

### Nabobs and the Empire at Home Bibliography

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#### Annotated Guide to Nabobs and the Empire at Home Publications

**Collingham, E.M.** *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c.1800-1947*. Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press and Blackwell, 2001.

In *Imperial Bodies*, Elizabeth Collingham examines the impact of colonialism upon the European body. More particularly, she explores how power impacted upon the bodies of those wielding it, rather than those subjected to it. Collingham argues that British experiences of India were intensely physical. Both in India and when Anglo-Indians returned home, their experiences of India were written upon their physique. India seemingly affected the food individuals ate, the clothes they wore and the complexion of their skin. Due to the physicality of their experiences Anglo-Indians were particularly interested in defining what made a particular body British. Collingham argues that rather than simply mirroring changes in the metropole, the Anglo-Indian body underwent its own narrative of change. Between 1800 and 1857 bodily practices kept pace with cultural changes in India and Britain. After 1857, however, a different chronology emerged to ensure that Anglo-Indians became culturally and bodily out of step during the twentieth century. Collingham argues that the Anglo-Indians disregard for the Indian response to British bodies severely undermined their position. Finally, in discarding Western clothes and in favour of the dhoti, Indian nationalists confronted the British with a rediscovered Indian body.

**Hall, Catherine and Rose, Sonya O.** (eds). *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Hall and Rose's edited volume takes the end of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century as its starting point. They argue that this moment marks 'a new historical conjuncture', which 'brought with it reworked conceptions of race, nation and empire'. At this moment revolutionary thinking, religious revival and the defeat of Napoleon's imperial ambitions meant the end of one type of empire and the creation of another. More particularly the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834 led to a need for new ways of explaining inequalities. In response, systems of classification and new technologies of measurement were appropriated as means by which to justify inequalities of power and opportunity. The new imperial project also affected the everyday in that it quickly became an accepted and ordinary aspect of British life. Those belonging to British society did become more aware of empire but only during specific events, which brought with them a particular type of intensity. On the whole, this volume argues, empire was an inevitable and familiar backdrop to British life.

Catherine Hall & Sonya Rose	'Introduction: being at home with the Empire'
Catherine Hall	'At home with history: Macaulay and the <i>History of England</i> '
Laura Tabili	'A homogenous society? Britain's internal "others", 1800-present'
Christine Kinealy	'At home with the Empire: the example of Ireland'

Jane Rendall	'The condition of women, women's writing and the Empire in nineteenth-century Britain'
Philippa Levine	'Sexuality and empire'
Susan Thorne	'Religion and empire at home'
Joanna de Groot	'Metropolitan desires and colonial connections: reflections on consumption and empire'
Cora Kaplan	'Imagining empire: history, fantasy and literature'
Antoinette Burton	'New narratives of imperial politics in the nineteenth century'
Clare Midgley	'Bringing the Empire home: women activists in imperial Britain, 1790s-1930s'
James Epstein	'Taking class notes on empire'
Keith McClelland & Sonya Rose	'Citizenship and empire, 1867-1928'

**Holzman, James M.** *The Nabobs in England: A Study of the Returned Anglo-Indian, 1760-1785*. New York, 1926.

In *The Nabobs in England*, Holzman concentrates on the years between 1760 and 1785 as the most significant period in contemporary responses to the nabob figure. Holzman argues that due to the levels of fortunes created and their small but significant numbers, this period was particularly vital in creating the idea of the nabob as a problematic entity. After 1785, Holzman argues, the nabob became less contentious and was increasingly accepted within British society. Holzman relies on a variety of sources to construct his argument. Newspaper articles, contemporary accounts, county histories and trade guides all play a role. In terms of *The East India Company at Home* project, Holzman is particularly useful in that he uses a chapter to focus on the nabob at home and more particularly their propensity to buy and build country houses.

**Juneja, Renu.** 'The Native and the Nabob: Representations of the Indian Experience in Eighteenth-Century English Literature', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 27:1 (1992), 183-198.

In this short article, Renu Juneja tracks eighteenth-century literary responses to the nabob. As Juneja notes, by the end of the eighteenth-century the term 'nabob' had become relatively innocuous. Yet in the 1770s and 1780s the term had deeply complex connotations. Like Lawson and Phillips, Juneja argues that returned East India Company officials were not the target of criticism simply due to feelings of envy or moral anger on the part of the critics. Rather the complex responses they prompted were, Juneja argues, due to concerns over violations of class hierarchies through social mobility as experienced by nabobs who returned home with large fortunes. Juneja also highlights how ostentatious spending by nabobs prompted much criticism. Vulgar and uncontrollable, such spending hinted at a deeper concern namely that the Indian experience led nabobs into psychological and moral instability. Critics were clearly concerned that nabobs returned to Britain lacking the self-discipline upon which the British thrived. As such they pointed to their fears about the 'East' and the dislocation from moral, social and psychological norms that it might engender.

**Lawson, Philip and Phillips, Jim.** "'Our Execrable Banditti': Perceptions of Nabobs in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 16:3 (1984), 225-241.

Lawson and Phillips examine why critiques of the nabobs became so widespread in the second half of the eighteenth century. They assert that envy and snobbery do not fully account for the level of

criticism that returned East India Company officials and their families encountered. Rather, Lawson and Phillips claim that the criticisms aimed at nabobs by the press and in poetry and plays were in response to popular fears about the changes to moral and political behaviour that nabobs brought and might bring. More particularly, late eighteenth-century society questioned the level of control that the British government retained over the East India Company in India and worried over the power that nabobs appeared to accumulate once returned home. Individuals also showed concern for the ways in which nabobs acquired power in Britain. Instances of excessive bribery and corruption during electoral campaigns signalled a changing moral climate that opponents of the nabobs fought hard to stop. At the same time communities responded badly to the more local affects that nabobs might have upon moving to a specific area. Provision prices were believed to soar when nabobs took a greater range of goods out of the marketplace, creating inflated prices for those limited goods that were left. For Lawson and Phillips then it was fear over the changes that nabobs appeared to have wrought on local and national communities that motivated contemporaries to launch critical and satirical attacks.

**Jordan, Sarah.** *The Anxieties of Idleness: Idleness in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003.

Sarah Jordan's book *The Anxieties of Idleness* provides a useful context for considering why and how British people expended so much energy satirizing and criticizing returning East India Company officials in the second half of the eighteenth century. Jordan argues that rather than defining themselves as a single people in response to the 'other' abroad, some Britons defined themselves as truly British relative to other British people. She asserts that 'the discourse of idleness' played an important role in defining both foreign and domestic 'others' and consequently in defining a sense of true Britishness. As both a foreign and domestic 'other', British people quickly implicated returning East India Company officials (affected by the climate of India) in a 'discourse of idleness'. Although Jordan deals only briefly with Europeans in India, further investigation of their role once returned home would clearly enrich the text.

**Nechtman, Tillman W.** *Nabobs, Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Nechtman understands the imperial experience undergone by East India Company servants in a particular way. He argues that East India Company servants understood India as an extension of the British imperial nation. Rather than somewhere peripheral or different therefore it was another part of home. As a result, when East India Company servants and officials returned from India in the second half of the eighteenth century they did not feel that they needed to re-establish themselves because they had never really left. Moreover, rather than ridding themselves of the accoutrements of Indian life they brought those objects back with them as symbols of the expanding British empire. For others in Britain, such behaviour raised concern. The presence of nabobs and their accoutrements suggested that the categories of "nation" and "empire" were neither stable, nor separate. Nabobs demonstrated that the British "nation" was subject to competing definitions. While it lasted, therefore, the nabob controversy was the focal point for discussions about nation and empire in the second half of the eighteenth century. Nechtman employs a variety of sources to construct his argument. He particularly focuses on print culture, examining sources such as

newspapers, periodicals, novels, plays, travel accounts and memoirs. Alongside this he also explores prints, correspondences and sale catalogues.

**Smylitopoulos, Christina.** 'Rewritten and Reused: Imagining the Nabob through "Upstart Iconography"', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 32:2 (2008), 39-59.

Smylitopoulos's article focuses on a series of graphic satires in order to examine the iconography through which contemporaries identified the nabob in the second half of the eighteenth century. In doing so Smylitopoulos exposes a pre-existing visual language that initially emerged to identify the 'up-start' in Georgian society. Smylitopoulos then demonstrates how graphic satirists employed this visual language to draw attention to nabobs and their seemingly problematic place in eighteenth-century British culture. By contextualising the stereotype of the nabob in this way Smylitopoulos reveals how this particular type emerged in and was exacerbated by pre-existing discussions of the 'upstart'.

**Spear, Percival.** *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth-Century India*. [1932] New York, 1998.

In *The Nabobs*, Percival Spear offers a broad survey of the social life of the English living in India in the eighteenth century. Spear pointedly seeks to develop a narrative of this life over the entire century in order to track the different phases of settlement. Through the eighteenth century he sees English settlement in India developing from an isolated commercial life based around specific trading posts to a vigorous settlement life that took place in well established 'cities'. Spear hopes that by following this trajectory of development he can show how the everyday life of everyday men changed during the period in question. He does by looking to a variety of sources, which include traveller's reports and diaries. He also uses sources from the India Office Records including dispatches, wills, letters and diaries. Although historical scholarship about Anglo-Indian life in the eighteenth century has of course developed since the original publication of *The Nabobs* in 1932, Spear's volume contains a series of interesting sources with which this topic can be considered.

**Travers, Robert.** 'Death and the Nabob: Imperialism and Commemoration in Eighteenth-Century India', *Past & Present*, 196 (2007), 83-124.

Focusing on monuments and burial grounds, Travers explores the changes in the 'British way of death' in Calcutta. Travers argues that death became an important tool for projecting British imperial power in Calcutta, an important outpost of British imperialism, and India more generally. In the article, Travers tracks change over time to find three important stages. First, in the eighteenth century rites of burial were a way of differentiating between Christians and Hindus. At the same time, by building large, elaborate tombs the British were able to assert their power within the political and cultural world of late Mughal India. Second, as conflicts between Indian rulers and European competitors intensified the idea that Indian rulers were attempting to wipe out Europeans provided a strong justification for British aggression and conquests. In this stage built memorials focused the British rallying cry. Finally, after the initial conquests, representations of death shaped the identity of the British Empire. Burial grounds and monuments became standardised and thus presented the British Empire as a unified entity. In terms of *The East India Company at Home, 1757-1857* project Travers work prompts greater consideration of the role of memorials (both written and built) within Britain.

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