wife's jewels as in *Nobo Babu Bilash*, and the babus' take their control over their wives for granted. All of the aforementioned activities, of course, did not bring the babus' wives any pleasure. Yet, in the end, for some of the babus' wives, it was the mistreatment that opened their eyes to the reality of their situations. Some of the wives realized that their husbands were unfit, and this realization, unthinkable to generations of women before the babus' wife, brought a liberating effect, no matter how temporary, in the lives of some of the babus' wives.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Ekei ki Bole Sobhota?* or *Is this Civilization?* (1860) captures the fate of such a wife married to Nobo, a drunk, unfeeling, and unconcerned Young Bengal babu. Harakamini, Nobo's wife, makes an appearance only in the last act of the three-act play. Initially she is shown playing cards with her sisters-in-law but when she hears her mother-in-law calling she throws down the cards and busies herself in making her husband's bed. In this regard, Meredith Borthwick quotes from J.C. Gangooly's *Life and Religion of the Hindus* and she writes that the Bengali woman "would spend all her time in her room, speaking only to a few of her own sex, taking meals in a solitary corner of the kitchen, consuming time in telling or hearing nonsensical stories, and worshipping idols," and the lives of the women in this play are led precisely

in this extremely stultifying fashion (M. Borthwick 35).⁶⁶ After her mother-in-law rebukes her for wasting her time with diversions, Harakamini witnesses her husband coming home drunk, shouting for *khemtawalis* to be brought into their bedroom, and sees her mother-in-law catering to her debauched son.⁶⁷ Taking a few moments from her duties earns Harakamini the title of being the “queen of the idle” from her mother-in-law who expects much from her while the worthless babu-son receives nothing but indulgence (M. Dutt 108).⁶⁸

Nobo’s mother ignores her son’s troubling behavior in the hope that she will not exacerbate it. She instructs her daughter: “Prasanna, go call the *khemtawali* and bring her quickly” and later says: ““Oh what a calamity! Has someone poisoned my baby boy?” (M.Dutt 107). The mother-in-law does not acknowledge the fact that her grown-up son has come home drunk since that would place the blame on Nobo. Instead she chooses to lament that he has been poisoned since that absolves Nobo of any blame. The mother-in-law is even willing to allow the *khemtawali* into his room so that he will stop making a ruckus. Nobo himself maintains no relation with Harakamini. In the play, he never

⁶⁶ Drawing from women’s diaries, biographies, autobiographies and newspaper accounts, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal 1849-1905* by Meredith Borthwick focuses on issues such as sati, child marriage, and education for female children. Borthwick examines the manner in which social reforms initiated by British and Bengali reformists changed, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively, the lives of nineteenth-century Bengali women. The *bhadramahila*, or the wives of Western-educated Bengali men are the focus of this extensively researched work.

⁶⁷ For more on *khemtawalis* and their involvement with the babus, see entertainment section in Chapter III, *Wayward Sons: the Search for Self Outside of Tradition*

⁶⁸ The wife often was no more than a servant. Tanika Sarkar writes: “Visits to the parental home were a rare pleasure, dependent upon the whim of the new authorities. They were mostly withheld: the wife soon became the source of the hardest domestic labour within the new household and her absence was intolerable. The wife who spends a large slice of her time with her own parents is a woman who deprives her own masters of valuable labour time” (T. Sarkar 87).

directly speaks to her. His world is chaotic and he brings only aspects of that chaos into hers. Mahesh Chandra Deb writes in *Awakening of Bengal in Early Nineteenth Century* of relationships between babus like Nobo and wives like Harakamini: “Notwithstanding all their kind attention, their pious and dutiful conduct, their submissive behaviour towards their husbands they frequently meet with severe scoldings and are even sometimes cruelly punished from ungrounded jealousy or tyrannical whim” (G. Chattopadhyay 93). Harakamini’s punishment and humiliation are complete when Nobo returns to their bedroom calling for the *khemtawali* and breaking the sanctity of the marital space that they supposedly share.⁶⁹

Harakamini is stuck between the traditional way of life her mother-in-law represents, one that demands duty and uncomplaining devotion to the husband and his family, and the new way of life that her husband supposedly espouses. It is ironic that her babu-husband, when drunk, gives speeches about emancipating the women of Bengal: “Gentlemen, educate your women—give them freedom,” but fails to begin his work of reformation in his own house by giving his wife an education and rights to freedom and happiness (M. Dutt 101). Contrarily, Harakamini remains completely at the mercy of the whims and fancies of others. Nobo, like many other babus, espouses freedom and enlightenment because it allows him to excuse his own aberrant behavior under the aegis of promoting the rights of others. In discussing universal libertine philosophies, Chernaik

⁶⁹ In the farce *Er Upai ki? (What is the Way out?)*, written in 1876, Meer Mosharraf Hossain presents a similar situation. A drunk babu brings his prostitute-mistress home and “introduces her to his wife. When the wife insults the prostitute, the latter kicks the babu and warns him” that unless he leaves his wife for her forever, she will beat him. He immediately asks for her forgiveness and promises to never see his wife again. (S. Banejee *Under* 97). Matters are still not so bad for Harakamini but we can never be sure of what her future holds. Her drunk and neglectful husband certainly seems capable of acting like Hossain’s babu.

discusses how “the ideology of libertinism can justify oppression in the name of freedom,” and Nobo illustrates how this is accomplished (W. Chernaik 4). Constant talk of freedom enables the babu to allow himself to deviate from the norms and expectations of mainstream society while simultaneously, at least in his mind, placing him in the self-righteous position of champion of the downtrodden, in this case the women of colonial Bengal. The ideology of freedom that libertinism espouses not only gives him license, but also satisfies his ego insofar as any pangs of selfishness are stifled by his self-generated sense of heroism. His notion of self is inflated, his understanding of freedom is confused, and he lives in a wholly deluded state, convinced that what he preaches he also practices despite obvious evidence to the contrary.

Finally, at the very end of the play, Harakamini raises the question which Dutt has been pursuing throughout the play: “Is this civilization?” The play ends with her words:

Among those who get educated these days in Calcutta, many gain only this knowledge. But look here, my dear, what good is a husband like this? ... (after some thought) The shameless ones dare to claim that they are as educated as the sahibs! Woe on my scorched fortune—can one be called civilized just because one consumes wine and meat and is in the habit of raunchy capers—is this civilization? (Translated by I. Choudhury 77)

Harakamini clearly places the blame for her husband’s faults on his Western education, but she takes her complaint one step further. She possesses an insightful grasp of the situation and indicts the choices he makes to drink, eat beef, and cavort with prostitutes. Mainstream society, like Harakamini and her father-in-law, often directly blamed Western education for the rise of the babus. Although Nobo’s father says: “Calcutta is a city of sin. Should gentlemen lodge in this city?” it was nevertheless true that not every young man staying in Calcutta and educated in the literatures and ways of the West

became a babu (M.M Dutt 108). Harakamini becomes a mouthpiece for the author when she reminds readers that merely placing blame on abstractions like Western civilization, education, and the city environment will not suffice; it will not allow society to arrive at the root of the problem, which lies with the babus and their poor choices and decision-making. Her husband has made the choice to *superficially* resemble the British as closely as he can, but he has chosen to adopt the worst aspects of his influences, and Harakamini holds him personally accountable for her miseries.

As a Bengali housewife in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta, Harakamini has no ways of seeking redress from those who wrong her, and she does not have enough power over her husband's affection to effect a change in him. Yet, in a significant way, her decision to criticize the suitability of such a man to become a husband with so much control over the life of another is a big step for this repressed and ignored wife, and in this sense, this is a profoundly liberating moment for Harakamini. Judith E. Walsh quotes from Manu, one of the lawgivers of ancient India: "A virtuous wife should constantly serve her husband like a god, even if he behaves badly, freely indulges his lust and is devoid of any good qualities" (Walsh 54).⁷⁰ That Manu's ancient laws still held force in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta is evident from an article published in *Antahpur*, a contemporary women's magazine which advises: "Even if you are at the point of death, you should never speak ill of your husband to others" (S. Banerjee "Marginalization"

⁷⁰ Ancient India had several lawgivers of whom Manu was the oldest and one of the most important. In nineteenth-century Hindu society, the laws he prescribed, called the Laws of Manu, were quite strictly observed. Tanika Sarkar quotes from the journal *Bardhawan Sanjivani*, 5 July 1887: "A good Hindu wife should always serve her husband as God even if that husband is illiterate, devoid of good qualities, and attached to other women" (T. Sarkar 208). Based directly on Manu's laws, the quote illustrates the manner in which ancient laws governing marriages and the relationship between husbands and wives still held force in nineteenth-century Bengal.

165). Harakamini's mother, knowing that her daughter would eventually marry and be at the mercy of her husband, would undoubtedly have raised her to think of her husband along the same lines. But, her miserable marriage finally teaches Harakamini to break away from such ancient teachings and think for herself and bemoan her fate. Thus, even though she has no agency to bring about any concrete change the author does allow her significant voice in the play by putting an important question in her mouth, and ending the play with her moment of realization. Powerless as she is, Harakamini is now at least aware that men such as Nobo should no longer possess such unlimited powers over their wives. Such a thought, unthinkable and unutterable to generations of women before her, does strike her, and she laments that she would rather hang herself than continue with her life.

To wives in Harakamini's situation, death is preferable to such oppression because it offers an escape from a cycle of humiliation and emotional and physical abandonment. Harakamini would completely agree with Kailashbashini Debi, one of the first nineteenth-century Bengali women to publish her writings that "conjugal love has disappeared from our country" (T. Sarkar 47).⁷¹ Kailashbashini Debi, however, was a highly exceptional and unique wife, whose condition was very different from Harakamini's since Kailashbashini Debi's husband was not a babu and genuinely cared for her. Kailashbashini Debi had the support of her husband when she gave voice to the laments of thousands of women in her country, but Harakamini, on the other hand, knows

⁷¹ Meredith Borthwick writes of Kailashbashini Debi: "She was probably born in 1837, but very little is known about this remarkable woman, although she was one of the very first Hindu women to write and publish. Her husband educated her from the age of twelve. After working in the house and looking after her children during the day, she studied at night. Her book on the condition of Hindu women, published in 1863, was said to have been written in a week" (M. Borthwick 368).

that she would get no support from within her own family if she dared to openly criticize her husband. Harakamini thus does not voice her opinion openly, but waits to speak to her sister-in-law once her mother-in-law and father-in-law have left the room. As Mahesh Chandra Deb points out, these husbands knew that “their wives are poor helpless creatures. The voice of their complaint cannot reach beyond the walls that confine them,” and hence continued to exploit and abuse them without any fear of recrimination (G. Chattopadhyay *Awakening* 100). Thus Nobo can refuse to speak with his wife, can neglect her, can come home drunk, can consort with prostitutes and expect to hear no accusations from Harakamini. Initially, far from blaming him, she tries to shield the drunken Nobo from censure by telling him: “What are you doing? Don’t you know your father in eating lunch at home?” (M. Dutt 106). But, in the end, Harakamini’s suffering provides her with a moment of liberation when she realizes that her husband is far from the “god” that Manu had said husbands were. Although the play ends at this point, and the audience do not find out if Harakamini acts on her realization in any way, it is at least assuring to know that her husband’s ill treatment of her has pushed her to break away from generations of women before her who suffered silently. Instead of breaking her spirit even more, Nobo’s neglect has made her realize his worthlessness, and has given her a much needed sense of liberation, no matter how temporary.

Harakamini and her sister-in-law’s plight represent only one of the problems that wives faced. There were some wives who were subjected to even worse at the hands of their babu-husbands, but these women were able to ultimately turn around the situation to their advantage. In *Hutom Panchar Naksha*, the narrator says:

Some *dalpatis* and *rajas* did not see their wives at night. Some *dewans* and

muchhudis who looked after the family business were also given the responsibility of looking after the babus' wives at night while the babus visited prostitutes. Sometimes the babus made servants sleep in their bedrooms. The servants locked the door and slept on the floor and the wives slept in bed. When the night was almost over the babus returned home and knocked quietly on the bedroom door. The servants unlocked the door and let the babu in (K. Sinha 118).

With regard to this practice, Swapna M. Banerjee notes:

[This practice] violated the assumption of upper-class women's purdah or seclusion from outside male members. It showed not only how perfunctorily purdah worked, but how the practice was widely manipulated. Second, the sexual implication of women's close encounters with adult male servants or employers of the estate in the absence of husbands can hardly be doubted (S.M. Banerjee 90).

Women in Hindu households were strictly confined to the *antahpur* or the inner chambers of the house where no unrelated men could gain entrance (M. Borthwick 10).

The only exceptions, as *Hutom Panchar Naksha* points out, were the servants or employees the babu secretly concealed in his wife's bedroom. While the rest of the household knew and unquestioningly obeyed the rule of seclusion, it was the babu himself who slyly brought temptation into his wife's room. It was directly through the babu's actions that the purdah system was violated. Opposition to the purdah system and a desire to violate it could have been applauded if the babu violated it by taking his wife out on airings with himself in a bid to grant her freedom to socialize and free her from the confines of the house. But he violated it solely out of selfish motives without any consideration for the wife so that he could pursue his perverse pleasures freely without any interruptions or annoyances.

It is of striking significance that the servant or employee was placed inside the bedroom. If the servant's purpose was merely to silently let the babu into the house

during the night the goal could have been served just as well from any other room in the house. It was wholly unnecessary for the employee to be in the bedroom for this purpose. The strategic placement of the employee was indeed more than an easy way of getting back into the house. On one level, the employees were indeed aiding and abetting the babus' licentious behavior, but they served more sinister purposes than granting entry. Given the fact that the wives, never having received any affection from their husbands, were physically and emotionally lonely, it is not surprising that there were sexual encounters between the wives and the employees. Swapna M. Banerjee writes that "several writers noted that, unable to control the sexual urge, 'educated' women of wealthy, 'respectable' families secretly engaged in sexual acts with servants working within the household" (S.M. Banerjee 90). The employees came to stand in as substitutes for the ever-absent babus, and the wives sought solace with them. The babu-husbands put their wives into an extremely compromising position, and whether or not the wives and the employees engaged in sex, the babus remained guilty of setting up a situation that could potentially become dangerous for their wives if the secret was ever divulged. For the wife, however, who took a lover, the babu unintentionally created a liberating situation. Lacking any real relationships with their husbands, these wives found solace and a sense of liberation with their lovers that they were unable find with their babu-husbands.

In acting as a sexual panderer to his own wife, the babu broke several social norms and rules. Not only did he break the sanctity of their marriage vows, he broke other rules that contemporary society held dear and the breach of which held serious consequences for those deemed guilty. Sexual contact between any unmarried man, let

alone a servant from a lower caste as the employee might certainly be, and a woman from an upper caste not only broke caste laws, which strictly forbade such inter-caste relationships, but also crossed boundaries between classes. Under normal circumstances, the employee would never have access to the babu's wife, a member of an upper-class household; the babu made such access possible, again breaking the rules that governed class hierarchy. With his sinister, irreligious act, the babu created a nightmarish situation which defied any expectations that his parents or his wife may have entertained of him. As a son, he deliberately cast off his responsibility of protecting the family name, and as a husband, instead of affording protection to his wife, he purposefully placed her in a dangerous position. The babu himself, then, was not only a corrupt member of the upper-class but, in this case, he was corrupting the lower class too. He often made speeches about adopting measures for society's advancement, but in his actions he was achieving the opposite. Instead of bringing about positive social reform he was contaminating society. Weber writes that the rake was cutting "[himself] off from the moral center of society" by rejecting "the basic social unit—the family" (H. Weber 5). Weber's assertion perfectly applies to the babu. The babu too was divorcing himself from his society and corrupting it, and the babu was starting with its core: the family (H. Weber 5).

Most Restoration plays and babu literature that delve into the libertine's married life portray him as an irresponsible and unfit husband. But, in some cases, the babus' exploitation of their wives was ultimately advantageous for the wives by liberating them, sometimes only temporarily, from the babus' authority and ill treatment. Given that libertines in both cultures held unmediated legal control over their wives, the literatures question the validity of allowing such callous and self-indulgent men to possess and

abuse such an important right. Accordingly, in both cases, the wives are portrayed in a much kindlier light which makes their vulnerable situation clear. However, babu literature also portrays some wives who gradually question their husbands' powers, seek to break away from them, and even sometimes take lovers. Initially no more than commodities handed over to their husbands, some wives in the Restoration as well as in nineteenth-century Calcutta sought ways to become stronger, gain independence and empower themselves, even if they could do so only in very small ways.

Crown of Horns: the Cuckolding of Inept Husbands

Cuckolding is commonly seen in Restoration literature, and libertine husbands of seventeenth-century England, as represented in drama, universally fear it. Weber writes that the libertine draws his identity from his sexuality, and hence the prevalence of such instances in this literature is not surprising (H. Weber 3). Although they do not hesitate to indulge in extramarital affairs which hurt and humiliate their wives, the husbands fear the sully of their honor and the bruising of their egos; hence they make every attempt to ensure that their wives are protected from other libertines. For the libertine who cuckolds, on the other hand, cuckolding affords greater pleasure than seduction of unmarried women since it allows the libertine to derive a sense of power by shaming and giving horns to the men whose wives they pursue. In Restoration literature, cuckolding is most commonly seen as an act of hostility carried out by one man against another by using the wife as a pawn. Because of restricted contact between men and women in colonial Bengal, cuckolding finds only limited representation in babu literature. Yet, in one instance in which cuckolding is written about in the literature on the babus it proves of

greater interest because it illustrates the manner in which cuckolding actually may prove advantageous to a devious husband.

Cuckolding allows a libertine to exploit a woman sexually, but it also allows him to use a wife to demean and dishonor her husband. Hence, cuckolding is particularly pleasurable to rakes and babus because it gives them power over other men as well as their wives. In the absence of emotional connection with their mistresses, the rakes and babus exploit these mistresses to make their husbands jealous and cause their husbands mental anguish. Additionally, cuckolding highlights the rake's and babu's exploitative nature well since it illuminates the manner in which the rake and the babu were willing to exploit other bonds, such as that between a husband and a wife, for their self-satisfaction.

William Wycherley's Horner in *The Country Wife* remains the quintessential giver of horns in Restoration literature. Horner's name reflects the nature of his power over other men. He is Horner—the man who gives horns, the man who cuckolds other men by having illicit relations with their wives, mistresses, and sisters. Additionally, his cuckolding of Sir Jasper and Pinchwife allows Horner to punish unfit, jealous, and abusive husbands who do not take proper care of their wives. Sir Jasper's business keeps him too busy to give his wife any attention, and Pinchwife marries a beautiful young wife only to lock her up and threaten her with gruesome violence that would spoil her attractiveness. In this regard Robert Hume writes: "here the cuckoldom is an expression of hostility. It may also be an expression of contempt for a foolish, ineffectual, often complacent husband" (*Rakish* 152). Pinchwife's entire notion of the need and usefulness of marriage is based primarily on the desire for sex, and he only marries because he cannot keep a prostitute to himself. Pinchwife seeks no more than a faithful prostitute in a

wife and hence, for Pinchwife, Margery's physical attractiveness, youth, and wit become causes for apprehension rather than appreciation.

Sir Jasper Fidget's cuckolding is deserved for similar reasons. Throughout the play, Sir Jasper is a complacent but foolish figure of fun who consistently fails to realize his own hand in his undoing. Weber writes: "Horner takes an exquisite pleasure in both his sexual and social manipulations," and the pleasure gained from manipulating Sir Jasper is greater for Horner than the physical pleasure that comes from having sexual relations with Lady Fidget since it allows Horner to fool the older, supposedly more virile, and worldly husband who considers himself superior to Horner in every way without ever guessing the truth (H. Weber 53). Even while he thinks he is providing innocent diversions for his wife and sister, Sir Fidget makes them available to Horner and fails to realize the true nature of their meetings, despite the sexually loaded innuendoes which are spoken in Sir Fidget's presence in the famous china scene. Sir Fidget unknowingly gives Horner power over himself, and succeeds in making himself a cuckold largely because of his complacency.

Sir Jasper and Horner form a bond that is different from the bond that is formed between the rake and Sir Jasper's wife. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out: "The bond of cuckoldry ... [is] necessarily hierarchical in structure, with an 'active' participant who is clearly in the ascendancy over the 'passive' one" (E.K. Sedgwick 50). The bond between Horner and Sir Jasper is precisely of this nature. Horner is the "active" participant who fashions elaborate schemes to form a connection between himself and the "passive" Sir Jasper who unknowingly helps Horner succeed in his plan. This bond clearly gives Horner dominance over Sir Jasper whose wife and sister are both involved in sexual

relationships with Horner. The bond works on two levels in *The Country Wife*. Sir Jasper is unaware that this bond exists between him and Horner simply because he does not know that his wife and sister are in an illicit sexual relationship with the rake. As Kosofsky Sedgwick says: “the cuckold is not even supposed to know that he is in such a relationship.” (E.K. Sedgwick 50). Only ignorance can ensure that such a bond may be forged. It is because Sir Jasper is clueless about the existence of this bond that he acts as a pander to his own wife, and allows the exploitative Horner to compromise his honor. It is to Horner’s advantage that he keep Sir Jasper in the dark because the success of Horner’s plan hinges on Sir Jasper’s ignorance. Sir Jasper is just as fearful of this bond as Pinchwife is as evidenced by his refusal to allow his wife to go to the play with Dorilant who is not impotent, and hence may be a threat to him (Wycherley1056). Sir Jasper tells Dorilant that Horner “is a privileged man amongst the virtuous ladies; ‘twill be a great while before [Dorilant is] so” (Wycherley1056). Sir Jasper finds Horner reassuring only because he believes Horner is impotent; he fears Dorilant because he knows Dorilant is virile and hence may prove a better lover than himself whom Lady Fidget might prefer over her husband. If Sir Jasper had had any knowledge of the bond that Horner had built with him he would have done as much as Pinchwife does to avoid it.

Both Sir Jasper and Pinchwife know that rakes may gain power over them through their wives. This power is related to these men’s egos. For Horner, conducting sexual affairs with married women means that he is marking other men’s wives and sisters as his own. Warren Chernaik notes that “the libertine pattern is to stamp one’s ownership and then pass on,” and Horner has found the easiest means to do so while remaining free from accusations from his victims who pretend to be honorable (W.

Chernaik 4). Since women were often seen as property, Horner is laying a claim to and appropriating property that belongs to someone else, and he derives more pleasure from his act of defiance than from the physical act. Lady Fidget sums up the whole situation very well when she says: “‘Tis not an injury to a husband till it be an injury to our honors” (Wycheley1055). In society’s eyes, a man’s honor is bound up with the chastity of his wife. A wife whose emotional and sexual needs are met will not seek to cuckold her husband. Knowledge that a man is being cuckolded harms him because it raises questions about his masculinity and his fitness to be a husband. In addition, it also indicates that these wives are willing to demean their husbands in order to have illicit sexual affairs, further hinting at the husband’s inability to contribute to the success of the marriage. This is advantageous to the rake because it makes him appear sexually superior to the husbands; the rake can provide satisfaction when the husband cannot.

Horner knows that the men whose wives, sisters, and mistresses he wants access to are also aware of the fact that if they are cuckolded they will lose their honor; he has thought of the perfect scheme for gaining power over the men and insulting their honor by insulting the honor of their women. To the informed audience and the theatergoer it is therefore ironic and amusing when Sir Jasper innocently answers all of Horner’s hidden innuendoes. When Lady Fidget says: “As he behaves himself and for your sake, I’ll give him admittance and freedom,” Horner asks her: “All sorts of freedom, madam?” To this Sir Jasper is quick to answer, “Aye, aye aye, all sorts of freedom thou canst take, and so go with her; begin thy new employment. Wheedle her, jest with her, and be better acquainted one with another.” (Wycherley 1057). Sir Jasper is blissfully unaware that Horner’s “new employment” is the very thing that Sir Jasper wishes to avoid. His “new

employment” is to “be seen in a lady’s chamber in a morning as early as her husband, kiss virgins before their parents or lovers, and may be, in short, the passé-partout of the town.” (Wycherley1042). It further demonstrates to Lady Jasper that her husband is a fool, and that a man like Horner has the intelligence and resources to dupe Sir Jasper. Horner successfully exploits his sexual relationship with Sir Jasper’s wife to exhibit his mental and physical superiority over Sir Jasper at Sir Jasper’s expense.

Cuckolding takes similar forms in babu literature. In babu literature, babus are often married men with little love and concern for their wives. Nobo has no connection with his wife, and the babu in *Nobo Babu Bilash* only goes to his wife when he wants her jewelry so that he can take them to his prostitute-mistress. Wives were lonely, lamented their fates, and some wives fell into traps prepared by procuresses who derived much business and profit from neglected wives they led astray. It is undeniably true that many wives bore their sufferings in silence and the thought of cuckolding their husbands never occurred to them; such wives also find ample portrayal in babu literature. Motilal’s wife in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* and Nobo’s wife in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* remain faithful to their husbands in spite of ill usage. But, there were also some wives whose patience was severely tested, and who looked at cuckolding as a way out of their miserable marriages. Procuresses were quick to point out the faults of the babu-husbands in their attempts to tempt such wives. One such procuress in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* or *The Drolleries of the New Bibi* says:

For whom are you preserving your beauty and youth? ... You are a talented woman and you impress others but your husband does not heed you. Your virtue is in vain. You have given your life and heart to a bad man who cares nothing for you. I am advising you to get rid of this bad husband (B. Bandopadhyay 176).

Such wives, through long ill use, are only too ready to cuckold their husbands. This is precisely what the heroine of *Nobo Bibi Bilash* does. She cuckolds her husband, and even when he seeks her out and offers to take her back she prefers to leave him and become a full-fledged prostitute instead.⁷² Cuckolding, which eventually led to prostitution, was a gateway to freedom and wealth for such neglected wives, temporarily freeing the wives from unfit husbands. It guaranteed them wealth and attention in their early years as a prostitute. Of the innocent wife who eventually turns into a prostitute in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* the narrator says:

She knows that fate has tied her to an unworthy man who smokes marijuana and drinks all day long. She begins to question why she should stay at home for a man who is always with prostitutes...She knows that she is still youthful and she too wants to have someone to love. So she promises herself to get lover, a surrogate husband. Being young, lonely, sad, and not having much sense, she falls into the trap. And the napitanie [the procuress in this tale] realizes she will make a good prey" (B. Bandopadhyay 178).

The young wife runs away with the procuress who then prostitutes her to a rich babu. The babu's exploitation of the bibi in this case, ironically, leads to some freedoms and a life of relative ease since the babus provided plentifully for their chosen bibis. Bibis such as the one in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* thus welcomed this exploitation, which, ironically, set them free from their oppressive lives as neglected and mistreated wives. The bibi thinks: "The napitanie has given me good advice and is my well wisher. Why should I stay at home

⁷² Banerjee's *Under the Raj: Prostitution in Colonial Bengal* looks at prostitution in nineteenth-century Bengal in great detail. Drawing from newspaper accounts, interviews with contemporary prostitutes, songs and poems written about them, *Under the Raj* looks at a subject that had been somewhat overlooked till this time. Banerjee explores what caused women to enter this profession, what they expected out of it and what they actually got, the British government's and the Bengali babus' attitude towards them, the dangers that they faced, and the manner in which they fared after they had lost their clients due to the loss of their youth and beauty.

and be sad? I will free myself from misery and I will live with a man I like who will make me happy” (B. Bandopadhyay 180). She tells the procuress that she does not want to be a caged bird and will readily go to a babu (B. Bandopadhyay 180). The bibi is aware that she will leave her husband and will become a prostitute, but she welcomes this change in her life because it would free her from her husband’s neglect and would make her feel pampered and loved. The babu’s exploitation which brings certain material perks with it are preferable to the life of loneliness that she had been forced to live.

In babu literature, then, cuckolding leads to different results. Lady Fidget cuckolds her husband but preserves her reputation in society’s eyes, and has a great deal of freedom. Horner’s cuckolding does not cause Lady Fidget to leave her husband since it is the protection of Sir Jasper’s wealth and title that guarantees her position in society; Sir Jasper is foolish, inept, and complacent, but his good opinion is still important to his wife because without it she would not have her advantageous position in society. Hence, it is imperative for her to cuckold Sir Jasper only in secret so that he remains unaware of the manner in which his honor is compromised. The unnamed bibi’s husband in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* does not afford any such position to her.⁷³ For her there isn’t even public acknowledgement of her position as his wife as she remains at home throughout the day deprived of the social interactions that Lady Fidget can enjoy. The bibi, then, has more to gain from cuckolding her husband than she has to lose. The narrator of *Nobo Bibi Bilash* says: “The young girl settles herself in the napitanie’s [procuress] house and is excited

⁷³ Women’s position in nineteenth-century Calcutta society was primarily derived from their relationships with the men in their lives. They were either mothers or daughters or wives, making these women even more vulnerable when neglected. Women had almost no opportunities for earning money or becoming independent unless they became prostitutes or maids who were often subjected to sexual harassment by their male employers.

about meeting the babu who will love her and will bring her jewelry (B. Bandopadhyay 180). Having gained no position, power, love, or money through her marriage she realizes that she only stands to gain sexual satisfaction, affection, and wealth by allowing a rich babu to cuckold her husband. The bibi is willing to let the babu exploit her and demean her husband, and knowingly concedes in her exploitation which gives the babu power over her neglecting husband who is then taunted by his friends and neighbors.

The writer of *Nobo Bibi Bilash's* wishes to illustrate the manner in which babus are unable and unwilling to regulate their household in an honorable and capable fashion. Like Sir Jasper, the babus have only their neglect of their wives to blame for their cuckolding. The babus' wives who go on to become prostitutes give additional numerous men the power that Kosofsky Sedgwick speaks of over the babu-husbands. This power, besides the fact that the husbands are forsaken by their wives, also extends to the manner in which society begins to view them. The narrator in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* says: "Neighbors and relatives now begin to taunt the husband telling him that he is no longer fit to be a part of respectable society since his wife has cuckolded him. They further tell him that they had warned him to look after his faithful wife but he did not do so, and now she has fled" (B. Bandopadhyay 181). The babu-husband's cuckolding thus not only allows the babu-lover to exploit the babu's wife, but it also enables the lover to taint the babu-husband's honor which causes the babu-husband to become an outcast. Only in this manner can the wife wield some control of her husband. Even though legally and socially she has no powers or rights, her ability to cuckold her husband is the only means she has for avenging herself on a neglectful and unfaithful spouse. Cuckolding turns the tables on

the husband who has ignored her, and empowers the wife to not only lead a life of pleasure but also to humiliate her husband.

In *Nobo Bibi Bilash*, the babu who forms sexual relations with the runaway wife is aware that his mistress is a married woman since the procuress tells him: “Babu, I have brought someone’s wife for you” (B. Bandopadhyay 182). This fact has never been hidden from the babu, and some of his pleasure from the relationship derives from this fact. This case is different from Sir Jasper’s because the babu is not directly involved in the cuckolding of the husband; the cuckolding has been mediated through the procuress who has lured the wife to the babu. But indeed the babu is the active participant, and he has the privilege of seeing the wife reject her husband a second time when the husband offers to take her back after she has been debauched. The narrator writes: “The husband also wants her to come with him but she refuses to go back to his house. She says, ‘I have come to enjoy the work of this business and I will continue to do so.’” (185). Since she had so far only led the life of a prostitute with the babu, her rejection of her husband in favor of a prostitute’s life indicates her preference for her babu-lover and the life he offers.

The spirit of competition among babus that was evident in their bids for conspicuous consumption is again evident here. Babus did not hesitate to cuckold other babus since that was an additional and very important way of proving their superiority, especially sexual superiority, and a means of shaming a competitor and tarnishing his family name. Since the desire for self-advertisement was a marked characteristic of babus, bringing infamy on another babu and injuring his sense of self-importance was a feat of no small importance. The babus’ desire to demean other babus by having affairs

with their wives, then, was beneficial to ill treated wives who left their babu-husbands since the wives' babu-lovers' guaranteed that the wives could earn money and live independent lives. Some babus-husbands' neglectful treatment of their wives and other babus-lovers' patronage of wives who had run away to become prostitutes finally, then, was to the advantage to some wives who were ultimately empowered by their rejection of their husbands.

Participating in one's own cuckolding as with Sir Jasper also occurs in babu literature, and we find such a case in *Duti Bilash* or *The Drolleries of the Procureess*.⁷⁴ In this short tale, we are told the story of Anangamanjari who cuckolds her husband with the help of her lover, Srideb, initially without her husband's knowledge. Anangamanjari resorts to outright lies such as asking for permission to visit her sick aunt while in reality visiting her lover. It is, then, with her husband's permission that Anangamanjari goes to visit her lover, and her husband's cuckolding is as much sanctioned by him in his ignorance as Sir Jasper's is. The husband is so engrossed in his own libertine lifestyle that investigating his wife's activities is too much of an effort for him to undertake. The narrator mentions that the husband goes out every night and, leading the life of a wealthy lotos-eating babu, he assigns his relationship with Anangamanjari a secondary position, concerned only with keeping up appearances (B. Bandopadhyay 126). Although initially the husband is just as eager to avoid the consequences of cuckolding as men during the Restoration are, he quickly changes his mind when he gathers that his secret cuckolding might prove advantageous for him. Anangamanjari tells the husband that in her dream a holy man has informed Anangamanjari that she will have a child but not by her husband;

⁷⁴ For details about *Duti Bilash*'s plot, see Appendix.

instead, she is advised to take her husband's permission and try to have a baby with a lover. This astounds her husband primarily because it will be a shameful matter for him, and he will be cuckolded. Yet when he is persuaded that such cuckolding will take place in the utmost secrecy, he agrees to it. The narrator writes: "[Anangamanjari's] aunt tells him that it is very essential for the household to have children. She also tells him that the lover would come secretly to the house and no one would ever find out" (B. Bandopadhyay 150). Hearing this, the husband agrees since he wants children who will ensure the continuity of his family's name even though they will not be biologically his.

Desire for children overrides concern for his relationship with his wife, and as long as his name and reputation are protected the husband accepts his cuckolding with equanimity. Himself a babu who does not return home to his wife on most nights, his concerns with his family life are superficial. His wife's desire to pursue sexual relations with another man does not prompt the husband to re-evaluate their marriage and make efforts to mend a relationship that has obviously gone terribly wrong. His lack of values and morals inspires his wife to cast off her own morals and inhibitions, but it also brings about Anangamanjari's sexual liberation as she takes a lover. Husband and wife both seek a selfish life of self-gratification, each indulging in separate lives, and merely keeping up a façade of a marriage.

The husband's regular absence from their marriage bed, and his indulgence in prostitutes prompts his wife to view sexual relations, not as a loving and procreating act between a husband and his wife, but as a mechanical act for self-satisfaction with disposable partners. But this view also empowers Anangamanjari in ways that most women in the nineteenth century were not since it allows her to take Srideb as a lover,

just as her husband has prostitute-mistresses, thereby placing her, in this case, on the same level as her husband. Society feared that the babus' extramarital affairs with prostitutes would lead their wives astray. An article in an unnamed Brahmo Samaj newspaper writes⁷⁵: "When [the wives], leading a life of imprisonment, watch the prostitutes enjoying freedom, and observe their husbands carousing with the prostitutes, is it not natural that they would be inflamed with a similar passion for the immoral deeds which they mistake for pleasure?" (qtd. in S. Banerjee *Under* 118). As with the husband in *Nobo Bibi Bilash*, Anangamanjari's husband shows no desire to regulate his household and reasonably direct his wife's activities. But, finally, Anangamanjari is much freer than other women, and enjoys freedoms and extramarital relationships that only men were normally able to have in nineteenth-century Calcutta. In this sense, Anangamanjari's affair and her husband's inability to control his household empowers Anangamanjari by making her a powerful woman who gains control over her sexual life. Anangamanjari's husband's neglect of her prompts her to find a satisfying sexual relationship outside of her marriage, a rare occurrence for women who were not prostitutes in nineteenth-century Bengal.

At this early stage power is clearly on the side of Srideb the babu-lover as he is now given permission to come to the house and engage in sexual activities with another man's wife at any time he likes. In control of her sexual life, Anangamanjari tells Srideb: "You have my husband's permission now, and must stay at our house" (B. Bandopadhyay 152). But this power shifts to the husband once Anangamanjari has three children with Srideb. The husband acknowledges the children as his, but all the expenses

⁷⁵ For more on the Brahmo Samaj, see footnote 4.

for their birth and upkeep are borne by their biological father. Moreover, the husband's family name is perpetuated through the sons, and Srideb's line comes to an end even though he is the actual father. Furthermore, Anangamanjari continues to make demands for expensive gifts, and when Srideb, who has no income but has been spending lavishly on Anangamanjari, is unable to meet her latest demands Anangamanjari instructs the guards not to let him in again (B. Bandopadhyay 165). In Srideb's and Anangamanjari's relationship, she remains the dominant partner who reaps more benefits than he does, and she discards Srideb once she has taken full advantage of him. Srideb ultimately laments that "he has not led a pure life and has disgraced not only himself but also his family" (B. Bandopadhyay 167). Furthermore, Srideb decides to become a hermit so that he can no longer meet lascivious and self-serving women like his mistress. He decides to live in the forest and worship God, hoping that this will bring him peace (B. Bandopadhyay 167). In this instance, the babu then loses his advantage and is consumed with regret since after a brief spell of being in the ascendancy he comes back to reality with a crash, an issue-less father and a poor man.

Ironically, then, this is an instance when cuckolding favors the husband. It appears that Srideb gets his way in this, but ultimately it is Anangamanjari and her husband who remain in control. Through Srideb, Anangamanjari provides her husband with what the husband wants but was unable to have with Anangamanjari: children to carry on his family name and inherit his wealth. The husband successfully manipulates Srideb and gets his wishes while continuing his babu lifestyle. Anangamanjari uses Srideb for sexual satisfaction and to become pregnant, and she also continuously makes demands for expensive gifts like golden bangles (B. Bandopadhyay 165). Ultimately

Anangamanjai's relationship with Srideb saves her husband time and money, and gives Anangamanjari more control over her life; the husband has to put in no more effort than merely look the other way while his wife is with her lover. Anangamanjari's husband always exerts a passive control over his cuckolding. The traditional sense of authority is perverted but he still remains in control because he *allows* his wife to take a lover, which frees him from his marital duties. Srideb, the lover, does all the work and bears all the expenses, but the husband profits from his wife's affair.

Constituting the libertine's act of hostility and the husband's badge of shame, cuckolding is a common feature in libertine literature. The rake's and babu's sexuality, coupled with their sense of superiority as a lover made this an attractive pursuit for them. Cuckolding gave them an opportunity to generate admiration for themselves from their peers while shaming, exploiting, and manipulating others. Playwrights of the Restoration hint that the character of a husband may sometimes justify his cuckolding, and *Duti Bilash* illustrates the manner in which the husband may turn around a disadvantageous situation to gain an advantage from it. In some instances of cuckolding, the women who team with their lovers to shame their husband find cuckolding liberating because it gives them greater control over their lives and sexualities than they ever had before. Cuckolding was thus not just enjoyable to babus, but it was also empowering for many women who, for the first time, were able to reject their husbands and live autonomous lives.

Conclusion

The Western and Eastern libertines affected the lives of many women. They had profound influences over the lives of their mistresses, their wives, their mothers, and the prostitutes they chose to visit. Although these were different types of relationships, there is a common thread that runs through all the libertines' dealings with the women in their lives. Through all these relationships, the rakes and babus continue to be self-indulgent and hedonistic, putting themselves first as they exploit and abuse women. The babu's relationship with women, however, remained more ambivalent than the rake's since many babus, while exploiting women in their personal lives, simultaneously made speeches and joined agitations which sought to loosen many of the strict societal strictures that had shackled Bengali women for many generations. Clearly, then, Bengali writers illuminate the manner in which babus were hypocrites who pretended to be altruistic individuals concerned with social issues while exploiting these issues to serve their own ends and excuse their choices.

It is, of course, his relationships with women that define the libertine. Relationships between a rake and his mistress find greater expression in Restoration plays since the rake often meets a beautiful and witty heiress who proves his match. Heiresses such as a Helena or a Harriet can captivate a Willmore or a Dorimant in a manner in which no babu's wife can ever enthrall him. Yet, in reality, devoid of all legal control, in essence, the lives of the British wives were quite similar to their nineteenth-century Bengali counterparts. Rakes and babus, however, even though aware of the tremendous power they wielded, often chose to be irresponsible, making the women in their lives miserable. Ultimately, though, some of the actions of some rakes and some babus were

empowering for their wives who either tried to maintain self-governance through making conditions before marriage as Millamant did, or questioned their husband's suitability to control their wives as Harakamini did, or refused to go back to their husbands as the neglected wife in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* did, or took advantage of their babu-lovers as Anangamanjari did. Ironically, then, in some cases, the libertine lifestyle which generally oppresses women inadvertently brought about empowerment of the same women that it oppressed.

CHAPTER V

Strange Bed Fellows: the Libertine's Infidelities and Inability to Reform

In this chapter, I will focus on the rakes' and babus' reformation, or the lack thereof. While there are some rakes in Restoration comedies who, the writers would have the audience believe, reform after their marriages, Bengali writers hold out very little hope for the babus' reform. Dorimant in *The Way of the World* and Willmore in *The Rover* supposedly reform at the end of the plays, but their reformations remain ambiguous at best. Literature on the babus too highlight that turning away from the babu lifestyle is very difficult once one has embarked on the road to becoming a babu. Restoration playwrights and Bengali writers thus point out that the rake and babu lifestyle is an addictive one, and that once one has become a rake or a babu it is difficult to give up the libertine way of life in both Western and Eastern culture. Relapsing into indulgences in extramarital affairs is one of the aspects of a libertine lifestyle that points to the addictive nature of this lifestyle, which makes it difficult for the rake or the babu to change his way of life. The Western and Eastern libertine both have, of course, been involved in sexual relationships with many women. In Restoration and babu literature, the rake and the babu relapses into extramarital affairs proving that, given their nature, a true and complete reform is very difficult to achieve.

In Restoration comedy as well as literature on the babus, extramarital affairs were

undertaken because both Western and Eastern libertines found marriages boring and entrapping, further highlighting the manner in which libertines in both cultures sought complete freedom in all spheres of their lives and relationships. Just as they sought variety in their entertainments, the rakes and babus sought variety in their relationships with women, highlighting their fickle, immature, and restless characters. The scheming and the plotting that was required in an extramarital affair invigorated the libertines, especially the Restoration rakes, by allowing them to use their wits and resources to attain their ends. Unable to resist temptation in any form and always looking for enjoyable escapades, the rakes and the babus naturally made no effort to remain faithful to their wives since reforming would cut off activities which were sources of entertainment and pleasure. Hence, married rakes like Loveless in *The Relapse* and a married babu like Jagatdurlabh in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* continue on their libertine lifestyles by being unfaithful to their wives.

Extramarital affairs in literature on the babus are different from extramarital affairs in Restoration literature in two significant ways, and I account for these differences which highlight the fact that the Bengali writers' viewed the babus differently from the way English playwrights viewed the Restoration rakes. Unlike Restoration literature which sometimes features reformed rakes, there are almost no reformed babus in Bengali literature since the babus continue their philandering ways even after their marriages.⁷⁶ The writers of the babus' tales portrayed the babus in an extremely negative light because the Bengali writers wished to use the babus' stories to caution other educated young men from becoming babus. These mainstream Bengali writers did not

⁷⁶ The only exception to this is Motilal in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* who becomes a reformed babu by the end of the novel.

hold out any hope for the babus' reform because they wanted to stress that there was no turning back once one embarked on the destructive babu lifestyle. In *Hutom Panchar Naksha*, the narrator addresses the readers thus: "It is pointless to pray for the improvement of a country which is inhabited by rich babus whose characters are so terrifying, so poisonous...those who should improve the country act like animals; they embark on this perilous path out of their own volition" (K. Sinha 127). Additionally, the babus only have extramarital affairs with prostitutes not just because the babus did not have easy access to other men's wives, but also because the Bengali writers wished to show the sort of low company the babus kept with these women who were considered outcasts. Continuing with their agenda to portray the babu in a shocking light which would highlight the difficulty of reformation, the Bengali writers suggested that the babus themselves became tainted because of the company they kept. Through this portrayal, Bengali writers strove to make the point that the babu lifestyle was additive, self-indulgent, demeaning, and rebellious, caused disruption in families, and was responsible for the increase and sustenance of prostitution in contemporary Calcutta. The Bengali writers argued that the babus' indulgence in affairs with the prostitute was so pleasing and fulfilling that the babus could not turn away from their prostitute-mistresses and that was partly the reason why the babus could not reform. Hence, writing about the babus' affairs with prostitutes allowed the Bengali writers to not only illustrate why babus did not reform, but also to criticize prostitutes.

The rakes and the babus sought variety in all their activities, and their pursuit of mistresses and prostitutes contributed to this search for novelty. The British and the Bengali libertine constantly sought new adventures and new pursuits, and this constant

attraction towards novelty made reformation difficult. Willmore, only a supposedly reformed Restoration rake, constantly looks for fresh escapades before he apparently reforms. When Willmore hears of Blunt's mistress, he immediately wants to be part of the new exploit, saying: "Egad, that's well; we'll all go" (Behn 602). Of Motilal, Thakur writes: "The amusements that Motilal and his friends usually indulged in soon began to become inadequate for them. The old amusements could not provide pleasure any more. Hence they began to look for newer adventures and entertainments" (T. Thakur 49). Looking for new diversions brought excitement, which was essential to the libertine way of life, and hence reformation which would tie the Western and Eastern libertine down to one woman would take away a vital source of excitement on which the British and the Bengali libertines thrived.

Variety is the Spice of Life: the Libertine's Extramarital Affairs

Given that financial considerations, rather than love, played a significant part in marriages in Restoration drama and in literature on the babus, it is not surprising that extramarital affairs abound in Restoration and babu literature. Boredom in marriage, exposure to temptations, and desire for control are just some of the reasons why the Restoration rakes indulged in extramarital affairs which prevented them from amending their ways. All of the aforementioned reasons readily apply to the babus, but in addition to these factors, the fact that the babus did not know their wives in advance and did not feel affection for them was an added spur that led to the babus' infidelities. There are, however, two important differences between the rake's extramarital affairs and the babu's: with the rakes, there is a hope that some rakes will see the error of their ways,

will reform themselves, and will settle down with their wives. With the babu, the writers do not hold out any such hope for reform. Additionally, unlike the rake who had extramarital affairs with women from both the upper and lower classes, the babu primarily had affairs with prostitutes who were considered outcasts. The rakes and the babus sought excitement and diversity in all aspects of their lives, and they indulged in extramarital affairs because these affairs brought the thrill, the variety, and the novelty that these British and Bengali libertines searched for in all that they undertook.

Marriage, many Restoration comedies will have the reader believe, reforms the rake. Matched with a suitable wife, the rake, according to these comedies, willingly gives up his freedom and his libertine lifestyle. But that is the point at which these plays end. The relapse of the married rake into his philandering ways is not exhibited in many plays, all of which end on an optimistic note. Yet, Restoration plays that show the state of marriages often address issues of entrapment, boredom, and lack of stimulation which make marriages dysfunctional, and cause the so-called reformed rake to lapse back into his former habits by indulging in extramarital affairs. The rake's and the babu's restless nature made them dissatisfied with what they possessed, and hence reformation which lessened excitement and tied the rakes down to wives they were too familiar with was not a welcome change; reformation would tie the babus to their wives whom they had not chosen and did not love. Always in search of new thrills, the rake and the babu did not hesitate to pursue new mistresses at the cost of further ruining their precarious relationships with their wives.

John Dryden clearly shows the manner in which marriages break down due to excessive boredom in *Marriage á la Mode*. In this regard, Tony Lake and Ann Hills

write: "Some affairs are undertaken as ways of obtaining those elements which the marriage is not providing," and indeed this is exactly the case with Rhodophil and Doralice who have obviously become disenchanted with married life (Lake et al. 13). Rhodophil states his case to Doralice plainly: "If thou couldst make my enjoying thee but a little less easy or a little more unlawful, thou shouldst see what a termagant lover I would prove...Thou art a wife, and thou wilt be a wife, and I can make thee another no longer" (Dryden 349). Rhodophil's point is that marriage kills interest by making the wife too familiar and too accessible. The excitement and thrill of courting are taken away, making the relationship a dull one which lacks the vigor needed to keep it going; hence, Rhodophil strays away, looking for those elements which will invigorate his life again. Rhodophil fails to stay a reformed rake because he is bored with his wife, and is actively seeking new adventures and pursuits again. He realizes that if he can separate himself from Doralice for a while, there might be a chance of falling in love with her again. For Rhodophil, the idealization and newfound objectification of Doralice is important if he is to love and value her. Hence, he has imagined her to be all the fashionable ladies of the town, and it is only under this pretence that Rhodophil has been able to remain with Doralice. But now, as he says, there are no other sophisticated women that he can imagine in her place, and he finds himself unable to enjoy Doralice anymore. Rhodophil knows that familiarity only breeds stagnation while distance between them might allow him to think of Doralice as she formerly was, and hence, bring about idealization and desire again. Rhodophil tells Palamede: "I remember, indeed, that about two years ago I loved her passionately. But those golden days are gone, Palamede" (Dryden 334). Valuing novelty over fidelity, Rhodophil is bored with what he owns, and wants to trade

Doralice for a new mistress. Remaining a reformed rake is stultifying, and hence Rhodophil lapses back into the rakish ways, trying to get a new mistress whom he could then value for a short time for her uniqueness.

Indeed, for Rhodophil, staying loyal to his wife has made his marriage a prison for him. Once the first excitement is over, the rakes realize, as Barbara L. Rubin writes, that: “there are better ways to pursue joy and excitement” (B.L. Rubin 584). The stability and the responsibility that a marriage entails signify stagnation for the rake, and stagnation often means the death of the sexual appetite. Since, according to Harold Weber, the rake draws his primary identity from his sexuality, the death of the sexual libido is a form of castration and ultimately annihilation for the rake (H. Weber 3). The pursuit of new stimuli through extramarital affairs, in Rhodophil’s mind, will reawaken his sexual appetite. Palamede is correct when he says: “That, indeed, is living upon cordials, but as fast as one fails, you must supply it with another” (Dryden 334). The pursuit of novelty itself becomes a novelty because it allows Rhodophil to do something new and move away from the mundane relationship he has with Doralice. For Rhodophil, chasing Melantha is amusing because it is a game that generates its own form of entertainment. Part of the fun is speculating whether he will acquire Melantha or not. Rhodophil’s chase resembles a business transaction where one has to speculate and manipulate in order to acquire a good deal. It is the prospect of a new acquisition that proves most thrilling for Rhodophil. Knowing that Palamede is “to be married to [his] mistress,” Rhodophil understands that his pursuit of Melantha will force him to use subterfuges which, he hopes, will end finally with his acquisition of Melantha, and it is this opportunity for a new acquisition that spurs Rhodophil on and prevents him from

reforming his ways. Rubin explains that the appetite “breeds on challenge and difficulty” and that “life at its best is a game played for pleasure, and it requires one to desire something first of all, to pursue it with skill through the intricate difficulties of approach, to give oneself up entirely to enjoyment” (B.L. Rubin 584). The pursuit of the woman that he eventually married had provided Rhodophil with the sort of excitement that he thrives on. But once he had won over Doralice and married her, all the excitement was at an end; Rhodophil’s life became placid, and it was the lack of adventure that stultified him. Hence Rhodophil looks forward to abandoning his supposedly reformed ways, and going in search of new quarry again.

The simple solution for Rhodophil is to begin a new flirtation which will provide him excitement and stimulation again. Palamede rightly points out Rhodophil’s cure: “The truth is, your disease is very desperate, but though you cannot be cured, you may be patched up a little. You must get you a mistress” (Dryden 334). The pursuit of Melantha, which brings challenges and difficulties that require Rhodophil to use subterfuges, brings him pleasure that makes his life worth living. Once again, Rhodophil is in the middle of a heated hunt where he needs his skills at manipulating, planning, organizing, and duping in order to attain his game. An extramarital affair, far from making Rhodophil pause to consider the effect it may have on his marriage, spurs him on to prove that he has not lost the abilities that he possessed as an unmarried man about town. Rhodophil says that “the world began to laugh at [him] for his devotion” to Doralice, but this new chase will allow him to prove that he remains just as charming and irresistible as he was, and that marriage has not dulled his lust for enjoyment, adventure, and exhilaration (Dryden 334).

Love within marriages in *Marriage à la Mode*, then, lasts only for the first few years when the wife is still a new acquisition. But the rake's character longs for variety, and prizing novelty, the rake constantly seeks the acquirement of something new. Rhodophil says: "if [the wives] would suffer us but now and then to make excursions, the benefit of our variety would be theirs" (Dryden 341). The mistress provides the "variety," primarily because she is new prey that the rake can plot to obtain. The search for new experiences and adventures, coupled with the desire to attain new things, in this case in the form of mistresses, spurs Rhodophil on to disregard his marriage ties with Doralice and pursue Melantha instead. Reformation, which would take away the anticipation and the thrill and would keep Rhodophil tied to a familiar, and hence dull, wife fails to be an attractive choice when measured against the exhilaration of a new chase.

John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse; or, Virtue in Danger* builds on Dryden's play but shows that factors other than boredom may contribute to extramarital affairs. The rake's tendency to pursue new exploits also indicates that he is quickly bored with old pursuits, and his weariness with former engagements make him susceptible to new temptations when he comes across them, making his reformation extremely difficult. In Vanbrugh's play, the move from the country to the city is one of the major factors that cause Loveless to stray from his wife because the city is the ultimate marketplace where there is a range of products and services at one's disposal. The city thus offers too many enticements that prohibit the pleasure loving rake from reforming.

Vanbrugh himself clearly saw the manner in which such a move would account for Loveless's affair when, referring to Loveless and Amanda's move to the city, Vanbrugh wrote: "I saw but one danger in Solitude and Retirement, and I saw a thousand

in the bustle of the World; I therefore in a moment determin'd for the Countrey, and suppos'd Loveless and Amanda gone out of town" (H. Drougge 510). The country represents an isolated, calm, and simple life where Loveless is satisfied with his wife. The city, conversely, represents dynamism and sophistication, and thus it encourages dissatisfaction. In his essay on Restoration comedy, Brian Corman writes that the city was characterized by "urbanity, sophistication, classical education" (B. Corman 59); being the seat of sophistication and fashion, it is also the seat of novelty, frivolity, and temptation, making it difficult for an already weak former rake to control himself and stay faithful to his wife. Amanda correctly sums up the enticements the city offers: "I know its false insinuating pleasures; / I know the force of its delusions; / I know the strength of its attacks" (Vanbrugh1482). The city holds many promises: promises of making more money, of moving up in the social scale, of acquiring elegant friends and acquaintances, and of meeting many women of beauty and grace. London offers many more diversions and choices than the staid country, allowing for overindulgence in vice. The country, on the other hand, diminishes the charged atmosphere or environment that the rake thrives in, and does not provide him with as many obvious opportunities for dalliances as the city does. Being a rake is essentially an urban experience, and hence affairs abound more in the city than in the country, making it harder to stay a reformed rake in the city as compared to the country.

It is in the country that Loveless says: "I never knew one moment's peace like this. Here, in this little soft retreat,...My life glides on, and all is well within," and he may mean that sincerely while he resides in the country (Vanbrugh1481). Marriages in the country, because they do not have to endure as many enticements, do not have to be

as strong to survive as they do in the city. The country indeed represents “slowing-down, stillness, inanition. [It is] cloistered and dull” (H. Drougge 51). But the stillness and dullness also guarantee that it is a place of safety where the libertine will not be besieged by temptations into which he falls with little struggle when in the city. In the country, Loveless is satisfied with his wife; she is the paragon of virtue and beauty and he does not have many sophisticated women to compare her with or to tempt him. Loveless tells Amanda: “The largest boons that Heavens think fit to grant/ To things it has decreed shall crawl on earth/ Are in the gift of women formed like you,” and again he may sincerely mean it in the country (Vanbrugh 1481). Being quite exceptional in the country, Amanda offers Loveless more than any other country girl would, and hence he is willing to devote himself to Amanda for a while because he can find no one who will be better than her. Moreover, retreating to a country house was often a form of rehabilitation for the rake where he could recharge himself, get his energies back, rest, and renew himself for city life. The Earl of Rochester, the prime example of such a case, was the sober poet-philosopher at his country house and the intoxicated rake in London.⁷⁷

In the city, however, dazzled by a profusion of fashionable women, Loveless cannot remain a reformed rake since his weak nature cannot tolerate the temptations that London offers him. Loveless puts on the garb of rakishness as soon as he enters London,

⁷⁷ In his biography of the Earl of Rochester, Graham Greene clearly shows the distinction that Rochester made between his life in the country and in the city. Greene writes: “Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Boutel belonged to London and to the house in St James’s; the country seems to have been associated in Rochester’s mind with his wife and children...Rochester had been brought up as a child in the country, he had known nothing of cities before he went to Oxford, and seldom a year passed but he retired to it—whether to write, to recover from sickness, or simply for contemplation. In a letter to Savile he said of the country that it was ‘where only one can think; for you at Court think not at all, or, at least, as if you were shut up in a drum; you can think of nothing, but the noise that is made about you’ (143).

and miserably fails the test of fidelity that he has been confident would pose no challenge for him. Vanbrugh's play is a sharp commentary on the need to exert self-control in face of the temptations that one is exposed to in an intensely stimulating yet vice-ridden city like London. Amanda's fear of Loveless's inconstancy makes it clear that Loveless has not been faithful to her in the past. He is always in an acquisitive mindset that prompts him to constantly seek out, access, and attempt to secure an opportunity for an affair, making a genuine reformation impossible. Much like a seasoned businessman, Loveless is always on the lookout for new acquisitions. Of his first glance at Berinthia, Loveless says: "I gazed upon her; nay, eagerly I gazed upon her" (Vanbrugh 1492). Loveless has felt "the raging flame of wild destructive lust," and yet in London he gives in to lust again because it involves a chase and an acquisition (Vanbrugh 1481). London proves particularly rich in this respect, given the fact that there are a myriad of similar people like Worthy and Berinthia who are seeking similar pleasures of the flesh.

Like Dryden's Rhodophil, Loveless may claim love for Amanda, but she does not excite him. Loveless may call Amanda "the happy cause of [his] content" (Vanbrugh 1481), but Hume correctly points out that: "From a man who has abandoned his wife for ten years while he whored and gamed his way through his fortune, this is not very convincing" (R. Hume *Rakish* 190). Loveless's adulterous actions upon entering into London prove that he is not as satisfied with his wife and mundane marriage as he would delude himself into believing. Like Rhodophil, he too is bored, and it takes no more than his first sighting of Berinthia to cause Loveless to give up any pretence at reformation. Loveless immediately finds Berinthia "exquisitely handsome," alarming his wife who is well aware of his weak nature (Vanbrugh 1491). Because Loveless has been

married to Amanda for a while, she holds no mystery for Loveless that he can unravel and savor. On some levels, the rake can be happy with a loyal and loving wife, but his relationship with her includes responsibilities, such as making mundane household decisions, that bore him. Loveless's marriage has lost the excitement on which he thrives, and hence Loveless wants to break away from boredom and seek this element in his pursuit of Berinthia. Loveless's "chase of five hours" is exciting to him precisely because at the end lies his acquisition of Berinthia, a new attainment which will bring new excitement (Vanbrugh1518).

Loveless can neither commit himself to his wife, nor can he become a complete rake. Loveless may say to Amanda: "When you would plead your title to my heart/ On this you may depend" (Vanbrugh 1482). Yet, his extramarital affair has deflated his noble sentiment and underscored his insincerity. Loveless ends the play trying to give the impression that he takes his position as Amanda's devoted husband very seriously, but through his actions he has given definite proof of his inclination to continue as a rake. Loveless occupies an uncomfortable and ambivalent position where he dabbles in both worlds. Possessing no self-knowledge and no self-control, at best Loveless remains a "base, ungrateful, perjured villain" whose desire for sexual novelty overrides all consideration for a matchless wife (Vanbrugh1536).

At root, the rake's propensity towards extramarital affairs is another version of his weakness for novelty and addiction to chaos which prevents him from genuinely reforming. The rake loves variety in his clothing, variety in his entertainments, and variety in his pursuit of women, and it is difficult for the rake to reform because in doing so he would have to control or master his desire and need for novelty. He flourishes on

exhilaration, stimulation, and danger, and he seeks all these qualities in his quest for extramarital affairs. Loveless, like the other rakes, is driven by his desire for novelty into excess, and this carries over into his lust for women. In Berinthia, he recognizes a kindred spirit; she is a female rake much like Loveless who relishes manipulation and deviousness to attain her ends. As Loveless has no conception of constancy, Berinthia has none of virtue, and he offers Berinthia flattery in exchange for her body. Loveless declaims: “When ‘twas my chance to see you at the play/ A random glance you threw first alarmed me/...I gazed upon you and was shot again,/ And then my fears came on me./ My heart began to pant, my limbs tremble,/ My blood grew thin, my pulse beat quick” (Vanbrugh1506). This speech, replete with flattery, is enough to “bewitch” Berinthia who willingly gives in to Loveless’s advances in exchange for such fulsome praise (Vanbrugh1507). From Berinthia’s flirtatious yet seemingly coy behavior, Loveless knows her values and enjoyments are rather similar to his, and he can confidently look forward to his chase that will end with Berinthia’s willing surrender, but which will also end his brief spell as a reformed rake.

Congreve presents yet another cause that may hinder reformation in *The Way of the World* (1700). As Congreve illustrates with Fainall, the rake’s love for control too may prompt him into relapsing into his old philandering ways. Fainall is involved in an affair with Mrs. Marwood, but he mainly regards her as a junior business partner of sorts, someone who will aid him in his ultimate goal of exposing his wife and mother-in-law and gaining their fortunes. In exchange for her services in obtaining Mrs. Fainall’s fortune, Fainall promises Mrs. Marwood that he will “squander [the fortune] on love and [her],” effectively making her a business partner who will receive a portion of the profits

(Congreve 773). Besides using Mrs. Marwood as a business partner and for sexual gratification, Fainall's greatest pleasure in this extramarital affair comes from his ability to control, humiliate, and dominate his ally. Fainall constantly needs to remain in a position of control, and his desire for control manifests itself in a sadistic streak which causes him to humiliate Mrs. Marwood in an attempt to lower her self-esteem. Fainall delights in mocking Mrs. Marwood when he says: "Oh the pious friendships of the female sex," conveniently forgetting that he has now enlisted Mrs. Marwood's services to betray his wife by gaining Mrs. Fainall's secrets by professing to be her friend (Congreve 772). Thus, even while he needs Mrs. Marwood's help in gaining his own aims, Fainall feels that he must mock and degrade her because doing so allows him to keep the upper hand. Weber is correct when he writes: "But the brutality of his manner, his quite evident desire to hurt her, leads him far beyond the mere 'Reproof' he claims to have intended" (H. Weber 123). Despite the assistance that he requires from Mrs. Marwood, Fainall successfully finds a way to dominate her and satisfy his ego and his controlling instincts.

Fainall's extramarital affair is different from those other rakes pursue because he is not primarily seeking sexual satisfaction or sexual variety; his primary aim in all his activities stems from a desire to exercise power, and he is prevented from becoming a reformed rake for the same reason. Fainall wishes to exercise his power over Mrs. Fainall, Lady Wishfort, and Mirabell in order to get Millamant's and Mrs. Fainall's fortunes, and he finds a willing accomplice in Mrs. Marwood. Fainall's reformation would tie him down to a wife for whom he does not care and who is quite unattached to him. But his affair with Mrs. Marwood provides him with an accomplice over whom Fainall can wield control, and who also aids him in his plans to control others who

inhabit their world. But even when he wishes to bring happiness to Mrs. Marwood, he can only do it at the expense of causing grief to another. Weber insightfully writes: “Fainall can express his love only through his hatred: ‘I’m convinc’d I’ve done you wrong; and any way, every way will make amends; I’ll hate my Wife yet more, Damn her, I’ll part with her, rob her of all she’s worth, and we’ll retire somewhere, anywhere to another World” (H. Weber 123). Fainall’s nature dictates that any marriage or affair he enters into will be dysfunctional. A vicious, irreparably flawed, and sadistic rake, Fainall brings chaos into every relationship he finds himself in. Fainall’s strongly controlling nature remains unsatisfied with legal control over Mrs. Fainall. Fainall’s sense of self-worth stems from his ability to manipulate and control society’s rules, as well as his acquaintances. He controls his mistress, attempts to control his wife, her mother, and her fortune. Indeed Fainall refuses even to continue at the game of cards with Mirabell when he realizes that winning is not granting him any power since his rival is indifferent to losing. He wishes not only to control material goods, but also to control his victims psychologically. Weber rightly points out that “for Fainall the game proves valuable only for its demonstration of his superiority” (H. Weber 121). It is his desire to exert control over Mrs. Marwood and then use Mrs. Marwood’s help in exerting eventual control over the other characters in the play that makes Fainall’s reformation impossible.

With characters like Mirabell in *The Way of the World* and Harcourt in *The Country Wife*, playwrights of the Restoration attempted to illustrate that some rakes may truly reform. Willmore in *The Rover* and Dorimant in *The Man of Mode* only ostensibly reform and whether Willmore’s and Dorimant’s reforms are real is open to question. With Rhodophil, Loveless, and Fainall, Dryden, Vanbrugh, and Congreve are illustrating

that though reformation is occasionally possible, it is extremely difficult for a man who has got a taste of the rakish mode of life to reform because the libertine lifestyle offers enticing excitements that are difficult to resist. Not possessing the strongest of human natures, the rakish character is quick to give in to boredom and enticements that are enslaving. In his poem “Upon his Drinking Bowl,” the Earl of Rochester points out the rake’s weaknesses: “Cupid and Bacchus y saints are:/ May drink and love still reign” (J. Wilmot 53). Reformation, which entailed loyalty to a single woman, was thus enervating for the rakes who flourished on stimulations and allurements, and hence sought unique adventures and escapades at every possible turn.

Not every married former rake in Restoration comedy indulges in extramarital affairs. Mirabell and Harcourt, for instance, are reformed rakes. In babu literature, on the other hand, marriage does not cause a babu to reform. In most texts, the babu’s way of life remains unaltered with his marriage. The babu had been content with his prostitutes and his extravagant lifestyle before his marriage, and he continues on this path after his marriage until he squanders his fortune. Generally, lamentation comes only with the loss of wealth, and it usually takes the form of regret that the lifestyle indulged in so far will have to end now. The only exception to this is Motilal in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* who, after his transformation, grieves because of the hurt he has caused his wife and mother.

Another significant aspect of extramarital affairs in literature on the babus is that most of the affairs are not with unmarried women or with other men’s wives, but with prostitutes. The only exception here is *Duti Bilash* where Anangamanjari, the wife, indulges in an extramarital affair with Srideb, the babu.

An intriguing question, then, is why the writers of babu literature do not generally show a reformed babu. During the babus' time, Bengali society did not have an established history of libertinism akin to the one in England that made provisions for the many shades of libertinism, including the reformed libertine. The Restoration rake was not the first libertine figure in Western literature. He had been preceded by libertine figures as diverse as Chaucer's Wife of Bath to Jonson's Volpone.⁷⁸ Given that Bengal had no such clearly deviant figures preceding the babu, his sudden appearance proved quite shocking to the mainstream society which included most of the writers who chronicled his life. In *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, Tekchand Thakur writes thus of the babus' destructive effect on nineteenth-century Bengali society: "the babus resemble a malevolent wind that destroys everything that stands in its way" (T. Thakur 82). Therefore, the Bengali writer was more judgmental and full of absolute condemnation towards the babus than his British counterpart was in the seventeenth century. This reactionary response to the babus led to a wholly fatalistic and pessimistic perspective on the figure. The writers, in many ways, could not account for or make any accommodations for the babu figure in Bengali society; the babu was roundly rejected and condemned, given no opportunity to reform in fictional accounts, irrespective of whether in reality he exhibited any desire or ability to do so.

Many of the Bengali writers were concerned with maintaining the status quo, especially when faced with the erosion of their traditional values by those of the colonizers and natives who had succumbed to the colonizing. Since their writings were meant to be "cautionary tales," their desire to highlight the babu's every fault was an

⁷⁸ Harold Weber characterizes the Wife of Bath as a figure replete with "sexual energy" (H. Weber 4).

attempt to compensate for the actual or perceived losses of culture that the British created within Bengali society (J.C. Ghosh 128). It is because of their desire to highlight the babus' flaws that the Bengali writers highlighted their addiction to drinking, their tendency towards wasteful expenditure, and their frequenting of brothels. Since the Bengali writers were attempting to highlight the babus' shortcomings, they did not write of reformed babus in an attempt to underscore that the babus were so addicted to their lifestyle that it was not possible for them to reform. However, it is also true that by and large these Bengali writers were conservative, and found any deviation troublesome, regardless of whether the departure was created by an external force such as the British or generated by segments within their own native populace. Bengali writers clearly had a stake in the well-being of the dominant culture to which they belonged, and indeed they received their sense of legitimacy from this dominant culture. The writers of the babu's tales painted an unflattering picture of the babu lifestyle which they did not understand or approve of. In literature, the babu became a scapegoat, an easy and oft-attacked target representing many of the ills of Bengali society under British rule. Much of the blame for the rise of the babus, as evidenced throughout this study, was placed on the babus' desire to emulate the ruling British.⁷⁹ Furthermore, by pinning blame on the babu, consistently attacking him, and holding out no hope for his reform, the writers were able to maintain a righteous position as upholders of traditional cultural values and guardians of the status quo at a time of disruption.

The purpose of writing about the babus was not to entertain but to criticize and provide cautionary tales that would serve to inhibit others from following the babus'

⁷⁹ In *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*, for instance, Nobo's father blames his son's babu lifestyle on his desire to emulate the British.

paths. Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay was “vituperate[ve]” (121) while Tekchand Thakur was “didactic” (127) and given to “blatant moralizing” (J. C. Ghosh 128). In this respect too, the Bengali writers differed from the Restoration writers who sought to chiefly provide theatrical entertainment through the figure of the rake. The Bengali writers obviously had an agenda that informed their presentation: they only showed the greatest debasements and the worst endings possible to illustrate the perniciousness of following the babu lifestyle. *Hutom Panchar Naksha*, for example, mentions several instances of drunken and drugged babus’ patronizing of prostitutes, and *Nobo Babu Bilash* ends with the poverty-stricken babu lamenting his fate and wishing for death, highlighting that the babu lifestyle only brings misery by enslaving babus to the libertine lifestyle to such a degree that the babu cannot reform. Nobo in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* adequately illustrates his dependency on the babu lifestyle when he says: As long as I am alive I will never abolish this club” (Dutt 106). The club where Nobo drinks with his friends and watches *khemtawalis* brings Nobo great pleasure. Closing down the club where he indulges in the babu lifestyle would be an important first step in reforming Nobo, but the babu’s weakness for the babu lifestyle is so great that he cannot bear the thought of closing his club of debaucheries and reforming. The writers of literature on the babus were selective in their portrayal of the babu, omitting anything that could justify the babus’ position or even humanize them. The babu lifestyle, in the Bengali writers view, destroyed traditional values and ways of life. Indulgence in extramarital affairs with no recourse to reform became one of the aspects of destruction that the babus were exacting on their own lives and on society at large. Writers aimed to show the extreme consequences of the

babus' bad behavior, and hence there is a significant absence of reformed babus in this literature.

The relationships between babus and their wives also suggest why babus do not reform after marriage. Unlike the Restoration rake, the babu marries a perfect stranger whom he does not love; he marries the bride who brings the greatest dowry. Rochona Majumdar insightfully points out why the babus could not be content with their spouses:

[the wives were] not educationally prepared to face life, to enjoy the fact of her womanhood and of the role she played as a wife and a mother in a man's life. Simultaneously, a man could not find a true friend and companion in his wife for a woman had not been acculturated into thinking of herself in these roles (Rochona Majumdar 135).

Additionally, unlike the Restoration libertines, the babus had not taken part in any form of courtship which had allowed them to familiarize themselves with their future brides. Motilal in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* is married at sixteen to a girl he has never met before, and Nobo in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* does not directly speak to this wife throughout the play. The personal disconnect between the babu and his bride was therefore so great that he had no love, compassion, respect, or even empathy for his wife. Hence, he saw no reason to change the lifestyle that he had been living and had been satisfied with so far. The babu had fulfilled his end of the bargain by marrying the woman chosen for him, and he felt that his part in the transaction was over with the marriage ceremony. The Restoration rakes further differed from the babus because they, at least initially, appeared to love the women they chose and married. The babu, on the other hand, had never wanted a wife and viewed her as an interfering stranger invading his life; marriage was not a choice but a requirement imposed on him, and once he had concluded the marriage, the babu felt no guilt at carrying on with his previous lifestyle. Hence, Motilal in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*

continues to visit brothels, Anangamanjari's husband in *Duti Bilash* spends his nights with his prostitute-mistress, Nobo in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* prefers the *khemtawali* to his wife, and Jagatdurlabh in *Nobo Babu Bilash* very rarely sees his wife but greatly pampers his prostitute-mistress.

Another fascinating question that emerges concerning the babus' infidelities after marriage is why they are portrayed as having extramarital affairs only with prostitutes and not with wives or mistresses of other men. A chief reason why the babus only had extramarital affairs with prostitutes, some of whom had been former wives, was that frequenting such women was much more convenient for the babus than seducing married women. Given the closed nature of Bengali society, especially as it pertained to women, the babu had less access to wives and women from respectable households than Restoration rakes did. *Duti Bilash* is the only tale in which the babu is able to secure an affair with a wife, and he needs the assistance of no less than five procuresses to gain an initial interview with Anangamanjari, the wife of another babu. Srideb first approaches malini, a flower seller and when malini fails he moves on to Moti napitanie, the pedicurist. The napitanie or pedicurist too fails, and Srideb's approaches the third procuress, Soro the milkmaid. After the milkmaid he approaches neri, the cook, and it is finally Gopi, the maid who is successful. We can guess the degree of difficulty in gaining access to wives when we learn that Anangamanjari was not a virtuous wife, but a debauched one who wanted to secure a lover for herself. If five procuresses and much cajoling are required to secure Srideb an interview with a corrupted woman, we may well guess how many procuresses would be needed to debauch a truly virtuous wife who had no inclinations towards the sort of relationships the babus offered. Srideb's constant

efforts at hiring procuresses and paying them highlight his desire to meet Anangamanjari. Of the strength of his desire, Bandopadhyay writes: “Srideb is tortured by his desire to meet with the woman. He remains awake the whole night, and sends for the flower-seller the next morning” (B. Bandopadhyay 72). Srideb’s sexual desires are so strong and he is so willing to give in to them that a reformation is impossible for him. Although he regrets his affair at the end and decides to live a hermit’s life, given his licentiousness throughout *Duti Bilash*, Srideb’s supposed reform, like Dorimant’s and Willmore’s in *The Way of the World* and *The Rover* respectively, is very difficult to believe.

Women in nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta did not enjoy even the limited liberties of women in Restoration Britain. They did not visit friends or stroll in parks, nor were they allowed to mingle with their husbands’ friends or attend cabal nights. Meredith Borthwick stresses that “women were not allowed to cross the threshold of the *antahpur* into the outer apartments of the public male world” (M. Borthwick 10). *Antahpur* refers to the inner chambers where women were confined. Most male relatives, let alone strangers, were not allowed into these inner confines, and though there was little to no entertainment to be had at home, women were confined indoors throughout the day. Besides the husband who seldom visited, the babus’ wives hardly met any men except for fathers or brothers. Tanika Sarkar rightly notes: “[A Bengali wife] was condemned to strict silence, to limited, awkward movements, to the absence of all contact with most older and male relatives” (T. Sarkar 120). The rake had more choice and opportunity to begin extramarital affairs with women who were not prostitutes than the babu did. The babu, almost always given to taking the easy way out and used to easy enjoyments, did not exert himself unnecessarily in the pursuit of other men’s wives (some of whom did

eventually become prostitutes and were then pursued by the babus) since he well knew that he could very easily procure his pleasures with a prostitute.

Reformation was hence even more difficult for the weak babus who were unable to resist the temptations that prostitutes put in their paths. *Nobu Babu Bilash* describes the prostitutes thus: “The prostitutes have dark black hair, milky white skin, musical voice, sparkling teeth, red lips and slim waists” (B. Bandopadhyay 49). Prone to acquiring easy pleasures, the babus found such pleasures at the brothels that were always eager to welcome them, thus making it harder for the babus to give up their licentious pleasures and return to their wives. Brothel keepers were aware that it was necessary for the babus to become dependent on the prostitutes for their pleasures since only such dependence would prevent the babus’ reformation, which would be profitable for the prostitute’s business. Hence, for the prostitute, serving the babu had to appear to be more of a pleasure than a duty, and her performance as an ardent lover who was the babus’ choice guaranteed the babus’ continued solicitation. The prostitute in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* is advised: “Wear flimsy clothes so that the babus can see your body and then frolic and flirt with the babus as you see fit. But do so in such a way so that the babus do not understand that these are only fake feelings...we can only love those who can give us money, but this too must be false love” (B. Bandopadhyay 203). The prostitutes continued to keep the babus’ interest and affection, which were the sources of the prostitutes’ income, and were willing to go to great lengths to please the babus. Thus Hutom sarcastically writes: “The *khemta* is a wonderful dance. On Sundays, some of the babus of the city have *khemta* dances in their country houses. Some babus make the women dance naked, others insist on being kissed before paying” (K. Sinha 50). For the

babu who anyway found it difficult to resist temptation, such easy access to pleasures proved to be fatal. The babus, given their addiction to pleasure and their non-existent relationships with their wives, were not keen on reforming in the first place. The ease with which prostitutes enabled the babus to satisfy themselves further hindered the babus from reforming.

One of the first lessons that the bibi in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* is taught is how to extract the most in cash and kind from her numerous babus since her future depends on it. Sumanta Banerjee correctly writes: “the prostitutes who were favoured by [the babus], had to make the most of their indulgences as long as the ‘babus’ were capable of spending, so that they could ensure their future security” (S. Banerjee *Under* 76). The bibi in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* is advised that she should have several babus but should pretend to each that he is her only client. The brothel keeper tells the bibi: “If the babu gives you money to buy tobacco, and wines of his choice for him, put half the money in your box and then give the rest of the money to Addiji [general overseer of the brothel and the brothel keeper’s lover] and he will get the required items for you” (B. Bandopadhyay 201). The services provided at the brothel are all geared towards making maximum profit for the inmates, and hence the babu was guaranteed entertainment as long as he was rich. Because of this profit-making motive, the relationship between the babus and the bibi was of a mutually parasitic nature where each exploited the other to attain their own ends.

The babus’ exploitation of the bibi, of course, does not need any explanation. But it would be wrong to believe that this exploitation was one-sided. The bibis worked hard to make the babus dependent on them so that they would never lack cash. The bibi in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* is advised:

The beauty of your body is only to please the babu. First make the babus fall in love with you by the power of your eyes. Then talk to them nicely only using sweet words. If you do that you will win them with your words. Then pretend to be shy but show them your body. Make sure you wear your sari tightly so that the shape of your body shows itself.⁸⁰ And walk in a provocative manner. Now that you are a prostitute you have to behave in this manner. You have to ensure that babus become your prey (B. Bandopadhyay 201).

Positions switch as the babus become the bibis' victims, and prostitution no longer remains a business where the bibi makes a meager sum from her client. The bibi knew her business well. Taught well by the brothel keeper she knew how to practice the arts of her profession: "chhapan" (hiding her other clients from her main babu who maintains her as his mistress); "chhemo" (fooling and beguiling her babu with fake stories if he gets knowledge of her other clients); and "chhenchrami" (ensuring that she is paid for her services beforehand) (B. Bandopadhyay 202-206). Unaware of her duplicitous nature, the babu continues his visits to his prostitute-mistress, enjoying her "chhalana" (tricks and artifices) and "chhenali" (coquetry), with no thoughts of reforming (B. Bandopadhyay 202).

The babus' devotion to the prostitutes signaled the inversion of their values. The Bengali writers hinted that the babus were weak, indolent, given to mixing with prostitutes who were considered outcastes, had faulty morals, and hence could not reform. The prostitutes found ways of exploiting the babus' attraction towards the ideal of chastity as well as sexuality. The prostitutes had their looks, their sexuality, and their aura to sell. On one hand, when they falsely swore eternal fidelity to the babus and

⁸⁰ The sari, the traditional form of clothing for Indian women, is a strip of cloth about nine meters in length. Unlike the dhoti and punjabi, the traditional clothing for males which is not commonly worn anymore, the sari is still the most common form of clothing for Indian women.

performed religious festivals at the brothels as the bibi in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* does, they were selling themselves as the docile, spiritual, chaste Bengali woman, loyal and obedient to the man. On the other hand, as prostitutes they were presenting themselves as antithesis of wives who simultaneously possessed the better qualities of a wife. They would be spiritual as a wife, but would also be sexually available at all times to the babus, would listen to them, and would sing, dance, drink, and smoke opium with them as a bashful wife in nineteenth-century Calcutta would not. The prostitute-mistresses were adept at making the babu feel as if there was an emotional bond between them, but in most cases they would distance themselves so that no bond would continue after the babu had lost his wealth. Prostitutes skillfully exhibited all the outward show of a relationship, but there was no emotional attachment on their parts. The babus who similarly lacked feelings towards their wives whom had they married for money were unable to realize the truth of the prostitute's feelings for them. In his drunken state, for instance, Nobo mistakes his wife for his prostitute-mistress and asks her: "Is this Poyodhori [the *khemtawali*]? Come closer to me. Do you love me so much that at this time of night you have come to this lonely place to love me in spite of being so tired?" (M. Dutt 107). Like Nobo, Jagatdurlabh and the bibi's clients in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* also mistakenly come to believe that their mistresses love them. Believing themselves to be involved relationships that included more than an exchange of sex for cash, the babus continued with their affairs without giving any thought to amending their ways and giving up their babu lifestyles.

The bibi understood that she was an expensive commodity that the babu would pay dearly to obtain; any additional services she or the brothel provided were likewise

priced at a high rate since the hedonistic and self-indulgent babus were more than willing to pay well to acquire the bibi and enjoy the entertainments the brothel provided. The babu knew that as long as money was available, he would be able to command the bibi, and knowing that the babu's cash was her security, the bibi was his willing lover as long as he consistently provided for her financially. The mercenary character of prostitutes is, of course, well known. Since the prostitute was willing to provide her services as long as the babus had money, the necessity for reforming themselves and giving up the babu lifestyle did not arise as long as the babu had money. Hence, Jagatdurlabh and Srideb in *Nobo Babu Bilash* and *Duti Bilash* respectively lament when they have spent all their money, and can find no way to maintain their babus lifestyle. Once Jagatdurlabh's father releases Jagatdurlabh from prison where he had been sent because of debts, Jagatdurlabh immediately returns to his prostitute-mistress who berates him:

You have been in jail for two months and you have not taken care of me at all during that time. If tomorrow you come with the money you would have given me in these two months, then I will let you enter. Otherwise, I will kick you out. In these five years that I have stayed with you, you have not given me much—only jewelry worth rupees two thousand and a house worth rupees four or five thousand. Look at that other prostitute—her babu has stolen his wife's and mother's jewelry and given it to her. If you cared about me you would have sent me money for the last two months from jail (B. Bandopadhyay 54).

Even after losing his prostitute-mistress, Jagatdurlabh continues to spend what little money he has left, and continues to be a babu on a smaller scale by maintaining a cheaper prostitute till all his money runs out. It is at this point that Jagatdurlabh laments his fate and wishes to die because he has no money. It is, then, only when they have dissipated their entire fortunes on their babu lifestyles that the babus are forced to turn their thoughts to reform because they cannot afford to keep up the babu lifestyle any more.

The babus do not wish to mend their ways while they are rich. Not realizing that their wealth will eventually come to an end, and that their poverty will cause them to lose their fair-weather friends, sycophants, and mercenary prostitute-mistresses, the babus continue with the babu lifestyle as long as they can afford it. In addition to their propensity towards leading an exciting lifestyle, their weakness for a life of leisure, their inability to resist temptations, their huge wealth that allowed them to finance this lifestyle prevented the babus from reforming as long as they could spend lavishly.

Conclusion

The playwrights of the Restoration and the writers of the babus' tales held very different perspectives on libertinism. Restoration playwrights, often friends of real life rakes and sharing in their lifestyles, were much more willing to present their heroes in an indulgent light. Bengali writers, on the other hand, primarily sought to portray the perniciousness of every aspect of the babu lifestyle and to provide warnings for other educated young men; hence, they were only concerned to degrade the babu in every way possible. In both cases, however, extramarital affairs provided the stimuli that invigorated the lives of the libertines and perpetuated a culture of inconstancy and deceit. Because the libertine lifestyle and culture of the West and the East constantly sought unique experiences, and because the rakes and the babus needed to be perpetually entertained and diverted, the culture of libertinism as presented in Restoration comedies as well as babu literature was an extremely addictive one that prevented the rake or the babu from reforming once they had succumbed to this lifestyle.

Bibis in babu literature played a greater part than Restoration prostitutes did with the rakes in keeping the babu addicted to the babu lifestyle and preventing the babus' reform. In the case of the babus, their emotional distance from their wives also played an important part in causing the babus to look for extramarital affairs with bibis. It was at the brothel that the babus indulged in many of the activities associated with the babu lifestyle such as drinking, watching *khemta* dances, and having sex with their prostitute mistresses. It was at the brothel, then, that the babus were able to get many of the pleasures to which they became addicted and which prevented their reformation. The bibis made themselves and the services they offered indispensable to the weak and hedonistic babus. Such easy access to pleasure, as long as they had the money to purchase it with, made it difficult for the babus to reform.

The situation of prostitutes as portrayed in the Restoration plays was different from those in colonial Bengal. The babu's dependence on prostitutes was greater than the rake's since the babu could only have access to prostitutes, and not to wives of other men. Hence, the Bengali prostitute, to the greater misery of the babu's wife, could wield a control over the babu that the British prostitute failed to possess over the rake, especially since in Restoration drama it was usually the wife of the rake who had a fortune and not the prostitute. The prostitutes were offering sexual adventures, variety, and excitement, which the rakes and the babus were incapable of resisting. The rakes' and the babus' restless nature, their love of novelty, their inability to withstand enticements, and their ability to buy their pleasures made the rakes and the babus continue in their lifestyles once they had embarked on it. Although the writers of the Restoration as well as Bengali writers have very different attitudes towards the rakes and the babus respectively, in both

cultures libertinism is presented as an addictive way of life. While the playwrights of the Restoration did not stridently criticize the rakes for being rakes, Bengali writers heavily censured the babus for leading the babu lifestyle and pointed out that reformation was difficult for those who once became babus. The Bengali writers presented the babus in the worst light in order to put across their opinion that the babus could never mend their ways.

CONCLUSION

There is a wealth of material on Restoration rakes; however, my research views the rake through the lens of the lesser known Bengali culture, and thus provides a new context for examining the rakes' impact on world culture. At the same time, my dissertation introduces many hitherto unknown Bengali figures to a Western audience. By introducing Bengali texts to a Western audience, the dissertation brings into focus rich material from Bengali culture. This dissertation is the first in-depth study that examines nineteenth-century Bengali texts through the lenses of libertinism and analyzes the portrayal of babu culture in these texts. Significantly, then, it is the first work that looks at the babu as a libertine figure. As such, my study represents an innovative and necessary examination of a significant cross-cultural current and exposes an under-represented, though nonetheless influential figure, in the formation of Bengali culture. At present, there is no body of scholarship on babus and rakes that draws connections between the two figures. It is this gap in scholarship that my dissertation aims to address. Surveying the various cultural parallels and outright adoptions of manners and behavior of the rakes by the babus allows for the emergence of a more composite picture of the rakish mode of life, and demonstrates the effects of colonialism on the elite segment of Bengali society that produced the babus. The findings from my research will ultimately lead to a fuller portrait of not only libertinism in general, but also the lesser known aspects of it as it applies in this specific cross-cultural context.

Although during Charles II's reign Restoration Comedy enjoyed tremendous success and was patronized by the king himself, cries of outrage soon followed in its wake. Beginning with Jeremy Collier's *A Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage* in 1698, Restoration Comedy found many detractors such as Arthur Bedford who directly traced the corruption and irreligiousness of contemporary society to the plays performed on the Restoration stage with so much success.⁸¹ In 1706 Arthur Bedford wrote a pamphlet titled "The Evils and Dangers of the Stage Plays" in which he exposed the shortcomings of Restoration comedies. The kind of heroes found in plays right after the Collier controversy were distinctly different from the rakes in plays before it, leading to the erroneous conclusion that English plays were considerably cleaned up after the Restoration period, and that one of the main outcomes of this cleansing brought about by the Collier controversy was the death of the rake figure. Benevolent, emotionally overwrought, but often colorless characters who were far removed from the witty, debonair, yet emotionally stunted rake, such as Young Bevil in Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), were beginning to make an appearance in British drama. However, any conclusion that figures such as Young Bevil pushed aside the radical rakes would be faulty; the rake figure was still a force to contend with, and remained so for a considerable period of time after the Restoration. The rake's influence lasted not only in

⁸¹ Jeremy Collier was not the first person to declaim the debilitating effect of the Restoration plays. In his 1695 Preface to *Prince Arthur*, Sir Richard Blackmore pointed out that the plays concentrated on rooting out virtue and welcoming vice. Blackmore was also quick to note, as Collier himself did at a later date, that the main male characters of the plays were men of good breeding but they were vicious and immoral rather than virtuous. Collier's pamphlet continued the motion for reform that Blackmore had started but Collier's was a much more detailed analysis of the flaws he saw in the plays and the ill effects they exercised on society. There were indeed others who felt the same outrage, and asked for similar reforms. Richard Steele's famous essay on the *Man of Mode* in *Spectator* 65 also essentially agrees with Collier's objections.

the years following the Restoration, but also well into the nineteenth century. Harold Weber rightly states: "...the rake was one of the most popular of stock theatrical types, surely the most notorious both during the Restoration and after" (H. Weber 6). Weber goes on to write:

to follow the rake's career in the eighteenth century is inevitably to move from the well-defined and relatively narrow limits of a single genre—the comedy of manners—to a consideration of how a variety of other literary forms adopted and transformed the rake's character (H. Weber 183).

The fictions of Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Oliver Goldsmith, Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, and Charlotte Brontë which chronologically followed each other all went a long way in keeping the rake character alive, attractive, and influential. Facets of the rake continued to appear in characters as diverse as Richardson's vicious Lovelace and Jane Austen's Wickham and Willoughby. The rake's influence in literature, then, can be seen in the hero of an early novel such as *Clarissa* and continues with other libertine characters in texts over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries culminating in the colonial context with the Bengali babus.⁸²

The babus were severely criticized because of their bohemian lifestyle since the older generations comprised of the babus' fathers were concerned that the babus were being led astray by corrupt foreign influences and were helping to solidify British rule in India by emulating the colonizer while casting aside Hindu traditions. Thus Motilal's father in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* has no faith in Motilal once Motilal becomes a babu, and Nobo's father's frustration with Nobo makes Nobo's father in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* ask

⁸² Facets of the rake and the manner in which he lived can even now be seen in the extravagant lifestyles lived by the rock stars and actors of our day. We often see the same kind of emphasis on pleasure, dissipation, sexual indulgence, drinking, and drug-taking that is quite reminiscent of the rakes.

Nobo's mother why she had not killed Nobo when she had conceived him. Both Motilal's and Nobo's fathers are shocked by their sons' libertine activities, and both are quick to realize that their sons' ways of life threatened age-old Hindu traditions that forbade the eating of beef, drinking of alcohol, and upholding the caste system. Unlike the rakes in Restoration drama who were often created by a playwright like Sir George Etherege who had close ties to rakes or were indeed rakes themselves, thus guaranteeing a sympathetic treatment of the rake figure, most Bengali authors such as Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay, Tekchand Thakur, Kaliprasanna Sinha, Bankimchandra Chatterji, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt who wrote about babu-culture were decidedly against it, and disparaged those who embarked on a babu lifestyle. Despite these denouncements, however, the babus continued to live a libertine mode of existence, advocated for an advanced society, and in doing so they exhibited sufficient strength.

The babus strove to set themselves apart from mainstream Indian society by forging a uniquely new identity for themselves that clearly severed ties with older generations. "Bound by the language and customs of their colonial educators," the babus believed that they needed to break ties with their fathers and reject numerous age-old traditions if they were to truly appear civilized and worthy of British esteem (D. David 120). Newly acquired Western philosophy and manners caused the babus to imagine themselves as cultured, sophisticated, and considerably more progressive than the more orthodox generation preceding them. Thus, in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*, the babu Nobo credits his Western education for having freed him from the shackles of Hindu superstition (M.M. Dutt 101). The babus sought to display such a progressive persona through several very conscious lifestyle choices that they made: spurning traditional

clothing, they arrayed themselves in the finest of British clothing and footwear thus flaunting their wealth and their taste; rejecting the native language, the babus spoke in the colonizer's tongue and appreciated only Western literature in an effort to gain British acceptance; breaking taboos, the babus ate beef, indulged in drugs and alcohol; and they frequented brothels. In their efforts to compete with other babus with similar notions of self-importance, the babus funded lavish festivals and religious ceremonies geared towards exhibiting their discernment and gaining admiration or inciting jealousy. The progressive-minded babus rejected age-old customs such as sati, the burning of the Indian bride on the funeral pyre of her husband, disregarded the rigid caste system, and agitated for the emancipation of women and pushed for female education—all calculated moves to portray themselves as modern, socially-conscious, and refined.

The babu phenomenon was significant for several important reasons. Critics such as Chitra Deb note that the babus often came from Kayastha families that did not belong to the highest caste (C. Deb 57); the wealthy babus were thus historically significant because they were the first to subvert the rigid caste system that had been established by upper-class Bengali society. The following instance amply illustrates how the babus shifted the focus from the *caste* to the *class* system. Ramdulal Dey was one of the first babus with great wealth of whom Subir Raychaudhuri reports:

Society is in my iron safe' [Ramdulal Dey] once remarked. 'I'll buy up all the kulins' [Brahmins of pure caste]. The occasion for the remark was the so-called Kaliprasad Scandal, when Kaliprasad Datta was ostracized by the Brahmins at the time of his father Churamani's funeral for having kept a Muslim concubine. Ramdulal came to Kaliprasad's rescue and made good his boast: he did win over the *kulins* (S. Raychaudhuri 72).

The scope of the babus' significance is undeniably wide-ranging and far-reaching because for better, and oftentimes for worse, they provoked Bengali society to respond or

react to an inevitable paradigm shift in Bengal at large. Conservative mainstream society recoiled from the babu lifestyle and, in response, entrenched themselves further in tradition and mocked the babus in popular folk songs:

Brandi, rendi, ganja, guli, yaar jutey katokguli
Mukhetey sarboda buli, hoot boley dey ganjaya tan
(They are immersed in brandy, whores, hemp, and opium along with their
cronies. Gabbling all the time, and pulling away at hemp) (S.Banerjee
Parlour 109).

It is clear that in popular culture the babu became a folk-devil because he was indeed a member of the Bengali community but was viewed, at best, as a contemptuous imitator of the British, and therefore as traitor of his people. The babu represented the subversion of mainstream values and was thus seen either as a threat or a ridiculous aberration.

Conservative, mainstream Bengali society felt threatened by the babus' progressiveness, and hence it was due their progressive views that the babus came to be viewed as folk-devils in the popular culture of the time.

In spite of negative criticism, it cannot be denied that the babus achieved much, and their influence is still felt in twenty-first century India. Tapan Raychaudhuri writes: "The Bengali experience is of particular interest in the Indian context, for it mediated at least some of the new ideas and influences which shaped modern Indian life," and the babus must be considered the harbingers of modernism in modern day Calcutta (T. Raychaudhuri *Europe* x). Despite heavy censure, the babus did have a measure of achievement, and they led India into the Western world in terms of ideas. Rajiv Vrudhula states that "it is in the babus' imitation, that is, in their taking on of Enlightenment forms of thought, Western manners and habits, and forms of literary and artistic expression, that their construction of a colonial modernity lies" (R. Vrudhula 5). Modern Calcutta owes a

large measure of its modernity to the progressiveness of the babus. English is widely spoken in India now, and without the looming threat of a foreign culture, there has simultaneously grown a love for the native literatures at the present time. The babus began the trend of wearing Western clothing, and men in Calcutta today are most often seen in the clothing of the West rather than in traditional Bengali clothing. Indeed, as with the literature, Western clothing has become largely accepted because of its convenience.

As we have seen in Chapters I and III of this study, the babus were largely responsible for the undermining of the rigid caste-system which had reigned in India since the ancient times, and adherence to the caste system is on the wane now. Additionally, through their speeches progressive-minded babus drew attention to women's issues of the time, as Nobo does in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?*. Tapan Raychaudhuri writes that "the debates on sati, widow remarriage, child marriage, polygamy and women's education were central to the nineteenth-century programmes of reform," and these issues, especially those of sati, widow remarriage, and women's education were frequently the subject of the speeches of Young Bengal babus (T. Raychaudhuri *Perceptions* 13). It is unfortunately true that many of the babus, especially those of the Young Bengal variety, did not follow up their speeches with concrete action, and yet it cannot be denied that the Young Bengal babus brought attention to these issues, and their voices were added to those of the social reformers who were agitating for better conditions and education of nineteenth-century Bengali women.

The babus' influence can be felt in other aspects of Bengali life as well. The secularized entertainments that the babus introduced into religious festivals are still a part

of the Bengali's festivities. Although the *khemtawalis* or *baijis* do not dance at religious festivals anymore, secular songs and plays are frequently performed at festivals in Calcutta now. The lavishness of the babus' festivities too have become the norm, and Durga festivals nowadays are celebrated with as much pomp and show as they were when the babus celebrated the Goddess.⁸³ As with the babus, the festivals have become events where the entire community comes together to celebrate, and the exhibitionist nature of the babus' festivals live on in the competitions in Calcutta in which the best community festivals are given prizes.⁸⁴

The babu phenomenon came to an end because just like the rakes, the babus had short lives, and the babus' lavish lifestyles died with them. Restoration plays do not take us to the end of Dorimant's, Mirabell's, Willmore's, or Horner's lives, but from the Earl or Rochester's life we know that that rakes led perilous lives. Rochester himself was not only consumed with drink but also had venereal diseases. Graham Greene mentions a famous incident from Rochester's life when he was forced to withdraw from fighting a duel with a certain Mulgrave because he was sick. Greene writes: "...the sickness was not feigned, though the vague word 'distemper' covered an attack of the pox caught perhaps, in spite of his discretion, in Paris. He had been treated with mercury at Mrs.

⁸³ The four day long celebration of the Goddess Durga is the biggest yearly festival in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. The goddess Durga represents the feminine force, but also the Divine Mother. The festival celebrates Durga's victory over Ashura, the demon. For more on the Durga festival, refer to *Durga Puja: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, Sudeshna Banerjee, Rupa and Co, Calcutta, 2004

⁸⁴ The competitive spirit of the babus lives on in community Durga festivals in Calcutta today. Asian Paints, one of the biggest paint companies in Calcutta, gives out awards every year to the best community festival in categories like lighting, decoration, idol etc. Since there are hundreds of community Durga festivals every year, the competition for these prizes is quite stiff. Community festivals strive to outdo one another in their bids to win the cash prizes and recognition.

Fourcard's 'Baths' in Leather Lane, Hatton Garden, a month before" (G. Greene 83).

Mercury was commonly used to cure sexually transmitted diseases during the time, and the Earl of Rochester was forced to take recourse to such cures often during the course of his life. In "The Disabled Debauchee" the speaker of the poem talks of the "pox" and the "pains" that force him to lead a life of temperance:

So, when my days of impotence approach,
And I'm by pox and wine's unlucky chance
Forced from the pleasing billows of debauch
On the dull shores of lazy temperance,
My pains at least some respite shall afford (J. Wilmot 116).

Horner has several mistresses, and it would not be surprising if he were to have a sexually transmitted disease. Lady Fidget, Dainty Fidget, and Mrs. Squeamish all freely admit that they have had small pox (Wycherley 1054). Sexual association with such women who have already had a sexually transmitted disease is almost a guarantee that Horner too has been infected or very soon will be. Dorimant too is a rake who might have caught diseases from the women that he has associated with. Etherege was Lord Rochester's friend and it is commonly believed that Dorimant was modeled on Lord Rochester.⁸⁵ In *The Man of Mode*, Etherege alluded to this seamier aspect of the earl's life when a footman delivers a letter from a common prostitute to Dorimant. This is not a scene with any dramatic significance. The playwright inserted the scene show that Dorimant did not only consort with well-bred women; he had visited Molly, the "true-bred whore," and it is possible that he too, before long, will be enslaved to a painful venereal disease (Etherege 537).

⁸⁵ In *Lord Rochester's Monkey* (chapter VII), Greene identifies Lord Rochester as the model upon whom Etherege based the character of Dorimant.

As with the rakes, the babus' libertinism was often cut short either because they quickly dissipated their enormous fortunes or because they died young. Chitra Deb notes of the babus: "...their fortunes begin to ebb—a Bengali proverb says wealth does not last more than three generations..." and this applied perfectly to the babus (C. Deb 62). The babu's grandfather or father had been responsible for the creation of the fortune, and the babu was frequently responsible for depleting their resources. The babu in *Nobo Babu Bilash*, for instance, has spent his entire inheritance and bemoans his fate:

I have become a skeleton now...worries have made me sick, and I don't even get a full meal every day... None of my old friends recognize me now since I have no money. I have even had to take recourse to begging. Now I want to put an end to this suffering by dying (B Bandopadhyay 56).

The babu in *Nobo Babu Bilash* is quite young at this point, and he wishes for death since he realizes that the future holds nothing but struggles for him. *Nobo Babu Bilash* ends at this point but in *Babu Gourober Kolkata* Baidyanath Mukhopadhyay notes that many babus indeed did die young. *Hutom Panchar Naksha* too writes of the relatively early deaths of some of the babus. Birkrishna for example, was in debt. Another babu, the youngest son of the Mukherjee family, got tuberculosis. Pelanath babu's boat drowned while he was on a pleasure cruise with *baijis*. Even though the babu phenomenon came to an end, their legacy and their stories did not. Just as the Restoration rakes are still well-known and intriguing figures in British literature, the babus continue to remain important characters in Bengali literary texts. Like Rochester who is a well-known historical figure, babu Nilmoni Haldar continues to remain an important historical babu, tales of whose lavish spending are still recounted today.

The rakes and the babus both followed libertine lifestyles which were similar in many instances. Like the rakes, the babus preferred the clothes and language of a foreign

country, had troublesome relationships with authority figures such as their parents, turned to entertainments similar to those the Restoration rakes enjoyed, married for money, and had extra-marital affairs. The rise of a new culture of libertinism in Bengal was, then, heavily influenced by the borrowing of ideas and attitudes from the foreign culture of Restoration England. Yet, there were also several differences between the rakes and the babus, and in the manner in which the rakes are represented in Restoration literature and the representation of the babus in Bengali literature of the nineteenth century. While there is an element of admiration for the rakes who are portrayed as pleasure loving men of the world, the babus are criticized for their progressive-mindedness which mainstream contemporary Bengali society found threatening. For example, while the rakes are admired for their sense of style, the babus are derided for casting off traditional Bengali clothing in favor of the clothing of the West. In this move, and others like it, traditionalists saw a rejection of themselves and of Bengali culture. Additionally, as the rake was an influential figure in the seventeenth century, the impact that the babus' had on nineteenth-century Calcutta was great and long lasting. Formed as a result of an imperfect contact with the British, the babus mimicked their flawed colonizers just as the rakes mimicked many of the French customs and manners. Both figures paid almost no regard to the disapproval that more staid members of their societies felt towards them. The babus followed the rakes in their bid to gain sexual, intellectual, and moral freedom from the constraints that society had imposed upon them, and the babus may be thus be viewed as the riotous successors of the Restoration rakes.

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APPENDICES

Literature on the Babus

This section introduces important texts from nineteenth-century Bengali literature that deals with the babus. One of the important aims of my dissertation is to introduce these texts to the Western academic world. Written by writers who belonged to mainstream Bengali society, the texts aim to criticize the babus and provide cautionary tales for the educated youth of Bengal. The texts do not take the often indulgent tone towards the babus that playwrights of the Restoration adopted towards the rakes. All these texts are written in Bengali, and most of them can still be procured from the bookshops in Calcutta. The sub-culture of the babus is still readily available to the Bengalis today. This sub-culture, however, remains largely unknown to the Western academic world.

As noted elsewhere in this study, although some critics such as Mrinalini Sinha, Parama Roy, Revathi Krishnaswamy, and Sumanta Banerjee refer to the babus and sometimes briefly mention some of these texts, these critics do not analyze the writer's motives behind writing these texts, nor do they analyze the texts with the specific intention of highlighting libertine culture in colonial Calcutta. In his book on Bengali literature of the same name, J.C. Ghosh fleetingly looks at some of these works, but he too does not discuss any of them in great detail. Since a basic knowledge of the primary texts is imperative for an understanding of the arguments that follow in the preceeding

this section briefly gives a short biography of the writers of the tales, provides a short summary of the plots, looks at the critical receptions of these texts, and highlights some of the important related social problems that, in addition to babu culture, the texts deal examine.

One of the earliest texts to portray, ridicule, and expose the babus was *Nobo Babu Bilash* or *The Drolleries of the New Babu* (1825) by Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay (1787-1848).⁸⁶ Bandopadhyay was also the author of three other related texts: *Kolikata Komolalay* (1823), *Duti Bilash* (1825) and *Nobo Bibi Bilash* (1831). According to Sanatkumar Gupta, the editor of Bandopadhyay's collected works, Bandopadhyay was well versed in Bengali, Sanskrit, Persian, and English. Additionally, he was a prolific writer and an editor for numerous Bengali journals. Bandopadhyay was also the editor of *Samachar Chandrika*, a newspaper that was begun on March 5th 1822.

Nobo Babu Bilash is written in a mishmash of prose and verse. It also mixes colloquial Bengali with the more Sanskritized, formal version of the language. Bandopadhyay gives a general description of the upbringing of young boys who become babus when they grow up. He lists their education, their transformation into babus, the lifestyle they then lead, and finally their fall. The story follows Jagatdurlabh, a young

⁸⁶ Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay began as a clerk in an English firm but rose to be a banian which allowed him to draw upon his own experiences in his writing. Along with the famous reformist and founder of the Bramho Samaj, Rammohan Roy, Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay was the founder of a newspaper called *Samvad Kaumudi* in 1821. Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay and Rammohan Roy had very different religious views and they soon parted ways. Bandopadhyay then started *Samachar Chandrika* in 1822. He was also the leader of the Dharma Sabha, a group of conservative Hindus who protested against some of the reforms begun by Rammohan Roy. Sumanta Banerjee's book *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* has a discussion of his contributions. For a more detailed biography, refer to the Preface written by Sanatkumar Gupta at the beginning of Bandopadhyay's collected works.

man who, after he completes his education, falls into the company of a skilled and cunning “babu-maker, Sur.” A former babu who has ruined himself, this man attaches himself to Jagatdurlabh and teaches him how to become a babu. Sur presents the lifestyle of babus as one of pleasure and elegance, as a lifestyle that has to be carefully studied and acquired as, according to Sur, not everyone with wealth is capable of becoming a great babu. Jagatdurlabh falls into his trap, begins to dress like a dandy, drinks, visits prostitutes, keeps mistresses, goes to jail for being in debt, sells his wife’s jewels, and is finally abandoned by his sycophants, his mistresses, and the babu-maker Sur once he has depleted his father’s considerable fortune. The text ends with Jagatdurlabh’s realization of his folly as he laments his fate and wishes for a quick death.

Nobo Babu Bilash is a very interesting text because it takes the reader, almost step-by-step, through the process becoming a babu. Some of the other texts on this subject, like *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, also trace the formation of a babu, but none of them go into the depth of detail that Bandopadhyay’s tale does. The babu-maker Sur too is the only figure of the kind that we find in babu literature. Reminiscent of the “dutis” or procuresses who corrupted wives and young widows into becoming prostitutes, the babu-maker is a shrewd judge of character and is well versed in the art of corrupting; additionally, Sur is self-serving, and honey-tongued. It is not very difficult to realize that under his guidance, Jagatdurlabh, whose character is weak, has no other alternative but to become a babu. Sur presents the babu lifestyle and its accompanying hedonistic pleasures in such an attractive manner and Jagatdurlabh is given so little time and opportunity to think for himself that his ruin becomes imminent very early. *Nobo Babu Bilash* features diverse characters such as a rich but indulgent father, a Brahmin priest, an Eurasian tutor,

moneylenders, and prostitutes. By presenting a realistic portrayal of a diverse group of characters *Nobo Babu Bilash* lays claim to being one of the first realistic works in Bengali literature.

Contemporary critics offer Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay mixed praise. In his book on Bengali literature, for example, J.C. Ghosh says:

He has a broad sense of fun, and is given to coarse vituperation; but he writes with observation and knowledge, and his social sketches are among the forerunners of the Bengali novel...he was the first writer who made an effort to use prose for creative work and for giving literary pleasure. He has the longwindedness and other faults of the age, but is capable on occasion of writing with remarkable directness and ease. (121)

Nobo Babu Bilash remains one of the first satirical works in Bengali literature. It is also a valuable social and historical document since it, like some of the other texts that portray the lives of the babus, draws from characters and incidents which could be easily found in Bengali society of the time. Written in racy language, drawing skillful portraits, exposing the follies of the babus, and giving a small voice to the lamentations of the babu's wife, *Nobo Babu Bilash* is an enlightening, interesting, and entertaining read. As with some of the texts that treated the babus, *Nobo Babu Bilash* clearly sought to point out the shortcomings of the babus who merely copied the shallower aspects of what they saw the British indulge in. It is an early warning to Bengali society to take notice of the follies that their youths were indulging in and check the babus' progress before they did away with the traditions and mores that were so dear to their elders.

Duti Bilash followed *Nobo Babu Bilash* in the same year. This takes up a *duti's* tale. *Dutis* were akin to procuresses and they came in various guises in nineteenth century Bengal. These were women who generally undertook professions that allowed them to

enter gentlemen's house and have access to their wives and sisters. Generally, in nineteenth century Calcutta wives and sisters did not come into regular contact with men who were not related to them in some way. The dutis were very important in carrying messages to and from men who wished to have sexual relations with other men's wives and sisters. They were also responsible for arranging secret rendezvous and providing cover for all sorts of extra-marital affairs. Besides this function, dutis themselves kept track of women who had newly come to reside in their localities, and if the women were pretty and young, the duties would inform the babus of the area that fresh prey had arrived. If the babus undertook to pay them, as we see in *Nobo Bibi Bilash* or *The Drolleries of the New Bibi*, then the dutis would also endeavor to corrupt these women and finally bring them down to the level of common prostitutes.

Dutis come in various guises. In *Duti Bilash* they take several forms, each of them more skilled than the last. First we encounter Malini who sells flowers, but she is not as much of an expert in this business as some of the others. The most common form of duti, the *napitanie*, resembles a pedicurist. Their job is to clean women's feet and apply nail polish. They have access to a lot of women and are able to exploit them. Urenis (milkmaids), neris (cooks), dashis (women's maids) are some of the other guises that procuresses in *Duti Bilash* take. Dutis themselves are fairly good-looking and well dressed. They have to maintain an external appearance of sobriety and decency in order to gain admittance into gentlemen's houses. Sometimes, it is hinted that the dutis used to be prostitutes but since they are now older and have lost their looks, this is the business they have taken to in order to earn their living.

Duti Bilash narrates Srideb's story. Srideb is a babu. He is very good looking, attractive to women, rich, and dresses well. In his effort to woo another man's wife, Anangamanjari, Srideb employs several dutis and pays them handsomely. However, after succeeding in forming a liaison with Anangamanjari, being a babu, he also indulges in sexual relations with her maid who was one of the last dutis whose services he employs. Ultimately, Anangamanjari's husband proves impotent, Srideb fathers several of her children who are adopted by her husband, and then Anangamanjari casts Srideb off after he has spent all his money on her. In the course of their relationship, Srideb uses several disguises, reminiscent of the Restoration plays and novels. Like Harcourt who in *The Country Wife* dressed as a parson, Srideb disguises himself as a priest. Like Philander in Aphra Behn's novel *Love Letters Between A Nobleman and His Sister*, he dresses as a woman. In his desperation to have sex with Anangamanjari, Srideb demeans himself, loses his huge fortune, and in spite of fathering several children has no one to carry his name. Finally, he realizes his mistake and leaves the city with the intention of living the rest of his life as a hermit.

Duti Bilash is remarkably frank in the manner in which it treats sex as a commercial commodity which can be obtained for cash. With Srideb and Anangamanjari, it becomes a cold, calculated, and debasing relationship which provides no emotional succor to either of them. Indeed the text makes it clear that neither of them is looking for any sort of emotional fulfillment from their liaison. Along with *Nobo Bibi Bilash* which followed *Duti Bilash*, this text was one of the earliest that portrayed women who were as lascivious as men, and indeed used the men to serve their own purposes. The dutis show no solidarity with other members of their sex. Admittedly Anangamanjari, in this text, is

more than willing to prostitute herself to Srideb with the duti's help, but it also becomes clear that if there were an opportunity to make some money, a duti would not hesitate to corrupt a virtuous girl.

But the dutis' situation also points out how precarious and piteous their position was in society. It brings up the question of what other options society provides to such women and it also provides the answer: none. Probably exploited as prostitutes in their younger days, once they lost their youth this was the only way left open to them. Being a duti was not entirely safe since police who were looking for a bribe would often arrest them. Dutis were not accepted in polite society and no gentleman would openly come forward to offer them protection or a respectable job. Having no education, training or skills, these women took to selling flowers and milk but that was only a pretence for the real business of procuring for rich babus that these women had to take recourse to. Even though readers tend to make harsh pronouncements against the dutis, it should be remembered that earning a meager living was obviously a greater priority than showing solidarity with their sex. Ultimately the dutis become a sympathetic figure since they exploit men's sexual desires, which is the only form of exploitation that they know of, in order to survive in a ruthless and commercial society. We are reminded that we cannot entirely blame the dutis for the services they perform. They would not exist if the babus and their mistresses did not seek their services.

Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay's *Nobo Bibi Bilash* or *The Drolleries of the New Bibi*, (bibi meaning prostitute) written in 1831, shifts its focus to the prostitute. The duti, in this case a *napitanie*, makes an early appearance in the book since it is she who tempts the wife of a hemp addicted babu into becoming a prostitute. The *napitanie* tempts the

wife, highlighting the fact that her husband ignores her but there are rich men in the city who would grant her all her heart's desires because of her beauty. The young wife falls into the dutis' trap and moves to the city where she is introduced to a babu. The babu enjoys her company for a while but soon deserts her. She then drifts into a prostitute's house. At this point in the text, we are given detailed accounts of how a prostitute is trained to please her clientele. The prostitute's education not only includes training in sexual matters, but also learning how to dance, sing, and paint. The new bibi (prostitute) is trained by a number of ustads and finally becomes a full trained bibi.⁸⁷

There is, however, one last important piece of advice that the owner of the brothel, who was herself a prostitute once, has to give the new bibi. The bibi must learn the six "chhs" of prostitution that will enable her to remain in demand and command riches from her clients: "chhalana" (artifices); "chhenali" (coquetry); "chhelemi" (pretending to be younger than she is); "chhapan" (hiding her other clients from her main babu who maintains her as his mistress); "chhemo" (fooling and beguiling her babu with fake stories if he gets knowledge of her other clients); and "chhENCHRAMI" (ensuring that she is paid for her services beforehand) (B. Bandopadhyay 202-206). The story continues with the bibi and her clients but soon the bibi falls in love with a peon and runs away with him, hoping to leave behind a life of prostitution. But her lover stays with her as long as her money lasts, and then deserts her. The bibi is forced to go back to a brothel, but since she has lost her looks, she only gets the position of the maid. But the new prostitute dislikes the old bibi and she loses her job. The bibi becomes a duti but is

⁸⁷ "Ustads" were usually Muslim men trained in Indian classical music.

arrested on her way back from taking a prostitute to a babu's house. Finally, she has no option but to join the vaishnavites and mourn her fate.⁸⁸

Such bibis generally held a position of power for a very short time. A hard life, coupled with the fact that the babus often quickly dissipated all their wealth, meant that they had to take advantages of the babus while they could. With an eye towards the future, bibis would often make demands for houses, money, and jewels while the babu was still affluent. In his book on prostitutes in Bengal Sumanta Banerjee says,

If one reads between the overtly erotic lines of *Nobo Bibi Bilash* one discovers an extraordinary treatise on the attempt at transforming a woman's emotions and passions, her mind and body into commodities in a commercial transaction that is sought to be made profitable to both the seller and the buyer. It is a contemporary version of the *Kamasutra*, where the old "nayika" (heroine) is transformed from the feudal courtesan into the 19th century Calcutta prostitute who is required to cultivate a new set of skills to attract her buyer—the babu. (S. Banerjee *Under 75*)

Besides the threat of being arrested by the police, bibis were also subjected to regular check-ups and treatment since the spread of sexually transmitted diseases to British soldiers was a very serious problem during this time. Kenneth Ballhatchet and Sumanta Banerjee mention that with the passing of the Contagious Disease Act in 1864, if found infected, prostitutes were sent to Lock Hospitals where they were imprisoned for as long as three months during which time they had no income.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ These women lived very simple lives. They earned little by begging and used this money to buy themselves meager food. They usually chose a partner to live with and performed a very casual wedding ceremony by tying a piece of thread around each other's wrist. If either partner wanted release in order to take a new partner, all they had to do was take off the string.

⁸⁹ The British administration opened Lock Hospitals which were some of the first clinics for sexually transmitted disease that were opened in Calcutta. Prostitutes were required to register themselves and come for regular check-ups. In spite of these measures, many prostitutes remained unregistered and the spread of venereal diseases did not decrease.

Nobo Bibi Bilash traces the corruption and downfall of an innocent country wife. It is a fictionalized account of how many young girls from the country are duped into becoming prostitutes in the city. Indeed, it is a story that would be recognizable even in modern day India where women very similar to the dutis lure uneducated girls from the country to the city with the hopes of getting jobs. Such a tale makes the reader wonder why women would leave the protections of their husbands, but the writer is quick to make it clear that their babu-husbands did not offer them much protection, being addicted to drugs and having mistresses themselves. Sumanta Bannerjee notes some of the reasons why upper-class women turned to prostitution. He mentions two women who were interviewed by the contemporary newspaper *Sangbad Bhaskar*:

both of whom stated that although married, they were deprived of the company of their husbands. They served their husbands according to the rules, by cooking and carrying out other domestic chores. Despite that their husbands went out and indulged in carousals with other women. As a result, unable to suffer this apathy and contempt, they left their homes...The *Sangbad Bhaskar* report, while highlighting the reasons for the women's taking to prostitution, stresses a number of factors:... rigours of leading the austere life-style that was required of Hindu widows' ill-treatment by husband and/or in-laws; seduction by paramours. Official records as well as observations by contemporary Bengali social reformers and newspaper editors repeatedly echoed these reasons to explain why middle-class and upper caste Bengali women left their homes to become prostitutes in 19th century Bengal (S. Banerjee *Under* 78-79).

The dutis held out the promise of a better, more independent life lived with a rich lover, and this was often a dream of escape that the miserable wives and widows could not refuse.

Sumanta Banerjee's book *Under the Raj: Prostitution in Colonial Bengal* contains a discussion of the Contagious Disease Act of 1864.

Another important text that focuses on the babus is Pyarichand Mitra's *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* (*The Spoilt Child of Rich Parents*). This was published in a serialized form from 12th February 1855 to June 1857 (T. Thakur Preface 5).⁹⁰ Mitra published under the pseudonym Tekchand Thakur. He was a reformer and a former student of Hindu College.⁹¹ Additionally, according to the editors of *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*, he published a journal called *Masik Patrika* with an eye towards educating women and providing them with something suitable and enlightening to read in colloquial Bengali and it was in this journal that *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* initially appeared. As a novel, it made its first appearance in 1858. Mitra also founded two schools in Chitpur and Nimtala in Calcutta.

In his Preface, the author writes thus of the novel, "It chiefly treats of the pernicious effects of allowing children to be improperly brought up, with remarks on the existing system of education, on self-formation... [the novel is] illustrative of the condition of Hindu society, manners and, customs..." (2). *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* traces Motilal's story. Motilal's father has amassed a huge fortune by working as an intermediary for British businessmen. Aware that he is the heir to this vast fortune, Motilal becomes carefree and reckless and embarks on the life of a babu. His father's attempts to educate him in his childhood fail as Motilal begins to gather a group of like-minded youths around him. Motilal lives the life of a babu, drinking, smoking opium, attempting to rape women, dressing like a dandy, and visiting *khemtawalis*. When he grows older, he tries his hand at business and fails. Finally Motilal comes to a realization

⁹⁰ Narendranath Mitra translated *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* into English with the title *The Spoilt Boy*. It was published in *Journal of the National Indian Association* from July 1882-1883 (T. Thakur Preface 8).

⁹¹ Hindu College was one of the premier institutions of higher education in Calcutta. For details see Chapter 1, note 6.

of the value of money, and he begins to reflect on the manner in which he has been living his life. Realizing the folly of his ways, Motilal goes on a pilgrimage, repents, and is ultimately restored to his wife and family. He is luckier than some of the other babus in Bengali literature insofar as there is still some property left for him so that he does not have to die in poverty. He returns home with his wife, becoming the only example of a reformed babu in Bengali literature.

Alaler Ghorer Dulal is the first novel in Bengali. Additionally, it is hailed as the first social novel because the author points out the weaknesses in contemporary Bengali society and gives advice on how such flaws can be removed. Thakur believed that the existence of the babus was harmful for Bengali society, and he meant his novel to point this out in a clear fashion so that no excuses may be offered for the babus. In order to accomplish his aims, Thakur needed to reach a wider segment of Bengali society than had been reached before. Since most works of literature at the time were written in either Sanskrit or Persian only educated Bengalis could read them. Thakur's novel was the first that was written in simple, colloquial Bengali reaching the masses, and this remains one of the distinguishing features of *Alaler Ghorer Dulal*. Another distinguishing feature is that unlike works produced in the past, this was the first novel that did not look to older Sanskrit stories and Hindu mythology for plots. Thakur garnered much praise for generating original material. More contemporary writer, however, have pointed out some flaws in the novel. J.C. Ghosh says: "He has a watchful eye for human folly and vice, and a good knowledge of social manners and customs, but his blatant moralizing spoils his

comedy” (128).⁹² But even these scholars are quick to acknowledge that Thakur deserves high praise for writing the pioneering novel.

Along with other works of literature of this period, *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* gives a clear and comprehensive picture how a babu is formed. The author cites the laxness of parental discipline, wealth, lack of proper guidance, and exposure to harmful models of emulation as some of the determining factors. *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* is also important because it is the only book that shows a reformed babu. Other works like *Nobo Babu Bilash* show a repentant babu when he has lost all his wealth, but *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* is one of the few works that shows the babu reform and lead a somewhat contended life afterwards. Because of the new language and materials he used in it, Thakur still continues to hold a high place in the history of Bengali literature.

Another writer who holds one of the highest positions in Bengali literature was Michael Madhusudan Dutt, one of the most intelligent and talented poets in nineteenth-century Bengal. He wrote two plays, both in 1860, which contributed to babu literature. According to Gopa Majumdar’s translation of Dutt’s biography written by Ghulam Murshid, Dutt was born a Hindu but he did not agree with some of the traditions and superstitions of the religion. Upon being pressurized to marry a child-bride, Dutt fled his home and converted into Christianity. His conversion was one of the most controversial incidents of the year since he came from a well-to-do family, his father was a well-known

⁹² Reviews of the book at the time that it was published were more favorable. Jon Beams, for example, wrote in *A Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages of India* (1872), “Babu [in this sense meaning “Mr.”] Piari Chand Mitra, who writes under the nom de plume of Takchand Thakur, has produced the best novel in the language, the *Allaler gharer Dulal*, or “The Spoilt Child of the House of Allal”. He has many imitators, and certainly stands high as a novelist; his story might fairly claim to be ranked with some of the best comic novels in our own language for wit, spirit and clever touches of nature” (T. Thakur 15).

lawyer, and he was a student of the famous Hindu College. Since it was usually poor Hindus who converted into Christianity, the missionaries were pleased that this convert was from a higher caste.⁹³ Dutt married an English lady, Rebecca Thompson McTavish, but soon, due to an affair with Henrietta White, his marriage broke up. Dutt and Rebecca were never formally divorced, but after she found out about his affair, Dutt did not ever see Rebecca or their four children again. Henrietta and Dutt had three children but they always struggled to make ends meet. Henrietta died on 26th June 1873 and Dutt died three days later.

Dutt receives more biographical attention here because he is a greater luminary in Bengali literature than Bandopadhyay and Mitra are. At the beginning of his literary career, Dutt shunned Bengali and only wrote in English. His desire was to gain popularity in England, and he did not believe that the Bengali language afforded him the kind of flexibility that he needed to write great works. Dutt composed several works, including plays and poems, in English but he received very moderate success. Some of his better known works include “I sigh for Albion’s distant shore,” “King Porus,” *The Captive Lady*, and *Rizia*. Ultimately, however, Dutt realized that he could only get true success if he wrote in his native language. He was the first to use blank verse in Bengali poetry, an innovation for which he was initially much maligned. Today, he is best remembered for two works written in Bengali: *Ekei ki Bole Sobhota?* or *Is this Civilization?* (1860), and *Megnadbad Kabya* or *The Story of Magnad’s Killing*.

⁹³ On February 9th 1843 Dutt was converted. In his biography *Lured by Hope* Gopa Majumdar reports, “...in the evening, the ceremony for his conversion was conducted in the Old Church. Armed guards were appointed at the gate” (49). Dutt’s father tried to bring him back home several times but all to no avail. His father finally disowned him and in spite of being from a rich family, Dutt died in poverty.

*Ekei ki Bole Sobhota?*⁹⁴ tells Nobo's story. The name "Nobo", which means new, at the very outset, suggests that he is a representative of a new way of life. Nobo, like his predecessors, is also a rich man's son. He has money (his father's) to spend and so finances a club called Gyantaringini Sabha. Ostensibly, this club exists to bring about social reform like emancipation of women and cessation of child-bride marriages, but in reality Nobo and his friends are babus who invite prostitutes and dancers of ill-repute to the club, drink, and make merry with the *khemtawalis*, all the while spouting hollow intentions of changing Hindu society. Nobo, who is the chief financier of the club, is fairly successful at hiding the true nature of his organization from his father until one night when he comes home inebriated and his secret is finally revealed, causing his parents to lament exposing their son to Western education and Western ways. *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* was written at the request of two rich brothers, Pratapchandra and Ishwarchandra Sinha, who were great patrons of the theatre. The Sinha brothers had established a theatre in 1858, and Dutt started writing for them. In a short play, Dutt achieved much. He was able to expose the babus and their hypocrisy, their shallowness, their lack of self-control, and the weakness of their characters.

Dutt's efforts at exposing babus were followed by Kaliprasanna Sinha in 1862. Sinha's contribution is a collection of essays entitled *Hutom Panchar Naksha* or *Sketches by the Barn Owl*. Sinha was born into a rich and renowned family of North Calcutta. Kaliprasanna Sinha was a great patron of literature, and was one of the first to recognize Michael Madhusudan Dutt's talent and acknowledge him as a talented poet at a public

⁹⁴ Dutt wrote *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* in answer to a challenge. His friend had expressed his doubt regarding Dutt's capability to write in Bengali and Dutt took him up on the challenge.

ceremony. Sinha's greatest contributions to Bengali literature are *Hutom Panchar Naksha* and a translation of the Indian religious epic, *The Mahabharata*. Since he was born into a rich family in 1840 and had a Western education, Sinha could also have become a babu, but he did not. In fact, he was a keen observer of the lifestyle of the babus and mocked them in *Hutom Panchar Naksha*. Additionally, he was an editor, a philanthropist, and a reformer.⁹⁵

In a series of short sketches, Sinha revealed the licentiousness and wastefulness of the babu's lifestyle. *Hutom Panchar Naksha* too is a valuable social document since it describes social life and functions like festivals, fairs, and theaters of nineteenth century Calcutta. But the main character most of the sketches remains the babu. Sumanta Banerjee writes:

The most ubiquitous figure who prances about in the pages of *Hutom* and other such satirical sketches is the *babu*. He is now carousing with his cronies in bordellos...now holding forth in broken English over drinks...sneaking off to taste a dish of beef roast. (S. Banerjee *Parlour*180)

Beef is forbidden food for Hindus. Since the babus were Hindus they alarmed society by partaking of beef. The babus believed that by shocking society they could bring about reform. It was acts of defiance like this that alarmed traditionalists who decried the effect Western education and exposure to the British had on the youth of Bengal.

Hutom Panchar Naksha got an enthusiastic reception when it was first published. There were many reviews that praised it for the energetic language used, the realism of the portraits painted, the diversity of the sketches, and the satirical vein in which it was

⁹⁵ Sinha was the founder of the Vidyotsahini Sabha and the editor of several magazines like *Vidyotsahini Patrika*, *Paridarshak* and *Sarvatatta*. He died at the age of 30.

written. It was also noted that Sinha had painted a vivid picture of the city of Calcutta and its inhabitants. Reviewers again pointed out that Sinha had once more shown the evils of his society, and if this timely warning was not heeded, it would be too late to repent the corruption of the youth.

The most important review, which was not entirely flattering, came from Bankimchandra Chatterji. Rabindra Kumar Das Gupta provides us with the review:

Bankimchandra Chatterji compared these sketches of Calcutta life to Dickens's *Sketches by Boz*. 'The follies and peculiarities of all classes, and not seldom of men actually living, are described in racy vigorous language, not seldom disfigured by obscenity,' says Bankim. (R. K. Das Gupta 120)

This review was published in 1871 in the essay "Bengali Literature" published in the journal *The Calcutta Review*. While Chaterji is correct about the language, it is also true that Sinha used language that was actually heard in the mouths of the babus and the on the streets of Calcutta during the time. *Hutom Panchar Naksha* has been called the first true satire in Bengali, and indeed that is an accurate distinction that has been bestowed upon it. *Hutom Panchar Naksha* drew such effective and intelligent satirical portraits that it spawned a number of imitators in the years that followed its publication.

In just a few pages Bankimchandra Chaterji's "Babu" captures the essence of babu culture.⁹⁶ Rajiv M. Vrudhula notes that Chatterji had received English education as a boy and then graduated from Hindu College, which by now had been re-named

⁹⁶ J.C. Ghosh says of Bankimchandra Chatterji, "Bankim-chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-94), the greatest Bengali novelist and the founder of the modern school of Indian fiction...[was] educated at Hooghly College and Presidency College [the re-named Hindu College]' He was one of the first graduates of the newly founded Calcutta University, and took his B.A. degree in 1858...He shared the contemporary craze for writing in English, and *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864), his first novel, was in that language. He showed his wisdom by abandoning English, and writing his next novel in Bengali.

Presidency College. After his graduation, he was offered the position of Deputy Collector and Deputy Magistrate.⁹⁷ Chatterji enjoyed much literary and financial success during his lifetime. His fame is primarily based on his novels. He wrote a number of very famous novels such as *Durgesnandini* (1865), *Bishbrikha* (1873), *Krishnakantar Will* (1878), *Anandamath* (1882), *Devi Chaudhurani* (1882), and *Sitaram* (1887). Begun as a conversation between Janmejaya and Boisampayan, “Babu” is written in a very sarcastic vein, often seeming to praise the babus when, in reality, it is criticizing them.⁹⁸ It is a short essay but it packs in a lot of valuable information about the babus mocking them for their cowardice, for their drinking habits, for their visits to prostitutes, for their Westernized style of dressing, for eschewing their native tongue in favor of English, and for their extreme laziness. Chatterji deplored the frivolous colonial mimicry that he saw the babus enacting, and in a sharp, mocking tone, made more pointed by the ironic pretence at admiration, he thrusts a scathing image of these pretenders into the fore.

⁹⁷ For a more complete biography of Bankimchandra Chatterji, refer to *The Bengali babu: Ideology, Stereotype and the Quest for Authenticity in Colonial South Asian Literature* by Rajiv M Vrudhula, Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1999.

⁹⁸ Janmejaya is a character in the Indian religious epic, *Mahabharata*. Although Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay writes this piece, he puts in the conversation in the mouths of two men from the epic. Boisampayan is Vaishdev’s pupil. Vaishdev wrote *The Mahabharata*.

VITA

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Scope and Method of Study: My dissertation treats Britain's colonization of India and examines how it produced a particularly subversive western influence among upper-class Bengali men, illustrating in particular the many startling similarities between the lifestyles and behavior of the Restoration rakes (1660-1700) and the babus of Calcutta. The babus, in imitation of the Restoration rakes, appear throughout nineteenth-century colonial Calcutta in the guises of world-wise libertines, debauched hedonists, or as a carefully constructed blend of both types. Real life rakes like the Earl of Rochester in Restoration England and Prankrishna Haldar in nineteenth-century Calcutta were often models for the fictional libertines that gained widespread popularity. I examine how these fictional figures and their real life counterparts in British society of the Restoration era and Bengali society of the nineteenth-century operate. In addition, the dissertation explores how the philosophy and lifestyle of the Restoration rakes were imported into a uniquely Indian context, thus exhibiting the rise of a new culture of libertinism in Bengal that helps to enrich our understanding of the British-Indian colonial relationship. The work draws parallels between the rakes and the babus, chiefly those involving the dissipation of inherited wealth in meaningless pursuits, eschewing conventional work at all costs, indulgence in frivolity and entertainment, extreme concern with fashion, pursuit of sexual relationships, resorting to procuresses in order to satisfy sexual appetites, and the cultivation of certain intellectual pursuits.

Findings and Conclusions: The Restoration rake has been well examined in the western academic world; however, my research views them through the lens of a lesser known Bengali culture, and thus provides a new context for their impact on world culture. At the same time, my dissertation introduces to a western audience many hitherto unknown Bengali figures and works of art. By introducing Bengali texts to an international audience, the dissertation brings into focus rich material from Bengali culture. This work, then, contributes to an enrichment of our understanding of the fascinating culture and literature of libertinism as it extends beyond the standard British figures and texts that one normally encounters in scholarship. As such, my study represents an innovative and necessary examination of a significant cross-cultural current and exposes an under-represented though influential figure in the formation of modern Bengali culture.

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