

“Daniells' Calcutta: Visions of Life, Death, and Nabobery in Late-Eighteenth-Century British India”

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Thomas Daniell and his nephew, William Daniell, left the British metropolis for South Asia in 1784 in order to refine their artistic abilities by observing and visually recording a distinctly “Indian picturesque” landscape aesthetic.<sup>1</sup> They desired to capture exotic ecological and social matrixes by producing myriad topographical oil paintings and aquatint etchings while living in India.<sup>2</sup> Most importantly, this uncle and nephew also composed countless sketches with camera obscura, charcoal and ink wash illustrations, and numerous notes and other studies during their travels throughout the subcontinent.<sup>3</sup> **(See images 1-2).** In 1794, after nearly eight year in India,<sup>4</sup> a worsening art market in Calcutta and recurrent ill health compelled the Daniells to return to Britain.<sup>5</sup> Once back in England, the Daniells published many works featuring India’s interior. These painting and aquatints proved very popular among collectors and garnered the attention of artists and orientalist scholars.<sup>6</sup> But these were not the only artworks of importance produced by the duo.<sup>7</sup> This paper suggests that the aquatints composed and sold by Thomas and William Daniell during their time in residence in Calcutta have been greatly overlooked by scholars fixated upon the Daniells’ later images of India’s interior. These earlier works, intended for a British expatriate audience in India, reveal just as much about Indian society and British activity in the subcontinent during the last quarter of the century.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Sutton, *The Daniells: Artists and Travelers* (London: The Bodley Head, 1954), 13-15.

William Daniell, “W. Daniell’s Journal,” in *Walker’s Quarterly*, No. 35-6, edited by Martin Hardie and Muriel Clayton (London: Walker’s Galleries, 1932), 39, 42, 44, 55, 67, 71, 79, 82-4.

<sup>2</sup> Mildred Archer, and Ronald Lightbrown, *India observed: India as Viewed by British artists, 1760-1860* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum in association with Trefoil Books, 1982), 10-12.

<sup>3</sup> Sutton, *The Daniells*, 87, and Mildred Archer, *Early Views of India: The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell, 1786- 1794* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 219.

<sup>4</sup> The Daniells left Britain in 1784, but they did not arrive in Calcutta until early 1786.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Farington, “Friday July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1796,” in *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, Vol. 2, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 623.

<sup>6</sup> Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters, History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977, 1992 Reissue), 126-30.

<sup>7</sup> Particularly, Thomas Daniell, *Views of Calcutta*, 1786-88.

<sup>8</sup> Katherine Prior referred to the Daniells’ artworks published from 1786-88 as being little more than the products of an “apprenticeship in Calcutta.”

As is evident throughout William Daniell's travel journal, these artists wished to locate beauty in economically-troubled regions that were recently conquered by the English East India Company (EIC), as well as in some battle-weary areas exterior to British or Mughal territory.<sup>9</sup> To the Daniells' eyes, these lands exhibited signs of warfare, death, sickness, and social disruption.<sup>10</sup> Nearly a century before they arrived in the subcontinent, numerous societal and governmental circumstances led to the piecemeal geographic fragmentation of the once-mighty Mughal Empire. The erosion of Mughal authority in northern India took the form of regional governors declaring their independence from the increasingly anemic imperial center. This decentralization of power yielded a political context in which newly-independent rulers, as well as prominent South Asian bankers, military leaders, and merchants (including the English East India Company) could attempt to assert their influence over the newly independent regions by subjugating or ousting their respective rivals.<sup>11</sup> During the third quarter of the century, the Company metamorphosed from a marginal trading organization into a sovereign landed entity in the subcontinent.

Despite the centrality of war and territorial annexation to Company dominance,<sup>12</sup> the Daniells' published landscapes always elided destruction and military action through a veneer of topographical beauty. The Daniells' artworks concealed the fears, ambivalences, and harsh social realities experienced by most Britons living in India. From 1786-88 the uncle and nephew

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Katherine Prior, editor. *An Illustrated Journey Round the World*, by Thomas, William, & Samuel Daniell (London: Folio Society, 2007), 25.

<sup>9</sup> Daniell, "W. Daniell's Journal," 50-2, 59-60, 70, 80-2.

<sup>10</sup> Mary A. Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 191-2.

<sup>11</sup> C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 46, 48- 50, 53. See also Kumkum Chatterjee, *Merchants, Politics and Society in Early Modern India, Bihar: 1733- 1820* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 4- 6, 101- 9.

<sup>12</sup> Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5, 48-53.

produced a series of twelve aquatints entitled *Views of Calcutta*. They sold these works by subscription in order to both cover their living expenses in Calcutta as well as finance future travels through India's interior.<sup>13</sup> These streetscapes mainly featured an idealized "white town" whose streets contained imposing, white Palladian buildings. For instance, the ninth image in the series, *Old Court House Street Looking South (Image 3)*, is a streetscape in which the viewer looks straight down the titular street in the white town. Either side of this street is lined with glistening white neoclassical structures of recent construction, each of which radiates an air of monumentality. In between these radiant symbols of British society and colonial progress is an eclectic mixture of South Asian and European peoples as well as palanquins, carts, and a trained elephant. Situated in the foreground is a lone ascetic with long, flowing hair and carrying his characteristic staff, which is pointing toward a small cluster of South Asians carrying Europeans in palanquins. Thomas Daniell later described Calcutta as being a vibrant urban milieu where "the streets are spacious, and from the diversity of European and oriental manners, present a scene of inexhaustible variety and amusement. The chariot often comes into contact with the palankeen; and the phaeton is seen lightly rolling before the litter-like hackney."<sup>14</sup> In each of the twelve *Views* much space in the picture plane is accorded to the sky. The expansive sky was an artistic convention typical of landscape composition during this period,<sup>15</sup> and in each of Daniell's streetscapes the large sky formed an appearance of openness dissimilar to claustrophobic European cities. In the twelve aquatints the sky over Calcutta represented the modernity of the white town as well as the enormity of India more generally.

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<sup>13</sup> Archer, *Early Views of India*, 37.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Daniell and William Daniell, *A Picturesque Voyage of India By Way of China* (London, 1810), 102.

<sup>15</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations During a Tour of the Lakes*, Vol. 1 (London, 1795, Third Edition, 1808), vii.

To the viewer, the British sector of Calcutta appeared as a neoclassical locus of European modernity and civility juxtaposed with “eastern” exoticism in the form of South Asian pedestrians and subcontinental animals. In addition to European mansions, the other aquatints in the series featured recently-built structures, such as the Old Government House (1767), the Council House (1767), the Writers’ Building (1780), the New Court House (1784), the Accountant General’s Office (1787), and St. John’s Church (1787).<sup>16</sup> Most importantly, these works functioned as a counterargument to metropolitan condemnation of the Company’s actions in India. For Edmund Burke and other Whig critics, Company misrule in concert with the personal greed and corruption of Company servants and other Britons in India seemingly spearheaded South Asian decline.<sup>17</sup>

In this context of metropolitan debate as to the nature of empire, the Daniells negotiated a space for their art between colonial knowledge and representation, the poor health and uncomplimentary metropolitan reputations of Britons in India, metropolitan controversies, and the forms and theories of art promoted by the Royal Academy of Art.<sup>18</sup> Most of the literature on the Daniells either focuses upon the relationship of their works to contemporary landscape painters or metropolitan discourse of aesthetic theories, such as that of the sublime and the picturesque.<sup>19</sup> These studies typically emphasized the Daniells’ works depicting overgrown, rural

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<sup>16</sup> John E. Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes: Britain's Global Visual Culture, 1745-1820* (London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2011), 186-7.

<sup>17</sup> Natasha Eaton “Nostalgia for the Exotic: Creating an Imperial Art in London, 1750-1793,” *Eighteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Winter, 2006): 238. Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 19-21, 101-3.

<sup>18</sup> See Holger Hoock, *The King’s Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture, 1760–1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), and David H. Solkin, editor, *The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Hermione de Alemeida and George H. Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2005), Archer, and Lightbrown, *India observed*, John E. Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes: Britain's Global Visual Culture, 1745-1820* (London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2011), Sutton, *The Daniells: Artists and Travelers*, G. H. R. Tillotson, “A Fair Picture: Hodges and the Daniells at Rajmahal, in *Under the Indian Sun: British Landscape Artists*, edited by Pauline Rohatgi and Pheroza Godrej (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1995), G. H. R. Tillotson, “The Indian Picturesque: Images of India in British

landscapes of India's interior, which provided the British with ethnographic, ecological and architectural information. Accordingly, most scholars have regarded Thomas Daniell's *Views of Calcutta* as mere experimental precursors to the truly important artworks produced after returning to England. This paper proposes to diverge from this trend by underscoring that Daniell's *Views* should be read as documents revealing how the social context of the white town, the decline of artistic patronage, and personal ties to Company servants and other Europeans in Calcutta informed their visual productions.

Their artworks were in dialogue with both metropolitan debates over proper modes of rule of the subcontinent as well as aristocratic anxieties stemming from newly-wealthy EIC servants returning to London and acquiring all the trappings of an elite. Many of these Company men returned with Indian goods, artwork, and cultural practices acquired during their time in the subcontinent. To many aristocrats, returned servants' wealth, strange tastes and habits, and social ambition indicated that they surely were corrupted by the oriental peoples, climate, and ecology of India. British elites presumed that EIC officers' ill-gotten riches allowed them to get used to living like an Eastern despotic king in India, and they would want to continue this lifestyle once resettled in England. Indeed, their presence would surely disrupt the proper social ordering in Britain. Critics dubbed returned Company men "nabobs," an anglicized corruption of the Persian word "nawab," meaning deputy or governor.<sup>20</sup> I argue that Thomas and William Daniell necessarily employed their medium of representation as a means of responding to contemporary

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Landscape Painting, 1780-1880," in *The Raj: India and the British, 1600-1947*, edited by C. A. Bayly (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 1990), Giles Tillotson, *The Artificial Empire: The Indian Landscapes of William Hodges* (Surry: Curzon Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> The Mughal emperor granted this title to provincial governors within the empire. Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 11. J. M. Holzman claimed that the first application of this term to returned Company men in England was Horace Walpole's reference to "Mogul Pitt and Nabob Brute" in 1764. J. M. Holzman, *The Nabobs in England: A Study in the Returned Anglo- Indian, 1760- 1785* (New York, 1926), 7.

crises of empire in both Bengal and London. Their artworks were not mere tools of appropriating and controlling representation of India.<sup>21</sup> Rather, they were arguments concerning the actions of the English East India Company as well as the character of British-Indian society more generally in the subcontinent.

Not long after the Daniells arrived in India in 1786, the Company became embroiled in yet another scandal pertaining to corruption and the governance of India.<sup>22</sup> This time it took the form of the impeachment of the former Governor General, Warren Hastings. This imbroglio intensified popular scrutiny and criticism of all Company men as typical immoral nabobs.<sup>23</sup> During his time in India, Hastings was a notable patron of the arts. In addition to patronizing landscape painters,<sup>24</sup> he commissioned many portraits of himself, his family, and notable colleagues.<sup>25</sup> European portraiture was associated with the communication of power and the performance of elite class identity by the individuals featured. The sitters collaborated with the painter to craft a visual representation of the identity that the sitter wished to project to the world. Portraits were inherently encoded with aesthetic and symbolic meanings that indicated the status of featured persons. The sitter's postures, gestures, the placement in relation to featured objects and other persons communicated social statuses and relationships.<sup>26</sup> Rumor of nabobs' wealth in Calcutta led many metropolitan portraitists to relocate to the subcontinent. During the latter half

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<sup>21</sup> Claims that they "travel[led] to record and then take visual possession of the new British India" are frequent in the extant literature on the Daniells. For instance, Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, quote 184.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Clive was the Deputy Governor of Fort Saint David in Madras. In 1757 the Directors of the Company commissioned him to retake Calcutta. Clive became famous as the "founder" of the British Empire in India, but in 1763 and 1772 Parliament launched official investigations into his actions in India. In 1772 Clive was officially charged with mass corruption and mismanagement of the EIC. Nechtman, *Nabobs*, 81-85.

<sup>23</sup> Nechtman, *Nabobs*, 19, 101-2, 126-9.

<sup>24</sup> Isabel Stuebe, "William Hodges and Warren Hastings: A study in Eighteenth-Century Patronage," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 115, No. 847 (October, 1973): 657-666.

<sup>25</sup> Portraiture also functioned as a form of tribute between Company officers and Indian politicians. Natasha Eaton, "Between Mimesis and Alterity: Art, Gift, and Diplomacy in Colonial India, 1770-1800," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Oct., 2004): 816-19.

<sup>26</sup> Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 16-17.

of the century, these British portrait painters composed works featuring nabobs in the guise of British elites.<sup>27</sup> But the occasional presence of South Asian women and children in the picture plane caused some portraits of Company officers to radiate an aura of nabobery.<sup>28</sup> British portraits composed in India both acted as an assertion of nabobs' social aspirations, but such works also identified these men as spearheading an intrusion into the British social order. Therefore, to metropolitan critics, portraiture was necessarily a nabobish medium in Calcutta.

The Daniells were not employees of the Company,<sup>29</sup> but their success in India depended upon their close social associations with EIC servants as well as with civilian businessmen who also had close ties to the Company. As members of the European community of Calcutta, the uncle and nephew were equally in danger of having a cloud of nabobery hanging over them following their return to Britain.<sup>30</sup> I argue that because "Anglo-Indian" portraiture carried the association of nabobish corruption and social aspiration, Thomas Daniell employed the unpopular medium of landscape painting as a means of arguing against metropolitan stereotypes of Company servants as nabobs. They depicted Calcutta as a locus of modernity where EIC officers and other British businessmen were recast as akin to English traditional elites, yet distinct as colonial rulers inhabiting the palatial structures of the white town. The beauty exuded by the Palladian architecture of British buildings did not signify nabobish greed and excess. Rather, bleached walls and ionic columns radiated a light of idealization obscuring suffering, death, and the tenuous existence of Europeans in its umbra. These aquatints constructed a

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<sup>27</sup> Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture: 1770-1825* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 36.

<sup>28</sup> See Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 110-38.

<sup>29</sup> While living in Calcutta they did have minor commissions from the Company and from various high-ranking officers. Martin Hardie and Muriel Clayton, Introduction to "W. Daniell's Journal," 11.

John E. Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes: Britain's Global Visual Culture, 1745-1820* (London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2011), 186

<sup>30</sup> The uncle and nephew team were very much like EIC men and other merchants in that they each ventured to Bengal in search of commercial opportunity and the possibility of social and professional advancement once back in Britain.

reassuring view of British life in a historically unhealthy city currently experiencing economic woes.<sup>31</sup> Thomas Daniell's *Views of Calcutta* attempted to reclaim the honor of an entire social milieu by omitting European suffering and whitewashing the white town with white walls. This neoclassicized view of Calcutta also served to depict the British as a civilizing force and the proper ruler over an Indian peasantry, whose "black town" was almost never in the same picture plane as the white town. Europeans in Calcutta appreciated these images as a visual argument for the virtue rather than corruption of the so-called nabob. Thus, by crafting an idealized view of Calcutta, the Daniells found success with local buyers rooted in their mutual desire for depiction of European life in India as being contrary to metropolitan stereotypes.

### *Departing from the Picturesque*

This essay complicates the commonly-held view of the Daniells as mere landscape artists wishing to add to British knowledge of "a Country very little known to the Europeans, or even to the natives of Hindostan"<sup>32</sup> while also capturing the "Indian picturesque" in their artworks.<sup>33</sup> B. N. Goswamy recently suggested that "the Daniells were not into politics. What interested them were the sights of the land, with its stunning colour, not necessarily the pursuit of an agenda."<sup>34</sup> However, as Anne Bermingham, W. J. T. Mitchell, and others demonstrated decades ago, landscape paintings were inherently interwoven with the politics of social ordering, governance, and imperial expansion.<sup>35</sup> In his 2009 work, *Imperial Landscapes: Britain's Global Visual*

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<sup>31</sup> Natasha Eaton, "Virtual Witnessing? Balthazar Solvyns and the Navigation of Precision, c.1790-1840," *Journal of Historical Geography*, No. 43 (2014): 50.

<sup>32</sup> Farington, "3 November, 1793," in *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, Vol. 1, 84.

<sup>33</sup> Archer, and Lightbrown, *India observed*, 8-14. See also Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

<sup>34</sup> B. N. Goswamy, *Daniells' India: Views From the Eighteenth Century* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2013), 12.

<sup>35</sup> Anne Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 66, 75. W. T. J. Mitchell, Introduction to *Landscape and Power*, edited by W. T. J. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 1-3, and W. T. J. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," in *Landscape and Power*, 10.

*Culture, 1745-1820*, John E. Crowley showed that English picturesque landscape painting emerged in the latter part of the eighteenth century as a fluid concept formed by a dialogue of colonial representation in the imperial center and each periphery. Although global colonial expansion after the Seven Years War transformed metropolitan aesthetics, topographical painting equally informed British audiences as to the nature of empire.<sup>36</sup>

As is evidenced by Crowley's recent monograph, much of the historiography pertaining to British imperial landscape painting continues to be dominated by discussions of the picturesque aesthetic. Natasha Eaton claims that this continuity is rooted in scholars' adherence to the arguments and approaches to British Indian landscape art presented in the pioneering works of Mildred and W. G. Archer in the 1960s-1980s. The Archers asserted that the imperial picturesque was not only the proper prism through which to study the Daniells and others, but also that it was the major aesthetic legacy of British imperialism in South Asia. The picturesque functioned as a tool for disguising the harsh realities of empire and decolonization during the decades following Indian independence as British Indian artwork was integrated into British national collections.<sup>37</sup>

This persistence of the picturesque is striking given that as far back as 1992 Kim Michasiw argued that scholars should not view the "alien" subjects and objects of imperial landscape representation through the lens of the English picturesque. European artists did claim that their landscapes of India were "picturesque." Yet, for one to investigate such productions merely according to this aesthetic greatly limits the scope of analysis for images that were

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<sup>36</sup> Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes*, 4-7, 47, 169, 193, 203.

<sup>37</sup> Natasha Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 111.

It should be noted that the Archers were associated with the British colonial Civil Service in India during the last decades before 1947. Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, 10. See also Mildred Archer, *Early Views of India: The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell, 1786- 1794* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980).

inherently influenced by dynamics external to Britain.<sup>38</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell also adds that the continuity of this approach to British landscape paintings of India is in actuality interwoven with nostalgia for empire. To fixate upon British aesthetic concepts in an imperial context is to presume that British modes of seeing and representing were authoritative.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, it is far more fruitful to depart from the extant secondary literature by not focusing upon the Daniells' works in terms of what they may or may not have contributed to global British picturesque landscape painting.

***“Times Are Changed”: Negotiating a Space for Landscape Painting in Recession-Torn  
Calcutta***

Immediately after its founding in 1769, young artists of various social strata and from around the British Isles sought acceptance as students of the prestigious Royal Academy of Arts in London. From the very beginning, the objectives of the Academy were to further the arts, contribute to the glory of the British nation, enhance the prestige of their royal patron, and train budding artists to become masters of their craft.<sup>40</sup> But admission was only guaranteed if one was fortunate enough to have close ties to full-fledged academicians or influential patrons of the arts.<sup>41</sup> Thomas Daniell was one of these lucky students. Born in 1749 to a middling-class family of inn-keepers, at the age of fourteen Daniell's parents apprenticed him to a London coach-builder and painter. During his seven years as an apprentice, Thomas Daniell showed such promise as an artist that his work garnered the attention of Charles Catton, who was the coach

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<sup>38</sup> Kim Michasiw, “Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque,” *Representations*, No. 38 (Spring, 1992): 94-6.

<sup>39</sup> Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” 5, 19.

<sup>40</sup> Joshua Reynolds, “Discourse I: Delivered at the Opening of the Royal Academy, January 2, 1769,” in *Sir Joshua Reynolds Discourses on Art*, edited by Robert R. Wark (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 11-14, 19-21. Also Hoock, *The King's Artists*, 1-3.

<sup>41</sup> Hoock, *The King's Artists*, 58-61.

painter for King George III and would later become a key founder of the Royal Academy.<sup>42</sup>

Daniell's ties to Catton allowed him the opportunity to exhibit his first painting at the Academy in 1772, and he was subsequently accepted as a student in 1773. Over the next decade Thomas Daniell refined his skills as a painter and engraver; exhibited numerous landscape paintings, floral images, and portraits at the Royal Academy; sought patronage from art connoisseurs; and established relationships with notable metropolitan artists.<sup>43</sup> However, if Daniell wished to be elected an Associate of the Academy or eventually a Royal Academician,<sup>44</sup> he would have to produce works that were far more impressive and novel.

Despite the marked expansion of both the art market and exhibition culture, most aspiring artists in late eighteenth-century London realized that fame and fortune were not easily won.<sup>45</sup> In fact, numerous painters found the metropolitan art scene to be so prohibitive that they took their skills to a British province or a colonial milieu where they could be appreciated.<sup>46</sup> Daniell's acquaintance with the highly-respected London architect and Associate James Wyatt would greatly aid him in his aspirations. Wyatt later claimed that he "was the principle cause of Daniell going to India, having spoken to George Hardinge, at a time when persons *not appointed* were refused leave to go."<sup>47</sup> Hardinge, an influential lawyer and politician, had ties to both the

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<sup>42</sup> Sutton, *The Daniells*, 13-15.

<sup>43</sup> Hardie and Clayton, Introduction to "W. Daniell's Journal," 8-9, appendix 86.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Daniell did in fact eventually become an Associate in 1796 and a Royal Academician in 1799. William Sandby, *The Royal Academy of Arts: From its Foundation in 1768 to the Present Time*, Volume 1 (London, 1862), 315.

<sup>45</sup> John Bonehill, "'The Hapless Adventurer': Hodges and the London Art World," in *William Hodges 1744-97: The Art of Exploration*, edited by Geoff Quilley and John Bonehill (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 9. Also Archer, *Early Views of India*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph Farinton mentions in his journal that there was even "want of sufficient employ" during the latter decades of the century, even among established artists in London. Joseph Farington, "18 October, 1793," in *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, Vol. 1, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 72. For more on patronage, see Louise Lippincott, *Selling Art in Georgian London: The Rise of Arthur Pond* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 31-55.

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Farington, "Wednesday July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1796," in *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, Vol. 2, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 611-12. Farington's Emphasis.

Academy as well as the East India Company. In December of 1783 he represented the Company and expressed its opposition to Fox's India Bill in the House of Lords.<sup>48</sup> Presumably,<sup>49</sup> Hardinge used his influence among the Company's Court of Directors to have Daniell and his nephew granted official authorization to go to India on a Company ship and work as "engravers" in Calcutta.<sup>50</sup> Although the extant web of social relationships between the art world of the Academy and the commercial realm of the Company in Calcutta seemingly allowed the Daniells opportunities for advancement, the uncle and nephew team would discover life in Calcutta to be even harsher than in Britain.

Following their arrival in 1786, the Daniells found that recession-torn Calcutta was hardly the most conducive environment for furthering one's career in the arts.<sup>51</sup> Despite the sharp decrease in artistic patronage by Company officers,<sup>52</sup> the Daniells were able to find some success by composing idealized aquatint streetscapes of the city. However, the Daniells' *Views of Calcutta* (1786-88) did much more than romanticize the social life of the white town. And they were not composed as mere souvenirs for rose-tinting a Briton's experiences in India post-nostos. Rather, they were complex texts presenting a series of arguments pertaining to the nature of the Company's activities in India as well as the development of a steadfast, upright, and prosperous "Anglo-Indian" social matrix. Thomas Daniell's *Views* functioned both as a denial of the social and economic instabilities plaguing most British inhabitants of the city since the early 1780s as well as a tool for the Daniells to reintroduce landscape painting into an art market where there were few buyers. Landscapes had greatly fallen out of favor in British India

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<sup>48</sup> Henry Manners Chichester, "Hardinge, George," in *The Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900*, Vol. 24 (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1890), 340-1.

<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, none of the secondary literature on the Daniells mentions how they were able to get approval by the EIC to go to Calcutta. This relationship with Wyatt and Hardinge seems likely to be the reason.

<sup>50</sup> Sutton, *The Daniells*, 13-15.

<sup>51</sup> Eaton, "Virtual Witnessing?," 50.

<sup>52</sup> Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*, 87-93.

throughout much of the eighteenth century, and most patrons and collectors were primarily interested in portraiture and miniatures.<sup>53</sup> The Daniells revived the popularity of landscape painting by crafting an idealized, reassuring vision of Calcutta that elided contemporary economic woes. The only way for Daniell to amass a small fortune with an unpopular medium in a post-patron, recession-mired city on a swamp was to re-envision Calcutta as a wealthy metropolis. The fragility of merchants' personal finances during these years meant that art connoisseurs were necessarily fewer. Thus, Thomas Daniell wished to create aquatints that would have mass appeal to Britons. Although only about thirty percent of British residences in Calcutta had pictures on the walls,<sup>54</sup> the Daniells managed to sell many sets to a European public no longer willing to invest large amounts in artworks.<sup>55</sup> These cheaper, transportable prints featuring idealized, and rarely-depicted, street scenes of Calcutta managed to garner some success among Europeans who rented their homes by the month and had little interest in acquiring expensive decorations.<sup>56</sup> British buyers of Daniell's prints knew that these images of the city were inaccurate through their omission of much of the unpleasantness and volatility of urban life,<sup>57</sup> but they preferred Thomas Daniell's city of white palaces.

Prior to the publication of the Daniells' *Views of Calcutta*, very few professional artists produced cityscapes or streetscapes of Calcutta. Although the Company was not a consistent patron of the arts,<sup>58</sup> the Directors commissioned the first cityscapes of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and Tellicherry, the Cape of Good Hope, and St Helena in 1726. The artists, George Lambert and Samuel Scott, never visited any of these places. But their works seemed accurate

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<sup>53</sup> Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, 389-90.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 81-2.

<sup>55</sup> Archer, *Early Views of India*, 37.

<sup>56</sup> Prior, *An Illustrated Journey Round the World*, 29, 32, de Alemeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 184.

<sup>57</sup> Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes*, 181.

<sup>58</sup> Pauline Rohatgi and Pheroza Godrej, introduction to *Under the Indian Sun: British Landscape Artists*, edited by Pauline Rohatgi and Pheroza Godrej (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1995), vi.

enough to the Directors, who wished for these images to hang in the Court Room of the East India House and represent global Company power.<sup>59</sup> The depiction of Calcutta provides the viewer with very little detail of the city, other than the Fort and Saint Anne's Church, and absolutely no sign of South Asian peoples or ecology. **(Image 4)**. Rather, clouds, ships, smoke from ships, and fog sit in the foreground and middle ground, blocking the viewer from seeing much of the city, which is relegated to the background. This is the earliest known picture of the city, and it continued to circulate in mezzotint and engraving form in Britain throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>60</sup> It was not until the last few decades of the century that landscape artists traveled to the subcontinent and had the patronage of newly-wealthy Company men.

The years following the loss and reclamation of Calcutta by the British in 1756-7 led to unprecedented wealth for the Company as well as for its officers. The acquisitions of larger swaths of territory following the EIC's victory at the Battle of Buxar in 1764 opened up further channels for enrichment. The Company monopolized direct trade between its Indian ports and Britain, but servants could engage in private "country trade" to supplement their meager salaries. Additionally, nearly all officers had frequent opportunities to engage in various forms of fraud, extortion, and embezzlement from Indian merchants and politicians.<sup>61</sup> High-ranking Company diplomats also found it very lucrative to accept presents from allied Indian leaders or loan money to them at usurious rates of interest.<sup>62</sup> Parliament's passage of the Regulating Act of 1773 was an attempt to drastically reform Company practices in India. The Act increased servants' salaries, curtailed private trade, banned the acceptance of "bribes" from Indian leaders, and prohibited the

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<sup>59</sup> Brian Allen, "The East India Company's Settlement Pictures: George Lambert and Samuel Scott," in *Under the Indian Sun: British Landscape Artists*, edited by Pauline Rohatgi and Pheroza Godrej (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1995), 7-12.

<sup>60</sup> Pheroza Godrej and Pauline Rohatgi, *Scenic Splenours: India Through the Printed Image* (London, 1989), 15, 20.

<sup>61</sup> P. J. Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes: The British In Bengal in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 158-62.

<sup>62</sup> Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire*, 55, 62-3.

misappropriation of war spoils.<sup>63</sup> Rumors of unrelenting Company corruption continued to swirl intensely around Britain long after the opening of Samuel Foote's satirical comedy, *The Nabob*, at the Theatre Royal Haymarket in the City of Westminster in 1772.<sup>64</sup> Over the next decade, articles appeared in metropolitan newspapers confirming such rumors by listing the estimated personal fortunes of top Company officials in India.<sup>65</sup> These rumors were not entirely unfounded. Only with the passage of Pitt's India Act of 1784 were nabobish schemes in India almost entirely ended.<sup>66</sup>

In the decades prior to the implementation of the India Act, newly-wealthy EIC men and other merchants were far more apt to patronize artists and scholars in Calcutta. After attaining the rank of Governor General of the Company in 1773, Warren Hastings proceeded to impose a series of measures intended to reform local agrarian policies, augment Company bureaucratic and governmental procedures,<sup>67</sup> and decipher proper law codes for sectors of the Indian populace.<sup>68</sup> Synchronously, Hastings was a notable patron of the arts for personal as well as political purposes. He commissioned landscape artists to accompany him on military campaigns throughout northern India.<sup>69</sup> In addition to contracting familial portraiture, the Governor General commissioned portraits of himself and South Asian leaders that served strategic purposes.<sup>70</sup> Because portraiture functioned as tribute in South Asian diplomatic relations, artworks and

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<sup>63</sup> Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes*, 130-6, 158-60. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire*, 59-60.

<sup>64</sup> P. J. Marshall, *Problems of Empire: Britain and India 1757- 1813* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968), 147- 9. See also Samuel Foote, *The Nabob* (Chadwyck-Healey, 1996).

<sup>65</sup> Nechtman, *Nabobs*, 13-14.

<sup>66</sup> Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Cultures, and Conquest in the East, 1750 -1850* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 40, 48.

<sup>67</sup> Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (London: Orient Longman, Second Edition, 1982), 12-3, 15-7, 21, 38-9, 91-4, 134-7, 194-5.

<sup>68</sup> I am using the term "decipher" here because Hastings and his scholars attempted to locate proper legal codes based upon South Asian religious texts. Michael S. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire, and National Culture: India 1770- 1880* (Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 20-22.

<sup>69</sup> Most notably William Hodges. Isabel Stuebe, "William Hodges and Warren Hastings: A study in Eighteenth-Century Patronage," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 115, No. 847 (October, 1973): 659-63.

<sup>70</sup> Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, 132-54.

artistic patronage were important tools of the Company's aggressive foreign policy during this period.<sup>71</sup> In sum, prior to the mid-1780s, portraiture played an important diplomatic function in Calcutta, and British artists were happy to be employed producing political and personal artworks for various Company officers and other wealthy patrons.

Soon after Warren Hastings resigned from the Governor Generalship and returned to England in 1785, it became clear to most European residents of Calcutta that the intermittent economic boom periods of the past two decades had come to an end.<sup>72</sup> This was particularly true for artists. Shortly after his arrival in Calcutta that year, Ozias Humphrey, an Academy Associate and notable painter of miniatures, claimed "there never was known in Calcutta so much poverty or so much scarcity of money, as there is at this time. All the first families are withdrawn from it, and I have been confidently assured, there are scarcely twenty persons left in Indostan, whose fortunes would each amount to twenty thousand pounds."<sup>73</sup> By the time that the Daniells arrived in 1786, the undermining of a number of Hastings' reforms,<sup>74</sup> the flight of many notable English bankers and other investors,<sup>75</sup> and stricter governmental oversight of the EIC in India yielded a veritable recession in Calcutta.<sup>76</sup>

A sharp decrease in Company and private patronage, a volatile art market, few exhibition spaces,<sup>77</sup> and ever-increasing taxes on art imports to Britain were only compounded by Company

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<sup>71</sup> Eaton, "Between Mimesis and Alterity." 816-44. Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*, 157-67.

<sup>72</sup> Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes*, 14, 106-28. Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*, 81-3.

<sup>73</sup> Ozias Humphrey, "Ozias Humphrey to Mary Boydell, Calcutta, 29, December 1785, Humphrey Mss, Royal Academy Library, London, HU/3/49-50. Cited in Prior, *An Illustrated Journey Round the World*, 26.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: The British in Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 100-1.

<sup>75</sup> Natasha Eaton, "Excess in the city? The Consumption of Imported Prints in Colonial Calcutta, c.1780ec.1795," *The Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2003): 45-74.

<sup>76</sup> Eaton, "Virtual Witnessing?," 50

<sup>77</sup> Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*, 85-6. For customs duties on art imports to Britain, see Hoock, *The King's Artists*, 240-5.

efforts to restrict artists from entering India.<sup>78</sup> After all, when the Daniells ventured to the subcontinent in 1784, Calcutta was already rife with artists who were increasingly impoverished and desperate for any form of patronage.<sup>79</sup> As the amateur artist and Company military officer, William Baillie, later reflected “Landscape painting will never do. Daniel[I] found it a very discouraging pursuit with all his merit. Nothing but portrait has any chance, and even for that there is no Rage at present.”<sup>80</sup> Thomas Daniell was also quite struck by the notable decline in the resale value of art in post-Hastings Calcutta.<sup>81</sup> When discussing the sale of a couple of paintings belonging to a London artist, he stated “I never should have got a fiftieth part of the value of either of them in Calcutta. Pictures they have in abundance of one sort or other and as to Prints the commonest Bazar is full of them. Hodges’ Indian views are selling off at the outcry of cartloads and altho’ framed and glazed are bought for less money than the glass alone could be purchased in the bazar. *Times are changed.*”<sup>82</sup>

But over the next two years the Daniells managed to get small-time artistic commissions as well as some miscellaneous jobs.<sup>83</sup> In one instance in 1787, the Company itself hired the duo to clean, repair, and rehang all of the paintings in the EIC’s council room prior to the arrival of the new Governor General, Lord Cornwallis.<sup>84</sup> In essence, the Daniells were of the lucky few artists who

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<sup>78</sup> Hoock, *The King’s Artists*, 241-5, Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, 58.

<sup>79</sup> Eaton, “Virtual Witnessing?,” 50.

<sup>80</sup> William Baillie, Letter from William Baillie to Ozias Humphrey, Calcutta, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1793, in “Letters from Bengal: 1788 to 1795: Unpublished Papers from the Correspondence of Ozias Humphrey,” edited by E. Cotton, *Bengal, Past & Present: Journal of the Calcutta Historical Society*, Vol. 35 (1928):127.

<sup>81</sup> It should also be noted that so many Europeans died from disease that art collections, including family portraits whose identification was potentially lost, continued to enter and reenter art markets. Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*, 77.

<sup>82</sup> Daniell is referring to William Hodges, who was patronized by Warren Hastings to paint landscapes of India a few years prior to the Daniells’ arrival in Calcutta.

Thomas Daniell, Letter from Thomas Daniell to Ozias Humphrey, Calcutta, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1788, in “Letters from Bengal: 1788 to 1795: Unpublished Papers from the Correspondence of Ozias Humphrey,” edited by E. Cotton, *Bengal, Past & Present: Journal of the Calcutta Historical Society*, Vol. 35 (1928):113. Emphasis Daniell’s.

<sup>83</sup> Archer, *Early Views of India*, 14.

<sup>84</sup> *Bengal Public Consultations*, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1787. Cited by Hardie and Clayton, Introduction to “W. Daniell’s Journal,” 11.

managed to evade insolvency through shrewd business practices and webs of official and unofficial commission.<sup>85</sup>

The Daniells sought the patronage of publicity managers long before the initial announcement of their *Views of India* in the *Calcutta Chronicle* of 17 July, 1786.<sup>86</sup> The agency house of Paxton and Cockerell oversaw the frequent advertisement of their aquatints and other artworks, reserved gallery space for their paintings, and managed the sale of their pieces.<sup>87</sup> Despite this collaboration, Thomas Daniell was initially pessimistic about how well his Calcutta views would sell by subscription. In a letter to his friend Ozias Humphrey, who was now living in London, Daniell claimed that his *Views of Calcutta* “will appear very poor in your land, I fear. You must look upon it as a *Bengalee* work.”<sup>88</sup> Certainly, not all initial reviews were positive. William Hickey, a prominent and eccentric Calcutta lawyer and art collector, proclaimed that these aquatints “proved very inferior” to their later works. He nevertheless bought sets for himself as well as many others to be given as gifts to friends in Britain. He also encouraged other moneyed art collectors of Calcutta to acquire Daniell’s aquatints by subscription.<sup>89</sup> Some artists, such as Baillie, would later concede that they “have wasted a great deal of time on that most unprofitable branch of the Art, Landscape painting.”<sup>90</sup> The Daniells’ savvy ties to houses of agency led many collectors to seek out these aquatints. The success of these Calcutta images was not merely rooted in their relentless advertising and displaying of the Daniells’ works. Despite

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<sup>85</sup> Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*, 93.

<sup>86</sup> *Calcutta Chronicle*, 17 July, 1786. Quoted in Archer, *Early Views of India*, 13.

<sup>87</sup> Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*, 93.

<sup>88</sup> Daniell, Letter from Thomas Daniell to Ozias Humphrey, Calcutta, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1788, in “Letters from Bengal: 1788 to 1795,” 113.

<sup>89</sup> William Hickey, *Memoirs of William Hickey*, Volume 3, 1782-1790, edited by Alfred Spencer (New York: Knopf, 1923), quote 327, 342.

<sup>90</sup> William Baillie, Letter from William Baillie to Ozias Humphrey, Calcutta, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1795, in “Letters from Bengal: 1788 to 1795: Unpublished Papers from the Correspondence of Ozias Humphrey,” edited by E. Cotton, *Bengal, Past & Present: Journal of the Calcutta Historical Society*, Vol. 35 (1928):128.

being obviously unrealistic and poorly “stained principally by natives,”<sup>91</sup> the *Views* were popular due to their radiation of an aura of urban flawlessness epitomized by the featured white monoliths of modernity. Considering that most buyers acquired multiple sets, it is likely that these artworks were popular as idealized images that could be sent to friends or family members in Europe who were dubious of European society in the subcontinent. The aquatints were powerful arguments in defense of the so-called nabob. Much as the bricks of the glistening white-town buildings received new layers of chunar plaster and whitewash at the end of each monsoon season,<sup>92</sup> Thomas Daniell’s *Views* patched over any recent recession-wrought cracks in the façade of Anglo-Indian society in Calcutta.

The third plate in Daniell’s *Views of Calcutta*, “Part of the Old Tank” (**Image 5**) features the south-east corner of the reservoir, which was adjacent to Old Fort William and served as the epicenter of the white town.<sup>93</sup> Also known as “the Red Tank,” this cistern was anterior to British settlement at the site. Due to the unhygienic state of the Hughli River, it served as one of the main sources of fresh water to the residents of Calcutta throughout the eighteenth century. Tank Square, with its reservoir and the surrounding park-like area, was a popular location for European social gatherings. Despite being such a fashionable locale in the white town, by 1755 it had fallen into a state of neglect because the Company had not conducted the annual repairs and cleaning for several years.<sup>94</sup> Trash, carrion, waste, insects, and other sources of foulness made this popular social spot a source of the unhealthfulness of the white town.<sup>95</sup> In an effort to both

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<sup>91</sup> Baillie, Letter from William Baillie to Ozias Humphrey, Calcutta, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1793, in “Letters from Bengal: 1788 to 1795: Unpublished Papers from the Correspondence of Ozias Humphrey,” 125.

<sup>92</sup> Archer, *Early Views of India*, 14.

<sup>93</sup> Meera Kosambi and John E. Brush, “Three Colonial Port Cities in India,” *Geographical Review*, Vol. 78, No. 1. (January, 1988): 43.

<sup>94</sup> Kathleen Blechynden, *Calcutta Past and Present* (London: W. Thacker & Co., 1905), 25-26.

<sup>95</sup> Suprekas Ghosh, “The Urban Pattern of Calcutta, India,” *Economic Geography*, Vol. 26, No. 1. (January, 1950): 53.

purify and modernize Tank Square, Warren Hastings commissioned the thorough cleaning and embankment of the cistern.<sup>96</sup> The Tank featured in Daniell's aquatint is certainly not a stagnant basin of filth. Rather, Hastings' overhaul allows the clear-blue water to exude purity as its surface reflects the equally spotless surrounding Palladian buildings of the white town. An ornate stone wall with an iron railing surrounds the park area of the Tank and signifies the improvements made to the reservoir. But this barrier does not keep the crowds out. Three sepoys in the foreground are walking within the walls of the park. The first gestures to the throngs of South Asians and Europeans occupying the steps extending from the water to the entranceway near the visible neoclassical European structures. The stairway serves to associate the pure water and general improvement of the tank with the modernity embodied by the Swedish Mission Church (1770) and the adjacent British buildings. Indeed, the white buildings are literally reflected in the cistern in order to associate pure water with the apparently clean, white buildings representing recent improvements to European sector of the city.

“The New Buildings at Chouringhee” (**Image 6**), the seventh plate of Daniell's *Views*, constructs a marked contrast between the old and new Calcutta. Chouringhee Road extends diagonally from the bottom-right corner of the picture plane to the vanishing point situated near the lower left side of the plane. Inhabiting the road are a few carts and carriages containing South Asians or Europeans, small groupings of pedestrians and soldiers, and pack animals. Although the majority of those featured on the street are residents of the black town, Chouringhee Road was a major thoroughfare of the European sector of the city.<sup>97</sup> Situated between whitewashed buildings and New Fort William, this road was not necessarily a dividing line between the British and Indian towns, but functioned as a boundary between the grid-pattern of the white

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<sup>96</sup> Lionel James Trotter, *Warren Hastings: A Biography* (London: William H. Allen & Co., 1878), 169.

<sup>97</sup> Alemeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 186.

town and the organic growth pattern of the much larger surrounding areas.<sup>98</sup> In actuality, many South Asians lived in the white town. According to one European resident of the white town in the 1770s, “the natives were made to know that they might erect their chappor (thatched) huts in what part of the town they pleased ... Every man permitted his own servants to erect straw huts against the outside of his house, but without digging holes, to prevent more disagreeable neighbours from occupying the spot.”<sup>99</sup> Daniell omitted Indian residences from his images of the white town in order to equate the modern European structures and other signifiers of European social life with the improvement, the enrichment, and the proper ordering of the city.

In “The New Buildings at Chouringhee” each of the stuccoed, luminous structures of the purportedly European side of the road featured balustraded roofs, pillared verandahs, and neoclassical columned facades. Unlike South Asian architecture located in black town, each of these European buildings was placed upon its own separate plot of land within the grid. Conversely, to the left of the street, the land seems entirely undeveloped. This space functions as a part of the maidan between the road and the fort. This stretch of terrain was not a part of the black town, but the presence of low hedgerows, storks in a stagnant pond adorned by a clump of wild palm trees, and grazing goats and oxen designated it as exterior to the British sector of Calcutta. The inclusion of Indian goat herders and an Indian women walking with her child thoroughly equates undeveloped landscape with South Asians as well as Calcutta prior to economic development occurring during Hastings’ Governor Generalship. Throughout Daniell’s *Views* the “white palaces” of the white town signified the modernity imparted by British rule of the city, but they also served as monuments to the great fortunes amassed by the British during

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<sup>98</sup> Archer, *Early Views of India*, 27.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in P. J. Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company,” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2. (May, 2000): 318.

the past few decades. Therefore, the Palladian structures on the right side of Chowringhee Road were both actual buildings as well as a metonym for an idealized vision of prosperous British existence in the city on the swamp.

***Sickness and the Nabob: Eliding the Unhealthfulness of the White Town***

In 1690 when Job Charnock first sought a site to replace the vanquished Company factory at Patna,<sup>100</sup> he chose a bank of the Hughli river that would allow the EIC to engage in trade “with sword in hand.”<sup>101</sup> Although the site was easily defensible from land-based incursions, the original trading factory was located on little more than an unstable silt deposit between an acrid salt-water deltaic swamp and the Hughli River. During the first decades of settlement, monsoon winds, rains, and flooding would nearly engulf the city each year. These persistent drainage problems resulted in damage to Company buildings, which were mainly constructed from wood and thatched palm branches.<sup>102</sup> The Company Directors did not authorize the construction of durable structures from brick or stone due to a desire to maintain high profits and little interest in investing much money in buildings in politically-volatile Bengal.<sup>103</sup>

Thus, during the rainy season, wooden structures collapsed due to the muddy ground giving way. EIC officers would recurrently report to the Directors in London that erosion, collapsing structures, and construction caused the city to be filled with “Holes... fill’d with Water

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<sup>100</sup> Prabodh Biswas, “Job Charnock,” in *Calcutta: The Living City: Volume 1: The Past*, edited by Sukanta Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), 6-7.

<sup>101</sup> Job Charnock “Job Charnock and Francis Ellis ‘To H. E. Sir John Child, Captain Generall of His Majestie of Greate Brittain’s Land and Sea Fforces in the North of India, Governor of Bombay, Generall for the Rt. Hono’ble Company’s Affiaires in India, Persia &ct. and the Councill.’” In Henry Yule, *The Diary of William Hedges, Esq. During His Agency in Bengal* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1887-1889), 64.

<sup>102</sup> Rhoads Murphey, “The City in the Swamp: Aspects of the Site and Early Growth of Calcutta,” *The Geographic Journal*, Vol. 130, No.2. (June, 1964): 241-242, 251-4.

<sup>103</sup> in Travers, “Death and the Nabob,” 85.

which there Stagnates and corrupts.”<sup>104</sup> Nearly forty years after Calcutta’s founding, Alexander Hamilton, a Scottish seaborne trader, remarked in his published 1727 travelogue that Charnock “could not have chosen a more unhealthful place on all the river.” For Hamilton, such a noxious environment surely led to the notoriously high rates of European morbidity and death.<sup>105</sup> During the first half of the eighteenth century, dysentery, cholera, insect-borne diseases, and myriad other ailments caused the average life expectancy for a European to be five years or fewer.<sup>106</sup> Approximately sixty percent of all EIC servants in Calcutta between its founding and 1775 died before being able to return to Britain. The rate of mortality was just as high for civilian traders and other private businessmen in Calcutta during this period.<sup>107</sup>

Thomas Daniell’s *Views of Calcutta* reconciled the tenuous nature of life and the great possibility of demise for Europeans in this city. In order to visually transform the city in the swamp into a locus of British civility, wealth, and modernity these landscapes had to omit the insecure and unhealthy existence of life in the white town of Calcutta. Park Street Cemetery and other symbols of rampant, meaningless illness and death were excluded and overwritten by the prominence of memorials to those who valiantly advanced British commercial interests and defended the city when the EIC had less power in Bengal. Company buildings, civilian mansions, and monuments mediated the ways in which Europeans understood the destruction and British death inherent in Calcutta’s past. The juxtaposition of memorials with modern

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<sup>104</sup> “Extract from General Letter from the Court to Bengal. London, February 4, 1709. Paragraphs 37-40 and 42. Letter Book No. 13.” Reprinted in C. R. Wilson, editor. *Old Fort William in Bengal: A Selection of Official Documents Dealing with its History*, Vol.1. (London: J. Murray, 1906), 75

<sup>105</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies Being the Observations and Remarks of Capt. Alexander Hamilton, Who Resided in These Parts from the Year 1688, to 1723. Trading and Travelling, by Sea and Land, to Most of the Countries and Islands of Commerce and Navigation, Between the Cape of Good-Hope, and the Island of Japan*, Second Edition, Vol. II (London: Printed for A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch, at the Red-Lion in Pater-noster-row., 1727), ii, 5. Quoted in Robert Travers, “Death and the Nabob: Imperialism and Commemoration in Eighteenth- Century India.” *Past & Present*, No. 196 (Autumn, 2007): 87.

<sup>106</sup> Murphey, “The City in the Swamp,” 254.

<sup>107</sup> Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes*, 218-19. Also cited in Travers, “Death and the Nabob,” 87.

Company structures and mansions suggested that the luminous walls of the white town were themselves monuments to British triumph in imperial expansion and overcoming the specter of meaningless death. Daniell's *Views* were reassuring visions of a white town whose cemeteries overflowed and whose churchyards became labyrinths of mausoleums of newly-wealthy Europeans. Vibrant crowds and radiant façades imbued the white town with life; mausoleums and monuments celebrating EIC officers' valor were the only sign of death. By only acknowledging British death through monuments to EIC virtue, Daniell's streetscapes functioned as a counterargument to the metropolitan equation of illness in Calcutta with nabobish immorality. Therefore, Thomas Daniell's streets lined with white monoliths of European life as well as monuments to meaningful, heroic death elided signs of disease and deflected metropolitan accusations of nabobery.

In January of 1757 Company forces led by Robert Clive reclaimed Calcutta from the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-daula, who had ousted the British the previous June.<sup>108</sup> Because a number of Company structures were destroyed during the incursions and subsequent occupation, the Company's Directors authorized mass rebuilding. Increased military and political might following victory at the Battle of Buxar in 1764 encouraged the Company and other European merchants to invest in more elaborate building and infrastructure in and around Calcutta.<sup>109</sup> Hastings' reforms and projects further developed both the white and black towns. Thomas Daniell later reflected that "the splendor of the British arms produced a sudden change in its aspect: the bamboo roof suddenly vanished; the marble column took place of brick walls;

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<sup>108</sup> P. J. Marshall, "The British in Asia: Trade to Dominion, 1700- 1765," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Volume 2, edited by P. J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 502.

<sup>109</sup> Dhriti Kanta Lahiri Chaudhuri, "Trends in Calcutta Architecture, 1690-1903," in *Calcutta: The Living City: Volume 1: The Past*, edited by Sukanta Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), 158-60.

princely mansions were erected by private individuals.”<sup>110</sup> But improvements in the quality of infrastructure and buildings in the white town did not categorically mend the health of Britons in Calcutta. As late as the end of the eighteenth century, awareness of the fragility of life in the city was so acute that each November Company servants and other prominent Europeans would attend a reception in celebration of having survived another year.<sup>111</sup>

Of course, news of high rates of sickness and mortality among Europeans in Calcutta reached Britain. Metropolitan critics condemned the white town of Calcutta as being the epicenter of nabobish vice, greed, effeminacy, and disease. Company servants were ostensibly potential contaminants to Britain’s morality as well as its physical health by importing Asiatic corruption as well as South Asian illnesses. An array of mid and late-eighteenth century British writers claimed that the body was in perpetual flux and had to be regulated through careful intake of consumed substances, one’s behaviors, climate, and sensory inputs.<sup>112</sup> European doctors in India and in England warned that the overconsumption of Eastern goods, such as tea and opium, would imbalance one’s body and adversely affect the nervous system. Therefore, the nabob’s declining health both mirrored and was a symptom of his moral putrefaction.<sup>113</sup> But Company men in Calcutta devised ways of deflecting and arguing against such denigrations. As Robert Travers recently illuminated, the construction of monuments in the white town allowed EIC servants to cope with the tenuous nature of life.<sup>114</sup> These memorials allowed Europeans to dismiss accusations of nabobery and re-envision themselves as heroic - and at times sacrificial - imperial officers bringing civility to Calcutta and furthering British interests in the subcontinent.

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<sup>110</sup> Thomas and William Daniell, *A Picturesque Voyage of India By Way of China*, 104.

<sup>111</sup> Murphey, “The City in the Swamp,” 254.

<sup>112</sup> In fact, viewing art supposedly helped to balance the humors of the body. Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*, 78.

<sup>113</sup> Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*, 77-8.

<sup>114</sup> Travers, “Death and the Nabob,” 94, 107.

Accordingly, the first two plates of Thomas Daniell's *Views of Calcutta* each feature a monument to the most infamous instance of British death in Calcutta, the Black Hole incident. The first aquatint (**Image 7**), *The Old Fort, the Playhouse, Holwell's Monument* (1786), is a streetscape whose perspective allows the viewer looks down Clive Street to a vanishing point next to the Playhouse. The viewer sees through Thomas Daniell's eyes as he stood among the people and traced the image through camera obscura. The street is not overly crowded, and the movement of the persons or animals does not yield a sense of great disorder. Yet, the heterogeneity of individuals, as well as the diversity of their activities, reminds the viewer that unlike Madras or Bombay,<sup>115</sup> the white town of Calcutta did not have a wall separating European and Indian city sectors.<sup>116</sup> In addition to various Europeans and Indians passing through the streets with their animals, the viewer sees Indian sepoy's guarding the fort, porters carrying goods, various persons apparently engaging in conversation or commerce, and a religious procession. The majority of the people in the street are organized in the picture plane in a somewhat linear grouping pointing towards the vanishing point. But two enigmatic Europeans are not a part of this clustering and stand in the center-left foreground engaged in conversation. The man to the right and facing the viewer gestures dramatically in a manner pointing to the Egyptian-style obelisk on the far right of the picture plane. His placement in the foreground of the first plate of the series suggests that he is leading the viewer to a symbol of Calcutta's modernity and resilience, J. Z. Holwell's monument.

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<sup>115</sup> Carl H. Nightingale, "Before Race Mattered: Geographies of the Color Line in Early Colonial Madras and New York," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 1 (Feb., 2008): 48.

<sup>116</sup> In fact, some prosperous Indian merchants lived within the "white town." Farhat Hasan, "Indigenous Cooperation and the Birth of a Colonial City: Calcutta, c. 1698-1750," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 26, No.1. (Feb., 1992): 76- 78

By the middle of the century, the Company's increasing wealth, political influence, growing fortifications, and standing armies indicated to the nawab of Bengal, Ali Vardi Khan, that the British were threatening his authority in the region.<sup>117</sup> Following the death of Ali Vardi in 1756, the new nawab, Siraj-ud-daula feared that the Company would collaborate with a challenger to his succession, Ghasti Begam, in overthrowing him. Siraj and a large army sieged Calcutta and captured many of its occupants.<sup>118</sup> Holwell, a Company officer who survived the attack, later wrote a famed narrative of his imprisonment that circulated around Britain and India. He claimed that "of one hundred and forty-six prisoners, one hundred and twenty-three were smothered in the black-hole prison."<sup>119</sup> This account was greatly exaggerated, but the memorial erected outside of Fort William after Robert Clive reconquered Calcutta in 1757 had continued resonance with Europeans and Indians. This obelisk became an important symbol of death as well as British colonial development in the subcontinent.

"The Old Fort, the Playhouse, Holwell's Monument," therefore, identifies the obelisk as both a symbol of British death and a marker of European progress. The two Europeans standing in the foreground are not merely pointing to peoples moving through the street or emphasizing the importance of the monument. Rather, the hand gesture guides the viewer to a sequence of symbols illuminating the progression of the development of British Calcutta. Beginning with Holwell's pillar and its associations with human death and the city's rebirth, the viewer's eye then moves in the direction of the vanishing point to Robert Clive's mansion in the middle

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<sup>117</sup> H. E. Busted, *Echoes From Old Calcutta: Being Chiefly, Reminiscences of the Days of Warren Hastings, Francis, and Impey* (London: W. Thacker & Co., 1908), 8.

<sup>118</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 12-31.

<sup>119</sup> J. Z. Holwell, Esq, "A Genuine Narrative of the Deplorable Death of the English Gentlemen, and Others, Who were Suffocated in the Black-Hole in Fort William, at Calcutta, in the Kingdom of Bengal, in the Night Succeeding the 20<sup>th</sup> Day of June, 1756" from a letter to William Davis, Esq., *Newcastle General Magazine*, (February, 1758): 90.

ground. Clive's retirement and death in Britain in 1774 were ignominious.<sup>120</sup> But this mansion, which Clive had not occupied for two decades, continued to stand along the street bearing his name as a monument to the improvement of the white town after 1757 and the conquest of Bengal. Therefore, Daniell's streetscape constructs a progression from a symbol of the reclamation of Calcutta to a mansion signifying the formation of the British territorial empire in India.

The viewer's eye then moves further towards the vanishing point to the Playhouse, which symbolizes modernity but sits in the background of the composition. Constructed in 1775, this theater, much like other recently-erected buildings in the white town, glistened with whitewash and marble facades. In Calcutta, as well as in other corners of the empire, theater had an important role in disseminating imperial ideology and reaffirming British identity.<sup>121</sup> The linear juxtaposition of Holwell's monument, Clive's mansion, and the Playhouse associated monuments to the dead with the neoclassical, bleached structures signifying white-town modernity in 1786. By associating monuments to imperial confidence with an obelisk to overcoming peril and meaningless death, Daniell's views argued that the white town was not merely a "city of palaces." Rather, it was a singular monolith obscuring British anxieties and dangers while simultaneously trumpeting the valor of Company employees. The *Views of Calcutta* crafted a romanticized view of the city that dispelled any sign of sickly EIC officers and rejected the notion of Calcutta as a disease-ridden swamp whose maladies and immoralities potentially flowed back to Britain on Company ships.

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<sup>120</sup> Clive was acquitted of corruption charges in 1773, but on 22 November 1774 Clive committed suicide in his home in London. Mark Bence-Jones, *Clive of India* (London: Constable, 1974), 299.

<sup>121</sup> Kathleen Wilson, "Pacific Modernity: Theater, Englishness, and the Arts of Discovery, 1760-1800," in *The Age of Cultural Revolutions: Britain and France, 1750-1820*, edited by Colin Jones and Dror Wahrman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 70.

### *Landscape, Portraiture, and the Nabob: Calcutta and a New Imperial Elite*

As early as the 1750s, a multiplicity of Britons and South Asians condemned Calcutta as the epicenter of corruption, indolence, extravagance, and immorality. Karam Ali, a personal enemy of Warren Hastings and chronicler for the Murshidabad court, claimed the city to be a place where “the hearts of people are always devoid of truth, righteousness and morality.”<sup>122</sup> Even Robert Clive, who was not a stranger to vice during his time in Calcutta, referred to the city as “one of the wickedest places in the universe.”<sup>123</sup> In addition to the approximately one-thousand permanent European residents of the white town, there were hundreds of white soldiers, sailors, and transient merchants in Calcutta at any given time. These lower-class Europeans were notorious among the residents of the white town for their heavy drinking, violence, theft, and gambling.<sup>124</sup> Despite disdain showed by Company officers and wealthier merchants towards European soldiers and sailors, there was considerable interaction between these groups at taverns, brothels, opium dens, and gambling venues located on the peripheries of the white town or in the black town. Just as South Asians freely moved throughout and lived in the white town, Europeans and South Asians of various social statuses assembled around the same poker table.<sup>125</sup> Such close interactions caused metropolitan critics of the Company to make little distinction between the Company officers and lower-class mariners. Thus, the unethical

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<sup>122</sup> Karam Ali, *Muzafarnama* (Patna:Khuda Baksh Library, 1990), 34. Quoted in Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*, 67.

<sup>123</sup> Quoted in Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*, 77.

<sup>124</sup> Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company,” 309-10.

In fact, there were reported cases of white sailors dressing as Indians while robbing pedestrians in both the black and white towns. This form of “cultural cross dressing” underscores the nebulous divisions between the Indian and European social milieus of Calcutta.

*Calcutta Gazette*, 15, April 1795. Reprinted in W. S. Seton-Karr, editor, *Selections from the Calcutta Gazette of the Years 1789-97, Showing the Political and Social Condition of the English in India*, Vol. II (Calcutta: O. T. Cutter, 1865), 146-7.

<sup>125</sup> Sumanta Banerjee, *The Wicked City: Crime and Punishment in Colonial Calcutta* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2009), 40-3, 227-31.

business practices of the nabobish EIC officer and the petty crimes of soldiers on the streets of Calcutta were apparently not all that different. After all, during the trial of Warren Hastings, Edmund Burke described Company activity in the subcontinent as being little more than robbery on a grand scale.<sup>126</sup> All of the Europeans of the white town were purportedly equally guilty of morally ruining the region and bankrupting Bengal.

Thomas Daniell's *Views of Calcutta* was an attempt to dispel metropolitan stereotypes of the nabob by whitewashing and rehabilitating the entire social milieu of the white town in the eyes of both colonial and metropolitan viewers. Daniell crafted images of European life in India through the panoramic lens of the streetscape because it allowed him to depict the entire European populace in Calcutta as virtuous colonial rulers and prosperous merchants. Unlike portraiture, which necessarily insisted upon the elite status of the European individuals featured, his *Views of Calcutta* did not carry an air of pretension and did not threaten metropolitan aristocrats by placing middling persons as the focus of the piece. Daniell's aquatints were able to feature Europeans as colonial rulers carried in palanquins, but without pinpointing particular individuals as social climbers planning to live as nabobs in Britain. Indeed, landscape artworks were the only way to visually present Company men as colonial rulers without implying that they were asserting a claim to aristocratic status once back in Britain.

Daniell's *Views* also demarcated a clear distinction between Indian and European society in Calcutta despite the notable diversity of persons featured in the streets of the white town. There are no indications of cohabitation or intermarriage between South Asians and Europeans throughout the twelve streetscapes. Rather, South Asians appear as servants carrying Europeans

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<sup>126</sup> Edmund Burke, *Mr. Burke's Speech, On the 1st December 1783, Upon the Question for the Speaker's Leaving the Chair, in Order for the House to Resolve Itself into a Committee on Mr. Fox's East India Bill* (London, 1784), 63.

in palanquins or as individuals traversing the white town yet not truly a part of the European community in India. Daniell depicted South Asians as in, but not of, the white town social sphere in order to deflect metropolitan critics' claims that Company officers had been corrupted through the appropriation of South Asian culture and by socially mixing with Indians. By demarcating a sharp distinction between ruler and ruled in his streetscapes, Daniell also argued that in the colonial context middling Europeans could assume the role of an elite class distinct from the status of the metropolitan aristocrat. In each aquatint wealthy Company men were virtuous colonial officers instilling India with modernity and a proper social ordering defined by European rule. In the twelve *Views*, a European standing in the shadows of the radiant buildings of the white town was certainly not a nabob; rather, he had acquired a social role necessary for colonial rule in India. And because it was unique to the colonial matrix, this elite colonial social status could not be taken back to Britain along with his wealth and artworks.

The plethora of portraits produced in colonial India signaled to the metropolitan British aristocracy that EIC officers and other businessmen were using their ill-gotten wealth to produce gaudy symbols - and tools - of social pretension. In the colonial milieu, as well as in the metropole, portraiture performed a complex function distinct from other genres and mediums of painting. In addition to recording the specific individual, portraiture was an assertion and reaffirmation of aristocratic power in Britain. Posing for a portrait was a process in which the individual performed the identity that she or he wished to broadcast to viewers as well as the identity that she or he presumed that viewers would expect. The production of a portrait was a collaboration between sitter and painter that produced an image of what the sitter hoped to look like in terms of both physiognomy and signifiers of social identity. The strategic inclusion of status symbols in the form of clothing, setting, included objects, and juxtaposition of persons

necessarily made portraiture an elite genre in Britain. But the act of sitting for a portrait was itself an assertion of empowerment. Being the subject of a portrait implied that he or she was wealthy and important enough as an individual to merit being recorded visually.

The featured person or persons were significant enough to be put to canvas, but so were his or her social relationships and particular social roles recorded within the picture plane. Even if the sitters' names were lost over time, the very existence of the painting let viewers know that the individuals depicted were important. Family portraits typically communicated a patriarchal familial model based upon the placement of individuals in the image. Even if servants were featured in the picture plane, a portrait communicated who was a member of the family and who was not.<sup>127</sup>

The inclusion of South Asian servants and others in portraits communicated colonial power of rule in India. **(See, for instance, Image 8).** While images of South Asians incorporated into Calcutta portraiture added nuance and exoticism, they were also in dialogue with the metropolitan convention of including black servants in familial portraits.<sup>128</sup> Beginning in the last decades of the seventeenth century, metropolitan painters and patrons communicated their attitudes towards colonialism through the inclusion of African servants as symbols of the imported exotic. Elite metropolitan attitudes shifted over the course of the eighteenth century from distrust to acceptance of certain Atlantic colonial goods. No longer interpreted by aristocrats as symbols of the disruption of English cultural practices, the image of the black servant became naturalized in the visual economy of the metropolitan milieu just as profits and goods from the New World were normalized in Britain's commercial economy.<sup>129</sup> Black servants

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<sup>127</sup> Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 16-17.

<sup>128</sup> In this section I define "black" persons as individuals from Africa or of African ancestry.

<sup>129</sup> Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 54-5.

became emblematic of a courtly relationship between servant and master which defined imperial relationships of ruler to enslaved populaces in the Atlantic colonial matrix. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, non-European servants in portraiture were stylish symbols of wealth among elites in the metropole.<sup>130</sup> The inclusion of South Asian servants in Calcutta portraiture disrupted a hierarchization rooted in courtly relationships characteristic of British portraits. Because portraiture was necessarily an elite genre in Europe, the presence and actions of Indians within a portrait implied that middling-class Company officers were claiming role of an elite akin to the aristocracy in Britain.

Most troubling to metropolitan critics<sup>131</sup> was that some Company men commissioned portraits depicting themselves as British elites alongside their South Asian wife or partner and biracial children.<sup>132</sup> (See, for example, **Image 9**). Durba Ghosh recently claimed that relationships between European men and Indian women during the eighteenth century played an important role in the formation of racial, gender, and other social hierarchies characterizing later British colonial ideology.<sup>133</sup> Calcutta portraiture reflected this ordering of the family as a microcosm of British authority in the colonial milieu. But by featuring non-European peoples as though they were both British and of an aristocratic household, Anglo-Indian familial portraiture threatened metropolitan conceptions of eliteness and Britishness. Thus, Calcutta portraiture was necessarily a nabobish genre revealing both the social aspiration and the apparent foreignness of the particular Europeans and South Asians featured.

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<sup>130</sup> Catherine Molineux, *Faces of Perfect Ebony: Encountering Atlantic Slavery in Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 21-4, 40-1.

<sup>131</sup> Although familial portraits did not have great circulation in Britain and were rarely copied as prints, such paintings or miniatures brought back to Britain confirmed the common metropolitan rumors of Company men taking Indian wives. Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, 69-70, 96. See also Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: the Making of an Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>132</sup> Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 110-17.

<sup>133</sup> Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India*, 9-10, 10-14, 25

Despite the presence of many South Asians throughout the streets, Thomas Daniell's *Views of Calcutta* presented white-town society as essentially European in order to illuminate how EIC officers had not been corrupted by the Indian climate, culture, or other factors. The literal elevation of Europeans in palanquins in Calcutta streetscapes underscored this preservation of Britishness. Much like the enduring motif of the parasol held by a black servant in metropolitan portraiture,<sup>134</sup> the palanquin carried by South Asians symbolized both colonial dominance as well as the importation of European civilization in Daniell's colonial Calcutta. Throughout the twelve aquatints, the palanquin occupied by a European and carried by Indians also symbolized the close physical contact - yet social separation - between ruler and ruled.

The second image in Daniell's *Views*, "The Old Court House and the Writers' Building" (**Image 10**), looks down Old Court House Street in the white town perpendicular to Clive Street, the road featured in the first aquatint of the series. In this streetscape, the location where Daniell stood to compose "The Old Fort, the Playhouse, Holwell's Monument" (**Image 7**) can be seen on the far left edge of the picture plane near the eastern wall of Fort William. Holwell's monument appears in the background in front of the Fort, and it is placed on the vanishing point. The titular buildings extend diagonally from the upper-right portion of the picture plane to the lower-left side of the composition. The building to the right with wide, arcaded verandas, a rooftop balustrade crowned with neoclassical urns, and ionic columns integrated into the exterior façade is the Old Court House. This public building was constructed in 1756 and was one of the first structures renovated and expanded following Clive's reclamation of Calcutta in 1757.<sup>135</sup> Numerous Indians occupy the steps and the veranda of this public building, including one South Asian man whose servants accompany him with a parasol. This presence of numerous Indians of

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<sup>134</sup> Molineux, *Faces of Perfect Ebony*, 43.

<sup>135</sup> Archer, *Early Views of India*, 21, Chaudhuri, "Trends in Calcutta Architecture, 1690-1903," 159.

various social statuses in and around this public building indicates that it was the location open to both South Asians and Europeans. Indeed, even administrative and legal offices of the “white town” were always populated by non-European individuals.

To the left of the Court House is the extremely long Writers’ Building, which housed new Company servants during their first years of service in Calcutta. The sheer size of the building and the additions evidenced by differing façades and window adornments indicate both the increasing number of Europeans in the white town as well as the growth in Company influence in Bengal. Old Court House Street appears vibrant as clusters of South Asians and Europeans travel through the streets. Much like cities in Britain, traffic flows are in no way regulated as carts, palanquins, coaches, pack animals, and pedestrians swerve around one another. In the left foreground a carriage driven by an Indian man contains two European passengers. An English woman wearing a large, fashionable hat looks out from the carriage directly at the viewer, or possibly towards a European man on horseback who is pointing towards the alleyway between the Old Court House and the Writers’ Building. He appears to be guiding the carriage through traffic, yet his horse is startled by two of four leashed dogs led by a South Asian man with a whip in hand. This individual leading the dogs is dressed much like an ascetic, but the servants carrying a palanquin in front of him are wearing similar garb. Thus, it appears that he is walking the dogs of the European reclining in the palanquin while reading a book. The cluster of five servants is led by a South Asian man dressed in white and pointing ahead with both his left hand and a staff held in his right hand. The placement of the carriage and the palanquin in the foreground of this aquatint emphasizes the servile role of Indians in the white town. **(See also Image 11).**

Moreover, the juxtaposition of the dog-walker behind the palanquin led by the man with the staff causes this transportation of both canines and colonizer to appear as though it were akin to a ceremonial procession. In a number of Daniell's *Views*, the parading of Europeans in palanquins seemingly mirrors religious processions moving through the streets. This equation occurs most explicitly in the fifth aquatint of the series, "The New Court House and Chandpam Ghaut" (**Image 12**). In this view, the newly-constructed Court House completely adorned with balustrades, ionic columns, and arches sits at the end of Esplanade Row near the Ghaut. Occupying both street and foreground are two groupings of people, which mirror one another. In the bottom-right of the picture plane are a palanquin placed on the ground as well as a sedan chair lifted by four South Asian servants and occupied by a fashionably-dressed European woman. Standing beside the woman is a European man who has made his attendants wait while he chats with her. This parade of elevated white people has come to a halt as another cavalcade passes. In the middle and bottom-left of the foreground, a religious procession of several South Asian men heads towards the Hughli River, which is located in the background to the left of the picture plane. The leading individuals in this group of devotees are playing various brass horns and percussion instruments or carrying flags. Many within the group are elevating a miniature peacock boat, which will be placed in the Hughli as part of a religious ceremony.<sup>136</sup> These simultaneous processions of holding aloft religious icons and colonial rulers illuminate a purported South Asian reverence and acceptance of colonial societal hierarchy. Ultimately, Daniell's views constructed "Anglo-Indians" as a distinct group of Europeans in Calcutta who were the subject of veneration by South Asians and the proper ruler of colonial India. These Company officers and other European businessmen were not the nabobs featured in Calcutta

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<sup>136</sup> de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 185.

portraiture. Rather, they instilled a proper societal structure that allowed for British colonial rule. As is symbolized by the elevation of Britons in palanquins, this particular social ordering was unique to the relationship between ruler and ruled in the subcontinent, and, thus, could not be transported to the metropole.

### ***Conclusion: “the Metropolis of British India”***

In September of 1794 the Daniells returned to London with their countless studies and sketches composed during their many years of residence and travel in South Asia. Fellow artists and collectors greatly admired their many drawings and notes capturing Indian ecological, social, and, particularly, architectural features. In fact, some collectors, such as William Beckford, attempted to buy the entirety of the Thomas Daniell’s notes. The uncle and nephew, of course, retained their stacks of studies since they were necessary for composing paintings and aquatints which could be sold through various channels or publically exhibited at the Royal Academy.<sup>137</sup> These numerous documents of their journeys were to be the basis of a series of aquatints published between 1795-1808. The Daniells entitled the first four series *Oriental Scenery: Twenty-Four Views of Hindoostan*.<sup>138</sup> These publications allowed Thomas Daniell to become a Royal Academy Associate and gain a reputation in Britain as both a master landscape painter and an expert of Indian aesthetics.<sup>139</sup> In the second series of *Oriental Scenery* (1797-8), Thomas and William Daniell revisited their Calcutta streetscapes by producing six new views of the city based upon sketches composed in 1792. However, some of these were clearly modeled on their

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<sup>137</sup> Joseph Farington, “Monday May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1797,” in *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, Vol. 3, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 843.

<sup>138</sup> Archer, *Early Views of India*, 219.

<sup>139</sup> Maurice Shellim, *India and the Daniells: Oil Paintings of the East by Thomas Daniell RA and William Daniell RA* (Verona, Italy: Incheape and Co. Limited, 1979), 9, 13-14.

earlier *Views of Calcutta*. (**Images 13 and 14**) The stuccoed walls of the white town were not as radiant as in their earlier works, and far fewer Europeans can be seen carried in palanquins and sedan chairs. Rather, throughout the entire second series of *Oriental Scenery*, Daniell highlights South Asian peoples and architecture in British colonial cities throughout the subcontinent. (**For instance, Image 15**) This shift in emphasis to Indian peoples and architecture in these later aquatints mirrors the gradual transmogrification of metropolitan perceptions of Company servants during the last years of the eighteenth century and first two decades of the nineteenth century.

EIC servants were still the subject of popular scrutiny and mockery on the British stage in the metropolitan press during this period.<sup>140</sup> (**For instance, Images 16 and 17**). In Parliament, Whigs, who were said to use their political power only to advance their personal interests, desired to pin as many national economic and political woes upon nabobs and other social aspirants. By targeting Company men as contaminants to Britain, Whigs could allay accusations of “old corruption” against their political faction.<sup>141</sup> But the political theater that was the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings led to the beginning of a metropolitan reevaluation of global imperialism and imperial officers. As P. J. Marshall has argued, the attacks of Edmund Burke and other Whigs upon Hastings were rooted in neo-Roman conceptions of politics.<sup>142</sup> A Tacitean notion that imperial expansion led to the decline in republican virtue informed Burke’s rhetoric. In this popular view the expansion into Asia mortally tainted the Ancient Roman people while rogue provincial governors destabilized the entire empire by claiming independent

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<sup>140</sup> For instance, M. G. Lewis’s *The East Indian: A Comedy* (1800). Nechtman, *Nabobs*, 137.

<sup>141</sup> Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire*, 13.

<sup>142</sup> P. J. Marshall, “A Free though Conquering People: Britain and Asia in the Eighteenth Century,” Inaugural Lecture in the Rhodes Chair of Imperial History at King’s College, London, 1981, 1-19. Reprinted in *A Free though Conquering People: Eighteenth Century Britain and its Empire*, essay 1, Variorum Collected Studies (Aldershot, Hampshire & Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 6-7, 9-12.

power.<sup>143</sup> By the mid-1790s, the seemingly-endless Hastings trial had become a political embarrassment to the Whigs, and Company victory in the Third Mysore War met wide acclaim in Britain. Marshall argues that these shifts in metropolitan aristocratic attitudes towards imperial affairs reflected a British reevaluation of governance more generally. Just as Whiggish “court” politics had been more normalized, the Company became accepted as an appendage of the state and a source of global strength. No longer was the EIC an unethical mercantile body allowed to exist in the system of Whiggish corruption. Rather, regulating acts and wider aristocratic acceptance of the virtue of empire allowed the nabob to metamorphose into heroic imperial officers who could have members of the aristocracy within their cohort.<sup>144</sup> Thus, both court Whigs and the EIC acquired an air of respectability as ideas of neo-Roman politics deemphasized republican virtue and stressed Rome’s imperial expansion as a source of state strength.<sup>145</sup>

Years after returning to Britain, Thomas Daniell reflected upon Calcutta as “the metropolis of British India, the seat of a powerful and prosperous empire, which has already communicated to those remote regions a portion of its national laws and liberties; and is probably destined to disseminate those arts and sciences which have conferred such honourable distinction on the people of Europe.”<sup>146</sup> This glowing portrayal of the nucleus of empire and modernity in India certainly contrasted with Daniell’s own written descriptions of Calcutta as a location of dearth, recession, and sickness fifteen years earlier. Yet, this quote appears consistent

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<sup>143</sup> Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth- Century India*, 217.

<sup>144</sup> Although shifts in metropolitan politics allowed for elites and middling merchants to each be respectable heroes of the Company and its state-sponsored imperial endeavors, the nabob remained a farcical and distressing figure in metropolitan literature and theater into the first decades of the nineteenth century.

<sup>145</sup> Marshall, “A Free though Conquering People,” 10-14.

<sup>146</sup> Thomas and William Daniell, *A Picturesque Voyage of India By Way of China*, 104.

with his depictions of the white town in his *Views of Calcutta*. As this paper has illuminated, Thomas Daniell depicted Calcutta as a locus of neoclassical British modernity in India devoid of corruption, immorality, meaningless European death, and cultural cross-dressing. Rather, Daniell's aquatints injected into the visual economy of Calcutta as well as Britain a pictorial argument that the city of palaces did in fact live up to the analogy between the Roman imperial peripheries and British imperial cities in Asia.<sup>147</sup> Much like the ionic pillars and roof-top urns covering each luminescent façade in the white town, Daniell's *Views* promoted a vision of Calcutta as an imperial Roman city and of EIC men as a distinct form of imperial ruler. This imagery was employed by Robert Clive and other nabobs wishing to dispel their aura of nabobish otherness.<sup>148</sup> **(Image 18)**. But only through streetscapes could Daniell or another artist make a case for Calcutta as an imperial, neo-Roman provincial capital rather than nabobish city on a swamp. Ultimately, Daniell's Calcutta streetscapes reveal the importance of visual forms of argumentation in both provincial and metropolitan discourse as to the nature of empire.

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<sup>147</sup> Pratapaditya Pal and Vidya Dehejia, *From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists in India 1757- 1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 48-9.

<sup>148</sup> Romita Ray, "Baron of Bengal: Robert Clive and the Birth of an Imperial Image," in *Transculturation in British Art*, edited by Julie F. Codell (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 21-22.

**1. Daniell, Thomas, *Architectural Ornaments*, undated. YCBA, B2000.6.105.**

(Image omitted from this version for copyright purposes)

**2. Daniell, William. *The Great Bull and Pagoda at Tanjore*, undated. YCBA-B1986.29.360**

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**3. Daniell, Thomas, “Old Court House Street Looking South,” from *Views of Calcutta*, No. 9 (1788).**

(Image omitted from this version for copyright purposes)

**4. Lambert, George and Samuel Scott. *Fort William, Calcutta*, (c.1731). British Library: India Office Record Collections. Reference: F45**

(Image omitted from this version for copyright purposes)

**5. Daniell, Thomas, “Part of the Old Tank,” from *Views of Calcutta*, No. 3 (1786).**

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**6. Daniell, Thomas, “The New Buildings at Chouringhee,” from *Views of Calcutta*, No.7 (1787).**

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**7. Daniell, Thomas, “The Old Fort, the Playhouse, Holwell’s Monument,” from *Views of Calcutta*, No. 1 (1786).**

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**8. Zoffany, Johann. *The Auriol and Dashwood Families*, Calcutta, (ca. 1783-7). Holburne Museum, Bath, Somerset, England.**

(Image omitted from this version for copyright purposes)

**9. Renaldi, Francesco, *The Palmer Family*, Calcutta, (1786). British Library: India Office Record Collections. Reference: F597.**

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**10. Daniell, Thomas, “The Old Court House and the Writers’ Building,” from *Views of Calcutta*, No. 2 (1786)**

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**11. Daniell, Thomas, “St. John’s Church,” from *Views of Calcutta*, No. 12 (1788).**

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**12. Daniell, Thomas, “The New Court House and Chandpam Ghaut,” from *Views of Calcutta*, No. 5 (1787).**

(Image omitted from this version for copyright purposes)

**13. Daniell, Thomas and William Daniell, “The Writer’s Building, Calcutta,” from *Oriental Scenery: Series II*, No. 4 (1798).**

(Image omitted from this version for copyright purposes)

**14. Daniell, Thomas and William Daniell, “Part of Cheringhee, Clacutta,” from *Oriental Scenery: Series II*, No. 6 (1798).**

(Image omitted from this version for copyright purposes)

**15. Daniell, Thomas and William Daniell, “Govinda Ram Mittee’s Pagoda, Clacutta,” from *Oriental Scenery: Series II*, No. 5 (1798).**

(Image omitted from this version for copyright purposes)

**16. Unknown Artist, ‘*Count Roupee*’ in Hyde Park, Line Engraving, London (1797).<sup>149</sup>**

(Image omitted from this version for copyright purposes)

**17. Moffat, James, *Rival Candidates at Calcutta*, Colored Engraving. Walter Collection (c.1800).<sup>150</sup>**

(Image omitted from this version for copyright purposes)

**18. Scheemakers, Peter, *Robert Clive, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Plassey, Governor of Bengal* (Undated)**

(Image omitted from this version for copyright purposes)

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<sup>149</sup> Image from Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, 39.

<sup>150</sup> Image from Pratapaditya Pal and Vidya Dehejia, *From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists in India 1757-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 17.

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