



## *Romanticism on the Net*

### **Poetry as Resistance: The Bengal Famine of 1770, Bangla Verses, and John Scott's "Serim; or the Artificial Famine: An East-Indian Eclogue"**

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#### **Abstract**

The present article explores the intersections of history, poetry, and empire in the context of Scott's "Serim; or, the Artificial Famine: An East-Indian Eclogue." With close analysis of the poem and the circumstances of the Bengal famine of 1770, it reads "Serim" as a poetic protest from the "metropole" against injustice committed by the British at the imperial periphery. Further, the article deliberates on the representation of the Bengalis in the poem while scrutinising orientalist tropes employed by Scott. With a final major turn, it weighs the significance of Scott's eclogue as a cultural text documenting the first mass experience of colonial evil in India vis-à-vis some Bangla verses.

#### **Biographical Note**

Md. Monirul Islam is Assistant Professor of English at Presidency University, Kolkata, India. His primary area of research is the Eastern connections of the first-generation Romantic poets, on which he has published articles and book chapters. In 2020, his monograph *Oriental Wells: The Early Romantic Poets and Their Eastern Muse* was published by Bloomsbury Academic (New Delhi). Other areas of interest include posthumanism and India, travel writing, walkability studies, and "minor" literature(s) in Bangla.

Anna de go, anna de go,

anna de go, Annada

Give us food, give us food,

give us food, o goddess Annada!

—Ramprasad Sen<sup>1</sup>

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1. Meditating on disasters and disease causing mass destruction in different parts of the planet, Mary Shelley wrote the following in *The Last Man* (1826):

Can it be true, each asked the other with wonder and dismay, that whole countries are laid waste, whole nations annihilated, by these disorders in nature? The vast cities of America, the fertile plains of Hindostan, the crowded abodes of the Chinese, are menaced with utter ruin.<sup>2</sup> (vol. 2, ch. 5)

The immediate context of Shelley's novel was the devastating Tambora volcanic eruption of 1815 and the cholera pandemic of 1817–1824 that affected the Indian subcontinent and travelled as far as the Middle East. However, Shelley might also have had the Bengal famine of 1770 in mind when she referred to the annihilation of people of the fertile plains of India. It is very possible that Shelley read about the widely discussed famine in which more than ten million people died due to starvation and disease; post-famine Bengal resembled the post-apocalyptic world of *The Last Man*. The large-scale depopulation turned the territories of Bengal into jungles where humans and animals vied for dominance, and the East India Company (EIC) had to pay “tiger money” to the villagers to ensure safe passage of their people and goods (Arnold 93). However, unlike Shelley's fictional world, where it is the pandemic of plague that leads to the extinction of humans, the 1770 famine of Bengal has been described as man-made; indeed, contemporary accounts suggest that the British East India Company had been responsible for many of the deaths caused by starvation and disease during the famine years (1769–1773). Some of these accounts

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documenting the miserable state of things in the Bengal Presidency were published in England immediately after the famine. The rapacity and cruelty of the company officials reported therein created quite a furore in the metropole. Moved by the plight of people described in these accounts, the Quaker poet John Scott responded to events in Bengal with the second of his *Oriental Eclogues* (1782), “Serim; or, the Artificial Famine: An East-Indian Eclogue.” Scott’s eclogue stands out as the only poetic composition in English to give substantial space to the people in distress and unequivocally condemns the British in India for their rapacity.<sup>3</sup> With a close analysis of Scott’s eclogue and the circumstances of the Bengal famine of 1770, I read Scott’s poem as a poetic protest from the “metropole” against injustice committed by the British in Bengal. Further, I deliberate on the representation of the Bengalis as passive victims of famine while scrutinising the orientalist tropes employed by Scott. With a final major turn, I consider the significance of Scott’s poem with reference to some local narratives from late eighteenth-century Bengal.

2. The East India Company became the de facto ruler of the provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and parts of Orissa with its victory in the Battle of Plassey (1757) and assumed the power to collect revenues (*diwani*) in 1765. Within five years, famine ravaged the Bengal Presidency. Although the immediate cause of the famine was the long drought that preceded the flooding of 1768, historians have noted that dearth and death during the famine were as much the result of what can be defined as the post-Plassey plunder, effected chiefly through a revenue offensive and trade monopoly, by the East India Company (Dalrymple; Habib 408; Washbrook). There was a manifold increase in tax after 1757, and various coercive methods were adopted by the company in exacting taxes after 1765. The

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peasants and artisans overburdened with tax were already struggling to survive but received no reprieve when the famine set in (Arnold 101). Local officials sought remissions of the land tax in the wake of the famine, but to no avail; “not even five percent of the land tax was remitted and ten percent was added to it for the ensuing year (1770–71).” Further, the company considerably increased its revenue collection during the famine years (Hunter 28, Appendix A 31).

3. Apart from the overburdening taxes, the other prime causes of the famine were the rapacity of company officials and their agents, their monopoly in trade, and a complete lack of effort on the part of company administration to address scarcity and want (Dutt; Chatterjee). The French writer Abbé Raynal, who was in India during the famine, observed that the “most odious and most criminal of all monopolies,” that is, the monopoly over the grain trade, was exercised by company merchants raising the price of grain steeply and causing its shortage (36–37). The culpability of the company administration and the British merchants becomes further evident from internal correspondence among company officials. John Grose, for example, writing from Rungpore on April 24, 1770, to Richard Becher, the Resident at the durbar in Murshidabad, pointed to the evil of grain monopoly and the need to punish the monopolisers: “It will be Absolutely necessary that orders be given for the punishment of Monopolizers of Grain, as if some Method is not fallen up to oblige them to bring it to Market, a famine must necessarily ensue, if we are not favor’d with rain in a very few days” (1).<sup>4</sup>

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4. Another company servant, William Harwood, alerted Richard Becher against the policy of accumulating food grains in the cities, ignoring the miseries of people in the districts. In July 1770, Harwood wrote from Raj Mahal, Bihar:

I shall attend your directions regarding Grain going to the City; and will only add, that the Distress greatly as it may be felt there, can scarcely be equal to the misery experienced by the unhappy Inhabitants of this District from a want of Sustenance.  
(57)

These communications reveal that company officials were aware of the dearth of food for the people but that higher-ups in the company ignored timely warnings from the districts and allowed British merchants to hoard food grains and continue their monopoly over the grain trade in the midst of a raging famine.<sup>5</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that when famine ravaged the land, no substantial effort was made by the company to address the shortage of food; it contributed only a meagre forty thousand rupees when a relief fund was created for the purpose.<sup>6</sup> East India Company officials defended their inadequate efforts with the argument that the vastness of the problem outplayed any human means to redress the situation. Richard Becher reported in August 1769 that his government was not negligent in its effort to alleviate the situation, but that it was “impossible to provide against the calamities inflicted by Heaven” (qtd. in Arnold 94). Only God could have saved the people from the famine, he argued.

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5. Notwithstanding the efforts of company administrators and officials to evade blame and avoid questions of culpability, their cruelty and rapacity became a matter of debate in late eighteenth-century England. Several anonymous accounts of the famine were published, providing details of the avarice of East India Company merchants and the miseries of the famine-ridden people. The rapid development of the company from “a trading organization into ruler of a vast empire in India” was questioned,<sup>7</sup> and the reports “prompted a greater degree of parliamentary scrutiny over the company’s administration through the Regulating Act of 1773” (Arnold 86).<sup>8</sup> In the face of scrutiny by the court of directors of the company, the council of governors in Bengal denied the charges of monopoly and struggled to evade responsibility by laying the blame squarely on the Indian officers, *zamindars*, and tax collectors. Reza Khan, the *naib-diwan*, for instance, was singled out and charged with malpractice, but he was acquitted, as allegations against him were proved false. None of the company officials involved in the monopoly was put on trial.
  
6. The evasive strategies adopted by the East India Company in the face of criticism at home were followed by long years of strategic silence on the famine. This “bureaucratic amnesia,” as Arnold puts it (87), was possibly the reason behind the muteness of the officials-cum-scholars, the English-speaking orientalist, many of whom were in Calcutta during and after the famine.<sup>9</sup> Their silence on the famine was possibly influenced by the fact that they were dependent on the EIC, either as employees of the company or as recipients of its patronage. Also, as Miles Ogborn has argued, writing, printing, and dissemination of printed material had a political economy of its own during the company regime, and writings on the famine would have been difficult to get printed with the EIC

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controlling the production and dissemination of print (231). Thus, British orientalist, artists, and writers in India probed issues relating to Indian society and culture but maintained complete silence on the issue of the famine, even though they saw the visible marks of it all around them. On rare occasions when scholars or travellers wrote about the famine, they tried to defend the company against the general accusations made against it. A classic instance of this is William Hodges, the first British landscape painter to visit India. Under the patronage of Warren Hastings, Hodges travelled through the territories devastated by the famine in the early 1780s making sketches of the “Moghul ruins.” Returning to England, he finished the paintings and wrote *Travels in India* (1793). On one or two occasions in the narrative, Hodges takes note of the famine-ravaged land but is very apologetic when it comes to the question of the responsibility of the company in aggravating the famine. For example, passing through the district of Jungleterry (the bordering areas between Bengal and Bihar), he notices how the famine has turned an industrious area into a deserted jungle:

I have understood that it was before this time highly cultivated, and filled with industrious husbandmen and manufacturers, and the population was estimated at more than eighteen thousand people. It is, however, at present reduced to a few hundreds, great numbers having been cut off by famine, and others having emigrated in search of food. (95)

Hodges reflects on the charges of rapacity against the company officials, only to conclude that they have been unjustly defamed “by malignant insinuations” (95).

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7. While “bureaucratic amnesia” might be the reason behind the silence of British scholars and orientalists under company patronage in India, it is difficult to explain the absence of reference to the famine in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British literature in general. This is despite the fact that the 1770 famine had become a matter of public discussion in England; by the late eighteenth century there was an emerging British poetic tradition that was critical of the colonial atrocities, especially in the form of Abolitionist literature. The only interesting post-famine phenomenon in terms of British writers’ responses to the famine was the development of satiric literature around the figure of the “nabob.”<sup>10</sup> The earliest text in this genre was Samuel Foote’s play *The Nabob*, first performed in 1772. Although there is no mention of the famine in the play, Foote was likely to have been motivated by debates on the avarice of the East India Company merchants and their corrupt means of garnering wealth during the famine years in satirising Sir Matthew Mite, the rich “nabob” who wishes to climb the social ladder with his newly amassed wealth in India. A more relevant text in this regard is John Clarke’s *The Nabob: Or, Asiatic Plunderers. A Satirical Poem*, which was composed in response to the famine of Bengal. In the preface, Clarke laments that justice has been denied to the oppressed subjects of India, hoping that the “Historians of other Nations, (if not our own) . . . will hand down the Memory of the Oppressors to the latest Posterity, loaded with the Infamy due to the Magnitude of their Cruelties, Extortions, and new modes of Murder” (iii).
  
8. The poem consists of a dialogue between the author and his friend, in which the author, guided by his humanist values, finds it his duty to criticise those who commit atrocities



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against fellow humans anywhere in the world. The East India Company officials, who “rob[bed] the Indians” and left them to “starve by millions” and “by famine to kill” (30), are condemned without any reservations by Clarke. However, as in Foote’s play, the poem pivots around those “fallen Briton[s]” whose crimes bring shame to the British (Nechtman 91). It is a self-reflexive poem in which the references to starvation and death of the Indians serve to criticise the moral bankruptcy of the company officials whose moral and material influence could potentially infect the British domestic space. The famine-ravaged people and their misery find little representation in the poem. John Scott’s eclogue “Serim; or, the Artificial Famine” assumes great significance in this context. Written within a decade of the famine and set in Bengal, the poem gives voice to the people and foregrounds their suffering by introducing an Indian sage, Serim, as the poetic persona. The trope of colonial guilt is also present in the poem: the spectres of the dead, as Serim predicts, will return to haunt the British domestic space. However, unlike the texts on the figure of the nabob, Scott’s poem is centrally concerned with the suffering of the ordinary Indians.

9. Scott’s *Oriental Eclogues* belongs to the genre Richard F. Jones categorises as the “foreign eclogue.” The genre originated with William Collins’ *Persian Eclogues* (1742) and was followed by the likes of Thomas Chatterton’s *African Eclogues*, William Jones’s *Solima: An Arabian Eclogue* (1768) and Eyles Irwin’s *Eastern Eclogues* (1777), to name a few. The development of the foreign eclogue and its experimentation with eclogue form and content was part of the late eighteenth-century dissent against neoclassicism. As Jones pointed out in his 1772 essay “On the Poetry of the Eastern Nations,” there was a growing sense of tedium with neoclassicism, as European poetry had been “sustained too long on

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the perpetual repetition of the same images and incessant allusions to the same fables.” Jones also suggested that going back to the “principal writings of the Asiaticks” would help revive European poetry (144). By the time of Jones’s suggestion, a number of writers had already begun their search for a new literary idiom and to produce a large body of literature that deviated from neoclassical norms. One strand of this aesthetic departure emerged in the form of literary interest in the remote and the foreign. The foreign eclogue was a part of this development. With European expansionism, the creation of multiple “contact zones”<sup>11</sup> paved the way for intercontinental exchanges. Naturally, a large body of texts was made available to European readers in the form of travellers’ tales, soldiers’ diaries, diplomats’ reports, histories, and translations (of literary, religious, and philosophical texts) from different parts of the globe. These texts and other cultural and material imports from the East introduced new knowledge and inspired European writers to venture into new and unexplored territories.<sup>12</sup>

10. However, the “contact zones” that proved a fertile space for the genre of the foreign eclogue were also conflict zones involving “relations of dominance and subordination” and of exploitation of the colonial other (Pratt 4). Therefore, as Richard Jones observes, the “imaginative interest” of the foreign eclogue “in the remote” and the oriental expanded to include a “humanitarian hostility to war, oppression and slavery” (57–58). Different forms of colonial injustice and exploitation thus came within the ambit of the foreign eclogue. Chatterton’s *African Eclogues* and Robert Southey’s “Botany Bay Eclogues” are remarkable examples. While Southey highlighted the plight of the convicts exiled to Australia, Chatterton’s “Heccar and Gaira” problematised the slave trade and suffering of

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Africans at the hands of European colonisers, underscoring the close connection between the foreign eclogue and Abolitionist poetry. Just as in anti-slavery poetry, the question of human rights was central to the protesting discourse of the foreign eclogue. Of Scott's three *Oriental Eclogues*, the first, "Zerad; or The Absent Lover: An Arabian Eclogue," simply narrates the wretched condition of a lover in the absence of the beloved, ignoring politics.<sup>13</sup> The third eclogue, "Li-Po; or, The Good Governor: A Chinese Eclogue," circuitously criticises the British by admiring effective and benevolent Chinese government. The final eclogue thus develops Scott's critiques, in the second eclogue, of the East India Company administrators, who stand in strong contrast to the Chinese rulers.

11. In the headnote to "Serim," Scott claims that the eclogue is "founded on fact," quoting a passage from the anonymous *A Short History of English Transactions in the East Indies* for support. The quoted passage describes how company officials established a monopoly over the grain trade and "collected rice into stores," leading to the scarcity of food. The natives could only choose "between giving what they had and dying" (Scott 140).<sup>14</sup> While people starved to death, numerous company officials garnered wealth selling food grains at higher prices. The headnote sets the tone of the poem by juxtaposing the distress of the Bengalis with the avarice and cruelty of the "insatiate plunderers" (142). The poem's narrative framework also sharpens its critique. Scott's assumed persona in the poem is Serim, and within his monologue Serim impersonates many other voices, both Indian and British (Mulholland 148). Serim's monologue is followed by two other monologues: one voiced by a hapless father who has been robbed of his daughter and one by a Brahmin whose family members are all dead. The Brahmin's speech, or rather, curse, is followed by

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Brahma's message of tolerance and forgiveness and Serim's final commentaries. The only British voice we hear in the poem is that of a ruffian who pushes Serim to death indignantly, uttering the words: "Go to thy Gods." The poet-narrator's voice is heard only at the beginning (introducing Serim) and at the end (citing the ruffian's voice). Within the fictional framework of the poem, the voices from Bengal occupy the centre stage, enabling Scott to launch a severe critique of the colonial establishment. Defining Serim's anti-colonial voice in the poem, Mulholland terms him "a predecessor to the postcolonial critic" (149). It is this (postcolonial) critique of violence that connects Serim to the two other Indian characters that we hear in the poem because the events of their lives constitute historical evidence of colonial atrocities.

12. At the beginning of the poem the Indian sage Serim sits on the banks of the Ganges. He surveys the famine-ravaged land and deplores the British for the miseries of his countrymen in an uninterrupted monologue that comes to an end with his appeal to the guardian genius of the river to save the people in distress (141-48). The riverbank setting is significant not only because the river is considered sacred to Hindus but also because the Ganges was the chief route of travel and trade in Eastern India and British merchants hoarded the food grains along its banks. We find reference to these "cumbrous piles" of grain in Serim's monologue (142) often in juxtaposition to the starving Indians who "[crave] . . . in vain" for food (142). Juxtaposition is a key narrative strategy in the poem, and Serim's monologue progresses through a set of comparisons and contrasts. Serim begins by comparing the "calm, contented, inoffensive" Bengalis and the rapacious British merchants who range across the "remotest climes / And every nation execrates [their] crimes" (143).

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By this Scott drives home the ubiquitous nature of the atrocities committed by the British merchants and colonisers.

13. The contrasting portrayal of the Bengalis and the British is followed by a rather intriguing comparison of the British rulers and the Mughals in terms of their conduct during the famine. Unlike the British, who hoard and continue their monopoly over the grain trade, disregarding the starving people, the Mughal rulers in the past, it is noted, had taken every possible measure to feed the people by opening the doors to the imperial granaries and arranging to bring grains from “distant shores” and distribute those among the people (143–44). In the footnote to this section Scott quotes a passage from Alexander Dow’s *History of Hindustan* that recounts Aurangzeb’s benevolence to the people during times of scarcity. This was quite a radical gesture on Scott’s part because British writers in the eighteenth century usually presented the Mughals as inferior to the British. Hodges, for instance, in *Travels in India*, made every effort to prove the superiority of East India Company rule over that of the earlier monarchs. Commenting on the primary cause of poverty in India, he labelled the Mughal rulers “plunderers instead of the parents of their subjects,” overlooking the role of the British in pushing people into their impoverished state (103). Scott reverses this equation. Following the common British practice, he refers to Aurangzeb as a “tyrant,” but argues that even as a despot he had stood by the people in need, which the British failed to do. Scott’s contradictory claims about the Mughal emperors remind us of the multifarious representation of the Indian sovereigns during the Hastings trial. While Hastings’ counsel made every effort to prove that Indian sovereignties were despotic, Burke had “it both ways.” On the second day of the trial, Burke argued that

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Islamic government could not be termed despotic, since Islam taught the rule of law, but on several other occasions in the trial, he criticised oriental despotism (Teltscher, *India Inscribed* 165–66). The varied representations reveal that Europeans had yet to form a fixed notion of the Indian sovereigns, and also point to the fact that Indian sovereignties constituted a free-floating image at the disposal of European commentators, who could employ the figure of the Indian ruler at will to fit into the discourse they wished to build. Scott employs the image of a despotic but caring Indian ruler to cudgel the company's administrators.

14. After the comparison of British and Mughal responses to famine, Serim's monologue juxtaposes the plenty and abundance of pre-British-era Bengal, bustling with agricultural and commercial activities, and the famine-era desolation, despair, and silence. By this means, Scott highlights the suffering of the people under company rule. Serim recounts how the farmers were forced to give "tenfold tax" and made to leave their occupation in despair (144); the weavers had to quit their homes and "mourn along the land" (145). Consequently, a shadow of darkness looms large over the provinces once known for their festivities. There used to be a vibrant, joyous festival honouring Durga in the midst of natural abundance; now, at "Drugah's [*sic*] feast—but grief and terror reign" (146). Earlier, thousands of devotees used to gather to take the holy dip in the Ganges in honour of Vishnu, but solitude reigns now and the paths leading to the ghats remain "by human foot unworn" (147). Historians have noted that the overexploitation of the farmers, tradesmen, and artisans by the company and its agents had already financially ruined the lives of many in the Bengal Presidency, and they could consequently do little to withstand the onslaught of

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the famine (Arnold 101). Even during the famine, however, the revenue target of the company was “violently kept up to its former standard” (Hunter 381). In the aftermath of the famine, when most of the villages were deserted, an additional *najai* tax<sup>15</sup> was imposed on the peasants to make up for the loss of revenue from the ryots<sup>16</sup> who left their homes during the famine. Scott, therefore, was quite accurate in his representation of the post-famine situation.<sup>17</sup> Serim’s monologue comes to an end with a reassertion of the contrast between the violent, murderous British merchants and the pacifist Bengalis, who are advised by the invaders “to slay like [the British] and riot on the slain,” only to be rebuffed: “We will die—but shall never pollute our hands” (147–48). This pacifism of the Bengalis, their refusal to indulge in violence, as will be discussed later, has its philosophical roots in Scott’s Quakerism, and through Serim, Scott seems to explore his own ideological concerns.

15. Serim’s uninterrupted monologue, which mimics many voices and moves through several comparisons, is followed by two specific scenes of misery. In the first, a man in his deplorable plight curses the foreigners for taking away his daughter. The man gave away everything he had to save his child from being taken away, but after the foreigners robbed him of his possessions, he was also forced to part with her (148–49). Although no explanation is given as to the objective of those who have abducted her, it can be assumed that hers will be a harrowing tale, since women were often sexually exploited by company officials and tax collectors. Revenue collector Devi Singh’s atrocities against women during the Hastings era were noted both by the British as well as Bengali commentators. Robbed of his daughter, the hapless father wishes to be killed by Serim, mistaking him for

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a British officer. In the second scene, a “white-rob’d Bramin” is seen near a temple with his “wives, his children dead beside him” (149). In his anguish, he curses the British for the death of his family members and appeals to the powers above to avenge this. However, Brahma’s voice is heard teaching him tolerance and forgiveness: “Forbear, rash man nor curse thy country’s foes; / Frail man to man forgiveness ever owes” (151). Remarkably, Brahma’s all-forgiving attitude consolidates the thread of pacifism in the poem. Brahma’s intervention is followed by Serim’s voice, and in contrast to the present scenes of misery, we are provided with a picture of luxurious homes built on the spoils from India in some lovely British valley. Serim predicts that peace will evade these palaces of luxury, as the spectres of past guilt will haunt them, and remorse will lead their inhabitants to death. The suffering Hindus, on the other hand, will reach their desired home at the end of the cycle of transmigrations of the soul.

16. The idea that remorse and guilt will weigh heavily on the British offenders echoes similar sentiments expressed in Thomas Gray’s ode “The Bard” (1757). Also, in terms of its framing device, its criticism of the British conquerors, and the dramatic final scene, Scott’s eclogue bears a striking resemblance to Gray’s poem. Both poems end with the death of the speaker. At the end of Gray’s poem, the bard commits suicide, jumping headlong from the hill while cursing the conquering King Edward. In Scott’s, Serim does not commit suicide but is killed by a “British ruffian” who indignantly pushes him into the river. Melodramatic as it is, the scene directs readers’ attention to the inhumanity of the British in India by depicting the absolutely outrageous conduct of company personnel. James Mulholland reads Scott’s “Serim” and Irwin’s eclogue “Ramah: or, the Bramin” as



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imitations of “The Bard.” He claims that they adopt the Welsh oral tradition represented by Gray’s poem in the Indian context (120–55) and interprets Serim’s death as the consequence of “direct colonial violence.” He notes that it is an attempt to silence Serim’s anti-colonial voice, although unsuccessfully, as Serim’s voice returns as a part of the “spectral choir” that haunts British domestic life (152). Once we consider Serim’s murder (silencing) in relation to the possible silencing of the orientalist on the issue of the famine by the EIC’s control over patronage and press, what becomes apparent is the existence of a company mechanism for controlling and containing dissidence, whether from within its own ranks or from the Indians. Dissidence, however, survives in literature. Scott preserves the dissenting voices in poetic form. Thus, Scott’s eclogue, with its Indian voices in print, “transcends the boundaries of space and time,” and realises the anti-colonial promise of the poem (Mulholland 149).

17. On its publication, the eclogue received mixed critical responses: it was praised for its “authentic” presentation of the circumstances of the famine but also criticised by some British readers for its candid treatment of the subject. One commentator in the *Critical Review* observed that the poem “paints in the warmest colours the various scenes of misery and distress brought on the natives of India by their cruel English task-masters: there is too much truth, we fear, in this narrative” (Smollet 47). This “too much truth” was hard to digest for many British readers. John Hoole, for instance, stated that the poet in his “philanthropy” had “greatly exaggerated” the circumstance of the famine and that, “by designing [British] men, into a general and universal spirit of rapine, avarice, and cruelty,” brought disgrace to the “British name in India” (lxx). Historical records, however, confirm

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the rapacious behaviour of the company officials and reveal worse scenes of human suffering. For instance, in June 1770, Becher observed that the situation was so grim “that in several parts the living have fed on the dead” (*Bengal District Gazetteers* 109).<sup>18</sup> The scenes in the poem pale before such official accounts.

18. Notwithstanding his attempts at providing an authentic poetic account of the famine, Scott fails to evade certain orientalist tropes in his eclogue. Firstly, it is difficult to overlook the elements of exoticism in the poem. Pre-famine Bengal is presented in a romanticised manner as a land of Edenic beauty. This idealisation can be defended in terms of the conventions of the eclogue within which portrayal of the ideal beauty of the countryside is meant to criticise the corruptions of the city, and it can be argued that in the case of “Serim” it is employed to condemn the colonisers. However, it is difficult to overlook the fact that such a binarisation ends up essentialising Bengal as a garden of plenty, ignoring its multifaceted realities. Another facet of this exoticisation is the introduction of the Hindu gods and goddesses, like Durga, Bishnu, and Brahma, in the poem and the use of footnotes to explain these mythological imports. It can be contended that these references help the poet create local colour and that it is appropriate in a poem with a Hindu sage as the primary narrator to introduce deities from the Hindu tradition, but the descriptions of Hindu gods or religious events in the poem lack the necessary details to make it a realistic portrayal of Bengali culture. Thus, the references to Hindu mythology in the poem, because of their vagueness, mainly function to create an exotic charm for late-eighteenth-century English readers, who were already orientalising. Also, as motifs they appear superfluous in a poem that aims at presenting a factual account of the famine. More than the exoticising tendency,

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what might strike a contemporary reader of Scott's poem is the identification of Bengalis as passive victims. The British and the Bengalis are presented as personifying contrasting qualities. The British are presented as active, resourceful, and rapacious perpetrators, and Bengalis as passive, pacifist, and indolent victims. Bengalis are depicted as incapable of resisting the oppressor on their own; their only action in response to colonial atrocities is to invoke gods' curses on the British. Stereotyping the Bengalis as passive and indolent victims facilitated the development of imperial ideology, particularly the claim that it was a moral duty of Europeans to rescue Indians from "the material and moral consequences of their passivity" (Arnold 95). Also, in the pacific disposition of the Bengalis the British saw a great prospect of furthering their imperial ambition. In 1789 John Shore, who was a member of the supreme council of Bengal, observed that "in the pacific disposition and habitual subjection of the natives, we enjoy a security without example in the records of history" (qtd. in Arnold 96). Scott's anti-imperial eclogue seems to involuntarily contribute to the development of imperial rhetoric.

19. Once we take note of the stereotypes, the obvious question that follows is why Scott fails to do away with them in a poem that is so critical of company atrocities. The generic conventions of the eclogue might be one reason behind their inclusion. As a genre, the foreign eclogue harboured several misconceptions about the colonial and oriental other (Wood xvii, 73). Moreover, as Edward Said notes in *Orientalism*, such misconceptions were part of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century perceptions of the East, much of which was "textual" (20, 137–38, 206; Marshall and Williams). That the stereotypes that we find in Scott's eclogue came from his reading on India and Bengal is revealed in the

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footnotes. Scott depended on John Z. Holwell's *Interesting Historical Events, Relative to the Provinces of Bengal* (1765–1768) and Alexander Dow's *The History of Hindostan* (1768–1772) for his conception of Indian history, culture, and its people. Dow provided an extensive overview of Indian society in the three dissertations appended to his *History: A Dissertation on the custom, manners, language, religion and philosophy of the Hindoos; A Dissertation on the origin and nature of despotism in Hindostan; and An Enquiry into the State of Bengal with a plan for restoring that kingdom to its former prosperity and splendour*. In the last of these Dow observed,

[t]o make the natives of the fertile soil of Bengal free, is beyond the power of political arrangement. The indolence which attends the climate, prevents men from that constant activity and exertion, which is necessary to keep the nice balance of freedom. Their religion, their institutions, their manners, the very dispositions of their minds, form them for their passive obedience. (cxx)

In Dow's works the words "passive" and "indolence" occur several times. For Dow, Bengalis were ready to become British subjects "or if the British nation prefers the name—more our slaves" (cxx).

20. Such images of the Bengalis in the context of the famine lose validity if we consider the basic instinct in humans to survive. Explaining people's responses to the famine, Arnold argues that the years of exploitation after Plassey by company representatives, zamindars, and tax collectors created a general atmosphere of despair among people who were

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constantly denied justice. He also shows that the accusation of passivity in the face of famine was far from the truth, citing, among other efforts, numerous complaints to the officers collecting taxes. Thousands of people migrated to other districts and cities in hope of getting food when prospects of finding it in the villages were exhausted (101–03). When people failed to provide for their children, they sold them to the rich, that the children might somehow survive (Mukhopadhyay 73).<sup>19</sup> Many villagers joined the band of robbers and indulged in looting and burning down the *golas* (Mukhopadhyay 46, 71; Arnold 102–03). Numerous ryots refused to cultivate their land, protesting over-taxation after the famine. In a manuscript letter preserved in the Visva-Varati University library in West Bengal, we get the account of Jangu Sekh, a ryot who wished to surrender the land he had cultivated for twenty years, expressing his inability to pay the taxes (Mukhopadhyay 51–52).<sup>20</sup>

21. Apart from the historical records, an interesting form of evidence of resistance against the company is found in the folk narratives from eighteenth-century Bengal that have come down to us in manuscript form. These narratives from the margin, evolving organically from the society, are quite reliable documents on the famine and its impact on the people and their resistance to EIC rule. Once we consider these local narratives, the accusation that Bengalis suffered their fate passively stands completely invalidated. Literary and cultural historians have noted that the second half of the eighteenth century was a period of “prolonged and chronic social and economic distress” in Bengal, leading to a sterile phase for Bengali literature (Kopf 57). Much of this had to do with the advent of EIC rule and the famine of 1770. Traditionally, Bengali writers and poets thrived on the patronage of nawabs and zamindars. However, with the dawning of company rule, its new taxation

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policy, and the restructuring of the political order, traditional centres of patronage were destroyed; this was compounded by the onset of famine, which made it even harder to find backing for literature and art. As a consequence, Bengali literature suffered a major crisis in the post-famine years (De; S. Sen). Only certain popular folk forms like *chhara*, *gatha*, *panchali* and some devotional forms survived the famine. It is remarkable, however, that these verses documented the suffering of the people under company rule and recorded people's resistance in certain instances. The epigraph to this essay constitutes an example of this. It is excerpted from a popular Bengali devotional song by the eighteenth-century poet (and saint) Ramprasad Sen. The agonising cry for food heard in the song represents the anguish of the people starving to death in the 1770 famine. Ramprasad's devotional songs were usually addressed to the goddess Kali, but the present song is a prayer to the goddess of food and nourishment, Annada or Annapurna (another form of mother goddess), to give food to the starving people. Ramprasad, who witnessed the scarcity and death, documented the miseries of the people within the formal limits of his devotional songs. The recurring use of words like *khajna* (tax), *khsudha* (hunger), *anna* (food), *vat* (rice), and *viksha* (alms) in his songs serves as a constant reminder of the want and scarcity (R. Sen 109).<sup>21</sup> Ramprasad reflected on the famine in an oblique manner, never directly accusing anybody. In comparison to this, a very straightforward representation of the grim condition of the people and how the monopolisation of the grain trade worsened the crisis is found in the following anonymous verse:

nadnadi khal bil sab sukailo l

annavabe lok sab jamalaye gelo ll

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desher samasta chal kinia bajare l

desh char khar holo Reja Khar tare ll

ekchete byabasa dam khharatara l

chhiattorer monontoro holo voinkoro ll

pati patni putra chhare peter lagiye l

mare lok anahare akhaddya khayie ll (Mukhopadhyay 129)<sup>22</sup>

The rivers and the water bodies are dry.

People are dying for lack of food.

All the rice of the country is hoarded.

The people are ruined by Reja Khan.

Business is monopolised, prices are high.

The famine of seventy-six has become perilous.

Husbands and wives are leaving their children for hunger.

People are dying for want of food.<sup>23</sup>

It is significant that the anonymous versifier accuses Reza Khan of being responsible for much of the people's distress, perhaps having witnessed Reza Khan's involvement in grain collection. It was the official responsibility of the *naib-diwan* to collect grains for the company army, but it was difficult for ordinary people to differentiate between official responsibility and personal profiteering.

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22. Another significant narrative in this context is the *jager gan* composed by Ratiram Das.<sup>24</sup>

As a folk form, *jager gan* sometimes incorporated elements from topical history, and this particular composition is remarkable for providing a good account of the distressful circumstances under company rule and people's rebellion against it. In Das's narrative, several aspects of the famine get highlighted. The misery of the people, including their starvation and death, is vividly presented: "Pete nai anna tader parane nai bas / Chame dhaka har kaikhani kori upbas" ("They have no food, nor any clothing / With long starvation what remains is bone and skin"; Mukhopadhyay 131). Raja Devi Singh, who was the *ijaradar* (revenue collector) of Rangpur-Dinajpur region, is condemned for his atrocities against poor peasants and women.<sup>25</sup> The wicked *ijaradar*, it is noted, was not content with beating up the ryots for non-payment of taxes and set his eyes on the women of the family: "Parena ghatai cholite jhiori bouri / Debi Singher loke nei take jor kori" ("The wives and daughters cannot go out. / Devi Singh's people forcibly take them away"; Mukhopadhyay 131).

23. It is pertinent to remember that Devi Singh's atrocities continued deep into the Hastings era, and during the trial of Hastings, Burke made multiple references to Devi Singh's torture of women (De Bruyn). In a very significant episode in the narrative, Das recounts a collective act of rebellion by the people against the company: the Rangpur peasants' uprising of 1783. In the wake of this uprising, the collector of Rangpur, Richard Goodland, was forced to take measures to reduce taxes (S. N. Sen 118–19). The same event was documented by another versifier, Krishnahari Das. His rather short composition narrates how thousands gathered around the collector's office and the collector was forced to admit



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the power of the peasants: “Diwan bole ryot sab karte pare / kake o swarge tole kake achhre mare” (“The *diwan* said that the ryots are all powerful / They can take one to great heights, or beat one to dust”; Bandopadhyay 84). The Bangla couplet is so potent an expression of the power of the peasants that it can qualify as a motto for any mass movement against oppression.

24. Remarkable as they are for their representation of the circumstances of the people in distress and their resistance to the British, these narratives must be acknowledged as the first sites of literary protest in Bangla against an emergent imperial regime. The fact that these verses come from Bengali writers and poets who lived outside the circle of patronage and were independent voices from the margin makes their anti-colonial stance very significant. These verses are centrally occupied with the misery of the people, and as the versifiers drew their inspiration from experiential reality, there is an affective dimension to these narratives. As folk narratives, they are characterized by simplicity and directness; there is an aura of authenticity about them. Just like these Bengali verses, Scott’s eclogue also remains an important cultural text documenting the famine and the miseries of people in Bengal. Scott registered his protest against the atrocities committed by his fellow countrymen. That it had some impact is evident from Hoole’s complaint regarding Scott’s supposed exaggeration of the evil deed of the British. However, there are some basic differences between Scott’s poem and the Bangla narratives. Scott writes with the burden of the conventions of the genre and certain misconceptions derived from his sources. His eclogue lacks the simplicity and directness of the Bangla narratives. A close look reveals that generic conventions and Scott’s rhetorical concerns take away much of the sincerity

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(and simplicity) that characterises the minimalist Bangla narratives. Thematically, Scott's narrative seems more oriented toward condemnation of the British. Unlike Scott's poem, the Bangla verses do not dwell much on the EIC or their agents but simply go on narrating the suffering of the people. The criticisms of the British and their Indian associates evolve organically out of the events narrated. Also, written from a distance, Scott's poem lacks the affect embedded in the Bangla verses.

25. Notwithstanding these differences, a close affinity between Scott and the Bengali versifiers lies in the fact that both they and Scott critically responded to the first mass experience of colonial evil in Bengal in their compositions. While the Bangla verses can be construed as early instances of the Empire writing back, Scott's poem is an anti-colonial critique from within the West and can be considered in league with protesting voices from colonial Bengal. Scott's marginal position as a Quaker in Britain is key to understanding this connection. Scott's was a peripheral voice when it came to British domestic politics. It is generally admitted that late eighteenth-century religious and political dissent played a crucial role in fuelling discourses on rights and that the Quakers took a leading role in propagating the principles of equality and universal brotherhood (Clarke 239–56). The Quakers did not subscribe to the dominant British political perspectives on war, conquest, and violence, and had a troubled relationship with metropolitan values. Quakerism liberally accommodated the racial and the colonial other in its discourse on rights, and to a good extent opposed the dominant British discourses around the issues of colonialism and slavery. Scott's criticism of colonial violence in the poem can thus be interpreted in terms of British domestic politics. The impersonated voices of Serim and other Indians help Scott

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articulate a Quaker's position of difference within Britain. This intersection of Quakerism and radical politics suggests that Scott's concern for the distressed Indians in "Serim" is rooted in his Quaker background.

26. Scott's Quaker background allows us to revisit the issue of Scott's representation of the Bengalis as passive victims. The Quakers were as well known for their radical pacifism and quietist approach to life as they were for their humanitarianism, toleration, libertarianism, and reformist zeal (Cookson; Stokes). Because of their quietism, the Quakers were also considered passive (Stokes). The Bengalis in the eclogue, unlike the resourceful and rapacious British, are represented as pacifists. The most poignant manifestation of pacifism in the poem is constituted by Brahma's instruction to the Brahmin. When the Brahmin invokes the gods to avenge the misdeeds of the British, Brahma's advice is not to "curse [his] country's foes" but to forgive his enemies, for "man to man forgiveness ever owes" (151). Brahma defines the desire for revenge as a satanic trait, illustrating how it can provoke a cycle of violence by alluding to the Hindu mythological figure of Mahishasura, the demon, who gave birth to "Strife and pain" (151). Brahma's voice echoes the pacifist ideology of the Quakers; this suggests that Scott, while condemning the violence and brutality of the British, does not condone patriotic counter-violence on the part of the Bengalis because it would give birth to a cycle of revenge. Scott's position in the eclogue might remind the readers of a poem by another Quaker poet, Bernard Barton. In his poem "Napoleon," Barton not only rejects the violence of Napoleonic war but "also forecloses the opposite extreme: a patriotic sublime glorying in

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the foe's destruction" (Stokes 518). Thus, the pacifism and passivity of the Bengalis in the poem can be read in terms of Scott's Quakerism.

27. Scott's poem, however, seems to move beyond pacifism toward a praxis of non-violence.

Pacifism, it has been argued, is "the ideological assertion that war and violence should be rejected in political and personal life, whereas nonviolence refers to a distinct set of political practices" (Howes 427). Nonviolent conduct is "that which deliberately refrains from using violence" (Miller 36). It is interesting to note that the Quakers are known not only for their refusal to take part in violence and war (Cookson) but also "for their commitment to a total way of life which is the invariable accompaniment of genuine nonviolence" (Nelson 20). And in general, as Mulford Q. Sibley<sup>26</sup> points out, "Quakers implicitly accepted the conception of nonviolent resistance" (233). Scott makes explicit what is "implicitly accepted" by the Quakers and explores the possibility of nonviolent resistance to the forces of oppression in the poem.<sup>27</sup> Apart from Brahma's message of forgiveness, which has been discussed in terms of pacifism, another key to understanding the ethic of non-violence in the poem is Scott's presentation of the man who has been robbed of his daughter. Despite losing everything, he is not in a mood for revenge, but, mistaking Serim for a British officer, invites Serim to kill him (148). This incident bears a close resemblance to an occurrence narrated in the "Account of the Late Dreadful Famine in India" in which a poor man confronts the (British) narrator and wishes to die in his presence: "Baba! Baba! My Father! My Father! This affliction comes from the hands of your countrymen, and I am come here to die, if it pleases God, in your presence" (206). Like the distressed father in Scott's poem, the dying man in this narrative blames the British

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for the calamity and wishes to embrace death in an act of protest. Both acts can be read as conscious attempts on the part of the Indians to touch (and transform) the conscience of the British who were responsible for their plight. Mahatma Gandhi, the most eminent advocate of non-violence of modern times, wrote that non-violence

in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration. ("The Doctrine")

The old man's invitation to the enemy to kill him in the poem is a conscious choice to suffer, not to submit passively.

28. The old man's act thus becomes an important anti-imperial gesture when considered (anachronistically) in relation to the Gandhian view of non-violent resistance. Once we locate the affinity between the "passive resistance" of the Indians in the poem and the Gandhian notion of non-violent resistance and the ideal of *satyagraha*, we can reach a new conclusion regarding Scott's representation of the Bengalis in the poem. Gandhi repeatedly pointed out that "*Satyagraha* is not a weapon of the weak. It is the strongest force that one can possibly imagine or wish for and is a complete substitution for brute force" (*Collected Works*, 42.39). In a similar vein, he defined non-violence as an intensely "active force" (*Collected Works* 48.325, 48.365). Given that the patient endurance of suffering does not

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mean passivity within the context of the Gandhian practice of non-violence, the pacifist Bengalis in the poem should not be (mis)construed as passive and weak.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps William Hunter saw courage and determination in Indians' patient endurance of suffering. Narrating the conduct of the people during the 1866 famine that ravaged Orissa, he observed that "the people endured silently till the end, with a fortitude that casual observers of different temperament and widely dissimilar race may easily mistake for apathy" (Hunter 42). Scott, though writing long before Hunter, seems to have discerned still more, sensing in the Indians' stoic endurance of suffering the beginning of a non-violent resistance to the British in India.

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**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> The lines are from an eighteenth-century Bengali devotional song usually assigned to the poet and saint Ramprasad Sen. Ramprasad’s songs are categorised as *shyamasangeet* or *shaktageeti*, that is, songs dedicated to the Hindu goddess Kali as Shyama or Shakti. They are also simply referred to as *Ramprasadi*, meaning “by Ramprasad.” The [full song in Bangla](#) and its [English](#)

[paraphrase](#) can be accessed in Exeter University's database [Famine and Dearth in India and Britain, 1550–1800: Connected Cultural Histories of Food Security](#).

<sup>2</sup> I must note here that there is a sense of racial superiority in the passage quoted, as “western Europe” is thought to be immune to the infections raging throughout the globe. The illusion of immunity is quickly dismissed in the novel, however, as the entire population of the Earth succumbs to infection. Nonetheless, the notion of Europe's superiority often influenced Europeans' reading of famines and natural disasters in India. Europeans considered themselves capable of averting and countering disasters that Asians could not, due to superior forms of governance; this discourse was used to justify subordination of non-European people (Arnold 93–95).

<sup>3</sup> The only other poetic composition in English to reflect on the scenes of suffering in some detail is, perhaps, the often-quoted lines composed by John Shore (Lord Teignmouth). Shore was in Murshidabad during the famine, but he wrote this in his memoir published about seventy years after the event:

Still fresh in Memory's eye, the scene I view,  
The shrivell'd limbs, sunk eyes, and lifeless hue;  
Still hear the mother's shrieks and infant's moans,  
Cries of despair, and agonizing groans.  
In wild confusion, dead and dying lie;—  
Hark to the jackall's yell, and vulture's cry,  
The dog's fell howl, as, midst the glare of day,  
They riot, unmolested, on their prey!  
Dire scenes of horror! Which no pen can trace,

Nor rolling years from Memory's page efface. (25–26)

<sup>4</sup> See the archive [Famine and Dearth in India and Britain, 1550–1800: Connected Cultural Histories of Food Security](#).

<sup>5</sup> Arnold quotes several such pieces of official correspondence in “Hunger in the Garden of Plenty.”

<sup>6</sup> Much of the relief efforts came from the nabob and the Indian tax collectors and zamindars, who provided as much food to the dying as they could; they also contributed to the relief fund (Mukhopadhyay 68).

<sup>7</sup> Recent criticism has hotly debated the EIC's method of functioning, with some historians arguing that the EIC existed all along as a corporate-political body or as a company-state and that its interests went beyond trade and commerce. The developments in India in the eighteenth century, it is also argued, consolidated the division of the economic and the political spheres in England, and the state established greater control in Indian matters (Stern).

<sup>8</sup> However, it is necessary to remember that the Regulating Act of 1773 had more to do with the financial crisis of the East India Company and the corruption of its officials than with company atrocities during the famine.

<sup>9</sup> On the issue of the official silence, see Teltscher's “Colonial Correspondence.”

<sup>10</sup> *Google Books Ngram Viewer* shows that the term [nabob was heavily used in English texts around the year 1800](#). Google claims that their data on post-1800 usages of words and phrases is quite accurate. In the case of *nabob*, it is interesting to note that the popularity of the word coincided with the financial collapse of the company in the 1780s and the Hastings trial (1788–1795). Company officials and agents were under public scrutiny during this time, so Ngram data here seems to represent the derogative use of *nabob* in the late eighteenth century quite accurately.

<sup>11</sup> My use of “contact zones” follows Mary Louise Pratt’s conceptualization of it in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Pratt defines contact zones as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (4).

<sup>12</sup> As formulated by Raymond Schwab in *The Oriental Renaissance*, the huge flow of cultural texts, especially those coming from Asia, gave birth to an Oriental Renaissance in Europe.

<sup>13</sup> In the headnote, Scott alludes to Jones’s “Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations” and remarks on the recurrence of the theme of the absent lover in Arabian love poetry (126).

<sup>14</sup> This anonymous account was quite authentic and provides details that match with other accounts of the famine published during the time, as well as with the internal correspondence of company officials.

<sup>15</sup> *Najai* tax (“*najai*” literally meaning “not allowed to leave”) was imposed on “the present cultivators to make up the deficiencies in revenue caused by the desertion or death of neighbouring ryots in the same village” (Haq 284).

<sup>16</sup> The word *ryot* is here used to refer to the tenant peasants, who were liable for paying taxes on their tenancy of land.

<sup>17</sup> Many of the details provided by Scott must have been derived from the anonymous *A Short History of English Transactions in the East Indies*. Another source might have been the pamphlet “Account of the Late Dreadful Famine in India,” the anonymous account published in 1772 in the *Annual Register*. It provided a very detailed account of the famine and its circumstances.

<sup>18</sup> One can read a [digitized excerpt from the letter](#) at the *Famine and Dearth* database.

<sup>19</sup> An account of how Bengalis sold their children to a White man who asked his servants to buy as many as they could and provide them with food is found in a testimony published in the Bengali Periodical *Dig Darshan* (Mukhopadhyay 77–78).

<sup>20</sup> I must mention here that Scott erroneously assumes the people in misery to be Hindus. This is obviously due to his lack of understanding of the demography of Bengal. The peasants and the artisans who were worst hit by the famine were both Hindus and Muslims. India as a Hindu land, it has been observed, was an orientalist construction and a problematic one (Roberts).

<sup>21</sup> One can also read the relevant songs in [\*Famine and Dearth in India and Britain, 1550–1800: Connected Cultural Histories of Food Security\*](#).

<sup>22</sup> This quotation shows the punctuation used in the old Bangla text, a form of punctuation used only in poetry. Both the single and double lines indicate a full stop, with the double lines signifying a greater pause and the end of a couplet. The double-line stop is no longer used in Bangla. (Subsequent quotations omit original punctuation.)

<sup>23</sup> Translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>24</sup> The folk genre *jager gan* generally deals with events related to gods (especially Krishna or Kamdeva) and was popular in the northern districts of undivided Bengal.

<sup>25</sup> The scarcity is blamed on the sin of the ruler: “rajar pape praja nosto deoai nai jal / mathe dhan jalia gelo ghore nai sambal” (“It is for the sin of the king that the people are suffering in drought. / The paddy field dries up in heat, nothing remains to harvest”; Mukhopadhyay 131).

<sup>26</sup> Sibley differentiates the Quakers from the Mennonites, who, he says, had “an ethic of withdrawal . . . rather than of *non-violent resistance*” (232; my emphasis).

<sup>27</sup> My opinions on the possible connections between Quakerism and the Gandhian praxis of non-violence is influenced by both Ramchandran and Mahadevan’s *Gandhi: His Relevance for Our*



*Time* and King's "Transformative Nonviolence: The Social Ethics of George Fox and Thich Nhat Hanh."

<sup>28</sup> It must be noted that Europeans in general misconstrued the difference between non-violent resistance and passivity. See Gandhi's "Passive Resistance versus Non-violence."