‘With Eyes of Wonder’: Colonial Writing on Indentured East Indians in British Guiana, 1838-1917

A thesis submitted by Maria del Pilar Kaladeen in requirement of the regulations for the examination of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature, December 2012

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Declaration of Authorship

I Maria del Pilar Kaladeen hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of colonial writing, as colonial discourse, on indentured East Indians in British Guiana between 1838-1917. Its themes are resistance, creolisation and cultural diversity. I will show that throughout indenture, colonial writing on East Indians in British Guiana formed as substantial a part of resistance to the system of indenture as did the actions of the indentured East Indians themselves. I will further demonstrate that textual creolisation occurred in the way in which colonists became influenced by the emerging culture of colonial Guyana. The primary sources for this thesis include Colonial Office records, Parliamentary Papers, works of literature and missionaries' correspondence.

I endeavour to provide a contrast to recent studies on indenture in British Guiana by looking at the combined role of Europeans and East Indians in the reformation and termination of the system. My work is a deliberate move away from historical studies of the Indian-Guyanese that isolate them from the colony's other ethnic groups, attempting to place them in the historical context of all the ethnic groups who resisted colonisation in Guyana. Due to the relative novelty of Indian-Caribbean studies, the role in indenture of minority groups such as the South Indian 'Madrasis', Muslims and tribal North Indians or 'Hill Coolies' has been largely ignored. Where relevant, using historical evidence, this thesis will address the role of these groups in resisting indenture and colonialism.

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Note on Nomenclature

Creolisation: Throughout this thesis I will refer to the concept of creolisation. My use of this term denotes a documented societal process that occurred in Guyana and other parts of the Caribbean and describes a culture formed as the result of sustained contact between different ethnic groups.[1] I would like to emphasise that I use this term to describe a strand of Guyanese culture and do not seek to advance creolisation as an all-encompassing experience that affected the entire population temporally and spatially.

Creole/creole: The word 'creole' as used in this thesis is employed to describe aspects of the culture and society of Guyana. Where I have spelt this word with a capital letter, as in Chapter 8, I refer specifically to the language of Guyanese Creole.

Guiana/British Guiana/Guyana: Throughout this thesis these terms will be used to refer to the colony before, during and after British colonisation respectively. I acknowledge that the British and Dutch treated the counties of Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo as separate colonies, however the shared colonial history of the counties, as well as their ultimate unification in 1831, justifies their treatment as a single entity in discussion of the period prior to amalgamation.

Prefixes: In this thesis, the prefixes Indian and African, before the words Guianese, Guyanese, or Caribbean are used as opposed to the more common Indo- and Afro-.

[1] Kamau Brathwaite's *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) is the founding work on this subject.

Madrasis: This is the accepted term of reference for the minority South Indian community of British Guiana who were named after their port of embarkation in the Madras Presidency of colonial India.

Hill Coolies: The term Hill Coolies, as used in this thesis, refers to a minority East Indian, semi-aboriginal, tribal group that formed part of the earliest groups of indentured Indians from the subcontinent. In Trinidad and Guyana this group are also referred to as 'junglis'.

Tadjah: The Tadjah in Guyana, also known as Hosay or Muharram is a Shiite Muslim holy day. It commemorates the martyrdom of two of the grandsons of Muhammad and consists of a procession in which devotees carry a replica tomb. No longer in practise in Guyana it is still observed annually in Trinidad.

Note On Historical Sources

It is a feature of colonial Guyanese newspapers that with few exceptions, they were on the whole unpaginated. In addition, the authors of editorials and articles were very rarely cited. Letters to the editor were frequently written under pseudonyms and where this has occurred the pseudonym is represented in single quotation marks. In reference to Colonial Office records held at the National Archives in Kew, where a volume is unpaginated this is cited in the thesis.

Introduction

I. Thesis Outline

From 1838 to 1917 the system of Indian indenture transported nearly one million men, women and children to the Caribbean, South Africa, Fiji, Malaysia and Mauritius. Almost a quarter of this number went to British Guiana.[1] Despite the provision in the indenture contract for a return passage, many labourers chose to stay in the colony and by 1911 East Indians formed the largest ethnic group in the country.[2] The purpose of this first part of my introduction is to provide a brief survey of current scholarship on the history of Indians in Guyana and to outline what I hope to contribute to this area of study.

The first book that attempted to document the East Indian presence in British Guiana was the *Centenary History of British Guiana* by the Indian-Guianese Peter Ruhomon. Ruhomon's work, a largely descriptive and uncontroversial piece of writing, was published in 1938 in order to observe the centenary of the Indians' arrival in the Caribbean. It was not until 1970 that the second substantial work on the same subject was produced; this was Dwarka Nath's *A History of Indians in Guyana* written in a similar style to Ruhomon's seminal work.[3] Published in the same year as Nath's study was Eric Williams's analysis of post-Columbian Caribbean history *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean, 1492-1969*. However while Williams included a chapter on indenture, it was largely confined to an economic analysis of the East Indian and Chinese presence in the British West Indies.[4] Alan Adamson's ground-breaking *Sugar Without Slaves: The Political Economy of British*

[1] This number is taken from David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 156-57.
[2] Dale Bisnauth, *The Settlement of Indians in Guyana, 1890-1930* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2000), p. 211.
[3] Peter Ruhomon, *Centenary History of the East Indians in British Guiana 1838-1938* (Georgetown, British Guiana: *Daily Chronicle*, 1947); Dwarka Nath, *A History of Indians in Guyana* (London: The Author, 1970).
[4] Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1970), pp. 347-60.

Guiana, 1838-1904, published two years later in 1972, was a very different text to its predecessors.[5] Not only did Adamson explore the economic implications of the introduction of Indian labour to British Guiana, he also assessed the injustices of the system of indenture and its economic impact on the African-Guianese population. It was Hugh Tinker's 1974 work *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* that was the first text to use historical evidence to argue that indenture replicated 'the actual conditions of slavery'.[6] The period between the publication of Peter Ruhomon's history and Hugh Tinker's critical account was punctuated by a series of anthropological and sociological articles on the East Indian community of Guyana. These works reflected a denial of the Indian-Guyanese as a distinct community and represented them instead as overseas Indians, worthy of study if only to observe to what extent they had either preserved or altered the 'authenticity' of the customs and language of the homeland.[7]

The academic analysis of a distinct Indian-Guyanese culture, identity and history was made possible in the 1980s when Indian-Caribbean academics, specifically Guyanese and Trinidadian, set about considering the social and cultural history of East Indians in the Caribbean. A boon to this flowering was provided by the growth of small publishing houses in England and Toronto that specialised in Indian-Caribbean texts. The two most important of these in England were Peepal Tree Press in Leeds and Hansib Publications in London's Finsbury Park. In Toronto, TSAR Publications, formed in 1981, played a crucial role in the publication of writing on indenture and the literature of the Indian-Caribbean diaspora. The work of all of these

[5] Alan Adamson, *Sugar Without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972).
[6] Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* 2nd edn. (London: Hansib, 1993), p. xiv.
[7] Two examples include, Philip Singer, 'Caste and Identity in Guyana', in *Caste in Overseas Indian Communities*, ed. by Barton Schwartz (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 93-116 and Raymond T. Smith and Chandra Jayawardena, 'Caste and Social Status among the Indians in Guyana', ibid, pp. 43-91.

groups, combined with the 150th anniversary of the arrival of East Indian labourers in the Caribbean and the establishment of centres for Caribbean Studies at the University of Warwick and London Metropolitan University, produced some of the most important texts about the history of indenture in the Caribbean.[8]

The Indian-Guyanese cultural historians Clem Seecharan, Basdeo Mangru and David Dabydeen were an integral part of the development of a body of work on East Indians in British Guiana during the indenture and post-indenture period. Clem Seecharan's *'Tiger in the Stars': The Anatomy of Indian Achievement in British Guiana, 1919-1929* focussed on the movement of East Indians off the sugar estates and into small businesses.[9] Among Basdeo Mangru's key works from this period were *Benevolent Neutrality: Indian Government Policy and Labour Migration to British Guiana 1854-1884* and *Indenture and Abolition: Sacrifice and Survival on the Guyanese Plantation*. The Indian-Trinidadian historian Brinsley Samaroo produced historical studies of indenture along similar lines and edited *India in the Caribbean* and *Across the Dark Waters: Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Caribbean* with David Dabydeen.[10]

One negative aspect of the relative novelty of the study of Indian-Caribbean history is that the tendency among the historians we have discussed has been to focus on the Indians as a community apart from the other ethnic groups of Guyana. Indian-Caribbean history has not appeared inclusive and seemed determined to tell the story of Indian indenture with little or no reference either to the region's other ethnic

[8] At the time of writing the Centre for Caribbean Studies at London Metropolitan University has since closed.
[9] Clem Seecahran, *'Tiger in the Stars': The Anatomy of Indian Achievement in British Guiana, 1919-29,* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1997); Basdeo Mangru, *Benevolent Neutrality: Indian Government Policy and Labour Migration to British Guiana, 1854-1884* (London: Hansib Publishing, 1987); Basdeo Mangru, *Indenture and Abolition: Sacrifice and Survival on the Guyanese Sugar Plantations* (TSAR: Toronto, 1993)
[10] *Across the Dark Waters: Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Caribbean,* ed. by David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Caribbean, 1996); *India in the Caribbean* ed. by David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo (London: Hansib Publishing, 1987).

groups, or the minority of East Indians outside the fold of North Indian Hinduism. These non-holistic accounts of indenture are quite possibly related to the paucity of existing material on the subject of Indians in the Caribbean and an eagerness to fill the historical void. Another contributory factor is the growth of Indian-Guyanese nationalism borne out of Guyana's 'Burnham years' during which the cultural, political and economic oppression of Indians in Guyana motivated a mass exodus of Indian-Guyanese to Toronto, New York and England.[11]

Consequently it has been left to African-Guyanese historians to produce work on Guyanese history that offers a more representative view of the post-slavery nineteenth century. Walter Rodney's *A History of the Guyanese Working People* was an overt attempt to further his political ambitions to unite the Indian-Guyanese and African-Guyanese community through a socialist interpretation of their shared history.[12] Brian Moore's work *Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism: Colonial Guyana, 1838-1900* was the first attempt by any historian to reflect the cultural lives of almost all of Guyana's ethnic groups in the nineteenth century.[13] In terms of Indian-Guyanese minority groups, it has been literary writers rather than historians who have chosen to depict their presence in the Caribbean.[14] It is thus a desire to build on the existing work of Indian-Caribbean and African-Caribbean historians and writers of fiction, as charted above, which has motivated this thesis.

Another casualty of the novelty of Indian-Guyanese history is that studies so far have not analysed the substantial destabilisation of the system of Indian indenture

[11] Tinker, pp. 385-86.
[12] Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).
[13] Brian Moore, *Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism: Colonial Guyana, 1838-1900* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1995).
[14] See for example the work of two Madrasi novelists Peter Kempadoo, *Guyana Boy* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2002) and Moses Nagamootoo, *Hendree's Cure* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2001) which both depict aspects of Madrasi culture and history in Guyana and were written by Guyanese of South Indian heritage. Trinidadian Harold Sonny Laddoo's novel *No Pain Like This Body* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1972), portrays the lives of the 'Hill Coolie' or tribal East Indian community of a village in Trinidad. In her novel *A Silent Life*, Rhyaan Shah presented a poignant portrayal of a Muslim Indian-Guyanese family (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2005).

by white Europeans. Neither have they considered in any significant way the contribution of minority groups to resistance against colonisation in the period 1838-1917. It is these gaps that my study seeks to address. It is my thesis that the system of indenture was consistently unsteady and that this instability was due to resistance not just from East Indians of all groups, but also from white colonists. In order to substantiate my argument I have analysed a wide variety of sources from the period 1838-1917. These materials include Parliamentary Papers, the journalism of the Anti-Slavery Society, colonial records held at the National Archives in Kew and historical Guyanese newspapers sourced at the British Newspaper Library in Colindale.

This thesis is structured chronologically to engage with what I have identified to be three distinct periods in the relationship between the coloniser and the indentured East Indian in British Guiana. Part 1, which covers the period between 1838-1872, consists of three chapters on the era of benevolent paternalism that followed slavery; Part 2 offers an analysis of the period of aggressive imperialism and racism between 1871-1902; and finally Part 3 is an evaluation of the process of 'writing back' that occurred between 1902-1917, documenting a period when East Indians in the colony began to challenge, in writing, the colonial narratives on their lives that had dominated the preceding decades of the indenture system. This chronological structure has been motivated by the dearth of studies that consider indenture in British Guiana from the period 1838-1917.[15]

I have pointed to my reading of the history of indenture in Guyana as an inclusive and diverse one that involved both white and East Indian resistance. How do I propose to advance this claim within my chosen structure? In Part 1 of this work, I

[15] See for example Dale Bisnauth, *The Settlement of Indians in Guyana, 1890-1930*; K.O Laurence, *A Question of Labour: Indentured Immigration into Trinidad and British Guiana, 1875-1917* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) and Basdeo Mangru, *Benevolent Neutrality: Indian Government Policy and Labour Migration to British Guiana, 1854-1884* which all focus on particular periods of the system of indenture in British Guiana rather than the era as a whole.

will show that the instability that I argue was continually inherent in the system was present from indenture's inception. Thus in Chapter 1 I will examine opposition to indenture from the Indian government and the Anti-Slavery Society while Chapter 2 features an analysis of the important function of the Protectors of Emigrants at the ports of Madras and Calcutta, highlighting their role in the exposure of poor on-board conditions and high mortality. Chapter 3 marks a significant turn in this thesis as for the first time I examine colonial intervention in British Guiana in the shape of judicial rebellion against the colony's Governor on behalf of the indentured East Indians. Throughout these chapters I will reference moments of East Indian resistance that coincided with the benevolent intervention of colonists.

In Part 2 of this thesis, which covers the period 1871-1902, I will show how the Victorian preoccupation with the concept of race and notions of migration as connected to 'self-improvement' led to a period of colonial ambivalence regarding indenture. I assert that some texts produced during this period simultaneously condemned and celebrated the system. In Chapter 4 I will examine two texts by the imperialist and social reformer Edward Jenkins, one a prose description of indenture that largely sanctioned the continuance of the system and the other a literary text that is sub-textually both powerfully anti-colonial and anti-indenture. In Chapter 5 I will analyse the work of the Dutch-Indian Wesleyan missionary H.V.P. Bronkhurst. This chapter will contend that while broadly advocating the system of indenture, Bronkhurst used his position to challenge colonial stereotypes of the indentured Indian, at once symbolising both accommodation and resistance to colonial authority. In Chapter 6 I chart the end of the colonial celebration of indenture as a solution to the economic threat of emancipation. Here I provide an analysis of how sustained estate resistance, combined with written East Indian agitation, finally put paid to stereotypes

of the docile and malleable coolie. This theme is continued in Part 3 of my thesis where I analyse and document the process of writing back. In Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 I provide a study of letters written by Indian-Guianese to the *Daily Chronicle* between 1900-1917. These correspondences reflect the burgeoning radicalism of the East Indian community in this period. However I will also show, in Chapter 7 in particular, that despite increased assertion in the East Indian community, there were still those amongst the colonists who advocated for better conditions and fairer treatment for the colony's indentured and unindentured masses reflecting the consistency of white anti-indenture sentiment throughout the existence of the system.

In this first part of my thesis introduction I have discussed my proposed contribution to the field of Indian-Caribbean studies, highlighting my intention to address the gaps that I have currently identified in the field. I have emphasised that my study of the period of indenture in British Guiana acknowledges the presence of minority East Indian groups and some of the commonalities of the African and Indian experience. However the main intention of this thesis is to address the absence of a single comprehensive chronological study of white writing about indenture, with specific reference to resistance, which considers a variety of texts from literary works to Parliamentary Papers. As such this thesis is the first work of its kind. Among the unique investigations that form part of this thesis are my analyses of the work of the port authorities in Madras and Calcutta; my assessment of the contributions of three missionaries during the period of indenture; and my in-depth critique of the process of writing back that took place amongst the Indian-Guianese community in the correspondence section of the *Daily Chronicle*.

What my thesis seeks to add to current scholarship on indenture in British Guiana can be expressed in two key arguments. The first of these is my contention

that white writing on indenture not only provided a substantial form of resistance to the system but also contributed to the establishment of the concept of a multicultural 'labouring population' equally violated by colonialism; we will see that this idea becomes especially significant in Part 3 of this thesis. Secondly throughout this thesis I will show how Julie Codell's term 'co-histories', with its urging towards an analysis of colonialism that considers the history of the colonised and coloniser together, is of special importance to the history of Guyana.[16] Throughout this thesis I make reference to the symbiotic nature of the relationship between plantation resistance during indenture and white writing that condemned the system. In an extension of the same theme, I also highlight how white writers were affected by the creole landscape of British Guiana. Here I seek to add to existing work by scholars like David Lambert and Mary Louise Pratt who have argued for a more inclusive interpretation of the term creole which acknowledges the extent to which Europeans resident in the region shared in aspects of Caribbean identity.[17] My study of white representations of East Indians under indenture, combined with my analysis in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 of the process of writing back, seeks to show that both the writing of the colonised and coloniser are crucial to an understanding of the emergence of a national identity in early twentieth century British Guiana.

[16] See, Julie F. Codell, 'Introduction: Imperial Co-Histories and the British and Colonial Press', in *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press,* ed. by Julie F. Codell (Madison: Rosemont Publishing, 2003), pp. 15-26 (p. 18). In this work on the British and colonial press, Codell references the influence of work by Edward Said and Frantz Fanon as crucial to her construction of the term 'co-histories'. I use Codell's term 'co-histories' to refer to an interpretation of Guyanese history that acknowledges the shared experiences of the coloniser and colonised. I will return to this idea in Part 3 and the conclusion to this thesis.

[17] David Lambert, *White Creole Culture: Politics and Identity During the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 37, note that here Lambert refers to work by Kamau Brathwaite in his discussion of 'the spatiality' of creole. See also Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 90. I will refer to both of these works again in Chapter 4 and Chapter 1 respectively.

II. From *Encomienda* to Indenture: Contextualising the Arrival of East Indians in the Caribbean and Guiana.

In the introduction to this thesis I will argue that the commencement of East Indian indentured labour migration to the Caribbean was the final act in an established relationship between the Old and New World, in which Europeans sought to profit from the mineral or agricultural wealth of the Caribbean by using enslaved, coerced or unfree labour. I will relate East Indian resistance to a long tradition of opposition to colonial oppression in the Caribbean from the Amerindians onwards, referencing those amongst the colonial elite who, like the writers this thesis focuses on later, contributed to successive struggles to reform or terminate the systems of indenture and slavery.[18]

From the end of the fifteenth century the incessant Spanish desire for gold, like Europe's insatiable craving for sugar centuries later, initiated a system of enforced labour in the Caribbean in which prior to the Africans and East Indians, Amerindians were the victims. The arrival of the Spanish in the Caribbean established relatively immediately the dominant theme in the dialogue between Europe and this part of the New World throughout their colonial history. Gesturing to the gold in their noses, Columbus's first communication to the indigenous islanders of San Salvador was about the source of the metal that adorned them.[19] In what was to become a frequently enacted scene between Europeans and the indigenous people of this part of the Americas the Amerindians, perhaps in an attempt to get rid of the treasure-hungry interlopers, pointed towards the south and told a story of a great king with an empire

[18] The idea of the Caribbean as a site of 'repeating' history is one expounded by Antonio Benitez-Rojo in *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective,* trans. by James Maraniss, 2nd edn, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 3. In addition connections have been made between Amerindian, enslaved and indentured labour by Michael Craton in *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 19 and between indenture and slavery by Brinsley Samaroo in 'Two Abolitions: African Slavery and East Indian Indentureship' in *India in the Caribbean*, pp. 25-41.

[19] Williams, *From Columbus to Castro*, p. 23.

of gold.[20] From 1492, until the death of Raleigh in 1618, European lives were lost in reckless and often pointless expeditions to find the place of the 'gilded one'; a reference to an Amerindian chief who was said to appear before his people covered in gold dust. [21] To all but the dreamers the myth quickly gave way to the reality that the true riches of the Caribbean would be harder to cultivate. For the real *oro* of the region turned out to be the sugar cane that Columbus brought with him on his journey.

Beyond gold was the agricultural potential of the tropical climate: it provided the possibility of growing the coveted products of the east and the Spice Islands such as cinnamon, nutmeg and pepper. These items were valuable in Europe because of the difficulty in obtaining them; there was a monopoly on trade by Eastern merchants and in order to reflect this, prices were vastly inflated once the products reached Europe. The ability of a country to grow these commodities in their own dominions reduced the necessity for trade with other more distant lands and meant that those with overseas colonies could retain their gold supplies. Consequently a desire for self-sufficiency was one of the appeals of possessing territories overseas. The hope that the Caribbean and South America would prove the location of quick riches and easy gold and silver gradually gave way to a reality of wealth that needed time, cultivation and more crucially, labour.

From first contact Columbus had observed what he perceived to be the tractability, or suitability for servitude, of the Amerindian tribes he first met in the Caribbean. His observation was shortly followed by their enslavement in Spanish gold mines all over the new Iberian territories.[22] Eric Williams notes that rather than slavery or enforced labour being a New World phenomenon, the Spanish brought with

[20] Hugh Thomas, *Rivers of Gold: The Rise of the Spanish Empire* (London: Phoenix, 2003), p. 106.
[21] Vere T. Daly, *A Short History of the Guyanese People* (London: Macmillan Education, 1975), p. 35.
[22] Williams, *From Columbus to Castro*, p. 31.

them ‘an economic and social heritage in which slavery and serfdom were constituent elements’. This he remarks was not unique to Spain but to ‘medieval Europe in general’.[23] The enslavement of the Amerindians in early Spanish sugar plantations lasted until the intervention of the Dominican Friar Bartolome De Las Casas, who fought for the emancipation of the Indians after he saw first-hand how they were treated.[24] Yet this early abolitionist promoted the enslavement of Africans and their transportation to the Caribbean as an alternative source of labour.[25] In this aspect Las Casas presaged the ambivalence of some anti-indenture campaigners or indenture-reformers that appear later in the thesis. Like Las Casas, their rhetorical disgust was secondary to the advancement of imperial economic considerations.

Do these imperial concerns diminish the importance of the work of European reformers however? The Cuban scholar Antonio Benitez-Rojo has argued for a re-evaluation of the writing of Las Casas. He contends that Las Casas’s work on the Caribbean was ‘the historical basis for a nationalist argument aimed at questioning the legitimacy of Spanish colonial rule in America’.[26] Benitez-Rojo cites as support the fact that some of Las Casas’s works were banned by the Spanish and fuelled protests in Spain even after his death.[27] Las Casas had promoted African slavery, but the fact that he was ‘one of the first to lament the consequences of the slave traffic’ locates him very much in the paradoxical tradition of the European writers that we will explore throughout this thesis, who simultaneously wrote about indenture in both laudatory and condemnatory tones.[28] Michael Craton rightly asserts that little attention has been paid to the connection between Amerindian and African resistance as it related to Europeans. His claim that Amerindian resistance ‘set a pattern that was

[23] Ibid, p. 30.
[24] Ibid, p. 34.
[25] Ibid, p. 37.
[26] Benitez-Rojo, p. 86.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid, p. 53.

to be replicated throughout the course of European colonisation' is important.[29] However it is equally important to acknowledge the European role in resistance against unfree labour in the Caribbean.

Certainly Benitez-Rojo is right in asserting that Las Casas belongs to, or even started, a tradition of European writing about the Caribbean. Indeed from the intervention of Bartolome Las Casas it can be stated that the colonisers were divided into two groups, those based in the metropole who felt obliged to protect the labourers from the excesses of the Europeans of the New World and the Europeans of the New World themselves, who had to all extents and purposes 'gone rogue'. They were depicted as having been corrupted by their distance from the 'civilising' metropole and their exposure to a debasing tropical landscape. This idea was enforced by narratives like Las Casas's *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* published in 1542, Aphra Behn's fictional work *Oroonoko* published in 1681 and John Scoble's *Hill Coolies: A Brief Exposure of the Hill Coolies in Mauritius and British Guiana and of the Nefarious Means by Which They Were Induced to Resort to These Colonies* published in 1840.[30] Narratives like these set up a contention between those that felt that they had authority over the 'true' narrative of the West Indies and a presumption that the general public living in the metropole would be sufficiently horrified into casting censure over the colony or colonies in question.

The Iberian monopoly over the Caribbean, South America and its labour was not to last. With only the authority of a Papal Bull whose power newly Protestant Europe disregarded, it was not long before other European powers, namely the English, French and Dutch were to come seeking their fortunes in the New World.

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[29] Craton, p. 19.
[30] Bartolome De Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (London: Penguin, 1992); Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko and Other Stories* (Cologne: Konemann, 1999); John Scoble, *Hill Coolies: A Brief Exposure of the Hill Coolies in Mauritius and British Guiana and of the Nefarious Means by Which They Were Induced to Resort to These Colonies* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1840).

Unlike the Spanish and Raleigh, who had used Guiana as a gateway to *El Dorado*, the Dutch looked beyond gold and became the first European settlers in Guiana, forming the colonies of Esssequibo (1616), Berbice (1627) and Demerara (1752). As tea and coffee became more popular in Europe the need for a sweetener for these beverages increased. Colonies like Guiana, where sugar could be grown successfully and abundantly became more desirable.

Under the Dutch the arrival of Commander Laurens Storm van Gravesande, who governed the colony from 1742-1772, was a crucial point in Guiana's development. Gravesande was the force behind much of the physical development of the three regions making Demerara habitable for Europeans and encouraging diversification of crops for export so that planters began to see a future beyond sugar.[31] It was during Gravesande's time as Commander that English planters began to settle in Demerara. Gravesande's encouragement, as well as the success of the English plantations, soon saw Demerara populated by a majority of English planters with their own English Commander. The late eighteenth century brought greater economic prosperity to the colony as more European settlers arrived in Demerara and more slave labour, consolidating an African presence that had begun with the first slaves introduced into the colony by the Dutch in 1657.[32] In 1781, during the American War of Independence, the British seized Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo. With the end of hostilities in Europe, Guiana was handed back to the Dutch in 1783. The presence and power of the British in the colony had been growing since Gravesande's encouragement to English settlers in Demerara. A further occupation by

[31] For a detailed consideration of Gravesande's contribution see Daly, p. 85.
[32] Daly, pp. 53-4.

the British from 1796-1802 secured their presence there, and the three colonies were finally ceded to the British along with the Cape of Good Hope in 1814.[33]

I have stated my intention to represent the diversity and heterogeneity of indenture in British Guiana. This is in harmony with the work of some recent Caribbean historians who have counselled against the perpetration of the historical myth of a homogenous slave experience.[34] Just as assertions of heterogeneous experience can be applied to the enslaved African-Caribbean population and indentured Indians, so too can they be extended to the indigenous Amerindians of the Caribbean. Superficial representations of the history of the Amerindians in the Caribbean, particularly those on the islands, commonly misrepresent these groups as having been 'wiped out by the Spanish' or destroyed by their contact with European illnesses. However the role that the Amerindians played in the history of the colonisation of the Caribbean is far more substantial than that portrayed in the myth of their instantaneous demise upon the arrival of the Europeans. The 'Black Caribs' of St Vincent and the Carib community of Dominica formed particularly powerful resistance to the Europeans, combining with Maroon communities to threaten their hold on these islands.[35] The Amerindians did more than present a physical challenge to the Europeans; in terms of diplomacy they tactically and successfully played different colonial powers against each other, manipulating them to further their own interests where possible.[36]

What was particular to the survival of the Guianese Amerindians and their strategies of resistance was their ability to retreat from the coastline to the interior unmolested. They were aware that their understanding of the vast Guianese landscape

[33] Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice were united to form the single colony British Guiana in 1831.
[34] B.W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 3.
[35] The term Maroon refers to African groups in the Americas that escaped plantation slavery to create independent communities.
[36] Graham D. Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography and a British El Dorado* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 19.

and its rivers rendered them valuable to both the Dutch and the British. Under Dutch rule, Storm Van Gravesande was particularly wary of Dutch traders combining with Caribs to raid other tribes and enslave members of these groups. Gravesande's intervention was diplomatic at source, he understood that 'a war with the natives would be the ruin of the Colony' driving the Dutch away from the coastland that they had subdued and into a forbidding interior of which they knew little.[37] As Alan Adamson has observed much of present-day Guyana 'remains as Raleigh first saw it, untouched by history' and there is a strong impression of Guyana as being a land in which resistance is ubiquitous; embodying this is the landscape which has always defied complete colonisation or settlement.[38]

The Amerindian relationship with the Guianese landscape differed greatly from that of the Europeans.[39] The Dutch and British occupied themselves by carving out successive plantations on the coastal plains: their dialogue with the territory centred on what they might extract from it. As Alvin Thompson comments, the Europeans saw the country 'not as an area of settlement but one of exploitation'.[40] While the location of Guiana, on the coast of South America, was useful for Raleigh in terms of the access it offered to the rest of the Spanish Empire, for the Guianese Amerindians its location aided their survival in that, unlike the island Tainos, Arawaks and Caribs, retreat from the colonisers was always possible.[41] This is not to detract from the skill of the Amerindians of the islands, whose success in resisting European settlement saw the Lesser Antilles being referred to by one historian as 'The

[37] C.A Harris and J.A.J de Villiers, *The Rise of British Guiana* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1911), p. 28.
[38] Adamson, p. 15.
[39] Two works on the Dutch and their role in the colonisation of the New World are Benjamin Schmidt's *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570-1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and Cornelis Ch Goslinga's *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791* (New Hampshire and Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1985).
[40] Alvin O. Thompson, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Guyana, 1580-1803* (Bridgetown: Carib Research & Publications, 1987), p. 15.
[41] Ibid, p. 19.

Poison Arrow Curtain'. [42] Vere Daly acknowledges that in the case of Guiana the Dutch 'used Indian hostility to the Spanish and Portuguese for their own advantage'.[43] But the Amerindians also negotiated their relationships with the Dutch skilfully and when diplomacy failed, the Amerindians challenged Dutch slave raiders and independent traders with violence.[44] Alvin Thompson further argues that much of the Dutch portrayal of 'ownership' of Guiana was illusory:

> Sometimes this official correspondence seems to imply that the Indians were under Dutch control but in moments of greater lucidity and honesty Dutch dependence on the good-will and substantial assistance of the Indians becomes manifest. On balance, the sources indicate a delicate alliance between the so-called 'colonizer' and the 'colonized'[45]

The Amerindians openly objected to Dutch plans to mine in particular areas in the interior and their displeasure influenced the decisions of the ambitious colonisers to leave the land unmolested. The Dutch did not substantially affect the economic landscape of the Amerindians either; their cultivation was not greatly changed by the presence of the Europeans regardless of their interest in products such as annatto, which they exported to Holland to dye cheese.[46] Ultimately, as Robin Blackburn has stated: 'The tendency of the Indians to withdraw a fair distance from the seat of Dutch power was one of the clearest expressions of their independence.'[47]

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[42] Burnett, p. 19.
[43] Daly, p. 45.
[44] Thompson, p. 181.
[45]Thompson, p. 199.
[46] Thompson, p. 183.
[47] Robin Blackburn, 'Coerced Labour in the Americas and Africa', in *The Worlds of Unfree Labor: From Indentured Servitude to Slavery,* ed. by Colin Palmer (Aldershot and Brookfield: Ashgate Variorum, 1998), pp. 85-122 (p.108).

When Bartolome de Las Casas agitated for an end to the enslavement of the Amerindians he put forward Africans as a possible labour substitute and set in motion the beginnings of the Caribbean slave trade.[48] Agricultural cultivation had begun in earnest, and Europeans realised that they would need an inexhaustible supply of slaves. The Portuguese, who through an early presence in Central and West Africa were already supplying slaves to work on their plantations in Brazil, now began to provide slaves for the Caribbean colonies.[49] Aspects of Amerindian resistance can be traced in the corresponding efforts of the Africans of the Caribbean to resist slavery. Indeed the concept of Maroonage reflected the Amerindian mode of separation from hostile white communities.

Unsurprisingly then, many Maroon communities mixed socially and ethnically with the Amerindians of the Caribbean in the enclaves that they formed together all over the region, from St Vincent and Dominica to Jamaica and Guiana. Maroonage represented more than 'running away' from the oppressors to build an alternative society. Maroon communities often presented a direct threat to plantations. As Alvin Thompson states the presence of Maroon communities in Guiana, so close to the plantations, suggested that they had 'dedicated themselves to a war of attrition'. This militant and martial aspect of the behaviour of Maroon groups, Daly argues, was with the exception of Jamaica, limited to Guiana and Surinam.[50] In fact a serious attempt to take over West Demerara by the Maroons was almost successful in 1795.[51]

Resistance to slavery or to colonial oppression in the Caribbean was not limited to spaces away from the plantations and the threat of revolts was omnipresent on estates throughout slavery, from the time of the Spanish to the termination of the

[48] For histories of the Atlantic slave trade see, James Walvin, *Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2005) and Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (Basingstoke and Oxford: Macmillan, 1997).
[49] Daly, p. 53.
[50] Thompson, p. 147 and Daly, pp.141-42.
[51] Daly, p. 142.

system and after.[52] The fact that the number of labourers, under the systems of slavery and indenture, was always greater than that of the colonial authority meant that Caribbean colonies continually existed on the brink of violence. Indeed either on or off the plantation resistance was ubiquitous. As James Walvin asserts in *Questioning Slavery*, 'the history of slavery is the story of enslaved resistance as much as slave-owning domination'.[53] Uprisings of African and Indian labourers persisted well into the post-emancipation years, showing a link between violence as a form of resistance to colonial authority as well as enslavement.[54]

Significant revolts in Guiana included the Berbice slave rebellions of 1762 and 1764, which constituted the first notable attempts by slaves in Guiana to win their freedom, and the Demerara Uprising of 1823. The Berbice uprisings were a key example of the potential power of the slaves. Vere Daly discusses the possibility that slaves in Berbice were influenced by a successful attempt by the 'Bush-Negroes' of neighbouring Surinam to secure their freedom and the right to occupy the interior. Although the uprising was eventually quelled, the Berbician slaves successfully occupied a large part of Berbice for ten months and Alvin Thompson asserts that the rebellion, for which the Europeans were 'militarily and psychologically' unprepared, left the 'colonial foundations' and the colonists 'visibly shaken'.[55]

In the late eighteenth century the slaves' fight for freedom received help from an unexpected quarter when Europeans began to agitate for an end to slavery. The abolitionist movement contained two main strands, political and moral. It is not enough to say that the movement to end slavery was a Christian or humanitarian crusade: the force that finally ended slavery drew part of its power from both

[52] Williams, *From Columbus to Castro*, pp. 66-8, discusses revolts and Maroon rebellions in the Spanish Caribbean.
[53] James Walvin, *Questioning Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 117.
[54] For a discussion of riots following emancipation see Gad Heuman, "Is this what you call free?" Riots and Resistance in the Anglophone Caribbean', in *Contesting Freedom: Control and Resistance in the Post-Emancipation Caribbean,* ed. by Gad Heuman and David V. Trotman (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2005), pp. 104-117 (pp. 104-07).
[55] Daly, p. 151 and Thompson, pp. 152-53.

elements, and it is unlikely that one would have been able to succeed without the help of the other. Economic factors consistently dominated Europe's dealings with the Caribbean and Howard Temperley stresses that even Englishmen 'aware of the horrors of the trade', balked at the idea that if they alone agreed to abolition, they would 'sacrifice their position as the world's leading sugar producer.'[56] However the British slave trade was abolished in 1807 and, despite the continual protests and complaints from the plantocracy, the end of the apprenticeship system, which followed emancipation in 1833, occurred in 1838.

At this stage in our survey of Caribbean history we have already seen two groups of enslaved labourers, the Amerindians and Africans, liberated by metropolitan agitation. Yet in terms of the intended economic assault on the Caribbean, nothing else had changed and the issue of a replacement labour force and system presented itself to the Caribbean plantocracy, who had fought vehemently with the metropole in order that they might keep their slaves. Out of the ashes of slavery re-emerged a system that had served the Americas before enforced African labour and which had its roots in the European Middle Ages: that system was indenture. How did this system, which formed a vital part of the labour force of the Caribbean and North America pre and post-slavery function? M.L. Bush, who describes indenture in the Americas before and after slavery, gives a fair definition:

> In both phases men and women bound themselves for something like three to five years to serve in a distant land, usually thousands of miles from home. Their bondage was defined in a written contract (that is, an indenture). Originally placed in the ownership of whoever paid for their voyage out, they

[56] Howard Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery, 1838-1870* (London: Longman, 1972), p. 5.

> were, on arrival usually sold to a master who was legally entitled to exploit their labour until the contract expired, or to sell them on. […] However, indentured servants had no choice of master or of the work to be done; and fierce public laws tied them to the master's service. In this sense, indentured service resembled serfdom and slavery.[57]

The many abuses to which the system of indenture was open are evident in the historical records of this period. Kidnapping and enticement all played a role in securing indentured labourers in Europe who arrived to uniformly poor conditions and treatment in the seventeenth century Caribbean.[58] However it was the elements of indenture that separated it from slavery that the plantocracy hoped to focus on in order to secure the reintroduction of the system in the nineteenth century.

M.L. Bush describes indenture as having 'two distinct phases, the first confined to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the second to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'.[59] The first indentured servants in the Americas actually predated the African slave presence and 'played a major role in early British migration to the New World'.[60] Yet it was the quantity and cost of labour that was to determine the fate of the Africans as white indentured labourers proved too costly and too sparse for the planters of the Americas.[61] Thus Russell R. Menard concludes that in Chesapeake, for example, 'planters did not abandon indentured servitude; it abandoned them'.[62] Further south, and for similar reasons, white indentured labour was also reaching its climax in the Caribbean. As sugar became the favoured product

[57] M.L Bush, *Servitude in Modern Times* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), p. 28.
[58] Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro,* pp. 96-97 and Don Jordan and Michael Walsh, *White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 2007), p. 127 & p. 179.
[59] Bush, p. 28.
[60] David W Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America: An Economic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 3.
[61] Russell L. Menard, 'From Servants to Slaves: The Transformations of the Chesapeake Labor System', in *The Worlds of Unfree Labor: From Indentured Servitude to* Slavery, pp. 205-40 (p. 239).
[62] Ibid.

of the Caribbean plantations, planters believed that the labour-intensive nature of its manufacture meant that white labourers would never suffice in either numbers or cost.[63] After the failure of this first phase of indenture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was only post-emancipation that the system was resurrected.

East Indian indenture did not follow smoothly on from the labour void that emancipation left behind. Prior to the plantocracy embracing Indian indenture a number of other groups were experimented with as labourers. The 1830s and 1840s saw an attempt at indenturing Africans, Europeans (mainly Madeirans) and West Indians. Brought into the colony from famine-stricken Madeira in 1835, the Portuguese presence in British Guiana predated that of the Indians and Chinese.[64] However they proved to be a disaster on the plantations where they died in large numbers of diseases such as yellow fever, malaria and dysentery.[65] Colonial records reveal that one of the main reasons for high mortality among the Madeiran Portuguese was the inadequate housing provided for them on the estates.[66] The experiences of the Portuguese in British Guiana are important to our discussion of Indian indentured labourers in that many of their difficulties in these early years of indenture foreshadowed those of the East Indians who were to come after them. As we will see later, inadequate housing and ill-preparedness on the part of the plantocracy cost the lives of many Indian labourers and successive official enquiries appeared frequently to do nothing more than blame a perceived susceptibility to illness on the immigrants and their 'habits' or their frailty on embarkation. This idea that the immigrant was

[63] Williams, *From Columbus to Castro*, pp. 107-10.
[64] Immigration from China to British Guiana was brief and intermittent. Like that of the Portuguese it never took place in substantial numbers. Chinese immigration will be considered more fully in Chapter 3.
[65] Parliamentary Papers, 1847/48, Vol. XXVI, 'Eighth General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners', Dr Bunyun to Henry Light, 6 January 1848, pp. 63-64.
[66] Mary Noel Menezes, *The Portuguese of Guyana: A Study in Culture and Conflict* (London: William Goodenough House, 1992), pp. 24-25.

complicit in their own demise was to occur on the voyages to and from the Caribbean also.[67]

The Portuguese were not fated to remain on the estates for long. In 1842 official emigration from Madeira was stopped and did not open again until 1846. This inconsistent pattern of emigration from Madeira was to repeat itself throughout the rest of the century. Importantly though an interesting phenomenon occurred in the interim gaps. Keen to join their families in Demerara, or eager to enjoy some of the financial success that they had heard was possible in Guiana, many Portuguese began to emigrate unofficially with 1,200 arriving between 1842 and 1846. Further traders began to arrive from Madeira carrying, amongst other things, cargoes of wine, potatoes, onions, garlic and fish. Soon the Portuguese began to move off the estates and into huckstering; such was their success in this new trade that a large number of Portuguese shops and businesses opened up in the colony.[68]

There is no doubt that the original attempt to lure the Portuguese to British Guiana was related to more than just a labour vacuum in the colony. The Demerara Slave Revolt of 1823 had reminded the plantocracy of the sheer weight of numbers of the African population. Their intention, following a classic colonial pattern, was to allow the Portuguese to form a buffer zone to prevent discontent and rioting directed from the African population towards the British.[69] The Portuguese, supported financially by the government in retail enterprises, would be the target of African disquiet. With the Portuguese usurping a trade that was predominantly African and the banks giving them better terms of credit than the Africans the accuracy of the British belief that the Portuguese would be resented was borne out in the riots that

[67] This will be discussed at length in Chapter 2 of this work.
[68] Menezes, pp. 29-30.
[69] Mangru, *Benevolent Neutrality*, p. 39.

took place amongst the Portuguese and Africans in 1856 and 1889.[70] The racial tension that developed between the African-Guianese and Portuguese-Guianese, as a result of the colonial policy of 'divide and rule', becomes significant to this study from Part 2 onwards where we see the effect of a similar colonial narrative on the relationship between see the Indian-Guianese and African-Guianese.

The success of the British intention to use the Portuguese as a buffer depended very much on the paradox of their similarity and difference to the British. Though white, the Portuguese were Catholic not Protestant, they had their own language, their own customs and chose not to mix with the colonial elite who were no more eager to invite them into their social sphere.[71] Once the Portuguese had attained dramatic economic success in the colony, they became the target of British envy and resentment. It was always clear, that despite the fact that they were also Europeans, they were not part of the colonial elite. As the Guyanese historian Mary Noel Menezes points out:

> From the very outset the Portuguese immigrants, hailing from Madeira, though as white as their European brethren were seen as a dirty, greedy, grasping lot, *sans* class and *sans* culture.[72]

Although the colonists to a large extent aided them, the story of the Portuguese was a remarkable one, particularly in view of the discriminatory attitudes that marked their treatment by the British. Within the space of one generation, people who had come to the colony with little had improved their circumstances to such an extent that they

[70] Adamson, pp. 70-71 and Rodney pp. 163-164.
[71] Rodney, p. 143 and Menezes, p. 69.
[72] Menezes, p. 3.

were able to send their children overseas to be educated in Europe.[73] In Part 3 of this thesis we will see that this dramatic ascendance was also part of the Indian-Guianese experience as the first doctors and lawyers emerged from this community in the 1890s.

It was in the midst of Portuguese emigration to the colony in 1838 that the ships *Whitby* and *Hesperus* brought the first Indian indentured labourers to British Guiana. Their arrival was the design of John Gladstone, father of the future Prime Minster, William Gladstone, and the owner of two sugar estates in Demerara. Gladstone's experiment with Indian labour in British Guiana was related to his knowledge of the successful use of Indian labourers on sugar plantations in Mauritius. As we will see in Chapter 1, the concern of the Anti-Slavery Society followed Gladstone, and alarm over the treatment of the Indians, combined with their high mortality on the Demerara estates, put a stop to indenture to the Caribbean until 1845 when plantocracy pressure on the home government resulted in the recommencement of the system.[74]

In the Caribbean the main beneficiaries of Indian labour were British Guiana and Trinidad, though Indians were also sent to St. Lucia, St. Kitts, Grenada, Jamaica, Martinique and Guadeloupe. The majority of Indian immigrants to the Caribbean came from the North of India. However, despite recent emphasis on a homogenous Hindu North Eastern Indian culture in the Caribbean, the truth was that Indian immigration to the Caribbean was a richly variegated affair.[75] Indian labourers included Hindus and Muslims from North India, Madrasis from South India and semi-aboriginal tribes like the Dhangars and Kols, called 'Hill Coolies' by the British.

[73] Ibid, p. 54.
[74] Tinker, p. 81.
[75] See for example Clem Seecharan's *Bechu: Bound Coolie Radical in British Guiana 1894-1901* (Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 1999), p. 10, which discusses the importance of the Ramayana to the North Indians and how this in turn shaped Indian resistance. See also Brian Moore's *Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism*, Chapters 7 and 8 of which centre on the idea of a unifying Bhojpuri culture in colonial Guyana.

Very early on in the system the planters began to show a preference for the Calcutta-embarked North Indian immigrants, claiming they were good plantation workers and more malleable than the Madrasis who were stereotyped as troublesome, wilful and independent characters. Yet such claims did not stop the plantocracy turning to Madras when numbers were short. The push factors for both the North and South Indians were similar: famine, family disputes, lack of employment, being duped by recruiters and sometimes, quite simply, a desire for a better life.[76]

Conditions for Indians in their new homes were overwhelmingly bad. Occupying the same quarters that had formerly housed the slaves, the immigrants had little freedom and needed a pass to leave their estates. Once indentured, their lives consisted of endless toil and poor treatment. Viewed merely as units of labour they suffered under harsh laws on absenteeism that meant that they were punished, fined and sometimes sent to jail when they were physically unable to work. Magistrates were often in cahoots with the plantation managers resulting in unfair judgements at court. On the estates, beatings and lashes were a frequent form of punishment. We will see throughout this thesis that when the judiciary or well-meaning members of groups like the Anti-Slavery Society intervened on the immigrants' behalf, they were demonised, ridiculed by the plantocracy and in some cases removed from the colony.

The position of Indian women under this system has been one of substantial scholarly debate. While some academics have argued that indenture was a source of liberation to the East Indian woman others have stressed the hardship and sexual exploitation that they experienced.[77] The perpetual shortage of women throughout indenture directly caused plantation squabbles that often resulted in murder and

[76]See Tinker, pp. 39-60.
[77] Verene Shepherd charts both sides of this debate in *Mahrani's Misery: Narratives of a Passage from India to the Caribbean*, (Jamaica: UWI Press, 2002), pp. xvii-xviii.

serious attacks of violence against indentured females.[78] Plantation riots during indenture were sometimes directly linked to plantation managers or overseers co-habiting with East Indian women: an act forbidden by legislation as it was known to cause explosive ill-feeling between indentured labourers and plantation management.[79] We will see in Chapter 6 of this thesis that colonists frequently romanticised the process of indenture for East Indian women, arguing that it released them from patriarchal authority and gave them financial independence. Rhetoric like this obscured some of the more brutal truths of plantation life for East Indian women and denied statistical evidence that showed how precarious and tragic the lives of some women under this system were.[80]

It is not to be supposed that indenture, once initiated, continued without scrutiny. Certainly we have seen above that there were evident abuses in the system that resulted in rioting and attracted metropolitan attention and intervention. Early informal investigations into the system in British Guiana occurred in 1839 and the government of India conducted their own major enquiry into the whole system in 1841.[81] The most important enquiry that occurred in British Guiana was in 1871. This was significant not only because it was prompted by the intervention of a former colonist, but also because it was the first substantial challenge to indenture that had occurred since the 1840s.[82] In 1898 a Royal Commission examined the declining economic fortunes of the West Indies as sugar prices plummeted and the British

[78] Basdeo Mangru, *The Elusive El Dorado: Essays on the Indian Experience in Guyana* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2005), pp. 33-46.
[79] Laurence, *A Question of Labour*, p. 262
[80] See Mangru, *The Elusive El Dorado*, p. 38 for statistics on uxoricide during the indenture period.
[81] Parliamentary Papers, 1839, Vol. XXXIX, 'Correspondence relative to the Condition of Hill Coolies and other Labourers introduced into British Guiana' and Parliamentary Papers, 1841, Vol. XVI, 'Report of the Committee Appointed to Inquire Respecting the Exportation of Hill Coolies'.
[82] Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XX, 1871, 'Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in British Guiana'.

Caribbean was plunged into a period of economic depression; here however, analysis of indenture formed merely one part in the examination of a wider regional crisis.[83]

We will see in this thesis that even in the final decade of indenture, the findings of these intermittent enquiries never resulted in anything more substantial than reforms to indenture; certainly none of them were so damming of the system that they ever seriously threatened its existence. By the late nineteenth century the East Indian community of the colony had begun to build their own identity as Indian-Guianese. Adherence to the Hindu or Muslim religion was possible through the colonial system which, whilst funding evangelising missions, had a policy of not interfering with the spiritual life of the immigrants. Even amongst minority groups like the Madrasis, resistance to colonial culture was so extensive that even today one of their key religious ceremonies, the Kali Mai Puja, is still observed in the colony.[84] The Shia Muslim Tadjah ceremony, which will be referred to in Part 3 of this thesis, is another example of a minority celebration that took on a new and expansive life in British Guiana. The consolidation of an Indian-Guianese community was fostered by continual immigration throughout indenture. As the system progressed the East Indians became increasingly aware of their value to a colony that viewed itself as totally dependent on their labour. An Indian-Guianese middle-class emerged in the 1890s and by 1913 East Indians were beginning to take an active role in the politics of the colony. It is notable however that while there was persistent and unabated plantation resistance throughout indenture, there is no clear evidence that any Indian-Guianese ever actively campaigned to end the system.

[83] Parliamentary Papers, Vol. L, 1898, 'Report of the Royal Commission on Depression in the Sugar Industry in West Indian Colonies', Appendix C, Vol. II, Part II, 'British Guiana'.
[84] Recent studies on the Kali Mai Puja include Stephanos Stephanides, *Translating Kali's Feast: The Goddess in Indo-Caribbean Ritual and Fiction* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000) and, Paul Younger, *Playing Host to the Deity: Festival Religion in the South Indian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

It was from another continent that the rising pressure to end indenture originated in the final decade of the nineteenth century. In South Africa, the restriction of the rights of indentured labourers aroused the interest of the young Mohandas Gandhi who was then working as a barrister in the colony.[85] The government of India had also expressed serious concerns about the treatment of labourers in this region with particular reference to endeavours in Natal to abolish the labourers right to reside in the colony after indenture, a proviso that had been a *sine qua non* of the system since its inception.[86] This movement, combined with the growth of Indian nationalism at the turn of the century, led to a period where indenture was viewed as a racial stigma in India.[87] In Mauritius, Manilal Doctor, who arrived in the colony in 1907, undertook work similar to Gandhi's using the legal system to advocate for the rights of indentured labourers.[88] As popular opinion in India mounted against indenture two enquiries were set up to examine the system. Yet the conclusions of the Sanderson Commission of 1910 and the McNeill-Lal Inquiry of 1914 condoned the continuance of the system at a time when even the colonial Indian government appeared to want to find a reason to terminate it.[89] One of a series of blows that was struck to the system in this period was the Rose Hall riot in British Guiana in 1913; following this event the Indian government protested that rioting labourers had been shot dead by police and demanded that compensation be paid to the families of the victims.[90] In an effort to preserve favourable opinion of British rule in the 'Jewel of the Crown' the system of indenture was sacrificed - terminating in Mauritius in 1910, in Natal in 1911, in Fiji in 1916 and in British Guiana in 1917.

[85] Tinker, p. 283.
[86] Ibid, p. 286.
[87] Ibid, p. 281.
[88] Ibid, p. 306.
[89] Ibid, p.330. See also, Parliamentary Papers, 1910, Vol. XXVII, 'Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates' and Parliamentary Papers, 1914, Vol. XLVII, 'Report to the Government of India on the Conditions of Indian Immigrants in Four British Colonies and Surinam, by James McNeil and Chimman Lal'.
[90] Ibid, p. 328.

This introduction has sought to locate the history of indenture in British Guiana within a West Indian context, arguing that the system, as it operated in the Caribbean, was reflective of the historic relationship that Europeans had with the New World and the labourers it conceived it required to exploit the economic potential of the region. Throughout this thesis I will acknowledge the important role played by the governments of India and Britain in the inception, repeated reformation and ultimate termination of indenture. I will also reference the significance of occurrences in Mauritius, Fiji and South Africa in the ultimate termination of the system. However in the following pages I want to show how intimately and intrinsically indenture is connected to the history of the Caribbean region by emphasising the spirit of resistance that existed amongst the indentured Indians which in turn connects the community to the history of opposition to colonialism and forced labour I have recounted in Guyana.

PART 1: 1838-1872

Introduction to Part 1

In Part 1 of this thesis, which covers the period of indenture from 1838-1872, I will argue that texts that professed to represent the interests of indentured East Indians in British Guiana largely typified them one-dimensionally as a huddled, victimised mass. Attempts to protect the East Indians from the unscrupulous West Indian plantocracy were largely the product of a liberal, but essentially patriarchal and paternalistic form of colonialism that coincided with the first two decades of indenture. What I analyse in the following three chapters is writing that incessantly spoke *over* the body of East Indian labourers discussing on their behalf their rights, needs, physical health, capabilities and access to the justice system. It is a body of writing in which the voice of the Indian indentured labourer is almost entirely absent.

A study of the first two decades of indenture is especially important because little academic work on this period currently exists. For example only two scholars, Hugh Tinker and Madhavi Kale, have offered substantial analyses of the role of the Anti-Slavery Society in the early years of indenture.[1] General histories of indenture in the Caribbean have typically chosen later periods to engage with and this is indubitably connected to the fact that the system in its nascent form, between 1838 and 1850, is so challenging. In its Caribbean incarnation, indenture was subject to fits and starts, banned by the Indian government in 1839, legalised in 1843, resumed in 1845 and then stopped until 1850 due to an economic crisis in the British West

[1] See Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery* (pp. 61-115) and Madhavi Kale's, *Fragments of Empire: Capital, Slavery, and Indian Indentured Labor Migration in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), which refers to the early period of indenture throughout the text.

Indies.[2] From 1850 onwards the system was able to function, largely without interruption, until its termination in 1917.

Beyond the current paucity of existing study in the area there are other crucial reasons that isolate this period as an important one for study, posing questions that I hope to address in the following three chapters. The first and most important of these is how was indenture justified by those that promoted it as a system and those that sanctioned its continuance following the wake of the abolition of slavery and the success of a campaign to bring about the early termination of apprenticeship? To find answers to this question I will examine a range of historical sources including two important pieces of literary writing. The first of these is the recently discovered diary of Theophilus Richmond, ship's surgeon on the first voyage carrying indentured East Indians to the Caribbean.[3] The second text is a poem, which I argue refutes current claims by academics that Edward Jenkins's novel *Lutchmee and Dilloo* is the first literary representation of East Indians in the Caribbean.[4] What I want to emphasise in this section, through my analysis of this wide range of material, is that key elements of the indentured East Indian experience in British Guiana - resistance, creolisation, minority presence - were all evident at this early stage in indenture.

In Chapter 1 I will analyse the Indian government's early intervention in the system of indenture. In Chapter 2 I will focus on the role played by the protectors of emigrants at the ports of Calcutta and Madras. These two areas are fundamental to this section because they presage the eventual role that India would have in finally toppling the system in the early twentieth century. By evaluating the role of the Indian

[2] Adamson, *Sugar Without Slaves,* p. 45.
[3] This diary, discovered by one of Richmond's descendants, is published as *The First Crossing: Being the Diary of Theophilus Richmond, Ship's Surgeon Aboard the Hesperus, 1837-8*, ed. by David Dabydeen and others (Coventry: Derek Walcott Press, 2007).
[4] David Dabydeen, 'Introduction', in Edward Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo: A Study of West Indian Life* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2003) pp. 1-21 (p. 16) and Jeremy Poynting, 'John Edward Jenkins and the Imperial Conscience', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature,* 21 (1986), 210-221 (p. 220).

government prior to the 1850s, I build on Basdeo Mangru's 1987 work *Benevolent Neutrality: Indian Government Policy and Labour Migration to British Guiana, 1854-1884*. I want to show that what defined colonial India's protective stance over the indentured labourer was less an acknowledgement of a duty to an inferior race but more a sense of obligation to a particular class. This marks Part 1 of this thesis as distinct from Part 2, where a focus on race is the defining characteristic of the texts we will examine. The third and final chapter of Part 1 of the thesis centres on the colonial judicial response to indenture in British Guiana in the 1860s. This chapter signals a key turning point in the history of the colony as it addresses a profound blow to the system of indenture in British Guiana. This was prompted by an attack on the system from the colony's judiciary, rioting by East Indians on the plantations and the first categorical statement by a colonist, Chief Justice Joseph Beaumont, that indenture was no better than the system of slavery that had preceded it.

Crucially then this section begins with the emergence of a fledgling system that was passionately advocated by the plantocracy but questioned by the governments of India and Britain and the Anti-Slavery Society. This scrutiny made its initial progress uncertain. In spite of this, by the 1860s, indenture had become a highly developed network that transported Indian labourers not just to British Guiana but also to other parts of the West Indies, South Africa and Mauritius. However in the shadow of this success discontent was fomenting on the plantations of British Guiana and in the colonial hierarchy; indentured East Indians and those involved in the administration of justice were unhappy with the draconian labour laws that effectively confined workers to the plantations. Following a complaint by a former magistrate in the colony, a Commission of Inquiry was sent to British Guiana in 1870 to investigate the treatment and conditions of the indentured East Indians in the colony.

What Part 1 of my thesis will show is that the system of indenture was unstable from its inception and repeatedly called into question thereafter. In the following pages I offer the first analysis of white resistance to indenture in British Guiana during the period 1838-1872. I also bring to light new studies and arguments regarding this period. Accordingly in Chapter 1 I provide a study of the first poem on East Indians in the Caribbean; In Chapter 2 I discuss both the early role of the port authorities in Calcutta and Madras and the presence of medical professionals as 'authenticating' figures in the system of indenture; and finally, in Chapter 3, I use the texts of two former members of the Guianese judiciary to argue that white writing on East Indian indenture contributed to the concept of a cross-cultural labouring population in British Guiana equally oppressed by the colonial authorities.

Chapter 1: Appropriating the 'Hill Coolies': Pro and Anti Indenture Rhetoric, 1838-1848

In 1838 four hundred and nineteen East Indians arrived in British Guiana. Indentured to work on one of six sugar plantations for a period of five years, they came on board the ships the *Whitby* and the *Hesperus* and were the first East Indian labourers to arrive in the Caribbean. The controversy surrounding their recruitment in India, voyage to the Caribbean and subsequent life under indenture in British Guiana, was such that further indenture to the colony would not occur for another seven years. In the following pages I will contend that the language of patriarchy and paternalism dominated colonial discourse on indentured East Indians in British Guiana during this period. This language obfuscated the identity of its subject and resulted in various forms of writing about East Indians, from Anti-Slavery Society protest tracts to governmental reports, that portrayed them as featureless dependant victims.

However I maintain that within the colonial framework there were momentary challenges to these overarching views on indentured East Indians. I will advance my argument by analysing three sets of colonial discourse about indentured East Indians in the Caribbean: the dialogue between the British, Indian and Guianese governments in the years 1838-1843, the rhetoric of anti-indenture activism in the work of the Anti Slavery Society's John Scoble and finally a poem by a Guianese planter which I believe to be the first piece of literary writing about East Indians in the Caribbean. I will additionally analyse the early presence in the system of indenture of the key concerns of this thesis: colonial involvement in the battle against the injustices and abuses of the system; its combination with the colonised voice; and the diversity of East Indians involved in indentured emigration to British Guiana. The argument of

this chapter is that the failure of those who attempted to arrest indenture resulted in part from indenture's difference from slavery. At a time that privileged the movement and freedom of labour, a system which allowed this and was not technically slavery, however questionable many of its aspects were, was far more likely to survive than not.

The official end of the apprenticeship system in British Guiana took place in 1838. In anticipation of this, as early as 1834, planters began to look overseas for an alternative labour source. Maltese, Portuguese, Germans, Africans and other West Indians were all imported to the colony via the indenture system.[1] At this stage there was no calculated determination that East Indians should replace the black labour force and efforts seemed more directed at securing a larger white presence in the colony by way of a peasant class who would be willing to labour on the estates.[2] Indeed with intervention from the Anti-Slavery Society directed towards protecting the East Indians specifically and the protective stance of the government of India at this period, it seemed rather more likely that the odds were stacked against them as the successors of the blacks on the colony's sugar plantations.

How then did Indians come to dominate the cane-fields of British Guiana? The inspiration behind the importation of East Indians to British Guiana, lay with one man, John Gladstone, and one place, Mauritius. Since 1834, Mauritian planters had turned to nearby India to fulfil their labour requirements. The owner of two estates in Guiana, Gladstone wrote to the Calcutta based firm Gillanders, Arbuthnot & Co. to enquire about the possibility of bringing Indian labourers to the Caribbean. Their response was wholly positive.[3] Focusing on the success of their previous endeavours

[1] Keith Laurence, *Immigration into the West Indies in the 19th Century* (Barbados: Caribbean Universities Press, 1971), pp. 9-19.
[2] Basdeo Mangru, *Benevolent Neutrality: Indian Government Policy and Labour Migration to British Guiana, 1854-1884* (London: Hansib Publishing, 1987), pp. 37-40.
[3] John Scoble, *Hill Coolies* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1840), p. 4.

in Mauritius, they replied that the Hill Coolies, semi-aboriginal tribes then popular with recruiters, were able workers with few wants, '"more akin to the monkey than the man"'.[4] Unregulated emigration from India to Mauritius had been taking place for many years prior to 1834, but an increase between 1834 and 1836 had seen the Mauritian government becoming concerned at the volume of labourers entering the country without supervision.[5] Thus Gladstone's letter was written at a time when the indenturing of Indian emigrants was under question. There was a wider issue of concern in Gladstone's plan however; the distance to which the labourers were travelling was far greater than that of places like Ceylon, Mauritius and Reunion where unregulated emigration had traditionally taken place.[6] This matched with the timing of the journey, as the apprenticeship system was ending, meant that the Indians' journey to British Guiana aroused the suspicion of the Anti-Slavery Society.

I. Governmental Interventions

Concern was not limited to benevolent organisations like the Anti-Slavery Society. The Indian government and the British government both saw the possibility of a new trade in people bearing some of the hallmarks of slavery.[7] It was this concern that pressed the Indian government into legislation that effectively outlawed indenture in 1839.[8] Convinced that the colony would not survive financially without a labour substitute, the Guianese plantocracy fought this decision passionately. As a consequence, from 1839 until the resumption of indenture in 1845, the governments of Britain, Guiana and India, as well as the planters' representatives, the Anti-Slavery

[4] Ibid, p. 5, John Scoble and the liberal Calcutta elite (Parliamentary Papers, 1841, Vol. XVI, 'Report of the Committee Appointed to Inquire Respecting the Exportation of Hill Coolies', Appendix, The Petition of the Inhabitants of Calcutta to the President of the Council of India, The Honourable Alexander Ross, pp. 148-149 (p. 149)) quoted this excerpt in their attempts to persuade the British public and Indian government respectively, to reject the system of indenture.
[5] Parliamentary Papers, 1874, Vol.XLVII, J. Geoghegan, 'Note on Emigration From India', p. 2.
[6] Ibid, p. 2.
[7] Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* 2nd edn. (London: Hansib, 1993), pp. 64-65.
[8] Ibid, p. 69.

Society and liberal, white, Calcutta elites all battled to make their voices heard in the international arguments for and against the resumption or cessation of indenture.

Before beginning an analysis of the documents that concerned this cross continental tussling, it is necessary to interrogate the term Hill Coolies which recurs throughout the documents of this period. This epithet was frequently used to refer to all of the Indian indentured labourers to Mauritius and British Guiana during the period 1838-1845. This is in spite of the fact that the expression, in British India, referred specifically to the semi-aboriginal tribes of Chota Nagpur who never made up more than half of the total number of indentured labourers between 1838-1860.[9] Of the 437 labourers that left India in 1838, J. Geoghegan, author of the 'Note on Emigration from India' put the number of Hill Coolies at one hundred and thirty, less than a third of the total.[10] How and why did the term come to be used to refer to all of the East Indians involved in this first movement of Indian indenture? The answer lies in the fact that it suited the rhetoric of both groups involved. As Madhavi Kale has noted pro-indenture and anti-indenture groups both invoked the imagery of the 'helpless native' to further their cause.[11] We will see, for example, that for the Anti-Slavery Society's purposes the Hill Coolies were represented as an ignorant and uneducated mass; the easy prey of recruiters they were depicted as being utterly unable to comprehend the nature of the agreement that they had entered into. Those who were pro-indenture could cite the Hill Coolies as 'improved' by emigration arguing that indenture provided salvation from a precarious slash and burn existence in the North Indian plains.

[9] Tinker, p. 49 and Ron Ramdin, *Arising From Bondage: A History of the Indo-Caribbean People* (London: I.B Tauris, 2000), p. 26. Later demand for the Hill Coolies as labourers on tea plantations in India reduced their numbers in emigration to the West Indies, Tinker, pp. 49-50.
[10] Geoghegan, p. 5.
[11] Madhavi Kale, *Fragments of Empire: Capital, Slavery, and Indian Indentured Labor Migration in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p.31.

In Part II of the Introduction to this thesis I drew connections between the systems of unfree labour that operated in the Caribbean as a result of European colonisation, it is important therefore to note that this depiction of labourers as being bettered or improved by the process of being transported from one continent to another had existed since slavery and invariably involved the denigration of the homeland and culture of the labourer. As David Lambert has asserted, slavery's supporters portrayed the blacks 'as subhuman, unchristian, units of labour who were better off in the colonial plantation societies than they would be in 'barbaric' Africa'.[12] Indenture as salvation is a trope that we will see repeated throughout the period of indenture and was used in reference not just to tribal groups but to indentured East Indians generally.

Henry Light, the Governor of British Guiana from 1838-1848, was keen to advance this narrative of the transformative powers of emigration. In his correspondence with the British government, which had enquired as to the welfare of the new immigrants, he wrote:

> If my information be correct, the Hill Coolies were accustomed to a marshy soil, to very low wages, and precarious scanty food; they are here supplied well, lodged well, and though on limited wages in comparison with the free labourer, yet are as carefully protected from oppression, and their complaints redressed as speedily, as those of other labourers.[13]

[12] David Lambert, *White Creole Culture: Politics and Identity During the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 1.
[13] Parliamentary Papers, 1839, Vol. XXXIX, 'Correspondence relative to the Condition of Hill Coolies and other Labourers introduced into British Guiana', Governor Light to Lord Glenelg, 11 January 1839, p. 74.

At a later date, when concern began to build in England about the high mortality of the labourers, he still argued that the 'the natives of India might safely be introduced here to the great amelioration of their own condition'.[14] Light, who appears through correspondence to emerge as something of a nineteenth century spin-doctor, even attempted to rewrite the deaths of the East Indians as positive events, citing deathbed conversions to Christianity.[15] The loss of caste that some Indians felt was a consequence of leaving the subcontinent was presented by Light as a gateway to the Christianisation of the immigrants; a point that he clearly felt could not help but sway the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord John Russell:

> The secret of their disposition to conversion is that they lose caste by leaving India, find themselves raised in their own opinion by being an object of solicitude to their own master, and observe that the brown or black man is here a Christian, equal in rights to the white man.[16]

In the same vein the Colonial Surgeon of British Guiana, E.M.L. Smith, provided something of a star-turn in the colony's campaign to maintain Indian indentured immigration, writing emotively of the response of some East Indians to Christianity:

> I would furthermore add, that Jan Hair Sing told me that he, with 15 of his countrymen, previous to their admission to the colonial hospital had visited

[14] Parliamentary Papers, 1839, Vol. XXXIX, Governor Light to the Marquess of Normanby, 21 May 1839, p. 88.
[15] Parliamentary Papers, 1840, Vol. XXXIV, 'Correspondence between the Secretary of State for Colonies and the Governor of British Guiana, respecting Immigration of Labourers', Governor Light to the Right Hon. Lord John Russell, 6 December 1839, p. 51.
[16] Ibid.

> the minister of their parish, who had read something to them out of a "Bible book" which made "the water run out of his eyes".[17]

The arguments of the government of British Guiana determinedly centred on the prospects for conversion and the belief that the life of an indentured labourer in British Guiana was an improvement on the one that he had left behind. How did the Indian government, which conducted its own enquiry into indentured emigration, counter this?

Hugh Tinker has noted that the Indian government of this period was enjoying a particularly liberal moment. Certainly the fact that the committee appointed to investigate indenture from the Bengal Presidency included an Indian judge, Russomoy Dutt, was, to say the least, unusual.[18] Further, the report that the committee produced provides an interesting contrast to its Guianese equivalent; textual space, for example, was given to Indian emigrants and returnees from Mauritius who were interviewed as part of the enquiry and their statements were printed in the final report.[19] Extraordinarily the report gave precedence to the voices of the indentured Indians over the 'European gentlemen' when their statements on the condition of East Indians in Mauritius contradicted each other. The committee concluded that the East Indians, 'however ignorant, are really the best judges'.[20] In contrast to Light's claim of improved circumstances the report countered:

> And when opinion is pronounced that the condition of a Coolie is bettered at Mauritius, it should be first ascertained what the condition was in India, and

[17] Ibid, p. 55.
[18] Tinker, p. 66.
[19] Parliamentary Papers, 1841, Vol. XVI, Proceedings of the Committee, pp. 45-50 consist of three statements all from Muslim emigrants returned from Mauritius and include one by a woman who made the journey from India alone.
[20] Ibid, 'Report of the Committee Appointed to Inquire Respecting the Exportation of Hill Coolies' p. 6.

> what is the condition of his wife and children, or those of his family, dependent upon him, when left behind.[21]

This holistic retort was in response to reports from some districts of Calcutta that they had been 'burdened with a vagrant and mendicant population of paupers, composed of the deserted families of emigrant Coolies'.[22] Pertinently, a remark like this highlights the one-dimensional relationship that the West Indian authorities had with its indentured immigrants.

The liberality of the Indian government at this stage in its colonial history appeared to extend beyond a sense of duty to the populace and to encompass a progressive world-view, citing as a point of concern the effect of new immigrants on the black population of Mauritius. The following excerpt also references what was to become a key point in the argument against indenture: whether or not those indenturing were capable of understanding the nature of their agreement and what it entailed:

> It is besides, a further question, whether an African free labourer, who was taken to Mauritius as a slave, ought not to be protected from any other kind of competition than that which arises from a really free emigration of other labourers, well enough informed to understand, previous to leaving India, what they are about, and where they are going, and willing to better their own condition by expatriation.[23]

[21] Ibid, p. 7.
[22] Ibid, p. 6.
[23] Ibid, p. 8.

The report itself effectively relates, at this early stage in indenture, the existence of the combination of colonial and colonised voices. Testimonies of indentured East Indians and a petition from the citizens of Calcutta requesting that the system be stopped until it could be shown to be 'fraught with as great advantage to the Indian emigrants as to the exporters and employers themselves' are here side by side.[24] The Calcutta petitioners wrote celebrating the 'blessings of civil and religious freedom, enjoyed by nearly all Her Majesty's subjects' and requesting that they be 'continued and extended to those residing within her densely-populated possessions in the east.'[25] While Guiana's Governor Light attempted to persuade the British government of the potential for evangelising to the East Indians in British Guiana, those charged with reporting to the Indian government in their enquiry into the system invoked freedom of worship and the suggestion that Britain's international reputation would suffer if she decided to extend the system, stating that it would 'weaken the moral influence of the British government throughout the world'.[26] Prior to their enquiry the government of India had terminated overseas indenture in 1839: this was a decision that would remain in place, as far as the West Indies was concerned, until 1844.[27]

The reaction of the British government, delivered by Lord John Russell, Secretary of State for the Colonies was ambivalent. Russell famously spoke of his reluctance to countenance 'a new system of slavery' and his relative benignity is reflected in his response to a planters' petition from British Guiana intended to secure government sanction for more labourers in the colony.[28] As far as the African-Guianese community's unwillingness to labour on the sugar estates he wrote: 'there is nothing in this singular or culpable. No man in this country, who has capital sufficient

[24] Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XVI, 1841, Appendix, The Petition of the Inhabitants of Calcutta to the President of the Council of India, The Honourable Alexander Ross, pp. 148-149 (p. 149).
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid, 'Report of the Committee Appointed to Inquire Respecting the Exportation of Hill Coolies' pp. 4 -12 (p. 9).
[27] The bar against indenture to Mauritius was withdrawn in 1842 and to the West Indies in 1844, Tinker, p. 75 & p. 81.
[28] Parliamentary Papers, 1840, Vol. XXXIV, Lord John Russell to Governor Light, 15 February 1840, pp. 42-44.

to keep a shop, or rent a farm, will follow the plough as a day-labourer, or work from morning till-night as a hand-loom weaver.'[29] It was Russell's belief in freedom of labour that he claimed would guide his decision and in this he was more aligned with the stance of the liberal white Calcutta petitioners to the government of India than the government of British Guiana. The petitioners claimed that if they were in any way persuaded that the emigrants were embarking with full knowledge of the nature of their agreement and an understanding of the distance to which they were travelling they would sanction the system.[30] Basdeo Mangru, who stresses that Indian government policy during indenture was 'influenced largely by the laissez-faire theory of administration' of Europe, also makes this point. He states that this theory prioritised the lack of restriction on the movement of goods and labour and ultimately propelled the success of indenture.[31] I have argued at the beginning of this chapter that this period is defined by a discussion about indenture that took place over the body of the indentured labourer; what is clear from the analysis of governmental interventions during this period is that it was ideas about indentured labour, rather than actual facts, that fostered the continuance of the system. We will see in the next section that similar ideals about free labour affected even the most militant anti-indenture campaigners.

II. The Anti-Slavery Society

The stances of the governments of India and Britain could fairly be summed up as pro-indenture in that despite the censure to which they subjected aspects of the system, they both prioritised freedom of labour. It would seem that the only real

[29] Ibid, p. 42.
[30] Ibid, p. 44 and Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XVI, 1841, Appendix, The Petition of the Inhabitants of Calcutta to the President of the Council of India, The Honourable Alexander Ross, pp. 148-149 (p. 149).
[31] Basdeo Mangru, 'Indian Government Policy Towards Indentured Labour Migration to the Sugar Colonies' in *Across the Dark Waters: Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Caribbean,* ed. by David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Caribbean, 1996), pp. 142-174, (p. 162).

stumbling block that might be placed in the way of indenture was the Anti-Slavery Society and the man selected by the society to challenge indenture, John Scoble. However I will argue here that ambivalence, directly related to the same reification of 'free labour' that dominated Britain and India's ultimate sanctification of the system, limited the Anti-Slavery Society's assault on indenture. What ultimately rendered their work on indenture unsuccessful was that they had a vested interest in wanting systems of free labour to succeed. As Howard Temperley has written of the Anti-Slavery Society's discovery of the atrocious conditions experienced in British Guiana by the first Indian immigrants:

> Despite these developments and the outspoken terms in which they denounced the "Gladstone slave trade", British abolitionists were not, in principle, opposed to emigration. What could be more desirable, John Sturge reminded the First World Anti-Slavery Convention, than that a steady stream of labourers should flow into the colonies? Sugar would be raised in almost unlimited quantities and at a price low enough to undersell the bloodstained produce of other nations; the economics of Brazil and Cuba would founder; the slave trade would fade away, and the British experiment, pure and unsullied, would emerge triumphant.[32]

The Anti-Slavery Society drew attention to the fact that it was the Indian government who had outlawed the system, marking it as a point of shame for the British government that the system was 'not stopped by orders sent out from England'.[33] The ambivalent attitude of the Anti-Slavery Society is particularly evidenced by the work

[32] Howard Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery: 1838-1970* (Longman: London, 1972), p. 126.
[33] *Anti Slavery Reporter*, Vol. I, 'Hill Coolies', 11 March 1840, pp. 45-46 (p. 45).

of their key anti-indenture spokesman John Scoble who, as we will see next, held similar views to Sturge.

Though ambivalent at times, the Anti-Slavery Society was not backwards in challenging indenture. In one of their most substantial attacks they produced a resounding strike on the system in the form of John Scoble's anti-indenture tract *Hill Coolies: A Brief Exposure of the Hill Coolies in Mauritius and British Guiana and of the Nefarious Means by Which They Were Induced to Resort to These Colonies* (1840).[34] The abuses to which a system like indenture was open to were all present in its formative years. Scoble documented cases of kidnapping and extortion, prior to embarkation, that had already been widely reported in Calcutta.[35] Only eight months after their arrival in British Guiana, thirty-five East Indians were dead and Scoble discovered seventy on the sick list.[36] Further, the labourers frequently attempted to run away from the sugar estates as a result of maltreatment. Scoble was present at a hearing in which it was proved that East Indians had been assaulted by estate staff.[37] Such was the severity of the beatings meted out to the East Indians indentured on John Gladstone's Vreed-en-Hoop estate that the Government Secretary, H.E.F. Young, wrote to the estate's attorney reprimanding him, stating that the result of a governmental investigation had shown 'flogging and confinement' to have been 'proved beyond all dispute'.[38] The same correspondence contained a tacit reminder of the scrutiny to which the colony was subject at the time urging a 'due regard' for its reputation.[39]

There is an element of rhetorical showmanship evident in John Scoble's work; a detachment from his professed subject that connects him less with the cause of

[34] This tract will hereafter be referred to as *Hill Coolies*.
[35] Scoble, p. 7.
[36] Ibid, p. 11.
[37] Ibid, p. 12.
[38] Ibid, p. 17.
[39] Ibid, p. 16.

liberating East Indians from an inherently unjust system and more with the concept of a seasoned performer rehashing the jargon of an older, more glamorous campaign. He consistently reduces his characters to stereotypes, thus the East Indian becomes the 'ignorant and inoffensive Hindoo' the Mauritian planters 'felon-planters' who are 'destitute of every human sympathy'.[40] Scoble's style makes problematic any attempt to discern a portrayal of the East Indians labourers beyond that of victims. He casts himself as the owner of the true narrative of the indentured East Indians:

> When in the presence of those that they know to be their friends, and really interested in their welfare, they give full vent to their feelings, and exhibit their real sentiments, and with tears and clasped hands, and in broken English, entreat to be sent back to their native country and to their kindred from whom they have been wantonly separated.[41]

However Scoble's bombast may be forgiven when it is considered under what weight he was writing; at the time of the publication of his tract, Lord John Russell had already spoken of his intention to relax the restrictions on the ban on indenture to Mauritius. The Anti-Slavery Society rightly anticipated that this would inevitably lead to a similar change in restrictions to the West Indies and Scoble reproduced its petition to Russell as an addendum to his tract. The text of the petition offers no portrayal of the East Indians more sophisticated than Scoble's; the 'ignorant and degraded natives of Hindostan' could not be expected to 'advance in civilization' under the influence of the Mauritian planters for example.[42] However it is to the credit of the Anti-Slavery Society that they, as well as Scoble and the liberal Indian

[40] Ibid, p. 7 & pp. 23-24.
[41] Ibid, p. 20.
[42] Ibid, p. 31.

government of the period, saw that one of the more serious and intentional consequences of introducing a foreign labour supply into the Caribbean was to gain bargaining power with the emancipated black population thereby allowing the plantocracy to maintain control over the labour market.[43]

In 1840, following a meeting of the Anti Slavery Society in Liverpool, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* quoted Scoble as saying that he was 'no enemy to emigration' and that his concern centred on the way the labourers would be treated by the planters. Thus as was the case with the Indian and British governments, it was the concept of 'free labour' that was at the heart of Scoble's plan for British Guiana, 'that fine portion of the British Empire'. Again the transformative powers of free labour migration were alluded to in his speech as he spoke of an environment engendered by such labour where migrants 'were likely by steady industry to raise themselves'.[44] We can trace in this statement the same ambivalence that appeared to drive Lord John Russell, who on one hand had charged that indenture was a 'new system of slavery' yet in the same letter sanctioned its continuance.[45] Scoble's language is equally ambiguous and his belief that emigration from India to British Guiana could be feasible sits uneasily with his depictions of irredeemable 'felon planters'.[46]

Scoble was a key figure in the first few years of Indian indenture and the Anti-Slavery Society relied on him 'almost entirely' in their anti-indenture initiatives.[47] Born in Devonshire in 1799, Scoble joined the Anti Slavery Society in 1831. He initially held a position as a lecturer for the Agency Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society but subsequently joined part of a more radical group called the Society for the

[43] Ibid, p. 20 & p. 31.
[44] *Anti-Slavery Reporter,* Vol I, 'Meeting of the Liverpool Anti-Slavery Society', 6 May 1840, pp. 90-91 (p. 91).
[45] Parliamentary Papers, 1840, Vol. XXXIV, 'Correspondence between the Secretary of State for Colonies and the Governor of British Guiana, respecting Immigration of Labourers', Lord John Russell to Governor Light, 15 February 1840, pp. 42-44.
[46] Scoble, *Hill Coolies,* p. 135.
[47] Tinker, p. 237.

Universal Abolition of Slavery and the Slavery Trade, headed by Joseph Sturge.[48] In 1836 Scoble made his first visit to the Caribbean as part of a group led by Sturge. The group's purpose was to investigate allegations of injustices in the apprenticeship system.[49] The work in the West Indies and its dissemination in England were successful, putting a premature end to the apprenticeship system in 1838, two years earlier than intended. The result of this success was that the Central Negro Emancipation Committee, formed in 1837, chose Scoble to share the findings of the 1836 journey in the West Indies and the United States. This 1839 tour incorporated a trip to British Guiana where Scoble saw the results of indentured emigration to the Caribbean prompting his authorship of *Hill Coolies* in 1840.

Acknowledging the vigour of Scoble's charge against indenture, I maintain that much of his language speaks to a drama in which he is the central performer. Therefore he continually constructed the East Indians as being in need of *his* specific protection. One comment at a meeting of the Liverpool Anti-Slavery Society was a case in point. Here his words reflect his perceived and assumed power, not only over the planters but also over the East Indians and the 'true' narrative of indenture:

> His quarrel was not with the colony, but with the men who were the governors of it – the planters; and so soon as they could be trusted with any grace with those who went there, he would allow them to have them.[50]

[48] Elwood H Jones, 'John Scoble' in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=38815> [accessed 26 August 2007]
[49] *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*, ed. by David Dabydeen and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 473.
[50] *Anti-Slavery Reporter,* Vol I, 'Meeting of the Liverpool Anti-Slavery Society', 6 May 1840, pp. 90-91 (p. 91).

There is a clear sense in which Scoble forms a public identity for performance. These performances, written or oral, rely fundamentally on the idea of the 'other' as dependant upon him, as Catherine Hall has written of this period:

> In a social world in which identity was always defined in relation to others, the others of this manly independent individual were the dependant and the subjected – the woman, the child, the servant, the employee, the slave – all of whom were characterized by their personal dependence.[51]

However in the midst of the public posturing that was taking place in this period there is a literary representation of East Indians in the Caribbean that provides us with a brief, but important example of creolisation and depicts the East Indian indentured existence outside of its dependence on planters or humanitarian societies. It is this representation that I will examine next.

III. A Planter's View: The Journal of 'Barton Premium'[52]

The journal of the white creole planter Barton Premium is crucial to my study because it appears at such an early stage in indenture and is evidence of the romanticisation of the East Indian in British Guiana that I will highlight Chapter 6 of this thesis. Barton Premium's journal includes a love poem, penned in the style of a ghazal, featuring characters of Indian descent living in British Guiana.[53] The poem's tragic love story

[51] Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 258.
[52] Barton Premium is the name of a Kentuckian whiskey, it was adopted as the pseudonym of the planter that wrote *Eight Years in British Guiana: Being the Journal of a Residence in that Province, from 1840 to 1848, Inclusive: with Anecdotes and Incidents Illustrating the Social Condition of its Inhabitants, and the Opinion of the Writer on the State and Prospects of our Sugar Colonies Generally* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1850) and may have been a reference to the heavy alcohol consumption that took place amongst the white creole community of British Guiana (Brian Moore, *Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism: Colonial Guyana, 1838-1900* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1995), p. 34). The author's real name is unknown. This text will hereafter be referred to as *Eight Years in British Guiana*.
[53] This melancholic Eastern poetic form commonly consists of rhyming couplets and is used to express feelings of loss, love and separation.

acts as a metaphor for the planter's own sense of loss. Moreover the poem incorporates palm trees, roses and hummingbirds; a mix of east and west that effectually writes the East Indian presence into the Caribbean:

"O Sadi! My lost one! I still see you here,
Each Flower that I gaze on's the face of my dear;
Each tree that we loved, has thy form in its shade;
On paths where we roved, thy foot-print has staid.

"All things that we cherished are still to be seen:
Alone you have perished and gone from the scene.
The humming-bird comes to our rose bower still,
And mournfully roams, while he sings through his bill!

"The fawn you did rear, now has lost all his pride,
And droops his fine ear as he walks by my side:
Then stamps he and snorts, as he still did of yore,
When, to join in his sports, you were wiled to the door.

"O Sadi! your lone one is weak, weak and low,
My head is so strange grown – I cannot tell how!
The man who is skilful, talks wisely in vain,
He tells them I'm wilful, that grief turns my brain.

"The soft wind blowing, wafts a note from the dove

Where palm-trees are growing - the call of my love! –

To rest then I yield me, still dreaming of you,

The palmette will shield me from fast-falling dew."[54]

What prompted the production of this complex piece of creole literature? The most exciting aspect of the poem is that it constitutes the final pages of Premium's journal before he returns forlorn to Europe, ill, unable to sell his estate and eager to reunite with his family. His departure is fraught with depression, regret and anxiety: all of these emotions he chooses to explore via the body of the East Indian. From the beginning of his journal, where Premium declares himself to be 'a native of British Guiana', to its end where he makes a final declaration of sorrow to be departing from the colony, it is clear that he is quite different from other members of the absentee planting interest based in England. Some of these, including John Gladstone, were absentee planters in totality: they neither lived in nor had ever been to the colony. According to his pseudonymous memoir, Barton Premium, by contrast was born in British Guiana and educated in England, he returned to the colony after his education but ultimately settled in England. His return, aged fifty, was prompted by the economic crisis that affected the Caribbean at the early termination of the apprenticeship system. Upon experiencing a fifty per cent decline in annual revenue he perceived that, 'the time had arrived for exertion, when every proprietor must be up and doing with his shoulder at the wheel'.[55] His period in the colony left him dejected and disappointed and the text is a depressing account of a sojourn in British Guiana at a time of economic hardship.

[54] Premium, p. 287.
[55] Premium, p. 11.

Eight Years in British Guiana is part of a wider genre of writing about the economic crisis in the West Indies in the 1840s and 1850s. These texts were essentially pro-planter and pro-immigration.[56] Whether the authors were based in the Caribbean or Britain they resented the early termination of the apprenticeship system and attacks on fledgling immigration schemes by the Anti-Slavery Society. All of this interfered with the substantial revenues that the mostly absentee proprietors gained from their overseas properties. Premium was a fine example of this and his estate in British Guiana 'yielded a clear revenue of £4,000 per annum'.[57] The time at which Barton Premium wrote was one of particular crisis in British Guiana. Although East Indian immigration was resumed in 1845, by 1848 the immigration experiment had come 'to a bankrupt halt' and was only restarted in 1851 with the assistance of the British government who guaranteed interest on loans and lowered the duty on rum and sugar.[58]

Although Premium's journal is part of a genre that was fuelled by the desire to influence metropolitan policy in the Caribbean his work is still worthy of attention. Premium based his poem on the tragic death of an Indian husband and wife who lived on his estate:

> I often noticed the taste with which this couple had adorned their cottage and garden with all the flowers they could procure and transplant, and the singular degree of harmony and retirement that reigned around, which was caused by their living apart from almost every one. I am particular in my remarks about them because the poor fellow was suddenly taken ill and died, and his wife,

[56] See for example Thomas Hancock, *Are the West India Colonies to be Preserved?* (London: W.E. Painter, 1840) and John Fairmann, *Cheap Sugar; or Coolie Immigration into the West Indies in a series of Letters Reprinted from "the Witness"* (Edinburgh: Paton and Ritchie; London: Hamilton, Adams and Co.; Demerara: Robert Short, 1859).
[57] Premium, p. 9.
[58] Adamson, p. 46.

> after attempting to destroy herself, fell gradually into a state of mind bordering on fatuity, and was thus frequently seen wandering about the fields accompanied by a pet deer, either singing or speaking to her dead husband. After the lapse of a few weeks, she was missed one morning, and in a short time, found.[59]

I would argue that Premium's poem signifies a profound moment of literary creolisation. By this I not only refer to the incorporation of East Indian characters, the use of an Eastern poetic genre and the inclusion of wildlife from the Old and New Worlds. Taking the poem as a metaphor for the condition of Guiana at the moment of writing: the abandonment of estates, the crisis in the economy, I conclude that that it is an acknowledgement of social equality in the sense that it links the fate of the East Indians and the white planter class together. Written in 1848 the poem heralded a changing landscape; by this stage in indenture a further 11,025 East Indians had arrived in the colony and irrevocably altered the population of British Guiana. In his poem Premium firmly connects them to the landscape, cementing their presence in the colony.

I would further contend that Premium's own background is important to an analysis of this poem. As 'a native of British Guiana' Premium's perspective is vastly different to that of men like John Scoble and William Gladstone.[60] Mary Louise Pratt has drawn attention to the importance of creole voices like Premium's in her work *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Pratt states that a writer like Francois Le Vaillant (1753-1824), popularly considered to be French, is never viewed

[59] Premium, p. 286.
[60] Premium, p. 9.

in terms of his own creole Caribbean background via his birth in Surinam.[61] Pratt argues that his 'experience of multiracial colonial society' was key to his relationships with non-whites and his portrayal of them in literature and concludes that:

> Much remains to be learned about the extent to which creoles, from the Americas, Africa or Asia, participated in the dialogues that gave rise to both colonialist and anti-colonialist doctrines, not just in the eighteenth century, but from the beginnings of the European colonialism that produced them. On the whole, an imperial tendency to see European culture emanating out to the colonial periphery from a self-generating center has obscured the constant movement of people and ideas in the other direction.[62]

What contribution does Premium make to this 'movement of people and ideas'? Despite the tragic nature of the story it is Premium's willingness to give substance to the idea of East Indians in the Caribbean beyond their presence as labourers or victims of the plantocracy. More profoundly it is the sense of a bleak shared fate that is overwhelming in the poem and makes it a unifying text. In the sense of writing about East Indians in the Caribbean generally this text also has value, not least because it challenges claims that Edward Jenkins was the first writer to represent East Indians in the Caribbean in a literary form.[63] Most importantly, Barton Premium's depiction is the precursor to the literary East Indian that we will see represented throughout this thesis. In these depictions the use of an East Indian character is justified by their difference from the rest of their community. Thus most literary representations of

[61] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 90.
[62] Ibid.
[63] David Dabydeen, 'Introduction' in Edward Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo: A Study of West Indian Life* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2003) pp. 1-21, p. 16 and Jeremy Poynting, 'John Edward Jenkins and the Imperial Conscience', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature,* 21 (1986), 210-221, p. 220.

indentured East Indians depict characters of high caste or striking physical appearance.[64] It is analogous to these portrayals that Premium notes, as we have seen above, that what drew him to these two labourers in particular was their 'taste', their 'harmony' and their separateness from the other East Indians.[65]

It is not only the accounts of Scoble and Premium that combine to form resistance to the colonial narrative in this early stage of indenture. Indian attempts to liberate themselves from the system to which they were bound are documented as early as the depots in Calcutta.[66] Further, Scoble's presence on the sugar estates in British Guiana was known to be related to a humanitarian investigation into the conditions of indentured labourers; accordingly East Indians directly opposed estate management by seeking Scoble out and reporting their dissatisfaction with their conditions - a clear case of collaboration between a white colonial and indentured Indians.[67] This was not the only evidence of inter-cultural solidarity. We have seen earlier that the government of India was prepared during their investigation to give precedence to the voices of the indentured Indians of Mauritius over the Europeans. When it came to reports of the ill treatment of indentured East Indians in British Guiana it was the voices of the African-Guianese who laboured alongside them that provided the testimonies that resulted in fines and imprisonment for those responsible for their mistreatment on the estates.[68] In addition to African testimonies indentured Indians also gave evidence in the same inquiry marking this as not only a period of liberalism in the government of India, but also in British Guiana – where as we shall

[64] Something I will explore further in the indenture novels *Lutchmee and Dilloo* and A.R.F. Webber's, *Those That be in Bondage*: *A Tale of Indian Indentures and Sunlit Western Waters* (Wellesley, MA: Calaloux Publications, 1988): this novel will hereafter be referred to as *Those That be in Bondage.*
[65] Premium, p. 286.
[66] Parliamentary Papers, 1841, Vol. XVI, Proceedings of the Committee, p. 31 & pp. 57-58 provide reports of East Indians throwing themselves overboard in Calcutta in an attempt to escape their indentures.
[67] Parliamentary Papers, 1839, Vol. XXXIX, Enclosure 3 in No. 11, Proceedings before an Inferior Criminal Court pp. 92-93.
[68] Ibid, Enclosure 1 in No. 11, pp. 88-89.

see later in the thesis – less and less credence and space was given to the voices of the East Indians in 'official' enquiries.

A summary of this chapter would rightly conclude that East Indian indenture to British Guiana was able to survive because no one was entirely opposed to it. As Hugh Tinker has stated, the exception to this was a section of the white, liberal Calcutta elite of India who renounced it wholesale; they accurately predicted that if indenture continued it would ceaselessly require legislative reforms to address its inherent injustices.[69] Tinker's claim that the Anti-Slavery Society had 'denied the legitimacy' of indenture prior to 1842 is not accurate in view of Scoble's 1840 speech that indicated that the Society was willing to accept Indian migration to the colony but in a different form. Powerfully the most humanising representation of East Indians in this early period of indenture comes from the most unusual source: a white Guianese planter. The poem's simplicity and tone is a stark contrast to the grandiloquence of speech and text produced by the anti-indenture lobby, which ultimately achieved nothing on behalf of the East Indians. The most striking element of Premium's work is that it simultaneously undermined the characterless depictions of the East Indians *and* the plantocracy advanced by other sources of the period; we will delve further in to the concept of white creolisation in literary texts in Chapter 4 this thesis.

[69] *Friend of India*, 3 August 1839, cited in Tinker, p. 237.

Chapter 2: Protecting the Emigrants: Voyage and Return, 1838-1858

In Chapter 1 of this work we have seen that following 'Gladstone's experiment' in 1838, emigration from India to the West Indies was prohibited due to concerns over high mortality on the plantation and voyage. It was the Indian government that was responsible for this ban and it is the attitude of those it chose to oversee the resumption of emigration to the West Indies that I would like to analyse in this chapter. The previous chapter has seen an international debate over the indenture system, with India emerging as the party least persuaded by the arguments for the system and most interested in the voices of the indentured labourers. How far did their liberal attitude pervade in this next decade of indenture? In the furtherance of an analysis of this question I will look at the role of the Protector of Emigrants at the ports of Calcutta and Madras between 1851 and 1853. I will also provide a brief study of the 1858 Mouat Report, commissioned by the Indian government to investigate a period of high mortality on voyages from India to the Caribbean.

What I aim to show in this chapter is that the period between my two studies represents a change in attitude from the Indian government to its indentured labourers. This is represented in the benign interventions of officials at Calcutta and Madras at the beginning of the decade as contrasted to the scientific detachment of Dr Frederic J. Mouat in his 'Report of the Mortality of Emigrant Coolies on the Voyage to the West Indies in 1856-57'.[1] While suggesting that the overt racism of Mouat's report was motivated by a changing attitude from the coloniser to the colonised in India following the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, I want to also argue that his work employs elements of the same race conscious analysis as other doctors who wrote about

[1] CO 318/218 Frederic J. Mouat, 'Report of the Mortality of Emigrant Coolies on the Voyage to the West Indies in 1856-57'. Hereafter referred to as the Mouat Report. The Mouat Report is a separately paginated document enclosed in CO 318/218.

indentured East Indians in the first two decades of indenture. Consequently alongside Mouat's report I will also offer a study of the diary of Theophilus Richmond, the surgeon on board one of the first ships that carried Indian labourers to British Guiana; and an 1847 report by Dr George Bonyun that examined the health of indentured emigrants to British Guiana.[2]

I. The Role of the Protector of Emigrants

There are two reasons why my study of those involved in safeguarding and reporting on the physical health of the Indian emigrants is both necessary and important. In the first place I will locate the role of the Protector of Emigrants within a tradition of white resistance to plantocracy power that recurs throughout my thesis. Moreover analysis of the work of these men in particular shows that while the Indian government had adopted a neutral position to indenture, there were individuals within the colonial hierarchy who used their position to challenge the aspects of the system that they felt needed reform or were liable to abuse.[3] The office of the Protector of Emigrants was fundamental in drawing governmental attention to injustices in the system because as Basdeo Mangru has stated, the rules and regulations of indenture in India were written on 'an *ad hoc* basis' as details 'surfaced'.[4] Secondly, the work of Dr Frederic Mouat is important because his writing marks a wider change in how Indians were viewed in the system of indenture. From 1858 onwards there is a distinct turn towards the racial classification of the emigrants that has its roots in the earlier writing of Theophilus Richmond and George Bonyun. These early examples of racial

[2] Parliamentary Papers, 1847/48, Vol. XXVI, 'Eighth General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners', Report from Dr George Bonyun to the Governor of British Guiana, pp. 62-65.
[3] See I.M. Cumpston, 'A Survey of Indian Immigration to British Tropical Colonies to 1910', *Population Studies*, 10th ser., 2, (1956): 158-165 (p. 160) for an account of this neutral stance.
[4] Basdeo Mangru, 'Indian Government Policy Towards Indentured Labour Migration to the Sugar Colonies', in *Across the Dark Waters: Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Caribbean*, ed. by David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Caribbean, 1996), pp. 162-173 (p. 164).

codification are important because they portend a movement into a period, which we will examine in Part 2 of this thesis, when scientific views on race dominated British colonialism.

There were always those within the system of indenture who fought against reductive and dehumanising definitions of indentured labourers. It is part of the paradox of indenture that it created official facility for contest in the formation of roles such as 'Protector of Emigrants' in India or 'Immigration Agent General' in British Guiana.[5] In 1840, Secretary of State for the colonies, Lord John Russell, spoke of his reluctance to countenance indentured immigration to the Caribbean. However in the same speech he professed his belief that with adequate regulations, indenture from India to Mauritius should be permitted.[6] It was the resumption of emigration to Mauritius in 1842 that led to the establishment of the position of Protector of Emigrants at the ports of Calcutta and Madras, a role that was given to the existing Master Attendant at each port.[7] During the period of this study, the men that occupied these positions were Captain Christopher Biden at the Port of Madras and Captain T.E. Rogers at the Port of Calcutta.[8]

The Colonial Office records for 1851 and 1852 reflect the indenture system in an embryonic form; procedures were not fixed and letters were sent between the governments of Madras, Bengal, Britain and the West Indies questioning who was responsible for which aspects of the system.[9] For example correspondence from the East India Company to the Colonial Office concerned the fact that following the expiration of their period of indenture in Jamaica, neither the authorities in Jamaica,

[5] The role of the Guianese Immigration Agent General will be examined further in Chapter 3. It is unique to British Guiana that the office of the protector was referred to as the Immigration Agent General. In Trinidad and Mauritius for example, the equivalent position was referred to as the Protector of Immigrants.
[6] Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* 2nd edn. (London: Hansib, 1993), pp. 70-71. This was inevitably followed by the resumption of East Indian indenture to the Caribbean.
[7] Ibid, p. 75.
[8] Captain Rogers assigned most of his work to his deputy Thomas Caird, (Tinker p. 77). Moreover in the period under consideration, other acting protectors assumed his responsibilities.
[9] The ruling authorities of the Madras and Bengal presidencies were referred to as governments during this period.

the government of Bengal, or the Protector of Emigrants at Calcutta were aware of any arrangements being made for their return.[10] This amorphous period of indenture is significant because those determined to reform the fledgling system had more chance of success. Indeed given their power, the extent to which the interventions of the protectors shaped a fairer and safer system for emigrants is a pertinent consideration. What I want to show emerges from this period is a definite sense of the Indian authorities pushing back against an encroaching system in which labourers seemed, at times, to be under threat of experiencing elements of the same treatment that had dominated West Indian relations with African slaves. It is in the high mortality that beset voyages from British Guiana to India that the shadow of the middle passage reasserted itself. We will see for example that one return journey from the Caribbean to India resulted in a mortality of almost 40%.

The resumption of emigration from India to the Caribbean began in 1845 and in 1851, the first time-expired labourers returned to Madras on the ship *Zenobia*. When the *Zenobia* anchored at the Port of Madras with a mortality of twenty-three out of over three-hundred labourers, Captain Christopher Biden set in place an investigation into the causes of the scurvy outbreak on board. What is key to Biden's report is that it included details from interviews with the labourers, the content of which prompted the Secretary of the East India Office to write on behalf of the Court of Directors to the Board of Commissioners that:

> The report of the climate of Demerara, and of the length of the voyage brought back by the labourers who have returned, discourages the idea that emigration to that colony can be successfully prosecuted from India, notwithstanding the

[10] CO 318/199 James C. Melville to Thomas Frederick Elliot, 5 February 1852, pp. 8-10.

profitable employment obtained there, and the kind treatment received from the colonists.[11]

Two things are important here; the first is that Biden extended an investigation that was ostensibly intended to shed light on an outbreak of scurvy, to incorporate the voices and opinions of the indentured labourers on their experiences in the colony; the second is that these opinions were treated credibly enough that they were escalated to the heart of the Indian government.

The statements of the East Indians, Biden judged, were 'both crucial and impartial.'[12] What do they tell us about the lives of indentured East Indians in British Guiana during this period? The emigrants' complaints about the country were minute in detail: they listed their unhappiness with the water, which was not of the same quality as Madras and their overwhelming dissatisfaction with the climate of British Guiana. Biden's attention to detail extended to the fact that he attempted to ascertain whether or not the emigrants were aware that they would be unable to burn the bodies of their dead.[13] A seemingly incongruous question, this was important because part of the indenture agreement stated that there would be no attempt to interfere with the immigrants' religion.[14]

After the *Zenobia* had disembarked its return emigrants from Madras it docked at Calcutta where, due to the loss of life on board, there was an investigation to examine the causes of high mortality on the journey. Calcutta's Thomas Caird invited the returnees to attend the enquiry and speak on their own behalf. Caird was critical of

[11] CO 318/199 James C. Melvill to Henry Boulie, 8 April 1852, pp. 18-20 (p. 20).
[12] CO 318/199 Captain Christopher Biden to H.C Montgomery Bart, 12 December 1851, pp. 37-42 (p. 38).
[13] Ibid, p. 38.
[14] CO 318/266 'Notice to Intending Emigrants to Demerara or British Guiana', p. 111. See also *Benevolent Neutrality: Indian Government Policy and Labour Migration to British Guiana, 1854-1884* (London: Hansib Publishing, 1987), p. 172, where Mangru cites this policy as being self-interested at heart and geared to encourage Indian residency in the colony.

the Medical Officer in charge of the Indians stating that his knowledge of the amount and quality of food the Indians ate on board was inadequate and that he lacked the experience necessary for his role. The substance to which Caird gives the voice of the East Indians is clear when he states of the doctor:

> Judging from what the Coolies have said the doctor could not have been of the slightest assistance to them whatever and they were in consequence left to the mercy of the third officer of the ship, who acted just as he pleased in regard to them.[15]

He suggested that on future ships an independent officer should be appointed to protect the interests of the Indians. Caird added that as a result of speaking to the recently landed returnees, a number of emigrants about to indenture to the Caribbean 'absconded' from the depot.[16] In regard to the quality of food and the conditions on board, Caird emphasised that the emigrants' return passage was deducted from their salary:

> The Coolies naturally expect the same good quality of rations returning home, as they received going out and as the Coolies pay handsomely for their conveyance both going and coming the very slightest impingement of the regulations on the part of Commanders, should be on no account overlooked[17]

Caird's remark is particularly important because the West Indian authorities only had a vested interest in securing the health of labourers on the voyage *to* the Caribbean

[15] CO 318/199 Thomas Caird to the Colonial Land and Emigration Officers, 30 January 1852, pp. 55-60, (p. 58).
[16] Ibid, p. 60.
[17] Ibid.

where they would be involved in labour intensive work. Evidence of their disregard for the emigrants after they had served out their indentures is more indication of an emerging attitude of disposability in regard to the East Indians from the West Indian authorities.

As in the first decade of indenture covered in Chapter 1, it fell to the Indian government to investigate and provide remedial action. By the autumn of 1852, three ships carrying indenture-expired labourers from British Guiana had returned to India with a significant loss of life: the *Eliza,* the *Zenobia* and the *Glentanner*. In a correspondence from the government of Bengal to the Colonial Office Secretary Herman Merivale, the Governor of the Presidency, targeted the case of the *Glentanner* particularly suggesting the massive loss of life was 'further proof of the want of due care and consideration for the comfort and health of the returning emigrants on the part of the authorities in Guiana'.[18] There is no wonder at the concern caused by the number of deaths on the *Glentanner:* of two hundred and nineteen passengers eighty-two had died on the voyage. Following the arrival of the *Glentanner* in the Port of Calcutta, the Acting Protector of Emigrants, H.J. Thomas, wrote in the most critical terms of the Captain and the Surgeon of the ship. He claimed that the appearance of the immigrants that he visited in hospital pointed to the fact that there was 'a want of judgement and a deficiency of care' on the part of both men who had ignored two possible opportunities to stop the ship at the Cape of Good Hope and at Port Louis, Mauritius:

[18] CO 318/199 India Board to Herman Merivale, 4 September 1852, pp. 139-140.

> Had a favourable disposition existed towards the unfortunate people either of those ports could have been visited and by the Captain's and Surgeon's own admissions many lives might possibly have been saved.[19]

Thomas also attacked the responsible parties in Demerara, commenting on their 'indifference' and 'lack of proper instruction'. Later on that year authorities in the West Indies attempted to improve mortality by informing ship's surgeons that they would receive a gratuity based upon the number of successfully disembarked healthy returnees.[20] If the West Indian narrative as it concerned the East Indians was one of complacence and neglect the Indian response was to agitate for reformative action.

This action was possible because the Indian authorities had consultative powers. For example in the same year as the tragic return voyage of the *Glentanner,* the Colonial Office in England asked the government of Madras for its response to possible ordinance changes in the indenture system of British Guiana. The government of Madras criticised the amendments in no uncertain terms as being difficult to explain to 'cultivators', the 'class' of labourer that the colony wanted to attract.[21] Although the suggested ordinance changes are not given in colonial office records, correspondence indicates that one of the amendments would have eradicated entitlement to a return passage on the expiration of the term of indenture; it was the belief of the authorities at Madras that this would deter anyone in the Presidency from emigrating.[22] In the reply of the Madras government in particular, the defining characteristics of the Guianese and Indian attitudes to the emigrants are encapsulated in one statement. In response to the question of the ordinances, the Madras

[19] CO 318/199 H.J. Thomas to the Secretary of the Government of Bengal, 26 April 1852, pp. 144-146 (p. 144).
[20] CO 318/199 India Board to Herman Merivale, 12 October 1852, pp. 173-174 (p. 174).
[21] CO 318/199 Public Letter from Fort St George, no. 28 of 1852, 7 September 1852, pp. 194-197 (pp. 194-195).
[22] Ibid, p.195.

government stated that they provided 'for the punishment more than for the protection of the labourer'.[23] This aptly sums up the increasingly punitive attitude towards the enforcement of indentures that prevailed in British Guiana and which we will see come under attack from the Guianese judiciary in the following chapter. The Protector of Emigrants at Calcutta supported this assessment and stated that no intending emigrant who fully understood the climate, conditions and distance of British Guiana would freely indenture there.[24]

As we have seen in Chapter 1, Guianese claims that indenture bettered the emigrant were challenged by the Indian government, who cited the negative impact that the system had on the emigrants' families in India.[25] During the 1850s too they were concerned at the high number of agricultural labourers leaving Madras for Ceylon, Reunion and Bourbon and the effect that this would have on the region. Correspondence from Madras asserted that an 'erroneous impression' had been created that there was a 'large surplus population' in the Presidency that were unable to 'find occupation' and concluded that neither the interests of the 'state or the landholder or the cooly himself can be promoted by continued emigration to British Guiana'.[26] What emerges from India is a counter-narrative to West Indian claims documented in Chapter 1, that indenture relieved an overpopulated and burdened subcontinent.

This Indian counter narrative played a vital role in the early stages of indenture. It offered the only challenge to the rhetorical and emotive propaganda of pro-indenture parties and sought to curb the disregard with which the West Indian authorities were wont to treat their labourers. The Anti-Slavery Society had been

[23] Ibid.
[24] CO 318/199 Captain T.E Rogers to the Marquis of Dalhousie, Governor of Bengal, 5 July 1852, pp. 262-263 (p. 262).
[25] Parliamentary Papers, 1841, Vol. XVI, Report of the Committee and Evidence, p. 6.
[26] CO 318/199 Public Letter from Fort St. George, 7 September 1852, pp. 194-197 (p. 196).

eager to establish that it was the Indian, not the British government that had banned indenture in 1839.[27] In this period of high mortality the voice of the British government was also understated. Indenture to British Guiana continued past 1852 in spite of the recommendations of Biden and his Calcutta counterparts. However their input, coupled with the threat of terminating indenture to the Caribbean, brought about reform in the system and secured the safety of later returnees. As mortality improved there was less reason to question Indian indenture to British Guiana. What the incidents of 1851-1852 show is a pattern that was maintained throughout indenture: the discovery of abuses followed by legislative reforms or the drafting of ordinances to rectify them. In this sense Hugh Tinker rightly cites as correct a prediction from the *Friend of India* made in 1839; it stated that were indenture to continue, it would exist as a race 'between abuses and legislation' with 'legislation always in the rear'.[28]

II. The Early Role of Doctors in Indenture

The most obvious distinction between the attitudes of the protectors and that of Mouat and the other colonial doctors in this chapter is that notions of protection towards an inferior class rather than an inferior race guided the protectors. Thus Biden wrote of the emigrants' inadequate clothing for the return voyage: 'that *class* of persons' could not be expected to understand the variety of climate they would be exposed to on the return journey to Madras.[29] Thomas Caird, who was sent to the West Indies to report on the condition of Indian immigrants there, also uses class as a reference to the indentured labourers.[30] These comments are indicative of the patriarchal attitude that

[27] *Anti Slavery Reporter*, Vol. I, 'Hill Coolies', 11 March 1840, p. 45
[28] *Friend of India*, 3 August 1839, cited in Tinker, p. 237.
[29] CO 318/199 Captain Christopher Biden to H.C Montgomery Bart, 22 July 1852, pp .227-244 (p. 236). My italics.

dominated the initial stages of indenture where the Hill Coolies were depicted by John Scoble and others as being in need of protection from plantocracy excesses and the threat of a 'new system of slavery'.

The reports of Dr Frederic Mouat (1858) and Dr George Bonyun (1847) mark the emergent stages of a discourse about indentured East Indians that was inured in biological concepts of difference. This racial discourse was almost wholly absent from the writing of the protectors. This is most ably demonstrated in the examination of the difference between the reports on the conditions of East Indians in British Guiana produced by Thomas Caird and D.W.D. Comins. Both men served as Protector of Emigrants at Calcutta when they were sent to British Guiana by the Indian government to report on the lives of the East Indians in the colony, Caird in 1853 and Comins in 1891. In contrast to Thomas Caird's references to the labourers as doing well for the 'class of people in their positions', D.W.D. Comins broke down by caste the best and least efficient labourers.[31] Caird's report celebrated the children of East Indians born in the colony as being superior to those born in India.[32] We are able to recognise here early evidence of the idea of British Guiana as a regenerative space for East Indians and a promotion of creole East Indians as empire-fused hybrids, in every way more acceptable than their parents - a trope which we will reencounter in Parts 2 and 3 of this thesis.

High mortality on the outward voyages from India to the West Indies caused the Indian government to commission Dr Mouat's investigation in 1858. Mouat's report was probably the second official occasion where significant distinctions began to be made between the three Indian cultural groups that formed the body of

[31] D.W.D. Comins, *Note on Emigration from India to British Guiana* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1893), p. 79. For Thomas Caird's reference to class see: Parliamentary Papers, 1852/1853, Vol. XL, Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, Thirteenth General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, 1853', appendix No. 47, copy of a letter of Mr. Caird on Calcutta Coolies, 18 March 1853, pp. 156-158 (p. 156).
[32] Ibid, p. 157.

indentured labourers to the Caribbean: the North Indians from the Bengal Presidency (mainly recruited from the United Provinces and Bihar); the South Indians recruited from the Madras Presidency; and the Hill Coolies.[33] At the outset Mouat stated that early reports from the West Indies and from ships' captains had persuaded him that the 'evil originated in the depot at Calcutta'.[34] With this in mind he focussed on post-recruitment procedure scrutinising the depots, speaking to all the employees and observing a number of embarkations and medical examinations. As ships sailing from Madras had been relatively free of high mortality on the outward voyage one of Mouat's aims was to find out why this was so.[35]

Mouat, in opposition to men like Caird and Biden, was given to the categorisation of the different groups of labourers. The Hill Coolies are 'valuable labourers' but in confinement 'rapidly pine and die, and everywhere require more care and management'.[36] Mouat made connections between what he saw as the inherent frailty of the emigrants and their demise. At one stage he compared the behaviour of the North and South Indians on board. The South Indian, whose mortality on the return voyage was generally good, was 'lively', 'merry' and 'less troubled with prejudices'; he 'delights in remaining on deck'. Mouat wrote in far more negative terms of the North Indians' behaviour on board citing a ship's captain's opinion of the North Indians:

> Compulsion is necessary to bring him on deck. He rapidly gives way to sea sickness and depression; when taken ill, always imagines that he must die; and

[33] The first occasion is Dr Bonyun's 1847 report which we will consider next.
[34] The Mouat Report, p. i.
[35] Ibid, p. ii.
[36] Ibid, p.xiii.

> remains in an apathetic state of torpid indifference, the very reverse of the mercurial propensities of the Malabar.[37]

Mouat was wholly different from Caird and Biden in his approach and appeared keen to represent high mortality as owing to the physiological or psychological shortcomings of the emigrant. He writes that the strength of the Indians as a 'vegetenarian race' [sic] are 'feeble' when compared with the 'flesh-eating families of mankind'.[38] Mouat wrote with unbridled disgust of Indian women, blaming their 'dirty personal habits' (xxii) for the lack of hygiene in the on-board living quarters. He described them as being difficult to control (xxiii), reluctant to bathe (xxvi) and related their increased presence on-board to high incidences of sickness (xxiv).

In Mouat the humanitarian and inquisitive approaches of Biden and Caird are discarded for quasi-scientific diatribes that exclude the voices of the emigrants, giving him sole authority. In one passage, he writes about the West Indian authorities' concerns that there are no separate quarters for the sick on board, putting the rest of the passengers at risk if an infectious disease broke out. This leads to a bizarre monologue on whether or not they would be able to separate the sick from the well:

> The natives of India are a peculiar race, or rather aggregation of races, full of the most idle fancies, usually utterly regardless of the sufferings of others, and in many instances destitute of the commonest feelings of humanity. They are not deficient in natural affection, yet I have known them in their pilgrimages to Pooree and elsewhere to abandon their nearest and dearest relations to the

[37] Ibid, xxxi-xxxii.
[38] Ibid, xix.

vultures and the jackals, while yet alive, when they were too sick to travel further.[39]

Mouat's racism dominates his report and leads to obfuscation; his fancy is primary to important factual information that could ascertain the reason for sickness on the voyages from Calcutta to the West Indies. For example Mouat acknowledges that the diet on the voyage from Madras was superior to that at Calcutta but this fact barely gets space above the caricature of the merry, lively 'Malabar'. In all Mouat marks a distinct change in attitude from that of Caird and Biden and embodies much of the 'rhetoric of race' that Edward Beasley describes as being increasingly characteristic of the 1850s and 1860s.[40] This rhetoric served a purpose significant to our discussion on indenture. Effectively language like Mouat's functioned to create a chasm between the coloniser and the colonised because it called into question the humanity of the emigrants and justified the system of indenture by suggesting the East Indians were undeserving of equal treatment.

What conclusions might we draw from the intervention of men like Christopher Biden, Thomas Caird and the other acting protectors who strove to ensure that the indentured Indians were given an opportunity to represent their experiences to the colonial authorities? Certainly, as we have seen in the previous chapter, they provide another example of collaborative resistance between the coloniser and colonised; Biden documented lengthy interviews to ascertain conditions in the West Indies and Caird invited return emigrants to be present at an enquiry into high

[39] p. xxii.
[40] Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 1.

mortality on a voyage in which they were passengers.[41] Their language and attitude was more concerned with the rhetoric of paternalism and protection, explored in Chapter 1, than the rhetoric of racial difference that occupied Mouat.

While acknowledging the changing tone of colonialism that surrounded Mouat's report, another area for consideration is how far his attitude was fuelled by the 'scientific' racism of the period. I would like to suggest that the work of Dr Theophilus Richmond and Dr George Bonyun locates Mouat in a tradition of medical racism that was employed to legitimise the system of indenture. Both Theophilus Richmond and George Bonyun were responsible for authenticating the system by supporting it in spite of the detrimental effects of indenture on the emigrant that they reported in their official accounts. Bonyun went further by analysing according to cultural group, the viability of emigrants as indentured labourers. Maneesha Lal has discussed the work of colonial doctors as 'authorizing assumptions of racial and cultural superiority'.[42] The work of these two men, and indeed to a certain extent Dr Mouat, authorised colonial superiority, promoting indentured emigration by emphasising what they felt were the positive effects of the system. Thus I will show in the following pages that where we might interpret the work of the protectors to be relatively independent and impartial, this was not so with Richmond or Bonyun. The diary of Theophilus Richmond was recently brought to the attention of the Guyanese scholar and author David Dabydeen by one of Richmond's descendants, Brigid Wells.[43] Richmond's diary tells of his experiences as a surgeon employed by John Gladstone on the *Hesperus,* the second ship to carry Indian indentured labourers to the

[41] CO 318/199 Questions put by the Protector of Emigrants to the Coolies returned per *Lucknow* from Demerara and their replies pp. 240-244 and CO 318/199 Thomas Caird to the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, 30 January 1852, pp. 56-60 (p. 60).
[42] Maneesha Lal, '"The ignorance of women is the house of illness"': Gender, nationalism, and health reform in colonial India', in *Medicine and Colonial Identity,* ed. by Mary P. Sutphen and Bridie Andrews (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 14-40 (p. 15).
[43] The diary was subsequently published as, *The First Crossing: Being the Diary of Theophilus Richmond, Ship's Surgeon Aboard the Hesperus, 1837-1838*, ed. by David Dabydeen and others, (Coventry: The Derek Walcott Press, 2007).

Caribbean in 1838. A newly qualified doctor, Richmond's journal was addressed to his mother and sisters and though he claimed it was only intended for a domestic audience it is reasonable to believe, given the style, content and level of detail of his writing that he did ultimately intended to publish it.

This diary is interesting to our study because as I have previously outlined, as far as the indentured labourers were concerned, in the 1850s the language of class gave way to that of race. Thus this text is early evidence of a progressively dehumanising dialogue about indentured East Indians that rendered them unworthy of the space given to their voice by men like the protectors at Madras and Calcutta. Yet within this dialogue of racial inferiority we can identify the sublimated desire for interaction with the 'other'. Richmond's diary is an early example of this and his desire for the 'other' is manifested in depictions of creole scenes and forays into 'native' religion. Born in Bedfordshire in 1815, Theophilus Richmond was the son of a clergyman. Richmond qualified to be a doctor at Edinburgh University completing his studies in 1836. Only twenty-three when he accepted the job on the *Hesperus* in 1837 his age made him a surprising choice. When the voyage resulted in high mortality, defensive claims by Gladstone that the surgeon he employed was experienced must have seemed questionable.[44] It is unclear, at least to Richmond's biographers, how Gladstone recruited him specifically for the task although there is a suspicion that due to a mutual connection with Liverpool the two families may have known each other.[45]

I argue that Richmond's text is a self-constructed masculine landscape within which he writes back to the domestic, feminine audience of his sisters and mother. There are extensive descriptions of 'manly' pursuits; Richmond is constantly shooting

[44] Ibid, Dabydeen and others, p. xxx.
[45] Ibid, Dabydeen and others, p. xxx.

animals on the voyage to India and having his servant cook them. He hunts regardless of whether the animal can be eaten or not, giving the impression that he wants to mark a landscape that he dares not admit is alien and perplexing to him. Richmond also steals a deity from an outdoor altar (p.143), disguises himself in robes to attend prayers at a mosque (p.146), steals a Koran (p.149) and throws pork at vendors who approach his boat:

> It was a priceless bit of fun to see their energetic scrambling and tumbling over one another to avoid the cursed contamination, jumping in the river to wash first themselves and then their boats, and then in less than five minutes scattered in all directions praying, swearing and crying, till out of hearing and almost out of sight. At the termination of this little comedy, the Captain and myself went on shore with our guns to enjoy a little shooting.[46]

While this incident serves to portray the superiority of the elite white colonials over the bumbling and comedic Indians, it further, with its emphasis on the 'fun' that is being had, portrays Richmond as being on a boy's own adventure; involved in endearing pranks and tomfoolery that contrast his perceived masculinity and charm against the idiocy of the superstitious and inscrutable native. In the episodes where he steals a deity and enters a mosque he is quick to represent at what danger this has been to himself, but describes this fear as not being his own but of those near him. At the mosque he professes that he is unconcerned at being discovered, but his servant 'who would do anything for me', is in a 'mortal funk'. Similarly once Richmond tells European friends of the theft of the deity he reports their conclusion that had he been

[46] Richmond, p. 118.

caught, he would have suffered 'mortal violence' from the natives.[47] Richmond's descriptions of the women he meets first in Mauritius and then in India offer similar opportunities for him to demonstrate his masculinity as he describes their charms and his desires towards them.[48]

As though bending to the relative proximity of Richmond's next, more dangerous journey, bodies, decomposition and the omnipresence of death define Richmond's entries following his departure from Mauritius to Calcutta. With the same professed flippancy with which he relates his earlier tales of theft from the temple and the mosque he represents himself as being untroubled by the sight of vultures and hawks picking at a corpse. At one point he states that the sight of a vulture feasting on the body of a baby girl 'piqued' him as it interrupted his dinner.[49] Yet the detail with which he relives each of these instances betray his terror:

> I have now several times seen a full grown and perfect corpse carried up by one tide, and again brought down by the next a corrupted and ghastly spectacle, its flesh hanging from the bones in shreds and tatters, and the greasy and discoloured water bubbling with uncontrolled freedom in the loathsome cavities of its well scooped eye sockets.[50]

The privileged colonial existence that Richmond enjoys in India, of parties, hunting and outings, is frequently interrupted by his awareness of the impending voyage and his mortality. He relays how one night he was particularly enjoying a prawn curry only to be told after that the prawns fed from the corpses in the Ganges.[51]

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[47] Ibid, p. 143.
[48] Ibid, p. 102 & p. 133-134.
[49] Ibid, p. 131, 135 & p. 141.
[50] Ibid p. 135.
[51] Ibid, p. 150.

Richmond's relationship with the alien bodies of the Indians changes when he finally boards the *Hesperus* and cholera breaks out mid-way through the voyage. Yet the relative compassion with which he describes the deathbed of the first victim, who is then unceremoniously 'thrown overboard', is nothing compared to the effect on him of the death of the first white sailor who is given a funeral of great ceremony.[52] Only at this juncture does Richmond apparently reveal his own fear: 'well knowing as we all did in what danger we ourselves stood'.[53] Richmond wrote little on the journey from India to British Guiana and what he did write was mostly concerned with his attempts to manage the cholera outbreak. His pre-occupation with death and corpses in the text presaged his own death from yellow fever in Guiana shortly after the ship's arrival in the colony.[54]

I have discussed Maneesha Lal's work on the doctor's authenticating role in colonialism and we can certainly see how this was applicable to Richmond whose position meant that he was able to legitimise and authenticate aspects of the system.[55] At the height of the dispute concerning the transportation of the Gladstone Coolies, as the first batch of indentured East Indians to British Guiana came to be known, John Gladstone's eldest son wrote to the Colonial Office to defend the family's actions in Demerara. Thomas Gladstone enclosed in his letter to the Home Secretary a short report by Richmond on the mortality on the voyage from India to British Guiana. As came to be standard, the report blamed the sickness of the emigrants on their pre-existing weakness or frailty prior to embarkation and promoted emigration as a 'fortunate change' in circumstances in which the East Indians were exposed to 'a

[52] Ibid, p. 156.
[53] Ibid, p. 157.
[54] Dabydeen and others, p. xxviii.
[55] Lal, p. 15.

comfort and abundance that they were utter strangers to before'.[56] This report by Richmond contained two of the most common tropes of indenture: that of the inherently weak immigrant culpable in his own demise and secondly that of the downtrodden emigrant East Indian subsequently 'improved' by migration.

In Chapter 1 I analysed at some length the use of the term Hill Coolies to refer to the East Indians who first indentured to British Guiana. In doing so I remarked that this term was applied regardless of whether or not the emigrant was from the indigenous community of Chota Nagpur. As colonial discourse became more ethnocentric this generic term was discarded and East Indians in British Guiana came to be classified, and consequently judged and stereotyped, according to their port of embarkation, which was either Madras or Calcutta. The first official occasion that this appears to occur is in the work of Dr George Bonyun, a medic in the colony who produced a report for the Guianese government on the health of indentured immigrants in 1847. In his essay entitled 'Malaria and Race in Colonial India, 1860-1930', David Arnold concludes that the codification of races in India was: 'A variant on an old imperial theme – manipulating the supposedly innate characteristics of non-white races to serve European economic and military ends.'[57] It is this element of racial categorisation that drove the work of Mouat and Bonyan as they engaged with the idea of a 'perfect' group for indenture.

Accordingly Bonyun's report is inclined as much towards racial engineering as protection or prevention of illness; he suggests where immigrants might be located so as to best avoid illness and cites the illnesses that feature among certain groups. In spite of the catastrophic mortality of the Portuguese (6668 out of nearly 16,000 had

[56] Parliamentary Papers, 1839, Vol XXXIX, 'Correspondence relative to the Condition of Hill Coolies and other Labourers introduced into British Guiana', Report on the General Health of the Coolies that came from Calcutta during the voyage to British Guiana, in the ship *Hesperus*, pp. 106-107 (p. 106).
[57] David Arnold, 'An Ancient Race Outworn' Malaria and Race in Colonial India 1860-1930', in *Race, Science and Medicine, 1700-1960*, ed. by Waltraud Ernst and Bernard Harris (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 123-43 (p. 128).

died) Bonyun promoted Portuguese emigration to British Guiana.[58] As Richmond did with the Indian emigrants aboard the *Hesperus*, Bonyun blamed the high mortality of the Portuguese on their condition prior to embarkation. The Portuguese, wrote Bonyun, were 'debilitated' from famine in their own country and suffered a 'want of cleanliness'.[59] More than providing a report on the health of the emigrants Bonyun was working within the system to 'improve' it by a selective process. This is demonstrated in Bonyun's suggestions as to the most salubrious locations suitable for various groups and his distinctions between different 'classes' of immigrants:

> I am not aware whether these people were vagabonds and beggars in their own country or not; but I am induced to think that two distinct classes of them have been brought here […] I think that as with the Madeirians, if the Madras Coolies who are about to be brought here be located on the coastal estates alone, there will be much less mortality, although, if not restrained from their bad and unnatural habits, it will still be considerable. *I would however, with all deference, state my opinion that the inferior caste is not worth the trouble and expense of acclimatising.* The labourers who have been brought from Calcutta appear to be generally of a higher caste of Coolies, are more cleanly in their person, stricter in their religious observances with regard to food, fonder and of dress and more industrious than the Madras immigrants.[60]

A notable aspect of this extract is the use of the terms 'class' and 'caste' interchangeably. This indicates a gradual absorption of the concept of race into

[58] Parliamentary Papers, 1847/48, Vol. XXVI, 'Eighth General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners', Report from Dr George Bonyun to the Governor of British Guiana, pp. 62-65. See p. 63 of Bonyun's report for these figures and p. 64 for his promotion of their continued emigration.
[59] Ibid, p. 63.
[60] Ibid, p. 64, my italics.

discussions of class and difference, a trend that escalated dramatically in the in 1850s and 1860s and dominated colonial writing on East Indians in the 1870s.[61] In Chapter 1 I highlighted that all of the early indentured emigrants were frequently and inaccurately referred to as Hill Coolies; from this general categorisation they were now codified by a budding branch of scientific racism that gave them back their heterogeneity in order to judge their usefulness as a labouring class. The emigrants were now subject to different stereotypes: the lazy Madrasi, the diligent Calcutta coolie and the sickly Portuguese. As this official racism of the 1850s took over, the mitigating voices of the Indian government and the Anti-Slavery Society, the two parties most condemnatory of indenture, became more muted while the system and its advocates seemed to grow commensurately. In a tour of the West Indies in the late 1850s Anthony Trollope wrote of the indentured Indian labourer in British Guiana:

> As to the charge of ill-usage, it appears to me that these men could not be treated with more tenderness, unless they were put separately, each under his own glass case, with a piece of velvet on which to lie.[62]

With the diminution of external organisations that might have challenged narratives like Trollope's, it was from within the colony itself, temporarily at least, that attempts to reform or terminate the system would originate.

[61] These texts will be explored in detail in Part 2 of this thesis.
[62] Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1860), p. 152.

Chapter 3: Protecting the Immigrants: Judicial Rebellion in British Guiana, 1863-1872

Between 1863 and 1868 British Guiana was the location of a struggle between members of its judiciary and the head of its government that ultimately resulted in the impeachment of the colony's Chief Justice. Part of the impetus behind this conflict was the treatment of indentured East Indians by Governor Francis Hincks. In this chapter I aim to show the lengths to which some members of the justice system were prepared to go to support the interests of the East Indians in the colony. While acknowledging the limits to which their liberalism was subject, I will analyse how effective their resistance was and show its contribution to the lives of indentured Indians in the colony and the movement to protect East Indians from the negligence of the state. This particular period in the history of East Indians in British Guiana is important because it initiated the landmark 1870 Commission of Inquiry into the treatment of East Indian immigrants that ultimately preserved and defended the authority of the colony's Immigration Agent General.[1]

Francis Hincks (1807-1885) was Governor of British Guiana from 1862 until 1869 and was possibly one of the most controversial Governors during the period of indenture. He was inadvertently responsible for establishing a triumvirate of judicial rebellion in the colony in the form of James Crosby (1806-1880), William Des Voeux (1834-1909) and Joseph Beaumont (1829-1885). Crosby was Immigration Agent General from 1858 to 1880, Des Voeux served as a stipendiary magistrate between 1863 and 1869 and Joseph Beaumont was the Chief Justice from 1863 to 1869. Opposed to the plantocracy's influence on Hincks, Des Voeux, Beaumont and Crosby

[1] The Commission arrived in the colony in 1870, but their results were not published until 1871 in: Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XX, 1871, 'Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in British Guiana'.

put up such substantial opposition to him that only one of them, Crosby, was to survive Hincks's tenure in the colony. In different ways each of these three men shared part of the responsibility for initiating the 1870 Commission of Inquiry into the treatment of Indians in British Guiana; however the person most directly responsible was William Des Voeux who wrote a letter to the colonial office, of one hundred and thirty-four paragraphs, documenting the injustices of the indenture system as experienced by the East Indian and Chinese immigrants.[2]

Scholars of indenture have discussed the conflict between Beaumont and Hincks and the peripheral role of Des Voeux and Crosby in the fracas. They have paid particular attention to the pro-planter nature of Hincks's administration.[3] However what I want to assert in this chapter is that during this period we are able to see the roots of the concept of a cross-cultural Guianese 'labouring population'. As they railed against indenture, both William Des Voeux and Joseph Beaumont charged that injustices were a fact of life not only for the East Indians, but also for the recently arrived Chinese immigrants and the African-Guianese. Des Voeux's letter to the Colonial Office indicated that the abuses that were practised upon the Chinese community were so numerous and distinct that he wanted to include these on a separate occasion in a different document.[4] In the work of Beaumont in particular, emphasis was placed on the labouring classes to include the African-Guianese.[5] Furthermore, in 1865, James Crosby's decision to take legal action against two overseers for physical assault against a Chinese labourer moved Governor Hincks to withdraw Crosby's power to prosecute on behalf of indentured immigrants.[6] Amongst

[2] Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XX, 1871, William Des Voeux to Earl Granville, 25 December 1869, pp. 1-14.
[3] We will encounter these studies throughout this chapter, but see for example, Basdeo Mangru, 'The Hincks-Beaumont Imbroglio: Partisan Politics in British Guiana in the 1860s', *Boletin de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, 43 (1987), 99-114.
[4] Ibid, p. 1.
[5] Joseph Beaumont, *The New Slavery: An Account of Indian and Chinese Immigrants in British Guiana* (London: Ridgeway, 1871), p.10, p. 64 & p. 68.
[6] Reuben J. Kartick, 'James Crosby: Immigration Agent General', *History Gazette,* 34 (1991), 2-9 (p. 5).

some colonisers then, this period of indenture marked the emergence of the idea of the colonised of British Guiana as a multi-racial creole community oppressed by a monomaniacal plantocracy. In a phrase, Anthony Trollope encapsulated this dynamic, defining British Guiana as 'a mild despotism tempered by sugar'.[7] This concept of a labouring population is to become particularly important in Part 3 of this thesis where I analyse how the trope of the exploited working class led to a progressively anti-colonial society.

There are two reasons why the work of Beaumont and Des Voeux addressed a more diverse populace than that of previous writing about British Guiana. In the first case an East Indian and Portuguese presence had by now been settled in the colony for more than two decades and secondly, indentured Chinese migrants had also become a significant presence. Between 1853 and 1866, 13,533 Chinese labourers had entered the country.[8] However Chinese emigration to British Guiana was terminated by the Chinese government, who refused to allow British Guiana anymore labourers until it guaranteed emigrants a return passage.[9] The significance of other immigration during this period was that the focus on the East Indians as the victims of an unjust system – as with John Scoble's depiction - was still present, but emphasis was now placed on a culturally variegated labouring population victimised by a planter-led government. The African-Guianese, many of whom now occupied post-emancipation village settlements, were also the target of the planters' ire. As Alan Adamson has shown, the plantocracy were intent on impeding 'the development of the village

[7] Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1860), p. 137.
[8] Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labour, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1917* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 18.
[9] Walton Look Lai, 'The People from Guandong', in *Essays on the Chinese Diaspora in the Caribbean*, ed. by Walton Look Lai (Trinidad and Tobago: Printcom (Caribbean) Ltd, 2006), pp. 1-10 (p. 6). This provoked Beaumont to write that the Chinese government had shown 'a more active interest' in its people than the colonial Indian government, Joseph Beaumont *The New Slavery: An Account of Indian and Chinese Immigrants in British Guiana* (London: Ridgeway, 1871), p. 13.

economy' and used legislation to do so. This 'legislative encirclement of the peasant' was fuelled by fear:

> Indentured immigration provided the planter with a new labor force, but it did not destroy the Post-Emancipation Negro villages. As long as these survived in a country where arable land was plentiful, the sugar economy felt threatened. From the planter's viewpoint, a peasant population living at the level of subsistence or producing for the market would always, by merely existing, represent a dangerous attraction to "his" labour.[10]

What was increasingly evident in this decade is that in spite of emancipation the plantocracy were as powerful and as insidious as they had been before slavery. Hence during the 1860s, the net of liberal concern widened to embrace the 'labouring population' of the colony as opposed to merely the 'ignorant' and 'inoffensive' East Indian portrayed as the victim of the plantocracy in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of this thesis.[11]

Henry Light, who was Governor of British Guiana between 1838-1848, said of the colony that no Governor would ever manage the 'administration peaceably' unless he 'yielded implicitly' to the planters interests.[12] Indeed Chapter 1 of this work has detailed Governor Light's lengthy representations to the British government to extend the system of indenture beyond the first arrivals from Calcutta in 1838. Who were the plantocracy of British Guiana and why were they so powerful? In Part II of the Introduction to this thesis, I highlighted the presence of British settlers in Guiana

[10] Alan Adamson, *Sugar Without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 57.
[11] John Scoble, *Hill Coolies* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1840), p. 7.
[12] Basdeo Mangru, *Benevolent Neutrality: Indian Government Policy and Labour Migration to British Guiana, 1854-1884* (London: Hansib Publishing, 1987), p. 17.

since the time of Dutch colonisation. By the nineteenth century almost half of the whites in Guiana (who never made up more than three per cent of the Guianese population) were born in the colony.[13] The vast majority of them pursued an occupation that was in some way connected to the plantation: bookkeepers, overseers, plantation managers and owners. The white community believed passionately that their fortune depended wholly and entirely on the success of sugar and this fact dominated their relationship with the British government and its representatives, in this case the successive Governors that presided over the colony.[14]

An accusation levelled at Hincks is that his governorship showed marked favouritism towards the plantocracy.[15] Hugh Tinker additionally states that Hincks was 'thoroughly opposed to Indian immigration'. It is, perhaps, self-explanatory then that the treatment of the East Indian immigrants, particularly by the justice system, formed a large part of the dispute between Hincks, Beaumont, Des Voeux and Crosby.[16] Born in Ulster in 1807, Hincks moved to Canada in 1832 starting his own retail business and eventually becoming involved in politics and journalism through his editorship of the *Pilot* newspaper, a journal that promoted the interests of the Reform movement in Canada. Hincks eventually became co-premier of Canada West (1851-1854) resigning his seat in 1855 after becoming involved in a scandal that implicated both him and the Mayor of Toronto in insider dealing.[17] His appointment as Governor of Barbados and the Windward Islands in 1856 was seen as something of a vindication of his reputation against his detractors in Canada.[18]

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[13] Brian Moore, *Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism: Colonial Guyana, 1838-1900* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1995), p.17.
[14] Coffee and cotton were significant industries prior to 1838 but did not survive post-apprenticeship. See Adamson, p. 160.
[15] Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* 2nd edn. (London: Hansib, 1993), p. 105 and Mangru, *Benevolent Neutrality*, p. 146.
[16] Tinker, ibid.
[17] Information for this historical sketch taken from William Ormsby, 'Sir Francis Hincks' in *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1881-1890* <http://www.biographi.ca/index-e.html> [accessed 27th November 2010]
[18] Ibid.

Hincks's governorship of the Windward Islands appeared successful and he worked largely to improve the 'social conditions and educational facilities' of those that lived there.[19] The settlement of labouring communities on uninhabited land was a hallmark of both of Hincks's West Indian administrations. During his time in British Guiana he supported the creation of separate ethnic villages for time-expired indentured immigrants.[20] Hincks had detractors however and in *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* (1871), John Edward Jenkins professed surprise that Hincks had ascended to the governorship bearing in mind the taint of his past political life in Canada. He wrote of Hincks:

> An able, astute, scheming, uncompromising, terribly energetic Scottish-Irish man from the dangerous neighbourhood of Belfast, endued with semi-absolute power, and incontinently pitched into a community like that of British Guiana, could scarcely fail to produce a pyrotechnic commotion in the blaze and sparkle of which fingers would be burned, and perhaps some persons totally annihilated.[21]

Hugh Tinker describes Francis Hincks as someone easily manipulated by the plantocracy who 'packed the Court of Policy' wielding enormous power over decisions that affected the system of indenture and the lives of the East Indians on and off the estates.[22] He argues that ordinances affecting East Indians, put in place during Hincks's tenure, reflected his lack of interest in the East Indians and his susceptibility to the influence of the plantocracy.[23] The source of the conflict at the heart of

[19] Ibid.
[20] For example the Chinese 'Hopetown' village scheme established in 1865, see Adamson, p. 95.
[21] Jenkins, *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* (New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1871), p. 66.
[22] Tinker, p. 105.
[23] Ibid.

Hincks's disagreements with Beaumont, Des Voeux and Crosby was the amount of power that the government had over the judiciary and the way that power was being wielded to appease the plantocracy, thereby having a negative affect on the lives of Indians. Thus Tinker states that despite the fact that Hincks was totally against East Indian immigration, one of his ordinances allowed East Indians to re-indenture for a period of five years following the completion of their first period of indenture.[24] Additionally, further ordinances made it possible for magistrates to try Indians in the law courts for labour related offences that did not constitute breaking the law of the land. As Tinker puts it: 'Under Hincks, the magistrates were made to understand that they should accommodate the planters if they wished for preferment.'[25] Finally, during his tenure, Hincks repeatedly sought to diminish the autonomy of the Immigration Agent General also known as the Protector of Immigrants.[26]

The clash between Governor Hincks and three members of the judiciary has a broader significance outside that of colonial Guianese history. It raises questions about the inherent opposition between colonialism and the rule of law, particularly in reference to plantation-based societies like those of the Caribbean. In his work *Empire on Trial: Race, Murder and Justice under British Rule, 1870-1935*, Martin J. Weiner outlines two areas of conflict in nineteenth century colonialism that are relevant to this section of my thesis. The first of these is that between liberal ideals and authoritarian empire played out in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of this work and the second and most significant to this chapter is that of the fundamental clash between the rule of law and the basic premise of the British Empire, which was inequality.[27]

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ron Ramdin, *Arising From Bondage: A History of the Indo-Caribbean People* (London: I.B Tauris, 2000), pp. 58-59.
[27] Martin J. Weiner, *Empire on Trial: Race, Murder and Justice under British Rule, 1870-1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1-2.

Both aspects of these nineteenth century conflicts were visible in the aftermath of the Morant Bay uprising in Jamaica.[28] Here colonial authorities had abandoned the rule of law and indiscriminately killed members of the black Jamaican population regardless of their participation in the uprising. Governor Eyre's actions were hotly debated in England with some believing that he should be tried for murder and others praising his actions as a justifiable defence of the white Jamaican community. Douglas Lorimer has emphasised that the Governor Eyre controversy inflamed those who felt that the 'honoured tradition of British justice' had been violated and that events in Jamaica were a stain on the 'honour and reputation' of England.[29] What emanates from this controversy is an image not dissimilar from that of discussions on indentured East Indians in Chapter 1 where I argued that the East Indian was almost superfluous to discourses for and against indenture. In the 1860s, as with the 1840s, a dialogue was taking place about the nature of English colonialism that excluded the voices of the colonised. As Lorimer writes of the Governor Eyre controversy:

> The two sides in the dispute differed so greatly not because they held conflicting opinions about the Negro, but because they held contrasting views about themselves.[30]

Hence the basic conflicts that Des Vouex, Crosby and Beaumont had with Hincks centred on their perception of how the law should be upheld and administered. What all three men agreed on was that the colony's judicial system should not be at the mercy of a plantocracy who abused it to control indentured labour by demanding

[28] Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 278.
[29] Douglas Lorimer *Colour, Class, and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), p. 196 and Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, p. 279.
[30] Lorimer, p. 196.

penal provision for labour offences. For Beaumont in particular, the idea of the 'honour and reputation of England' was at the forefront of his first clash with Governor Hincks.

According to James Rodway it was not until 1864 that Hincks and Chief Justice Joseph Beaumont collided.[31] This occurred when Beaumont demanded the returns for prisons, stating that he would overturn any convictions that lacked the correct paperwork. Behind Beaumont's request was a suspicion that some prisoners were being held illegally or beyond the time of their completed sentence. Correspondence between Beaumont and William Walker (Government Secretary in British Guiana) and Beaumont and Frederic Rogers Bart. (Under Secretary of State for the Colonies) reveals that Beaumont suspected that the judiciary was not being included in the line of procedure related to the commutation of sentences.[32] Thus in 1864, Beaumont wrote to Hincks complaining that procedure regarding the commutation from death penalty to life sentence was not being followed. He impressed on Hincks that the lack of procedure could result in embarrassment for the colonial government if the public were to be made aware that the government was usurping the authority of the court. Not satisfied with Hincks's response, Beaumont wrote to the office of the Colonial Secretary in London.

In 1865 Beaumont again demanded a return of prisoners, Hincks informed him that he would pass a new ordinance by which a return of prisoners no longer had to be seen by the judiciary.[33] The Bill was passed in spite of Beaumont's opposition and Beaumont, in what looked like an attempt to antagonise Hincks, began proceedings against the Clerk of Arraigns, William Campbell, who was accused of making post

[31] James Rodway, *History of British Guiana from the year 1688 to the Present Day*, 3 vols (Georgetown: J. Thomson, 1894), III, p. 147.
[32] CO 111/349 Joseph Beaumont to William Walker, 2 July 1864, and in the same volume, Joseph Beaumont to Frederic Rogers Bart., 3 October 1864, unpaginated volume.
[33] Rodway, ibid.

dated entries of certain indictments. When he was questioned, Campbell claimed that he had done this on his own authority although the implication throughout the press was that Campbell was protecting Governor Hincks. Beaumont's demand that Hincks apologise for his role in the incident resulted in Beaumont's subsequent suspension and his return to England. In Beaumont's absence the Campbell trial was adjourned. These events quickly divided the colony in two; the majority of the plantocracy were in favour of the pro-plantocracy Governor, while more liberal elements, including the clergy, favoured Beaumont.[34] Beaumont's supporters petitioned the Secretary of State for the Colonies for the reversal of his suspension and Beaumont was reinstated and returned to British Guiana. The result of this decision was of course embarrassing for Governor Hincks. In a speech delivered in the Court of Policy Hincks used the recent Morant Bay uprising in Jamaica to deter support for Beaumont, creating metaphorical links between violence against white colonists in Jamaica and support for Beaumont amongst the African-Guianese community. Beaumont reacted almost immediately by writing to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Edward Cardwell, to complain:

> I trust that I am not mistaken in believing that insofar as it refers to myself it will be treated, as such a monstrous tale deserves. […] The structure and tradition of society in this colony are such that all questions of decency and order apart, the very independence of the courts of justice are imperilled and must suffer from such inflammatory language and such open assaults upon the head of the law by the head of the Legislature and Executive Government.[35]

[34] Amongst Beaumont's supporters was the African-Guianese newspaper the *Creole*, which in opposition to the pro-planter *Colonist* defended Beaumont throughout his tenure, see Kartick, p. 7.
[35] CO 111/354 Joseph Beaumont to Edward Cardwell, 29 December 1865, unpaginated volume.

An angry editorial in the black-edited *Creole* newspaper also attacked Hincks's speech and castigated him for the liberty he indirectly gave the press to print support of his views:

> We protest in the name of all that is fair and if anyone feels a doubt on the subject let him refer to the Royal Gazette on the 3rd inst. in which will be found a most cold blooded and atrocious attack upon the negro population of this country founded manifestly upon the hint furnished by his Excellency in the speech to which we have referred. We deny the truth of the Governor's statement that they have shown any inclination to disturb the public peace in defence of Mr Beaumont, or of anybody else.[36]

However Hincks's speech galvanised the planting community who suggested that Beaumont's actions could precipitate unrest in the colony. They wrote of the African-Guianese particularly:

> They are being taught to believe that His Excellency the Governor having been beaten by their particular friend the Chief Justice, that they may also resist him and that Her Gracious Majesty the Queen will come personally forward to help them in their resistance to that authority which the Governor personifies. [37]

The language used in statements like this show how little representations of the country's African-Guianese community had progressed since emancipation. The idea

[36] Editorial, *Creole*, 5 January 1866.
[37] Editorial, *Colonist*, 2 January 1866.

that with this singular act as an example the African-Guianese community were being 'taught' that their causes would receive metropolitan support denied their ability to discern for themselves when they, or indeed their supporters, were justifiably vindicated. Hincks's evocation of the recent spectre of the Morant Bay Rebellion was a politically shrewd attempt to gain further support in the colony by arousing the fear of the white colonists. The background to the Jamaican uprising was one that could have had its origins in any of the West Indian colonies. Factors that helped anger foment before the uprising were the lack of available employment among the black population, high taxes imposed on them, the extreme poverty that resulted from this and the 'denial of political rights to the ex-slaves'.[38] The verdicts of stipendiary magistrates were not trusted and the labouring population lacked confidence in their decisions. Attempts by Jamaicans to rectify this from within the system failed; George William Gordon for example, a magistrate of African and European ancestry was removed from office when he complained about jail conditions. In the wake of Morant Bay and the 1857 uprising in India, Hincks may have hoped for a sympathetic hearing of his complaints against Beaumont but his attempt at scaremongering was thwarted when, following events in Morant Bay, the British government and press condemned the retaliatory actions of Governor Eyre which they held to be responsible for the deaths of almost five hundred people.[39] Hincks, speaking so soon after the uprising could not have anticipated that Governor Eyre would be roundly condemned for his actions and that the resultant retaliation by the colonial Jamaican government would result in a Commission of Inquiry being sent to the colony.

Beaumont returned from England to a commotion, yet almost immediately upon his return he controversially reinitiated proceedings against the Clerk of

[38] Gad Heuman, *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1994), p. 45.
[39] Ibid, p. xiii.

Arraigns, William Campbell. Beaumont alienated supporters with his action against Campbell but what happened next sealed the Chief Justice's fate. The editor of the *Colonist,* Lawrence McDermott, was summoned to answer charges of contempt of court when he published an article ridiculing the Immigration Agent General James Crosby who was then an acting judge. The trial, which resulted in the imprisonment of McDermott for six months, was referred to the Privy Council in London who did not revoke McDermott's sentence. The *Colonist* referred to Beaumont and two other High Court judges, including Crosby, as having 'assumed despotic powers of the highest order'.[40] The end for Beaumont occurred when a judgement he gave about the transfer of property in the African-Guianese village of Friendship caused discontent amongst the villagers. As the village schemes were a pet project of Hincks's, Beaumont's interference was construed as a direct challenge to the Governor.[41] The Court of Policy voted to refuse to pay Beaumont's salary and under these circumstances the Colonial Secretary of State could no longer ignore the demands from the colony to have Beaumont removed. In 1868 Beaumont left the colony for the last time: his appeal to the Privy Council failed and he returned to England. There, in 1871, he produced a tract entitled*: The New Slavery: An Account of the Indian and Chinese Immigrants in British Guiana* where he gave an account of what he felt to be the more serious injustices of the indenture system.

Beaumont's tract is a historic piece of work because it is the first example of colonial writing that attacked the conditions in the colony not only for East Indians under indenture but also for the African-Guianese and Chinese. Beaumont complained that essential food items for 'the labouring classes' were 'without

[40] 'Summary for the Packet', *Colonist*, 26 April 1866.
[41] Rodway, p. 161.

exception' the ones subject to the highest taxes.[42] Regarding the colony's justice system Beaumont's main concerns were the number of prosecutions under the labour laws, the number of fines that were administered to immigrants outside the court, and the large numbers of Chinese and East Indians being held in the capital's jail for labour related offences.[43] Beaumont stated that out of a total of seventeen death sentences passed during his tenure (1863-1868) fifteen of these were on indentured East Indians. Beaumont asserted his belief that this was not related to any innate propensity for crime but rather 'the degraded condition of these people under servitude'.[44] What is special about Beaumont's tract is that in contrast to Edward Jenkins's *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs,* also published in 1871, it did not focus on the condition of the Indians as being more worthy of sympathy or indeed more pitiable figures than the economically excluded African-Guianese population or the Chinese-Guianese. In this way Beaumont appeared to want to depict a society in which the ethnic groups that were economically disadvantaged were subject to a variety of injustices by a planter dominated colonial system that apportioned little or no value to their lives. The structure of Beaumont's tract therefore is unifying and for its time relatively revolutionary. It creates a textual sense of inter-ethnic solidarity and inadvertently describes the emergence of a creole society. More profoundly for our discussion it is the first unequivocally anti-indenture text:

> This is not a question of more or less, of this or that safeguard, of an occasional defect here, or excess there. But it is that of a monstrous, rotten system, rooted upon slavery, grown in its stale soil, emulating its worst

[42] Joseph Beaumont, *The New Slavery: An Account of Indian and Chinese Immigrants in British Guiana* (London: Ridgeway, 1871), p. 10.
[43] Ibid, pp. 26-28.
[44] Ibid, pp. 33-34.

> abuses, and only the more dangerous because it presents itself under false colours, whereas slavery bore the brand of infamy on its head.[45]

Unlike John Scoble, Edward Jenkins and even William Des Voeux, Beaumont saw no redemptive features in indenture nor did he believe that reforms could ever address the inherent injustices of the system.

Immigration Agent General James Crosby and stipendiary magistrate William Des Voeux were two of Beaumont's key allies in the colony. Des Voeux came to British Guiana in 1863 and suffered ill health for much of the five years he spent in the colony. In 1903 he published a memoir recalling his colonial service not just in Guiana but also in St Lucia, Canada, Fiji and Hong Kong.[46] A stipendiary magistrate in both East and West Demerara, Des Voeux had significant experience of life on the sugar estates. Shortly after Beaumont's departure, remarks that Des Voeux made in private criticising a recent government policy reached Hincks. Des Voeux became an immediate target of the Governor and within a week he was transferred to an insalubrious district populated by hostile planters.[47] Roundly unpopular because of his lack of sympathy for the planters and his silent but suspected support of Beaumont during the controversy, Des Voeux requested a position elsewhere in the colonies.[48] Newly located in St Lucia, Des Voeux heard reports of unrest among the Indians on plantation Leonora in British Guiana. On Christmas Day 1869, motivated by what he was sure was to become a significant uprising of Indian indentured labourers in the colony, Des Voeux wrote a long letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Granville detailing his concerns about the treatment of indentured Indians in the

[45] Beaumont, p. 14.
[46] Des Voeux went on to have an illustrious career in the colonial service later becoming the Governor of Fiji and Hong Kong.
[47] George William Des Voeux, *My Colonial Service in British Guiana, St. Lucia, Trinidad, Fiji, Australia, Newfoundland and Hong Kong, with interludes* (London: John Murray, 1903), pp. 124-127.
[48] Ibid.

colony. Des Voeux felt strongly that the injustices of indenture were the underlying cause of the rebellion at Leonora and would, unchecked, lead to more violence.[49]

The section of Des Voeux's memoir that focuses on British Guiana is more patently concerned with the administration of justice to Indian immigrants than the circumstances surrounding the correctness of indenture as a system. In this sense it differs from Beaumont's tract, which was resolutely anti-indenture. Des Voeux claimed in his autobiography that his discontent was directed not against individuals in power themselves but rather the system as it was.[50] This is certainly borne out by the evidence contained in his autobiography; he does not, for example, name Hincks or his successor nor differentiate between them, referring to the succession as 'King Log following King Stork'.[51] It is clear that Des Voeux wanted to preserve a sense of his own impartiality and distance himself from the personal feud between Hincks and Beaumont. However he was no less revolutionary in his thinking than Beaumont and, in terms of diminishing both the system of indenture and Governor Hincks's administration, far more effective.

The key points of Des Voeux's 1869 letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies were that insufficient provisions were given to the immigrants, conditions and housing were unsanitary, overseers were abusive and hospital staff and planters colluded against the proper treatment of immigrants in order to keep them in constant labour on the estates.[52] Des Voeux's reference to overseers' ill-treatment of Indian labours was at the heart of discontent at plantation Leonora where the uprising that prompted Des Voeux's letter began:

[49] Ibid, p. 129.
[50] Ibid, pp. 130-31.
[51] Ibid, p. 126.
[52] Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XX, 1871, 'Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in British Guiana', Des Voeux to Granville, 25 December 1869, pp. 1-14.

> It seemed to stem from the arrival of Richard Rose Manson as Deputy Manager. Reportedly, Manson was accustomed to the system of coerced labour as he previously worked under the slave system in the cotton plantations of southern United States. […] Manson had reportedly been "repeatedly guilty" of assaulting immigrants who were either afraid to complain or who believed that such complaints would be futile.[53]

One immigrant had already managed to successfully sue Manson for damages and it was Manson who was the target of violence when the riot at Leonora began.[54] Beyond Leonora, Basdeo Mangru documents labour disturbances occurring along 'the sugar belt' during this period, reflecting the fact that Des Voeux's letter had accurately anticipated growing discontent amongst the Indian indentured population as regards their treatment on the estates.[55]

Des Voeux's intervention had the desired effect and a Commission of Inquiry was sent to British Guiana in 1870. Charged with investigating the statements that Des Voeux made, the Commission spent time in the colony and on individual estates, interviewing the indentured labourers in private. Des Voeux himself was summoned before the Committee to give evidence. However in the interim he had been injured in an accident and was unable to represent himself well in court.[56] This coupled with the fact that he could not provide specific and dated evidence for many of the points in his letter forced him to withdraw a number of his original claims. Des Voeux was

[53] Basdeo Mangru, 'Indian Militancy on Sugar Estates, the 1869 Leonora Episode', *Guyana Journal,* 14.6 (2009) <http://www.guyanajournal.com/indian_militancy_leonora.html> [accessed 17 November 2012] (para.5-8 of 16).
[54] Ibid, para. 7 of 16.
[55] Ibid, para. 11 of 16.
[56] Des Voeux, pp. 131-38.

unable to do much justice to the points he made and was himself disappointed in his own performance.[57] Hugh Tinker concludes however:

> Certainly when giving evidence Des Voeux had appeared a poor kind of bureaucrat, getting dates and events wrong, and when pressed pleading that he had kept no material as evidence. But having disposed of George Des Voeux they proceeded to demonstrate that virtually all his allegations were true. […] If they were critical of Des Voeux they were even more critical of the evidence submitted by the planters which they categorized as 'on the whole, untrustworthy'.[58]

Tinker's portrayal of Des Voeux as a 'poor kind of bureaucrat' however is one I would like to challenge. As part of the research for this thesis I encountered a letter written from Des Voeux to the Secretary of State for the Colonies before the Commission of Inquiry began. In it Des Voeux outlined his concern that the plantocracy were using delaying tactics by objecting to the appointment of a potential commission member.[59] Des Voeux also commented on the difficult position that testifying doctors would be put in, being perhaps unable to give evidence freely.[60] Des Voeux further stressed just how ingrained plantocracy interests were in the structure of the colony:

> In stating the circumstances of Guiana as peculiar, I refer to the exceptional power of the sugar planting interest in that colony. In no other West Indian

[57] Ibid.
[58] Tinker, p. 241.
[59] CO 111/378 George William Des Voeux to Earl Granville, 9 June 1870, unpaginated volume.
[60] Ibid.

> colony to which East Indian immigration has been permitted, does the influence of that interest make itself so universally felt.[61]

Drawing an analogy with Trinidad, Des Vouex stated that the plantocracy interests there were divided and therefore less powerful as the planters were not all British and held 'opposing interests' as sugar competed with other crops like cocoa. He contrasted this with Guiana however, of which he wrote that of the thirteen members of the Combined Court nine were planters and a tenth, the Attorney General, was a legal adviser 'to many leading planters.'[62] Des Voeux further stated that beyond politics, the interests of the leading traders in the colony were also caught up with the planters as six out of seven of the leading firms owned sugar estates forming, 'an oligarchy which has hitherto overcome all opposition'.[63] Des Voeux spoke of the planter interests as being so entire and so insidious to life in the colony that their effect on the judiciary was such as:

> Almost inevitably to warp their judgement and to cause them to look upon immigrant discipline from the planters' point of view; and I even intimated that a greater length of time would have not improbably produced a similar effect upon myself, even if the process had not already begun.[64]

In the final paragraph of this letter Des Voeux accurately predicted that the passage of time between his 1869 letter and his appearance in front of the Commission of Inquiry

[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

would make him an inept witness but he concluded that 'sufficient evidence' would come out of the enquiry that would prompt 'radical reforms'.[65]

Des Voeux was right: in spite of his poor performance he was vindicated by the fact that so much of what he had said was proven indirectly in the course of the Commission's work. In his memoir of this period he wrote of the Commission: 'they had brought to light more than I had expected and almost as much as I had desired'.[66]

There was further vindication for Des Voeux the following year when the *Times* review of *The Coolie His Rights and Wrongs* pointed out that the very existence of Jenkins's book proved the substance of Des Voeux's allegations.[67] In 1872, far more serious riots than the ones at plantation Leonora occurred at another estate named Devonshire Castle, echoing Des Voeux's claims in his letter that 'ill feelings' on the part of the indentured Indians would eventually 'result in far more serious calamities'.[68] The disturbance at Devonshire Castle resulted in the deaths of five Indian labourers who were killed when police mistook a gunshot for an order to fire on the crowd.

There are three key ways in which Des Voeux's work is important to my study. Firstly it conveys the consistency of anti-indenture agitation that I have argued was present from the inception of the system. As we have seen with the Indian government in Chapter 1, Des Voeux also challenged plantocracy claims that indenture offered improved circumstances to the immigrant. He wrote that this improvement was true only 'to superficial observation' and that the 'advantages' of emigration were 'more nominal than real'.[69] Secondly Des Voeux ably portrayed the extent to which the system corrupted the doctors and magistrates who worked within

[65] Ibid.
[66] William Des Voeux, *My Colonial Service,* p. 139.
[67] 'The Demerara Coolie', *The Times*, 17 October 1871, p. 4.
[68] Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XX, 1871, William Des Voeux to Earl Granville, 25 December 1869, pp. 1-14. p. 1.
[69] Ibid, p. 2.

it by nullifying their autonomy; dependant upon the planters for employment they felt unable to make decisions contrary to their wishes.[70] Finally, as with Beaumont's writing, there was a culturally unifying element to Des Voeux's letter. Des Voeux related an incident where a planter verbally abused him after he had released three of his Chinese labourers from 'illegal confinement'. This event resulted in Des Voeux being attacked by the plantocracy organ the *Colonist* and in response the *Creole,* the African-Guianese newspaper that had supported Beaumont, printed an editorial in defence of Des Voeux.[71] This is consequential because the black community were acknowledging the unfair treatment of Chinese and East Indians under the justice system.

Now retired and living in Canada, Francis Hincks greeted the news of Des Voeux's letter with the publication of a pamphlet written before the Commission of Inquiry had begun. In it Hincks appeared to apportion blame to Crosby's Immigration Office and its employees, despite the fact that he had considerably reduced their powers during his time as Governor: 'I must observe that, if Mr Des Voeux's allegations are correct, no one is more censurable than the Immigration Agent General and the sub-agents who visit the estates.'[72] Perhaps in an attempt to draw attention to some of the good it was acknowledged he had done in the colony, Hincks wrote of Des Voeux: 'He makes no reference whatever to the Creole population, which is much more in need of increased medical aid than the immigrants'.[73] In a line similar to the defence of many leading colonists accused of treating Indians poorly during indenture, Hincks drew negative comparisons with the place of origin of the immigrants stressing the 'improving' nature of the system:

[70] Ibid, pp. 2-5.
[71] Ibid, pp. 6-7.
[72] Separately paginated enclosure in CO 111/378 Francis Hincks *Observations on A Letter* (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1870), p. 8.
[73] Ibid, p. 10.

> Some hospitals are more liberally managed than others; but it is my conviction that there has been gradual improvement going on, and that there will be a concurrence of testimony among the best informed medical men, that great progress has been made of late years, and that the immigrant labourers are not only better attended to than they were formerly, but that they are much better cared for in British Guiana than they were in their native country, and better than the same class in any other tropical country.[74]

The officers of the Commission of Inquiry were unsparing in their conclusions on the Hincks administration however and wrote negatively of his tenure, his treatment of the East Indians and of James Crosby, the Immigration Agent General. They observed that Crosby's responsibilities suffered from continual diminution by Hincks until 'he had become a sort of chief clerk in an office […] directed by the governor in person.'[75] Part of the conclusion of the 1870 Commission of Inquiry was that independence should be restored to the Immigration Agent General and his office.[76]

Throughout this thesis I will argue that there are key examples of combined coloniser-colonised resistance in indenture. Thus in Chapter 1 I emphasised that East Indians on the estates, aware of John Scoble's presence, actively sought him out to present oral reports of the ill-treatment that they had received. I would like to stress this theme of combined resistance in my reading of the work of James Crosby. The name of the Immigration Agent General, James Crosby, was to become so synonymous with what he did that for years after he died, East Indians referred to his

[74] Hincks, p. 10.
[75] Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XX, 1871, 'Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Treatment of immigrants in British Guiana', p. 50.
[76] Ibid, p. 54.

office and the holder of its title as 'Crosby'.[77] A legendary figure, Walter Rodney perceives a danger in the lionisation of Crosby and his 'real or imagined remedial actions' stating that they 'obscure the self-liberating activity of indentured labourers'.[78] Rather than romanticise James Crosby as a hero, like early Guyanese historians such as Dwarka Nath, Rodney's assessment of Crosby centres on the efforts of the Indians themselves rather than any action that Crosby took on their behalf.[79] He cites instances where Indians walked off estates during working hours and proceeded to Crosby's Georgetown office to register complaints. Rodney's view of Crosby as little more than a bureaucrat in a nominal role, ineffective without the Indians, is similar to that represented by Alan Adamson who suggests that one of the reasons that Crosby maintained his position for so long was because of what he and his office had come to symbolise for the indentured Indians: the possibility of justice in a planter dominated society and 'the protector of what meagre right they possessed'.[80] An early colonist and colonial historian Henry Kirke, who worked as a magistrate in Guiana for twenty-five years paints a picture of Crosby as nothing more than a bumbling and accident-prone old man, eccentric in nature, who became a 'a sort of deity and impersonation of protection'.[81] It is interesting how similar his view is to that of Adamson and Rodney; all three appear to diminish the well-documented respect that the East Indians held Crosby in and by doing so suggest that they were incapable of discerning for themselves when a colonist was genuinely interested in their welfare.

It is important to consider the limits to which the various rebellions of Beaumont and Des Voeux were subject. When defending himself against accusations

[77] Tinker, p. 224, wrote that a Commission from India, visiting British Guiana in 1913, found that the Immigration Office was still called 'Crosby'.
[78] Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 52.
[79] Dwarka Nath, *A History of Indians in Guyana* (London: The Author, 1970), p. 60 and Rodney, p. 182.
[80] Adamson, p. 143.
[81] Henry Kirke, *Twenty-Five Years in British Guiana* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1898), pp. 72-4.

made by Hincks that he had strong alliances within the African and Indian community, Beaumont wrote to the Colonial Secretary of State that the African population were lazy, had 'extraordinary disregard of truth' and repudiated 'the colonial creed that a negro was to be believed rather than an asiatic'.[82] Des Voeux's writing, too, demonstrated the sorts of racial classification characteristic of colonial administrators in this period; the Indians he accused of lying to such an extent that they showed a 'fertility of the imagination and invention of pictorial detail as almost to amount to a fine art.'[83] While Indians, Chinese and Portuguese are ascribed the dignity of a 'language', the Africans are labelled as speaking 'some dialect of savage Africa'.[84] It would be wrong to surmise that because these men were markedly brave in their attempts to defend the East Indians from various judicial colonial injustices that they were without the prejudices that allowed the colonial system, as opposed to the system of indenture, to function. Beaumont and Des Voeux may have been anti-indenture but they were certainly not anti-imperialists.

The actions of Des Voeux and Beaumont had initiated the Commission of Inquiry and reinvigorated the Anti-Slavery Society's interest in indenture. It dispatched Edward Jenkins to the colony to represent its interests in the 1870 Inquiry.[85] Indirectly Beaumont and Des Voeux had emboldened the East Indians to consider their plight in a wider perspective; the physical presence of the Commission in the colony demonstrated to the East Indians that beyond the shores of British Guiana there were higher, if very removed, authorities that were interested in their welfare. The effect of this should not be underestimated; Basdeo Mangru cites James Rodway and Des Voeux as ascribing the increase in disturbances, from the 1860s

[82] CO 111/354 Joseph Beaumont to Edward Cardwell, 29 December 1865.
[83] Des Voeux, p, 117.
[84] Des Voeux, p. 118.
[85] Edward Jenkins work will be the subject of the next chapter of this thesis.

onwards to the changes in climate wrought by Beaumont.[86] If the 1870 Commission of Inquiry empowered the labourers, their efforts in the Devonshire Castle uprising struck a blow to indenture from which it never fully recovered. The riot altered the colonial view of the East Indians as docile and malleable with the result that later Guyanese historians like Walter Rodney commented that events at Devonshire Castle and Leonora 'conditioned planter and official attitudes toward Indian estate labor', the idea that the Indians could be 'volatile and violent' was something that they were now forced to entertain.[87]

What was exceptional about Devonshire Castle was the support from the metropole, as reflected in the leader article of *The Times* (5 November 1872). Listing the elements of the system that marked it out as being similar to slavery the editorial stated:

> At a time when the feelings of the English people are deeply moved by the description of crimes practised by superior on weaker and defenceless races in various parts of the world, an unfortunate occurrence in British Guiana will attracts [sic] special notice to the condition of the Coolies in certain British Possessions. In the Mother Country there are signs that the old zeal against slavery, which seemed to have died out for want of an object, is reviving and ready to go forth against new enemies.[88]

The efforts of Beaumont and Des Voeux to galvanise the support of the more liberal elements of the metropole towards British Guiana had worked. Pressure had revealed dissension: there was a different perception of the purpose and role of indenture

[86] Mangru, *Benevolent Neutrality*, p. 172.
[87] Rodney, p. 153
[88] Editorial, *The Times*, 5 November 1872.

between the colonial authorities in British Guiana and those in England. If there was any sense of security that existing measures in the system served to protect the East Indians sufficiently, all three men had shaken this, if not dislodged it entirely.

PART 2: 1870-1902

Introduction to Part 2

The period under consideration in Part 2 of this thesis is overwhelmingly defined by the increased acceptance of the concept of race and the pervasive belief in white racial superiority in Europe.[1] For those that connected Darwinian theories of evolution with racial inferiority, the decline of some indigenous groups in parts of the British Empire was evidence of the certitude of Anglo-Saxon primacy.[2] Landmark occurrences in the British colonies, such as the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, exacerbated the growth of racial thinking among the colonists. The emergence of the 'new science' of anthropology, 'which declared that moral and intellectual as well as physical traits were biologically determined', combined with these events.[3] The result was a style of British colonialism that took for granted its own superiority. This was evidenced by a more aggressive and assured style of colonial writing buoyed by the irrefutable power of science.[4]

These attitudinal differences on the part of the coloniser toward the colonised affected the Caribbean significantly. It was the African-Caribbean community who were the subject of the most consistently crude racial stereotypes of the period. As we have seen in Chapter 3 of this thesis, Morant Bay in Jamaica had been the site of one of the key episodes of mid-nineteenth century rebellion against British rule. In England, the Governor Eyre controversy temporarily polarised English society and

[1] Douglas Lorimer, *Colour, Class, and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), p. 13 and Andrew Porter, 'Introduction: Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth Century', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. by Andrew Porter, 5 vols (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), III, pp. 1-28 (pp. 22-23).
[2] Porter, p. 22. See also Patrick Brantlinger's *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003).
[3] Lorimer, p. 14.
[4] See for example James Hunt, *On the Negro's Place in Nature* (London: Trubner, 1863) and James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, the Bow of Ulysses* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900).

Eyre's supporters emerged victorious as far as a middle-class consensus was concerned.[5] The colonisers increasingly blamed the economic decline of the Caribbean on emancipation and directly associated this not only with the black community, but also with the work of benevolent liberal organisations like the Anti-Slavery Society who had agitated for the end of slavery and apprenticeship.[6] Accordingly recurring references to lazy, thriftless blacks litter colonial texts on the Caribbean throughout this period. The collective motivation of these works was the desire to portray the black population of the West Indies as degenerating through lack of industry, an image to which we will return throughout the following three chapters.[7] As Anthony Trollope's 1860 work *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* shows, the idea that emancipation was a failure was in existence prior to Morant Bay; Catherine Hall, for example, has noted Thomas Carlyle's contribution, from the 1850s onwards, to a national discourse that questioned the correctness of the abolition movement and the success of emancipation.[8]

In its consideration of the East Indians colonial writing also changed. Although racist ideology informed representations of East Indians in the Caribbean, in literary quarters this was concurrent with an overwhelming drive to idealise the Asian presence in the Caribbean and laud their part in the perceived rescue of the sugar industry of British Guiana. As far as the plantocracy were concerned, the anticipated labour problems of emancipation had been tackled by the survival of indenture through initially difficult years. With the caveat that indenture was controlled and

[5] Catherine Hall, 'The Nation Within and Without' in *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867,* ed. by Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland and Jane Rendall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 192-233 (pp. 201-204).

[6] Gad Heuman gives an account of the economic difficulties of the West Indies in Gad Heuman, 'From Slavery to Freedom: Blacks in the Nineteenth-Century British West Indies', in *Black Experience and the Empire,* ed. by Philip. D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 141-165 (p. 161).

[7] See for example, Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, Charles Kingsley *At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies* (London: Macmillan, 1871), James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies* and William Agnew Paton *Down the Islands, A Voyage to the Caribbees* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887)

[8] Catherine Hall, 'The Nation Within and Without' p. 197. See also Gad Heuman, ibid, p. 162 who states that one strand of British thought, inspired by Carlyle, saw 'emancipation as the ruin of the West Indies'.

regulated to prevent abuses, it was acknowledged as a point of pride on the part of colonisers and not shame. As a consequence many commentators now celebrated indenture as a successful experiment in social engineering.[9] This is not to say that indenture did not come under scrutiny between 1871-1900, rather that revolutionary talk was limited to reform of the system instead of its abolition.[10]

A key factor that facilitated the idealisation of East Indians in the Caribbean was the notion that indenture and the process of migration had created an opportunity to 'advance' the East Indians. If the blacks were subject to representations of their community as degenerating in the West Indies, the East Indian presence was reflected as the opposite of this image. These notions, conscious or unconscious, appealed to topical biological theories on degeneration, regeneration and social engineering.[11] Pseudo-science legitimised racist depictions of the blacks as having atrophied since the end of slavery. As Christine Bolt has commented the East Indians were portrayed as the binary opposite of the blacks: 'hard-working, dignified, attractive in appearance, operating a colour-bar against the black population and therefore thoroughly acceptable to Victorian prejudices'.[12] In Part 3 of the thesis we will see how the incessant regurgitation of these ideas contributed to the increased polarisation of the African-Guianese and Indian-Guianese and perpetuated dangerous stereotypes of both communities that persisted into the next century and beyond.

[9] Trollope, p. 152, Kingsley, p. 97 and Froude, p. 76 and Agnew Paton, p. 196 all remarked positively on the system of Indian indenture in the British West Indies. Kingsley and Froude wrote in specific reference to Trinidad, not having travelled to British Guiana.

[10] As expressed in *The New Slavery* (p. 14), it was total abolition rather than this reformist attitude that Joseph Beaumont advocated.

[11] In his work *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, 1848-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Daniel Pick has described degeneration as an 'intellectual current within a far-wider language of nineteenth-century racist imperialism' whilst acknowledging the extent to which the concept was also applied 'to sectors of the imperial metropolis' (p. 2). A point also emphasised by Ann McClintock in *Imperial Leather: Race Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 46-51 who charts the ubiquity of the 'shadow' that degeneration cast against 'idea of progress' in Victorian society, p. 46.

[12] Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge; Kegan Paul: Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 108.

But how were stereotypes of the work-shy African-Caribbean and the industrious, docile East Indian challenged? The black community of the Caribbean had opposed European narratives on slavery from the eighteenth century onwards. Writing by women like Mary Prince (1831) and Mary Seacole (1857) and works by Ignatius Sancho (1782) and Olaudah Equiano (1789), while frequently appropriating the tropes and stylistic flourishes of New World literature, offered a form of resistance to colonial narratives on the African-Caribbean community.[13] In this tradition the black Trinidadian writer John Jacob Thomas censured James Anthony Froude's *The British in the West Indies* in the publication of his own text *Froudacity: West Indian Fables by James Anthony Froude*.[14] Thus far this thesis has charted occasions where the East Indian community of British Guiana mounted physical resistance to indenture. Unlike the black community in the West Indies they had not yet opposed stereotypes or narratives about themselves in writing. It is key to this section of the thesis specifically that when this began to happen at the end of the century, the colonial construction of the malleable coolie as the saviour of the sugar industry diminished. Consequently in the following three chapters I will chart the pinnacle of colonial adoration for the East Indians, its coexistence with racism and finally its decline as the East Indians became involved in the process of writing back to the colonial centre.

[13] Mary Seacole, *The Wonderful Adventures of Mary Seacole in Many Lands* (London: Penguin Classics, 2005); Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000); Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003); Ignatius Sancho, *The Letters of Ignatius Sancho* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994).

[14] J.J Thomas, *Froudacity: West Indian Fables by James Anthony Froude* (Philadelphia: Gebbie and Company, 1890). Thomas was also the author of *The Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar* (Port of Spain: *Chronicle* Publishing Office, 1869).

Chapter 4: Edward Jenkins: The Creolisation of a Victorian Imperialist

It is my contention that between 1871-1898, texts on East Indian indenture in British Guiana are distinguished by the increased presence of ambivalence towards colonialism and a burgeoning desire to explore the culturally creole landscape of the Caribbean. The paradox of this status quo is that as I have outlined in the introduction to this section, the same period was simultaneously defined by increased racial discourse. In consequence it is in writing from this period in particular that we might see, as far as British Guiana was concerned, the pertinence of Homi Bhabha's theory of colonial discourse as inherently ambivalent and therefore ultimately destabilising to colonial rule.[1] This point becomes markedly apparent in this section of the thesis where we encounter texts, which, as Patrick Brantlinger has described, 'celebrated or criticized Britain and its Empire, often doing both simultaneously'.[2]

In the following three chapters I will show that in the final decades of the nineteenth century, this ambivalence was manifested in the contradictory writing of colonists and imperialists who on one hand argued for the superiority of the white race or Christianity, yet on the other increasingly idealised and romanticised the East Indians and aspects of their religion and culture.[3] I aim to show that this veneration of the East Indian was attributable in part to the perceived exoticism of the South Asian presence in the New World, which was represented as embodying the glory and vastness of the empire at a moment when British imperialism was at its height.[4] I have earlier emphasised my incorporation into this thesis of Kamau Brathwaite's theory on

[1] See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), pp. 121-174. See also Robert Young's *Postcolonialism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), here the author writes that colonialism has always 'carried the seeds of its own destruction' and that 'anti-colonialism goes back to the beginnings of colonialism itself', p. 74.
[2] Patrick Brantlinger, 'Empire and Nationalism', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1830-1914,* ed. by Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) pp. 251-269 (p. 251).
[3] Examples of this will be provided throughout the forthcoming chapters, but see for example, William Agnew Paton's *Down the Islands: A Voyage to the Caribbee* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887) on the East Indian presence in Trinidad, pp. 197-198 and his portrait of a 'Hindu belle' in British Guiana pp. 177-180.
[4] Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Introduction*, pp. 90-91.

the concept of creolisation as it occurred in the Caribbean.[5] Creolisation is particularly pertinent to this section of my thesis where I will show that textually aggressive assertions of Anglo-Saxon supremacy appear alongside a colonial desire to explore intellectually the post-emancipation multi-cultural terrain of British Guiana.

The antagonistic desires that I have outlined above are most emphatically demonstrated in two texts on indenture written by the imperialist and social reformer Edward Jenkins (1838-1910), who was selected as an independent observer of the 1870 Commission of Inquiry by the Aborigines' Protection Society and the Anti-Slavery Society. Somewhat poetically Edward Jenkins was born in India the same year that the *Hesperus* and the *Whitby* landed the first East Indian emigrants in British Guiana. Educated in Canada and America, he came to London to join the bar in 1864 eventually becoming the Member of Parliament for Dundee in 1874. Jenkins produced novels throughout his life; his first was the satire *Ginx's Baby*. Published in 1870 the novel was partly responsible for the religious compromise in the Education Act of the same year, satirising as it did the struggle between religious institutions to educate a child.[6] That Jenkins was affected by the short time he spent in British Guiana is seen in the two works that he produced about the indenture system. The first of these, written in 1871, was a work of literary reportage called *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs*. The second was a fictional romance published in 1876 entitled *Lutchmee and Dilloo: A Tale of West Indian Life*.[7] Centring on the lives of two indentured labourers *Lutchmee and Dilloo* was a ground breaking work, the first documented Guyanese novel it is also the first ever novel on the Indian indenture system.[8]

[5] See the 'Note on Nomenclature' that precedes this thesis.
[6] Dabydeen, 'Introduction' in Edward Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo: A Study of West Indian Life* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2003), p. 7.
[7] Hereafter referred to as *Lutchmee and Dilloo.*
[8] John Gilmore, 'Series Editor's Preface' in Edward Jenkins *Lutchmee and Dilloo: A Study of West Indian Life*, pp. vi-x (p. vii).

In Chapter 1 of this thesis I examined John Scoble's work on behalf of the Anti-Slavery Society. There I identified ambivalence in his position on indenture and stressed that this undermined the effectiveness of the campaign against the system. I want to show in the following pages that Jenkins's ambivalence is not so easily located. Through his use of a prose text and subsequently a literary one, we are able to trace the evolution of a more compassionate gaze towards the indentured East Indian. Jenkins's representations shift from the relative detachment of *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* to what I will argue is a resolutely anti-indenture and anti-colonial text *Lutchmee and Dilloo*. Where Scoble's ambivalence centred on the proximity of indenture to slavery, Jenkins's ambivalence embodies the more complex dialogue of this period of the nineteenth century as colonial discourse transitioned from a period of anti-colonial liberalism to racist imperialism.[9]

Edward Jenkins's first work on British Guiana, *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs,* was a predictable response by the author to his duties on behalf of the humanitarian societies that had engaged his services. The text formed the basis for his opinions on indenture garnered through his own experience of the system in British Guiana. There is a sense of finality about his writing; on the whole it is clear that he believed indenture was beneficial for the East Indians but potentially open to abuse.[10] What prompted a second work on the colony and the subject of indenture in such a vastly different genre? Two things are pertinent here, the first is Jenkins's disappointment that he had not successfully reached a wider audience with his first book, and the second is tied to dramatic events in the colony after Jenkins's departure – both ideas I will examine next.

[9] Young, *Postcolonialism: An Introduction,* pp. 89-91.
[10] Jenkins, *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* (New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1871), p. 297.

Whilst noting the critical approval of *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* Jenkins was unhappy that his book was not widely read. It was his attempt to gain popular interest in the subject of Indian indenture that led him to change genres. Consequently in 1876 he published a romantic novel about the lives of two indentured labourers set in India and the plantations of British Guiana. Jenkins concluded that fiction was the only way in which he might depict the issue of 'coolie labour in our colonies into a concrete and picturesque form' showing that: 'the sorrows of Lutchmee and Dilloo are the sorrows of humanity'.[11] Yet I believe that there is strong evidence that Jenkins was also motivated by events in the colony following his departure. In Chapter 3 I noted the significance of the Devonshire Castle riot; there I commented on the fact that this uprising challenged stereotypical views of the docile coolie. In addition, I would argue here that this riot was also something of a turning point for Jenkins who wrote to *The Times* about the incident; in turn the newspaper wrote a lengthy editorial questioning the brutality with which the police had responded to the labourers. [12]

The Times editorial, previously quoted in Chapter 3, promised much. Evoking the spirit of the anti-slavery campaigns of earlier in the century, it asserted that the British public would be roused by any 'barbarous treatment' of the 'Asiatics' by the West Indian plantocracy and emphasised that the incident had awoken the 'old zeal' of the early anti-slavery campaigners.[13] Importantly it appealed to the 'idea' of Britain as being sullied by its attachment to a system that resembled slavery: the country would be the subject of 'satirical remarks' if while 'preaching at Portuguese and Spaniards' she 'quietly enjoys the benefits of a system which differs from slavery

[11] Jenkins, 'Preface', *Lutchmee and Dilloo,* pp. 28-30 (p. 28).
[12] Edward Jenkins, Letters to the Editor, *The Times*, 1 November 1872, p. 6 and Editorial, *The Times*, 5 November 1872, p. 7. Jenkins also cited a subsequent Commission of Inquiry held in Mauritius in 1872 as part of his motivation for writing the novel, 'Preface', *Lutchmee and Dilloo,* p. 28.
[13] Editorial, *The Times*, 5 November 1872, p. 7.

only in name'.[14] Following the publication of Jenkins's original letter, the owners of the Devonshire Castle estate and the chairman of the West India Committee also wrote to *The Times* denying allegations of ill-treatment of the East Indians within the system of indenture.[15] What is significant about this event from our perspective is that it marked a turning point for Jenkins who departed from the careful language of *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* and cast off the impartiality that marked this text:

> I have thought and said that, within proper restriction, with improved regulations, and under careful supervision, the immigration of coolies may be fruitful of good. What is it that makes me hesitate or doubt? It is the temper of the planters themselves, their sensitiveness, their irritability at criticism, and their opposition to reforms. I lose confidence in a man who asserts that no abuses exist when I have seen them with my own eyes and heard of them with my own ears. I cannot but be suspicious of any human system which arrogates perfection or resents criticism.[16]

By his own admission Jenkins was going through something of an evolutionary process in his thoughts on indenture and in this way we might interpret events at Devonshire Castle as a catalyst, causing Jenkins to depart from the literary-reportage of *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* to the romantic and reflective work of fiction *Lutchmee and Dilloo.*

In my study of Edward Jenkins's writing on British Guiana I want to stress this transition and highlight the author's external and internal influences for both

[14] Ibid.
[15] J. Gordon, Letters to the Editor, *The Times,* 2 November 1872, p. 5, Alexander Crum-Ewing, Letters to the Editor, *The Times,* 9 November 1872, p. 10 and J.L. Ohlson, Letters to the Editor, *The Times,* 12 November 1872, p. 10.
[16] Edward Jenkins, Letters to the Editor, *The Times*, 20 November 1872, p. 4.

texts. *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* represented the complex turn from the liberalism of the earlier part of the century, to the imperialism that dominated the later. Though this imperial shadow is also seen in elements of *Lutchmee and Dilloo,* the novel's complexity demonstrates the post-Devonshire Castle ruminations of the author. In this chapter I will discuss Jenkins's first work *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* and then provide a reading of his novel *Lutchmee and Dilloo*. My aim in the following pages is to show that Edward Jenkins's writing on British Guiana is far more complex than has thus far been acknowledged. *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* is defined by the contradictory blend of confidence and insecurity that marked the period.[17] This text is punctuated by anxiety: Jenkins writes as though he fears that in setting down feelings of compassion he will be judged as being taken in by duplicitous natives. He proudly asserts at the outset for example, that while selected as an observer of the Commission of Inquiry for the Anti-Slavery Society and Aborigines Protection Society, he was a member of neither.[18] This statement is a vast difference to John Scoble's claim of pride in being 'the advocate of the oppressed' and signals the change of mood in British humanitarian circles.[19]

While anxiety marks *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs*, Bhabha's destabilising ambivalence is the distinguishing feature of *Lutchmee and Dilloo*.[20] Assessments of this novel by scholars John Gilmore, David Dabydeen and Jeremy Poynting have praised the incorporation of Indian indentured labourers into an English literary work but focused on the author's deployment of crude racism and his

[17] Patrick Brantlinger, 'Empire and Nationalism', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1830-1914,* ed. by Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 251-269 (p. 263), describes the era of 'the new imperialism' as affected by both 'jingoism and its shadowy opposite, anxiety'.
[18] Edward Jenkins, *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* (New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1871), p. 3.
[19] John Scoble, *British Guiana: Speech Delivered at the Anti-Slavery Meeting, in Exeter Hall, on Wednesday, the 4th of April, 1838* (London: Central Negro Emancipation Committee, 1838), p. 6.
[20] Bhabha, pp. 121-74.

imperialistic outlook.[21] I want to argue that there is an alternative reading of Jenkins's work that frames him as a valuable contributor to Guyanese literature and the first literary writer to begin an anti-colonial dialogue in the country. Later In this chapter I will show that whether consciously or not, Jenkins's fictional work so successfully transplanted elements of the colony's culture on to the page that we can see many of the motifs and tropes of his work in contemporary Guyanese and Caribbean literature.

In the Introduction to Part 2 of this thesis I emphasised that during this period, the shadow of the 'failure' of emancipation defined white writing on the African-Caribbean. There is a clear sense in which Jenkins appears haunted by the figure of the African-Caribbean as a representation of the nonfulfillment of the liberal ideals of emancipation. Jenkins perpetuates the stereotype of the 'idle' black, a recurring figure in writing from this period.[22] In the work of Trollope and Edward Jenkins, the African-Caribbean is often depicted as a mocking figure that taunts the European with his inactivity.[23] Yet insecurity manifests itself in discussion of the East Indians and Chinese also and there is a discernible vacillation between compassion and distrust in Jenkins's discussion of these groups. This is most ably seen in the lack of credibility that Jenkins affords their narratives in the text. It is resoundingly the written or spoken word of the 'oriental' that is not to be trusted – for Jenkins their language betrays their inherent duplicity.[24]

From Edward Jenkins's arrival in the Caribbean he distances himself from the older language of the early anti-slavery campaigns that portrayed the African Caribbean as oppressed and helpless. When smaller boats peopled by blacks approach

[21] Gilmore, 'Series Editor's Preface' in Edward Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo*, p. viii, Dabydeen, 'Introduction' in Edward Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo,* pp. 19-20 and Jeremy Poynting, 'John Edward Jenkins and the Imperial Conscience', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature,* 21 (1986), 210-221 (p. 213).
[22] Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge; Kegan Paul: Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 98.
[23] Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1860), p. 155, Jenkins, *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs*, p. 46.
[24] Jenkins, *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs*, pp. 142-46.

his ship on arrival to the Caribbean he writes of 'sturdy black monsters' needing to be deterred by 'carbolic acid'.[25] This sense of alienation from the African-Guianese is continued into his travels in Guiana. Jenkins transplants his fear of blacks onto the landscape; they become paralleled in his mind with the dense forest as he describes the black creek water of the Demerara River as 'strange' and 'ebonised', 'like the smiles on a Negro's face'.[26] This image of the grinning African-Guianese is part of Jenkins's attempt to depict the black community as infantile: distant from the weighty pursuit of empire as they 'squat listless about anything but a full stomach and an occasional gala dress'. In contrast 'evidences of trade, cultivation and thrifty activity' define the Portuguese.[27] This 'othering' of the blacks against the East Indians and Portuguese was typical of this period and is also evident in the work of Anthony Trollope and Charles Kingsley.[28] It is in his depiction of African-Guianese homes particularly that Jenkins endeavours to portray the image of the African-Caribbean as a race in retrograde motion:

> You may find such people in the environs of Georgetown; but I am referring more particularly to the straggling villages in the country. There was such a village on our right, consisting of dirty, tumble-down structures, surrounded by rank vegetation, around and amid which we could see men, or women, or children, stretched in what seemed to be a perpetual siesta.[29]

That he directly connects this to their desertion of the sugar estates post-emancipation is without doubt: 'they could of themselves double the production of British Guiana,

[25] Ibid, p. 20.
[26] Ibid, p. 118.
[27] Ibid, p. 46.
[28] Trollope, p. 155 and Kingsley, p. 96.
[29] Jenkins, *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs*, p. 46.

and enhance their own position.'[30] As far as Jenkins is concerned it is only through exertion on behalf of the British Empire that the African-Guianese might reverse the stagnated position that he portrays.

Jenkins is far more benign when he addresses the Indians and here we might see the beginnings of what I have referred to previously as the romanticising of the East Indian presence in British Guiana:

> Shall we pause for a moment and regard a flock of these strangers as they pass through the streets of Georgetown on the way to their estate? Can we possibly enter into their feelings? Coming from their Asiatic homes with their notions of Asiatic life, with the very air and mystery of that life hanging about them; simple in their knowledge, though cunning enough in apprehension, they curiously scan the new country to which, with vague and ignorant faith in some good to be won by it, they are voluntary exiles![31]

What prompts this fond celebration of the East Indians is the connection between the system of indenture and Victorian ideals of self-improvement and industry that were in turn linked to the process of migration. In contrast to the depiction of the African-Guianese, the East Indians are involved in a kinetic process of regeneration:

> Any one who has seen the Coolie in British Guiana is forced to admit that he has undergone a change for the better. The fawning and crouching gait of the Asiatic has been transformed into the independent and even proud walk of a better race. Men of low caste and lower hopes have acquired what to them is

[30] Ibid, p. 45.
[31] Ibid, p. 98.

> wealth; and many have improved in every way under the discipline of labour.[32]

This idealistic portrait is at odds with Jenkins's detailing of the untoward recruiting practices that took place in India and that he documents himself later.[33] It shows Jenkins's ambivalence and contradicts his representation of the happy immigrant of 'light and vigorous swing', presaging the later ambivalence that was to define *Lutchmee and Dilloo*.[34] There is a powerful inference of regeneration in the quotation above and the suggestion that for Jenkins, emigration is a means by which redundancy or stagnation might be reversed. But there is a more sophisticated element to Jenkins's employment of migration in his discussion of the East Indians. By emphasising the 'voluntary' aspect of indenture Jenkins is denying the line of argument advocated by John Scoble and more recently by Joseph Beaumont that indenture was the resurrection of the slave trade.[35]

Yet at the same time the transformative powers of emigration can be seen to have their limitations; the Chinese and Indians are depicted as intrinsically dishonest. This evocation of oriental 'cunning' is an important example of my earlier claim that Jenkins attributes inherent duplicity to the inhabitants he meets. Jenkins uses the terms 'Asiatic' or 'Oriental' interchangeably to refer to both the East Indians and the Chinese and we can see much in his representations of these communities that meets with Edward Said's study of the stereotype of the oriental in this period.[36] In *Orientalism*, Said calls attention to a powerful 'archive of information', the essence of which was to convey 'the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and

[32] Ibid, p. 297.
[33] Ibid, p. 165.
[34] Ibid, p. 30.
[35] As discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 respectively.
[36] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 39-44.

Oriental inferiority'.[37] This is so particularly where Said claims that the 'long-developing core of essential knowledge' about the oriental represented them as 'inveterate liars', opposing the 'clarity, directness and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race'.[38] On the subject of 'oriental' believability Jenkins writes:

> Herein lies the very root of the difficulty in administering justice for them. The Indians will concoct a story; witness after witness will state and adhere to it with rigid fidelity; yet again and again they will be incontestably refuted. What a puzzling position for a magistrate, who knows the common propensity of the people, and who has to balance between numbers of half-credible Indian witnesses and one or two white or black men[39]

This same disregard for Indian narratives occurs in Chapter 13 of *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs*, which is dedicated to written complaints from the East Indians to the Commission of Inquiry; in this chapter, Jenkins dismisses these texts as the product of 'Asiatic ingenuity and craft'. [40]

If Jenkins's first text overwhelmingly represents the process of migration as a redemptory one that promised to transform the East Indian into 'a better race', why this emphasis on their lack of credibility?[41] Here Jenkins's text fulfils the role of colonial discourse in his representation of the colonised subject as continually falling short of the standard achieved by the coloniser. Thus though 'improved' by contact with the British the indentured East Indians are still, as Bhabha has framed, 'not

[37] Said, pp. 41-42.
[38] Ibid, p. 39.
[39] *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs*, pp. 111-12.
[40] In addition to submissions from the Chinese community, letters were written by African-Guianese on behalf of the largely illiterate Indian-Guianese community, ibid, p. 142.
[41] Ibid, p. 297.

quite/not white'.[42] Indeed Jenkins's first text comfortably sits beside the positive depictions of East Indian labour in the Caribbean from the same period, which acknowledge the 'mild despotism' of the planters yet portray the interests of the East Indian as improved by emigration to the Caribbean.[43]

It is in his literary work *Lutchmee and Dilloo* that we begin to see more complex ideas about British Guiana and its inhabitants enter Jenkins's work. In my reading of *Lutchmee and Dilloo* I would like to highlight important areas of Jenkins's novel that I feel have been ignored thus far. It is my contention that *Lutchmee and Dilloo* is a far more ambivalent and anti-colonial text than it has been adjudged. I maintain that its outwardly imperialistic stance belies a core that challenges aspects of British colonialism and employs some devastating non-white characters in its attack on indenture, thereby indirectly celebrating resistance and promoting anti-colonialism. Previous commentary on the novel has decried Jenkins's racism towards the African-Guianese and apportioned a lack of autonomy to Jenkins's female character Lutchmee, I want to argue that the black characters of the novel and Lutchmee form powerful elements of the work.[44] It is these characters that Jenkins charges with exposing the injustices of plantation life and the hypocrisy of elements of the plantocracy.

Everything about this novel marks it as a departure from *The Coolie His Rights and Wrongs,* from the way Jenkins uses language in the text to the narrative itself. Even Edward Jenkins's plot, which David Dabydeen has rightly asserted is largely borrowed from the Hindu religious epic the Ramayana, is an act of submission

[42] Bhabha, p. 131.
[43] James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, the Bow of Ulysses* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), p. 73, Charles Kingsley *At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies* (London: Macmillan, 1871), p. 95. This quotation is taken from Trollope, p. 152.
[44] See Dabydeen, 'Introduction' in Edward Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo* p. 19 and Gilmore, 'Series Editor's Preface', in Edward Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo*, p. viii.

to the Indian-Caribbean experience.[45] In Jenkins's novel Lutchmee and Dilloo represent the virtuous Sita and noble Rama respectively. The 'dark' figure that comes between them, or rather the Ravana of the piece is a fellow villager Hunoomaun whose violent desire for Lutchmee prompts the couple's departure to British Guiana, unaware that the fugitive Hunoomaun has indentured to the same colony.[46] What follows is the evolution of the character of Lutchmee into a plantation-savvy version of Sita and the rapid degeneration of Dilloo, whose nobility is eroded by colonial injustice and the inherent corruption of the indenture system. It is in this New World retelling of the Ramayana that Jenkins's novel is at its most anti-colonial – attacking his own insistence in *The Coolie His Rights and Wrongs* that the emigrant benefitted from the system of indenture. Hunoomaun degenerates further into a life of crime, murdering a prospective lover's husband, while the hero Dilloo descends into a world of suspicion, jealousy and revenge. Initially subservient to his white masters he becomes cynical and violent when presented with the injustice of the plantation system.[47] If, as Patrick Brantlinger has attested, the Victorian novel portrayed the idea of emigration as social progress, then Jenkins's reversal of this trope renders his text more unsettling.[48]

Edward Jenkins professed that his novel was an attempt to portray to a wider readership the sufferings of those involved in the system.[49] With his intention stated in the Preface, the central love story serves as no more than a ruse in which the reader becomes complicit at the outset. Yet to dismiss Jenkins's novel as a mere tool with which to draw attention to the injustices of the indenture system would be to diminish some of his other aims and achievements. As the first novel written about British

[45] As previously discussed in the Introduction to this thesis
[46] The Ramayana presents Sita's kidnapper Ravana as a dark-skinned or black character. Similarly Jenkins's character Hunoomaun is also depicted with 'extreme darkness of skin', *Lutchmee and Dilloo,* p. 32.
[47] Ibid, p. 181.
[48] Brantlinger, 'Empire and Nationalism', p. 255.
[49] Edward Jenkins, 'Preface' *Lutchmee and Dilloo* (pp. 28-30) p. 28.

Guiana and East Indians in the Caribbean Jenkins's work demands serious consideration. Though peopled by grotesque and offensive racial caricatures, the work offers a mosaic-style view of colonial Georgetown society that no other early Guianese novel achieved. Other early Guianese literature, like W.H. Hudson's *Green Mansions* (1904) and James Rodway's *In Guiana Wilds* (1899), centred on the interior and the Amerindian community that lived there, rather than the burgeoning, cosmopolitan and multi-cultural capital.[50] Jenkins himself confesses his intention in the preface:

> To give greater variety and reality to the tale, to display the system fairly in its proper setting, and above all to make the story a wider and therefore, I hope, a more interesting study of human life, I have not confined its events to one race, but have brought into view the whole of that strange mixture which constitutes West Indian society, from the Queen's representative to the African Creole.[51]

The extent of Jenkins's fascination with the cultural mix of Georgetown is reflected in the resultant sketch of the Guianese capital, which has never been reproduced in literary terms. But by what measure might we refer to a novel by an Englishman as a Caribbean text? It is here that the concept of 'creole' is helpful. In a recent work on white Barbadian creole culture, David Lambert makes reference to a more inclusive version of creole. He highlights Kamau Brathwaite's extension of creole to those that had associations outside of permanent residence in the region, this is important to Lambert: 'because it highlights the spatiality of creole and the importance of

[50] James Rodway *In Guiana Wilds* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899) and W.H Hudson *Green Mansions* (New York: Dover, 1989).
[51] Edward Jenkins, 'Preface', *Lutchmee and Dilloo,* p. 30.

geographical imagination in the articulation of belonging in the Caribbean'.[52] This inclusivity is at the heart of Jenkins's text. His characters range from Portuguese, Chinese, and Madrasi to Welsh, Scottish and Barbadian thus the novel is rightly subtitled *A Study of West Indian Life.*

I would assert that we can confidently call Jenkins's text an early Caribbean novel: in it we are able to trace themes that lie at the heart of later Guyanese and Caribbean literature. Certainly Jenkins employs many of the elements that have become characteristic to Caribbean literature in his text. He uses a Madrasi character to represent the West Indian folk hero 'anansi', a tactic seen in novels like David Dabydeen's *The Counting House* (1996)*,* V.S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street* (1959) and Moses Nagamootoo's *Hendree's Cure* (2000).[53] The corruption of the white plantocracy, a significant theme of both novels is evident in the Jamaican writer H.G. De Lisser's *The White Witch of Rosehall* (1958), A.R.F. Webber's *Those That be in Bondage* (1917) and David Dabydeen's plantation owner 'Gladstone' in *The Counting House.*[54] It is Jenkins's depiction of the Indian female body, journeying though a sexualised and volatile landscape, which resonates with later Guyanese literature in particular.[55] Sexual corruption is central to the novel and is bound to everything and everyone related to the plantation but it is the vulnerability of Indian women to the sexual whims of the plantocracy that is a pointed concern of *Lutchmee and Dilloo*.[56]

[52] David Lambert, *White Creole Culture: Politics and Identity During the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 37.
[53] Maria Kaladeen, ''Mercurial Malabars': The South Indian Presence in the Caribbean, With Specific Reference to the Colony of British Guiana' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Warwick, 2004), pp. 62-82.
[54] David Dabydeen, *The Counting House* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1996), V.S Naipaul, *Miguel Street* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1959), H.G. De Lisser, *The White Witch of Rosehall* (Oxford: Macmillan, 1958) and A.R.F. Webber, *Those That be in Bondage*.
[55] See for example Edgar Mittelholzer, *Corentyne Thunder* (London: Heinemann, 1970), Arnold Itwaru, *Shanti* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1988) and David Dabydeen, *The Counting House*.
[56] In 'Colonial Elites of Nineteenth Century Guyana', in *The White Minority in the Caribbean,* ed. by Howard Johnson and Karl Watson (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers; Oxford: James Currey; Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998), pp. 95-115 (pp. 101-03), Brian Moore has discussed the extent to which relationships between non-white women and plantation managers were a feature of life in nineteenth-century British Guiana. Yet he has also emphasised the extent to which the colony itself was viewed as site of sexual licentiousness, with one of the colony's newspapers labelling Georgetown the Sodom of the nineteenth century, p. 103.

Upon Lutchmee's arrival in Demerara her physical body becomes a site of debate and attraction between the white planters when she is unable to locate her husband Dilloo. The battle for Lutchmee's body begins with the Immigration Agent-General Goodeve's intention to unite Lutchmee with her husband. This is set against the planter Drummond's desire to take her onto his estate. Whilst Goodeve understands the likelihood of Lutchmee's fate if she goes to work for Drummond his concern has restraints:

> If she were telling the truth he could do nothing less willingly than to put her in Drummond's power for five years. Were her story untrue, even his mind was not unable to overcome the natural race indifference to what became of her. He knew too well the ordinary and inevitable fate of the small proportion of Coolie women then in the colony; without clear evidence that this one was unlike the rest, - her good looks, indeed, being rather against her, - how could he be expected to get up any interest in her fate? Subtle, indeed, but powerful are the influences upon the calmest and most honest mind, in those peculiar relations of a superior to an inferior race, of which terms of bondage or terms akin to bondage form a part.[57]

For Jenkins, Lutchmee's body comes to represent not just the corruption inherent in the system, but also the struggle over racism in the mind of the coloniser. Everything begins to mount *against* Goodeve being able to help Lutchmee: Drummond's intervention and power; the system of 'bondage'; and finally, as seen in the quotation above, Goodeve's own prejudice. Jenkins uses Lutchmee's presence in Drummond's

[57] Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo,* p. 61.

house to expose his relationship with his black housekeeper Nina. Lutchmee's entrance into the house provokes Nina's jealousy fuelling an encounter between Drummond and Nina that disturbs Drummond who is unable to accept that Nina has the intellectual capacity to understand his dissolute character.[58] It is Nina who spells out Drummond's real desires for Lutchmee, as she comments to Lutchmee in a 'satirical' tone that Drummond is '"Good man to Coolie woman"'.[59]

As we follow Lutchmee's journey from the Calcutta depot to her eventual reunion with Dilloo and the beginning of her indenture at Drummond's estate, Jenkins reveals the extent to which the indentured Lutchmee is valuable as a sexual commodity rather than a labourer. Beyond the threat of Drummond are the overseers themselves, who hearing of her beauty discuss the impossibility of Lutchmee's fidelity to Dilloo concluding: '"Virtue is not an Indian woman's best reward in these regions – eh?"'.[60] If Lutchmee is to be Jenkins viable heroine then she must be virtuous and unsophisticated yet Jenkins must also represent the many Indian women in the indenture system who worked as prostitutes prior to emigrating.[61] Jenkins does this in the shape of another female character, Ramdoolah, who is intended to embody the fact that unscrupulous recruiters, instructed to enlist experienced agricultural workers from villages, often sought women in city bazaars instead. Hence Ramdoolah says, upon finding out where Lutchmee is from: '"Oho! Then you are from the country - a real villager? […] We get very few of your sort here, I can tell you"'.[62] After listening to Ramdoolah's remarks about Dilloo's attractiveness and hearing Dilloo describe Ramdoolah as typical of the women recruited, even Lutchmee is

[58] Ibid, p. 73.
[59] Ibid, p. 74.
[60] Ibid, p. 87.
[61] Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* 2nd edn. (London: Hansib, 1993), p. 205.
[62] Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo*, p. 92.

corrupted and after picking up the cutlass against Ramdoolah she begs Dilloo to hide it from her.[63]

In placing an indentured Indian woman at the heart of his novel Jenkins is bold. But by far the most audacious feature of the work is the relationship between Lutchmee and the white overseer Craig, whom she nurses at Drummond's house before beginning her plantation indenture. However Jenkins is ambivalent about the possibility of reciprocated sexual desire between Lutchmee and Craig – simultaneously confirming and denying their mutual attraction. Jenkins does allow that Craig's affection for Lutchmee is visible enough for the magistrate's daughter, Isabel, 'the white belle of Demerara' to become jealous of Lutchmee.[64] She is driven to tears by the thought that Craig was more interested in Lutchmee's reaction to her presence, than to her own visit to his sick bed.[65] Jenkins teeters on the brink of permitting a mental struggle in the romantic desires of the protagonists. For example when Lutchmee is angered by Isabel's visit, Craig is left to ponder the reason why:

> Her singular interruption during the interview with Isabel had suddenly revealed to him something unsuspected and unthought of – or, perhaps, something which he had been half-consciously concealing from himself up to that moment, and which he would much rather have allowed to remain unexpressed. [66]

Indeed it is only through Dilloo that the reader is allowed to explore the possibility of sexual desire between Craig and Lutchmee.[67] As the friendship between Lutchmee

[63] Ibid, pp. 94-95.
[64] Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo,* p. 153.
[65] Ibid, p. 156-59.
[66] Ibid, p. 154.
[67] Ibid, p. 155.

and Craig continues beyond the sick room, an already suspicious Dilloo becomes progressively more alienated and bestial in terms of character.[68] Craig's arrival at Lutchmee and Dilloo's hut, to say goodbye to Lutchmee before returning to England, further fuels Dilloo's anger and Lutchmee is beaten by her husband.[69] Yet still Jenkins will not allow her mind to play on her desires for Craig: 'She was too child-hearted, too devoted to her husband, to give her fancies play in forbidden directions.'[70]

It is Lutchmee that is by far the novel's most interesting character. She comprehends the modus operandi of the plantation and is wise enough to be able to negotiate the relationships within it. Although Jenkins portrays her as sexually naïve in her relationship with Craig he undermines this by her immediate understanding of the sexual relationship that has existed between Drummond and Nina. Lutchmee skilfully manages to extricate herself from Drummond's impending advances while flattering his ego.[71] It is in this scene that she most aptly demonstrates the Guyanese aphorism 'play fool to catch wise'; a legacy of plantation resistance from the era of slavery in the colony. It is Lutchmee who single-handedly involves Craig and Isabel in Dilloo's cause and she is the catalyst for change in both of them. When Lutchmee points out that Indians could not expect a fair hearing from a magistrate who is a dependant of the hospitality of the manager to whose estate he is travelling, Isabel begins to consider the Indians differently:

> Isabel was for the moment half amused, half stung, she had never before concerned herself specially in any way about the justice her father administered or the subjects of it. She used to look at the coolies on the road

[68] Ibid, p. 268.
[69] Ibid, p. 304.
[70] Ibid, p. 267.
[71] Ibid, p. 75.

> with curiosity or aversion. […] But here, by this poor Hindoo girl, there was suddenly suggested to Isabel's quick mind a view from the other side, and she took in immediately all that Lutchmee meant to imply [72]

Lutchmee is responsible for a similar awakening in Craig.[73] But while Lutchmee is the force of change in others, Dilloo is changed by his experiences so that he is destroyed by the corruption inherent in the system and being imprisoned unjustly. The threat that Lutchmee represents to the logical union of Craig and Isabel is removed by Dilloo's increasing violence and alienation.[74] The unsteady alliance of Isabel and Craig is finally cemented by Dilloo's resolution that the white man is his enemy and that he cannot trust Lutchmee. Lutchmee's detachment and despair draw the attention of both Craig and Isabel who realise their feelings for each other when they endeavour to help her, thus Lutchmee's body is once more the novel's catalyst. However it is in Dilloo's dying retreat to the obeah man and his rejection of '"jesu krissi"' that the colonists are seen to have failed entirely; Dilloo rejects western medicine and Christianity as he turns his head 'to the unknown God'.[75]

Victims are not confined to the East Indian community alone. One important facet of *Lutchmee and Dilloo* is the skill with which the author conveys the oppression of the plantation system for the white overseer, an issue that did not really come to the fore of discussions in the colony until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This issue was a central concern of A.R.F. Webber's later indenture novel *Those That Be in Bondage* (1917).[76] Jenkins describes the lives of the overseers as being: 'nearly the most penal that could be devised for any man who is

[72] Ibid, p.190.
[73] Ibid, p. 254.
[74] Ibid, pp. 302-304.
[75] Ibid, p. 358.
[76] This novel will be studied in more detail in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

not a slave or a prisoner in a penitentiary' and in doing so hints at what Webber examines in *Those That Be in Bondage:* the idea of the plantation as a site of ethnic equalisation, violating all who are involved in its lower functions.[77] Concern for the overseers seems to be motivated by their presence almost as an underclass of white men. As Jenkins describes, apart from our hero Craig: 'they were nearly all the children of adventure and misfortune'.[78]

What do Jenkins's representations of the white community of British Guiana tell us in the wider context of the novel? John Gilmore notes that while there is no doubt that Jenkins was motivated by an 'unquestionably genuine' concern for the indentured East Indians, his radicalism did not push him to question the idea of 'superior and inferior races'.[79] While this is true Jenkins does repeatedly emphasise the ineffectuality of the colonists whose good intentions are marred by misdirection and corruption. He satirises the charitable intentions of one character who decides to open up an orphanage: desperate in his attempts to find orphaned children in Georgetown, he threatens to travel to the interior and shoot the parents of Amerindian children.[80] We have explored the extent to which the text represents the plantation and the justice system as sites of corruption, however in Chapter 24 of the novel, even the Governor himself is depicted as complicit in dishonesty.[81]

Jenkins's depictions of the 'inferior' races are undermined by the frequency with which his non-white characters contradict his authority, in particular Nina, Sarcophagus, and Lutchmee. Hence Nina is depicted by Jenkins as having a 'poor mind' with 'few ideas' she is 'simple' in nature and 'half-way between the Adamite

[77] Ibid, p. 82.
[78] Ibid, p. 84.
[79] Gilmore, p. viii.
[80] *Lutchmee and Dilloo*, p. 221.
[81] Ibid, pp. 222-25.

ideal and the pure, unspiritual brutism of lower animals!'[82] Yet she is able to see through Drummond's professions that he wants to do Lutchmee '"a kindness"'.[83] Her comment to Drummond: '"I ought to be used to your ways by this time"' makes questionable Jenkins's claims that Drummond's 'manliness' and 'spirit' rendered him 'god-like' in her eyes.[84] Moreover Lutchmee, continually depicted as infantile throughout the text, demonstrates her knowledge of Drummond's desire for her and expresses her own sexual desire for Craig in her jealous reactions to his meetings with Isabel.[85] Sarcophagus, seen to be attempting to mimic the coloniser in his inaccurate rendition of their speech, is the only person in the text who is honest about the burgeoning relationship between Craig and Isabel at a time when Isabel is feigning coyness to her father.[86] Hence after the awkward scene between Lutchmee, Nina, Craig and Isabel the reader is almost relieved when Sarcophagus suggests to Isabel that she would have preferred a different reception from Craig:

> "You'm require to visitate dat young man berry frequen' 'fore he ressimprocate your attenshuns wid de right impropriety."[87]

Though jokes are made throughout the text about Sarcophagus' malapropisms, this is one point in the text where we are not quite sure of his intention. Certainly the reaction that it provokes from Isabel is violent and the incident is probably the only

[82] Ibid, pp. 73-4.
[83] Ibid, p. 73.
[84] It is in the relationship between Drummond and Nina in particular that we see what Rhoda Reddock and Shobhita Jain have referred to as the 'psychological dependence' that was a feature of the relationship between the white plantation manager and his workers in 'Plantation Women: An Introduction', in *Women Plantation Workers: International Experiences*, ed. by Shobita Jain and Rhoda Reddock (Oxford & New York: Berg, 1998), pp. 1-15 (p. 9-10). The relationship between Drummond and Nina also personifies the paradox of white male relationships with black women during this period as described by Robert Young: 'despite the way in which black women were constituted as sexual objects and experienced the evidence of their own desirability through their own victimization, they were also taught to see themselves as sexually unattractive', *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), p.152.
[85] Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo*, p.153.
[86] Ibid, p. 157-59.
[87] Ibid, p. 154.

place in the novel where she breaks from angelic stereotype to show a different side to her character as she threatens to beat Sarcophagus. These contradictions lend a chaotic quality to the novel and give a sense of Jenkins's characters liberating themselves from his narrative. It is in this aspect of the text that we might engage with Jenkins's text as inherently carnivalesque and therefore, according to Antonio Benitez Rojo, inherently Caribbean.[88]

It is with this idea of the carnivalesque and its connection to social disorder that I would like to link Edward Jenkins's novel to the tradition of white resistance to indenture that I have established in the preceding chapters. It is important to reflect on the extent to which figures like John Scoble, Joseph Beaumont, William Des Voeux, James Crosby and Edward Jenkins contributed to social disorder in British Guiana. We have seen in Chapter 1 that Scoble's presence on the sugar estates of British Guiana caused labourers to seek him out in order to protest against plantation conditions. Similarly in this chapter and Chapter 3 I have indicated an almost symbiotic relationship between plantation disturbances and white resistance. One of the most significant aspects of Jenkins's text is the way that he charts the simultaneous disaffection with the system of indenture in the characters of Craig and Dilloo. It is no coincidence that the labourers plan an estate riot on the day of the Tadjah ceremony: an observance which, we will see in Chapter 6, had become noted for both its potential for disorder and its evolution from a religious ceremony into a New World carnival. That the Tadjah riot constitutes part of the climax of Jenkins's novel reflects the author's building assent throughout the text that the labourers have no other option than to resort to the chaotic.

[88] Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective,* trans. by James Maraniss, 2nd edn, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 294.

However I also want to stress the way in which Jenkins's novel yielded to the creole influences of the colony in a way unlike any other writer of the period of this study with the notable exception of Barton Premium, whose poem we have studied at length in Chapter 1. Like Premium, Jenkins acknowledged the East Indian presence in the region in a profounder and more sophisticated way than Scoble, Des Voeux and Beaumont who had all associated East Indians in Guiana with victimhood and exploitation. The literary genre allowed both men to represent aspects of East Indian life in the colony beyond these confines and represented the East Indians as possessing lives, desires and needs outside the parameters of the sugar plantations.

Finally I would posit that in some aspects of his novel, Jenkins presages the politics of the early-twentieth century Caribbean. Previously in this chapter I discussed Jenkins's representation of the plantation as a site of social equalisation, arguing that the novel suggested that the plantation violated white overseers as well as indentured Indians. The importance of this inclination towards an almost socialist interpretation of the plantation system in the Caribbean cannot be stressed enough. In Chapter 7 of this thesis, where I analyse the growing tumult among the 'labouring population', I will argue that early leaning towards social democracy foreshadowed the role that Marxist politics would have in the campaign for independence from British rule in the colony in the mid-twentieth century.[89] I want to emphasise that it is prior to the twentieth century, in Jenkins's novel, that we might trace the first expressions against an unequal society that oppressed across colour lines. Thus there is a deeper reading of Jenkins's novel that indicates that in as much as it was a literary work about about the injustices of indenture, it was also a novel about an emergent society that prefigured the motives of that community's eventual decolonisation.

[89] Vere T. Daly, *A Short History of the Guyanese People* (London: Macmillan Education, 1975), pp. 286-306 and Tinker, p. 385. David Dabydeen notes, but rightly dismisses, the fact that Jenkins was accused of communism during his lifetime, Dabydeen, 'Introduction' in *Lutchmee and* Dilloo, p.19.

Chapter 5: H.V.P. Bronkhurst: Wesleyan Missionary to the East Indians of British Guiana, 1860-1895

During the course of this thesis I have ventured to examine a variety of texts produced by colonists that had contact with the East Indians of British Guiana during the period of indenture. These range from members of the colonial judiciary to ship's doctors and minor literary figures. Of all the colonists, the group that arguably had the most intimate and lengthy exposure to the immigrants were Christian missionaries, of various denominations, some of whom spent decades amongst the East Indian community of British Guiana.[1] In this chapter and Chapter 7, I will analyse the attitudes of three of these missionaries towards the East Indians and the system of indenture. I will attempt to 'locate' the complex position of the missionary in the colonial hierarchy of British Guiana and endeavour to fill a void in the discussion of the missionary presence in British Guiana as it relates to the proselytising of the Indian community. My aim here is to add to the currently scant body of work on this subject, which is generally confined to the lack of success that Christian missionaries had in proselytising to the indentured East Indians in British Guiana. In contrast I would like to analyse the results of interaction between East Indians and missionaries outside the parameters of conversion.[2]

Although the missionary presence in the Caribbean was a crucial part of the apparatus of colonisation, the history of the region reveals that there were crucial moments where Church and State conflicted over the concept of forced labour and the

[1] I refer in particular to the subject of this chapter H.V.P. Bronkhurst, Wesleyan missionary to the East Indians between 1860-1895 and Alexander Alexander, a former planter who operated the Salvation Army mission to the East Indians between 1896-1926. Alexander's work forms part of Chapter 7 of this thesis.

[2] Peter Ruhomon, *Centenary History of the East Indians in British Guiana 1838-1938* (Georgetown, British Guiana: The *Daily Chronicle*, 1947), pp. 206-25, discusses the various efforts of missionaries to the East Indians and notes the lack of success missionaries had with this group in the nineteenth century, as does Dale Bisnauth, *The Settlement of Indians in Guyana, 1890-1930* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2000), pp. 230-231, and Brian Moore, *Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism: Colonial Guyana, 1838-1900* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1995), p. 228.

treatment of the colonised. This was so from the intervention of Las Casas, outlined in Part II of the Introduction to this thesis, up to the penultimate decade of indenture.[3] In many ways the Spanish attempt to impose Christianity on the Amerindians represented a cursory nod to conscience, as though the inhumanity of the forced or coerced extraction of physical labour could be mitigated through an unenthusiastic desire to convert.[4] This mild sense of obligation that dominated relations with the Amerindians was superseded by comparative indifference to the Christianisation of the slave population of the West Indies. Noel Titus describes how the Church of England and the Dutch Reformed Church made little effort to 'teach or baptise' slaves.[5]

Unsurprisingly then it was the Non-Conformist branches of the Christian churches of the Caribbean that formed the majority of missionary workers in a slaveholding society like that of the Caribbean. Among their number Baptists and Wesleyans, who traditionally opposed slavery as 'the denial of full Christian personhood', featured prominently.[6] For the Caribbean colonists, who 'associated non-conformity with sedition' and denied 'the capacity of enslaved people to revolt of their own initiative' these missionaries often provided a convenient scapegoat for uprisings.[7] Consequently the growth of Methodism in the Caribbean incurred significant opposition and this was particularly felt in the days of slavery.[8] In St Vincent laws were passed prohibiting preaching without a licence unless the preacher had spent more than a year in the colony. As most of the Methodist preachers were

[3] For example in Chapter 7 of this thesis, I will examine a significant clash between the Congregationalist missionary H.J. Shirley and the colonial Guianese government.
[4] Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean from 1492-1969* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1970), p .33.
[5] Noel Titus 'Reassessing John Smith's Influence on the Demerara Slave Revolt of 1823', in *In the Shadow of the Plantation: Caribbean History and Legacy,* ed. by Alvin Thompson (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2002), pp. 223-245 (p. 227).
[6] Alan Lester, 'Humanitarians and White Settlers in the Nineteenth Century' in *Missions and Empire* ed. by Norman Etherington, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp. 64-85 (p. 65).
[7] Ibid.
[8] Christopher Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 24.

itinerant this worked against them more than other denominations.[9] The Methodist experience in British Guiana was no different from that of the rest of the Caribbean. It is testament to the reputation that the Methodists had in the Caribbean that the first Methodist missionary to arrive in the colony in 1805, John Hawkshaw, was sent back to England by the Governor on the same boat by which he had arrived.[10] His replacement in 1814, Thomas Talboys was slightly more successful, but his presence was tolerated rather than accepted.[11] On one occasion, Talboys, was asked to report to the colony's Governor to explain the meaning of the quotation 'the kingdom suffereth violence' on one of the church's publications.[12]

Other Non-Conformist missionaries fared no better in British Guiana. The Congregationalist John Smith, was warned that if he taught the slaves to read, he would be banished from the colony.[13] John Smith was one of the key figures in what was arguably the most dramatic moment in the relationship between planters and missionaries in the British West Indies. This event, the Demerara Slave Revolt, occurred in British Guiana in 1823 and involved an uprising by nearly twelve thousand slaves who Smith allegedly incited with his teachings. The London Missionary Society, who had dispatched Smith to the colony, were well aware of the delicate balancing act of ministering to the slaves without antagonising the planters. They counselled their missionaries not to involve themselves in local politics and to urge the slaves to obey their masters; their job, they were told, was to 'save' the slaves' 'souls'.[14] When slaves associated with Smith's chapel on the East Coast of Demerara led an uprising, his teachings were held to be responsible and following a

[9] Ibid, pp. 60-3.
[10] G.G. Findlay and W.W. Holdsworth, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, 5 vols, (London: Epworth Press, 1919), II, p. 274.
[11] Ibid, p. 276.
[12] Ibid, p. 277.
[13] Alfred Hardy, *Life and Adventures in the 'Land of Mud': Stories and Incidents of Missionary Work in British Guiana for all Ages* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1913), p. 117.
[14] Emilia Viotti Da Costa, *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood: The Demerara Slave Rebellion of 1823* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 14-15.

trial he was sentenced to death. News of a royal reprieve arrived too late as Smith died of consumption in prison and was hailed 'The Demerara Martyr' by the London Missionary Society and the anti-slavery movement.[15]

The elevation of Smith to the status of martyr, considering his lack of involvement in the uprising, was a convenient fillip to those that needed to use his death politically. In truth Smith appears to have been a largely conformist and conventional figure keen to avoid trouble with the authorities. He repeatedly denied any involvement in the uprising or any prior knowledge that the revolt would take place. As Noel Titus concludes of Smith: 'In the long run, he seems to have had no higher opinion of them and their capacity than was common in his day'.[16] What this episode demonstrates is the unique position that missionaries occupied in the colonial Caribbean during the periods of slavery and indenture. Unable to align themselves entirely with either with the ruling elite or the labourers they ministered to they were viewed with suspicion by both groups and rarely fully trusted by either.

A missionary who embodied this liminal position and exploited its possibilities was the Reverend H.V.P. Bronkhurst (1826-1895), Wesleyan missionary to the East Indians of British Guiana for thirty-five years (1860-1895). In contrast to the subjects of previous chapters, Bronkhurst was neither white nor British, but born in Tanjore, South India to an Indian mother and a Dutch father. A frequent contributor to the local press he also wrote five books about the geography, culture, history and ethnic origin of the inhabitants of British Guiana.[17] The value of Bronkhurst's writing

[15] Books produced by missionaries of the LMS, proclaiming Smith a martyr were Edwin Angel Wallbridge, *Demerara Martyr: Memoirs of the Reverend John Smith*, (London: Charles Gilpin, 1848) and David Chamberlin, *Smith of Demerara: Martyr-Teacher of the Slaves* (London: David Livingstone Press, 1923).
[16] Titus, p. 242. See also Vere T. Daly, *A Short History of the Guyanese People* (London: Macmillan Education, 1975), p. 167.
[17] These are H.V.P. Bronkhurst, *The Origin of the Guyanaian Indians,* (Georgetown, British Guiana: *Colonist* Press, 1881); H.V.P. Bronkhurst, *The Colony of British Guiana and its Labouring Population,* (London: T. Woolmer, 1883); H.V.P. Bronkhurst, *The Ancestry or Origin of Our East Indian Immigrants being an Ethnological and Philogical Paper,* (Georgetown, British Guiana: *Argosy* Press, 1886); H.V.P. Bronkhurst, *Among the Hindus and Creoles of British Guyana,* (London: T. Woolmer, 1888); H.V.P. Bronkhurst, *A Descriptive and Historical Geography of British Guiana and the West India Islands,* (Georgetown, British Guiana: *Argosy* Press, 1890).

to contemporary Guyanese cultural historians is such that it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a book or article about the period of indenture that is not indebted in some way to information from one or other of his works. His life however has remained unexplored by Caribbean historians and his relationships with the coloniser and with the East Indian population ignored, despite the fact that he wrote more voluminously than any other of his contemporaries on the indentured East Indians of British Guiana.[18]

The benefit of studying a life like H.V.P. Bronkhurst's goes beyond his importance to the indentured experience in the Caribbean and has wider relevance to the role of 'native' missionaries in the British Empire. In *Missions and Empire*, Norman Etherington writes that that the charge that Christian missions 'were a form of cultural imperialism' is thwarted by the presence of non-white missionaries who were voluntary converts and who Peggy Brock asserts were part of the 'hidden history of mission and Empire', neglected despite the fact that they were essential to the European missionary effort.[19] As far as British Guiana was concerned there is certainly evidence for these claims. Two African-Caribbean Wesleyans from St. Vincent constituted the first Methodist presence in the colony: arriving in 1802 their reports of their work in British Guiana led to Thomas Coke dispatching Hawkshaw to the colony in 1805.[20] This diversion into a discussion on agency is vital to my representation of Bronkhurst whose dual cultural heritage has seen the Guyanese historian Clem Seecharan locate him within the tradition of the colonial middleman, defined by 'gnawing inbetweenity' and 'placelessness'. Seecharan additionally

[18] A notable exception is Clem Seecharan who acknowledges the 'profound intellectual influence' that Bronkhurst had over the Indian-Guianese journalist Joseph Ruhomon in *Joseph Ruhomon's India: The Progress of Her People at Home and Abroad, and How Those in British Guiana May Improve Themselves*, ed. by Clem Seecharan (Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 2001), p. 11.

[19] Norman Etherington, 'Introduction' in *Missions and Empire*, ed. by Norman Etherington (Oxford & New York: OUP, 2005) pp. 1-18 (p.5) and Peggy Brock, 'New Christians as Evangelists' in *Missions and Empire*, pp. 132-152 (p. 150). See also recent work on the Christian Indians Cornelia Sorabji and Pandita Ramabai in Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archives: Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[20] Findlay and Holdsworth, p. 276.

associates Bronkhurst with the stereotypical image of the Anglo-Indian as a 'mimic' with the desire to 'ape British manners and beliefs'. [21]

In contrast it is not my intention to frame Bronkhurst either as a hybrid in a crisis of racial identity or a mimic man regurgitating the evangelical zeal of the period. As the work of Robert Young has shown, appropriating the discourse of hybridity in the analysis of post-colonial criticism is to utilise traces of the same discursive elements that dominated nineteenth century thinking about race.[22] I want to argue that Bronkhurst's life is less about binaries and mimicry and more about a creole continuum. While it is certainly true that Bronkhurst employed the racist evangelical colonial discourse of the period, this is only one dialogue that takes place in his work. I will show that we can directly link Bronkhurst's writing to the powerful emergence of Indian nationalism in British Guiana in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[23] Finally I want to demonstrate that towards the end of his life, Bronkhurst began to advocate a brand of Guianese nationalism in which we see the beginnings of an intellectual discourse on creolisation as a solution to ethnic tension between the African-Guianese and Indian-Guianese communities. I will argue that it was Bronkhurst's role as a non-white missionary in a Non-Conformist church, rather than his dual cultural heritage that marks him out as difficult to place. In this sense Bronkhurst is not dissimilar to Samuel Ringgold Ward, a black Congregationalist preacher who is the subject of a chapter of Tim Watson's recent work *Caribbean Culture and British Fiction in the Atlantic World, 1780-1870*:

[21] Seecharan, *Joseph Ruhomon's India*, p. 14.
[22] Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 26-28.
[23] This topic is the focus of Part 3 of this thesis.

> Predicated as it has been on the twin figures of the liberal subject and the modern nation-state, history has been unkind to Samuel Ringgold Ward. Too itinerant for inclusion in national histories, too deferential to the empire to be included in anticolonial and black histories, too militant to be included in imperial histories, Ward's life is a challenge to all of these ways of understanding the nineteenth century Atlantic world.[24]

The 'challenge' that Ringgold presents to contemporary scholars is equally applicable to Bronkhurst.[25] However throughout this thesis I have striven to demonstrate heterogeneity and diversity in the experiences and writing of both the coloniser and the colonised in British Guiana. Additionally in the last chapter I indicated aspects of Edward Jenkins work that could see his writing afforded the adjective 'creole'. It is in this spirit of interrogating the heterogeneity of the creole experience that I would like to analyse the life of H.V.P. Bronkhurst.

While appropriating their texts into a body of early creole writing, we might also consider the lives of men like Bronkhurst and Edward Jenkins as being reflective of the inherently transcultural nature of colonialism and Empire. Both men were born in India and for separate reasons travelled from London to the Caribbean because of the East Indian indentured presence in British Guiana. It was sometime in the 1850s that Bronkhurst arrived in London where he worked as a language teacher and translator. When the General Secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Dr. Elijah Hoole, required a Tamil language tutor for his missionaries, he

[24] Tim Watson, *Caribbean Culture and British Fiction in the Atlantic World, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 104-153.
[25] To what extent for example, Bronkhurst's life amongst the colonists may have been eased by the fact that he was in all likelihood a freemason, an organisation that included a number of members of the colonial elite, is a point for consideration. What is definite is that he was the author of a book entitled *The Three Masonic Precious Jewels: or, the Freemason's Faith, Hope and Charity* (Demerara: Baldwin & Company, 1882) which is held at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London.

directly sought out Bronkhurst and it was under Hoole's influence that Bronkhurst became a missionary.[26] Bronkhurst's appointment was the result of a long held desire by the Methodist Missionary Society to replace the Reverend J.E.S. Williams. Williams was the first Methodist minister sent out to the East Indians of British Guiana and he worked specifically with the Madrasi community of the colony. However after arriving in the colony in 1851, Williams's work was cut short by his death from yellow fever in 1853.[27] Methodist Missionary Society records reveal a frustrated attempt to find a replacement for Williams until Bronkhurst assumed his position in 1860.[28] As Williams mainly spoke Tamil his work amongst the East Indians was limited to the Madrasi community, Bronkhurst however spoke a number of Indian languages including Hindi and was therefore uniquely skilled to work in an environment like British Guiana.[29]

Further to my intention to highlight the role of minority East Indian groups within indenture and emphasise the place of agency in potential converts, it is key to my discussion here that the arrival of J.E.S. Williams was the direct result of a request by a Christian East Indian from Madras. Although a missionary named William English had written to the society in 1848 requesting a minister be sent to the East Indians, a petition sent by South Indians from the colony proved more effective.[30] The petition's author, Samuel Johnson, was a Tamil who had had contact with Methodism in India and converted to Christianity in Guiana. Christian and Hindu labourers alike

[26] SOAS Archive, MMS/West Indies/British Guiana/Correspondence/FBN 38 H.V.P. Bronkhurst to Reverend Boyce 24 August 1872.
[27] Yellow fever was the scourge of Methodist missionaries to the West Indies as documented by John Corlett in *The Beautiful Feet: Being a Memorial of Seven Wesleyan Missionaries Who Died of Yellow Fever* (London: John Mason, 1856).
[28] 'The Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society for the Year Ending April 1861' in *Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Reports, Vol XV 1861-1863* (London: Wesleyan Missionary Society, [n.d.]), p. 95 and 'The Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society for the Year Ending April 1860' in *Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Reports, Vol XIV 1858-1860* (London: Wesleyan Missionary Society, [n.d.]), p. 88.
[29] 'The Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society for the Year Ending April 1852' in *Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Reports, Vol XII 1852-1854,* (London: Wesleyan Missionary Society,[n.d.]) p. 74.
[30] Findlay and Holdsworth, pp. 377-378.

signed Johnson's letter.[31] What made it so effective was that missionaries in the colony informed the Methodists that the colonial government was willing to offer financial assistance to this venture.[32] As a result J.E.S. Williams was sent to British Guiana and his work received a governmental grant.[33]

What prompted the Guianese government to sanction missionary work amongst the East Indians when they had opposed equivalent endeavours among the African-Guianese? Following the termination of slavery, colonists were concerned that outside the parameters of the plantation, the black population would 'revert' to traditional African religious practices; as such the East Indians were now seen as a conduit to 'heathenism'.[34] The practice of the *Charak Puja* or hook swinging festival, a fertility rite during which devotees impaled themselves on hooks, was a particular concern because of the number of spectators from the black community.[35] Governor Henry Barkly and Reverend Williams jointly embarked on a campaign targeted to persuade the East Indians to discontinue the practice, directly citing their belief that the observance would 'strengthen' the African-Guianese population 'in vice'.[36] The idea of a Wesleyan missionary and the colony's Governor working together was a far cry from scenes decades earlier. Yet the attitude to the *Charka Puja* was not representative of the colonists' stance on East Indian religion. Many in the plantocracy felt that the only way to encourage re-indenture and 'foster a sense of belonging' was by supporting Indian religious celebrations.[37] Thus the absentee planter Quintin Hogg famously stated 'if we cannot make the Coolies Christians let us

[31] The Christian Indian presence in Guiana was as old as indenture itself, three Christians travelled to the colony on board the *Hesperus* and the *Whitby,* see Peter Ruhomon, *Centenary History of the East Indians in British Guiana, 1838-1938* (Georgetown, British Guiana, 1947), p. 207.
[32] *Wesleyan Missionary Notices,* n.s., 10 (1852) (London: Wesleyan Mission House, 1852), pp. 13-14.
[33] Findlay and Holdsworth p. 378.
[34] Simon Mangru, 'The Role of the Anglicans in the Evangelization of the East Indians in British Guiana, 1838-1919', *History Gazette,* 57 (1993), 2-19 (p. 5).
[35] Basdeo Mangru, *Indenture and Abolition: Sacrifice and Survival on the Guyanese Sugar Plantations* (TSAR: Toronto, 1993) p. 44.
[36] Basdeo Mangru, *The Elusive El Dorado: Essays on the Indian Experience in Guyana* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2005), p. 27.
[37] Ibid, p. 26.

build them Hindoo temples'; advice that Basdeo Mangru asserts became 'planter policy'.[38]

Hence we are able to trace in the colonists' attitude to the proselytisation of the East Indian community the same lukewarm stance that defined their efforts in the Amerindian and African-Caribbean communities. So while the government officially sanctioned Bronkhurst's presence, their acquiescence might be defined as concessionary rather than committed.[39] This is emphasised by the fact that both Bronkhurst and his Anglican equivalent, the Reverend E.B. Bhose, were expected to minister to over 20,000 East Indians scattered on estates across the coast of the country.[40] After six years labouring in the colony, Bronkhurst had managed only sixteen converts amongst the East Indians and upon his death, after thirty-five years' of missionary work, there were only 'a handful of converts' in the colony.[41] Though contemporary historians make much of this statistic, Bronkhurst's time in the colony coincided with unspectacular growth for the Methodists generally.[42] Findlay and Holdsworth attribute this to poor management and financial wrongdoing on the part of one minister, which in turn affected the group's reputation in the wider colony.[43] They also write in defence of Bronkhurst and his lack of success in converting East Indians to Christianity. They state that he worked without the support of his superiors in the ministry and also emphasise that he was the victim of a commonly held misconception that missionaries should have more success converting overseas East

[38] Ibid.
[39] As with J.E.S. Williams, Bronkhurst was also paid by the colonial government, see The National Archives of Guyana, Minutes of the Court of Policy, 1872, p. 13.
[40] Simon Mangru, p. 9.
[41] Seecharan, *Joseph Ruhomon's India*, p.12 and Peter Ruhomon, p. 211.
[42] Findlay and Holdsworth, p. 411.
[43] Ibid, pp. 410-16.

Indian communities to Christianity as they were outside the influence of their native land.[44]

However it is analysis of an indirect strand of Bronkhurst's work rather than his successes or failures as a missionary that constitute this chapter. In fact Joseph Ruhomon, a first generation Indian-Guianese and one of Bronkhurst's protégés summed up Bronkhurst's true role in the colony after his death:

> The late Mr. Bronkhurst has not only benefited me personally, but a large number of my East Indian friends in the Colony who had come into direct contact with him. They have in no mean measure been influenced for good by the, sweet, strong power, exercised over them by the deceased gentleman, and it is chiefly owing to him that they to-day hold respectable positions in the colony. A patriot he had always been and a great lover of his countrymen and their offspring – the Hindo-Guianese, and the many and various attempts he had made to benefit them morally and socially, and the vast amount of real good he has been the means of achieving in endeavouring to better and ameliorate the East Indians in general in this Colony will ever be a lasting permanent memorial to his sterling character and solid worth as a man and a Christian worker. [45]

As with Bronkhurst's obituary in the *Daily Chronicle*, Ruhomon's tribute focuses on the role that Bronkhurst played in the East Indian community outside his position as a

[44] Ibid, p. 417. Simon Mangru, p. 15, also notes that the Reverend Bhose was 'frustrated' by the same criticism and wished to cease work as a government minister due to it.
[45] Joseph Ruhomon, Letters to the Editor, 21 July, 1895, *Daily Chronicle*.

missionary.[46] While acknowledging the racism and religious prejudice that punctuate his writing on the East Indians and African-Guianese, I want to interrogate the anti-colonial strand in his work and emphasise its co-existence with his absorption of imperial Christianity and its intolerance for Eastern religion. Finally I would like to show how his writing fostered the growth of Indian nationalism in the colony and how, towards the end of his life, he began a dialogue on British Guiana as a proto-nation.

One of the major ways in which Bronkhurst can bee seen to have absorbed the colonial discourse of the era is in his authorship of the anthropological-style texts that were commonly produced by missionaries during this period. In particular two of his works, *The Colony of British Guyana and its Labouring Population* (1883) and *Among the Hindus and Creoles of British Guyana* (1888), conformed to the 'guide book' type of missionary text that Anna Johnston claims was important propaganda in the advancement of the missionary cause in the metropole.[47] Writing of the relationship between anthropologists and missionaries, George Stocking remarks how trusted missionary accounts of 'natives' were purely because of their traditionally long residences in the colonies. Stocking cites how one such account by a Methodist minister who served in Fiji was received in England:

> His monograph on Fiji was published in London in 1858, supplemented by a fellow missionary's account of the history of the mission, so that Christian consciences, at once shocked by the horrors of savagery and reassured by the

[46] An untitled editorial in the *Daily Chronicle,* 18 July 1895 wrote in reference to Bronkhurst's relationship with the East Indians that he had 'done much for the uplifting of that race'.
[47] Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire: 1800-1860*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 6-7.

> victory of Christ, could be exhorted to further efforts in the cause of Christianity and Civilisation.[48]

Ethnography itself had its roots in humanitarian causes; Patrick Harris for example has described the relationship between missionary work and anthropology as 'fundamental'.[49] It was William Wilberforce's successor, Thomas Fowell Buxton, a Quaker, who was instrumental in the formation of a Parliamentary Select Committee on the protection of Aborigines in 1835. Shortly after, in 1837, the Aborigines' Protection Society was formed as a humanitarian society. Part of the role of the Society included collecting data on aboriginal populations so as to know how best to 'civilize' such groups. As Stocking points out, the early role of the society was not to end colonisation but 'to change its nature'.[50] The society did not sustain its dual scientific and humanitarian roles for long and the eventual split into two separate groups occurred in 1843, when the scientific quarter reformed itself as the Ethnological Society. Both interests are repeatedly asserted in Bronkhurst's work and explain much of the turbulence of genre that troubles his ethnographical and philological studies like *The Ancestry of Origin of Our East Indian Immigrants* (1886) and *The Origin of the Guyanian Indians* (1881).

What was evident in these two texts was a desire to represent East Indians as a part of Christian history and therefore make them more acceptable to the colonial elite. In both works Bronkhurst attempted to link the Amerindians and the East Indians back to the division of the biblical tribes of Israel. Moreover Bronkhurst used the anthropological text, a tool of scientific racism, to provocatively return the

[48] George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1987), p. 92.
[49] Patrick Harris, 'Anthropology', in *Missions and Empire*, ed. by Norman Etherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp. 238-260 (p. 238).
[50] Stocking, p. 242.

colonial gaze. He asserted, for example, that the English were the 'descendants of Shem' and that they should be referred to as 'Eur-Asiatics'.[51] He distinguished between the North Indians, whom he believed to be Aryan in origin, and the South Indians who 'claim relationship with the English or the Saxons of Great Britain'. He offered as proof of this two points: one that the South Indians had been more accepting of British rule in India than the North Indians and two, the inflammatory comment that both the English and the South Indians 'are in like manner addicted to the vice of Drunkenness'.[52] How remarks like these would have been received in the colony is summed up by one of his reviewers:

> We cannot agree with Mr. Bronkhurst when he asserts that the Englishman is of the Shemitic race. We believe with the great philologists whom he has mentioned that our characteristics of mind, the structure of our language and the nature of our religion all mark us out as the descendants not of the dreamy mystical Shemite but of the active pushing practical Aryan.[53]

Bronkhurst also appropriated the academic study of orientalism initiated by the philologist William Jones and then in vogue with scholars such as Max Muller.[54] In the *Origin of the Guyanian Indians* he commented on the early poets, mathematicians and philosophers, Gautam, Kalidas, Bhawanbhut, Bhasker and Acharya stating that 'their lofty genius is now universally admitted […] to be by no means inferior to that of Shakespeare, Locke and Newton.'[55] Moreover there are points at which Bronkhurst appears to be actively celebrating the resistance that he encounters amongst the East

[51] Bronkhurst, *The Ancestry or Origin of Our East Indian Immigrants,* p. 12.
[52] Ibid, p. 68.
[53] E.J.M. Thomas, 'The Ancestry or Origin of our East Indian Immigrants', *Argosy,* 4 September 1886, p. 2.
[54] Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race* (Basingtoke: Macmillan, 2002), pp. 5-6.
[55] Bronkhurst, *Origin of the Guyanian Indians*, p. 28.

Indians and attributing this to awareness of their cultural heritage even amongst the young: 'Too frequently the cleverness and perspicuity of their arguments and their reasoning, the aptness of their illustration, would put to shame many an intelligent West Indian or an English boy.'[56] Bronkhurst acknowledges that these arguments are rooted in an awareness of the longevity of Indian culture:

> There are some people in the colony who believe it is an easy matter to convert a heathen or Muhammedan Indian to Christianity, though that heathen or Muhammedan may by birth be a Hindu-Guyanian. This is a great mistake. It must be remembered that amongst the Immigrants there are a great many persons who are highly educated, and who have a civilisation and religion of their own to point back to, long antecedent to the days when our ancestors were savages covered with the skins of beasts.[57]

In Chapers 6, 7 and 8 of this thesis, I will trace and analyse the process of writing back as it took place in British Guiana during the final three decades of indenture. However I want to highlight the extent to which H.V.P. Bronkhurst initiated this process by emphasising the nobility of East Indian history, referencing ancient literary and religious works from the subcontinent.

In acknowledging Bronkhurst's more revolutionary narratives we must also engage with the racism and intolerance that were a feature of his writing and that Clem Seecharan has rightly connected to his adherence to evangelical Christianity.[58] Where I have promoted a reading of H.V.P. Bronkhurst's life that marks the moments of resistance evident in his writing, it is also important to note that Bronkhurst himself

[56] Bronkhurst, *Among the Hindus and Creoles of British Guiana*, pp. 52-53.
[57] Ibid, p. 52.
[58] Seecharan, *Joseph Ruhomon's India,* p. 14.

was the target of resistance, threatened with violence when he preached on sugar estates and heckled while preaching publicly.[59] Bronkhurst's writing on the East Indians was limited by his belief that their religions were a 'farrago of deception and superstition'.[60] Further one might argue that his promotion of Indian culture focused upon the aspects considered worthy of scrutiny by British orientalists whose work, Tony Ballantyne has observed, was rooted in India's past rather than its present.[61] Writing on the topic of the early inclusion of Indian literary texts in colonial schools in India, Gauri Viswanathan comments on the exclusion of texts with erotic content like *Shakuntala*: 'The inability to discriminate between decency and indecency was deemed to be a fixed characteristic of the native mind.'[62] We might compare these acts of colonial censorship with Bronkhurst's attempt to stop a performance of the Nautch dance in the colony because of its 'impure and contaminating influence'.[63]

As with Edward Jenkins then, the acceptability of Indians and Indian culture is limited. Jenkins initially emphasises the nobility of Dilloo and the virtuousness of Lutchmee, distinguishing them from the other labourers, he has Dilloo say in reference to the majority of the immigrants: 'they are the scum of India.'[64] Equally Bronkhurst disassociated his idea of India from the mass of the workers in British Guiana but in his own inimitable style he does this while reflecting the colonial gaze:

> A very poor and unfavourable opinion is formed of the Hindus in general, not only by the ignorant class of people, but unfortunately by the educated classes

[59] MMS/West Indies/British Guiana/Correspondence/FBN 39 H.V.P. Bronkhurst to the General Secretaries of the Methodist Missionary Society, 30 November 1877 and MMS/West Indies/British Guiana/Correspondence/FBN 39 H.V.P. Bronkhurst to Revd. Osborne, 8 April 1881.
[60] Bronkhurst, *The Colony of British Guiana and its Labouring Population*, pp. 36-7.
[61] Ballantyne, p. 43.
[62] Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 5-6.
[63] H.V.P. Bronkhurst, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 17 June 1887.
[64] Edward Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo: A Study of West Indian Life* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2003), p. 146.

> also, from the ways and manners of the lower orders of the Indian Coolies around them. One may as well take the scum of the English people – the rude and unwashed throng – to form an opinion of the better educated and more refined natives of England.[65]

For both writers this celebration of the noble oriental takes place at the expense of the African community. In *The Colony of British Guiana and its Labouring Population* Bronkhurst cited his agreement with the Wesleyan missionary to the East Indians in Natal, Reverend Ralph Stott who claimed that '"The Coolies are not like the Kaffirs, vegetating at their kraals, but a busy, active, enterprising race, taking on their share in pushing on the world right or wrong"'.[66]

I have stated at the outset that I believe that we may interpret Bronkhurst's life to reflect that of a creole continuum. I argue that he progressively developed a sense of British Guiana as a country without reference to the homelands of the immigrants but as a community in its own right.[67] In this spirit he advocated the abandoning of Indian dress to facilitate better relationships between Africans and East Indians and encouraged the termination of the indenture system to promote fairness in work opportunities between the colony's two major races.[68] He began this more progressive dialogue in his penultimate book *Among the Hindus and Creoles of British Guiana,* which he dedicated to the African and East Indians and published in honour of the jubilee of emancipation. In this text he argued that a holiday should be observed in the colony that celebrated both the arrival of the East Indians and the emancipation of the

[65] Bronkhurst, *Among the Hindus and Creoles of British Guiana*, p. 269.
[66] Ibid, p. 145.
[67] On one occasion Bronkhurst's superintendent the Reverend Greathead had complained to the MMS about Bronkhurst preaching in Creole, MMS/West Indies/British Guiana/Correspondence/FBN 38 Reverend Greathead to the General Secretaries of the Methodist Missionary Society, 6 November 1874.
[68] H.V.P. Bronkhurst, Letters to the Editor, *Colonist* 18 July 1882 and *Among the Hindus and Creoles of British Guiana,* p. 27.

slaves.[69] This increasingly unifying and nationalist discourse was also at the heart of his final book for children on the geography of the Caribbean. This work was, according to its author, motivated by the idea that 'West Indian children as a rule have had their heads crammed with the geography of other lands while such an important education as that of their own country has been fearfully neglected, because not written'.[70]

Where we might see De Voeux, Beaumont and Jenkins as somewhat explosive in their short-lived contributions to the anti-indenture dialogue there is something of the wily anansi about Bronkhurst who appropriated the liminality of his profession to engender survival in the colony, variously aligning himself with both the coloniser and the colonised. In *Among the Hindus and Creoles of British Guiana* he writes of the Indians as possessing a civilization when: '*our* ancestors were savages covered with the skins of beasts'. [71] In the same volume however he writes to the Indians 'let *us* try to be a true pride of India, the home of *our* ancestors, whence in bygone days enlightenment and civilisation travelled to the other parts of the world.[72] As far as the East Indian community were concerned Bronkhurst's legacy was profound. He imbued a sense of Indian nationalism in young East Indian men like Joseph Ruhomon and importantly he was the first to use the term 'Hindu-Guyanian' to refer to East Indians.[73] It was with the support of Bronkhurst that Joseph Ruhomon, whose work is dealt with more fully in the next chapter, gave a public speech that contained the first reference by an East Indian to the decolonisation of India.[74]

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[69] Bronkhurst, *Among the Hindus and Creoles of British Guiana*, p. 185.
[70] Bronkhurst, *A Descriptive and Historical Geography of British Guiana and the West India Islands,* p. v.
[71] Bronkhurst, *Among the Hindus and Creoles of British Guiana*, p. 52, my italics.
[72] Ibid, p. 212, my italics.
[73] J.R. Wharton, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 16 October 1894, Wharton, a leading member of the emerging Indian middle-class, wrote of the intellectually improving influence of Bronkhurst on the young East Indian men of the colony. Walter Rodney, p. 179, stresses how important Bronkhurst's use of the term 'Hindu-Guyanians' was stating that it foreshadowed the later use of the term Indo-Guyanese.
[74] See Seecharan, *Joseph Ruhomon's India*, p. 60.

At the outset of this essay I wrote of my intention to move away from Clem Seecharan's analysis of Bronkhurst. Seecharan has attributed much of Bronkhurst's racism to his dual cultural heritage, his 'splintered psyche, rooted in his ambivalent Eurasian provenance'.[75] Rather than advance the notion that those of dual heritage are inherently ambivalent, at once incorporating the ideals of both coloniser and colonised, I would counter that it is the ambivalence generated by colonialism that fuelled Bronkhurst as it did Jenkins and Beaumont before him. It is here in particular that we might begin to appreciate how limited the concept of binaries is in aiding understanding of colonial histories in our study of British Guiana and how we might further appreciate the idea of anti-colonialism as embedded within the colonist and the colonised.

[75]Seecharan, ibid, p.16.

Chapter 6: 'With Eyes of Wonder': The Rise and Fall of the Romanticisation of the Creole East Indian, 1890-1902

This chapter concerns texts written by both colonists and East Indians in the period between 1890-1902. It was in this final decade of the nineteenth century that the stereotypes of the docile, loyal and hardworking coolie - instrumental in the rescue of the colony from economic decline - reached their peak. This elevation of the East Indian indentured labourer to the saviour of the colony particularly addressed the creole East Indian community, the members of which were portrayed as physically and intellectually superior to their Indian born parents.[1] As if to defy the mounting white stereotypes of the placid and diligent coolie, at this very moment the emerging middle-class East Indian community were galvanised by the voice of a literate indentured East Indian named Bechu. Between 1896 and 1902, Bechu wrote repeatedly to the *Daily Chronicle* protesting against conditions and pay for the East Indian community on the colony's estates. Following his example other East Indians, both on and off the plantations, began to use the letters pages of the colony's press to air their grievances. Though detested by the planters, such was Bechu's articulateness that he was invited to give evidence to the 1898 Royal Commission of Inquiry on the economic depression of the West Indies during this period.[2]

In this chapter I will establish the romantic stereotype of the indentured East Indian in official documents and the colony's newspapers, using heretofore unexplored articles that were written in the press about the Muslim Tadjah celebration

[1] This celebration of the creole East Indian is seen for example in the anonymous poem 'Eyes of Wonder' printed in D.W.D. Comins, *Note On Emigration from India to British Guiana* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1893), p. 9 and his comments on p. 8. We will recall from Chapter 2 of this thesis that Comins, Protector of Emigrants at Calcutta during this period, was sent to the Caribbean to report on the condition of indentured East Indian labourers.

[2] Parliamentary Papers, Vol. L, 1898, 'Report of the Royal Commission on Depression in the Sugar Industry in West Indian Colonies', Appendix C, Vol. II, Part II, British Guiana, pp. 75-76. Bechu's appearance before the Commission was most likely caused by his submission of a memorandum on, amongst other things, contractual violations in the indenture agreement, ibid, p. 131.

and a study of the Comins Report. I will demonstrate the prevailing view amongst the colonists of a sense of celebration in the creole East Indian, highlighting the representation of the system of indenture as regenerative - a theme outlined previously by Jenkins and dwelt upon by Bronkhurst.[3] I will analyse how far this romanticisation of the East Indian presence in British Guiana centred upon the body of the East Indian woman and how Comins's text was representative of a strand of colonial thought that argued that indenture had improved the circumstances of East Indian women. Finally I will begin to explore the destabilising role of Bechu in the emergent process of 'writing back', showing how Bechu's writing challenged colonial constructions of the East Indian. In this chapter, what I seek to add to existing scholarship on indenture in British Guiana is an argument that the final decade of the nineteenth century represented both the pinnacle of the romantic stereotype of the East Indian and the first signs of its destruction; as East Indians began to articulate their own condition in print they forced the colonists to revaluate their idealised notions of the indentured immigrants.

I. Celebrating the East Indian Presence: The 'Coolie' Tadjah, The Comins Report and Depictions of the East Indian Woman

For the first few decades of indenture Indians barely featured in the newspapers. Mention of their presence was confined to details noting the arrivals and departures of the vessels that carried them to and from India. Later they were to be found in the records of court proceedings as the protagonists of murder trials and violators of the comprehensive labour laws that restricted their movements and effectively confined them to the plantations. Two things were responsible for their increased presence in

[3] Edward Jenkins, *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* (New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1871), p. 297 and H.V.P. Bronkhurst, *The Colony of British Guiana and its Labouring Population,* (London: T. Woolmer, 1883), p. 157.

the media in the final decades of indenture: first the transition that they were perceived to have made from temporary workers to settlers and second the solidification of the system of indenture itself, from a series of disjointed ventures in the first two decades to a vast system that employed recruiters, sailors, doctors, medics and civil servants in the Caribbean and India. As Guianese society came to accept that the 'saviours' of the sugar industry had come to stay, the newcomers were gradually afforded 'spaces' in the colony beyond the plantation and these included column inches in the press. Both Europeans and East Indians were responsible for this change in attitude to the immigrants. The combined result of plantation protests by East Indians and agitation from men like Beaumont, Des Voeux, Crosby and Jenkins had brought Indians out of the plantations and into the daily consciousness of the white community, indeed into their everyday texts.

It was in the pages of the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Argosy*, the most popular newspapers amongst the colonists during this period, that the white community explored their relationship with the East Indians of British Guiana. The division between these two periodicals was at times gaping and at others barely discernible.[4] For though the *Argosy* was unashamedly biased towards planting interests the *Daily Chronicle,* though liberal in many of its stances, was still heavily influenced by the plantocracy, government policy and the colonial discourse inherent to its temporal and spatial location.[5] The *Daily Chronicle's* attempts to demonstrate the more permissive or progressive face of colonialism were most obvious in its correspondence section and editorials.[6] In relation to East Indians and indenture, the publication could be

[4] See for example Clem Seecahran, *India and the Shaping of the Indo-Guyanese Imagination, 1890s-1920s* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press and the University of Warwick), p. 27.
[5] See Clem Seecharan, *Bechu: 'Bound Coolie' Radical in British Guiana, 1894-1901* (Barbados: The University of the West Indies Press, 1999), p. 186 and Dale Bisnauth, *The Settlement of Indians in Guyana, 1890-1930* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2000), p. 204 for the *Argosy's* allegiance to the planters.
[6] Walter Rodney states that the *Daily Chronicle* could not be described as 'antigovernment'. However they clearly had their moments, Rodney cites an occasion where it referred to Frederick Hodgson (1851-1925), the colony's Governor from 1904-1911, as a 'bigoted partisan of planter interests', p. 211. The date of the original article is not cited in the text.

located between that of the anti-immigration, black-edited *Creole* newspaper and the pro-immigration, planter-centred *Argosy*. Throughout its publication, the *Creole* actively promoted the interests of black labourers over the immigrants, whom they perceived to be interlopers in the labour market – deflating prices paid to black labourers thereby indirectly excluding blacks from work on the sugar estates.[7] In the absence of a paper that was specifically geared to East Indian interests the *Daily Chronicle*, in part, adopted this mantle.

I have repeatedly referred to this final decade of indenture as one in which the East Indian presence in British Guiana was celebrated; one way in which we encounter these positive depictions is in newspaper articles about the Tadjah ceremony. Edward Jenkins had already immortalised the celebration by using it as the backdrop for the dramatic denouement of his fictional novel *Lutchmee and Dilloo* (1876), but what was it about the Tadjah that sparked colonial interest? Much of the fascination with this Shia Muslim celebration lay in the intrinsically creole celebration it had become; almost all the country's ethnic groups were documented as having taken part in it at one time or another.[8] It is this fact that offers the key to understanding the increased interest in the Tadjah in this period. Late nineteenth century British Guiana was a complex place in terms of relations between the different ethnic communities. The colony itself was a relatively new country, the three counties of Essequibo, Berbice and Demerara having only been united in 1831. In the wake of emancipation an economy that had depended entirely on free slave labour in what was essentially, in the populated coastland at least, a binary society of master and servant was now, due to indenture, a far more culturally diverse society.

[7] They were not alone in their nationalism, Rodney cites the editor of the Portuguese-Guianese newspaper *O Portugez* as promoting 'Portuguese cultural nationalism', stating that he denounced the relationships that Portuguese men had begun to form with African-Guianese women and objected to them adopting the Creole language, p. 143.
[8] Bisnauth, pp.130-131 and Basdeo Mangru, *The Elusive El Dorado: Essays on the Indian Experience in Guyana* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2005), p. 30.

Successive groups, Portuguese, Chinese and now Indian moved away from the plantation and began to consider lives as settlers rather than sojourners.[9] As these groups sought an identity in relation to the world around them, so to did the white colonists who increasingly began to consider British Guiana as home.[10] A creolised event like the Guianese Tadjah offered an opportunity to engage with a celebration that was utterly unique to the Caribbean in terms of the changes the ceremony had undergone in the New World.

Just as the colony's other ethnic groups participated in the Tadjah, one might identify in colonial writing on the ceremony a desire to stamp an English bent on events. Lamenting the absence of the estate managers in recent Tadjahs for example, one writer compared the loss to the former role played by the country squire in England:

> It seemed like the snapping of a bond of good feeling and sympathy between the coolies and the sahibs, to be regretted just as in England we deplore the loss of the old relationship between the squire and his labourers and tenants.[11]

At the same time there is an acknowledgment that the celebration is intrinsically Guianese, a national festival that should be apportioned the same sanctity as a revered site in the metropole. The same author compared Guianese who had not seen the Tadjah to Londoners who had never been to the British Museum.[12] However it was also an opportunity to express imperial triumphalism and advocate the beneficial nature of indenture:

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[9] See for example Brian. L. Moore 'The Settlement of Chinese in Guyana in the Nineteenth Century' and Mary Noel Menezes 'The Portuguese and Catholic Church in British Guiana' both in *After the Crossing: Immigrants and Minorities in Caribbean Creole Society,* ed. by Howard Johnson (Great Britain and the U.S.A: Frank Cass, 1988), (pp. 41-56) (pp. 56-78).
[10] This idea will be considered in more detail in Part 3 of this thesis.
[11] A Sightseer, 'A Demerara Tadjah', *Daily Chronicle*, 17 July 1898,
[12] Ibid.

> It is as though Good Friday were religiously observed in a single province in the middle of China. The circumstance might provide a philosopher with abundant food for reflection. It is indeed a tempting subject even to a casual scribbler, and I might go on to enlarge upon the possibilities that may lie in the future of British Guiana. The coolies bring their tadjahs and their tom-toms and we give them trousers and other advantages of civilisation.[13]

We must also acknowledge the racism inherent in the suggestion that the East Indian contribution is limited to 'tom-toms' and recognise the extent to which positive depictions of East Indian observances were used as propaganda to promote indenture. Katherine Mayo (then Katherine Prence), who visited the colony in 1900, wrote an article in the *New York Post* about the Tadjah and used the opportunity to advocate for the benefits of indenture, comparing the 'debased, hopeless, starving, plague-stricken' Indian in the subcontinent, with the 'well-fed, well-cared for coolie' labourer in British Guiana, 'made a man by the new self-respect induced by honest prosperity'.[14] Portrayals like these denied the element of resistance that was a fundamental part of the Tadjah ceremony; the event continually teetered on the verge of disorder and had been subject to serious outbreaks of violence in Trinidad, British Guiana and Surinam.[15] In Guiana there were occasions where whites were attacked for 'defiling' the Tadjah by passing too close to it.[16]

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[13] Ibid.
[14] Katherine Prence, 'The Tadjahs Carnival', *Daily Chronicle*, 10 October 1900. See Catherine Hall, 'Of Gender and Empire: Reflections on the Nineteenth Century', in *Gender and Empire*, ed. by Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 46-76 (p. 56), for a discussion on colonial narratives that alleged that men who indentured could achieve 'full masculinity'.
[15] See Kelvin Singh, *Bloodstained Tombs: The Muharram Massacre, 1884* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Caribbean, 1988), for an in-depth study of a clash between Tadjah devotees and the police in Trinidad in 1884. See Basdeo Mangru, *The Elusive El Dorado*, pp. 29-30 for attacks on colonists in British Guiana. For Surinam, see Comins, p. 80.
[16] Brian Moore, *Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism: Colonial Guyana, 1838-1900* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1995), p. 225.

This colonial re-fashioning of the Tadjah was indicative of a process of romanticisation around the idea of East Indian indenture that took place in this period. This is never clearer than in colonial depictions of the East Indian woman. Colonial fascination with the body of the East Indian woman was prompted in part by the same sense of triumphalism that surrounded the Tadjah and spoke of the improved circumstances of the New World East Indian. Thus in William Agnew Paton's 'Portrait of a Hindu Belle' the narrator centres on achingly drawn out descriptions of the Hindu Belle's jewellery that are intended to symbolise the financial benefits of the indenture system for the labourer.[17] In the same way, the anonymous and untitled poem, from which this thesis partly takes its title, uses the female indentured body to celebrate the system by portraying the prosperity of a creole East Indian girl:

Oh cooly girl with eyes of wonder!
With thoughtful brow and lips compressed!
I know not where your thoughts do wander;
I know not where your heart doth rest.

Is it far away by rolling Indus?
Or down by Ganges' sacred wave?
Or where the lonesome Indian Ocean
The shores of Malabar doth lave?

Ah no! Those lands you never saw!
This western world can claim your birth;

[17] William Agnew Paton *Down the Islands, A Voyage to the Caribbees* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), pp. 179-180.

Your parents thence their life may draw,

Their thoughts of joy their themes of mirth.

This land of mud has been your home,

'Twas here you drew your natal breath,

Your home of childhood doomed to be

The land shall hold your dust at death.

Then why so foreign? Why so strange

In looks and manner, style and dress

Religion, too, and social ways?

Thy mystery I cannot guess,

You dwell so very near a church,

A Christian church, with tolling bell;

You never enter it, alas!

For marriage peal or funeral knell,

A cooly temple far away,

Pagoda shaped, with colours loud;

'Tis there you wend your stately steps,

Arrayed in winsome gauzy shroud.

Your parents have been thrifty folks,

And now you scorn a life of toil;

No " Creole gang," no whip, no thong,

Thy youthful beauty e'er does spoil.

Thy father is a landlord now

With herds of cattle, flocks of sheep;

A veritable lady thou,

Thy father's flocks and herds doth keep.

This land is yours, go up, possess!

'Tis here for you to cultivate.

Many have come, many have gone;

They all have left it desolate.

The Carib, Negro, Portuguese,

The Chinaman (not he of delf),

They all have tried their hands, and now

They leave it mostly to yourself.

“Out of the running” all of them,

More loiterers on the world's highway;

They all are "going, going, gone,"

The cooly man has come to stay.

The future of this land is yours;

Her wealth is not in precious stones.

The digging fork, the spade, the hoe,
Still draw the marrow from her bones.

You open up the country when
You dig a space around your door,
And cause two blades of grass to grow
Where only one was seen before.

Ah! cooly girl with eyes of wonder!
With thoughtful brow and lips compressed!
I know not where your thoughts may wander,
But here at length your heart shall rest.

D.W.D. Comins reproduced this poem, originally printed in one of the colony's newspapers, in his report on British Guiana in 1893. Comins had been sent to the colony in 1891 on behalf of the Indian government to assess the lives under indenture of East Indians in the Caribbean region.[18] As part of his report on British Guiana, Comins sought to describe the difference he perceived between East Indians born in the colony and those born in India. Comins argued for the superiority of the former and reprinted this poem in full, in support of his belief that this feeling was also generally held in the colony.

[18] This tour was precipitated in part by increasing concern from the Indian government over the status of time-expired labourers. Some countries that imported Indian labour were reluctant for labourers to settle in the colony on completion of their indenture, preferring that the labourer either re-indenture or return to India. As far as India was concerned the right of the labourer to settle in the country to which he was indentured was a *sine qua non* of the system, but countries such as Jamaica and South Africa were attempting to limit or restrict rights of settlement for indentured East Indians after they had completed their indentures. In Jamaica for example, time expired immigrants were expected to report their place of residence to the police on a quarterly basis (Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labour, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1917* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 83) and an unsuccessful bill was proposed suggesting that immigrants who did not reindenture would be taxed fifty shillings a year (Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* 2nd edn. (London: Hansib, 1993), p. 276). In Natal, restrictions on the rights and residency of East Indians served to 'brand' them 'permanent inferiors' (Tinker p. 273). These issues will be explored in greater depth in Part 3 of this thesis.

These colonial representations of life for indentured women presented a stark contrast to the reality of existence on the plantations for many Indian women, who due to a disparity in sexes became valuable commodities for East Indian men and targets of violence in the face of sexual jealousy.[19] Catherine Hall has noted that colonial discourse depicted East Indian women as in need of 'saving' by the 'British' from the 'barbarities of their archaic world' and if the narratives explored above served any function it was to emphasise that indenture had in a sense 'rescued' East Indian women.[20] This variance between how the lives of East Indian women were experienced and how white colonists represented them supports the veracity of Tim Watson's claim that the history of the West Indies is 'continually transforming itself into romance'.[21]

This process of romantic transformation occurred in both 'official' documents on indenture and in the colony's media. I want to emphasise the way in which Comins's report vacillates between romanticising the 'oriental' presence in the Caribbean, as seen in the poem above, while simultaneously engaging in a dialogue rooted in scientific racism. In one section for example, Comins grouped labourers by caste into the categories of 'best labourers', 'good labourers', 'fairly good', 'indifferent' and 'worthless', appropriating the caste system into what Douglas Lorimer has defined 'a new determinism' that 'declared that biological inheritance [...] fixed at birth a person's place in the natural and social order.'[22] Yet he also protests against criticism in the colony directed towards the Indian 'baba' or loincloth.

[19] See for example, Basdeo Mangru, *The Elusive El Dorado: Essays on the Indian Experience in Guyana* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2005), pp. 33-50 and by the same author 'The Sex Ratio Disparity in British Guiana and its Consequences', in *India in the Caribbean*, ed. by David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo (London: Hansib Publishing, 1987), pp. 211-230. Here Mangru describes polyandry as 'almost an acknowledged system', p. 227.
[20] Catherine Hall, 'Of Gender and Empire: Reflections on the Nineteenth Century', p. 52.
[21] Tim Watson, *Caribbean Culture and British Fiction in the Atlantic World, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 3.
[22] Douglas Lorimer, *Colour, Class, and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), p. 202.

In response to a letter published in a local newspaper that demanded that the East Indians be forced to wear knee length trousers, Comins wrote:

> There are not wanting people in these colonies with prudish ideas who profess to see in the native dress something to shock the ideas of decency, and with a high sense of duty they attempt to reform a dress which they forget is infinitely older than the country they are living in.'[23]

In this statement we might recognise something of the paternalistic stance of the Indian government, as depicted in Chapter 2 of this thesis, and echoes of Bronkhurst's celebratory dialogues on India's past.

The ominous side to the celebrations of East Indians under indenture that I have thus far explored was that they habitually took place at the expense of the African-Guianese. In Comins's text the stereotype of the idle black that we have seen throughout Part 2 of this thesis continued unabated. Comins stated that indenture was necessary due to the: 'astonishing laziness, apathy and improvidence' of the African-Guianese population. For Comins emancipation was a failure and Caribbean slavery is retrospectively justified as 'essential to […] improvement, progress, and to the maintenance of industrious habits'.[24] In juxtaposing this image against that of the coolie woman resplendent in agricultural imagery, depicted in the poem 'Eyes of Wonder' which featured in the same report, Comins indirectly supports the idea of the East Indians as the rightful inheritors and cultivators of the land, contributing to a now immense body of writing that effectively conspired to consign the African-Guianese presence to the margins of the colony's history. In Chapters 7 and 8 we will see the

[23] Comins, p. 10.
[24] Comins, p. 5.

catastrophic effect that this strand of colonial discourse had on Indian-African relations in the colony.

II. Bechu and the Commencement of the Process of Writing Back, 1894-1902

In the 1890s, three crucial events occurred that challenged the romanticised notions of indenture held by the colonists. The first of these was a public lecture by H.V.P. Bronkhurst's Guianese-born protégé Joseph Ruhomon that criticised the treatment of East Indians under indenture, decried the 'racial prejudice rampant' in the colony and urged the burgeoning Indian-Guianese middle-class to show solidarity with their indentured brethren.[25] The first known public talk by an East Indian in British Guiana, Ruhomon's text is almost certainly also the first publication by an Indian-Guianese.[26] Secondly, two years later in 1896, there was a riot at plantation Non Pareil during which police opened fire on protestors killing five East Indians and wounding a further fifty-nine. The third was the campaign of letter writing to the *Daily Chronicle* that the Non Pareil riot precipitated from an indentured East Indian named Bechu.

Throughout this thesis I have argued that plantation disturbances precipitated attempts at reformative action by white British men. The riot at the Leonora estate in 1869 prompted Des Voeux to write to the Colonial Secretary for State and I have shown in Chapter 4 that events at Devonshire Castle radicalised a somewhat lukewarm Edward Jenkins. Now, for the first time, an East Indian indentured labourer was attempting to provoke reform of the system by publicising its injustices in the newspaper press and in public forums such as the 1898 West India Royal

[25] *Joseph Ruhomon's India: The Progress of Her People at Home and Abroad, and How Those in British Guiana May Improve Themselves*, ed. by Clem Seecharan (Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 2001), p. 67 & p. 84.
[26] Joseph Ruhomon's speech became the first printed text by an East Indian when it was reproduced as a pamphlet and published in the colony, Clem Seecharan, *Joseph Ruhomon's India*, p. 2.

Commission.[27] Clem Seecharan's study of Bechu interprets his life in the context of the burgeoning of Bengali intellectuals in India in the latter part of the nineteenth century. He twins this with the domestic progress of Indians in British Guiana during the same period, citing for example developments such as the publication of Ruhomon's speech and the departure of the Indian-Guianese William Hewley Wharton to study medicine at the University of Edinburgh.[28] Both Seecharan and Basdeo Mangru have also rightly contended that Bechu's actions were in line with the established anti-plantocracy agitation of men like Joseph Beaumont, William Des Voeux and Edward Jenkins.[29]

It is not my intention in this chapter to repeat the substantial and seminal work that Clem Seecharan has completed on Bechu, which has successfully and exhaustively compiled and analysed the letters of Bechu and assessed their role in both challenging the plantocracy and uplifting the East Indian community. Instead, in my analysis of Bechu's contribution to Indian-Guianese national consciousness, I would like to emphasise four critical points. Firstly, in line with Hugh Tinker's observations of Gandhi's work in Natal, I want to stress the support that Bechu received from the East Indian middle-class. Tinker has stated that much of Gandhi's agitation on behalf of the East Indians in this colony was triggered by awareness that the fate of both indentured East Indians and the East Indian middle-class were connected. While the one were denied equal treatment this would inevitably affect the rights of the other.[30] It was this awareness that Bechu appeared to have awoken in British Guiana. Secondly I want to show how Bechu triggered a spirit of rebellion and

[27] Parliamentary Papers, Vol. L, 1898, 'Report of the Royal Commission on Depression in the Sugar Industry in West Indian Colonies'.
[28] William Hewley Wharton and James Wharton were part of the Indian-Guianese middle-class of this period. James, a lawyer, was along with his brother, fundamental in the set-up of the first association for Indians in British Guiana, disbanded after William Hewley Wharton's departure for university in 1893. See Seecharan, *India and the Shaping of the Indo-Guyanese Imagination*, pp. 24-25.
[29] Seecharan, *Bechu: Bound Coolie Radical in British Guiana, 1894-1901*, p. 72 and Mangru, *The Elusive El Dorado*, p. 90
[30] Tinker, p. 283.

a culture of letter writing amongst East Indians in the colony that lasted well after his departure from the colony.[31] Thirdly I will argue that Bechu refuted the glorification of the position of the East Indian woman that I have outlined earlier in this chapter by drawing attention to their sexual exploitation under indenture. Finally I will contend that Bechu proffered a challenge to preceding colonial narratives on indenture by returning the colonial gaze and thereby destabilising colonial constructions of the coolie.

In the history of Guyana there is no figure that more embodies the spirit of the anansi than Bechu. The scant biographical information available concerning him and his appearance at such a crucial point in the colony's history align him to the spirit of the mysterious, mischievous and wily Caribbean folk hero.[32] Bechu came to the colony as an indentured labourer in 1894 but it was not until 1896, ignited by the shootings at Non Pareil, that Bechu wrote his first letter to the press. Bechu's letters generally centred on injustices connected to the plantation and his memorandum on these issues prompted his testimony at the West Indies Royal Commission. In the same year, a prominent East Indian merchant assisted Bechu by paying for the commutation of his indenture and offering him employment.[33] No longer bound to a plantation master Bechu now had greater freedom of expression in his letters to the press. In 1898, allegations he made regarding the culpability of a sugar estate's management in the death of an indentured immigrant resulted in a libel case.[34] This case meant that it was another year before Bechu was able to write to the press again. In his later correspondences, Bechu increasingly expressed a desire to leave the colony and Seecharan's study found no trace of Bechu after his announcement that he

[31] We will see more evidence of this Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 of this thesis.
[32] Bechu stated at the Royal Commission that he had been 'brought up by a white missionary lady', but gave very little other information regarding his background. Parliamentary Papers, Vol. L, 1898, 'Report of the Royal Commission on Depression in the Sugar Industry in West Indian Colonies', Appendix C, Vol. II, Part II, 'British Guiana', pp. 75-76.
[33] Seecharan, *Bechu: Bound Coolie Radical in British Guiana*, p. 47.
[34] Ibid, pp. 73-81.

was departing from British Guiana in 1901.[35] However in the process of research for this thesis I was unable to uncover two letters written by Bechu in 1902 and sent to the *Daily Chronicle* from Fiji where he appeared to have settled.[36] While the second letter described something of the geography and history of Fiji, the first continued the chastisement of the Guianese plantocracy that had been a feature of Bechu's correspondence in the *Daily Chronicle* and compared the planters of Demerara negatively with those of his new home.

After such a short time in British Guiana, how substantial could Bechu's contribution have been? Bechu's letters came at a time when the plantocracy were particularly vulnerable to attack. Sugar prices were declining and corresponding changes to the amount of work expected from labourers, as well as a decrease in the amount of pay they received on estates, resulted in more strikes and riots on the plantation. It was widely known that although there were a sufficient number of East Indians in the colony to satisfy the plantocracy's needs, new numbers were being added every year with the result that the surfeit of labour inevitably lowered wages. Once Bechu's attack was launched 'the rebellious spirit' ignited after the shootings at Non Pareil was 'contagious'.[37] As planters wrote to the Chronicle criticising Bechu, East Indians also wrote their own letters verifying Bechu's assertions.[38] Bechu's flourishes were now adopted as positive assertions of identity amongst the East Indians. Following allegations that Bechu made regarding child labour in the plantation, another East Indian wrote in support of Bechu's statement signing himself,

[35] Bechu, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 6 February 1901.
[36] Bechu, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 18 July 1902 and 28 August 1902. It is highly unlikely, given the address that Bechu cites in Suva, that he had indentured again. I was able to find no further correspondence by Bechu in the Fijian newspapers of the period.
[37] Seecharan, *Bechu: Bound Coolie Radical*, p. 45.
[38] J.R. Wharton, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 5 November 1896 and East Indian Descendant, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 6 November 1896.

as Bechu had done previously, with the name of the ship he had arrived on and the year it had come to the colony.[39]

Bechu's first letter argued that the riot at Non Pareil occurred because the planters did not honour the indenture contract that guaranteed labourers' wages, a point that he reiterated in his evidence in front of the Royal Commission.[40] Almost immediately J.R. Wharton, an established member of the East Indian middle-class, wrote to support Bechu: 'I am not acquainted with the author of the letter, but I know there are many who along with me agree with the writer in everything he has expressed.'[41] Wharton used the opportunity to attack the government for continuing the immigration and indenture system when 'hundreds of coolies are seen knocking about with no employment':

> I was pleased to read Bechu's letter in your issue of Sunday last anent the wages paid to East Indian immigrants on the estates of the Colony and more particularly as the circumstances which caused this bold East Indian, although an indentured immigrant, to place the case of the coolie (as he is commonly called) in this Colony in its proper light before the public, at a time when some practical steps should be taken to alleviate the sufferings and hardships of the poor coolie in this Colony, and I think he deserves some credit.[42]

Here we might sense a response to Joseph Ruhomon's plea for the members of the East Indian elite to support those on the estates.[43] Ruhomon himself joined the fray in 1897 heralding Bechu as a hero to the East Indian community: 'the redoubtable,

[39] Seecharan, *Bechu: Bound Coolie Radical*, p. 45, article not cited.
[40] Bechu, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 30 October 1896, cited in, Seecharan, *Bechu: Bound Coolie Radical* pp. 98-100.
[41] J.R. Wharton, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 5 November 1896.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Seecharan, *Joseph Ruhomon's* India, p. 84.

invincible Bechu, one of the champions of his race'. Ruhomon stressed the importance of Bechu's contribution to the Commission:

> It is to be hoped, Sir, that the important revelations made by Bechu before the Royal Commissioners will in due course be submitted to our Government for their consideration, and that firm and effective practical measures will be taken to render the conditions on our sugar plantations less burdensome and considerably easier than those which obtain at present to the severe discomfort of so many of our East Indian brethren who have come from over the seas for occupations so servile and results so absurdly unprofitable.[44]

That the actions of one man precipitated, for the first time, such outspoken condemnation of the indenture system was monumental.

Bechu did more than galvanise the East Indian communities on and off the estates, he challenged the very notion of the ignorant and illiterate indentured coolie whose alleged satisfaction with his new surroundings was represented in celebrations like the Tadjah which simultaneously reflected colonial munificence. Bechu did this by merely writing back to the coloniser, prompting them to question their own constructions of the indentured East Indians:

> Sir, Who is Bechu? Is he really an indentured immigrant? […] If Bechu is a real live indentured coolie it strikes me that he has had the Agent in Calcutta

[44] 'East Indian Descendant', Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 6 February 1897. Clem Seecharan has identified Ruhomon as writing under the pseudonym 'East Indian Descendant', Seecharan, *Bechu: Bound Coolie Radical*, p. 44.

> on toast, he is far better educated than most of us are, at all events in some respects, but what the dickens has he come here for?[45]

Where we have previously seen the indentured 'coolie' in British Guiana as 'gazed upon' by the whites here was a formerly indentured East Indian returning that gaze and writing critically of colonial policy as it affected his community. In one letter to the *Daily Chronicle*, Bechu toyed with the idea of the intellectually superior colonist remarking:

> It seems passing strange that the ignorant *uneducated* coolie should be required to learn a foreign language, and that the *educated* European should save himself little trouble to acquire the language of the people with whom he has so much to do.[46]

Bechu undermined the process by which colonists romanticised the condition of the indentured East Indian by returning this gaze. In his original memorandum to the West India Royal Commission, Bechu devoted a paragraph to the discontent caused on the estates by the 'immorality' that occurred between white overseers and East Indian women adding that although these relationships had been known to cause rioting on estates the 'immigration agents close their eyes to the matter'.[47] Bechu directly challenged colonial depictions of the body of the East Indian woman as the uncontested site of the white male gaze by stressing the violence that surrounded encounters between white planters and East Indian women.

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[45] 'Planter' to the Editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, 9th of January, 1897.
[46] Bechu, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 28 July 1898, italics in original.
[47] Parliamentary Papers, Vol. L, 1898, 'Report of the Royal Commission on Depression in the Sugar Industry in West Indian Colonies', Appendix C, Vol. II, Part II, 'British Guiana', p. 131.

This chapter has sought to account for a period where colonists, in spite of a region wide economic depression, reflected on the success of indenture in the colony by romanticising 'coolie' religious celebrations and women. In a moment as vital as the 1869 riot at plantation Leonora, which prompted Des Voeux's letter, an East Indian voice had conflicted with colonial structures of East Indians as docile and indenture as beneficial and improving. As far as the period that concerns Part 2 of this thesis, From H.V.P. Bronkhurst onwards one is able to trace the evolution of a more radical East Indian community. I have credited Bronkhurst with promoting aspects of East Indian nationalism and cited his connection to Joseph Ruhomon as important in the latter's intellectual development. Bechu had successfully built bridges between the indentured East Indian community on the estates and the burgeoning East Indian middle-class of the colony that Ruhomon was a part of. In Part 3 of this thesis we will see how the foundations laid by Bronkhurst, Ruhomon and Bechu, triggered a culture of writing back in the colony that was to persist until the end of indenture.

PART 3: 1900-1917

Introduction to Part 3

Thus far this thesis has almost exclusively considered white colonial writing on East Indians in British Guiana. However in the following two chapters, this narrative is interspersed with the writing of East Indian labourers both on and off the colony's sugar estates as I provide an analysis of the process of 'writing back' that took place in the final years of my study. This activity, initiated by Joseph Ruhomon and Bechu in the last decade of the nineteenth century, was sustained by a growing body of literate and non-literate Indian-Guianese who used the pages of the *Daily Chronicle* newspaper in particular to protest about various aspects of their lives.[1] Where the East Indian community had previously relied on the intervention of benevolent men like Joseph Scoble, William Des Voeux and Edward Jenkins to publicise the injustices of indenture, my research will show that between 1900 and 1917, a number of East Indians, from a variety of different backgrounds used the pages of the colony's press to expose the injustices of their lives both on and off the estates.[2]

Importantly this sustained wave of East Indian protest did not leave the community without white supporters in the colony. Throughout this thesis I have emphasised the uncoordinated 'collaboration' of East Indians and sympathetic colonists, stressing in particular how riots in British Guiana motivated Des Voeux's letter and prompted Edward Jenkins's novel *Lutchmee and Dilloo* (1876).[3] In Chapter

[1] My research has shown that the Indian-Guianese almost entirely sought publication in the pages of the *Daily Chronicle* rather than the *Argosy*. This was related to the fact that the *Argosy* was in particular considered the planters' paper and until 1907 was published weekly rather than daily, limiting the amount of letters they were able to print.

[2] Given the low literacy rates amongst the East Indians during this period it seems highly likely that some correspondents were utilising the services of amanuenses as was done during the time of the first Royal Commission of 1871 (See Edward Jenkins, *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* (New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1871), pp. 142-146). See Clem Seecharan, *Mother India's Shadow Over El Dorado: Indo-Guyanese Politics and Identity, 1890s to 1930s* (Kingston and Miami: Ian Randle Publishers, 2011), p. 258 for low literacy rates amongst East Indians.

[3] These were the riots on plantation Leonora in 1869 and plantation Devonshire Castle in 1872.

7, I would like to examine a similar pattern in the contribution made to the resistance movement against indenture by two very different but equally radical missionaries, the Congregationalist minister Reverend Henry John Shirley (n.d-n.d) and the former overseer turned Salvationist Alexander Alexander (1861-1934).[4] In reference to men like Barton Premium, Edward Jenkins and H.V.P. Bronkhurst I have argued for an interpretation of elements of their work that acknowledges its creole influences. Here, however, I contend that a notion of fluid identities marks the work of Alexander and Shirley in the colony. I have previously referred to Kamau Brathwaite's reading of creolisation as the result of sustained contact between different cultural groups in the Caribbean.[5] Where I refer to the concept of fluid identities between 1900-1917 I reference an inclination amongst some colonisers to take on aspects of the identity of the colonised subject.

Accordingly in the following two chapters we will see evidence that in British Guiana, the notion of 'empire' had progressively created the sense of a worldwide multi-racial community united under the British flag. Thus while men like Alexander and Shirley sought to express a sense of fraternity with the colonised, Shirley by attempting to instigate trade unionism in the colony and Alexander by adopting the language and dress of the East Indians, we will see that the Indian-Guianese were involved in a reciprocal movement to explore their identity as citizens of empire as they wrote poems about the British victory over the Boers, celebrated the coronation of King George in 1911 and pledged their willingness to fight in the First World War.[6] I will also show that during this period, patriotism paradoxically co-existed

[4] Neither the Surman Index (<http://surman.english.qmul.ac.uk>) nor the John Williams Library in London hold the details of the date of birth or date of death of Henry John Shirley, nor is there any record of his activities after 1914. However Charles Booth, who met Shirley in 1899 as part of his survey of Non-Conformist parishes in Fulham, put him in his forties the year before he arrived in British Guiana (The Charles Booth Archive, The British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics and Political Science, Notebook B625, pp. 8-25 (p. 8).

[5] Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[6] See Clem Seecharan, *Mother India's Shadow Over El Dorado: Indo-Guyanese Politics and Identity, 1890s-1930s*, p. 64 for Joseph Ruhomon's poem on the loss of British lives during the Boer War. See J.R. Wharton, Letters to the Editor, *Daily*

with the growing radicalism of the East Indian community, evidenced by major riots on Guianese estates and provocative letters to the press that questioned aspects of colonial government.

For three key reasons the relative radicalism of individuals like Shirley and Alexander and the process of writing back were tolerated in British Guiana during this period. The first and most crucial of these is the decline of British Guiana's sugar industry as charted by Alan Adamson; this resulted in the increased abandonment of estates and the escalation in corporate amalgamation of those that were formerly privately owned.[7] Thus ownership went from that of individual sugar barons to large companies such as Bookers and McConnell.[8] I argue in the following two chapters that this corporatisation of the sugar industry resulted in the growing radical consciousness of both East Indian labourers *and* white overseers who also protested in the press against the conditions that they experienced on the estates. A second consideration was the official verdict of the 1898 Royal Commission that the West Indies had collectively placed too much weight on the production of sugar to the detriment of the region's economy.[9] Finally there was the increased acceptance amongst the white community of the trope of the plantation as a site of social equalisation – an idea first explored embryonically by Barton Premium and Edward Jenkins – that helped to foster the colony's tolerance of men like Shirley and Alexander. These are ideas that I will bring to the fore in Chapter 8 where I discuss the first Guianese novel written by a Caribbean author, A.R.F. Webber's (1880-1932)

Chronicle, 19 November 1911 for the Indian-Guianese celebration of the coronation and Tyran Ramnarine, 'The Growth of the East Indian Community in British Guiana, 1880-1920' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sussex, 1977), p. 247, for Indian-Guianese willingness to fight in the First World War. See also Pradhan Mantri, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 14 June 1900, which questioned why the East Indians were not being invited to take part in the overseers' parade in honour of 'the fall of Pretoria'.

[7] Alan Adamson, *Sugar Without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 208-213.

[8] Thus emerged an era when its inhabitants satirically referred to the colony as 'Booker's Guiana' rather than British Guiana.

[9] Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1970), p. 373. The report of this Commission is contained in, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. L, 1898, 'Report of the Royal Commission on Depression in the Sugar Industry in West Indian Colonies'.

Those That be in Bondage (1917). This work in particular emphasises the common history of exploitation of overseers and Asian labourers in the sugar plantations of British Guiana in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The events detailed above also strengthened the burgeoning radicalism of the African-Guianese and Indian-Guianese communities who were not only writing back to the colonial centre in the pages of the press, but were also involved in a series of riots and strikes from 1900-1905.[10] The growing presence of the African-Guianese community in the colony's legislature meant that their campaign against state-aided immigration, which they argued had largely contributed to their economic detriment, gathered pace during this period.[11] Thus political agitation was coupled with more militant activity and open dissension in the press. What is crucial about dissenting Guianese voices at the beginning of the twentieth century is that they were echoed and supported worldwide; this was possible because the legacies of slavery and indenture had created two diasporas on four continents. These groups now sought to connect with each other as both the Pan-African and Indian nationalist movements, which took shape in the final decade of the nineteenth century, blossomed in the first two decades of the twentieth century.[12] As Gandhi's work in Natal forced the status of

[10] The most significant of these skirmishes were the Ruimveldt riots of 1905, which mainly involved striking African-Guianese dock workers but did spread to some of the colony's sugar estates (Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 190-216) and the East Indian riot on plantation Friends (ibid, p. 159) in which six labourers were shot dead by police. Basdeo Mangru notes that between 1900-1913, 141 strikes were recorded on sugar estates, *A History of East Indian Resistance on the Guyana Sugar Estates, 1869-1948* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1996), p. 156. See also Nigel O. Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: The Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy* (Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2001), p. 192, who has defined the British Caribbean, from the end of the nineteenth century up to 1907 as an area of 'working class unrest' with the most 'militant activity' occurring in British Guiana.

[11] Peter Fraser, 'The Immigration Issue in British Guiana, 1903-1913: The Economic and Constitutional Origins of Racist Politics in Guyana,' *Journal of Caribbean History*, 14, (1981), 18-45 (p. 33).

[12] As far as the Pan-African movement is concerned, the Caribbean region in particular contributed to this important dialogue. Henry Sylvester Williams, a Trinidadian, was responsible for the organisation of the first Pan-African Conference in London in 1900. In his recent work *Holding Aloft the Banners of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), Winston A. James assesses the role Caribbean migrants to North America played in the growth of African-American radicalism. See also Marika A. Sherwood's *Origins of Pan-Africanism: Henry Sylvester Williams, Africa and the African Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 2011). For a discussion of the emergence of the Indian National Congress between 1885-1892, see Jim Masselos, *Indian Nationalism: A History* (London: Oriental University Press, 1986), pp. 78-92.

labourers there into the limelight, the government of India expressed concern about the continuance of indenture; it seemed inevitable that enquiries that considered the system of indenture as a global phenomenon would follow.[13] These took place in the shape of the Sanderson Commission of 1910 and the Chiman Lal Enquiry of 1914.[14] Other worldwide events had their impact on British Guiana during this period too; Walter Rodney has argued that the Ruimveldt riots of 1905 were influenced not only by similar strikes by dock workers in London in the 1890s, but also by the Russian Revolution of 1905.[15]

In addressing indenture as a worldwide system it is imperative that we acknowledge that the experience of individuals under indenture in various colonies differed greatly. Despite their contribution in the Boer War, East Indians in Natal were heavily discriminated against and actively discouraged from taking up residence outside their periods of indenture.[16] The same ambiguous discourse that punctuated indenture in its first period reappeared in the final two decades of the system as Joseph Chamberlain appeared to both defend and upbraid white settler communities for their discrimination against East Indians.[17] In Fiji, the Governor expressed concern that the disparity between male and female recruits had led to serious social problems in the colony and in 1903, the Mauritian governor, Sir Cavendish Boyle, demanded legislation that placed greater financial responsibility on the planters who he argued were intent on paying labourers wages below the level on which they could exist.[18]

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[13] See Tinker, pp. 302-303.
[14] Parliamentary Papers, 1914, Vol. XLVII, 'Report to the Government of India on the Conditions of Indian Immigrants in Four British Colonies and Surinam', by James McNeil and Chimman Lal and Parliamentary Papers, 1910, Vol. XXVII, 'Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates'.
[15] See Rodney, p. 198, who argues that more minor strikes by stevedores in British Guiana throughout the 1890s could be connected to events in London. He also cites the significance of the 1905 Mortality Commission as a spur to the rioting of this period. Referring to the overcrowding that was the root cause of high mortality and in particular high infant mortality; Rodney cites that the commissioners ascribed this in 'a circular manner' to the poverty of the people in the area, p. 195.
[16] Events in Natal were indicative of a period in which white settler communities feared the increase of non-white populations. This led to the production of texts like J.E. Neame's *The Asiatic Danger in the Colonies* (London: George Routledge, 1907).
[17] Parliamentary Papers, Vol LIX, 1897, 'Proceedings of Conference between Secretary of State for Colonies and Premiers of Self-Governing Colonies', pp. 13-14.
[18] Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* 2nd edn. (London: Hansib, 1993), p. 293.

In British Guiana at this time the situation of the colonial government in relation to the East Indians was unlike Fiji or Mauritius. There was neither the resentment of white settlers, as in Natal, nor the benevolent efforts of the Governors of Mauritius and Fiji to protect the East Indians from the excesses of the planters. Publicly the labourers were feted as, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the planters still insisted that they needed a continuous stream of labour from India. In contrast to Natal the Guianese government encouraged settlement as they were reluctant to pay the return passages of the immigrants. Yet in spite of the outward posturing the treatment of labourers in British Guiana had not undergone any dramatic changes and in the light of the disturbances that proliferated in the colony during this period, it became difficult to argue for the success of indenture.[19] However the end of indenture was not related to any conscious effort on the part of the Indian-Guianese who 'condemned individual abuses' rather than the abolition of the system that had brought them to the colony.[20] As Walton Look Lai has concluded of this period:

> Indian nationalism emanating from the source of emigration, had succeeded in doing what years of colored and Black pressure group agitation in the West Indies had not been able to do. The development was sudden and decisive and totally unrelated to West Indian circumstances.[21]

I have argued throughout this thesis that indenture was perpetually unstable and fostered resistance amongst sympathetic whites as well as the victims of the system.

[19] There were disturbances throughout the colony in 1912 but one of the most serious riots in Guyanese history took place on plantation Rose Hall in 1913 when fifteen labourers were shot dead by the police. The incident raised questions about indenture in the Indian Legislative Council, Tinker, p. 328.
[20] Dale Bisnauth, *The Settlement of Indians in Guyana, 1890-1930* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2000), p. 196.
[21] Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labour, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1917* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 178.

In these final two chapters I would like to show that the cumulative effects of these years of agitation in British Guiana, as well as the climate of the early twentieth century Caribbean that I have outlined in this introduction, had transformed the colony into a radical space in which we are able to trace the roots of the country's dramatic mid-century decolonisation.

Chapter 7: Fluid Identities Under Empire, 1900-1909

In this chapter I will analyse the work of the Congregational minister H.J. Shirley and the Salvationist Alexander Alexander, juxtaposing their constructions of the 'coolie' against the representations the East Indian community made themselves in their letters to the press between 1900-1909. I will argue that the radicalism of both men, while significant, had its limitations, emphasising that much of the rhetoric of Shirley and Alexander echoes the patriarchal and paternalistic language that we have seen as a feature of the first chapter of this thesis and, in particular, as a recurring theme of the writing and speeches of John Scoble. Throughout this chapter I explore in further detail the perceptible inclination amongst the European and East Indian communities of British Guiana to engage with and articulate fluid concepts of identity fostered by empire. We will see that both Shirley and Alexander appeared to identify more wholly with the proletariat than any other colonist we have examined. While Shirley was responsible for instigating a movement to form African-Guianese trade unions and founding a newspaper that would focus on the interests of the 'working people', Alexander Alexander learnt Hindi, changed his name to Ghurib Das and adopted East Indian dress in order to evangelise to the East Indians of the colony.

I. The Reverend H.J. Shirley: Congregationalist Radical

The significance of Reverend Shirley's contribution to British Guiana is arguably more impressive because of the brevity of his sojourn in the colony (1900-1903). Dispatched to British Guiana by the London Missionary Society, Shirley was a Congregationalist. We have seen in Chapter 5 of this thesis that this group had acquired a wholly negative reputation with the plantocracy of British Guiana. Facing

fierce resistance from the planters, the Congregationalists were the first missionary group to attempt to proselytise to slaves in the colony and by 1817 had four missionaries in Guiana.[1] John Smith (1790-1824), 'The Demerara Martyr' was a Congregationalist as was his successor Joseph Ketley (1802-1875). The chapel to which Shirley was sent was itself started by another Congregationalist, John Wray (1779-1837), who in opposition to the planters had run a school for slaves in his Mission Chapel in New Amsterdam in 1808.[2] Importantly for the group, they were the only Non-Conformist section of the Christian church in British Guiana that did not receive government funding for their missions and were therefore able to secure some amount of independence from the colonial government.[3] In this way we can see how Shirley was able to occupy a far more adversarial role than that of the comparatively liminal H.V.P. Bronkhurst.

There was more to Shirley's explosive presence in British Guiana than the historical antagonism between the colonists and the Congregational church. I maintain that the political climate of the Caribbean during this period fostered much of Shirley's resistance and contributed in particular to the support he received from the African-Guianese who formed the majority of his congregation. In terms of Shirley's arrival timing was everything: both plantocracy and government had been undermined by the conclusions of the 1898 Royal Commission on the economic depression of the region; the black middle-class was agitating for reforms that would end immigration and allow more equality for their community in the colony; and in nearby Trinidad, in

[1] Juanita De Barros 'Congregationalism and Afro-Guianese Autonomy', in *Nation Dance: Religion, Identity and Cultural Difference in the Caribbean,* ed. by Patrick Taylor (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 89-103, (p. 89).
[2] Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 274. The Congregationalists figured significantly in early missionary work in British Guiana due to their strong presence in the London Missionary Society; a group that was intended to be inter-denominational but was ultimately overwhelmingly dominated by Congregationalists, De Barros, p. 90.
[3] Ibid, p. 94.

1890, the first Caribbean trade union had emerged amongst black workers.[4] If there was an era in which the time was ripe for a figure to galvanise the colony's black population, it was the first decade of the twentieth century.

The England that Shirley left also played a part in the radicalism that he injected into the colony. The end of the nineteenth century saw increased confidence amongst Non-Conformist churches as their congregations expanded in England.[5] Moreover, Congregationalists were a key part of a growing movement in England to take 'serious notice of the socially underprivileged' whose conditions had been exposed in texts by Henry Mayhew (1812-1887), Charles Booth (1840-1916) and William Booth (1829-1912).[6] For the Congregationalists this entailed 'involvement in the organised movements that sought to ameliorate the condition of the working classes'.[7] Importantly the Congregationalists saw 'a moral imperative to class collaboration' thus their participation in trade union movements was inevitable.[8] It is this perhaps that led the Guyanese historian Walter Rodney to comment:

> What made Shirley somewhat unique was that he entered the situation with a class consciousness developed in England where the modern proletariat was carrying out trade-union and party struggles. His real contribution was not so much the denunciation of existing ills in Guiana as his emphatic call for the self realization of the working people through agitation and organization.[9]

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[4] Stephen J. Roundell and Graeme S. Mount, *The Caribbean Basin: An International History* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 49. See also Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labour, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1917* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 178-184 for a history of African-Guianese opposition to indenture during the period.
[5] D.W. Bebbington, *The Non-Conformist Conscience* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 1-2.
[6] R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1661-1962* (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1962), pp. 342-343. See also Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (London: Macmillan, 1903-1904) and William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: Salvation Army, 1890).
[7] Tudur Jones, p. 342.
[8] Bebbington, p. 10.
[9] Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 172.

Rodney's markedly socialist account of Guianese history paints Shirley as a valuable contributor to the subsequent growth of interest in workers' rights amongst labourers in British Guiana, importing ideas that were gaining popularity in England; however as we have seen in Trinidad, these ideas were already evident in the region.

If Shirley is to be constructed as an agent of change in the colony then this was a mutual affair. His life before and after his time in British Guiana reflects no significant record of activism. Charles Booth's portrait of Shirley, written in 1899 when Shirley was in command of a Congregationalist church in Fulham, revealed no hint of the passion to which British Guiana was exposed during his residence.[10] Booth described Shirley as having a 'frank open manner' and noted his comments that social movements needed 'spiritual power behind them'.[11] At the behest of Shirley the congregation had contributed to the quarrymen's strike in Wales and were judged by Booth to be taking 'a genuine interest in social movements'.[12] Yet in no way does Booth's description marry with the flamboyant character who surfaced in British Guiana a year later. Juanita de Barros's assertion that newly arrived Congregational ministers had the power to invigorate congregations appears to have been reciprocal in the case of Shirley.[13]

Recent academic studies that have dealt with Shirley's work in British Guiana have been brief but have generally veered toward the laudatory. Clem Seecharan and Walter Rodney stand out as two advocates of his endeavours amongst the East Indian and African communities of the colony. Rodney extols Shirley's unifying narrative of the joint oppression of both groups by the colonists and aligns his efforts to those of

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[10] The Charles Booth Archive, Notebook B625, pp. 8-25.
[11] Ibid, p. 9 & p. 25
[12] Ibid, p. 17
[13] De Barros, p. 93

H.V.P. Bronkhurst, who, he argues, 'dedicated his work to furthering good race relations'. [14] Rodney stresses that Shirley 'set up his base among black Congregationalists while simultaneously expressing pro-Indian sentiments'.[15] Clem Seecharan emphasises the support that Shirley received from prominent East Indians like Bechu and Joseph Ruhomon, who both praised his attempts to draw attention to the plight of the East Indian in British Guiana by writing letters for publication in the British press.[16] While I do not seek to depart from these assessments, I would like to analyse two aspects of Shirley's residence in British Guiana that I maintain have not been given adequate consideration. Firstly I would like to acknowledge Shirley's presence on the side-lines of an increasingly racist African-Guianese anti-immigration campaign directed against East Indians. Finally, I will show how Shirley's language, as far as it concerned the East Indians, was mired in the same diminishing, paternalistic rhetoric that defined the Anti-Slavery Society's writing on the indentured East Indian decades earlier. In spite of this however, I maintain that the overarching theme that defines Shirley's presence in British Guiana is that of fluid identities. We will see evidence of this in his criticisms of racial inequality in employment, his attempts to instigate trade unionism in the colony, his initiation of the *People* newspaper, which challenged the racial oppression of both African-Guianese and Indian-Guianese and his constant identification with the colonised proletariat of the colony.

It was relatively soon after Shirley's arrival in the colony in July 1900 that he began to speak publicly about the conditions for the African-Guianese working class and the indentured East Indians. There is a clear sense in which Shirley assigned

[14] Rodney, p. 177.
[15] Rodney, ibid. Citing evidence from the Colonial Office records, Rodney emphasises that even after his return to England in 1904, Shirley continued to contradict those who tried to 'paint a blissful picture of the lot of Indians under indenture'.
[16] Clem Seecharan, *Bechu: Bound Coolie Radical in British Guiana 1894-1901* (Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 1999), pp. 237-241.

himself the role of the saviour of the working people of the colony. As with Joseph Scoble, Shirley positioned himself as the owner of the 'true' narrative of the state of British Guiana and as with Scoble we might see something of the public performer in Shirley. While bold in his arguments, Shirley's claims that the Guianese people were not aware of the extent to which they were exploited was presumptuous in the least:

> First the Government does not care much about the people; secondly, the people at home, in Britain knew next to nothing about them; and thirdly, the people here did not realise themselves yet […] He was driven to the conclusion that it was the intention if possible to 'KEEP THE BLACK AND COOLIE RACES IN IGNORANCE.[17]

Unsurprisingly, Rodney states that the same newspaper printed rumours that Shirley was under police observation and that he would be imprisoned for 'inciting the people'.[18] Returning to my reference to the carnivalesque in Chapter 4, we might figure Shirley as something of a Lord of Misrule at this early stage of his time in the colony. Certainly he can be firmly linked to the tradition of white resistance to indenture established in the preceding chapters. By September of the same year Shirley had written to the London Missionary Society enclosing a letter that detailed the injustices of life for the black and East Indian communities of the colony; he requested that the society get his letter printed in an English newspaper.

The letter that Shirley enclosed for publication in the British newspapers was entitled 'A Plea From British Guiana' and was overwhelmingly concerned with the absence of equality in the colony; he wrote about the lack of civil service jobs

[17] *Daily Chronicle*, 12 September 1900, cited in Rodney, p. 171. Capitals in original text.
[18] *Daily Chronicle*, 16 December 1900, cited in Rodney, p. 171.

available to African-Guianese qualified in law and medicine and the taxes imposed on the poor to fund the sugar industry.[19] In line with my emphasis on fluid identities during this period, it is pertinent to note that even at this early stage in his time in the colony Shirley identified himself with the colonised, beginning, '*We* here in British Guiana are a cosmopolitan community' and continuing his alignment with the proletariat in the same letter:

> In a speech at Georgetown a few weeks ago I urged Trade Unionism upon the people. The proposal has stirred the colony from end to end and *we* are threatened with an influx of East Indians to circumvent us. But sire, *we* shall form Trade Unions if things go on in their present state much longer and the Government will have a very serious situation to face.[20]

With respect to the East Indian community it was here that Shirley contributed to a tradition of white writing about the West Indies that I have stated in the introduction to this thesis was directed at gaining the censure of the metropole over the actions of the coloniser. Shirley's depiction of the East Indians was that of a vulnerable and defenceless people: he commented that the justice they received was 'as scant as their clothing' and stressed their connection to the British Empire by stating that 'The gracious Queen would be grieved if she could see the condition of her Indian subjects here'.[21] Shirley appeared to disregard the emergence of the Indian-Guianese middle

[19] 'The latest proposal with respect to the medical profession is that black men shall be required to discharge the duties of Government Medical Officers without being put on the staff and without title or leave to pension'. London Missionary Society Archives, SOAS, CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 2, 1900-1908 A Plea From British Guiana, enclosure in Reverend H.J. Shirley to Reverend George Cousins, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 27 September 1900, my italics.

[20] Ibid, my italics, underline in the original text.

[21] Whether or not Shirley intended to evoke the imagery of emancipation in his letter is unknown, but certainly there is a dual connection between the Caribbean and India here. While Queen Victoria was titled Empress of India she was also seen as 'a symbol of monarchical maternalism' in the West Indies, connected as she was with slave emancipation, see Howard Johnson, 'The British Caribbean from Demobilization to Constitutional Decolonization' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 5 vols, ed. by Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), IV, pp. 597-622

class, the efforts of Bechu, who was still in the colony and any agency the Indian-Guianese had themselves in his statement: 'the coolies have no Mr. Naoroji to represent them here'.[22] However the publication of Shirley's letter was something of a landmark moment in British Guiana's history: it was the first time since the publication of *The New Slavery* by Joseph Beaumont that anyone had tackled the injustices faced by both the major colonised groups in British Guiana in the same text.

Both Joseph Ruhomon and Bechu wrote to the press in support of Shirley's claim when his letter was printed in the *Birmingham Post*, Ruhomon by writing to the *Birmingham Post* and Bechu by writing to *The Daily Chronicle*.[23] Ruhomon's concern was that the attacks that Shirley had made on the system, with specific reference to the way that the Indians were treated within it, were not believed:

> Mr. Shirley's allegations against the planters of this colony, for instance, as regards their treatment of the indentured East Indian immigrants in their employ, are absolutely and unquestionably true, despite what his opponents may say to the contrary.[24]

But what did the Guianese press make of Shirley's allegations? The *Daily Chronicle* dealt satirically but attentively with Shirley, portraying him as a showman while reporting many of his speeches verbatim.[25] They would often revert to a supercilious

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(p. 597). In Shirley's reference there is a disassociation of the colonial government from the monarchy. We will see later that this was a recurring image of the final two decades of indenture amongst the East Indian community of British Guiana in particular, but not unique to them, Marika Sherwood notes the election of West Indian delegates of the Pan-African Association to attend the coronation of King Edward VII, p. 129.

[22] This is a reference to Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), M.P for Finsbury Park between 1892-1895. The East Indian middle-class community had sent a telegram to congratulate Naoroji on his election in 1892 and Clem Seecharan has argued that his election was significant for them as 'an instrument with which to challenge' their 'calumniation' as 'coolie', see Seecharan, *Mother India's Shadow Over El Dorado*, p. 49.

[23] Both letters are cited in, Seecharan, *Bechu: Bound Coolie Radical in British Guiana 1894-1901*: 'East Indian Descendant', Letters to the Editor, *Birmingham Post,* 29 December 1900 (pp. 240-241) and Bechu, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle* 29 December 1900, pp. 237-239.

[24] Ibid, pp. 240-241.

[25] See for example the untitled editorial from the *Daily Chronicle,* 19 December 1900: 'The public must have been vastly amused by the very serious view that the Rev. Mr. Shirley of New Amsterdam takes of his "mission" to benighted British Guiana. With

tone to reveal concern over the influence that Shirley had over the 'poorly informed classes'.[26] Like Shirley's colleague in the Guianese Congregationalist Church, Reverend A.W. Wilson, the *Chronicle's* editor believed that Shirley was importing ideas into a country and economic climate to which they were wholly unsuited:

> The amazing cocksureness of Mr. Shirley on local questions is however the most ridiculous element in his public performances. He lectures the Government on its shortcomings, the planters on their wickedness, and the press of Georgetown on its venality. […] If instead of teaching the masses to blame the Government for all their limitations Mr Shirley were to instruct them in the saving virtues of self-reliance and independent initiative his pastorate would be marked by a more honourable and auspicious record. By all means let him "have his fling" at the Government when he detects any unfairness or inequitability. But let him remember the code of ethics which governs politics in Fulham cannot be bodily applied to the conditions of New Amsterdam.[27]

It is this same attitude that dominated Reverend Wilson's frustration with Shirley. Writing retrospectively in 1911 he commented that Shirley's 'political opinions' were 'right enough for England' but 'did not suit this colony'.[28] It is a dialogue on the lack of equality for African-Guianese and Indian-Guianese that dominated Shirley's narrative on British Guiana and resulted in claims that his ideas were unsuitable for

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our interviewer he discussed almost every mundane thing – from the possibility of getting into jail to the business of Barnum, the late showman. The supple mind will not fail to observe the analogy.'

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 3, 1909-1923, Reverend A.W. Wilson to Reverend G. Currie Martin, Joint Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society, 6 February 1911. Reverend Wilson, (1861-1945) ran the John Smith Chapel in Demerara between 1898-1917.

British Guiana. This provides a distinct echo of responses to Joseph Beaumont during his time in the colony when his attempts to hold sacred the rule of law resulted in a clash with Governor Hincks and the plantocracy. What men like Shirley and Beaumont exposed was the lack of substance behind claims that 'Empire […] makes no distinction in favour of, or against race or colour'. The empty nature of such assertions were evident to Beaumont in his documentation of the absence of the rule of law in the justice system as it treated East Indians and to Shirley in his concern regarding the lack of equal opportunities for African-Guianese in the civil service.[29]

I have stated in the Introduction to Part 3 of this thesis that a study of British Guiana at the turn of the century reveals elements that were to figure in the process of the colony's mid-twentieth century decolonisation when the African-Guianese and Indian-Guianese united politically under the banner of socialism to end British colonialism. Arguably Shirley's greatest contribution to British Guiana was the discourse of unity that surrounded the creation of the *People* newspaper, making no distinction in its service to both the African-Guianese and Indian-Guianese 'working people'. The paper demonstrated this in its campaign to collect subscriptions for the defence of the East Indians who were charged with rioting following the disturbance at plantation Friends in 1903.[30] In the establishment of the *People* we might see the tentative roots of the socialist alliance between the African-Guianese and Indian-Guianese and acknowledge how radical and unique Shirley was as a colonist, moving beyond ideas of race to explore the concept of an oppressed proletariat. Shirley's narrative is a thus a total rejection of the colonial discourse of Part 2 of this thesis which set the Indian-Guianese and African-Guianese in binary opposition to each other.

[29] Parliamentary Papers, Vol. LIX, 1897, 'Proceedings of a Conference between Secretary of State for Colonies and Premiers of Self-Governing Colonies', p. 13.
[30] Ghurib Das, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 17 June 1903.

Beyond Shirley's frustration with the government was his anger at the inaction of the colony's press and clergy whom he felt should be exposing the conditions of the 'people' more vociferously. This is certainly borne out in his speech at the first public meeting of the paper - there he criticised both newspaper editors and members of the clergy for their 'insufferable silence over things which they should smite with a withering fire'.[31] Barbadian born A.A. Thorne, a prominent black community leader who would later be involved in starting the first Guianese trade union spoke at the same meeting.[32] The *Daily Chronicle* recorded Thorne's attack on the existing newspapers as such: 'It amounted in his opinion to impertinence for a single individual sitting in an editorial chair and speaking of the people saying 'we' while 'we' were silent.' Excerpts like this emphasise the veracity of Rodney's argument that Shirley contributed to the 'self realization of the working people'.[33] Shirley's Congregationalist colleague A.W. Wilson believed that Shirley's motivation in starting the paper was solely the way he had been treated in the press, but the records of the first meeting of the *People* reflect that Shirley had a number of genuine concerns about the way the poor were treated in Guiana. He attacked an unfair taxation system that charged, for example, $16 for a licence for a carriage, but $40 for a cart for trade, as well as criticising the closure of the Berbice Almshouse.[34] The typically satirical standard press had a field day with Shirley's admittedly pompous speeches and his heady rhetorical flourishes left him open to attack:

> Mr. Shirley rose to some giddy heights of oratory the other night in the Town Hall and it is not surprising that he got into trouble once in the rarefied

[31] 'The Proposed "People's Paper"', *Daily Chronicle*, 24 March 1901.
[32] Robert J. Alexander, *A History of Organized Labor in the English-Speaking West Indies* (Connecticut: Praeger Publishing, 2004), p. 350.
[33] 'The Proposed "People's Paper"', See also Rodney, p. 172.
[34] See both CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 2, 1900-1908 Reverend A.W. Wilson to Reverend George Cousins, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 14 August 1901 and 'The Proposed "People's Paper".

> atmosphere of the upper altitudes. He invited the Christian Church to come down from *her* high perch into the midst of the people and divest herself of "*her emasculate* Pilateism." It was perhaps the most striking passage in the speech, and the audience fairly roared. But viewed in the clear cold light of print will the sentence pass muster? I fear not.[35]

The creation of the *People* led Reverend A.W. Wilson to write to the Joint Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society complaining of Shirley: 'Mr. Shirley wants a paper to air his political views by all means let him have it if he can but he should not abuse in public and private other men and ministers who do not follow his lead'.[36] He described Shirley's attacks on the government the previous year, after having been in the colony for only two months, as 'exceedingly ill-judged.' [37]

Ultimately it was the formation of the *People* that was directly responsible for Shirley's departure from the colony in 1903. His efforts in launching the newspaper exhausted him and bought him in to conflict with members of his flock who believed that he should spend more time in his church.[38] Wilson felt that the work on the newspaper had had a debilitating effect on Shirley who unusually returned to England for a break after only two years in the colony. Wilson wrote to the Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society that Shirley's labours in starting the paper 'have added not two years to his age since he came but half a dozen at least'.[39] While Wilson saw problems in store for Shirley if he continued the newspaper on his return

[35] CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 2, 1900-1908, Reverend A.W. Wilson to Reverend George Cousins, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 14 August 1901.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 2, 1900-1908, Reverend A.W. Wilson to Reverend George Cousins, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 17 June 1903.
[39] CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 2, 1900-1908, Reverend A.W. Wilson to Reverend George Cousins, 21 May 1902. Shirley stated that it was the effects of malaria which were responsible for his return to England, CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 2, 1900-1908, Reverend Shirley to Reverend George Cousins, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 15 July 1903.

to the colony, he wrote that he could not reasonably be seen to abandon the project and remain in the colony.[40] When Shirley returned from England without his family it seemed clear that his intention was to leave the colony permanently.[41] On his return it appears that he also came into conflict with the shareholders of the *People* and expressed a desire to leave them to the management of the paper.[42] Two months later Wilson said Shirley was 'nervously desirous of being gone with as fair a show of decency as he can muster'.[43] Shirley wrote to Wilson requesting that he take over his church in New Amsterdam so that he could return to England to his new church at Markham Square, Chelsea. Such was the state of relations between Shirley and his flock at this stage that he stated that he 'would not be missed'.[44] Indeed one might see the evolution of an increasingly worn and cynical character. Even Shirley's solidarity with the black community seemed to have diminished in comments he made to Wilson that suggested his congregation would not tolerate a black successor, writing: 'Privately, there will be a cleavage deep as hell if a black man comes, but keep that confidential please'.[45]

Shirley's initial narrative on arriving in the colony was an attempt to unite the East Indians and Africans as the joint victims of colonial oppression. Yet evidence suggests that despite the fact that he maintained his sympathetic position towards the

[40] CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 2, 1900-1908, Reverend A.W. Wilson to Reverend George Cousins, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 1900-1908, Reverend A.W. Wilson to Reverend George Cousins, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 23 March 1903.
[41] CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 2, 1900-1908, Reverend A.W. Wilson to Reverend George Cousins, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 17 June 1903.
[42] Untitled Editorial, *Daily Chronicle*, 22 April 1903. Wilson stated, somewhat gleefully that those left to run the paper had taken to 'quarreling among themselves' in Shirley's absence: CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 2, 1900-1908, Reverend A.W. Wilson to Reverend George Cousins, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 23 March 1903.
[43] CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 2, 1900-1908, Reverend A.W. Wilson to Reverend George Cousins, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 17 June 1903.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Shirley, quoted by Wilson in Reverend A.W. Wilson to Reverend George Cousins, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 17 June 1903. The Congregationalist ministers appeared to be paranoid about their letters being leaked among the wider community. Wilson, who was especially contemptuous of the black population, repeatedly stated that he did not want any of his remarks made public, (CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 3, 1909-1923, A.W. Wilson to Reverend G. Currie Martin, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 6 of February 1911 and CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 2, 1900-1908, A.W. Wilson to R. Wardlaw Thompson, 9 September 1904). When Shirley's successor, who was allegedly unpopular in the black community died, Wilson wrote that there was talk that he was 'hostile to the Black man' and continued 'nor is the suspicion wanting, in which I fully share, that he did not die a natural death', CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 3, 1909-1923, A.W. Wilson to Reverend G. Currie Martin, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 6 of February 1911.

East Indians he was drawn into the anti-immigration movement led by members of the African-Guianese middle-class.[46] While the movement could not of itself be deemed racist, it increasingly promulgated a hostile attitude to the Indian-Guianese who were referred to by Patrick Dargan, one of the leaders of the anti-immigration movement, as 'no use to anyone but the planters'.[47] This divisive rhetoric led to a caution at a subsequent meeting not to use personal violence against the East Indians as many would not object to leaving the colony.[48] There is no evidence that Shirley was part of the more racist aspects of this campaign and his involvement in the movement was related less to any discernible contempt for the East Indians and more to a historic tradition of Congregationalist involvement in African-Guianese politics.

Peter Fraser has charted a history of Congregationalist intervention against indenture assigning this to their position as 'articulators, of Creole opinion on immigration'.[49] Certainly Shirley was not the only one of the organisation's ministers involved in the anti-immigration movement: Joseph Ketley also spoke out against Indian immigration citing its detrimental effects on the African-Guianese communities and an unnamed Congregationalist minister chaired the meeting at which Dargan had spoken against the Indian-Guianese.[50] Perhaps realising that he had become embroiled in an increasingly racist movement, Shirley seemed to disassociate himself from the campaign in an ambiguous speech in which he stated that he would not discuss the immigration issue and then proceeded to do so, arguing that immigration to the colony should continue but not under the planters' terms.[51]

[46] As late as 1903 Shirley was writing to the LMS criticising indenture as 'a modified form of slavery' CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 2, 1900-1908, Reverend H.J. Shirley to the Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 6 May, 1903.
[47] Fraser, p. 33.
[48] Ibid, p. 33.
[49] Ibid, p. 22.
[50] See, Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labour, Caribbean Sugar*, p. 181 for Ketley's contribution and Fraser, p. 33 for the presence of an unnamed Congregational minister at Dargan's meeting.
[51] 'The Anti-Immigration Campaign', *Daily Chronicle*, 22 April 1903.

An evaluation of Shirley's contribution to the colony must acknowledge that his ideas were not new. He was not alone in recognising that immigration had been a catastrophe for the African-Guianese population who had been driven off the plantations and taxed to pay for a system that indirectly prevented them from seeking fair wages.[52] As far as the *People* was concerned, Walton Look Lai lists a number of publications prior to Shirley's arrival that attempted to address the cause of 'the Black displaced worker.'[53] Similarly Richard Hart notes movements among black workers in British Guiana in the 1890s to form early trade unions.[54] While Shirley depicted the East Indians as voiceless and undefended, their actions on the sugar estates at this time has seen others describe them as taking 'the most militant initiative' in the colony.[55] I have stated in my Introduction to Part 3 of this thesis that this period reveals the roots of the process of decolonisation in British Guiana that begun in the 1950s and I have referenced the important development of political unity between the African-Guianese and Indian-Guianese that prompted this. Crucially it is this narrative that Shirley can be seen to have contributed to through the ethos of the *People* and through its support of the rioters at plantation Friends.[56] Writing about Shirley some years later, Wilson commented that Shirley's contribution to the colony had been a 'deep stirring of race feeling' taking this to mean that Shirley had increased consciousness of institutional discrimination in the colony we might

[52] See for example, an untitled editorial in the *Daily Chronicle*, 15 June 1902 and 'Sympathiser', Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 17 February 1906 and also an excerpt from the Barbados *Bulletin* printed in the *Daily Chronicle*, 24 March 1909.
[53] Look Lai, *Indentured Labour, Caribbean Sugar*, p. 178.
[54] Richard Hart 'Origin and Development of the Working-Class in the English Speaking Caribbean', in *Labour in the Caribbean* ed. by Malcolm Cross and Gad Heuman (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 43-79 (pp. 45-46).
[55] Hart, ibid, p. 46.
[56] There are no known surviving copies of the *People* and there is no clear indication of how long the newspaper continued. There is evidence that the paper was still functioning possibly as late as 1909 under the editorship of Joseph Ruhomon ('The "Taj Mahal" Company Limited', *Daily Chronicle*, 14 January 1909). Ruhomon maintained a relationship with Shirley visiting him in England in 1910 ('Return of a Berbice Phrenologist', *Daily Chronicle*, 24 November 1910).

usefully argue for his acknowledgement as an important contributor to the cause of the colonised in early-twentieth century British Guiana.[57]

II. Alexander Alexander: Planter turned Salvationist

A contrastingly diplomatic and sustained voice for the East Indians emerged from the overseeing community in the shape of the former planter Alexander Alexander (1861-1934), who left his work as an overseer and joined the Salvation Army, working with the East Indians from 1896 until his retirement in 1926. In the Introduction to Part 3 of this thesis I stated that writing about Guiana between 1900-1917 reveals recurring references to the plantation as a site of social equalisation, responsible for the exploitation of both the non-elite whites and the indentured East Indians. This trope was embodied by the work of Alexander who provided food and shelter not just to distressed members of the East Indian community, but also to homeless overseers whom he argued were equally corrupted and brutalised by plantation life.[58] It was the now vast amount of East Indians living off the estates that preoccupied Alexander; members of this community, centred in Georgetown, eked out a precarious existence as jobbers where they were the target of police harassment and a government campaign to become licensed.[59]

While Alexander's work came to be accepted and supported by the wider white Guianese elite community I aim to show here that he could be viewed in the

[57] CWM/LMS, West Indies and British Guiana, Incoming Correspondence Box 3, 1909-1923, Reverend A.W. Wilson to Reverend G. Currie, Joint Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 6 February 1911.
[58] 'An Open Door: Or, Army Work in British Guiana', *All the World: A Monthly Record of the Work of The Salvation Army in all Lands,* 3 (1887), 417-419 (p. 418).
[59] '"Ghurib Das" on Coolie Jobbers', *Daily Chronicle*, 16 March 1901. The objective of this campaign was to remove the East Indians from the streets as it was suspected that many of those working as jobbers were deserters from the plantations. It was argued that the licensing project was discriminatory in nature as it exempted African-Guianese workers and prompted bullying of the East Indians by the police. See for example, Ramsing, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 3 March 1901, Ramsing, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 28 March 1901 and Ghurib Das, Letters to the Editor *Daily Chronicle*, 30 March 1901.

same radical light as his contemporaries H.J. Shirley and Bechu.[60] This can be seen in the extent to which Alexander censured the exploitative nature of the plantation by providing a refuge for those escaping it. I will argue that Alexander followed a long line of men, from John Scoble onwards, who challenged the treatment of the East Indians. Where Alexander was unique however is that his efforts and sympathies also extended to members of the planting community and it is here that we might acknowledge echoes of Barton Premium's poem, in Chapter 1 of this thesis, which links the fortunes of the planters to those of the East Indian immigrant.[61] Moreover in Alexander's attacks on the way that East Indians were treated within the justice system we are reminded of the work of the rebellious judicial triumvirate of Beaumont, Des Voeux and Crosby, whose battle with Governor Hincks's administration to obtain a fairer legal system for the indentured was the subject of Chapter 3 of this thesis. Alexander for example successfully laboured to save three East Indians wrongly convicted of murder from the gallows and believing their innocence, he laboured until their life sentences were reversed and they were freed.[62]

Howard Johnson has framed the West Indies during this period as a place where 'wealth was coterminous with whiteness'.[63] Yet in British Guiana, at the turn of the century, we see a different portrayal of members of the white community through the work of Alexander in this chapter and A.R.F. Webber in Chapter 8. Both these men represented overseers in particular as victims of the plantation system. There are a number of contributory factors that led to the pervasiveness of the trope of

[60] For Alexander's eventual acceptance by the white elite community see Frederick L. Coutts, *Down in Demerara: Alexander Alexander, O.F.* (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, 1944), pp. 13-14.
[61] See pp. 48-53 of this thesis.
[62] Doreen Hobbs, *Jewels of the Caribbean: The History of the Salvation Army in the Caribbean Territory* (London: Salvation Army, 1986), p. 48. See also Coutts, pp. 13-14 who states that Alexander's involvement in the case angered the colonial authorities.
[63] Howard Johnson, 'The British Caribbean from Demobilization to Constitutional Decolonization' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 5 vols, ed. by Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), IV, pp. 597-622 (p. 600).

the 'P.B.O.' in colonial Guianese society.[64] Certainly the economic crisis of the 1890s must have played its part, as did increased violence on the part of the East Indians against individual overseers and plantation managers.[65] A key turning point however was the fallout of the plantation Friends riot of 1903. Following this disturbance in the colony, Governor Alexander Sweetenham ordered the company responsible for the estate to dismiss the manager. Upon their failure to do so he stated that he would remove the three hundred indentured East Indians from the plantation, transferring their indentures to a different estate. [66]

Simultaneous discussions in the press about relationships between overseers and East Indian women strongly suggest that this was a contributory factor to the riot on plantation Friends. Importantly the unnamed newspaper article indicated that the Governor's decision was led by how his actions would be viewed in India.[67] This reflects the concern in the colony that the Indian government would prevent the flow of indentured labourers if they heard negative reports about the treatment of Indians overseas. The aftermath of the plantation Friends riot was significant in that it was the first time such a serious public division between the white elite and the overseers took place. Those in support of the overseers accused the colonial elect of equal immorality with East Indian women and highlighted the oppressive conditions of the overseers' lives, drawing attention to the aspects of their jobs that were similar to the system of indenture.[68] Thus we are able to see an emerging argument that it was not the East Indian alone who had been a victim of the all-consuming plantation. Crucially it was

[64] Poor, broken, overseer.
[65] The volume of these attacks led to the Immigration Agent General, A.H. Alexander, publishing a public notice to immigrants stating that violence against overseers was 'certain to bring punishment' 'Assaults on Overseers and Drivers', *Daily Chronicle*, 29 January 1903.
[66] This newspaper article is most likely from the *Argosy*, however only the article and date (28 July 1904) appear as an enclosure in CO111/541.
[67] A later correspondence between Governor Frederick Hodgson and the Earl of Crewe (19 December 1908) states that both the manager and deputy manager of the Berbician Port Mourant estate were 'removed because of immoral relations with East Indian women: CO111/564.
[68] See for example, Bolah, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 20 November 1904, and Francis G. Harvey, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 5 August 1904 and 'Be True', Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 4 May 1905.

work like Alexander's and Webber's – in the forms of practical action and fictional narrative – that publicly acknowledged the difficult position of young British men sent to the colony as overseers. We have seen consistently throughout the preceding chapters that indenture was condemned as a system that exploited East Indians. It speaks to my earlier assertion that the period between 1900-1917 saw an inclination toward a more fluid concept of coloniser/colonised relations that in the final two decades of indenture we see representations of overseers as victims of the plantation system. My reference to Julie F. Codell's term 'co-histories' in Part I of the Introduction to this thesis is also pertinent here as we are able to trace an inclination amongst *some* elements of the white community of British Guiana to acknowledge an existence in common with the colonised.

How did a former overseer come to take such a stance against the plantation? Like many young overseers in British Guiana, Alexander was born in Scotland.[69] He came to work in British Guiana in 1882 at the invitation of a family member but in 1886, when he suffered a serious head injury while operating machinery on an estate factory, he returned to Scotland to convalesce. Alexander attended a Salvation Army meeting at the instigation of his sister, who had recently joined the movement. Following his conversion he returned to Guiana the same year, where he continued his work on the sugar estates. Although he proselytised to the East Indians in Guiana, Alexander was not wholly satisfied either with his efforts or the results that they yielded. Returning to England in 1887, he underwent training at the Salvation Army College and subsequently returned to British Guiana as an overseer. However his work amongst the East Indians there did not begin in earnest until 1896 when he returned from another trip to England having been heavily influenced by what he had

[69] See Rodney, p. 157, who states that most overseers were Scottish and were in addition 'bonded for three years' suggesting that a system similar to indenture was in operation regarding their employment.

heard about the pioneering work of the Salvation Army's Frederick Booth Tucker, who adopted an Indian style uniform while carrying out missionary work in India. Tucker's approach seems to have been inspired by a general instruction from William Booth, the Army's founder, that they 'get into the skins' of the community they wanted to serve.[70] This was followed by a gradual consensus among his group that the change in dress should become more radical both for comfort and congruity this eventually culminated in the adoption of Indian names.[71] Alexander returned to British Guiana with a new zeal: he wore Indian dress and adapted his lifestyle to make it as close to the lives of the indentured masses as he could. He ate the same food, lived in similar conditions and learnt Hindi. Like Booth Tucker's Salvationist group in India, there is every possibility that Alexander was 'regarded as a racial embarrassment' by other whites in British Guiana. However like the Salvationists in India, who became involved in 'imperial policing' helping to run prisons and reform programmes, his eventual acceptance would suggest that despite his eccentricities, he was still viewed as part of the colonial system. [72]

In my study of Alexander I would like to emphasise the extent to which he perpetuated an image of the victimised 'coolie' in the twentieth century press. This depiction was at odds with the assertions of East Indian identity that appeared elsewhere in the journalism of the time and in particular with the eloquence of Ruhomon and Bechu seen in Chapter 6.[73] I would additionally like to draw parallels between Alexander and Shirley and the theme of public performance evident in their work. Here I refer especially to Alexander's adoption of East Indian dress. I want to show that despite his compassionate intervention on the part of the East Indians, his

[70] Frederick Booth Tucker, *Muktifauj: or Forty years with the Salvation Army in India and Ceylon* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1923), p. 70. This sketch detailing Alexander's journey into Salvationism is taken from Hobbs, pp. 45-47.
[71] Booth Tucker, pp. 70-79.
[72] Peter Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 155.
[73] We will see later that Alexander had minor clashes in the press with both men.

work denied the emerging process of creolisation that was taking place amongst this community in British Guiana during this period. Alexander deliberately constructed the East Indians of British Guiana as outsiders in the colony by establishing separate 'East Indian corps'.[74] Despite the late stage in indenture during which Alexander's work took place, it is notable that he was so focussed on its 'Indian' appearance, particularly in view of the fact that other missionaries, H.V.P. Bronkhurst for example, were advocating the creolisation of the East Indian community as a gateway to better interracial relations. As far as Alexander was concerned, the Indians were not considered part of the Caribbean community. He insisted that though they were 'Englified coolies' they required a different approach: '"You can't get at them with a coat like this on you [sic] back! They'll have to be gone for on native lines, as in India."'[75]

While acknowledging the vital role of the theatrical in the ethos of the Salvation Army generally, Alexander's insistence on adopting East Indian dress had more to do with his recognition of the lack of ascendancy possible for a person of his background in colonial Guiana rather than a genuine need among the East Indian community to be proselytised to by a missionary in East Indian dress.[76] I want to use Anne McClintock's work on Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim* (1901), noting her stress on Kim's Irish heritage, to argue that Alexander's 'passing down' the 'cultural hierarchy' was a conscious recognition of the fact that the structure of the colonial social order did not permit 'passing up' for a Scottish overseer.[77] Photographs of Alexander and the East Indians in a Salvation Army publication reveal him to be the

[74] In fact two distinct Salvation Army divisions operated in the colony at the time, known as the 'Indian Division and the West Indian Division', Hobbs, p. 47.
[75] 'An Open Door: Or, Army Work in British Guiana', p. 419.
[76] See for example, Pamela J. Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 175 who acknowledges the role of theatre and music hall in the preaching of the Salvation Army.
[77] Ann McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 70.

only person in 'native' dress, challenging his insistence on its necessity in his missionary work.[78] Alexander believed that his role as a missionary to the East Indians signified the adoption of a lowlier status and this is seen in comments he made to the Salvation Army in an interview conducted in England in 1904. Alexander spoke of getting 'hold of those who are deepest in the quagmire of superstition and sin' by being prepared to 'stoop low enough'.[79]

This attitude however did not prevent Alexander advocating equality for the East Indians and we see this most clearly in his work on behalf of the East Indian jobbers. Alexander recognised a distinction between the treatment meted out to the East Indian community as they laboured in the city and those of other races:

> Why is poor "Sammy" always hauled before the Magistrate while others can be seen picking off the many choice jobs about sales, Railway station and steamer stellings? If licensed jobbers can only be made to believe they have police protection, the Government will easily establish some control over the army of jobbers which is now far beyond the needs of the city, and is ever increasing. [80]

In a later interview with the *Daily Chronicle* Alexander protested against the criminal prosecution of those who were jobbing without licenses complaining that employers favoured the cheaper unlicensed jobbers and thereby justifying the Indians' refusal to take part in the licensing scheme.[81] Alexander also wrote to the *Daily Chronicle* to complain that police ignored physical assaults on East Indians claiming equality for

[78] 'A Servant of the Poor', *All The World: A Record of Salvation Army Work at Home and Abroad*, 25 (1904), 615-617 (p. 615-616).
[79] Ibid, p. 616.
[80] Ghurib Das, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 30 March 1900.
[81] Ghurib Das, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 30 March 1901.

East Indians he asked: 'Where is *Baboo* in the brotherhood?'[82] It is in acts like these that we might see Alexander's most anti-imperial stance. While others viewed free East Indians as a nuisance or an eyesore in the capital city, Alexander gave them shelter and wrote to the newspapers to advocate for their equal treatment.[83] Here, with particular regard to the disdain with which East Indians were viewed outside of the plantation, we might figure Alexander as someone who drew out of the margins those that Anne McClintock has claimed the imperial project 'expelled'.[84]

Discrepancies in the justice system were a preoccupation of Alexander and he emphasised the extent to which Indians were unprotected by the law, thereby justifying the radicalism of men like Bechu and Shirley. In one letter he recounted how an East Indian ignorant of his rights at the magistrates' court was imprisoned without either being formally summoned or given an opportunity to call witnesses in his defence and concluded 'were the facts before the public (which are undoubtedly unknown to the reporters), we might be having some more Shirleys or Bechus come into existence'. [85] Following the plantation Friends riot of 1903, Alexander contributed to a subscription led by the *People* newspaper to obtain defence counsel for the twelve men accused of being ringleaders in the riot. In a letter to the press he chastised Joseph Ruhomon who had criticised the *People's* campaign and argued that the men had no justifiable cause for riot.[86] This incident itself is important to the theme of fluid identities that dominates this section of my thesis. In it we have an Indian-Guianese objecting to a campaign to provide legal representation to a group of Indian labourers protesting about poor wages. This campaign was led by a newspaper

[82] Ghurib Das, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 29 May 1901, this letter was possibly written in reference to fights between competing African-Guianese and Indian-Guianese jobbers as it makes reference to an increase in racial tension.
[83] A letter to the *Daily Chronicle* in 1909 was typical of this decade. It questioned why a ship was returning to India without its full quota when there were 'hordes of loafers who spread themselves over the city and become a source of enormous expense to the colony generally.' 'Decency', Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle,* 5 July 1909.
[84] McClintock, p. 72.
[85] Ghurib Das, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 8 June 1901.
[86] Ghurib Das, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 17 June 1903, see also Joseph Ruhomon, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 14 June, 1903.

initiated by a radical English minister and endorsed by a Salvationist missionary but objected to by Ruhomon on the grounds that he would be the last one to give his 'own kin' even 'the slightest encouragement to rise in revolt against the constitutional authority of the land.'[87] In this paradigm one might well question who was the colonised and who the coloniser.

Supporting a campaign like the one run by the *People* did not guarantee Alexander's acceptance into all quarters of the East Indian community. When he clashed with Bechu about inaccurate payment on estates, Bechu accused Alexander of 'sticking up' for the planters because he was reliant on their funding for his mission.[88] Alexander was limited in his role as an advocate of the East Indians, in the same way as other missionaries reliant on funding in the colony. In spite of this Alexander seemed to have managed his liminal existence well. He was the first person in the colony to highlight the broken condition of many of the colony's overseers while concurrently advocating the interests of the East Indians. In his work we are able to trace the humanisation of an element of the planting class that was largely ignored, by virtue of their class, by other white British writers during the period of indenture. It is in his exposition of a narrative that represented the plantation as a site of white and East Indian exploitation that we might appreciate, as with Shirley's self-alignment with the colonised proletariat, the concept of fluid identities and its significance in this early period of the twentieth century.

III. Writing Back: Part I, 1900-1909

Alexander was the last colonist to advocate for the rights of the East Indians in British Guiana in the period of this study. I would argue that two reasons explain the end of

[87] Joseph Ruhomon, Letters to the Editor, ibid.
[88] Ghurib Das, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 10 November 1900 and Bechu, Letters to the Editor, *The Daily Chronicle*, 11 November 1900.

this colonial intervention. The first of these is the circumspect nature with which the colonial authorities were now wont to treat the immigrants in view of the poor publicity that indenture was garnering throughout the rest of the world. The second is that, as we will see in this final section of Chapter 7, the East Indians had now taken to asserting themselves on their own behalf in the colony. In the last part of this chapter I will explore the three important strands that constituted the process of 'writing back' amongst the East Indians during the period 1900-1909. The first of these was a response to the African-Guianese anti-immigration campaign; the second addressed various aspects of life in the colony; the third related to the cultural life of the East Indians in the colony, as, in harmony with the theme of fluid identities that defines this chapter, they began to explore an identity that was at once British, East Indian and Guianese. In line with one of my objectives at the outset of this thesis, in this section I would like to emphasise the role of minority East Indian groups in indenture by drawing attention to the voices of the Muslim and Madrasi communities in this period of Indian assertion in the colony.

In the early twentieth century two separate discourses attempted to define the East Indian presence in British Guiana in the press. These voices belonged to the colony's white and black communities. The middle-class representatives of the African-Guianese portrayed the East Indian almost wholly as an unwelcome interloper or economic burden to the colony. In contrast, elite white discourse was more circumspect; writers were eager to avoid any of the controversy that surrounded the East Indian community of Natal and might thereby interfere with what was still a steady stream of labour from India to British Guiana. As we will see next, European and African-Guianese narratives on the East Indian community did not go without reply.

There is a sense during this period of an unfolding realisation among the Guianese planting community that their ability to import East Indian labour was untenable. In common with the first period of indenture, analysed in Part 1 of this thesis, the system was now subject to worldwide events beyond their control. This awareness led to a minor public relations campaign in British Guiana to represent indenture as a success, while an oblivious India simultaneously fired warning shots at the colony that were related to the treatment of indentured Indians in Natal.[89] This could be clearly seen from articles like this one, reprinted in the *Daily Chronicle* from the *Times of India*:

> Guiana, in short is a Colony which seems eminently adapted for receiving a portion of the surplus populations of India, but the white residents there, before inviting Indians to do work they cannot undertake themselves, had better ponder over the homely adage which tells us that we cannot have our cake and eat it too. They must be prepared to give Indians the freedom they enjoy themselves, and must not complain in future years that the Indians are an incubus and a nuisance, or that they acquire wealth which would be gained by white men if the colony were rid of them. [90]

Natal had become a key turning point in the history of Indian indenture and when the Guianese planting interest petitioned Joseph Chamberlain to remove the return

[89] As we saw in Part 1 of this work, the references to indenture as a means by which India could be relieved of a 'superabundant population' were still trumpeted by the West India lobby in Britain. During the Indian famine of 1900, Neville Lubbock, the lobby's chairman, wrote to Joseph Chamberlain requesting that the Indian government more actively encourage emigration, arguing that the removal of some of the East Indian population would have the effect of 'alleviating the position of those that remain', see 'The Indian Famine and Coolie Emigration', *Daily Chronicle*, 18 May 1900.
[90] 'Indian Coolies in British Guiana', *Daily Chronicle*, 23 April 1897. No original date is given for this article's publication in the *Times of India*.

passage liability from the Guianese government, the *Times of India* referred to the 'cavalier fashion' with which Natal had treated its Indian indentured labourers.[91]

For different reasons, popular opinion in India and amongst the African-Guianese was the same; both parties believed that indenture must be ended. Throughout Part 2 I argued that texts written between 1878-1902 largely celebrated the East Indian presence in the West Indies at the expense of the African-Caribbean. Now, the racist discourse of the previous century was appropriated by both the Indian-Guianese and African-Guianese as they argued over which race was nearer to the 'standard of perfection' of 'Western civilisation'.[92] The letters that the African-Guianese wrote to the *Daily Chronicle* regurgitated in entirety the most common stereotypes of the East Indians as unclean loin-cloth clad penny-pinching coolies, given to despair, depression and suicide. The economic success of some elements of the East Indian population was related to their ability to live on low means: 'a shed, a handful of rice, and a few yards of cotton with which to enwrap his loins', argued one correspondent, was sufficient for the East Indian.[93] Symbolically, the same author described the East Indian presence in the city of Georgetown as that of 'an invading army'.[94]

Mimicry of colonial rhetoric and discourse was not confined to the African community and East Indians retaliated in print against the African-Guianese by repeating the most common European stereotypes of blacks in the West Indies. They

[91] See 'The Expatriation of Indian Coolies', *Daily Chronicle*, 2 April 1898. This attempt was ultimately unsuccessful as the Indian government successfully insisted that the return passage entitlement was a *sine qua non* of the system (see Basdeo Mangru, *The Elusive El Dorado: Essays on the Indian Experience in Guyana* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2005), pp. 58-59). The article reprinted in the *Daily Chronicle* indicated that it was felt that the benefits of such a change where wholly on the side of the colony: 'one cannot help feeling that it would have been more candid to lay a little less stress on the benefits which the coolies are expected to derive from the change, and a little more emphasis upon the financial relief which Guiana hopes to obtain thereby.' Even in England dissent was discernible. In a House of Commons debate on the South Africa Loan Bill of 1903, Sir William Harcourt, made reference to indenture as a 'mark of degradation and infinite injury' in 'every country that has had experience of it' to cheers from his audience. 'Sir William Harcourt on Indentured Labour', *Daily Chronicle*, 29 August 1903.
[92] 'Creole', Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 23 February 1905.
[93] 'Africanus', Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 31 August 1900.
[94] Ibid.

argued that in contrast to the 'industrious coolie' they were lazy and unwilling to work.[95] When an unnamed African-Guianese candidate for a seat in the Court of Policy spoke out against immigration, an East Indian replied that the same candidate was unable to get 'his own people' to 'work for him' and was therefore compelled to seek out Indian labourers.[96] Earlier that year an African-Guianese speaker at a political meeting held in Buxton stereotyped the East Indian thus: "'he catches shrimp with his baba on Sunday, […] turns round and strains his milk with that baba, and finally hangs himself with it"', an East Indian wrote to the *Chronicle* quoting the comments and arguing:[97]

> To conclude, I say all the agitation and political meetings will never do for the black man what his shovel and fork applied to the soil will do for him. Therefore let them not exalt themselves at the expense of the industrious coolie, who furnishes such striking agricultural examples for their imitation.[98]

It is clear to see that the increase in political meetings surrounding the immigration issue generated a progressively hostile dialogue. While the African Guianese accused the East Indians of penny-pinching, the East Indians argued that the blacks were spendthrifts who should practise their example of 'industry, self-denial and economy.'[99] Peter Fraser has aptly commented on this period in particular that there 'was no articulated view that both Creoles and East Indians suffered from the same social and economic system.' He further states that political life in British Guiana was

[95] 'East Indian', Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 5 April 1906.
[96] Siri Krishmiji, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 21 November 1906.
[97] 'East Indian', Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 5 April 1906.
[98] Ibid.
[99] W.R.F., Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 20 May 1903. See also J.R., Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 14 September 1900.

shaped by the 'Creole failure to escape the planters' terms of debate.'[100] What we can see from the excerpts above however is that neither group, at this time at least, was able to move beyond the colonial discourse of the previous century.

Aside from this clash with the African-Guianese at the turn of the century, the majority of letters by East Indians in the *Daily Chronicle* during this period were focussed more on the everyday struggles of those living off the estates. A sample of letters from the period reveals writing on such diverse subjects as advice to the authorities on how best to recruit in India, praise of estate mangers, the cost of sea defences in the Leguan region of the colony and the participation of Indian farmers in the Berbice cultural exhibition.[101] However there was an international bent to Indian-Guianese correspondence that acknowledged their existence not only as citizens of British Guiana, but also as citizens of the British Empire. A letter by the Madrasi Veerasawmy Mudaliar, a long term interpreter for the Guianese government and a former student of H.V.P. Bronkhurst, questioned why neither Hindi nor Tamil were taught at the colony's premier boys' school, Queen's College. He argued that these languages should replace the 'obsolete and entirely unnecessary' Greek. Mudaliar continued: 'How many appointments in our eastern possessions, and even here are open to competitive examination, which scholars in this country are unable to compete for owing to their lack of knowledge of the Hindustani language?'[102] This evocation of the spirit of Empire was also mined to create support in the community for other projects. In 1896 a leading Muslim merchant, Gool Muhumad Khan, wrote to the *Daily Chronicle* in an attempt to secure government funding for what was to become the Queenstown mosque. Khan described the Muslims of the empire as

[100] Fraser, p. 44.
[101] Ramsing, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle,* 12 January 1901; Abdool, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle,* 10 April 1902; Soormally Williams, Letters to the Editor *Daily Chronicle,* 6 March 1901 and Nadiralli, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle,* 6 February 1903.
[102] Veerasawmy Mudaliar, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 12 January 1904.

'faithful and loyal subjects' deserving 'favourable consideration' from the 'Queen Empress of India who rules over an immense Mohammedan population.'[103]

In this chapter I have attempted to provide an analysis of a relatively dramatic period in British Guiana's history. I have argued that Alexander and Shirley advocated East Indian rights by advancing a dialogue of equality in the treatment of the colonised groups. This is a stark difference from the colonial narrative of Part 2 of this thesis, which was dominated by racial binaries and sought to justify colonialism through an insistence on the inferiority of colonised. Yet I have also shown that the concept of the British Empire was harnessed by the Indian-Guianese as they used citizenship of the Empire to gently push their concerns on the colonial government. The next chapter will see a rejection of this gentility as an increasing radicalism asserted itself amongst the East Indian community and the process of writing back became more militant.

[103] Gool Muhamud Khan, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle,* 7 October 1896.

Chapter 8: Writing a Proto-Nation: A.R.F. Webber's *Those That be in Bondage* and the Letters of the East Indian Community, 1910-1917

The final decade of indenture revealed a diminishing of the racial antagonism built up during the anti-immigration campaign of the previous decade. How much this was fuelled by the metropole's unequivocal rejection of a petition from the African-Guianese People's Association in 1910 is unknown, but at this point the 'immigration issue', as it was termed at the turn of the century, appeared to have receded in the public consciousness.[1] In contrast, the work of the African-European creole novelist A.R.F. Webber, (1880-1932) *Those That be in Bondage* (1917), though it contained offensive caricatures of East Indians under indenture, attempted to represent a common history of plantation oppression in the Caribbean under which the Africans, East Indians and overseers had all suffered. In the novel's lack of reference to the metropole and its local considerations, we are able to identify an attempt by Webber to describe the emergence of a fledgling nation. It is this process of nation-making that I will argue in the second part of this chapter, fuelled the writing of East Indians to the *Daily Chronicle* between 1910-1917. In this brief study we will see an increasingly assertive East Indian community engaging with the idea of their identity and rights in relation to the colony.

Previous academic scholarship in the field of Indian-Guyanese studies has emphasised Indian involvement in politics from 1916 onwards.[2] Scholars have marked the Indian-Guianese entrance into the debate over the recall of Governor

[1] Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labour, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1917* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 182-184.
[2] See Clem Seecharan, *Mother India's Shadow Over El Dorado: Indo-Guyanese Politics and Identity, 1890s to 1930s* (Kingston and Miami: Ian Randle Publishers, 2011), pp. 80-87 and Dale Bisnauth, *The Settlement of Indians in Guyana, 1890-1930* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2000), pp. 190-192.

Egerton in this year as a 'watershed' moment.[3] Thus far no one has embarked on a study of what I will term the printed revolution that was occurring in the pages of the *Daily Chronicle* and its concurrence with the labour disturbances of 1912 and 1913.[4] I would like to argue in the following pages that these disturbances, coupled with the process of writing back, were as critical to the establishment of an Indian-Guianese identity in the colony as the community's involvement in politics. It is through these letters that we are able to trace the rejection of the colonial 'master narrative' on the East Indians that had dominated indenture in British Guiana since the system's inception in 1838.

I. The Alignment of the Overseer and the 'Coolie': A.R.F. Webber's *Those That be in Bondage*

I begin this chapter with a study of A.R.F. Webber's novel *Those That be in Bondage*. This text signifies something of a landmark in Guyanese literary history as the first text written on the Indian-Guianese by a non-white Caribbean author. While I want to align aspects of the author's work with the radicalism that we have seen as a feature of early twentieth-century British Guiana, I also want to stress that this is not an anti-colonial novel and its reformist bent is directed at the wrongs of the all-consuming plantation system rather than those of the colonial government. This indictment of plantation life does not contain any in-depth attempts to illustrate the lives of the East Indian community and Webber's characters are nothing more than the result of the culmination of successive decades of stereotypes about indentured East Indians fostered by the elite white community. Indeed, despite the Caribbean ancestry of the

[3] Seecharan, ibid, the Egerton recall divided the colony across racial lines temporarily in 1916. African-Guianese and Portuguese-Guianese demanded the recall of Egerton when his decision to ask the British Government for funding for a railway in the colony, threatened to reduce British Guiana to Crown Colony status.
[4] The most significant of these was the riot on plantation Rose Hall in 1913 that resulted in the deaths of fifteen labourers, see Bisnauth, p. 75.

novel's author and the passage of time between the publication of *Lutchmee and Dilloo* (1876) and *Those That be in Bondage* (1917) one might reasonably argue, as Jeremy Poynting has, that it is the former novel that possesses the more intricate portrayal of the indentured Indian.[5] I have attempted throughout this section to highlight the theme of fluid identities in the texts that I have examined as a part of this study and it is in this area that I would argue that Webber made his most valuable contribution to Guyanese literature. His novel was a literary attempt to represent a society in which the plantation was seen to brutalise across colour lines and where the white overseer was as equally in 'bondage' as the indentured East Indian.

Born in Tobago, Webber spent most of his adult life in British Guiana where he worked as a newspaper editor, politician, social activist and possibly, at one early stage, an overseer.[6] In the 1920s Webber played a crucial part in the fight against Crown Colony government in British Guiana through his work in the Popular Party, which fought for 'self-government, the right of women to vote, and the promotion and protection of trade unions'.[7] Webber's biographer, Selwyn Cudjoe, claims that it is the work of Webber and politicians like him that paved the way for figures such as Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham.[8] Certainly Webber was preoccupied with the local; there are significant moments in the narrative where we are aware that he is advancing a dialogue on the economic future of British Guiana.[9] The *Daily Chronicle* published the novel in the colony and there is no indication in the text that Webber sought an audience beyond the Caribbean. Thus a major difference between Webber's

[5] Jeremy Poynting, 'Literature and Cultural Pluralism: East Indians in the Caribbean', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 1985), p. 136.
[6] Selwyn Cudjoe, *Caribbean Visionary: A.R.F. Webber and the Making of the Guyanese Nation* (Jackson, Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 2009), pp. 6-7.
[7] Ibid, p. 5.
[8] Ibid, pp. 8-9.
[9] See for example the contrived and incongruous debate between Harold, a planter who believes the colony's salvation still lies with sugar and an old colonist who advocates 'mixed cultivation and intensive farming', A.R.F. Webber, *Those That be in Bondage*: *A Tale of Indian Indentures and Sunlit Western Waters* (Wellesley, MA: Calaloux Publications, 1988), pp. 197-206, (p. 198).

text compared to those of Edward Jenkins is that while Jenkins was determinedly writing back to the metropole, Webber was writing to and for British Guiana. This is significant in that it marks an end to the process I have outlined in the Part II of the Introduction to this thesis, where writing from the Caribbean was directed from the margin to the centre in the hope of gaining colonial censure of the excesses of the plantocracy.

The drama of *Those That be in Bondage* takes place across two generations and is set in British Guiana and the Trinidadian island of Tobago. It begins when the nephew of the elite Walton family, who are of mixed heritage but able to pass for white, develops feelings for Bibi, an East Indian girl indentured on an estate where he works as an overseer. In defiance of his family, Edwin marries Bibi and the two have a daughter. Subsequently Abdool Karim, a former rival for Bibi's affection, murders Edwin and following the shock of the incident Bibi also dies. Marion Walton, Edwin's aunt, takes their daughter Marjorie to Tobago with her own son Harold and the two grow up together until Harold leaves Tobago to be educated in Europe, studying architecture and eventually training to become a Catholic priest. During intermittent visits back to Tobago Harold discovers romantic feelings for Marjorie and when Harold is stationed at a parish in Trinidad the two have a sexual encounter that leads to his departure from the Church. Harold leaves Trinidad and goes to work in Georgetown forging a career first as an overseer then as an architect. After Harold is accused of deliberately starting a fire that burns down the main Catholic cathedral he is reunited with Marjorie and the two leave the Caribbean to begin a new life in Europe.

Webber's novel is bracketed by two periods that concern the plantation; the first of these is Edwin's time as an overseer where he discovers his feelings for Bibi

and the second is Harold's employment as an overseer following his departure from Trinidad. In the first section of the novel the depictions of the East Indians on the plantation are no more sophisticated than the caricatured representations of plantation life that were a feature of the short story series 'Tales of the Tropics' that appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* at the turn of the century.[10] In the second part of the text the focus is more clearly placed on the oppressive conditions for the overseers. While attempting to present a system that injured both the East Indians and the overseers, Webber's poor sketch of the East Indians and his focus on the body of the female indentured labourer as the root of all estate evil leave an unbalanced work that impresses both a lack of knowledge and sympathy for the indentured East Indian woman.

In this aspect Webber was no different from other authors of the time. A cursory glance at the 'Tales of the Tropics' series for example reveals many of the literary tropes that had their inception with Edward Jenkins. 'The Vengance of Wali Mohammud' reads like Othello of the canefields and contains similar themes to *Lutchmee and Dilloo*: the lack of constancy in Indian women, the jealousy of Indian men and the brutality of white overseers. In an attempt to exact his revenge on a white overseer who has publicly humiliated him, the Iago of the piece, Rohimbux, convinces Wali Mohammud, whose wife has previously been unfaithful to him, that she is engaged in an affair with the overseer. Tricking both the wife and the overseer into a meeting with each other that will be witnessed by the enraged Wali Mohammud, Rohimbux is foiled when the intervention of another planter saves the white man, 'Cottam Sahib' and the story ends with Wali Mohammud drowning himself and his wife. In an earlier story, 'Rampersaud's Mistake', the Rampersaud of

[10] See for example 'Rampersaud's Mistake', *Daily Chronicle,* 21 March 1897 and 'The Vengeance of Wali Mohammud', *Daily Chronicle*, 16 December 1900.

the title is the unwitting cuckold to an affair between his wife and an overseer. On mistakenly identifying the brother of the overseer as his wife's lover, he murders him and realising that he has killed the wrong man, goes insane. The psychological fragility of Rampersaud, his masculinity dependant upon the fidelity of his wife, and the morally weak overseer unable to prevent himself from taking advantage of his position were all themes that had appeared in Edward Jenkins work two decades earlier. While demonstrating some sympathy for the plight of Indian men 'Rampersaud's Mistake' ultimately succumbed to stereotype. Representations of the Indian woman had not grown in substance since *Lutchmee and Dilloo* and Baban, Rampersaud's wife, while a more daring character than Lutchmee is represented in the same childlike terms as Jenkins's heroine, 'with tiny hands and feet' who prefers the 'broad shouldered' overseer to her husband.

We have seen in Chapter 7 that public discussion of relationships between overseers and East Indian women were a significant part of the press in the wake of the riot on plantation Friends. Both the 'Tales of the Tropics' series and *Those That be in Bondage* could be interpreted as a desire to publicly acknowledge the ubiquitous nature of these relationships in spite of the legislation that forbade them. What both novels betray is white desire, whether conscious or unconscious, for contact outside the boundaries of coloniser-colonised relations. In aligning Bibi and Edwin, Webber creates a sense of solidarity between the indentured Indians and the lower orders of the plantocracy; were it not for Edwin's connection to the Waltons he would be as unwelcome in Georgetown's elite society as Bibi. Webber thus pushes the reader to acknowledge that overseers like Edwin occupied the same limited space in the colony as the Indians.[11]

[11] Webber, p. 31.

Webber's stance on the position of indentured Indian women is hopelessly ambivalent and in his novel we are able to identify two strands of thought that currently dominate contemporary academic discussion on women under indenture and which Verene Shepherd details in *Maharani's Misery*.[12] The first of these argues that indenture was a new form of slavery that subjected indentured women in particular to acts of uxoricide and sexual and physical violence from both white and East Indian men. The other insists that indenture was a source of liberation for East Indian women who were for the first time able to experience an independent existence outside of the familial patriarchy that dominated their lives in India.[13] A key example of Webber's ambivalence is his assertion that in British Guiana an Indian woman may 'remain mistress of herself', yet Edwin's proposal of marriage to Bibi is prompted by his brother-in-law's attempt to remove her to a different estate where Edwin fears she will be the subject of the sexual desires of other men:

> At that moment Edwin Hamilton felt his heart leap from its socket, and his hands grow cold: then the truth dawned upon him; for he was suddenly seized with the fierce, savage jealousy of the male animal: his instinct primeval and unbidden, was to kill - whom he knew not, but anyone, from the big Crosby himself down, who dared to suborn the graceful young woman sitting in his presence, into an unwelcome or repulsive embrace.[14]

Though Webber insists that there is no question of 'forced relations' on the estates, on the following page he hints that Bibi has narrowly escaped rape and physical assault

[12] Verene Shepherd, *Mahrani's Misery: Narratives of a Passage from India to the Caribbean*, (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), pp. xvii-xviii.
[13] Verene Shepherd, ibid.
[14] Webber, p. 34.

by Abdool Karim and asserts: 'these primitive natures exhibit none of the chivalry which is usually found in more developed minds, where a struggle with a woman is concerned'.[15] Apart from Bibi's attack on Abdool Karim, when he suggests that she is involved in a relationship with Edwin, we see nothing in her character to contradict what Rhoda Reddock has defined as 'myths' about 'Indian women's docility, tractability and 'natural' acceptance of dominance'.[16] Edwin takes on the same god-like status to Bibi as we have seen Craig symbolise to Lutchmee: Edwin is not just her husband but also her 'lord'. [17] However in in the death of both Bibi and Edwin the novel defies Marina Carter's assertion that as far as the literature of indenture is concerned, it is 'usually the Indian woman who is required to do penance for her transgression in falling in love across racial lines'.[18]

Webber is far less ambiguous about the position of the overseers in the colony. Through the characters of both Edwin and Harold he conveys the idea that they too are 'in bondage' by virtue of an occupation that put them outside Georgetown's elite society, restricted to them to the estates and denied them marriage. Edwin's awkwardness amongst the high society of Georgetown precipitates his union with Bibi.[19] When Edwin flees the ball that his sister and brother-in-law have organised, to keep him away from Bibi, he is rejecting the confines of a colonial society in which overseers were at the bottom rung of the social ladder:

> After all, thought he, an overseer was utterly out of place in the social world […] He saw that all around him there were economic notice boards warning

[15] Ibid, p. 26
[16] Rhoda Reddock, 'The Indentureship Experience: Indian Women in Trinidad and Tobago 1845-1917', in *Women Plantation Workers: International Experiences*, ed. by Shobita Jain and Rhoda Reddock (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1998), pp. 29-48 (p. 29).
[17] Webber, p. 60 and Jenkins, p. 302.
[18] Marina Carter and Khal Torabully, *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora* (London: Anthem Press, 2002), p. 70.
[19] Webber, pp. 30-34.

> all and sundry that as a social factor, either in marriage possibilities or entertaining possibilities – except with an occasional bunch of swizzles - his class was out of it.[20]

It is through Edwin's nephew Harold, in the second part of the novel, that we feel Webber really rail against the plantation system and the condition of overseers. In this section any attempt to portray a sympathetic picture of the East Indians, in particular the women, is almost wholly abandoned as the corruption of the white overseers, 'young men indentured out from England, offering the highest promise' is attributed to both East Indian women and gin:

> Constant troubles, back biting, news carrying: work scamped, pay lists falsified, each and every one in some way could be traced back in some way, remote or otherwise, to the influence of some woman.[21]

It is these young white men that are ultimately the most sympathetically portrayed in the novel and who are Webber's overwhelming preoccupation. They dominate the section on British Guiana that forms a large part of the novel's finale as Harold laments the dismissal of fellow overseers McGregor and Engledow when the former attacks the parsimonious plantation manager's wife and the latter is no longer able to obtain employment as an overseer in the colony because his relationships with indentured women have been discovered.[22] Harold's own dismissal is the result of his departure from the plantation without the permission of the estate's manager. In this incident we see Webber unite the overseers' condition with that of the indentured East

[20] Webber, p. 31.
[21] Ibid, p. 182.
[22] Ibid, pp. 184-186.

Indian. Before Harold is dismissed the manger asks him: '"And don't you know that overseers are as much bound by boundaries as coolies?"'[23]

Surprisingly, given Webber's later political agitation against Crown Colony government there is not the anti-colonial strand in his work that I have argued exists subtextually in Jenkins's novel *Lutchmee and Dilloo*. Webber is against the current structure of plantation life rather than the colonial system. Yet both authors identify the plantation as a source of a corruption and are at pains to highlight that Craig and Edwin are unlike the other overseers and are out of place in the plantation which is debasing and promotes illicit relationships:

> Where the morality of the superior race is, except in a very select portion of the community, unfettered even by the ordinary restraints of civilised societies; and where among the inferior races animal instinct is too much the overmastering power, the first sensation of a pure minded man, in Craig's situation, is one of repulsion from the tone and manners of his associates.[24]

Jenkins's character Craig is portrayed as possessing simplicity and goodness that put him outside the normal run of planters and make him incapable of surviving plantation life. Craig is not the 'low type of Briton' that Jenkins argues is 'common in tropical latitudes'.[25] Similarly it is Edwin's absorption of key British characteristics that makes him also unsuitable for the plantation:

> Had Edwin's temperament and learning been carefully measured by some accurate instrument, he would have been the last person to be sent on a sugar

[23] Ibid, p. 191.
[24] Edward Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo: A Study of West Indian Life* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2003), p. 85
[25] Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo*, p. 84.

> estate, where the whole atmosphere reeks of sex and its trying complications. […] Bred in the atmosphere of an English public school, he had absorbed to a hypersensitive degree its spirit of fairplay, until it obsessed him and dwarfed his every other instinct.[26]

It is this emphasis on Edwin's goodness as being connected to his Britishness that allows us to make connections between Webber's writing and the early tradition of creole Caribbean literature that Alison Donnell has stated had a tendency to 'celebrate Caribbean culture and geography within the context of colonialism.'[27]

Certainly Webber can be seen to have absorbed the colonial dialogue as it referred to the East Indians in British Guiana. He repeats the stereotype of the duplicitous oriental that we have seen in Chapters 3 and Chapter 4: 'Those who know the East Indian character will readily realise how prone they are to romance around every conceivable subject. Indeed it may be said that 'to lie' is the East Indian immigrant's vital breath.'[28] Yet if we are to charge Webber with creating one-dimensional Indian characters then we must also acknowledge how much poorer the depictions of the African-Caribbean are. Except for a few subservient roles they are all but absent from the novel.[29] It is only through Marjorie's explorations of Caribbean history that the reader is briefly able to engage with the African presence on the sugar plantations.[30] If Webber wants to say something about race in the

[26] Webber, pp. 6-7.
[27] Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* (London and New York, Routledge, 1996), p. 27.
[28] Webber, p. 27, see also Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 39.
[29] This aspect of the novel was criticised by the Trinidad *Argos* who commented: 'A peculiar omission is that of the Negro, who is undoubtedly in "bondage" from the point of view of the Author, if we regard the many disabilities under which he labours.' Quoted in the *Daily Chronicle*, under the heading 'Argos Pleased and Displeased', 23 May 1917.
[30] Webber, p. 75.

Caribbean it is that the future lies in the advancement of those of mixed race, advocating this group by challenging the discrimination that they encounter.[31]

Unsurprisingly then Webber's most developed character is Edwin and Bibi's daughter Marjorie whose positive delineation is attributed to her mixed heritage. Marjorie is seen to unite the Old World and the New World. She comfortably acknowledges the family's European ancestry while also linking her own presence in the colony to the systems of indenture and slavery. Her preoccupation is with the history of the land and the people, physical and oral. Thus she befriends the older people of Tobago, challenging the use of Harold's European schooling: 'I learn more at home talking with my old friends than you ever do at college.'[32] Unlike her mother Bibi, Marjorie is allowed an intellectual life. Upon Harold's departure to further his studies in Europe, she laments that her own life will be limited. She desires the achievement of 'something great'.[33] She ultimately assumes financial control of the relationship, taking work as a writer in London and encouraging Harold to leave the Caribbean.

Webber's novel was progressive, with a bold intention to define the plantation as a site of social equalisation, linking the existence under conditions of 'bondage' of East Indians and white and mixed-race overseers. However Webber's failure to create substantial East Indian characters weakens his intention. This is clearly evidenced in the reviews of the novel after it appeared which focussed compassionately on Webber's portrayal of the lives of overseers in the community, praising his depiction of estate conditions for these men and advocating changes to the system that denied them marriage but largely ignoring the East Indians in the novel.[34] Even at a period of

[31] Webber, p. 204 and Cudjoe, p. 18.
[32] Webber, p. 110
[33] Webber, ibid.
[34] 'Those That be in Bondage, Sympathetic Review by Diocesan Magazine, Overseers Entitled to Human Rights', *Daily Chronicle,* 8 July, 1917 and 'Those That be in Bondage. A Review', *Daily Chronicle*, 19 April 1917.

heightened radicalism and in the hands of a Caribbean author depictions of the East Indian were still one-dimensional and insubstantial. Thus we might interpret the inclination toward fluid identities during this period as an idea explored rather than one fully carried out. Indeed as with Edward Jenkins's slant towards creole culture in *Lutchmee and Dilloo* we must acknowledge the co-existence of racism alongside more progressive ideas in the text.

II. Writing Back: Part II, 1910-1917

A key absence in this chapter is that of the voice of the coloniser as an advocate for the East Indian. One might feasibly argue that the growing sensibility that indenture had run its course, coupled with the increasing assertiveness of the East Indian community in British Guiana meant that this group were now perceived as being beyond the need of patriarchal protection. As black and Indian nationalism in the Caribbean increased, in British Guiana there appeared to be a corresponding endeavour on the part of some white Europeans to embrace creole society and culture in their literature and a desire to construct an alternative identity that signified a cultural life away from the metropole and acknowledge the roots that many Europeans had in the colony.

Articles from the *Daily Chronicle* during this period contradict Brian Moore's contention that despite their long presence in the colony 'British elites […] harboured an immigrant mentality'.[35] There was an increase in, for example, poetry being written in Creole, and the adoption of Creole for racist representations of blacks and East Indians which while derisory in tone nevertheless expressed an enjoyment of the

[35] Brian Moore, *Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism: Colonial Guyana, 1838-1900* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1995), p. 297.

language and an understanding of its grammar and lexicon.[36] In a letter to the *Daily Chronicle* Jan Van Sertima, a prominent planter, wrote in defence of a barrister who submitted a poem in Creole to a literary competition and was criticised as either belittling the language of the 'common people' or demonstrating his 'contempt for them'.[37] Yet Sertima's defence of Creole was limited to appreciation of its English ancestry and he disregarded any contribution to the language from any other Guianese community ascribing its origin to 'those Britons who, in the luckless times of the early Stuarts and the days of Cromwellian 'thoroughness' came to the West Indies either through choice or compulsion'.[38] If work like Sertima's was geared at encouraging white European colonists to identify more definitely with the colony then this movement was not just confined to language but extended to land. One letter from the *Daily Chronicle* questioned why many of the country's residents had not made the journey into the interior to see Kaiteur yet bragged of having been to Niagara, which is not as high:

> It is nevertheless amusing to hear some of these express the hope of some day being able to take a run "home" meaning of course England losing sight of the fact that their "home" is the colony.[39]

What is clear from the period between 1900 and 1917 is that it was not only the two major ethnic groups, African-Guianese and Indian-Guianese that were involved in a process of reflection on their identity within the colony. The journalism analysed

[36] One letter at the height of the Bechu controversy was written in mock Indian-Guianese Creole, see Nidhooie, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 9 January 1897. Also a column written in Creole regularly appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* under the title of 'Aunty Bucky's Pure English', see for example a poem that appeared in this series by F.E. Sykes, *Daily Chronicle*, 26 July 1908.
[37] J. Van Sertima, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle,* 1 March 1905.
[38] J. Van Sertima, *The Creole Tongue of British Guiana* (New Amsterdam: *Berbice Gazette*, 1905), p. 4.
[39] 'Bushman', Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 28 August 1913. Kaiteur is among one of the largest and most powerful single-drop waterfalls in the world.

above reveals that the colony's white community were also asking themselves similar questions about the nature of their identity in relation to the colony. In this final period of my study, more than any other, we are able to trace burgeoning ideas about the emerging nation of British Guiana and reflections on the idea of belonging in each community.

Between 1910-1917 it was from amongst the East Indians in the colony that the most dramatic wave of nationalism emerged in this period. This was buttressed by the arrival in the colony of suspected Indian nationalists, one of whom was under surveillance by the colony's police force as a reader of seditious literature that promoted Indian independence.[40] In this final section I want to dispute work by Brian Moore, which has suggested that all the immigrant groups of Guiana 'considered home to be elsewhere.'[41] As Clem Seecharan has argued, there was at this time a discernible move towards an Indian-Guianese identity:

> It is not fortuitous that an Indo-Guyanese voice was taking shape by 1916: their economic achievements gave the Indian middle class self-belief. Besides, all Indians were deeply aware of Gandhi's opposition to indentureship and that the days of the 'bound coolie' were numbered. They were saying that they had paid their dues; they now belonged to British Guiana – but on their own terms.[42]

Accordingly the radicalisation of the Indian-Guianese was only partly a response to events in the diaspora; rather it was largely fuelled by a conscious adoption of an

[40] Tyran Ramnarine, 'The Growth of the East Indian Community in British Guiana, 1880-1920' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sussex, 1977), p. 247.
[41] Moore, *Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism*, p. 300.
[42] Clem Seecharan, *Mother India's Shadow Over El Dorado: Indo-Guyanese Politics and Identity, 1890s to 1930s* (Kingston and Miami: Ian Randle Publishers, 2011), p. 86.

Indian-Guianese identity, which in itself was the product of over seventy-five years in the colony.

In this section I would like to draw on important work by Julie F. Codell on colonial writing in the press at the turn of the last century. Codell's research has shown a number of elements that are particularly relevant to my discussion on the letters that appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* between 1900-1917. She has framed the discourse of the colonised during this period as marking a moment when we might challenge the presumption in colonial studies that colonised communities were continually 'spoken for'.[43] What is unusual about British Guiana is that this process was not just embarked on by a colonised elite, as Codell has suggested happened elsewhere, but was a movement that involved those employed in menial labour on and off the sugar estates.[44] We will see that Codell's assertion that these texts were markedly ambivalent, 'as likely to criticize the British as to praise them', is applicable to writing between 1910 and 1917.[45]

During 1911 a debate took place in the press about the exemption of East Indian children from religious education in schools. It is possible, but not conclusive, that this debate was sparked by the arrival of Pandit Parmanand Sarawat who arrived in the colony from India in 1910 and who, Tyran Ramnarine states, was responsible for starting the first 'Hindu college' in British Guiana.[46] However the joint stance against compulsory religious education that was evinced by both Hindus and Muslims subsequently suggests that there had been long-standing strong feeling

[43] Julie F. Codell, 'The Empire Writes Back: Native Informant Discourse in the Victorian Press', in *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press,* ed. by Julie F. Codell (Madison: Rosemont Publishing, 2003), pp. 188-218 (p. 188).
[44] Ibid, p. 189. For examples of these letters see, Abdool, Letters to the Editor of the *Daily Chronicle,* 10 April 1902 and 'Coolie Girl', Letters to the Editor *Daily Chronicle* 28 August, 1902.
[45] Codell, p. 190.
[46] Ramnarine, p. 204.

about this issue prior to Parmanand's arrival.[47] In a long letter to the *Daily Chronicle* Nadir Ali Khan wrote against the imposition of compulsory Christian catechism in schools and reasoned that state and religion must operate separately in a population 'composed of various creeds':[48]

> What we have always to bear in mind is to distinguish between English State and Christian Church. These two should never be confused; that is the problem before us. While we may look upon the former as a blessing, we have the right to consider the latter as the reverse of it, as it deprives us of the religion of our forefathers.[49]

Khan here asserts his right to an identity that is at once British and Muslim. His statement that the English state is a blessing, but the Christian Church is not, neatly demonstrates Julie F. Codell's argument that those 'who accommodate to the language of the colonizer are often in a state of resisting, even when complying'.[50] An East Indian who had been through the education system supported Nandilall Khan writing that 'ordinary people' were unaware that they could withdraw their children from religious teaching:

> I beg to state that I myself was a student at one of the East Coast schools and I can say from personal experience that all of us (whether Christian or not) as a matter of course had to attend Bible lessons and during that time any irregularity in the observance of prayer or other inattention was punished

[47] The article that describes the school's opening ceremony does not list any Muslim participants: 'The Hindi School, Meeting At Upper Robb Street, Rapid Progress Made', *Daily Chronicle*, 27 June, 1911.
[48] 'Religious Instruction in Schools', Nadir Ali Khan, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 15 August 1911. Khan's name is inconsistently spelt throughout his correspondences with the *Daily Chronicle* as 'Alli' or 'Ali'
[49] Ibid.
[50] Codell, p. 212.

> severely, so that even if we wanted we couldn't get away from the religious instruction period, so the rule that the children can withdraw from the school at the period is a dead letter.[51]

Here, in the pages of the *Chronicle*, we begin to perceive a sense of the East Indian community coming together to challenge aspects of colonialism: Khan's original letter was written in support of Dr. Sharma and Doobay's was written in support of Khan's. The final letter from this series encouraged the further intervention of the Immigration Agent General on the issue charging that: 'East Indians are the best persons to look after the education of their own children':[52] What is most pertinent in this letter however is the complete abandonment of respect for what was termed 'Crosby Office', a place which had formally personified the patriarchal protection of the East Indians:

> A last we hear a few words from the high pedestal occupied by the Immigration Agent on the education of us poor East Indians. By the long observed silence from that central Depot, the place which decides the destinies of the East Indian immigrants we were inclined to believe that the supreme oracle was never going to exhibit interest on such minor points as the education of the East Indians of British Guiana. Let us harken very attentively to the words that have come like the 'Sermon on the Mount' to us and grasp the meaning of them very clearly.[53]

[51] Ghar Bharan Doobay, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 17 August 1911
[52] 'Immigrant', Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle* 18 October 1911.
[53] Ibid.

While Bechu had been a lone voice in his acerbic criticisms of the colonial state and plantation, by 1911 it was not unusual to read letters like this in the press. Indeed texts like this one were the culmination of the project of resistance that had been going on throughout the colony from the beginning of indenture.

The following year saw increasingly militant activity on the sugar estates and this final decade reveals the total decimation of the stereotype of the docile 'coolie' as the plantations exploded in disturbances between 1912-1913.[54] The most serious of these was the riot at plantation Rose Hall in 1913. Basdeo Mangru has argued that this event played a crucial role in the termination of indenture as it occurred at the same time as:

> Indian nationalists denouncing the indenture system as an affront to the national honor (*izzat*) and self respect of India. The confrontation revealed that after seventy-five years working conditions on estates were little improved, that management exploitation and worker degradation continued to permeate estate life despite repeated clamour for amelioration. What was most significant was that the conflict provided vital ammunition to the anti-indenture campaign in India as it showed indentured Indians were now condemning the system from which they supposedly benefitted.[55]

[54] See for example, 'More Coolie Disturbances', *Daily Chronicle* 31 August 1912, 'The East Indian Immigrants, A Merchant Gives Reason For Discontent', *Daily Chronicle*, 26 September, 1912, H. Llewelyn Palmer, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 26 September 1912 and 'Simla', 'The Immigration System, Some Causes of Unrest', *Daily Chronicle* 5 March, 1913

[55] Basdeo Mangru, *A History of East Indian Resistance on the Guyana Sugar Estates, 1869-1948* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1996), p. 159.

Hugh Tinker has also noted that the riot resulted in questions being asked in the Indian Legislative Council and the government of India requesting compensation for the relatives of the dead.[56]

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to align serious outbreaks of rioting on estates with textual attacks on indenture. We saw in Chapters 3 and 4 in particular that such disturbances had provided motivation to Des Voeux in 1869 and Edward Jenkins in 1872. I have also described in Chapter 6 how the riot at plantation Non Pareil in 1896 prompted Bechu's first letter to the press. Similarly in 1913, following the riot at plantation Rose Hall, Nadir Ali Khan wrote to the *Daily Chronicle* attacking an editorial that had appeared in the *Argosy* which suggested that the cause of the riot was attributable to the class of immigrant that came to the colony:

> Kindly allow me a space to say few words with regard to the editorial notes appearing in the *Argosy* of the 16th February in which the Editor refers to the East Indian immigrants coming to this colony as being pariahs and outcasts for the most part in their country. How deplorable that those who are clamouring for the East Indians [sic] labourers are so blind as not to know that class of people are immigrated from India. I am aware that swineherds and shepherds have become Kings. Can the Editor tell me how many pariahs and outcasts [sic] are brought out in every ship from India. I guess not. He ought to know that the majority of immigrants coming to this colony are as respectable and intelligent as the Editor himself.[57]

[56] Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* 2nd edn. (London: Hansib, 1993) p. 328.
[57] Nadir Ali Khan, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle* 20 March 1913.

Dr. Sharma attacked the editor of the *Argosy* later that same year when he described the Indian character as containing a 'mixture of integrity and treachery'.[58] Another anonymous Indian-Guianese accused him of 'habitual narrow-mindedness' and of wearing 'plantocratic spectacles'.[59] The process of writing back had been taken up with such force and ubiquity that none of the colony's institutions, from the press to the Church to the Immigration Agent General were left untouched.[60]

The arrival of the First World War seemed to quell much of the agitation amongst the East Indians in the colony after 1913. Even the militant Dr Sharma, who the Governor had attempted to deport, wrote to the colonial authorities to express his willingness to fight for the British.[61] Significantly, in all this agitation there is no evidence that any East Indian in the colony ever advocated the termination of indenture in the colony and a lone letter from one East Indian praised the decision to stop the system after it had been made in 1917.[62] The powerful and eloquent retaliations that we have seen in the final part of this chapter defy the one-dimensional characterisations of the East Indians that feature in A.R.F. Webber's novel. Thus the final decade of indenture symbolised a complete reversal of the tradition of others writing about indentured East Indians in British Guiana.

[58] R.N Sharma, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 22 May 1913.
[59] 'R', Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 18 February 1913.
[60] See for example a letter against the Anglican Archdeacon F.P.L. Josa's attack on Islam in 'Archdeacon Josa in 'A Mussulman', Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 27 August 1911 and Joseph Ruhomon's complaint to the McNeill and Lal deputation from India in which he accused the office of the Immigration Department of 'apathy': 'The East Indian Delegates', *Daily Chronicle*, 14 March 1913.
[61] Ramnarine, p. 244 and p. 247.
[62] Jugmohun Singh, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Chronicle*, 1 August 1917.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to analyse colonial writing on East Indians in British Guiana from the period 1838-1917. It has been the main argument of this study that colonial writing on East Indians during the period of indenture provided as substantial a strand of resistance to indenture as the efforts of the indentured Indians themselves. However three subsidiary studies that have also formed part of this thesis have been the role of minority East Indian groups in indenture, the colonial celebration of creole culture, and the process of writing back that took place in the pages of the colony's media between 1900-1917 which has, as yet, been unacknowledged by scholars of Guyanese history. In Chapters 1 and 2 I showed the presence of both the Hill Coolies and Madrasis as collaborators in white intervention in indenture and in Chapters 7 and 8 I referenced the role of the Madrasi Veerasawmy Mudaliar and the Muslim community of British Guiana in the process of writing back. In the work of Barton Premium, Edward Jenkins and the studies of white creole culture in Chapters 7 and 8 I have reflected the white exploration of creole culture in the Caribbean. Finally, in Chapters 7 and 8, I have demonstrated that written resistance accompanied a tradition of East Indian plantation resistance to the injustices of indenture and colonialism in the final two decades of indenture.

Employing a chronological structure that has encompassed the entire period of indenture has disclosed the continuity of white opposition to indenture throughout the system. One of the most important findings of this thesis is that it documents a wholly consistent white narrative, from Scoble to Alexander Alexander, which argued that indenture largely resulted in the abjection and denigration of East Indians in British Guiana. The omnipresence of white resistance throughout indenture's existence is one

of the most valuable tools in refuting recent scholarship that has suggested that indenture was more in line with free emigration in the nineteenth century than slavery.[1] Historical evidence throughout this thesis has relayed the documented injustices of indenture which, when coupled with the legislative confinement of East Indians to sugar estates, defies assertions that indenture was not a form of unfree labour.

However not all writing about East Indians under indenture was part of a movement to challenge, terminate or reform the system. We must also acknowledge the darker aspects and motives of colonial writing on indentured East Indians in British Guiana as explored in the preceding chapters. We have consistently seen indenture represented as a regenerative process that 'uplifted' the East Indian in Guiana and celebrated the incongruity of his presence in the New World. Thus some texts, like those by Anthony Trollope, William Agnew Paton, James Anthony Froude and even to some extent Edward Jenkins, were imperial propaganda that used the existence of indenture to exalt the vastness and diversity of the British Empire. Another negative feature of colonial writing on indenture relates to the process I described in Part 2 of this thesis. There I showed how a period of intense imperial racism had resulted in a body of literature about the Caribbean that celebrated the East Indian presence in the West Indies at the expense of the region's black community. In Part 3, I then went on to analyse to what extent both of these communities had appropriated colonial stereotypes about themselves and each other by the early-twentieth century.

[1] One of the major proponents of this argument is David Northrup. See for example, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. x. and by the same author, 'Migration from Africa, Asia and the South Pacific', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. by Andrew Porter, 5 vols (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), III, pp. 88-100.

While there was a consistent stream of white writing about indenture throughout the period 1838-1917, there was paradoxically no consistency in the genres that were employed to write about the system. Thus this thesis has analysed pamphlets, travel writing, literary texts, letters to newspapers, ethnological studies and the correspondence of missionaries. Equally while each section of this thesis is marked by an overarching theme as regards colonial writing, paternalism in Part 1, imperialism and ambivalence in Part 2 and fluid identities in Part 3, there is no specific theory of colonial discourse that lends itself especially to this study. Rather we have seen that in the development and establishment of the system of indenture a number of theoretical perspectives can be used to interpret a wide range of texts. In Part 2 I have shown how usefully Homi Bhabha's theory of colonial ambivalence can be applied to the work of Edward Jenkins. I have argued, in my study of H.V.P Bronkhurst, that theories of colonial ambivalence can also be used to refute the binaries of coloniser and colonised by arguing that ambivalence was embodied as much in the colonist as the colonised. In the literary work of Barton Premium and Edward Jenkins I have shown how the influence of creole culture affected the literature written by these two men. In Part 3 I drew special attention to how the period of indenture between 1900-1917 appeared to promulgate fluid identities. What this neatly demonstrates is the truth of Antonio Benitez Rojo's claim that 'Caribbeanness' is beyond any 'specific kind of knowledge or interpretation of the world.'[2]

The chronological structure of this thesis has enabled us to appreciate the discernible pattern between unrest on estates and the production of texts that supported this physical resistance. We have seen in Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 6

[2] Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective,* trans. by James Maraniss, 2nd edn, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 295.

and Chapter 8 that serious riots precipitated Des Voeux's correspondence, Jenkins's novel, Bechu's letter writing campaign to the press and the galvanisation of the East Indian community that I have argued is apparent during 1913. The importance of this pattern cannot be underestimated because it indicates that the most significant condemnations of indenture were utterly reliant on the indentured East Indians and their plantation protests as a spur to activity. Moreover we might conclude from this established pattern that the root of resistance lay almost wholly with the most oppressed group in the equation.

A final point regarding the chronological structure of this thesis relates to the role of missionaries in indenture. Elsewhere in this study I have looked at the writing of a variety of different colonists from the planter Barton Premium to the Guianese judiciary. The one profession where I have identified a consistent contribution to resistance in indenture is in the missionary profession. In the case of missionaries in British Guiana I have shown the presence of powerfully contentious characters that offered real and tangible resistance to indenture, from the liminal H.V.P. Bronkhurst who worked from within the system to promote East Indian nationalism and advance a positive narrative of East Indian heritage to Reverend H.J. Shirley who condemned the system outright. We have seen in Part II of the Introduction to this thesis that Non-Conformist missionaries in British Guiana were ascribed the role of agitators during slavery, yet in the cases we explored historians have challenged this alleged accusation of radicalism as exaggerated: more real in the planters perception than the missionaries' actions. This study has shown however that missionaries played a fundamental part in resistance to indenture and aspects of colonialism. That this continued right up to the end of indenture is evidenced by the work of Alexander Alexander.

A criticism that may be levelled at this work is that its focus on white resistance to indenture diminishes the substantial and consistent resistance by East Indians that I have traced throughout the system. It may be argued that in an emerging field such as Caribbean Studies the focus should more appropriately be placed on the efforts of the colonised rather than those of the coloniser. However this thesis has sought to challenge the concept of binaries as applicable to the lives of coloniser and colonised and has instead attempted to relate the presence of 'co-histories' within indenture, acknowledging that the history of British Guiana is a history of both coloniser and colonised. Importantly, especially in the work of Barton Premium and the white writers that explored creole culture and language in Chapters 7 and 8, I hope to have reflected the diversity of Guyanese history and the Guyanese people.

What further areas of research might this study prompt? The most obvious subject for attention that has arisen from the production of this thesis is the necessity for a more comprehensive study of the role of East Indians in the process of writing back that took place in the final decades of indenture. Evidence from this study has seen that this activity involved a cross-section of society, from working women to minority groups advocating their own interests. The fact that this occupation was not solely the domain of the middle-class Indian-Guianese interest points to some important further work to be done in this area with particular respect to the role of the *Daily Chronicle* but also in reference to the *Argosy* which did not form part of this study. Finally, in Part II of the Introduction to this thesis, where I sought to make connections between a tradition of white writing about the Caribbean and indenture, I referenced the role of missionaries in British Guiana during slavery. In light of the revelations concerning the role of missionaries in indenture as explored in this study, one might posit that an analysis of the role of the missionary in slavery *and* indenture

in British Guiana would invite some further important conclusions about the history of white resistance in systems of unfree labour in British Guiana.

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