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**William Delafield Arnold's Oakfield; Or  
Fellowship in the East and the Fragility of  
Britain's Imperial Ideology, 1828-1856**

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William Delafield Arnold's *Oakfield; Or Fellowship in the East* and the Fragility of  
Britain's Imperial Ideology, 1828-1856.

Introduction

In 1853, *Oakfield; Or Fellowship in the East* (from here, *Oakfield*), was published in two volumes by an anonymous author under the name of 'Punjabee'. It tells the story of Edward Oakfield, an Oxford graduate who comes to Calcutta to take up a cadetship in the army of the East India Company. Arriving with the hopes that he may take part in the "grand work of civilising Asia" while "under utterly new circumstances, he might...realise his theory of bringing religion into daily life"<sup>1</sup> he is soon disappointed. In India, he is dismayed at the shortcomings of the English officers. Not only do they appear to be doing little effective work towards civilising Asia, they are a low and immoral society whose disregard for Christianity and ungentlemanly behaviour results in Oakfield's self-imposed isolation. The majority of the novel thus consists of letters and debates between the few men he does befriend- forming the titles 'fellowship'-on the nature of their position in India. Throughout his time in India, two pressing questions come to the foreground of his thought. The first is the question of the point at which "the European and the Native mind begin to diverge"<sup>2</sup>, the second, and most pressing is what is to be done about "the degradation of European society?"<sup>3</sup> However, neither are answered in the novel or by Oakfield, whose premature death concludes the tale.

After a second edition was published in 1854 under the author's real name, William Delafield Arnold, it was not republished again in the UK until 1973. Both historians and literary critics have paid it minimal attention.

This study aims to adopt a cultural history approach to situate *Oakfield* in its historical context, in order to answer how, and in what ways, *Oakfield* represents an alternative to the dominant narrative on the character of Britain's imperial ideology of 1828-1856. This period has been classified as one of both social and political reform. Francis Hutchins, H.G. Nicholas and Jennifer Pitts have argued that the British imperial project during this time was defined by the 'new morality' of British society,

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<sup>1</sup> W. Arnold, *Oakfield; Or Fellowship in the East* (Surrey, 1973), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 160.

<sup>3</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 247.

which gave the ideology both its legitimacy and its objectives. J.W. Davidson further suggests “the Victorians were concerned with the spread of English culture, rather than the extension of political control”.<sup>4</sup> However, equally, the ideology of this period has been defined in terms of its political theory of reformist liberalism, inaugurated in 1828 by the governor-generalship of Lord Bentinck, and ending in 1856 with the end of Lord Dalhousie’s generalship. Eric Stokes’ *The English Utilitarians and India* and Thomas Metcalf’s *Ideologies of the Raj* are two such important works which assert that “liberalism as a programme of reform developed a coherence it rarely possessed at home”.<sup>5</sup> From these perspectives, the Mutiny of 1857 is seen as the crucial point of change, leading to a more authoritarian ideology in the latter half of the century. This is well discussed in social and cultural terms by Patrick Brantlinger and Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, who describe it as a “foundational myth which contributed to grand scale imperial self-fashioning”.<sup>6</sup> It has long been seen as a point of important political change, the general consensus being that “reformism (was) ascendant in the first half of the nineteenth century and conservatism dominant thereafter”.<sup>7</sup>

Notable challenges to both of these definitions exist. Uday Singh Mehta has elaborated on Stokes’ work to question further how liberal theory could be reconciled with imperialism, while Partha Chatterjee has proposed that no true liberal ideology existed, liberal ideals surrendering instead to a purely colonialist impulse.<sup>8</sup> Challenges regarding the social or ‘civilizational’ aspect of the ideology often appear alongside such critiques, owing to the ‘moral’ emphasis of liberalism. D.A. Washbrook notes that “the history of British India possesses many self-paradoxes”.<sup>9</sup> The alternative suggestion is therefore that “the East India Company’s rule came to be seen as a failure long before the Great Rebellion of 1857”<sup>10</sup>, and it is this position which this thesis hopes to contribute to.

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<sup>4</sup> J.W. Davidson, ‘The Idea of Empire’, in *British Broadcasting Corporation Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: an historic revaluation of the Victorian age (a series of talks broadcast on the B.B.C. Third programme)* (London, 1949), 322.

<sup>5</sup> T. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1994), 29.

<sup>6</sup> A. Erll and A. Rigney, *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Berlin, 2009), 112.

<sup>7</sup> I. Klein, ‘Mutiny and Modernisation in British India’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 34 (2000), 553.

<sup>8</sup> P. Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Oxford, 2012), 176-7.

<sup>9</sup> D.A. Washbrook, ‘India, 1818-1860: The Two Faces of Colonialism’, in A. Porter (ed.) *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume III: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), 395.

<sup>10</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1988), 106.

Historical interest in novels as a means to access imperial ideology has largely arisen since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978.<sup>11</sup> Post-colonial critics identified literature as a particularly useful site for understanding how the British constructed an understanding of India, and Said himself elaborated on these discussions in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). He argued that the novel arose with and supported imperialism through its representative power<sup>12</sup>, "it partook and was part of a discursive field with the construction of a universal and homogenous subject...held together by the annihilation of other subject positions".<sup>13</sup> This notion has been much incorporated into 'new imperial histories', further under the influence of Foucault, Marx, Gramsci and Derrida. Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness, British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* is one such example, and subscribes to a Foucauldian analysis that culture itself assumes the power to repress, that "what the Victorians thought, wrote and read about their developing empire mattered, even though... (it) can now be critically understood as 'ideology'".<sup>14</sup> Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest* draws on Gramsci to argue that cultural domination worked only by consent, and cultural means of control in the place of direct force in fact reveals the weakness in the position of the coloniser.<sup>15</sup>

Despite this interest, novels on the British societies in India, that is, Anglo-Indian novels, of which *Oakfield* is an example, have received little attention. By excluding depictions of an 'other', such novels resist easy theorisation by the arguments of *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*. Their relation to the wider imperial ideology more generally has been a point of contention, from which separate histories have been produced on the subject of Anglo-India alone, such as Eddy Kent's *Corporate Character*. Anglo-Indian novels were never popular, and therefore, under Said's analysis, were not part of the apparatus of the nation, supporting or legitimising power in any significant way. *Oakfield* has received little attention since Said's seminal work. The most extended readings appear in surveys of the first half of the twentieth century

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<sup>11</sup> A. Chakraborty, 'Anglo-Indian Novels and the Politics of Canon-Formation: Tara as a Case Study', *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, Vol. VIII, No.4 (2016), 132.

<sup>12</sup> E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1993), 60-72.

<sup>13</sup> F. Azim, *The Colonial Rise of the Novel* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2002), N/A (unnumbered e-book).

<sup>14</sup> P. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (London, 1988), x.

<sup>15</sup> G. Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York, 2015), 10.

by Robert Sencourt (1923), Alfred Comyn-Lyall (1915) and Edward Farley Oaten (1908).

However, Sujit Mukherjee and Ayusman Chakraborty have more recently undertaken notable analyses of Anglo-Indian novels, and argued for greater attention to be afforded to them in histories on the 'reform' period, for they "often highlight the politics and praxis of colonial rule".<sup>16</sup> Mukherjee has elaborated on this with regards to the incoherence of the ideology in the pre-Mutiny period, noting "it is this...which some Anglo-Indian novels have presented in another way- namely that the British ought to withdraw from India...because they are doing a great deal of harm to themselves by the obvious contradictions between their professed principles at home and their hardening practises in the colonies".<sup>17</sup> Recent work which emphasises the significance of the imperial experience in shaping ideology is also useful for analysing Anglo-Indian novels. Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquests* and Sara Suleri's *The Rhetoric of English India* stress the role of the imperial encounter in shaping and highlighting the flaws in Britain's methods, arguing therefore against the notion of a completely secure and dominant 'self'. Suleri argues that "the necessary intimacies that obtain between ruler and ruled create a counter culture not always explicable in terms of an allegory of otherness".<sup>18</sup>

In light of this, *Oakfield* is a useful source for deconstruction in order to better understand the imperial ideology, because it disrupts the "scripts of empire"<sup>19</sup> and furthers builds on such work. Its usefulness first lies in its extended descriptions of Anglo-Indian life, which have been largely understudied with regards to ideology. Secondly, it is the work of someone who was highly engaged in both the moral and political reform of the period. William Arnold was the son of Dr Thomas Arnold, the famous reformer of Rugby School, whose piety has been most often sought in readings of the text, E.M. Forster's review, printed almost a century after *Oakfield*'s initial publication commented "it has that Arnold integrity".<sup>20</sup> Additionally, William

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<sup>16</sup> A. Chakraborty, 'Studying Anglo-Indian Novels: A Forgotten Genre' (2015)

<http://www.goldenline.bcdedu.net/anglo-indian-novels/> [accessed 2 February 2017].

<sup>17</sup> S. Mukherjee, *Forster and Further: The Tradition of Anglo-Indian Fiction* (Bombay, 1993), 25.

<sup>18</sup> S. Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago, 1992), 3.

<sup>19</sup> A. Arondekar, "Too Fatally Present:" The Crisis of Anglo-Indian Literature', *Colby Quarterly*, Vol. 37, Issue 2 (2001), 163.

<sup>20</sup> 'An Arnold in India', *The Listener*, 12 October 1944, 410.

Arnold served as a civil servant and Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab, and as a writer for the conservative *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, where he wrote numerous articles on India.<sup>21</sup> His particular involvement in society and politics means that, to an extent, the views expressed in this highly biographical work do not stand as merely record of individual thought, but represent more widely held ideas by social groups. Furthermore, such ideas anticipated those which became ascendant after 1857, and in this way, Oakfield can be seen as contributing to an alternative narrative about the trajectory of imperial ideology by indicating the deeper roots of later changes. In turn, this disrupts the suggestion of the coherence of the ideas of the period 1828-1858, and allows a more nuanced explanation of the imperial ideology during that time. This dissertation does not suppose that Oakfield alone can alone endorse the argument that Britain's imperial ideology was not secure or confident, rather it suggests that it contributes an important addition to this argument for its unique focus on moral critiques of the ideology before the mutiny.

Previous study on Oakfield has been extremely limited. Only in three studies is it a significant subject, Diana Ostrander's religious study, which examines what have been interpreted as the novels allusions to Buddhism, D.C.R.A Goonetilleke's work on 'forgotten' nineteenth century fiction and Martin Jarrett-Kerr's work on the impact of Eastern thought on Arnold's writing. Such approaches are limited by their literary focus, and do not extensively situate the novel in the specific historical context. Nonetheless, they have some application for ideas about the 'self' and 'other' that permeated political discourse, as discussed in the second chapter of this study. Deidre David and Francis Hutchins make brief but notable mention of the novel in their broader studies, analysing its pervasive morality, while Sujit Mukherjee touches on the political engagement of the novel. However, none have covered it extensively.

This study therefore attempts a deeper analyses of the novel from a historical perspective, through the broad appraisal of secondary work as well as social commentary, legal acts and important histories of the time, in order to identify reflections of and allusions to broader themes. The novel is read therefore as both documentary evidence of the events of the period as well as response to it.

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<sup>21</sup> K. Prior, 'Arnold, William Delafield (1828–1859)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/690> [accessed 10 December 2016].



Representative value is limited however, because a reflection of the audience is not particularly discernible owing to the small impact it made, however the few reviews that exist are made use of to these ends. The opinions in such reviews are also analysed alongside evidence of wider opinions to determine their representative value. Additionally, examination of the writing and speeches of William Arnold is integrated into this work in order to clarify the aims and ideas of the author and determine the reception of his views elsewhere, and therefore the significance of the novelistic form. Arnold's work has been largely unexplored owing in part to the historical interest in the Arnold name rather than William himself. As a largely autobiographical work, such an understanding will allow a fuller reading of the novel, although some caution must be taken to recognise literary decoration when using such a source.

Accordingly, there are three aims this thesis seeks to achieve. In order to test ideas about Britain's imperial ideology, it aims firstly to analyse the social aspect of ideology in the ideas surrounding the belief of a superior civilisation that legitimised expansion. Secondly, it aims to analyse the political aspect of the ideology by situating the novel within the political ideas of the time. Finally, this work aims to contribute to the debate between Edward Said and his critics. While it cannot refute the central premise of *Culture and Imperialism*-that novels developed alongside and legitimised the imperial project, for *Oakfield's* unpopularity ultimately supports this- it can contribute to a key point of contention. *Culture and Imperialism* inherently implies a one way process of imposition, and further, that this is based on a secure ideology "we can locate a coherent, fully mobilised system of ideas...and there follows a set of integral developments".<sup>22</sup> However, two counter arguments can be discerned in the literature on British India. Firstly, Gauri Viswanathan argues that there was not a coherent set of ideas, but that they developed in the imperial encounter. Sara Suleri has described this as a desire to treat "English culture first and foremost in its imperial aspect, and then to examine that aspect as itself constitutive of national culture", therefore challenging "the assumption that what makes an imperial culture possible is a fully formed national culture shaped by initial social developments".<sup>23</sup> Secondly, Eric Stokes suggests that the experience highlighted already existing issues "it holds a

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<sup>22</sup> Said, *Culture*, 68.

<sup>23</sup> Suleri, *Rhetoric*, 10.

mirror up to nature”<sup>24</sup>, refuting in part the suggestion of a one way imposition without consequence. The first element of this debate is addressed in chapter one, in the discussion of the society which formed, and the second is discussed in chapter 2, where the attempt to impose the same political system provides a point of analysis.

## Chapter 1

The legitimacy of imperialism is fundamentally founded on the belief that one civilisation is superior to another, and therefore justified in imposing itself. John Hobson’s seminal study on imperialism has referred to this as “the supreme principle of the imperialist statesman”.<sup>25</sup> Oakfield was published during what appeared to be a time of great civilizational confidence. The extension of suffrage, the abolition of slavery and the “powerful nexus of evangelical Christianity” in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain<sup>26</sup> contributed to a national confidence rooted in the belief of Britain’s superior morality. This self-perception was reflected in the justification of Britain’s imperial policies; having attained a higher level of society for themselves, they were rightly positioned to spread the light of civilisation. In 1833 the Charter Act ended the right of the East India Company to trade<sup>27</sup>, symbolically transforming it from a profit making group to a selfless governing body. Politician Thomas Babington Macaulay’s Minute on Education in 1835 made clear the desire transplant Britain’s society entirely, such that India should become “English in tastes, in opinions, in morals...in intellect”.<sup>28</sup>

However, histories of imperialism tend to evade extended discussion of the complicating fact of the British communities in India<sup>29</sup> who would enact reform and spread this civilisation. Anglo-Indian societies were not integrated into Indian society, but separate British communities consisting of members of the army and the civil

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<sup>24</sup> E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1989), vii.

<sup>25</sup> J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (Cambridge, 2011), 169.

<sup>26</sup> C. Herbert, *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Oxford, 2008), 27.

<sup>27</sup> R. Muir, *The Making of British India, 1756-1858* (Manchester, 1923), 14.

<sup>28</sup> T.B. Macaulay, ‘Minute on Education’, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1835, [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealcac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt\\_minute\\_education\\_1835.html](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealcac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html) [accessed 13 February 2017].

<sup>29</sup> For example P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins *British Imperialism: 1688-2015* (Oxford, 2016) discusses the ‘gentlemanly order’ but not Anglo-Indian society before 1850, A. Porter *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999) similarly discusses it after 1850 and treats it as separate. Additionally, all works in this study, unless explicitly stated, only make passing mention.

service.<sup>30</sup> From the administration of Lord Cornwallis in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, which had gradually removed Indians from offices of responsibility<sup>31</sup>, the British had resisted mixing with India, preserving themselves as pristine models of British civilisation. Training colleges for civil servants first introduced in 1800 filtered into India boys from similar higher class backgrounds<sup>32</sup> who were taught the law alongside classical subjects<sup>33</sup>, with the aim of making students “previously educated at private or inferior seminaries...more like English gentleman”.<sup>34</sup> In India, such a society remained self-consciously British, “entertainments were those of an English provincial town, an ideal of civility”, with field sports, theatre, and a season of balls.<sup>35</sup> Despite this, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Anglo-Indian communities were regarded with animosity. Owing to the physical distance from Britain, they were “beyond the new affections which flutter the ephemeral life”<sup>36</sup>, they appeared odd and outdated, and most dangerously “preserving something of that spirit of unreformed Britain into the mid -19<sup>th</sup> century”.<sup>37</sup> The *laissez faire* attitudes abhorred in the post reform act society<sup>38</sup> appeared to resurface in the idleness reported of such societies, alongside accusations of self-indulgence levelled at the stories of excessive drink.<sup>39</sup>

Histories therefore mention little of such societies in connection with the British imperial ideology, because this is reflective of the common perception of the distance felt between Britain and its communities abroad at the time. A contemporary review of *Oakfield* in the radical newspaper the *Daily News* acknowledged the moral want of these communities “This book will deeply interest two classes of readers who might seem to have little in common- those whose minds are full of...ethics...and those whose minds are full of India”, yet does not see this as a disqualifying factor for British

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<sup>30</sup> P.J. Marshall, ‘British Society in India under the East India Company’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 31 (1997), 91.

<sup>31</sup> Viswanathan, *Masks*, 11.

<sup>32</sup> B. Cohn, ‘The British in Benares: A Nineteenth Century Colonial Society’, in B. Cohn (ed.) *An Anthropologist Among Historians and Other Essays* (New Delhi, 1987), 435-7.

<sup>33</sup> B. Cohn, ‘The Recruitment and Training of British Civil Servants in India’, in B. Cohn (ed.) *An Anthropologist Among Historians and Other Essays* (New Delhi, 1987), 521.

<sup>34</sup> Marshall, ‘British Society’, 99.

<sup>35</sup> Marshall, ‘British Society’, 101.

<sup>36</sup> *Anglo-India, Social, Moral, and Political; Being a Collection of Papers from the Asiatic Journal*, Volume 1 (1838), 111.

<sup>37</sup> Marshall, ‘British Society’, 105.

<sup>38</sup> L. Cazamian, *The Social Novel in England, 1830-1850: Dickens, Disraeli, Mrs Gaskell, Kingsley*, trans. M.Fido, (London, 1973), 15.

<sup>39</sup> Marshall, ‘British Society’, 94.

rule “the thing to be done...is to stand fast and do the duty”.<sup>40</sup> Literature on these communities has thus never been popular, because it appeared “too fatally present”<sup>41</sup>, too concerned with an experience to which the common Briton felt no relation.

Yet, far from presenting a distant and foreign account, *Oakfield* instead presents the corrupt community of Anglo-India as merely a magnification of British society. Anjali Arondekar notes “for Oakfield, the emergence of this ‘gross’ society and its accompanying effects underscores... the inherent and fatal ‘wickedness and stupidity’ of European society”.<sup>42</sup> It can be seen as a direct attempt to engage Britain with what he saw as their wider society in order to tackle the “dark mantle of irresponsibility which allows the English nation to remain in ignorance as to the real author of all our difficulties”.<sup>43</sup> *Oakfield* therefore represents a direct challenge to the imperial ideology of Britain in the reform period, where it relied on for its legitimacy, and built itself upon the notion of a superior civilisation.

This is firstly achieved through the presentation of *Oakfield* as a ‘social novel’. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, social novels arose as vessels for the middle class response to issues affecting society.<sup>44</sup> They presented arguments against the “liberal economists’ laissez faire”<sup>45</sup>, and advocated for intervention by the state and the individual through emotional but realistic depictions of society. In *Oakfield*, despite the distant setting of the novel, the social reform of European society is frequently referenced “And what is social reform? ...my idea of a man’s duty... (is) to help in the work...of raising the European society...from the depths of immorality”.<sup>46</sup> The end of the Chartist movement is referenced at the start of a chapter with seemingly similarly little context, and thus, the action of Anglo-India is brought into the realm of wider society. Furthermore, the novelistic form is of significance, because prior to the publication of *Oakfield*, in the same year ‘*The Wetherbys, Father and Son, Or, Sundry Chapters of Indian Experience*’ appeared as a serial in *Fraser’s Magazine*. The fictional autobiography of the son of an officer in the Bengal Light Cavalry, its topic is also the vices of Anglo-

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<sup>40</sup> ‘Oakfield; or Fellowship in the East’, *Daily News*, 24 September 2 1853, 7.

<sup>41</sup> E. Farley Oaten, *A Sketch of Anglo-Indian Literature* (London, 1908), 10.

<sup>42</sup> A. Arondekar, “Too Fatally Present:” The Crisis of Anglo-Indian Literature’, *Colby Quarterly*, Vol. 37, Issue 2 (2001), 158.

<sup>43</sup> ‘An Anglo-Indian Lament for John Company’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, Vol. 57, No. 342, May 1858, 636.

<sup>44</sup> Cazamian, *Social Novel*, 1-13.

<sup>45</sup> Cazamian, *Social novel*, 24.

<sup>46</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 119.

Indian society. However, distinct from the sombre tone of *Oakfield*, it satirises the subject “I attended ‘office’ occasionally, and abused the chaprassies (messengers), and sometimes kicked them, just to satisfy my conscience that I did not draw my salary for nothing”, and plays on existing stereotypes “what with...billiard playing...during the day, attending Mr Maison’s carriage in the evening and dining out, I had scarcely a moment to spare”.<sup>47</sup> *Oakfield* can be seen as a purposeful readdressing of these issues in order to bring the vices into the realm of British society at large, for Arnold was also a writer for *Fraser’s Magazine* during this time, and in an 1853 article he wrote of Britain’s entertainment by such negative portrayals of Anglo-India “with the unreflecting public...such declamatory vituperative language is...popular...it is more stimulating and exciting”. Arnold thus appears to subscribe to the notion proposed by Terry Eagleton that literature is a “vital instrument for the insertion of individuals into the perpetual and symbolic”.<sup>48</sup> This can be read in the text itself, for Miss Middleton frequently speaks of a number of ‘vague sweeping impressions’ that “people in England are so fond of with regards to India”<sup>49</sup>, making explicit the novels attempt to reposition the individual in Anglo-Indian society.

In beginning with a lament on Oakfield’s reasons for leaving Britain, the novel is able to thus demonstrate how Anglo-India is merely a magnification of British society. Oakfield arrives to escape the “insincerity of everyday society”<sup>50</sup>, unwilling to take up the 39 articles because he finds the church corrupt. Believing that in India he should be able to pursue religion “without the necessity of denying it at every turn in obedience to some fashion...of society”<sup>51</sup>, he again finds that his hopes “fade away before the stupid realities of daily life.”<sup>52</sup> Drawing a parallel between himself and the most morally degenerate officer Cade, who is “not much older than himself”, he declares Cade has “lost sight of all standard of measurement”.<sup>53</sup> In India “religion is reserved for the Sunday sermon...a man who tries to... live as though he believed the Sunday sermon, is obliged to leave society”.<sup>54</sup> It is such that Oakfield becomes a

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<sup>47</sup> J. Lang, *The Wetherbys, Father and Son; or, Sundry Chapter of Indian Experience*, reprinted from ‘Fraser’s Magazine’ (London, 1853), 56.

<sup>48</sup> T. Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London, 2006), 56.

<sup>49</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 224.

<sup>50</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 14.

<sup>51</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 16.

<sup>52</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 171.

<sup>53</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 61.

<sup>54</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 43.

hermit, escaped from the Anglo-Indian society mentally just as he escaped from English society physically.

It is important to acknowledge that the wider significance of the presentation of Anglo-Indian society as synonymous with British society does seem to be hindered by the books unpopularity. However, *Oakfield* forms one component in a body of writing produced by Arnold, all of which attended to the goal of stirring British interest in India. Alongside multiple articles concerning 'The Indian Problem', he gave a speech at the Kendal assembly rooms where he was able to address a large audience. Here he made a similar appeal on the basis of morality for a British consciousness of India and the importance of good governance of Indians, for "what affects educated Englishmen will affect no less those who had not had the same advantages, but have the same hearts, capable of being stirred by the same human interests"<sup>55</sup>. The dedication of the 1855 book which published this speech, similarly stated his intention to "bring that remarkable institution out of the dreary confines of...oriental disquisition into the warmer climate of human interests".<sup>56</sup> All of this work was received by a far larger audience, hence we can assume that these ideas had some currency. This is supported by the initial praise with which *Oakfield* was met, in agreement with the need for change to the *general* state of society "the most complacent advocate of the existing state of things cannot affect to regard Oakfield or his portrait painter as grumblers".<sup>57</sup> Another declared that it was "remarkable for earnestness of purpose".<sup>58</sup> The particular unpopularity of the novel in the long run, then, can in part be attributed to the 1853-1855 reforms of the civil service which introduced a competitive examination in an attempt to select the better men for the role and end the outdated system of patronage.<sup>59</sup> Under these circumstances, *Oakfield's* exclusive and negative focus on the Anglo-Indians made it appear an "attack on an *honourable* body of men".<sup>60</sup> However, prior to this, we can discern a more widely held insecurity about British

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<sup>55</sup> W. Arnold, 'The English in India' delivered at the Whitehall, Kendal, December 20, 1853, published in W. Arnold (ed.), *The Palace at Westminster and Other Historical Sketches* (London, 1855), 44-45.

<sup>56</sup> W. Arnold (ed.), *The Palace at Westminster and Other Historical Sketches* (London, 1855), vi.

<sup>57</sup> 'Oakfield; or Fellowship in the East' *Daily News*, 24 September 1853, 7.

<sup>58</sup> 'Oakfield; or Fellowship in the East', *The Examiner*, 1 April 1854, 196.

<sup>59</sup> H.G. Nicholas, 'The New Morality', in *British Broadcasting Corporation Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: an historic revaluation of the Victorian age (a series of talks broadcast on the B.B.C. Third programme)* (London, 1949), 132.

<sup>60</sup> 'An Arnold in India', *The Listener*, 12 October 1944, 410.

civilisation and therefore imperial legitimacy, for which *Oakfield* acts as extensive documentary.

Furthermore, the view that British society *itself* was corrupt concurs with the immediate sentiment following the 1857 Mutiny. The violence of the Anglo-Indians was brought to the foreground and British action in India became a national concern. Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli invoked the nation when he later argued British intervention “our disturbance to the settlement”<sup>61</sup> was the cause of the uprising, and in the immediate period, civil servants spent much reduced lengths of time in India. As Christopher Herbert argues, the Mutiny proposed the disturbing question “Did the circumstances...simply afford an opportunity for a strain of devilish cruelty native to the British character to cast off its garments of...humanitarian sentiment and reveal itself?”<sup>62</sup> Arnold reflects this concern in articles for *Fraser's Magazine*, sarcastically speaking of “that lazy current of distant benevolence which is always virtuous in the absence of temptation”.<sup>63</sup> In 1858 he writes “we owe it to ourselves to make the connection between 1853 and 1858”.<sup>64</sup> Here he refers to the 1853 reforms of the civil service, and notes, even at their best, they were comparable to the violent actors of the mutiny, and furthermore, that they were both representative of the nation. *Oakfield* gives weight to this narrative, and implies there were deeper roots to this civilizational insecurity, and thus, Britain's imperial legitimacy was fragile even during the years of 1828-1856. The novel form is particularly useful for demonstrating this because of its associations with social consciousness.

Secondly, *Oakfield* can further be seen as a lens through which to view more widely held opinions of the period because it invokes the idea of ‘character’ to condemn the actions of Anglo-Indian society, and thus moves the novel beyond documentary of individual thought to a more widely held opinion. Furthermore, in describing Anglo-Indian society in these terms, it is again equated with British society. In the only other study of this society in *Oakfield* outside of religious terms, Eddy Kent has disputed this link to broader British society in *Oakfield*, stressing “they were a body

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<sup>61</sup> Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 202.

<sup>62</sup> Herbert, *War*, 38.

<sup>63</sup> ‘An Anglo-Indian Lament for John Company’, *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. 57, No. 342, May 1858, 637.

<sup>64</sup> ‘An Anglo-Indian Lament for John Company’, *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. 57, No. 342, May 1858, 635.

of men and women with values and interests of their own".<sup>65</sup> In the Anglo-Indian community, he argues, it was "the corporation, as social institution" which shaped the culture, hence society was not "secured by ideology, but by habit and affect".<sup>66</sup> However, this view fails to take account of the way in which habits, or conduct were assigned specific moral meaning under the notion of 'character' in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and therefore the threat this represented to Britain's imperial ideology.

Developed in public schools, most famously under Arnold's father, Dr Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School, ideal 'character' was defined by gentlemanly and religious conduct, as well as a certain industriousness.<sup>67</sup> Character was about not only about respectable conduct, but independence of mind which permitted this. A Rugby graduate noted that he was taught not to consider "fighting with....those 'of lower social position'... instead one should help them by acting towards them as 'Christians and gentleman'".<sup>68</sup> Industriousness was developed in public schools through sports and the creation of artificial adversity.<sup>69</sup> Dr Ludwig Wiese, a teacher conducting research into British education noted "sport and contests which we consider dangerous...are highly approved of... as fostering in the boys that fearless spirit, so...characteristic of a nation calling herself mistress of the seas".<sup>70</sup> In wider society, 'character' became an important element for defining status. As Jennifer Pitts has noted, the debates of the second reform act were conducted in the language of character "reformers contrasted the character of those they declared worthy of participation- respectable, independent, self-restrained, industrious, with that of subjects they deemed necessary to continue to exclude".<sup>71</sup> It constituted an important element then, in determining who was to be in charge. The principal of Haileybury,

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<sup>65</sup> E. Kent, *Corporate Character: Representing Imperial Power in British India, 1786-1901* (Toronto, 2014), 110.

<sup>66</sup> Kent, *Corporate Character*, 172

<sup>67</sup> I. Hamilton, Chapter 1 of 'A Gift Imprisoned: The Poetic Life of Matthew Arnold', (1999) in <http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/h/hamilton-gift.html> [accessed 5 March 2017].

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in F.G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton, 1967), 26.

<sup>69</sup> S. Collini, 'The Idea of 'Character' in Victorian Political Thought', *Transactions of the Royal History Society*, Vol. 35 (1985), 48.

<sup>70</sup> L. Wiese, *German Letters on English Education*, trans. W. Arnold (London, 1854), 48.

<sup>71</sup> J. Pitts, *A Turn To Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, 2005), 249.



the biggest training college for civil servants, declared the two aims of the college to be the “general enlargement of knowledge and elevation of...character”.<sup>72</sup>

In recognising this discourse in the language, of the novel, *Oakfield's* condemnation thus becomes more significant. It is exactly their failure to meet these specific criteria of good character for which Oakfield damns the Anglo-Indians. Independence is most obviously lacking in their persistent portrayal as single group from which Oakfield is excluded, “I pay no allegiance then to the common opinion of men”<sup>73</sup> Oakfield consistently laments the apathy of the army, noting “civilians have some undeniable advantage over the officers of the other service....what brains they have are not allowed to lie utterly unemployed”<sup>74</sup>. In his intense individual religious musings, in his industriousness-his correspondent Stanton declares admiration for his “good self-denying life”<sup>75</sup>- and his gentlemanly conduct, horrified at the disrespect of the 90<sup>th</sup> regiment as they discuss women<sup>76</sup>, Oakfield is shown to be the only person of ideal character. However, his premature death appears an indication that such character is not enough to survive in the corrupt east where other principles now guide the Anglo-Indians. Perhaps for such a reason he initially elected a pseudonym, avoiding the Arnold name and all its associations with character, for implying that the encouragement of character was now futile. By making reference to this prominent societal discourse, *Oakfield* judges and considers Anglo-Indian society by the same standards, and invites the reader to do the same. Furthermore, it moves the novel beyond the depiction of an individual view, and acts as a lens through which we can view a perhaps wider concern.

Finally, in equating British society with Anglo-Indian society through language and form, its additional status as an Anglo-Indian novel further condemned British society. Popular Anglo-Indian novels did not depict the Anglo-Indians, but native life in India. Notable examples are William Browne Hockley's *The Memoirs of a Brahmin* (1843), Philip Meadows Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug* (1839). Such novels portrayed the most abhorred elements of Indian society to maximum Orientalist effect,

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<sup>72</sup> Marshall, 'British Society', 99.

<sup>73</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 329.

<sup>74</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 94.

<sup>75</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield* (volume 2), 291.

<sup>76</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 267.

*Confessions of a Thug*, for example, was based on the Thuggee cult which was targeted for eradication in the 1830s under Bentinck.<sup>77</sup> Arnold was well versed in the literature of the day as *Fraser's* was also a literary magazine, and *Oakfield* is replete with references to authors. Arguably, therefore, *Oakfield* can be seen as a conscious attempt to invert the power relations of this tradition by placing the Anglo-Indian, or the British, in the place of the 'foreign object'. His belief that Britain had no 'natural' right to domination is further clear in speeches given the same year as the book was first published which outline the signs which he believed indicated this. He declared that while the Portuguese "traded with the native, and taught them their language...we...learn theirs ...no English word has been naturalised".<sup>78</sup> Britain's 'otherness' can thus be read in the way in which the narrative is frequently interrupted by Indian terms, footnoted at the bottom of the page as "the native word for..." Such words are not spoken by natives but appear merely as part of the text, and during his time in India Oakfield himself learns Persian and Hindi. As Antoinette Burton notes positioning "Britain itself as colonial landscape can...put at risk the certainty of the nation as an analytical category, as a cherished ideal, and as a guarantor of the sovereign Western self"<sup>79</sup>. Thus, the legitimacy of British rule is challenged by questioning the inherent right to domination in Arnold's disruption of the category of the 'self'.

*Oakfield* therefore urges a reconsideration of Said's argument that a "coherent and fully mobilised" system of ideas preceded action, for what seemed a coherent set of social values in Britain was shown not to be so in its imperfect translation in India. Viswanathan's counter argument that British culture should be considered a development resulting from its imperial activity is equally unsupported by *Oakfield*, however, for Arnold shows this society as merely an extension of British society. *Oakfield* suggests instead a third line of argument, that where British society was concentrated and magnified in the colonies its flaws become apparent. Thus, Anglo-Indian society revealed the true fragility of Britain's imperial ideology.

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<sup>77</sup> Hutchins, *Illusion*, viii.

<sup>78</sup> Arnold, 'English in India', 49.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in M. Ellis Gibson, 'Introduction: English in India, India in England', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 42 (2014), 326.

## Chapter 2

Out of this social consciousness grew a political theory of liberal reform. *Oakfield* offers a number of political critiques which concur with later criticisms at the point of change in politics, when the end of Lord Dalhousie's rule and the Mutiny gave way to a more authoritarian age.<sup>80</sup> *Oakfield* is therefore important because it suggests an alternative narrative about the cause of change.

The theoretical basis of this reform was utilitarianism, as best expressed in James Mill's *History of British India*. It articulated the theory that the degree of 'civilisation' of any society could be determined because all existed on a universal scale. Therefore, progress could be attained by uniform, logical methods, for "liberals conceived that human nature was essentially the same everywhere, and that it could be totally and completely transformed"<sup>81</sup>. Against the Orientalist scholars of the eighteenth century, who had sought to recognise the unique culture and history of India<sup>82</sup>, the new utilitarians denied the existence of any distinct historical trajectory, in order to maintain that "the past had no relevance for defining cultural identity, nor for shaping a programme of reform for Indian or British society".<sup>83</sup> Mill's *History* thus argued that his ignorance of Indian languages was inconsequential for his writing of history, as all could be understood within a single scheme.<sup>84</sup> However, in *Oakfield*, India is portrayed as unknowable, thus suggesting the impossibility of assimilating it into any universal scheme of improvement, and therefore the futility of the British enterprise.

Although *Oakfield* arrives in India under the illusion that it existed as a blank space, clear for the imposition of his own religious hopes, soon "another reality confronts him".<sup>85</sup> India first appears as only "a variation what is already familiar"<sup>86</sup>, Arnold writes "when the...great Ganges broke and rippled...*Oakfield* would be reminded of his bellowed Thirlwater".<sup>87</sup> Yet, in the second volume, India takes on an

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<sup>80</sup> Chatterjee, *Black Hole*, 166.

<sup>81</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, 29.

<sup>82</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, 30.

<sup>83</sup> J. Majeed, 'James Mill's 'The History of British India' and Utilitarianism as a Rhetoric of Reform', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 24, No.2 (1990), 211-212.

<sup>84</sup> J. Mill, *The History of British India: Volume 1* (London, 1817), 459.

<sup>85</sup> D. Ostrander, 'Wordsworth in the Himalayas: Indian Narratology and Sacred Space in William Delafield Arnold's 'Oakfield: Fellowship in the East' *Religion and the Arts*, Vol. 14, Issue 1 (2010), 39.

<sup>86</sup> Singh Mehta, *Liberalism*, 20.

<sup>87</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 68.

autonomy indefinable through analogy, the Himalayas “giving to the mind an almost new meaning of size”<sup>88</sup>, Oakfield “looked for characteristics of Mountain scenery and found...none. This is a disappointment felt by everyone...who has seen...the...English lakes”.<sup>89</sup> Reference to the Himalayas to highlight India’s autonomy has specific historical importance, as it can be read as a reference the Orientalist traditions of the Romantics who exalted them. The Himalayas were described by Ernst Renan as the “home of the Aryan race and therefore the cradle of civilisation”<sup>90</sup>, displacing the centrality of Europe. Thus, India is no longer merely a “past point on the scale of civilisational progress”<sup>91</sup>, but exists in its own right, possessing its own civilisation, and denying the notion of a single world historical trajectory. When the Mutiny occurred historian Henry Sumner Maine described it as an “epistemic failure”, for it ruptured the British or ‘universal’ timeline. Power necessitates knowledge where ideas are said to have universal application, hence Maine also described the Mutiny as a “symptom of a fundamental defect of knowledge”.<sup>92</sup> By suggesting that India could not be known, *Oakfield* invalidates Britain’s claim to power through its inapplicability and therefore the possibility of ‘progress’ in India. The death of the two characters who represent the best intentions of reform, Oakfield himself and Arthur Vernon, a young ensign as yet uncorrupted by the regiment “his...delicate countenance...among the coarse...old faces of his companions”<sup>93</sup> signals the impossibility of progress because that ‘universal’ scheme of reform is futile. Vernon, it is noted, was not “for *this* world”.<sup>94</sup>

In suggesting that India has a life of its own, *Oakfield* is one of the first historical documents to seriously consider the possibility of self-rule “but do you not contemplate a time when this government should pass into the people’s own hands?”<sup>95</sup> Of course, this arises in part from his own belief in the inadequacy and immorality of the British, as discussed, which invalidates the importance of any scale of civilisation which implicitly places Britain at the top. For others, most notably James Mill, who found India

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<sup>88</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield* (volume 2), 21.

<sup>89</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, (volume 2), 22-23.

<sup>90</sup> M. Jarrett-Kerr, ‘Arnold versus the Orient: Some Footnotes to a Disenchantment’, *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1975), 140.

<sup>91</sup> Singh Mehta, *Liberalism*, 21.

<sup>92</sup> K. Mantena, ‘The Crisis of Liberal Imperialism’, *Histoire @Politique*, No 11 (2010), 20.

<sup>93</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 47.

<sup>94</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 196.

<sup>95</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 158.

“resistant to all logical enquiry”<sup>96</sup>, inscrutability merely reasserted “the natural in the familiar with added vigour”<sup>97</sup>, and India is simply relegated to the bottom of the scale, rather than representing a challenge to its existence. Indeed, it is important to acknowledge that the alterity presented in *Oakfield* was not perceived, an 1856 review saw India as an ‘empty’ frontier land, in the same way as America had been perceived, bare for European designs “we beg of such men to come to America, here...there are ‘quarter sections’ in the wilderness which are not cleared”.<sup>98</sup>

However, the suggestion in *Oakfield* that India had a life of its own and could not be read and thus directed through Western ideas became an important notion. Following the Mutiny, there was a retraction of Britain’s governing powers, and “substantial consensus at Calcutta and Whitehall, for more legislative consultation with Indian interest groups”.<sup>99</sup> While Mill’s ideas obviously had far greater reach, the History was published in 1817. Published in 1853, *Oakfield* can be seen as part of an ascendant strain of thought which only become fully realised after the Mutiny. As Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab in 1855, Arnold was able to introduce an educational reform programme of ‘Halkabandi’, based on the engagement of the ancient learning of the East with that of the West.<sup>100</sup> After the Mutiny, in an 1862 eulogy in *The Times*, this work in which the history and autonomy of India was acknowledged, was celebrated “William Arnold... had time enough given him to make himself of importance to a government like that of lord Dalhousie”.<sup>101</sup> In 1858 Arnold wrote of the predominance of Indian power “there is more real unanimity among thoughtful Indian observers to express what may be considered the main Indian view of the principles which we must regulate the future path of rule in British India”.<sup>102</sup> In its suggestion of self-rule, *Oakfield* appears to show the upheaval of ideas not yet realised, and furthers an alternative narrative that suggests change was not the result of external factors, but located within the inherent weakness of the British political theory.

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<sup>96</sup> Singh Mehta, *Liberalism*, 68.

<sup>97</sup> Singh Mehta, *Liberalism*, 9.

<sup>98</sup> ‘Oakfield; or, Fellowship in the East’, *The North American Review*, Vol. 82, No. 170 (1856), 279.

<sup>99</sup> Klein, ‘Mutiny’, 551.

<sup>100</sup> T. Allender, ‘William Arnold and Experimental Education in North India, 1855-1859: An Innovative Model of State Schooling’, *Historical Studies in Education* (2004), 64.

<sup>101</sup> ‘The Late Mr Arnold’, *The Times*, 28 February 1862, 3.

<sup>102</sup> ‘An Anglo-Indian View of the Indian Crisis’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, Vol. 57. No.339, March 1958, 282.

Secondly, *Oakfield* can be seen as contributing to the body of work by historians who have increasingly begun to question how the seemingly contradictory creeds of liberalism and imperialism could coexist. The problem that the 'self-image' of Britain was one of democracy, and yet it "held a vast empire that was...undemocratic in its acquisition and government"<sup>103</sup> has been the subject of a number of studies. Most importantly, Uday Singh Mehta's *Liberalism and Empire* builds on the work of Eric Stokes seminal work *The English Utilitarians in India* and urges that we take "seriously the writing of a small though significant group of political thinkers as they reflected on British rule in India".<sup>104</sup> However, while Mehta offers a theoretical understanding, he does not embed such ideas within a historical context to explore why and when aspects changed. Andrew Sartori has since argued that the "unravelling (of) the shifting ambiguities of liberal attitudes towards empire" necessitates such an analysis, of liberal thought in the "socio-historical context of its articulation".<sup>105</sup> Novels as a means to gain further understanding of political theory, more than just the social effects of politics, have rarely been considered. However Anglo-Indian novels are useful for showing how policies were actually experienced and put into practise and therefore what ultimately caused them to alter. *Oakfield* can be read as an extended exploration of this alternative suggestion of fragility in the political theory of the imperial ideology, with its focus on the extended rift between theory and practise.

In theory, the humanism of liberalism was reconciled with the implicit denial of liberty in imperialism through the idea that the imposition of liberal policies of government first necessitated that society be raised to a standard which would allow them to accept self-government. The idea relies on the notion of implicit difference between the colonised and the colonisers. This stream of thought is clearly represented throughout the novel through the voice of Mr Middleton, who declares "to preach Christianity to the nation of India, is to begin at the end. Physical improvement first, then intellectual then spiritual"<sup>106</sup>, owing to this intrinsic difference "what an inconceivable separation there...is between us few English silently making a servant of the Ganges with our steam engines....and those Asiatics...worshipping the same

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<sup>103</sup> Singh Mehta, *Liberalism*, 7.

<sup>104</sup> Singh Mehta, *Liberalism*, 8.

<sup>105</sup> A. Sartori, 'The British Empire and Its Liberal Mission', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol, 78, No.3 (2006), 624.

<sup>106</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 179.

river”.<sup>107</sup> The means of raising these societies to a level from which they could then control their own fates would be, in the first instance, material. The necessity of material transformation to facilitate social and moral change had particular currency during this period because of Britain’s industrial transformation, “the novelty of the Victorian age was not its misery, but the realisation that urban and rural misery could be prevented....these possibilities were based upon the application of scientific knowledge to industry and agriculture”.<sup>108</sup> Thus, in British India, the building of infrastructure, railways, and telegraphs instead of the introduction of a democratic system came to be justified.

*Oakfield* shows, how, in practice, the idea that “material and technological development rapidly altered social relations and cultural practise”<sup>109</sup> and were therefore morally justifiable was doubtful. He notes “British dominion (was)...apparently so firmly planted in the soil, and yet so manifestly separate from it, so that while it was impossible to fancy the power swept away, it was easy to look round and think of it gone”.<sup>110</sup> The illusiveness of *British* power arises from the fact that morality was not only central to social consciousness, but characterised the British political project. This condition arose in the late eighteenth century in the attack on the East India Company by Edmund Burke during the trial of Warren Hastings “the founding political drama of British India”.<sup>111</sup> Burke advocated the notion of trusteeship in order to prevent further abuses by the company, and “set the stage for the succeeding generation of reformist arguments”.<sup>112</sup> In suggesting that the company “still retains the mark of its commercial origin”<sup>113</sup>, *Oakfield* makes reference to this time. He invokes the idea of ‘beaver tendencies’ introduced by social commentator Thomas Carlyle to describe the arbitrary nature of the work “those beaver tendencies which Carlyle speaks of as characterising Englishmen...are not only followed too far in our practise, but...their perfection is our highest idea”.<sup>114</sup> In an 1850 pamphlet, Carlyle

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<sup>107</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 184.

<sup>108</sup> E.L. Woodward, ‘1851 and the Visibility of Progress’, in *British Broadcasting Corporation Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: an historic revaluation of the Victorian age (a series of talks broadcast on the B.B.C. Third programme)* (London, 1949), 57

<sup>109</sup> Klein, ‘Mutiny’, 559.

<sup>110</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 13.

<sup>111</sup> Mantena, ‘Crisis’, 4.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield* (volume 2), 222.

<sup>114</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield* (volume 2), 222-223.

mused “what is the use of his ‘civilisation’ and his ‘useful knowledge’, if he has forgotten that beginning of human knowledge...the first dictate of Heaven’s inspiration...I cannot account him a man any more, but as kind of human beaver, who has acquired the art of ciphering”.<sup>115</sup> Without any clear higher moral purpose, Oakfield declared the work was meaningless, for Britain no longer had a claim to superiority over any other government “in most civilised countries there is, generally at least, a partially recognised idea of the higher and spiritual ends of government in human life”.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, despite believing India required improvement “I grant freely that they are a deplorably inferior race, but I do not see why they should be considered hopelessly so”<sup>117</sup>, he encourages his younger brother to remain at Winchester, rather than come out to the East, as no good or meaningful work can be done.

This dismay at the rift between liberal ideals and imperial realities should not be dismissed as the opinion of a single, deeply moral individual. Reviews of *Oakfield* in the first half of the 1850s praised Arnold’s focus on the public action of men “he writes in a spirit of honest zeal for public interest and the honour of the British, we cannot but think that he has done good service by his...tale”<sup>118</sup>, and hope for improvement in the actual enactment of the political ideology “we wish the courageous and conscientious author the reward of seeing some of that good come to pass”.<sup>119</sup> The most significant expression of this horror at the gulf between imperialism and liberalism appeared following the mutiny. In the violence exhibited by the British, the distance between morality and subjugation became too obvious to ignore, and the integrity of government became a serious issue brought to the foreground. In *Fraser’s Magazine*, Arnold wrote “woe to us if we plead the miseries of the past year as justification of tyranny”.<sup>120</sup> The use of ‘tyranny’ constitutes a significant attack on the integrity of government and their right to colonise, for it was most commonly designated for the ‘savage’ people of the colonies. Writing in the “most talked about magazine in London”<sup>121</sup>, we can assume that there existed an audience for such an

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<sup>115</sup> T. Carlyle, ‘Latter Day Pamphlets: No. V. Stump-Orator’, 1 May 1850  
<http://www.efm.bris.ac.uk/het/carlyle/latter5.htm> [accessed 4 February 2017].

<sup>116</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield* (volume 2), 222.

<sup>117</sup> Arnold, *Oakfield*, 141.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Oakfield; or, Fellowship in the East’, *John Bull*, 5 June 1854, 345.

<sup>119</sup> ‘Oakfield; or, Fellowship in the East’, *Daily News*, 24 September 1853, 7.

<sup>120</sup> ‘An Anglo-Indian Lament for John Company’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, Vol. 57, No. 342, May 1858, 642.

<sup>121</sup> P. Leary, “‘Fraser’s Magazine’ and the Literary Life, 1830-1847”, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1994), 105.



opinion. Herbert's argument that it "inflicted its wound on the British psyche...by inflicting the shock of what seemed to be a catastrophic wound to the moral order itself"<sup>122</sup> reflects the disruption of the perceived order of civilisations, from which the paternal politics were developed.

However, such evidence that there long existed a fragile political theory of empire owing the relationship between liberalism and imperialism is limited, for it was soon subsumed by the "hardening of imperial attitudes"<sup>123</sup> in the latter half of the period. The more authoritarian attitude to government saw little need for moral justification for the methods of empire, so long as their civilisation was superior, and had the 'right' to dominate. James Fitzjames Stephen, a writer and civil servant from 1869 declared empire a 'brute fact' which could survive without any additional warrants.<sup>124</sup> The only reference to *Oakfield* in the immediate post mutiny period, in a review in the *Daily News* notes "we cannot but earnestly desire that every officer or citizen in India, who feels the truth of these authors views would remember General Sir Charles Napier's saying..."so far from thinking that my reforming efforts are useless, I hold them to be of consequence. In the struggles, the meanest, if he does utmost, is of use".<sup>125</sup> In this environment, the political tensions of the previous government seemed unremarkable and thus, the imperial confidence that followed obscures a narrative of political insecurity. More than newspapers or official sources can the form of the novel illustrate the contradictory theory by narrating the actual enactment of ideology "it shows us the dynamics of social exchange...life and action are breathed into modes of conduct, which we would otherwise only know as laws, regulations, and surface appearances"<sup>126</sup>, and thus, a broader appraisal of Anglo-Indian novels within imperial history may further reveal this narrative.

Furthermore, in the presentation of the imperial project as guided not by political ideology but by necessity, *Oakfield* suggests its weakness because of its submission to outside events. Antoinette Burton has argued that empire was "hegemonic by design but the effect, ultimately, of many different historical forces".<sup>127</sup> *Oakfield*

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<sup>122</sup> Herbert, *War*, 55.

<sup>123</sup> P. Chatterjee, 'The Curious Career of Liberalism in India', *Modern Intellectual History*, Vol.8, Issue 3. (2011), 689.

<sup>124</sup> Singh Mehta, *Liberalism*, 29.

<sup>125</sup> 'Review of *The English in India*', *Daily News*, 28 July 1859, 2.

<sup>126</sup> Cazamian, *Social Novel*, 10.

<sup>127</sup> Gibson, 'Introduction', 326.

supports this idea in the portrayal of the war towards the end of the novel. As Diana Ostrander has noted, it bears uncanny similarity to the Mutiny which would occur four years after the publication of *Oakfield*.<sup>128</sup> In anticipating seemingly the same event, *Oakfield* can in part be read as evidence of deep rooted tensions that preceded the real event, “fiction can sometimes tell in advance the kind of truth which history can only tell in retrospect”.<sup>129</sup> In turn, this suggests an alternative narrative that events transpired not because of the sudden uproar of the Indians, but the weakness inherent in the governing ideology. As Eric Stokes has argued, India “holds a mirror up”<sup>130</sup> to Britain. In Britain, the application of political ideas were impeded by a people under less oppression who could protest their imposition<sup>131</sup>, but in India could the ideology be most strongly enforced. Against Edward Said’s proposition that a coherent set of ideas preceded developments, *Oakfield* suggests that these ideals were fractured, and, in their large scale development, the fragility was revealed.

## Conclusion

This thesis has been an attempt to reimagine the imperial ideology of Britain through culture. It works from the contention specifically that Anglo-Indian society, and its representation in Anglo-Indian novels, has been insufficiently integrated into wider imperial history. *Oakfield*, as an example of such novels, symbolises their usefulness, for it poses a challenge to the dominant narrative about the ideology of this period, which has been characterised by a civilisational confidence and distinct political theory.

Firstly, *Oakfield* illustrates the fragility of Britain’s imperial ideology in the social aspect by highlighting the hidden narrative of doubt about Britain’s moral superiority. Through the presentation of Anglo-Indian society as synonymous with British society, the novel suggests that the problems associated with Anglo-Indian society are in fact those at the heart of British society. As the first novel on Anglo-Indian life proper, it represents a rising social concern, owing to the significance of the novelistic form in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although it is only one novel, it should not be considered an anomaly, but representative of a more widespread sentiment, the development of which was

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<sup>128</sup> Ostrander, ‘Wordsworth’, 55.

<sup>129</sup> Mukherjee, *Forster*, 22.

<sup>130</sup> E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1989), vii.

<sup>131</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, 29.

arrested, first by the civil service reforms, and eventually in the demonstration of a seemingly more 'savage' Indian society in the Mutiny, which exalted British civilisation in comparison. Furthermore, the novel suggests that Anglo-Indian society was beginning to become more integrated into the consciousness of wider society. Read in a historical context, the language reveals the novels engagement with prominent social discourses and suggests that there were more widely held opinions on Anglo-India than has been traditionally recognised. Other sources, such as newspapers, have sought to entertain or distance the British from the Anglo-Indians, and so have obscured historians' perceptions of British opinions towards Anglo-India. This lack of civilisational confidence undermines the very foundation of Britain's imperial ideology.

Secondly, in the political aspect, *Oakfield* shows the fragility of the ideology by demonstrating that the political theory was both inapplicable and meaningless. The form of the Anglo-Indian novel allows particular insight to these ends, for while the political reform represented an ideal in theory, this did not translate in practise. *Oakfield* also illustrates the deeper roots of issues discernible in the immediate post mutiny period and alludes to the ideal of self-rule. In doing so, the novel suggests such ideas were ascendant prior to the Mutiny, and the period of 1828-1856 was far more unstable politically than has traditionally been recognised.

This thesis does not suggest that *Oakfield* alone can prove that Britain's imperial ideology was deeply fractured, but rather that it can considerably support existing arguments. Furthermore, it advocates for the further study of generally ignored novels on Anglo-Indian life, for they represent an important advancement in the *Culture and Imperialism* debate, in their complication of the idea of the 'self'.

Recognising the significance of Anglo-Indian society complicates Said's argument that ideological imposition occurred as a one way process, and came from a secure and coherent ideology. However, equally, *Oakfield*, as one example of an Anglo-Indian novel, does not suggest a society and attendant ideology developed in the colonies, as argued by Suleri and Viswanathan. Instead, it supports Eric Stokes' argument that elements of "English life tested their strength upon the Indian question".<sup>132</sup> *Oakfield*, and arguably other Anglo-Indian novels, in fact move beyond Stokes' argument, for it was not merely English life, but English life in its perfection that was tested upon India. Anglo-Indian society was founded as microcosm of ideal

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<sup>132</sup> Quoted in Singh Mehta, *Liberalism*, 8.

British society, and utilitarianism and liberalism was realised with far greater force in India. In revealing the flaws in both, *Oakfield* underlines the true fragility of Britain's society and the ideology which developed from it.

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