

Cambridge University Press

0521832748 - The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination

Gautam Chakravarty

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE INDIAN MUTINY AND THE BRITISH IMAGINATION

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

GAUTAM CHAKRAVARTY is Reader in the Department of English at the University of Delhi. He is the translator of *Jibanananda Das, Short Fiction, 1931–1933* (2001), and has recently translated *Kapalakundala* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (2003).

Cambridge University Press

0521832748 - The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination

Gautam Chakravarty

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY
LITERATURE AND CULTURE

General editor

Gillian Beer, *University of Cambridge*

Editorial board

Isobel Armstrong, *Birkbeck College, London*

Leonore Davidoff, *University of Essex*

Terry Eagleton, *University of Manchester*

Catherine Gallagher, *University of California, Berkeley*

D. A. Miller, *Columbia University*

J. Hillis Miller, *University of California, Irvine*

Mary Poovey, *New York University*

Elaine Showalter, *Princeton University*

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

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

A complete list of titles published will be found at the end of the book.

Cambridge University Press

0521832748 - The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination

Gautam Chakravarty

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE INDIAN MUTINY AND THE BRITISH IMAGINATION

GAUTAM CHAKRAVARTY



Cambridge University Press
0521832748 - The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination
Gautam Chakravarty
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Gautam Chakravarty 2005

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2005

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Adobe Garamond 11/12.5 pt. *System* L^AT_EX 2_ε [TB]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0 521 83274 8 hardback

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Glossary</i>	ix
Introduction	I
1 From chronicle to history	19
2 Reform and revision	49
3 Romances of empire, Romantic orientalism and Anglo-India: contexts, historical and literary	72
4 The ‘Mutiny’ novel and the historical archive	105
5 Counter-insurgency and heroism	127
6 Imagining resistance	156
Epilogue	181
<i>Notes</i>	184
<i>Bibliography</i>	215
<i>Index list</i>	237

Cambridge University Press

0521832748 - The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination

Gautam Chakravarty

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgements

This book began as a Ph.D. thesis, and I should start by thanking the Trustees of the Inlaks Foundation for a generous scholarship, Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi for granting a timely study leave, and Churchill College, Cambridge for funding my third year in residence, and for a handsome Arts Bursary in the tenth term.

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

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

GAUTAM CHAKRAVARTY

New Delhi

2003

Cambridge University Press

0521832748 - The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination

Gautam Chakravarty

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Glossary

baboo/babu: a Hindu gentleman; but a disparaging Anglo-Indian term for English-educated Indians, especially Bengali clerks

banjara: a nomadic tribe of artisans, peddlers and performers

bahadur: lit., brave

begum: a lady of rank, or wife

Benares: the British spelling for Banaras or Varanasi

bhang: a variety of cannabis

bibi: Persian-Urdu term for lady; but Anglo-Indian argot for the Indian wife or mistress of a British male in India

budmashees or, budmash: a criminal or one with a criminal record

Camdeo or, Kamadeva: the god of love in Hindu mythology

Cawnpore: the British spelling for Kanpur

Collector: the chief administrator of a district under British rule

Company Bahadur: popular Indian name for the East India Company

dacaiti/dacoity/dacoitee: armed robbery by a gang of five or more men

Delhi Ridge: a wooded spur north of the city wall; the British were camped on the Ridge during the siege of Delhi

diwani: here, the post of minister, or steward; but also, council chamber and reception hall; also, the collected works of a poet

darbar: the royal or imperial court

fakir: a Muslim mendicant

farman/firman: an order, edict, royal charter

Feringhee/Firangi: a Hindustani term for Europeans

Futtehghur: the British spelling for Fatehgarh

ghat: landing stage, wharf or riverbank

gosain: a Hindu mendicant order; also a Brahmin sub-caste

Governor-General: the chief administrator of the East India Company's Indian territories; renamed Viceroy after the Crown takeover in 1858

griffin: the Anglo-Indian argot for a newly arrived British subaltern in India

- haveli:** an Indian-style house, usually single-storeyed with rooms arranged around a central courtyard
- Hindostanis/Hindustanis:** the people of Hindustan, including Hindus and Muslims
- jehad/jihad:** the religious duty to defend and proselytise Islam
- Jahanpanah:** lit., 'shelter of the world': a honorific for the Mughal Emperor
- khansaman:** lit., the keeper of stores: chief steward or butler
- khidmatgar:** a waiter; male domestic servant under the *khansaman* (q.v.)
- khufia:** of or pertaining to secret or criminal intelligence; an intelligence agent or police informer
- Lal Quila:** lit., 'the red fortress'; the popular name for the red sandstone Mughal city-palace at Delhi
- Mahatma:** 'great soul'; the honorific of M. K. Gandhi
- Mahratta:** another spelling for Maratha
- memsahib:** an Indian word for a white woman
- moffusil:** the district and other provincial towns as distinct from the presidency towns
- mujahid:** an Islamic religious warrior
- munshi:** a clerk or administrative officer
- Mullah/Maulavi/Maulvi:** Islamic clergyman
- nabob:** the Anglo-Indian argot for an East India Company clerk, official or private trader who had made a fortune in India
- nawab:** the pl. of *Naib* or deputy; the title of provincial governors in the late Mughal administration, though under British rule it came sometimes to mean independent rulers
- newab wazir/nawab wazir:** the governor and minister of finance, or principal minister
- Oude/Oudh:** the British spelling for Awadh
- Plassey:** the British spelling for Palasi or Palashi, where the East India Company defeated the Nawab of Bengal in 1757
- peshwa/peishwa:** the chief minister of the Maratha kingdom; later the ruler of an independent Maratha state.
- pindari:** the roving bands of plunderers in central and western India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The *pindaris* were unemployed soldiers and mercenaries hired by Indian states against each other.
- Raj:** the term for the British government of India after 1858
- Resident:** the British agent stationed in an Indian court, and the instrument of 'indirect rule'

Glossary

xi

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