Introduction

Speaking before the House of Commons in 1833, Whig politician and essayist Thomas Babington Macaulay observed that the East India Company (EIC) was "the strangest of all governments" designed for an empire that was itself "the strangest of all political anomalies."[1] The Company's rise to power had not proceeded along any rational trajectory; as the colonial state resembled "no other in history," its role in India's development remained opaque.[2] And yet, Macaulay reckoned that the British could not immediately replicate the representative political institutions that characterized the metropolitan constitutionalist system. While he advised the Company to devise a new legal code for India, challenge religious tyranny, and gradually admit Indian aspirants to government service, he also urged these authorities to proceed cautiously "to the verge of timidity."[3] In the interim, conflicts were sure to arise under the Company's "paternal despotism," for no nation could "be perfectly well governed till it is competent to govern itself."[4]

Macaulay returned to this theme of the anomaly in his biography of Sir Robert Clive – the controversial "nabob" generally regarded as the founder of British India. At the peak of Clive's career in the 1760s, the Company "was not merely an anomaly but a nuisance."[5] Its directors were both "ignorant of general politics [and] ignorant of the peculiarities of the empire which had strangely become subject to them." Meanwhile, the Company's Court of Proprietors was a veritable pit of vipers that engaged in "indecently virulent" debates. Clive contributed to this disorder by allocating a sizeable amount of stock to proxy proprietors; these machinations roiled certain directors who connived at his downfall. A parliamentary investigation into Clive's alleged receipt of presents and bribes resulted in an acquittal, but he took his own life shortly thereafter. Writing in 1840, Macaulay was convinced that a series of parliamentary acts had remediated this rot within the Company apparatus.

[1] Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Government of India," in *The Works of Lord Macaulay*, ed. Lady Trevelyan, vol. 8 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1866), 122.
[2] Ibid., 142. [3] Ibid., 120. [4] Ibid., 129.
[5] Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Lord Clive," in *Macaulay's Essays on Clive and Hastings*, ed. Charles Robert Gaston (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1910), 60.

No longer a rapacious and bumbling mercantile body, it was now "a beneficial anomaly" purged of its earlier corruptions.

Critics of the EIC, however, continued to insist that this legislation had created an anomalous bureaucratic structure in which the Company's Court of Directors (CoD) in London operated as a "mere cloak" for "irresponsible despotism."[6] In 1853, free trader and newspaper editor James Silk Buckingham was intent on abolishing the system of "double government" under which the Company exercised nominal supremacy despite its de facto subordination to the president of the Crown-appointed Board of Control (BoC). This convoluted arrangement had "the great disadvantage of dividing responsibility and screening offenders"; in reviewing Buckingham's pamphlet, the *Banner of Ulster* concurred that it would be prudent to "put an end to this fatal anomaly."[7] A petition to the House of Lords drawn up by the British and Indian Christian residents of Bengal also urged action against double government. The Company directors had been reduced to cyphers, forced to tamely transmit orders from the BoC to India. And yet, they retained the ability to recall any governor-general, even if he had been following the BoC's instructions to the letter.[8]

After the transfer of India to direct Crown rule in 1858, bureaucratic anomalies persisted and exposed fractures within colonial officialdom. In 1883, Viceroy Ripon's administration infamously attempted to correct a jurisdictional anomaly that prevented Indian judges from trying European defendants in the hinterland. The resultant legislation – the Ilbert Bill – generated a furor amongst the settler community who were intent on upholding a "rule of colonial difference" and maintaining their race-based privileges.[9] Luminaries such as the jurist James Fitzjames Stephen, a former legal member of the Viceroy's Council, dismissed Ripon's crusade against anomalies as illogical and advised the government to openly assert its dominance as a conquering power.[10] Like Macaulay, Stephen conceived of the British presence in India as a propitious

[6] John Dickinson, *India: Its Government under a Bureaucracy* (London: Saunders and Stanford, 1853), 24.

[7] James Silk Buckingham, *The Coming Era of Practical Reform* (London: Partridge, Oakey and Co., 1853), 139.

[8] P. Clarkson Reed and Hindsey Reed, "The humble Petition of the undersigned British and Other Christian Inhabitants of Calcutta," in *Third Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, Appointed to Inquire into the Operation of the Act 3 & 4 Will. 4, c. 85 for the Better Government of Her Majesty's Indian Territories*, 1853 [H.C. 556], 243.

[9] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 18–24.

[10] Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 41. Stephen was the architect of the 1872 Amended Code of Criminal Procedure that affirmed the right of European British subjects to certain judicial exemptions. See Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India: White Violence and the Rule of Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 96.

anomaly that served to uplift a heathen, barbaric population through despotic governance. The language of anomalies, then, was clearly elastic in nineteenth-century political discourse. It could refer to a haphazard, historical process (the Company's expansion), highlight a structural incongruity that was proving defective (the system of double government), and even be reclaimed to justify a heavy-handed civilizing mission.

Historians have also used the concept of the anomaly as a heuristic device to clarify the complexities and ambiguities of colonial statecraft. K. Sivaramakrishnan, for instance, characterizes the forested jungle tracts of West Bengal as "zones of anomaly" that existed beyond the reach of formal British control in the early nineteenth century.[11] Inhabited by "primitive" bandits and governed through tributary relations, this region was frequently contrasted with the legible, settled plains where the Permanent Settlement of 1793 had fixed colonial revenue demands. More recently, Lauren Benton has drawn our attention to "anomalous legal zones" such as the Indian princely states where the ambit of colonial sovereignty was unclear.[12] British negotiations of these overlapping jurisdictions and aberrant legal orders were not isolated events, but rather so quotidian that they "came to be regarded as integral and expected elements of empire."

Although colonial agents may have strategically tolerated these irregular arrangements when the exercise of direct territorial sovereignty was untenable,[13] I argue in this book that anomalies were also a longstanding source of moral unease. The colonial regime's exploitative conduct routinely defied both indigenous and metropolitan norms; policies that were so novel, experimental, or hypocritical as to be catastrophic to Indian interests prompted accusations of "geographical morality" and "un-British" rule. These disturbances were particularly distressing for the global, multi-generational network of India reformers who participated in the British India Society (BIS), India Reform Society (IRS), and East India Association (EIA) between the 1830s and 1890s. These agitators railed against a series of anomalies that had arisen under colonial rule: Indians' virtual enslavement, infrastructural decay, a stillborn imperial civil society, violations of the law of nations, and deindustrialization. They did not conceptualize "imperialism" on an abstract level as an innately benevolent force or an incontestable evil, but rather focused on rectifying these specific abuses.

[11] K. Sivaramakrishnan, "British Imperium and Forested Zones of Anomaly in Bengal, 1767–1833," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 33, no. 3 (1996): 281.

[12] Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 6, 30.

[13] Certain anomalies were more perturbing than others. By 1917, the colonial state had grown leery of granting concessions to private entities such as the Tata Iron and Steel Company, which accrued significant mineral-rich territory through the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 and exercised an anomalous form of corporate sovereignty over the town of Jamshedpur. See Mircea Raianu, "'A mass of anomalies': Land, Law, and Sovereignty in an Indian Company Town," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 60, no. 2 (2018): 369, 381.

Critiquing the Empire

Did legislative interventions and successive charter renewal acts – as Macaulay posited – truly curb corruption within the EIC and redeem its reputation? Revisiting the trial of former Governor-General Warren Hastings (1788–1795) offers a point of entry into this debate. Impeached by the House of Commons and facing judgment before the Lords, Hastings confronted a host of charges compiled by Whig MP Edmund Burke, Philip Francis (a former member of his governing council), and dramatist Richard Sheridan. Delivering a sensationalist oratorical performance, Burke accused Hastings of laying false claim to arbitrary power, extorting Indian princes to pad his war chest, and manipulating the colonial judiciary into executing his detractors. With his "wicked disposition and blackened heart," Hastings resembled a "ravenous vulture, who feeds on the dead and the enfeebled."[14] The governor-general's ultimate sin lay in his observance of a "*geographical morality*, by which the duties of man…are not to be governed by their relation to the great Governor of the universe, or by their relation to mankind, but by climate, degrees of longitude, parallels not of life but of latitudes."[15] Although the trial created a public spectacle in its opening days, the prosecution was hindered by an unfavorable format, a lack of access to officials' correspondence, and the logistical difficulty of producing witnesses with clear memories.[16] Reformers operating decades later would continue to encounter these obstacles to the revelation of colonial misdeeds.

While some scholars have argued that Burke resented the Company for threatening the "integrity and coherence" of political communities in India,[17] others have characterized him as a rather parochial figure. In a strident study, Nicholas Dirks claims that Burke endeavored "to keep the scandals of the East firmly outside the borders of Britain" by any means necessary.[18] In doing so, he played a "vital if unwitting role in the legitimization of the

[14] *Memoirs of the Life of the Hon. Warren Hastings*, ed. Rev. G. R. Gleig, vol. 3 (London: Richard Bentley, 1841), 347.
[15] *The Works and Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, vol. 7 (London: Francis and John Rivington, 1852), 353.
[16] Vinod Pavarala, "Cultures of Corruption and the Corruption of Culture: The East India Company and the Hastings Impeachment," in *Corrupt Histories*, eds. Emmanuel Kreike and William Chester Jordan (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 313.
[17] Uday Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 160. In the opening speech of the Hastings trial, Burke recounted that India's Muslim conquerors had "left the ancient people in possession of their states" and allowed their rulers "to continue in a separate state of Sovereignty." See Jennifer Pitts, *Boundaries of the International: Law and Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 105.
[18] Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2006), 79.

British imperial mission."[19] By effectively scapegoating Hastings, Burke's tirades "ennoble[ed] the idea of empire" and restored a "moral authority for Britain's imperial ambitions."[20] Its original sins expunged, the increasingly Evangelical British nation began to fixate on an alternative scandal: the "superstitious" and "barbaric" practices of the Indian population. The ramifications of this shift were somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, the British public could comfortably glorify conquering heroes such as governors-general Richard Wellesley and Lord Dalhousie once the reputation of the empire was salvaged.[21] On the other, the absence of riveting scandals comparable to the Hastings affair produced a sort of amnesia that diminished interest in colonial exploits altogether and "worked to sever India's affairs from Britain's."[22]

Ethical Empire challenges the notion that Burke's fusillade against Hastings constituted a drawn-out, last gasp of imperial critique.[23] Although few scandals rivaled the Hastings affair in terms of sheer spectacle and bombast, anxieties about misgovernment abroad were hardly quelled after 1795. Even James Mill, whose infamous *History of British India* (1817) offered a searing indictment of Hindu priestcraft and attempted to lower India's standing on the scale of civilization,[24] portrayed recent colonial history as "a sorry saga of stupidity and greed."[25] In one notable section, he took issue with the EIC's coercive bullying of Indian princes such as the Nawab of the Carnatic. A 1792 treaty, which forbid any intercourse between the nawab and other "foreign" powers, authorized the Company to take over the administration of the Carnatic in wartime. Yet Governor-General Wellesley wished to make this temporary measure permanent. The detection of letters between Nawab Mohamed Ali, his son Umdat ul-Umara, and Tipu Sultan (the anti-British ruler of Mysore) provided the leverage that Wellesley needed to diminish the sovereignty of a historically faithful ally.

[19] Nicholas B. Dirks, *Autobiography of an Archive: A Scholar's Passage to India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 194.
[20] Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire*, 162, 296–297.
[21] Hastings' reputation was also salvaged in the 1820s as a "resurgent England" began to erect a pantheon of national heroes. See Pavarala, 325.
[22] Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire*, 125–126.
[23] Lida Maxwell convincingly argues that Burke conceived of his crusade as an experiment rather than a capstone project. His "appeals to multiple sets of laws" in the trial reflected a "dissonant" approach to transnational justice. There was simply no moral consensus regarding Britain's imperial role, nor any established system in place, to interrogate malpractices of such magnitude. See Lida Maxwell, *Public Trials: Burke, Zola, Arendt, and the Politics of Lost Causes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 51.
[24] Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 129.
[25] Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's* The History of British India *and Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 149.

Putting forth a sympathetic – if somewhat belittling – analysis of courtly modes of address, Mill determined that the illicit correspondence in question contained no trace of intrigue. The nawab had simply "felt himself in a state of degradation" and "soothed his vanity" by corresponding with a leading potentate.[26] Moreover, his use of a cypher could be explained by "the state of civilization under which [Indian rulers] were educated," which led them to "make a great affectation of secrecy on very trifling occasions." While Mill found Wellesley's interpretation of this so-called evidence to be rife with error, the governor-general's summary judgment against the nawab was even more alarming. It suggested that "English rulers in India [who were] deprived of the salutary dread of the scrutinizing minds and free pens of an enlightened public" would shamelessly devise any pretext for their duplicitous actions.[27]

In 1801, Wellesley offered Umdat ul-Umara's heir, the eighteen-year-old Ali Hossain, a new treaty that demanded his forfeiture of de facto sovereignty. When Hossain rejected this deal, Wellesley sought a more pliable pawn and anointed a rival claimant to the throne. The disappointed prince, in turn, hired legal representatives in Britain and instructed them to circulate a petition protesting his mistreatment. Hossain made it clear that the Madras authorities had long desired the acquisition of the Carnatic and were using their soldiers to intimidate the royal household.[28] He further challenged the suspension of his state's full sovereignty and disclaimed any knowledge of correspondence between his father and Tipu Sultan. In a subsequent petition, he sought assistance from the home ministry, Company directors, and the British public alike, even urging his ancestors' creditors to intercede on his behalf.

Dispossessed, Hossain died in 1802. Two months later, Richard Sheridan (Burke's colleague in the Hastings trial) demanded that the House of Commons consider Hossain's petition and any official papers relating to the succession.[29] Over the next several years, Wellesley's conduct became a matter of parliamentary debate, with some members actually calling for his impeachment. During one heated session, the nawabs' advocates lamented that India's rulers had "been made slaves" under Wellesley's tenure, thereby disturbing a fragile balance of power.[30] But it mattered little to Lord Castlereagh,

[26] James Mill, *The History of British India*, vol. 6, 5th ed. (London: James Madden, 1858), 221–227.

[27] Later editors of Mill's text were unsettled by the tone he had taken in recounting Anglo-Carnatic relations. To dilute his critique, orientalist H. H. Wilson added a footnote reminding readers that the nawab had been the Company's "creature, not their equal," all along. See ibid., 231.

[28] "State Papers," in *Asiatic Annual Register, For the Year 1802* (London: J. Debrett, 1803), 204.

[29] Sylvanus Urban, "Proceedings in the Last Session of Parliament," in *The Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle. For the Year MDCCCII*, vol. 92 (London: Nichols and Son, 1802), 1050.

[30] Thomas Turton, Speech to House of Commons, 17 June 1808, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 1st ser., vol. 11 (1808), col. 942.

the president of the BoC, whether Hossain himself had a hand in any treason. The Company could simply assume his complicity and oust him, much as the English had driven the Stuart descendants of James II out of their country. Provoked by this analogy, Sheridan rejected the notion that "the rights and laws of nations" could be "trampled upon with impunity."[31] Sympathetic MPs also doubted that the nawab was a mere vassal of the Company subject to its boundless power. Declaring "there was no parallel in the history of [India] which presented so unbridled an instance of insatiable ambition," Sheridan implied that the Company's ethics had failed to improve following the Hastings investigation.

Despite this backlash to the Company's recurrent abuses, there remains a belief that "anti-imperialist political thinking was virtually absent from Western European intellectual debates" of the nineteenth century, aside from the contributions of "philosophically obscure and politically marginal figures."[32] Yet historians in recent years have become ever more attracted to these outliers. Gregory Claeys, for instance, has directed our attention to the small, fractious, and vocal circle of British Positivists who internalized the teachings of Augustus Comte, disavowed free trade as a covert form of empire-building, and envisioned a world federation of small states.[33] Although the Positivists' admirers were convinced of the group's outsized political influence, their extremist views also proved alienating. One prominent acolyte's insistence that England hastily "liquidate" its Indian Empire in the 1870s earned him a reputation for being "half crazed."[34]

Other anti-imperialist voices included members of the working-class Chartist press such as Ernest Jones and the Reynolds brothers, who "knew little about life or politics in the colonies" but "represented events there as a repetition of the misrule they suffered at home."[35] Drawn to the struggles of former slaves and colonized populations alike, organs such as *Reynolds's Newspaper* fostered a sense of "social solidarity, which the British working class ought to feel for the Indian peasants."[36] But while the Chartist press eagerly publicized colonial

[31] Richard Sheridan, Speech to House of Commons, 17 June 1808, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 1st ser., vol. 11 (1808), col. 936.
[32] Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 5.
[33] Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 47–123.
[34] R. H. Elliot, "The True Interests of Manchester in India," *Journal of the East India Association* 6 (1872): 91. The Positivist in question was James Geddes of the Bengal Civil Service.
[35] Gregory Vargo, "'Outworks of the Citadel of Corruption': The Chartist Press Reports the Empire," *Victorian Studies* 54, no. 2 (2012): 235.
[36] Eugenio Biagini, "The Politics of Italianism: *Reynolds's Newspaper*, the Indian Mutiny, and the Radical Critique of Liberal Imperialism in Mid-Victorian Britain," in *Evil, Barbarism and Empire: Britain and Abroad, c. 1830–2000*, eds. Tom Crook, Rebecca Gill, and Bertrand Taithe (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 107.

missteps and shamed aristocratic officials, they struggled to translate their ire into consistent policy recommendations. Even Jones, who initially hoped that the "contagion" of the 1857 Indian Uprising might spread to England, retreated from this position once the mutineers began to suffer defeats.[37] Thereafter, he insisted upon the democratization of British rule in India and recommended the restoration of the princes whose despoliation had triggered the revolt. More so than the Positivists or Chartists, the network of reformers at the heart of *Ethical Empire* brought their influence directly to bear on colonial policy deliberations and kept establishment figures on the ropes.

Some scholars have expressed discomfort with censure that publicized scandalous abuses of power without condemning imperialism on a broader level as a form of systemic oppression.[38] Dirks represents the sensationalist exposure of British missteps abroad as a ploy to reinforce colonial hegemony. As he puts it, "scandal both allowed empire to be 'reformed' and made empire itself far less the issue than the scandals themselves."[39] Elaborating upon this argument, Priya Satia speaks of the "ethical duplicity of the Hastings trial, when the narrow focus on a few bad men or moments of excess blinded Britons to the illegitimacy of the entire imperial enterprise."[40] In a similar vein, Deanna Heath claims that commissions of inquiry tasked with investigating colonial abuses were primarily concerned with erasing "the scandal itself, not its underlying causes."[41] Indeed, she asserts that torture in India "ceased to exist" within the colonial consciousness after the Madras Torture Commission's report effectively closed the book on the matter in 1855.

Admittedly, the short shelf-life of scandals and the limited governmental machinery for probing colonial injustices did present obstacles for reformers. Yet the takeaways from this brand of scholarship are unclear, as it implicitly subjects critics of empire to a kind of ahistorical, ideological purity test. Those who demanded anything less than the total dissolution of the empire were apparently complicit in supporting the subjugation of colonized populations (regardless of their actual intentions). By operating on the presumption that reformers were simply deluding themselves, these studies foreclose any serious inquiry into their motivations, agitational strategies, fraught collisions with obstructionist regimes, and struggle to bring India into the metropole's frame of vision.

Some readers may still find it incongruous that reformers who campaigned for emancipation, free trade, global peace, the extension of the franchise, and

[37] Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2019), 67–69.
[38] Ibid., 56. [39] Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire*, 31.
[40] Priya Satia, *Time's Monster: How History Makes History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2020), 277.
[41] Deanna Heath, *Colonial Terror: Torture and State Violence in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 92, 179.

aboriginal protection against settler violence did not endorse an immediate British withdrawal and the consequent formation of an independent Indian nation-state. And yet, scholars such as Mrinalini Sinha have reminded us that "anticolonial movements…often identified their political and ethical horizons with the contours of the larger imperial polity" even as their agitation "threatened to reconstitute the very foundations of existing empires."[42] Indeed, a series of home rule movements in the early twentieth century aimed to secure some autonomy for India while still maintaining a connection to the imperial system.[43] Sinha therefore directs our attention to specific occurrences – the maneuvers of the Round Table Group and an intra-imperial campaign against the use of Indian indentured labor in South Africa – that produced an "imperial nationalizing conjuncture" in which the prospect of a nation-state began to overshadow other anti-colonial imaginaries. Taking a similar tack, Radhika Mongia argues that colonial administrations facilitated the transition from empire-states to nation-states by restricting the migration of Indian subjects at the turn of the century. These prohibitions on movement redefined sovereignty in territorialized, nationalized terms, culminating in a series of "reciprocity resolutions" that authorized mutual discrimination between India and the settler colonies.[44] The point here is that the nation, as a political imaginary, did not exist autochthonously in the absence of imperial power relations. Rather, it was fashioned in response to specific exigencies that had not yet occurred during the reformers' heyday.

Ethical Empire also diverges from literature that approaches imperial critique mainly as a refraction of metropolitan politics. Dirks, again, insists that Burke's primary concern was not for the Indian peasant but for the preservation of England's imperiled "ancient constitution" that was under threat from the recently returned nabobs.[45] In his early work, Miles Taylor also claimed that British critics repudiated Caesarist forms of empire-building when liberalism appeared to be under threat on the domestic front.[46] During the political ascendancy of Prime Minister Palmerston in the 1850s, "fears about imperialism overseas were inseparable from perceptions of an anti-liberal reaction at home." Echoing Taylor, Mira Matikkala observes that anti-imperialism "rarely meant opposition to the British empire as such," but rather emerged from a

[42] Mrinalini Sinha, "Premonitions of the Past," *Journal of Asian Studies* 74, no. 4 (2015): 823.
[43] Despite the home rule leagues' professions of loyalty, the Government of India still attempted to curb their activities and censor their polemic. See Peter Robb, "The Government of India and Annie Besant," *Modern Asian Studies* 10, no. 1 (1976): 107–130.
[44] Radhika Mongia, *Indian Migration and Empire: A Colonial Genealogy of the Modern State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 135–139.
[45] Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire,* 82.
[46] Miles Taylor, "Imperium et Libertas? Rethinking the Radical Critique of Imperialism during the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 19, no. 1 (1991): 11, 17.

"prolonged competition between…two views of Englishness."[47] Gladstonian constitutionalists who valorized the Greek model of settler colonialism thereby clashed with territorial imperialists like Benjamin Disraeli who wished to replicate the glories of the Roman Empire.[48]

In her expansive study of anti-colonial thought, Priyamvada Gopal rejects this Anglocentrism and attempts to foreground "rebel agency as a catalyst for serious criticism of the imperial project."[49] She cannily suggests that reformers called for "active engagement" with disaffected Indians in the aftermath of the 1857 Uprising; jurist John Bruce Norton even drew on the speech of a dying mutineer in the princely state of Satara to clarify its causes. But insurgent violence did not prompt Norton's critique so much as it validated his preexistent concerns. As editor of the *Madras Athenaeum*, he had previously denounced the annexation of native states and formed relationships with members of the IRS. For over a decade, many of these reformers had collaborated with Rungo Bapojee, an emissary dispatched by Satara's royal family to prevent the Company's extralegal effacement of their sovereignty. Given that these instances of "dialogism" occurred well before the Uprising, I would suggest that the practice of imperial critique was rather more dependent upon the gradual buildup of circuits linking metropolitan reformers with Indian informants and disaffected colonial personnel.

And while it is true that reformers held saber-rattlers like Palmerston in low esteem, this hostility alone did not galvanize their agitation. Their repudiation of the political, legal, and economic anomalies that propped up an extractive system of colonial rule and unleashed widespread chaos in India had little to do with the strength or weakness of any parliamentary opposition to the ruling ministry. In order to determine the level of reformist fervor at a particular moment, we must investigate individuals' personal circumstances, the fortunes of the societies to which they belonged, and the integrity of intra-imperial networks of intellectual exchange. We must also determine how reformers amassed information on Indian conditions, how they interpreted this data, and how they disseminated their findings.

Plan of the Book

Established in the wake of the 1837–1838 Agra famine by a coterie of abolitionists, Quakers, and Anglo-Indians, the London-based BIS aimed to stoke the metropolitan public's interest in Indian affairs.[50] Led by the vociferous

[47] Mira Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition: Liberty, Englishness and Anti-Imperialism in Late-Victorian Britain* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 7, 15.
[48] Ibid., 78. [49] Gopal, 51.
[50] *Prospectus of the Provisional Committee for Forming a British India Society, for Bettering the Condition of our Fellow-Subjects – The Natives of British India* (1839), 2.