

The Aesthetics of Imperial Crisis
Image Making and Intervention in British India, c. 1857-1919

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Abstract

This thesis examines the visual cultures that developed in tandem with the violent crises of power that were endemic to Victorian imperialism. It looks primarily at the colonial artists and photographers who were working in British India and its borderlands from around the time of the 1857 Indian Uprising up until the Amritsar Massacre of 1919, arguing that image making was increasingly instrumental not only in mediating imperial violence, but also in moulding it. Of particular concern is the martial resonance of British aesthetic discourse in moments of crisis, as well as the entanglement of artistic and military imperatives that was characteristic of the photographing- and sketching-in-the-field that took place during episodes of unrest and their traumatic aftermaths. The case studies all lay great emphasis on how the formal conventions of aesthetic practices could affect the nature of the engagement of Briton and Indian alike with imperial violence, encouraging ways of looking and acting within a crisis that were consonant with established visual tropes.

While the central focus of this thesis is the aesthetics of colonialism in South Asia, the arguments that are developed intersect with broader histories of illustrated journalism, international exhibitions, and atrocity photography. The material includes everything from draughtsmanship to oil painting, but a particular stress is placed on the agency of photographers as they operated in ways that could stage interventions in the processes of imperial conquest and counterinsurgency. Ultimately, I argue that violent colonial crises functioned to shift the terms in which wide-ranging areas of visual media were viewed and used by the British throughout the Victorian period.

List of Contents

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	1
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	8
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	9
INTRODUCTION	10
VISUAL CULTURES OF CRISIS	10
<i>Art and the Raj</i>	14
<i>Art History and the Raj</i>	21
<i>Media War</i>	25
<i>Photography and Empire</i>	30
<i>Crisis Points</i>	36
MILITARISING SIGHT: AGENCY, AESTHETICS, AND THE 1857 INDIAN UPRISING	40
<i>Introduction</i>	40
<i>The Militarisation of Photography</i>	42
<i>Agency and Aesthetics</i>	53
<i>Exhibiting War</i>	61
<i>Insurgent Vision</i>	70
<i>Conclusion</i>	79
MARTIAL ARTISTS: IMAGE MAKING IN THE FIELD, C. 1857-1919	80
<i>Introduction</i>	80
<i>Precarious Life (A Performance)</i>	83
<i>Authorial Privilege / Imperial Violence</i>	91
<i>The Combative Camera</i>	103
<i>Psychological Warfare</i>	113
<i>Conclusion: Towards a Recent History of Atrocity...</i>	125
INTERVENING IN THE AFTERMATH: PHOTOGRAPHY AND CITIZENSHIP IN CAWNPORE	129

<i>Introduction</i>	129
<i>Citizens of the Studio</i>	132
<i>The Limits of Citizenship</i>	141
<i>Sightseeing and Segregation</i>	146
<i>Conclusion</i>	154
THE ART OF PEACE: PORTRAITURE AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY UNDER THE RAJ	155
<i>Introduction</i>	155
<i>Diplomatic Portraits of Empire</i>	159
<i>Gaps in the Paint</i>	166
<i>Composing Power</i>	173
<i>Conclusion</i>	181
CONCLUSION	183
ILLUSTRATIONS	187
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	237
BIBLIOGRAPHY	229
Newspapers and Periodicals	229
Unpublished Primary	231
Published Primary	233
Secondary	240

List of Illustrations

- Figure 1 Felice Beato, *The Hanging of Two Rebels* (1858). Albumen print. Alkazi Collection of Photography.
- Figure 2 Colesworthy Grant, ‘Nathaniel Wallich, MD. FRS. Professor of Botany, Medical College Calcutta,’ in Colesworthy Grant, *Lithographic Sketches of the Public Characters of Calcutta, 1838-1850* (Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1850) [originally published in *Medical Journal Press*, Calcutta, c. 1840]. Lithographic print. Copyright © The British Library Board, P2635.
- Figure 3 Anon., ‘The Ruins of Paris,’ *Illustrated London News*, 24 June 1871. Wood engraving.
- Figure 4 Frederick Villers, ‘Mr Burke posing the Ameer,’ *The Graphic*, 12 July 1879. Wood engraving.
- Figure 5 Anon., ‘Mary Jane Kelly: Photographing the Body,’ *Illustrated Police News*, 17 November 1888. Wood engraving.
- Figure 6 Linnaeus Tripe, *The Thapinyu Pagoda, Pagan, Burma* (1855). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 61/1(15).
- Figure 7 Sir Henry Yule, ‘Elevation of Thapinyu Temple (Thatbyinnyu) at Pagan,’ in Sir Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1858). Lithographic print. Author’s photograph from book. Yale Centre for British Art, DS485.B81 Y85 1858.
- Figure 8 Sir Henry Yule, ‘Section of Thapinyu Temple at Pagan,’ in Sir Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1858). Lithographic print. Author’s photograph from book. Yale Centre for British Art, DS485.B81 Y85 1858.
- Figure 9 Sir Henry Yule, ‘Ground Plans of Three Temples at Pagan [Ananda, Thapinyu, and Gaudapalen (Gaudawpalin)],’ in Sir Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1858). Lithographic print. Author’s photograph from book. Yale Centre for British Art, DS485.B81 Y85 1858.
- Figure 10 Anon., ‘Musahar. Low Caste Hindoo. Behar,’ in Sir John William Kaye and John Forbes Watson, *The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress, of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan*, I, 8 vols. (London: India Museum, 1868-1875). British Library, IOL.1947.c.344.

- Figure 11 Dr John Murray, *Moree Gate, Delhi* (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 52/(5).
- Figure 12 Anon., ‘Trophy of Armstrong Guns and Coils from the Royal Gun Factories, Woolwich,’ *Illustrated London News*, 14 June 1862.
- Figure 13 Anon., ‘Iron Figure Castings by M. DuceL, of Paris, in the International Exhibition,’ *Illustrated London News*, 14 June 1862.
- Figure 14 Ahmad Ali Khan, *Nawaub Raj Begum Sahibah of Oudh*, c.1855. Salt paper print on card mount. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 500/(3).
- Figure 15 Ahmad Ali Khan, ‘[Group portrait with] Miss Ommaney, Mr Ommaney killed in Residency by round shot in head, [Miss White], Mrs Ommaney, Miss Ommaney [and Mrs Kirk], [Lucknow],’ in *The Lucknow Album*, I, 2 vols. (c.1856). Salt paper print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 269/1(63).
- Figure 16 Ahmad Ali Khan, ‘View of the city of Lucknow taken from the top of the Ferad Bux and looking in a westerly direction,’ in *The Lucknow Album*, I, 2 vols. (c.1856). Salt paper print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 269/1(31).
- Figure 17 Ahmad Ali Khan, ‘[Portrait of] Mrs Lewin [and] Lt Lewin, [Lucknow],’ in *The Lucknow Album*, vol. 1, c.1856. Salt paper print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 269/1(69).
- Figure 18 Walter Sherwill, ‘Aerolite’, *Illustrated London News*, 13 December 1851. Wood engraving.
- Figure 19 Joseph Nash, ‘India no. 2,’ in *Dickinson’s Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851* (London: Dickinson, Brothers, Her Majesty’s Publishers, 1852). Colour lithograph. University of Exeter Library, Open Research Exeter (ORE).
- Figure 20 Dr John Murray, ‘The Samman Burj in the Fort-Palace in Agra,’ [1855], in *Photographs of Agra and its vicinity* (London: John Hogarth, 1857). Salt print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 101/(5).
- Figure 21 Sir Joseph Noel Paton, *In Memoriam* (1858). Oil on canvas, 48³/₈ /37⁷/₈ inches (123 × 96.5 cm). Private collection.
- Figure 22 Dr. John Nicholas Tresidder, ‘Gungoo Mehter’ (1859), in *The Tresidder Album* (1859-1863). Albumen print. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.

- Figure 23 Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, 'Joala Peisad - The Nana's Commander in Chief at Cawnpore' (1859), in *The Tresidder Album* (1859-1863). Albumen print. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.
- Figure 24 Patrick Gerald Fitzgerald, *View from the roof of Alumbagh, looking towards the Charbagh & Lucknow*. (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 591/(11). The 'X' on the bottom left marks the site of General Henry Havelock's burial.
- Figure 25 Patrick Gerald Fitzgerald, *On the roof, Alumbagh* (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 591/(7).
- Figure 26 Roger Fenton, *Lieutenant-General Sir J. L. Pennefather and Staff, Crimea* (1855). Albumen print. National Army Museum. NAM. 1964-12-151-6-8.
- Figure 27 William Simpson, 'The Afghan War: Attack on the Ali Musjid – The First Shot (About 10am, Nov. 21)', *Illustrated London News*, 28 December 1878. Wood engraving.
- Figure 28 George Franklin Atkinson, 'Tragical Adventure in the Subseemundee,' *Illustrated London News*, 10 October 1857. Wood engraving.
- Figure 29 William Simpson, 'Dangers of Archaeology at the Pheel Khana Tope,' *Illustrated London News*, 19 April 1879. Wood engraving.
- Figure 30 William Simpson, page from *Balaklava Sketchbook, October to December 1854* (1854). Graphite on wove paper. Yale Center for British Art, B1977.14.34.27.
- Figure 31 Colesworthy Grant, *Panoramic view of Pagan, looking S. W. by S* (1855). Watercolour, 13 x 18.5 inches (33 x 47cm). Copyright © The British Library Board, WD 540(23).
- Figure 32 Frederick Villier, 'Mr Burke posing the Ameer,' *The Graphic*, 12 July 1879. Wood engraving.
- Figure 33 Leon Willette, 'La Famine aux Indes', numéro spécial du *Rire* (23 novembre 1899). Cote : Est. V.R. Cart. 5, ch 19. Wood engraving.
- Figure 34 Murray, *Hindoo Rao's House, Delhi* (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 52(1).
- Figure 35 Dr John Murray, *Flag Staff Tower, Delhi* (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 52/(8).
- Figure 36 Harriet and Robert Tytler, *Front of Hindoo Rao's House* (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 193/(8).
- Figure 37 Felice Beato *The inside of Secundra Bagh where 2000 men*

were killed (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 27/(2).

- Figure 38 Dr John Murray, *Parade Ground, Benares* (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 52/(39).
- Figure 39 Willoughby Wallace Hooper, *Execution of dacoits at Mandalay* (1886). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 447/8(1).
- Figure 40 R. M. Howgego [?], *A wounded prisoner* (1919). Silver gelatin print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 566/(5).
- Figure 41 R. M. Howgego [?], *An Englishwoman was attacked in this street. as deterrent Indian who wanted to go down it had to crawl* (1919). Silver gelatin print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 566/(4).
- Figure 42 R. M. Howgego [?], *Making an Indian crawl through the streets as a punishment* (1919). Silver gelatin print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 566/(4).
- Figure 43 Sir Benjamin Simpson, 'Goorung, Military Tribe, Nipal,' in Sir John William Kaye and John Forbes Watson, *The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress, of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan*, 8 volumes (London: India Museum, 1868-1875). British Library, IOL.1947.c.344.
- Figure 44 Dr. John Nicholas Tresidder et al, 'P. 1,' in *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864), page 1. Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.
- Figure 45 'Personal,' in *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864), page 6. Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.
- Figure 46 Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, 'Cawnpore,' page 20 of *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864). Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.
- Figure 47 Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, 'Cawnpore Civil Establishment,' page two of *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864). Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.
- Figure 48 Dr John Nicolas Tresidder, 'JNT's Family,' page five of *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864). Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.
- Figure 49 John Nicholas Tresidder, 'Cawnpore Civil Establishment,' in *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864), page 11. Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.

- Figure 50 Bourne & Sherpherd, *Mr Nanabhoy B. Jeejeebhoy* (1870). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 127/(87).
- Figure 51 Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, 'Cawnpore,' in *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864), page 49. Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.
- Figure 52 Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, 'Cawnpore,' in *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864), pages 47-48. Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.
- Figure 53 Carlo Marochetti, *Angel of Cawnpore* (1860). Marble. Kanpur Memorial Church. Photography by Samuel Bourne. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 11/(44).
- Figure 54a Samuel Bourne, *Outside of the well* (c.1860). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 394/(60).
- b. Bourne & Shepherd, *The Memorial Well, Cawnpore* (c.1865). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 11/(45).
- c. Anon. *Memorial Well, Cawnpore* (1880). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 50/2(95).
- d. Bourne and Sherpherd [?], *People beside the well at Cawnpore* (c.1865). Albumen print. Royal Geographical Society, S0002702.
- e. John Edward Saché, *The Memorial Well, Cawnpore* (c.1870). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 2/3/(80).
- Figure 55 Samuel Bourne, *Memorial Well at Cawnpore* (c.1865). Albumen print. Victoria & Albert Museum, 53:299.
- Figure 56 Dr. John Murray, *The Well and Monument, Slaughter House, Cawnpore*, (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 52/(36).
- Figure 57 Val Prinsep, *The Imperial Assemblage, 1 January 1877* (1880). Oil on canvas. 10'x27' (300cm x 802cm). Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, RCIN 407181.
- Figure 58 Richard Caton Woodville, 'Clive on the top of the Nawab Siraj-d-daula's hunting lodge,' *Illustrated London News*, 23 September 1893. Wood engraving.
- Figure 59 Anon., 'Battle of Plassey,' *Will's Cigarettes Card* (1912). Colour lithograph. Bridgeman Art Library, LLM455631.

- Figure 60 Francis Hayman, *Robert Clive and Mir Jafar after the Battle of Plassey, 1757* (c. 1760). Oil on canvas. 39.5 in. x 50 in. (100cmx127cm). © National Portrait Gallery, London.
- Figure 61 Benjamin West, *Shah 'Alam conveying the grant of the Diwani to Lord Clive* (c.1818; copy of original from 1774). Oil on canvas. 114 x 159 in. (290 x 400 cm). Copyright © The British Library Board, F29.
- Figure 62 Francesco Bartolozzi after Mather Brown, *The Delivery of the Definitive Treaty by the Hostage Princes* (c.1794). Line and stipple engraving. Copyright © The British Library Board, P421.
- Figure 63 William Simpson, 'Lord Canning's return visit to the Maharaja of Cashmere,' *Illustrated London News*, 14 July 1860. Wood engraving.
- Figure 64 Val Prinsep, *Son of the Maharaja of Kashmir* (1877). Oil on canvas; 40 x 28 in. (99 x 71.1 cm)..Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata. R2785.
- Figure 65 Val Prinsep, *Maharaja of Mysore* (1877). Oil on canvas; 35.5 x 27.8 in. (90.2 x 70.8 cm). Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata. R2779.
- Figure 66 Val Prinsep, *Sir Salar Jung*, (1877). Oil on canvas; 42.6 x 33.4 in (108.2 x 84.8cm). Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata. R2776.
- Figure 67 Val Prinsep, *H. H. Raja Dewas* (1877). Oil on canvas; 35.9 x 27.9 in (91.2 x 70.8 cm). R2777.
- Figure 68 Val Prinsep, *Maharana of Oodeypore* (1877). Oil on canvas; 50 x 33 in (104 x 84cm). Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata. R2788.
- Figure 69 Val Prinsep, *Rana of Dholpore* (1877). Oil on canvas; 35.5 x 27.9 in (90.2 x 70.8 cm). Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata. R2779.
- Figure 70 Detail of Val Prinsep, *The Imperial Assemblage held at Delhi, 1 January 1877* (detail), 1877.
- Figure 71 Frank Dudman, *Val Prinsep A. R. A.* (1883). Photogravure. ©National Portrait Gallery, London. NPG Ax27817.
- Figure 72 Val Prinsep, *Maharaja of Scindia* [Maharaja of Gwalior, Jayajirao Scindia] (1877). Oil on canvas. 40.9 x 33 in (104 x 84 cm). Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata. R2783.
- Figure 73 Bourne & Shepherd, *Maharaja of Gwalior* (c.1876). Albumen print. Alkazi Collection of Photography, 96.04.002 00016/1.
- Figure 74 Frederic Leighton, *The Syracusan Bride* (1866). Oil on canvas. 134.7 x 424.3 cm (53.03" x 167.05"). Private collection.

- Figure 75 Paolo Veronese, *The Family of Darius before Alexander* (c.1567). Oil on canvas. 93 x 187 in (236.2 x 474.9 cm). National Gallery, London. NG294.
- Figure 76 Bourne & Shepherd, 'Lord Lytton, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, Grand Master of the Star of India,' in J. Talboys Wheeler, *The History of the Imperial Assmeblage at Delhi* (London: Longmans, 1877). Woodburytype print. British Library, Photo 1054/(2).
- Figure 77 Detail of Val Prinsep, *The Imperial Assemblage at Delhi* (1880).
- Figure 78 George Hayter, *The House of Commons, 1833* (1843). Oil on canvas. 213 3/8 in. x 136 1/4 in. (5.420m x 3.460m). © National Portrait Gallery, London. NPG 54.
- Figure 79 Sir John Everett Millais, *William Ewart Gladstone* (1879). Oil on canvas. 49 1/2 in. x 36 in. (1257 mm x 914 mm). National Portrait Gallery. NPG 3637.
- Figure 80 Sir John Everett Millais, *Benjamin Disraelie, Early of Beaconsfield* (1881). Oil on canvas. 50 1/4 in. x 36 5/8 in. (1276 mm x 931 mm). National Portrait Gallery. NPG 3241.
- Figure 81 Mortimer Menpes, 'State Entry as seen from the Jumma Masjid, 1903,' in Mortimer Menpes (transcribed by Dorothy Menpes), *The Durbar* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1903).

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Author's Declaration

The material submitted for examination here has not been published elsewhere. With the exception of the quotations and paraphrased remarks from published or unpublished sources, which have been acknowledged in the text, the following thesis represents my own original contribution.

Introduction

Visual Cultures of Crisis

What role did image making play within the violent crises that were endemic to Victorian imperialism? A colonial soldier shed some light on this question following his role in a vicious British assault against the city of Lucknow during the 1857-58 Indian Uprising (termed the Mutiny by the British at the time and the First War of Indian Independence by some subsequent historians). The attack was ‘the first good revenge I have seen!’ enthused Lieutenant Arthur Moffat Lang, ‘a glorious sight to see the mass of [Indian] bodies, dead and wounded.’¹ Later, as British reprisals for the seismic insurgency against imperial rule in India were still raging, Lang found pleasure in another form of vengeance. He saw two rebels hanged, while the Italian-British photographer Felice Beato (1832-1909) arranged a camera and tripod ‘just a few yards off!’² An excited Lang then watched Beato’s morbid authorial touch ‘steady the bodies, when life was extinct, to be nicely photographed!’ The consequent image shows hooded and bound figures framed by a makeshift gallows with ten Indian men standing witness to the grisly spectacle (1858; Figure 1). Photography was not only serving a documentary function here: it was seen to be actively part of the intimidating tactics of Britain’s counterinsurgency campaign, with Lang believing that ‘the Photographing must have impressed *additional horrors* on the scene to the natives.’³ The act of creating an image thus staged an intervention in both the physical arrangement and the psychological impact of colonial warfare.

The primary aim of this thesis is to theorise the role which image-making practices such as the above played within the violent upheavals of colonisation. Stated in the simplest of terms, my argument is that a climate of perennial unrest was crucial to informing the trajectories of colonial aesthetics in British India in the nineteenth century. This is not to say that an artistic appreciation of the ‘picturesque’ and ‘exotic’ aspects of the landscape or an academic interest in the peoples and cultures of

¹ Arthur Moffatt Lang (ed. David Blomfield), *Lahore to Lucknow: The Indian Mutiny Journal of Arthur Moffat Lang* (London: Leo Cooper, 1992), 139.

² Felice Beato was born in Venice but grew up in the British protectorate of Corfu before working as a photographer for primarily British markets. See Chapter Two for a fuller account of his identity and practice.

³ ‘Letter of A. M. Lang to his brother, Mathew,’ dated 21 June 1858. Add. MS 43822, f.100. I am indebted to John Fraser for this reference.

the subcontinent were not key drivers of visual production. They were, but these agendas were nevertheless frequently indulged under the auspices of some sort of martial engagement or diplomatic rapprochement, since such crisis points were the moments when state and commercial patronage – as well as public interest – were actually galvanised.⁴ This entanglement of art and unrest changed the terms in which wide-ranging modes of image making were deployed and discussed. So, in contrast to previous approaches to the colonial imagery of India from the Victorian period that have tended to compartmentalise photography and other art forms, the following study considers numerous areas of visual praxis – from colonial pedagogies of draughtsmanship and metropolitan cultures of display to the politics of the studio and the mechanics of working *en plein air* – in order to argue that moments of colonial crisis acted as crucibles in which the meanings of highly diverse, but interlinked, areas of aesthetics were determined anew.

Key to this focus on the aesthetics of imperial crisis is the issue of what modes of perception and action – that is to say what type of agency – visual media enabled. The formal conventions of art and photography were not cloistered neatly away from the world of action: they created a demand for artists, photographers, subjects and viewers to occupy certain positions, engage in certain activities, and adopt certain ways of looking. Acts of image making that were taking place in the field had a particularly tangible effect on the engagement of both British and Indian bodies with violent unrest. Scenes of artistic production – consisting of tripods, cameras, easels, sketchbooks, paint, pencils, and poses – interpolated the contested terrains of Britain's empire and created zones in which fraught encounters between coloniser and colonised could occur. Rather than looking at pictures solely in terms of their role as finished works to be viewed, then, I aim to assess the relationships that were engendered by the image-making event itself as it took place under the pressure of violent crisis.

⁴ Natasha Eaton has previously touched on colonial crisis as a context for the market for Indian prints in Britain during the mid eighteenth century. See Natasha Eaton, 'Nostalgia for the Exotic: Creating an Imperial Art in London, 1750-1793,' *Eighteenth-century Studies* 39: 2 (2006): 227-250.

A more particular aim of this thesis is illustrated through visual metaphor in Beato's image of the execution. The way the frame of the photograph is a formal echo of the gallows neatly visualises Lang's assertion that Beato's camera reinscribed the initial 'horror' of the hanging. I seek to tease out the feedback loop between visual media and violent spectacle that this colonial lieutenant perceived – a phenomenon of particular significance considering that this was a period which witnessed an absolutely unprecedented surge in the number of image makers working in combat zones. Photographers and artists were both active in servicing the demands of the publishing companies, illustrated newspapers, and consumer public that together formed a nineteenth-century art-industry which was becoming increasingly adept at capitalising on imperial wars by commissioning or soliciting images produced 'on the spot' in far-flung campaigns. The presence of these artists and photographers worked to alter the very dynamic of the conflict that they were there to record, as the production of images became interwoven with both the particular maneuvers and the wider strategies of colonial invasion, counterinsurgency, and diplomacy.

These issues are all important to understanding the historically specific aesthetic culture of the Raj, but they also address themselves to broader theoretical concerns regarding the mutually reinforcing relationship that frequently seems to occur between acts of image making and episodes of violence. Note again the *excitement* with which the colonial soldier's account given above treats a photographer's aggressive interaction with the hooded and manhandled bodies of (alleged) Indian insurgents. In the sense of exclamatory thrill there we can see shades of those American soldiers with happy thumbs-up smiles standing next to humiliated Iraqi prisoners posed *in extremis* for the camera at Abu Ghraib in Baghdad in 2003. From our twenty-first-century vantage point, the imbrication of violent geopolitical crises with the production of images seems routine. War, especially, is now an affair with which image making is seamlessly melded, something starkly demonstrated by the eerie marriage of the camera and the bomb in the controversial Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, more commonly termed a Predator Drone, as well as by the unprecedented live transmission to the White House of the extrajudicial killing of Osama Bin Laden by U.S. special forces operating nearly 8000 miles away in Pakistan in May 2011. These acts of visual mediation now have an agency that is structural to contemporary conflict.

In part, then, the chapters that follow work to trace a lineage for the weaponised visual practices that are constitutive of the projection of global power today, addressing an early stage of photography's history in which the camera was only beginning to be incorporated into the military-industrial-aesthetic complex of imperialism that I will be delineating. Photography was not unique in its combative status, though, which was rather a product of a complex web of wider artistic practices that intersected with the military exigencies of the Raj. Many of the Victorian-era artists looked at here have so far gone unstudied or have received only a summary treatment; still less have their imagery and writings been theorised in relation to that of the contemporary photographers who were operating in similar conditions of violent crisis throughout the British Empire. At its core my argument is that the practices of these artists and photographers were active not only in providing certain narrative frames within which episodes of unrest could be understood by viewers after-the-fact, but in crafting the type of colonial agency that could respond in a capable manner to military and diplomatic emergencies as they unfurled.

Crisis was by its very nature something that created a demand for action. It therefore framed visual production in terms of its efficacy as a form of *intervention*, and the four case studies of this thesis all work to explore the parameters of such interventions in the processes of war and peace in India. The first three chapters concern themselves with the effect that warfare in South Asia had on the ways that British art and photography were viewed and used: Chapter One demonstrates the widespread militarisation of aesthetic theory and practice that occurred in response to the epoch-shifting upheavals of the Indian Uprising; Chapter Two looks at the combative agency of colonial artists and photographers in the warzones which they occupied increasingly throughout the nineteenth century; and Chapter Three thinks about how rituals of image making helped to mould the contours of Anglo-Indian relations in the aftermath of brutal warfare. Finally, Chapter Four takes a different tact by tracing a parallel history in which artists and photographers facilitated the diplomatic engagements that were just as characteristic of Britain's imperial rule as violent crises – indeed, which helped to ward off violent crises by consolidating allegiances and augmenting power through ceremony and spectacle. Image making could be

conciliatory as well as combative, although in imperial diplomacy it was more often than not an ambivalent mixture of both.

Art and the Raj

When photography was first introduced to India immediately following its ‘invention’ in Europe in 1839, it greeted an emaciated colonial art scene.⁵ By the start of the Victorian period, India was no longer the profitable theatre for commercially-minded European artists that it had been in the eighteenth century, when oil painters such as Tilly Kettle (1735-1786), Johan Zoffany (1733-1810), and William Hodges (1744-1797) had enjoyed successful times in the service of both the English East India Company and the Indian royal courts.⁶ While Lucknow held out as a bastion of Indian royal patronage for European artists – with George Beechey (1797-1852), Alexandre Beoit Jean Dufay Casanova (1770-1844), William Florio Hutchisson (1773-1857) and a German miniature painter C. Muntz (dates unknown) all finding work there in the 1830s and 40s –⁷ the commissions that were received were seemingly not enough to sustain a career and artists either faded into obscurity, returned to Europe, or, like Hutchisson, moved into more profitable colonial trades in India like indigo farming.⁸

In fact, such was the pitiful state of the colonial art scene on the subcontinent by this point that in the 1830s the *India Review* went so far as to claim that a recently established artist – one who at the time was doing little more than contribute some lithographed portraits such as ‘Nathaniel Wallich, MD. FRS. Professor of Botany, Medical College Calcutta’ (c.1843; Figure 2) to colonial periodicals – was somebody that could be credited with ‘laying the foundation for the fine arts’ (a statement that

⁵ For an account of the myriad ‘inventions’ of photography, see Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: London: The MIT Press, 1997).

⁶ See Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture, 1770-1825* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1979).

⁷ G. D. S. Beechey, *The Eighth Child: George Duncan Beechey, 1797-1852, Royal Portrait Painter to the Last Four Kings of Oudh* (London: Excalibur Press, 1994), 35.

⁸ *Papers regarding William Florio Hutchisson*. Mss Eur F236/478.

denied that mantle to any Indian traditions).⁹ The artist in question was Colesworthy Grant (1813-1880), who had arrived in India in 1832 at the age of 19 and was still in agreement with the *India Review* about the ‘almost non-existence of the fine arts in the country’ over a decade later.¹⁰ Even his attempts to foster a more artistically literate colonial public through his popular twice-weekly evening classes in drawing in Calcutta (Kolkata) during the 1840s were to come to little when the wider project of which they were a part – the short-lived Mechanics Institution and School of Arts – was abandoned.¹¹

Grant has been almost totally absent from art historical accounts of India, but his career is a good demonstration of the centrality of violent crisis to a colonial artist’s prospects.¹² Illustrated narratives were his forte, and most of these attempted to capitalise on moments of military or social unrest. Following the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-42), Grant published *Dost Muhummud Khan: and the recent events in Caubool* (1842), a collection of portraits of the exiled rulers of Afghanistan with notes detailing the disastrous British campaign there.¹³ In the wake of the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852), the artist was commissioned to accompany the British embassy that was sent to a still-turbulent Burma in order to formalise Britain’s latest territorial expansion.¹⁴ In 1860, he published *Rural Life in Bengal: Illustrative of Anglo-Indian Suburban Life* (1860), a book pitched as a response to the Indian discontent that had

⁹ Quoted in Peary Chand Mitra, *Life of Colesworthy Grant, Founder and Late Honourable Secretary of the Calcutta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals* (Calcutta: I.C. Bose & Co., 1881), 5. While a good source of information on Grant’s early artistic career, Mitra’s work – as the title implies – was motivated by Grant’s later achievements in preventing animal cruelty rather than by his activities as an artist.

¹⁰ Colesworthy Grant, *An Anglo-India Domestic Sketch: A Letter from an Artist in India to his Mother in England* (Calcutta: Thacker & Co., 1849), v.

¹¹ Mitra, *Life of Colesworthy Grant*, 10-14

¹² The exception is Mildred Archer’s discussion of Grant’s work in a short article for a popular history magazine. See ‘Mission to Burma, 1855’, *History Today* (October 1963): 691-699.

¹³ Colesworthy Grant, *Dost Muhummud Khan: and the recent events in Caubool* (London: Thacker & Co, 1842).

¹⁴ All of the 106 watercolours that Grant ultimately produced on the mission are now mounted one-to-a-page in a large leather-bound album housed in the India Office Collection of the British Library. See Colesworthy Grant, *Album of 106 Drawings of Landscapes and Portraits of Burmese and Europeans made in Burma during Major Phayre’s Mission to the Court of Ava in 1855* (unpublished). PDP/WD540.

recently exploded by way of the violent protests of indigo workers, which had disrupted the production of the blue dye that was so essential to the colonial economy.¹⁵ Grant was very explicit about the commercial advantage offered by crisis: sketches that he had made of Rangoon in the 1840s had languished unseen for years, he wrote, until the Burmese had been ‘considerate enough’ to engage in the 1852 war and therefore render the imagery sufficiently marketable for him to publish it in *Rough Pencillings of a Rough Trip to Rangoon in 1846* (1853).¹⁶

Early-Victorian colonial art like this was more popular among expatriate audiences in India than it was with consumers back in Britain.¹⁷ While in some ways India had started to loom large in the metropolitan art scene following the blistering success of its artisans’ wares in London’s Great Exhibition of 1851 – and the consequent centrality of Indian design to the collection and the curriculum of the newly established South Kensington Museum (renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1899) – public interest in British imagery that actually took India as its subject was still relatively meagre.¹⁸ This was symptomatic of a more general indifference towards empire that Bernard Porter has identified in Victorian Britain prior to the ‘New Imperialism’ of the 1870s, with imperial territories being notable for their relative absence within education, the arts, and political discourse, so much so that in 1849 ‘there was actually a debate on the *lack* of debate in the Commons on colonial issues.’¹⁹

Yet, as Porter also notes, this general indifference was punctuated by moments of heightened public concern about the colonies brought on by news of rebellions and the prospect of imperial losses. Accordingly, the catastrophic and internecine

¹⁵ Colesworthy Grant, *Rural Life in Bengal: Illustrative of Anglo-Indian Suburban Life* (Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1860).

¹⁶ Colesworthy Grant, *Rough Pencillings of a Rough Trip to Rangoon in 1846* (Calcutta: London: Bombay: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1853), v.

¹⁷ The only book of Grant’s that enjoyed much success in Britain was his illustrated account of colonial life in India, *An Anglo-India Domestic Sketch: A Letter from an Artist in India to his Mother in England* (Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1849).

¹⁸ Tim Barringer, ‘The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project’, *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (New York: London: Routledge, 1998).

¹⁹ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 107.

violence that characterised the 1857 Uprising prompted in the British a surge of interest about the peoples, culture and landscapes of South Asia that led to the production of myriad oil paintings, watercolours, sketches, woodcut illustrations, engravings, lithographs, sculptures and photographs – a body of work that forms the crux of this thesis.

The Uprising was a seismic colonial crisis and its causes were myriad: widespread Indian resentment over unchecked colonial power; increasing religious anxiety about the fervour of Christian proselytising; the erosion of privileges for sepoy (Indian soldiers) in the East India Company army; and the caste-breaking implications of those sepoys having to bite the new greased cartridges for their Enfield Rifles, which were widely rumoured to be coated in religiously offensive beef and pork fat.²⁰ Though termed ‘the Mutiny’ by most Britons at the time, the insurgency was formed of both soldiers and civilians many of whom understood the conflict to be a struggle for India’s political and religious autonomy. The figurehead for this was the erstwhile puppet ruler of the British, the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar II (personally ambivalent towards the Uprising), whose city of Delhi was to become a focal point of the war after the colonial population there were either killed or forced to flee by the sepoys who had first revolted at the nearby cantonment in Meerut and then marched in a murderous fury on the Mughal capital.²¹ Such atrocities were relayed to the stunned British along with countless other stories, rumours, and exaggerations, all of which stoked a violent and frenzied vengefulness in the colonial population.²² The counterinsurgency campaign that followed was vicious and punitive – but ultimately, for the British, a success.

For decades following the convulsions of the Uprising a sense of crisis permeated Britain’s interactions with its Indian territories: the spectre of that war haunted the Raj, informing everything from its politics to its art. Yet violent conflict had been part and parcel of Britain’s colonial presence on the subcontinent for at least a

²⁰ See ‘The Mutiny and its Causes’, in Thomas Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857-1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 46-92.

²¹ See William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006).

²² See Christopher Herbert, *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Princeton, N.J.; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2008).

century. Among its most recent engagements, the East India Company had fought the Sikh Empire in the Punjab in both 1845-46 and 1848-49, colonised large swathes of Burma in the wars of 1824-26 and 1852, fought counterinsurgency campaigns in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1848 and Jharkhand in 1855, and used the Doctrine of Lapse (which extended imperial rule over Indian states in which the ruler died without a direct heir or was simply thought by the British to be incompetent) to annex Satara in 1848, Jaitpur and Sambalpur in 1849, Nagpur and Jhansi in 1854, Tanjore and Arcot in 1855, and Oudh (Awadh) in 1856. It was just this sort of aggressive expansionism that had helped to foment the far-reaching Indian discontent that enabled such an explosive insurrection to occur in 1857.

Artists and photographers had long been highly active in response to colonial conflicts such as these. The Bengal Army Surgeon John McCosh (1805-1885) produced some of the earliest photographs of India and perhaps the very first war photographs in the world during the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-49) and the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852).²³ While the camera was still a novelty in such contexts, there was also a long-standing tradition of military art in which members of the army would utilise their training in draughtsmanship to produce and occasionally also publish images of the peoples and places encountered during campaigns.²⁴ And increasingly, these sorts of ‘small wars’ (as Charles Edward Callwell would term them in his 1896 book on military strategy)²⁵ were being brought to the attention of the British public via an illustrated press that dedicated significant coverage to episodes of Anglo-Indian hostility.²⁶ Nor was it simply commercial opportunities that arose from these wars: East India Company patronage was sometimes extended to

²³ Ray McKenzie, “‘The Laboratory of Mankind’: John McCosh and the Beginnings of Photography in British India,” *History of Photography* 11: 2 (1987): 109-118.

²⁴ See John Dunlop, *Mooltan, During and After the Siege: Being Twenty-One Drawings, from Sketches Taken on the Spot* (London: Wm. S. Orr & Co., 1849); William Lines, ‘Five lithographs of Multan Fort and the military lines surrounding it in 1848,’ IOR/L/MIL/5/429; Major C. S. Weston, ‘Private Memoranda of the Second Punjab War of 1848 and of the Mutiny in India, 1857,’ IOR/ORB 30/121.

²⁵ Charles Edward Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principle and Practice* (London: Stationary Office, 1896).

²⁶ See Daniel J. Rycroft, *Representing Rebellion: Visual Aspects of Counter-insurgency in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

artists in the aftermath as the colonial government sought to survey and map the lands it ruled over.²⁷

Despite such an intimate connection of artists to colonial violence, however, no real work has been done on the impact that this had on nineteenth-century British and Indian perceptions of the purpose and value of image-making practices. So how did warfare intersect with the self-fashioning of artists? And what did the presence of these artists in warzones mean to combatants? After all, the camera and the sketchbook were not simply instruments that mediated crises for the photographers and artists who utilised such equipment; as demonstrated by the colonial eyewitness account, given above, of the photographer Felice Beato's macabre engagement with the hanging bodies of suspected insurgents in front of a crowd of Indian witnesses (1858; Figure 1), image-making technologies enabled performances of visual production to occur that were addressed to numerous agents: coloniser and colonised, sitter and bystander, victim and aggressor.

One epistemological problem that this thesis faces, then, is how to best recuperate the experiences of the myriad actors who were involved in the image-making events that proliferated in Britain's empire during moments of violent unrest.²⁸ Unsurprisingly, the archive tends to be silent when it comes to the feelings aroused in colonised men and women as they were sketched and photographed – or witnessed others being sketched and photographed – amidst the upheavals of imperial conquest. But the imagery and writings of colonial artists and photographers do allow for the (tentative) reconstruction of such scenes of production, and a key aim of what follows is to start assessing the meanings which were encoded in the physical gestures and material

²⁷ See Nicholas B. Dirks, 'Guiltless Spoliations: Picturesque Beauty, Colonial Knowledge, and Colin Mackenzie's Survey of India,' in Catherine B. Asher & Thomas R. Metcalf (eds.), *Perceptions of South Asia's Visual Past* (New Delhi: Mumbai: Kolkata: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. PVT. LTD, 1994), 211-232; Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (London: Chicago: London, 1997); and Jennifer Howes, *Illustrating India: The Early Colonial Investigations of Colin Mackenzie (1784-1821)* (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁸ This problematic takes its cue from the work of the Subaltern Studies Collective. See Vinayak Chaturvedi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London: Verso, 2000), and Ranajit Guha, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

sights of photographing- and sketching-in-the-field in zones that were fraught with violence.

Evidence that the Victorian public harboured an interest in the dynamic of the image-making events that took place under the pressure of crisis can be found in the soaring status of war artists over the nineteenth century and the increasing number of accounts which they would come to write in which the experiences of being ‘on the spot’ were relayed.²⁹ So too can it be seen in the fact that when illustrated newspapers sought to invoke the authority of photography, they sometimes did so – somewhat curiously – via the work of artists showing photographers at work. From the *Illustrated London News*’s coverage of the Paris Commune in 1871 (1871; Figure 3) to *The Graphic*’s depiction of the British insertion of Mohammad Yaqub Khan as Amir of Afghanistan in the Second Anglo-Afghan War in 1879 (1879; Figure 4) and the *Illustrated Police News*’s documentation of the mutilated final victim of Jack the Ripper in 1888 (1888; Figure 5), we find newspapers utilising non-photographic illustrations of the photographic process. The events in all of these scenes are anchored around the act of taking a photograph, the conspicuous processes of which provides the frame through which current affairs are filtered for metropolitan consumers.

On one level such depictions of photographers engaging with the ‘news’ they were documenting can be seen as an interesting way in which graphic artists were negotiating their competitive relationship to a new technology, since the trope of the camera at work is arguably being used here as a cipher for the authority that might otherwise accrue to photographs. But I would suggest that the marketability of these scenes relied in the first place on a public interest in the mechanics of visual reportage – an interest in the way that image makers were entangled with the military or social crises that they were recording, and a tacit awareness that the meanings of such crises

²⁹ For examples by William Simpson, see: ‘An Artist’s Jottings in Abyssinian’, *Good Words* (1 October 1868): 605–613; ‘The Special Artist’, *Illustrated London News*, 14 May 1892; ‘In the Trenches Before Sebastopol’, *English Illustrated Magazine*, December 1895; ‘Winter and Summer in the Trenches of Sebastopol’, *English Illustrated Magazine*, April 1896, 32–42; *The Autobiography of William Simpson, R. I. (Crimean Simpson)* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1903).

were increasingly inseparable from the journalistic network of visual production that they sustained.³⁰

Art History and the Raj

The way that violent crises of power consistently energised the market for artists and photographers speaks to colonialism's reliance not only on militaristic and economic processes in order to function, but on cultural ones as well. This multi-layered understanding of imperialism's workings has been a commonplace of scholarship since Edward Said's groundbreaking *Orientalism* (1978) and follow-up work *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) traced the ways in which western discourses about the East constructed an image of Oriental deficiency and otherness that ultimately served to help legitimise Europe's colonial control over the region.³¹ The imperial struggle over territory in South Asia was thus 'not only about soldiers and cannons, but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.'³²

Said's insights, combined with those of subsequent postcolonial Literary theorists working in deconstructive traditions such as Homi K. Bhabha³³ and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,³⁴ have stimulated what Natasha Eaton has called an 'Imperial Turn' in recent art historical scholarship that has seen the visual culture of the British Empire receive increasing amounts of attention from scholars.³⁵ Insofar as research into the art of colonial India is concerned, much of the core empirical groundwork for this Imperial Turn was done immediately following decolonisation in the mid

³⁰ For an account of the press in British India during the late-Victorian period, see Chadrika Kaul, *Reporting the Raj: The British Press in India, c.1880-1922* (Manchester: New York: Manchester University Press, 2003).

³¹ See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); and *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

³² Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 7.

³³ See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Oxon: New York: Routledge, 1994; 2004).

³⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999).

³⁵ Natasha Eaton, "'Enchanted Traps?'" The Historiography of Art and Colonialism in Eighteenth-century India,' *Literature Compass* 9: 1 (2012): 15.

twentieth century by the married couple of Mildred Archer, a curator of the Print Room at the India Office in the British Library, and W. G. Archer, a one-time officer in the Indian civil service and Keeper of the Indian Section at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The pioneering catalogue work and publications of this pair are still an absolutely key resource for anyone studying the art history of the Raj.³⁶ But as noted by Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley, and Douglas Fordham in their introduction to a 2007 collection of essays that worked to recuperate empire from the margins of art historical scholarship, ‘These are *late imperial* rather than post colonial documents, in which the official language of mid-century art history shields a tender elegy for a lost empire.’³⁷

Until recently, the work being done on artists working in colonial India was largely the product of curators who succeeded the Archers in those one-time institutions of imperialism, the India Office and the V&A, or by scholars whose primary research interest was South Asian artistic traditions. The broad overviews and collections of short essays which Pauline Rohatgi, Pheroza Godrej, Pratapaditya Pal and others have compiled on British art in India are not tinged with the same ‘postcolonial melancholia’³⁸ as that of the Archers, but they do still tend to reproduce a similarly positivistic account of artists’ biographies, travel itineraries, and categories of style and subject matter – data that is never quite marshaled towards a critical postcolonial analysis of the agency of such art in enabling the brutal processes of imperial invasion

³⁶ See Mildred Archer, *Indian Architecture and the British* (Feltham: Country Life: 1968); *Indian Popular Painting in the India Office Library* (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1977); *The Indian Collection of Paintings and Sculpture* (London: British Library, 1986); *India and British Portraiture, 1770, 1825* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1979); *Company Paintings: Indian Paintings of the British Period* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum in association with Mapin Publishing, 1992); *British Drawings in the India Office Library* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1969); *Early views of India: The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell, 1786-1794* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1980); *Natural History Drawings in the India Office Library* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1962); *Company Drawings in the India Office Library* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1972); *India Observed: India as Viewed by British Artists, 1760-1860: An Exhibition* (London: V&A Museum in association with Trefoil, 1982).

³⁷ Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley, & Douglas Fordham (eds.), *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester: New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), 9. Emphasis in original.

³⁸ Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Multiculture or Postcolonial Melancholia* (London: Routledge, 2004).

and expropriation.³⁹ A more sustained and theoretically engaged assessment of the colonial role of artistic practices emerged in the work that scholars have produced on the entanglement of art institutions themselves with the ideologies that channeled and challenged colonial power – in particular the imperial network of collecting, display, and art education that was organised through the South Kensington Museum in the nineteenth century.⁴⁰

An emphasis on networks of circulation and the Anglo-Indian aesthetic exchange that they enabled has been a central feature of the more recent Imperial Turn. Especially well documented has been the transformation that the presence of British painters and pedagogies ended up effecting on nineteenth-century *Indian* artists who adopted and adapted European methods, resulting in new hybrid aesthetic constructions.⁴¹ The subsequent agency of Indian art practices in the development of modernism in twentieth-century Britain has also started to receive critical attention in recent years.⁴²

³⁹ See Pheroza Godrej & Pauline Rohatgi (eds.), *Scenic Splendours: India through the Printed Image* (London: British Library, 1989); Pheroza Godrej & Pauline Rohatgi (eds.), *Under the Indian Sun: British Landscape Artists* (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1995); Graham Parlett & Pauline Rohatgi (eds.), *Indian Life and Landscape by Western Artists: Paintings and Drawings from the Victoria and Albert Museum, 17th to the early 20th Century* (London: V&A Museum: Mumbai: Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, 2008); and Pratapaditya Pal, *From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists in India, 1757-1930* (Ithaca: London: Cornell University Press, 1986).

⁴⁰ See Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (eds.), *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (London: New York: Routledge, 1998); Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of its Global Reproducibility* (New York: Oxon: Routledge, 2007); and Saloni Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (University of California Press: Los Angeles: London, 2007).

⁴¹ See Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*; Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New 'Indian' Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c.1855-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977).

⁴² See Sarah Victoria Turner's articles: 'The "essential quality of things": E.B. Havell, Ananda Coomaraswamy and Indian Sculpture in Britain', special issue on 'Nineteenth-Century Sculpture in its Global Contexts', edited by Jason Edwards and Michael Hatt, *Journal of Visual Culture in Britain* (Autumn, 2010): 239-264; 'Sex, Stone and Empire: Direct Carving and "British" Sculpture', in *Modern British Sculpture* (London: Royal Academy, 2011), 100-105; '"Alive and Significant": Aspects of Indian Art, Stella Kramrisch and Dora Gordine in South Kensington, c.

Such cross-cultural fluidity was a key aspect of Anglo-Indian relations almost from their inception; as shown by Natasha Eaton's work on the hybridised art practices that emerged back in the eighteenth century, the visual field was frequently a fraught and contested zone of empire in which colonial and anti-colonial gestures were negotiated in dizzying spirals of aesthetic appropriation.⁴³ The visual forms of the coloniser were not secure in their effects, but were often re-inscribed by Indian subjects and made to figure as signs of autonomy and resistance.⁴⁴

One of the primary achievements of such scholarship has been to highlight 'British' and 'Indian' identities as contingent constructs mediated by highly fluid aesthetic categories.⁴⁵ The European-derived visual paradigms through which the British sought to understand India – indeed, the very articulation of 'Britishness' itself – were not stable in the colonial context. Compositional templates such as 'the Picturesque' – with its love of variety, wildness, irregularity, and ruins – were repeatedly invoked by artists in a manner that worked to provide a coherent expression of the myriad alien terrains of a growing empire by containing them within familiar visual schemata.⁴⁶ But as Romita Ray has shown in her recent book on the subject, the various topoi of the 'the Picturesque' proliferated when confronted with the diversity of India, transforming its pre-given parameters and thereby serving as a visual register for the instability of expressions of traditional British identity in the midst of Indian

1940', *Wasafiri: International Contemporary Writing* 27: 2 (2012): 40-51; 'Crafting Connections: The India Society and inter-imperial artistic networks in Edwardian Britain', in Susheila Nasta (ed.), *Only Connect: India in Britain 1870-1950* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 96-114.

⁴³ See Natasha Eaton, 'Between Mimesis and Alterity: Art, Gift and Diplomacy in Colonial India, 1770-1800', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46 (2006): 816-844; 'Critical Cosmopolitanism: Gifting and Collecting Art at Lucknow, 1775-97,' in Timothy Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham (eds.), *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 189-204; and Natasha Eaton, 'The Art of Colonial Despotism: Portraits, Politics, and Empire in South Asia, 1750-1795', *Cultural Critique* 70 (Fall 2008): 63-93.

⁴⁴ Sarah Monks, 'Visual Culture and British India,' *Visual Culture in Britain* (special issue on British India) 12:3 (2011): 269-275. Also see Daniel Rycroft, 'After-Images: Visual Cultures and Subaltern Pasts,' *Visual Culture in Britain* 12: 3 (2011): 367-386.

⁴⁵ See Julie Codell (ed.) *Transculturation in British Art, 1770-1930* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012); and Julie Codell & D. S. Macleod (eds.), *Orientalism Transposed: The Impact of the Colonies on British Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998; translated into Japanese, Hosei University, 2011).

⁴⁶ Jeffrey Auerbach, 'The Picturesque and the Homogenization of Empire,' *The British Art Journal* 5: 1 (2004): 283-305.

difference.⁴⁷ Anxieties over identity were everywhere at work in the ostensibly assured imperial project.

Media War

This thesis is therefore positioned within a growing area of art historical scholarship. However, the practices of *Victorian-era* colonial artists in India – a key focus here – have so far been repeatedly sidelined in a body of research that has otherwise started to provide highly nuanced assessments of equivalent colonial artists working in the eighteenth century, or Indian artists working in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴⁸ This is perhaps due to the lure of early photography, which has so far received far more attention from scholars. By the 1850s, artists were operating within a colonial marketplace that had been rendered newly competitive by the increasing presence of the camera, and to a certain extent it seems that graphic practices were losing ground to an exciting new medium which many of the British in India saw as ‘a solution to the weaknesses and corruptions of earlier technologies of representation.’⁴⁹ It was faster and – due to its indexical relationship to the things that it recorded, which were imprinted by light onto a photosensitive emulsion – more reliably accurate than draughtsmanship, while the level of detail achieved in photographs was such that it was the cause of frequent wonderment for colonial viewers.

⁴⁷ See Romita Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree: Relocating the Picturesque in British India* (New Haven: London: Yale University Press, 2013).

⁴⁸ For an overview of the scholarship on eighteenth-century colonial art in India, see Natasha Eaton, ‘“Enchanted Traps?” The Historiography of Art and Colonialism in Eighteenth-century India,’ *Literature Compass* 9: 1 (2012): 15-33. Also see: Hermione de Almeida and George Gilpin (eds.) *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); John Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes: Britain’s Global Visual Culture, 1745-1820* (New Haven: London: Yale University Press, 2011); and Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-century British Painting* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

⁴⁹ Christopher Pinney, ‘The Prosthetic Eye: Photography as Cure and Poison’, in Matthew Engelke (ed.), *Evidence*, special issue of *Journal of Royal Anthropological Research* 14: 1 (2008): S33 [idiosyncratic pagination].

Even so, artists remained viable contenders for both state and commercial patronage throughout the Victorian period. The complexity of the matter for patrons, artists, and photographers is demonstrated by the composition of the embassy sent by Governor-General Lord Dalhousie to the Burmese Court of Ava in 1855, with the objective of stabilising the fractious situation that had emerged in this far-eastern border of British India following the annexation of Lower Burma a few years previously. As well as the military cartographer, Major Grant Allen, and the geologist and draughtsman, Thomas Oldham, the mission included a professional artist, Colesworthy Grant (referred to above), a photographer Captain Linnaeus Tripe (1822-1902), and an official chronicler of the trip who was also the keen amateur draughtsman and ethnographer, Sir Henry Yule (1820-1889).⁵⁰ Treating everything from topography to architecture, the visual practices of these men were of fundamental importance to the three-month long mission, which was conducted as much for the accumulation of useful knowledge about the geography and culture of a region that was now under problematic British control as it was for the purposes of political diplomacy.⁵¹ Burma was being incorporated into the imperial archive, as multiple modes of visual production vied for effective ways in which to service the needs of a colonial state that was faced with a crisis of governance on its borders.⁵²

Although the Governor-General had personally suggested Grant as the artist for this mission, one of the stated reasons for the choice was that he believed the artist ‘understands and practices the art of Photography,’ and would therefore be ‘very popular’ with the Burmese king, who had ‘expressed great interest in the novel act of producing “Sun Pictures”, as his Envoys termed them.’⁵³ Dalhousie was misinformed here: Grant never undertook any photographic work for the mission and there is no record of him having practiced photography at any other time. The confusion

⁵⁰ The only work to have been done on Colesworthy Grant’s role on the embassy is Mildred Archer’s short article for a popular history magazine, ‘Mission to Burma, 1855’, *History Today* (October 1963): 691-699.

⁵¹ Also on the mission were two men ‘of mercantile knowledge and experience’ to assess the current state and future potential of Burmese commerce. *Allen’s India Mail*, XIII, January-December 1855, 16 August, 441.

⁵² For the importance of the archive to British rule in India, see Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁵³ Minute by Dalhousie, dated 12 April 1855, No. 2, 29 June 1855. IOR/P/SEC/IND/191.

indicates that graphic practices were in some ways coming to be seen as somehow lacking in themselves – Grant gets this job on the basis of a misunderstanding about his versatility – but it is worth noting that photography was also cast as a supplement to Grant’s primary artistic remit. It was explicitly his ‘pencil’ that was charged with ‘supplying us with sketches of the river, which the mission is to traverse, and the country through which it is to pass.’⁵⁴ Photography was apparently seen as useful not so much for its capacity for representation as for its potential to act as a curiosity and so facilitate friendly relations with King Mindon Min.

Nevertheless, men like Grant were still operating in a newly hostile culture of state patronage. Having grown increasingly frustrated at the protracted activities of an artist receiving the colonial government’s funds to sketch temples in the Bombay Presidency, the East India Company’s Court of Directors in London sent out this despatch in 1855.⁵⁵

We have recently desired the Government of Bombay to discontinue the employment of draughtsmen in the delineation of antiquities of Western India, and to employ photography instead, and it is our desire that this method be generally substituted throughout India, in places where it may be considered desirable by the Government to obtain representation of objects of interest.⁵⁶

Upon receiving this, Dalhousie suggested Tripe for the role of photographer on the planned expedition to Burma (evidently the Governor-General had become aware of Grant’s lack of photographic aptitude). A lieutenant in the East India Company army, Tripe had started experimenting with photography while on extended furlough in England in the early 1850s.⁵⁷ He was to make a name for himself with the

⁵⁴ Minute by Dalhousie, dated 12 April 1855, No. 2, 29 June 1855. IOR/P/SEC/IND/191.

⁵⁵ See Janet Dewan, "Captain Biggs and Doctor Pigou: Photographers to the Bombay Government 1855–1858", *Photoresearcher* 5 (1993): 6-13.

⁵⁶ India and Bengal Dispatch, No. 22, 1855 (7 February), para 3. IOR: E/4/829.

⁵⁷ The best account of Tripe’s work during the embassy is Andrew Jarvis, “‘The Myriad-Pencil of the Photographer’: Seeing, Mapping and Situating Burma in 1855,” *Modern Asian Studies* 45: 4 (July 2011): 791-823. Also see Janet Dewan, *The Photographs of Linnaeus Tripe: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2003). For more general work on Tripe, see Stephanie Roy Bharath,

predominately architectural photographs which he took on the 1855 embassy, as for example his study of the Thapinyu Pagoda (1855; Figure 6), and in 1856 was hired as the official photographer to the Madras Presidency, his self-proclaimed aim ‘to secure before they disappear the objects in the Presidency that are interesting to the Antiquary, Architect, Sculptor, Mythologist and Historian.’⁵⁸ Artists were suddenly appearing largely moribund within this imperial project of ethnographic representation, preservation and classification.

Such, anyway, is the impression which scholarship in this area tends to leave. A 2003 collection of essays edited by Maria Antonella Pelizzari on architectural photography in India has demonstrated the ascendancy of the new technology within the knowledge-gathering practices of colonialism on the subcontinent, showing how over the course of the nineteenth century it was increasingly instrumental in ethnographic research of the kind that Tripe was undertaking in the 1850s.⁵⁹ Less well documented have been the attempts by artists to challenge the epistemological privilege of photography. The chronicler of the 1855 embassy, Yule, was especially assertive here. The amateur draughtsman had a keen interest in architecture and aligned his images and writings on the subject with a wider academic discourse by making reference to the research conducted by previous artists and scholars.⁶⁰ He was given free reign by the government to furnish his account with some of the hundreds of photographs taken by Tripe, but from a total of 76 images in the resulting book only nine derive from Tripe’s architectural photographs – the vast majority of the published images are taken instead from the graphic delineations of Yule himself.⁶¹

‘Recording South Indian Architecture: Linnaeus Tripe and Edmund David Lyon,’ in *South Asian Studies*, 26: 2 (2010): 97-118; Janet Dewan’s “‘This noble triumph of Photography’: Linnaeus Tripe’s Thanjavur Inscription Panorama,” in *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850-1900*, (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture: New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2003), 140-153; and Nicholas B. Dirks’s ‘Colonial Amnesia and the Old Regime in the Photographs of Linnaeus Tripe’ in Pelizzari (ed.), *Traces of India*, 196-215.

⁵⁸ ‘Captain Tripe to A. Murray Esq.’. IOR: F/4/2725.

⁵⁹ Maria Antonella Pelizzari (ed.), *Traces of India* (2003).

⁶⁰ See Sir Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission Sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1858).

⁶¹ Colesworthy Grant fared no better in Yule’s publication: a mere four plates of the book were dedicated to exhibiting his work. With the exception of one landscape by Thomas Oldham, all other images of Burma were by Yule himself.

Flagrant self-promotion this might well have been for Yule, but the amateur artist nevertheless made a specific visual argument about the superior capacities of his own work for producing representations of temples that lent themselves to the scientific demands of ethnography. He formatted his drawings in academically useful ways, producing simplified outlines (1858; Figure 7), schemata (1858; Figure 8), and floor plans (1858; Figure 9) that highlight the essential structures of the buildings, which have been carefully abstracted in order to purge them of any details that might be thought of as extraneous to serious architectural investigation. This careful graphic modelling seems to testify to an active scholarly engagement with the buildings that anticipates the comments of William Simpson (1823-1899), an itinerant artist periodically in South Asia whose depictions of architecture in India, Afghanistan, China and the Middle East had significant currency in ethnographic circles back in Britain.⁶² Simpson believed that ‘sketching leads one to notice details [of buildings] *as well as causing one to think.*’⁶³ Art could thus be presented as an intellectualised endeavour distinct from – and in some cases preferable to – the mechanised processes of photography.

Artists remained contenders for the patronage of the colonial state when it was in need of the accurate delineation of landscapes and objects throughout the nineteenth century, as well as finding numerous opportunities available to them in fields like newspaper illustration, portraiture, and the various ventures that trailed colonial

⁶² William Simpson is an important and understudied figure in the history of colonial ethnography in India. See the following articles and lectures by the artist: ‘The architecture of India’, *RIBA Trans.* (Royal Institute of British Architects) (May 1862): 165–178; ‘Arkite Ceremonies in the Himalayas’, *Good Words* (1866): 601–608; ‘Praying Machines’, *Good Words* (1867): 845–850; ‘Church Architecture of Abyssinia’, *RIBA Trans.* (1869): 234–246; ‘The Royal Quarries’, *Palestine Exploration Fund* (1870): 373–379; ‘Jerusalem’, *Society for Biblical Archaeology* (1872): 310–327; ‘The Architecture of China’, *RIBA Trans.* (1873): 33–50; ‘China’s Future Place in Philology’, *Macmillan’s Magazine* (Nov. 1873): 45–48; ‘Gangootre’, *Alpine Journal* (May 1874): 385–397; ‘Symbolism of Oriental Ornament’, *Royal Society of the Arts Journal* 22 (1874): 488–494; ‘The Modoc Region’, *RGS Procs.* Vol. XIX, 1874–75, 292–302; ‘Ark-Shrines of Japan’, *Society for Biblical Archaeology* (1877): 550–554.

⁶³ William Simpson, *Notes and Recollections of My Life* (c.1890; unpublished manuscript). National Library of Scotland, Acc. 11877, 146. Emphasis added.

crises.⁶⁴ It is telling that the photographer Tripe was not employed as a replacement for the professional artist Grant on the 1855 embassy to Burma, but as an accompaniment: the decision to place both on the payroll of the East India Company demonstrates the uncertainty felt over any seamless substitution of the photographic for the graphic within imperial praxis. Actually, far from seeing art supplanted by photography, this was period that was marked by an unprecedented expansion of *both* aesthetic practices: the 1850s saw the establishment of the Photographic Society of Bombay (Mumbai) in 1854, Calcutta's Photographic Society of Bengal in 1856, and the Photographic Society of Madras (Chennai) in 1857, but so too was draughtsmanship being incorporated into the pedagogy of imperialism like never before, with art schools also opening up in Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay in 1850, 1854 and 1856 respectively.

Photography and Empire

Photography was first seen in India at a meeting of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in October 1839, its invention only having been officially announced in Paris by Louis Daguerre on 7 January and – with an independently developed process – in London by Henry Fox Talbot on 25 January.⁶⁵ At a meeting of the Photographic Society of Bengal in October 1856, Rev. Joseph Mullins could still complain about the lack of any systematic approach to representing the peoples and cultures of India by photographers, a lament echoed by a judge of the society's exhibition that year who

⁶⁴ For example: Between 1861 and 1863, the draughtsman Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas Hamilton (1818-1892) was commissioned to produce illustrated reports on the plateaus on the Palni Hills, Anaimalai Hills, and Shevaroy Hills of southern India with the aim of finding new locations for hill stations for British troops (See the five albums in the India Office Collections of the British Library: PDP/WD566; PDP/WD567; PDP/WD568; PDP/WD1350; and PDP/WD135)1. Between 1874 and 1880, the Archaeological Surveyor and Reporter for Western India, James Burgess, repeatedly hired both Indian and British draughtsmen to delineate architectural objects of interest; and in the 1880s, the Curator of Ancient Monuments, Captain Henry Cole, would do the same.

⁶⁵ Christopher Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India* (London: The British Library, 2008), 9.

noted the lack of ‘castes and costumes’ on display.⁶⁶ Yet following the 1857 Uprising and a government initiative, anthropological photography gained momentum: the archive is saturated with Indian figures who were constituted as ethnographic specimens by portraits which were taken by colonials and incorporated into a ‘scientific’ discourse that was structured by violently racist assumptions (c. 1868; Figure 10). These joined a proliferating mass of domestic portraits, architectural records, and picturesque views that were being produced by both amateur and professional practitioners and seen everywhere from Calcutta to London in public exhibitions, private albums, amateur societies, and informal networks. Photography was quickly integral to the imperial experience.

Christopher Pinney has so far led the scholarship on photography in India, creating a body of work that has been crucial to positioning the colonial context as a core rather than a marginal area of study for broader theorisations of photography as a medium.⁶⁷ His approach has situated itself between two poles of photographic theory: one, which embraced the indexical imprint of light on paper for its ‘utopian lack of [human] mediation,’ and another which privileged the role of wider social processes and ideologies in structuring the frame imposed by the photographer in the first place – a view epitomised by John Tagg’s statement that ‘photography as such does not

⁶⁶ Quoted in John Falconer, “‘A Pure Labour of Love’: A Publishing History of *The People of India*,” in Eleanor M. Hight & Gary D. Sampson (eds.), *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place* (New York: Abingdon: Routledge, 2004).

⁶⁷ Christopher Pinney has published widely on photography in nineteenth- and twentieth-century India. See: *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1997); “Some Indian ‘Views of India’: The Ethics of Representation,” in Pelizzari (ed.), *Traces of India*, 262-275; “The Bomb and the Body in Colonial India,” in Richard H. Davis (ed.) *Picturing the Nation: Iconographies of Modern India* (Orient Longman, 2007), 51-64; *The Coming of Photography to India* (2008); ‘The Prosthetic Eye: Photography as Cure and Poison’, in Matthew Engelke (ed.), *Evidence*, special issue of *Journal of Royal Anthropological Research* 14: 1 (2008): S33-S46 [idiosyncratic pagination]; ‘The Colonial Dromosphere: Speed, Transmission, and Prosthesis in Colonial India,’ *The British Empire: Ideology, Perspectives, Perceptions* (Lisbon: University of Lisbon, Centre for English Studies, 2010), 115-136; ‘The Line and the Curve: Spatiality and Ambivalence in the 1903 Delhi Coronation Durbar,’ in Julie F. Codell, *Power and Resistance: The Delhi Coronation Durbars: 1877, 1903, 1911* (The Alkazi Foundation of Photography in association with Mapin Publishing: New Delhi, 2012), 204-215; and ‘Seven Theses on Photography,’ *Thesis Eleven* 113: 1 (2012): 141-156.

exist...it is flickering across institutional spaces.’⁶⁸ Pinney points to the excessive ‘data ratio’ of photography as a pathway between these two stances; since each photograph contains an ineradicable surfeit of visual information, it necessarily bypasses at least some of the intentions of a photographer even in the most punctiliously choreographed of circumstances. ‘Data ratios permit us to understand photography as chemical trace without valorising it as truth.’⁶⁹

This negotiation between indexicality, contingency, and intention serves as a corrective to earlier approaches to photography in India that imbued the medium with a much more unproblematic evidential status. In John Fraser’s articles⁷⁰ and unpublished manuscripts from the 1980s, a prime concern was the manner in which photographs of buildings and battle sites could ‘correct inaccuracies in contemporary sketches and prints.’⁷¹ This thesis has benefited from Fraser’s empirically rich scholarship, but his approach displays a highly uncritical view of the evidence, with material presented in a laconically positivist style that sidesteps the ideologically-loaded nature of the colonial archive and suspends analysis of the imperial role of photography in this period; at times, Fraser’s accounts veer into effusive praise for colonial photographers of ‘outstanding characteristics...fully capable of meeting the challenges presented’ by the subcontinent.⁷²

Since Fraser’s early research into photography in India, there has been a far-reaching scholarly initiative to interrogate the colonial prejudices that mobilised the ostensibly objective capture of light on film.⁷³ Lately, accounts have increasingly highlighted the instability of the imperial privilege that this imagery implied, stressing the multivalent

⁶⁸ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Basingstoke : Macmillan Education 1988), 63.

⁶⁹ Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 5.

⁷⁰ See John Fraser, ‘Beato’s Photograph of the Interior of the Sikanderbagh at Lucknow,’ *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 59 (1981): 51-55; and ‘Some Pre-Mutiny Photographs,’ *Journal for Army Historical Research* 58 (1980): 134-47.

⁷¹ John Fraser, *The Indian Mutiny in Photographs* (unpublished manuscript; c. 1986), 33. NAM 2010-11-11-2-1.

⁷² John Fraser, *Dr. John Murray of Agra* (unpublished manuscript; c. 1986). Not paginated. NAM 2010-11-11-2-2.

⁷³ See James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); and Hight & Sampson (eds.), *Colonialist Photography* (2004).

quality of a medium that, through its reproducibility, is potentially available for inclusion within infinite contexts and open to endless instrumentalisations. Shifts in meaning have been documented as scholars have traced the multiple trajectories of a ‘single’ photograph that among other things might be woven into biographical narratives, incorporated into scientific discourses, and mobilised by political causes and counter-causes.⁷⁴ Because the projection of the photograph into various socio-cultural and institutional spheres has demonstrated that representational content can be recoded, sensitivity to the deterritorialised nature of the medium has been highly productive, allowing for alternative narratives of resistance to emerge around these images.

In part, this approach to photography has arisen from a method of analysis that is informed by phenomenology, a branch of philosophical thought that emphasises the immersion of consciousness in an embodied interplay with the ‘flesh of the world.’⁷⁵ Elizabeth Edwards’s work has been key here, encouraging us to view pictures as not merely semiotic in nature, but also as tangible objects with ‘material properties [that] are themselves signifying properties.’⁷⁶ For Edwards, ‘the eye as a bodily organ functions within a larger somatic context’ in which sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing converge to constitute the meaning of an image anew for each beholder.⁷⁷ Edwards and others have accordingly provided complex accounts of the embodied, multi-sensory engagement of people with photographs in contingent spatiotemporal circumstances – ‘a complex and fluid relationship between people, images and things.’⁷⁸

⁷⁴ See the collection of essays by Elizabeth Edwards & Janice Hart (eds.), *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London: Routledge, 2004).

⁷⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), xviii.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Edwards, ‘Objects of Affect: Photography Beyond the Image,’ *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 221-34. Also see the author’s *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: New York: Berg, 2001).

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Edwards, ‘Material Beings: Objecthood and Ethnographic Photographs,’ *Visual Studies* 17: 1 (2002): 68.

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Edwards & Janice Hart, ‘Introduction,’ in Edwards & Hart, *Photographs, Objects, Histories*, 3.

A similar sensitivity has not yet generally been shown in scholarship towards the engagement of embodied persons with the material presence of the camera during the act of *making* photographs. In fact, the emphasis on the viewer's reception of the *finished* photograph is such that Zahid R. Chaudhary's recent theoretically complex study of nineteenth-century photography in India has gone so far as to claim that the medium's 'phenomenological contributions must be assessed at the level of *consumption* rather than at the level of *production*.'⁷⁹ The physical and psychological experiences that were engendered by the image-making event itself are thus sidelined.

Actually, Chaudhary does briefly note the complexity of the image-making event by pointing to the immersion of the photographer with the camera at the point of production – but his account refuses to see this immersion as a location at which significant meaning can occur. 'For the photographer,' he writes, 'the photograph is created as an extension of the senses and the body, by incorporating the camera into the bodily field. For the spectator of the photograph, however, incorporating the *photograph* into his or her bodily field means to be in thrall to photography's rhetorical effects, which come from the medium itself.' It is supposedly only this *rhetorical* dimension of photography – a dimension revealed primarily upon viewing finished photographic images – wherein 'sensation meets intellection, perception becomes concept, and feelings crystallise.' The author thus refuses semantic richness to the act of making an image, instead drawing a distinction between the mere 'sensation' of wielding the camera and the broader 'intellection' of beholding the rhetorical effects of the photograph: 'the point of [photographic] production emphasizes sense and the point of reception emphasizes making sense.'⁸⁰

This thesis takes its cue from Pinney's less segregated phenomenological account of photography, whereby the camera is positioned as an 'actor' in the scenes that are orchestrated for its benefit.⁸¹ Pinney's readings of the travelogues of colonial photographers Samuel Bourne (1834-1912) and James Waterhouse (1842-1922) have emphasised the cumbersome materiality of the practice and its frequent reliance on a

⁷⁹ Zahid R. Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 63.

⁸⁰ Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire*, 25-27. Emphasis in original.

⁸¹ Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 12.

physically and emotionally draining world of marshalling people, props, and apparatus. Yet this attentiveness to the embodied experience of photographic production is absent when the author turns from the *peacetime* contexts within which Bourne and Waterhouse were working during the 1860s and towards the *wartime* operations of the photographers whose work will form the backbone of this thesis: Felice Beato, Dr. John Murray (1809-1898), Dr. John Nicolas Tresidder (1819-1898), and the married couple Harriet (1828-1907) and Robert (1818-1872) Tytler. The phenomenology of colonial war – a distinct sphere of experience – has thus been left out of an account which otherwise demonstrates great sensitivity to the flesh-and-blood processes of photographic production.

The reason for this lacuna is that for Pinney (and, following him, Chaudhary) such early war photography in India is defined by its engagement with vacant spaces where significant military events had *previously* occurred. This is mostly true. Dr. John Murray, an amateur photographer operating in Delhi shortly after the British recaptured the city during the Uprising, offers a typical example in his view of Mori Gate (1858; Figure 11), in which the camera traces rubble and ruin on a location following its involvement in fighting. The doors that are flung wide open in the houses on the left-hand side and the uprooted tree that is sprawled along the centre of the road signals past turbulence – but the scene, while desolate, contains none of the military action to which it is being asked to attest. It is consequently characterised by absence, remaining (as Pinney has written in regards to other images from the Uprising) a ‘space waiting for its historical inscription: this is the space of an event, but because that event has gone it remains simply a space.’⁸² Yet in this and in many other photographs from the Uprising, the space was not simply a space – it was a stage on which Indian figures were placed by colonial photographers and asked to confront the camera while the intimidating violence of counterinsurgency continued around them. At the time of the taking this photograph, for instance, Delhi was still in the grips of a startlingly brutal purge of ‘insurgents’ – often very loosely defined.

In other words, the emphasis that previous scholars have placed on belatedness and absence in the imagery from the Uprising has acted as a lure to prevent an account

⁸² Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 125.

emerging in which the camera is constituted as a material actor within the processes of a counterinsurgency campaign that was still in effect. Photographers might have been late to particular battles and failed to capture specific military actions, but they were well in time for the overall war. Accordingly, the camera's physical occupation of contested terrain and its demand for the presence of its sitters worked to coordinate the engagement of both Britons and Indians with an ongoing counterinsurgency. The image-making event was embroiled in a framework of violence even as that violence escaped the frame of the image itself.

While not arguing for any privileged locus of meaning, then, this thesis does aim to highlight the potential for the image-making event itself to achieve a status as a nodal point within the processes of invasion, insurrection, and suppression in South Asia. One of the main drawbacks of a focus that prioritises the finished image (of whatever media) and its circulation within aesthetic networks is that this often precludes an assessment of the meanings that could have been attached to colonial art and photography by the vast majority of Indian men and women who would simply never have engaged with such imperial practices at the point of image reception. By and large, the British did not subject the Indian population to a particularly extensive regime of visual propaganda in the Victorian period. For most of the colonised, then, British art was encountered (if it was encountered at all) not as a spectacle of images, but in rare moments of exposure to image making. And since the activities of artists and photographers within the myriad regions of South Asia were frequently the insidious symptom of some sort of crisis, their presence was a potentially potent signifier of violent upheaval to the local populace – and one that could instantiate the aggressive tactics that underpinned colonial occupation.

Crisis Points

In summary, the overarching aims of this thesis are as follows: (1) The positing of military and social unrest as central to the mobilisation of colonial artists and photographers in nineteenth-century South Asia; (2) The production of accounts of the visual culture from this period that considers graphic and photographic practices together, as having an important and not dissimilar agency within moments of

military and diplomatic crisis; (3) The theorisation of the image-making event as a key sphere within which the meanings of colonial aesthetics could be forged; and (4) An attempted recuperation of an Indian perspective on the colonial technologies of vision that were deployed in moments of crisis.

The above issues will be dealt with over the course of four chapters constellated around various crisis points of empire. Chapter One, ‘Militarising Sight: Agency, Aesthetics, and the 1857 Uprising,’ consider the militarisation of aesthetics that occurred as a consequence of the violent geopolitical crises of the 1850s. During the Uprising, photography in particular came to be discussed in terms of its possible value as an instrument of warfare, but this was merely symptomatic of a long-standing interest in the wartime utility of (western) modes of art and vision. Unrest in India precipitated a drive towards thinking about vision in terms of its military efficacy, and I identify a martial streak that connects the mode of vision adopted by Britons for leisurely gallery-going in London to the type of sight demanded of a combatant looking through the lens of a camera in war-torn India. This is posited, tentatively, as a lineage for the aesthetics of today’s ‘military-industrial-entertainment complex,’ in which the techno-visual experience of operating a remotely-controlled Predator Drone flying sorties over Afghanistan finds a striking contiguity with the phenomenology of playing a commercial videogame simulation of such a drone attack – something that not so much bridges as obliterates the gap between the visualities of leisure and war.⁸³

During the Uprising, imperial faith in the martial agency of photography was expressed most vividly through fearful rumours that the insurgent army was mobilising the new technology in their anti-colonial struggle against the British. Reports of insurgent photography remained unconfirmed, but they indicate that the British saw the wartime deployment of photographers as dangerous and unsettling. I argue that photography and the European artistic practices within which it was nestled were believed by the British to foster a mode of agency that was capable of intervening in warfare in a militarily decisive fashion, making aesthetics a weaponised sphere of Anglo-Indian relations. It is against this backdrop that Chapter Two, ‘Martial Artists: Image Making in the Field,’ goes on to build its argument that

⁸³ Ian Graham Ronald Shaw, ‘Playing War’, *Social and Cultural Geography* 11: 8 (December 2010): 789-803.

the colonial artists and photographers occupying the conflict zones of South Asia were functioning in a self-consciously combative manner against the colonised. Image makers sometimes worked in tandem with the colonial strategies of intimidation that were fundamental to suppressing the 1857 revolt, as Indian sitters were posed in ways that could make them acutely aware of the vulnerability of their subaltern bodies to Britain's counterinsurgent violence.

The emphasis of Chapter Two on the dynamic of the image-making event as opposed to the nature of any consequent imagery is used to bridge my accounts of different media by drawing parallels between the agency of photographers and artists operating in imperial warzones. I argue that both asserted their authorial privilege to arrange people and props in a manner that dramatised the assertion of aggressive imperial sovereignty over territory; indeed, the very notion of producing images 'in the field' was one which was historically entwined with an imperialistic drive to gain visual knowledge that could facilitate the control of distant people, objects, and space, with the authority of the artist over his or her studio environment having been harnessed to the epistemological needs of early British colonialism for accurate representations of distant lands. The blurring of boundaries between artistic and imperial privilege consequently saw the image-making event accrue an intimidating resonance in certain circumstances. The theatre of visual production thus not only shadowed the theatre of war, but also positioned itself in a mutually reinforcing relationship with the violent horrors that it set out to record.

In Chapter Three, 'Intervening in the Aftermath: Photography and Citizenship in Cawnpore,' I shift focus to the aftermath of warfare and the role of photography in mapping the parameters of Indian citizenship under the Raj. In particular, I look at how the formal demands of certain types of photographs – namely the portrait and the picturesque landscape – exerted pressure on the British to place Indians in physical and conceptual locations which they would not otherwise have had access to. Even a war memorial site which was strictly policed by the British on racial grounds was frequently the stage for Indian sitters posing for colonial photographers who seemingly could not imagine this apartheid-structured space without the inclusion – no matter how politically disjunctive it might be – of that perennial trope of colonial representations of Indian landscape, native staffage. Aesthetic conventions were not

assigned to a discreet virtual sphere; if a photographer wished to adhere to a compositional template, then this had to be projected onto the peoples and landscape of India. I consider how such porousness of virtual and actual space raised uncomfortable issues about the status of Indians, and in particular how the photographic portrait – with its topos of seriality and sameness – worked to inaugurate spaces that were not subject to combative Anglo-Indian binaries.

The final chapter of this thesis, ‘The Art of Peace: Portraiture and Political Instability under the Raj,’ identifies a parallel history of colonial visual culture. Crises of British power were frequently responded to with diplomatic spectacles in the form of official tours of Indian kingdoms and grand ceremonies declaring imperial sovereignty. I look at the largest commission ever awarded to a painter by the colonial government of India, Valentine Cameron Prinsep’s (1838-1904) task of collating the portraits of local rulers of South Asia who had been required to attend the official declaration of Queen Victoria as Empress of India at the 1877 Imperial Assemblage in Delhi. I situate Prinsep’s work within a longer history of ‘peacetime’ artistic interactions with Indian sovereignty; in particular, I theorise his *portrait sittings* as arenas in which Indian subjects could successfully launch a challenge against the dynamic of imperial subjection which the British intended the *finished portraits* to represent. Ultimately, I suggest that the visual grammar that Prinsep deployed to envision Anglo-Indian relations under imperial peacetime was laced with what to colonial eyes looked like political instability. In other words, a crisis of authority was made manifest at the level of aesthetics even as the British mounted an unprecedented power grab.

At its heart this thesis is an argument for the increasing role of image-making practices in informing the phenomenological texture of unrest over the course of the Victorian period. Not only did aesthetics create the perceptual grounds on which militarily useful modes of viewing conflict could develop, it also placed demands on artists, photographers, and their subjects to situate themselves in certain ways for the purposes of photographing- or sketching-in-the-field, therefore actively moulding the nature of the body’s engagement with violence. The formal conventions of colonial aesthetics bled into the somatic experience of colonial crisis, a permeability that informs the thrust of what follows.

1

Militarising Sight: Agency, Aesthetics, and the 1857 Indian Uprising***Introduction***

In a scene from the special supplement which the *Illustrated London News* published in conjunction with the International Exhibition being held in London in 1862, a group of well-to-do visitors are shown admiring the ‘Trophy of Armstrong Guns and Coils from the Royal Gun Factories, Woolwich’ (1862; Figure 12), one of a number of displays of British weaponry on show at the world’s fair.⁸⁴ Other scenes in this supplement depicted similar visitors admiring paintings and sculptures (1862; Figure 13), thereby registering an equivalence between the martial tenor of the gaze which the top-hatted man on the left adopts to stare down the sight of some heavy artillery and the sophisticated metropolitan viewing practices that had become a fundamental feature of Victorian culture since at least the Great Exhibition of 1851.⁸⁵ The military court was a novel addition to the 1862 exhibition, however, and was seen by many as a corruption of formerly pacific ideals.⁸⁶ ‘No wonder the ghost of 1851 is so restless,’ wrote one reviewer. ‘Peace, so loudly invoked in the first Exhibition, scarcely expected to see *this* as a result of it in the second.’⁸⁷ But it was not only such metropolitan exhibitions that had become militarised in the intervening decade; as this chapter will show, an entire constellation of visual practices which had once been

⁸⁴ *Illustrated London News*, 14 June 1862.

⁸⁵ For other images depicting the British engagement with the military court at the International Exhibition, see: ‘Birmingham Small Arms Trophy,’ *Illustrated London News*, 14 June 1862; ‘The Armstrong Gun Trophy,’ *Cassell’s Illustrated Family Paper Exhibitor: Containing About Three Hundred Illustrations, with Letter Press Descriptions of all the Principal Objects in the International Exhibition of 1862* (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1862); and ‘The Armstrong Gun Trophy’, in Tal. P. Shaffner, *The Illustrated Record of the International Exhibition of the Industrial Arts and Manufactures, and the Fine Arts, of All Nations, in 1862* (London: New York: London Printing and Publishing Company, 1862).

⁸⁶ Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (University of California Press: Berkeley: Los Angeles: London, 2001), 199-202.

⁸⁷ Anon., ‘At the Great Exhibition’, in *The Cornhill Magazine* 5 (London: Smith, Elder, ad Co., 1862), 677. Emphasis in original.

deployed as a means to harmonise cross-cultural relations had found itself re-instrumentalised in an increasingly martial manner by the British.

Why this dramatic shift in the tone of Britain's aesthetic culture? The 1850s saw two conflicts in particular – the Crimean War (1853-56) and the Indian Uprising (1857-58) – that had worked to erode the sense of geopolitical optimism that Britain had formalised in the cast-iron and plate-glass structure of the celebrated Crystal Palace, custom-built at Hyde Park to house the manufactures of countries from around the world for the unprecedented international spectacle of 1851.⁸⁸ News of the violent insurgency against colonial rule in India in 1857 induced a sort of collective hysteria in the British, the sense of traumatic shock all the more intense because it had interrupted a mood of national self-confidence and wellbeing: as Christopher Herbert has argued, 'It was the prevalence of this [optimistic] mood that rendered the impact of the terrible despatches from Bengal...immensely greater than perhaps would have been the case in any other historical context.'⁸⁹ This chapter takes the Indian Uprising as its primary point of focus, arguing that the war led to the weaponisation of photography and the wider aesthetic matrix in which it was nestled, something that precipitated a breakdown in the idealism that had previously structured the aesthetic relations of empire.

Image making was not only providing a means for the British to apprehend violent crises like the Crimean War and the Uprising by spreading visual narratives of their events: it was increasingly seen as an important enabler of martial agency within the crises themselves. Such agency was the source of excitement and fear for the British as they discussed it in regards to both counterinsurgent and insurgent armies in wartime India. In what follows, I examine the theory of aesthetics that the influential art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) produced in response to the 1857 revolt alongside the critical reaction to a contemporaneous exhibition in London showing Dr. John

⁸⁸ There is a large body of literature on the Great Exhibition of 1851. See, for instance: Jeffrey A. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Jeffrey A. Auerbach and Peter H. Hoffenberg, *Britain, the Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Louise Purbrick, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

⁸⁹ Herbert, *War of No Pity*, 28.

Murray's (1809-1898) photographs of sites relevant to the Indian conflict. Through my reading of these texts I suggest that the Uprising caused a militarisation of sight in British discourse in which a sophisticated mode of supposedly 'British' vision was lauded for its agency in warfare and contrasted with an allegedly deficient 'Indian' way of seeing. Photography was ultimately active in challenging the basis of this cultural hierarchy, though, as rumour of its mobilisation by insurgents in India brought about a threatening collapse of the distinctions between the ocular competencies of coloniser and colonised. Warfare thus exerted critical pressure on colonial theories about Indian vision at the same time as it reframed aesthetics in weaponised terms.

The militarisation of aesthetics in India is ultimately examined here with an eye to assessing the scope and the scale of the martial trajectory that the critics of the International Exhibition in 1862 detected in Britain's recent cultural development. Metropolitan exhibition spaces such as this shared with their colonial counterparts an ethos of edification: the act of viewing in these contexts was seen as a pedagogical tool that helped to craft a peaceable mode of (imperial) citizenship.⁹⁰ But images of visitors engaging with weaponry on the military courts of these exhibitions – 'fevered by the suggestions they inspire' – demonstrate that the processes of sight could also have combative inflections that strained against the surrounding rhetoric of peace and diplomacy.⁹¹ It is the primary aim of what follows to highlight the tensions that were caused by this military intervention in the supposedly civilising terrain of aesthetic practice.

The Militarisation of Photography

Far from being sidelined by the widespread sense of crisis engendered in the British by the Indian Uprising, image production actually came to be discussed by colonials with particular interest and urgency. Scholars have previously noted how the ruptures of the insurrection changed the terms in which some types of photographs were viewed: portraits took on mournful valences as the subjects represented fell victim to

⁹⁰ See Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*.

⁹¹ Anon., 'At the Great Exhibition,' 676.

the war,⁹² while architectural scenes were imbued with a poignant historical significance as buildings were ravaged by the vicious bombardments launched by both sides in the conflict.⁹³ But the war was not merely a cause for imperial meditations on loss; it was also a spur to action, and at times led to a highly instrumental view of visual practices. Of sudden concern to the British in the chaotic years of 1857 to 1859 were the ways in which image making could be used to facilitate interventions that might alter the processes of the conflict itself.

This is not to say that image-making technologies necessarily had to be deployed in new ways, for simply viewing images under the pressure of violent crisis caused hitherto relatively innocuous areas of aesthetics to appear newly combative to the colonial eye. Such a shift was especially apparent in the case of a Lucknow-based Indian architect and amateur photographer, Ahmad Ali Khan (dates unknown), whose imagery took on sinister implications for the British as it circulated in wartime networks. Before the war, the *Bengal Directory* had listed Khan as one of the ‘Respectable Native Inhabitants’ of Lucknow.⁹⁴ He was known as ‘the darogha’ (a manager or superintendent) and was in charge of the Husainabad Imambara (Chota Imambara) monument in the city, a building that he was also credited with having designed.⁹⁵ For a brief time in 1855, Khan was employed as a court photographer for Wajid Ali Shah (1822-1887), the last Nawab of Awadh (Avadh), producing a series of images that have been noted for their marriage of Mughal aesthetic traditions with the conventions of a new technology (c.1855; Figure 14).⁹⁶

Khan was one of a number of well-educated high-caste Indians who straddled the fraught social divisions of the nineteenth-century colonial environment. He was a

⁹² See Alison Blunt, ‘Home and Empire: Photographs of British Families in the *Lucknow Album*, 1856-57’, in James Ryan (ed), *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

⁹³ Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 122-127.

⁹⁴ Sophie Gordon, ‘Monumental Visions: Architectural Photography in India, 1840-1901.’ PhD thesis. School of Oriental and African Studies. (2010), 122.

⁹⁵ Gordon, ‘Monumental Visions,’ 122.

⁹⁶ See Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire*, 131-139; and Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 133. The photographs that Khan produced for Wajid Ali Shah are now held in the British Library. See ‘Miscellaneous Portraits of the Royal Family of Oudh and other Sitters.’ PDP/ Photo 500.

fairly well-integrated member of the British community in Lucknow, with his ‘gentlemanly manners and cultivated tastes’ making him ‘a great favourite with the European residents.’⁹⁷ It was thus not only Indian royalty who called on Khan: a great many colonials had also gone to him to have their portraits done, resulting in an imagery that mostly survives in the *Lucknow Album* (1856), a collection of 149 salt-paper prints representing British and Indian figures but also including views of buildings in Lucknow and Delhi, all of which were produced and compiled prior to the Uprising.⁹⁸ These lack the Islamic borders that decorate the work which Khan produced for the Nawab of Awadh, demonstrating the photographer’s flexibility and sensitivity to the aesthetic demands of diverse sitters.

When war broke out in May 1857, Khan joined the insurgents and was reported by one colonial newspaper to be among ‘the principal leaders of the Mahomedan section of the rebels.’⁹⁹ Troublingly, it was also reported that Khan had put photography to ‘practical account’ by handing over his imagery to the notorious insurgent general, Nana Sahib.¹⁰⁰ The nature of this ‘practical’ wartime use of photographs informs the main thrust of what follows and will be used as a lens through which to view the wider martial instrumentalisation of the aesthetic sphere that was precipitated by the violent crises of the 1850s. The Uprising became crucial to how the British viewed much of Khan’s pre-war imagery when colonial soldiers found his *Lucknow Album* following the storming of the eponymous city in March 1858. The album, immediately framed by *The Times* journalist William Howard Russell as a ‘sad memorial of those who have fallen,’¹⁰¹ was transformed into a mournful palimpsest by the addition of hand-written captions to photographs of people ‘killed’ and places ‘destroyed’ within the conflict, thus explicitly situating the Indian photographer’s imagery within an economy of colonial grief.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ *Daily News*, 30 March 1858.

⁹⁸ Ahmad Ali Khan, *The Lucknow Album* (c. 1856), 2 vols. PDP/Photo 269/1 and Photo 269/2.

⁹⁹ *The Englishman* 17 February 1859.

¹⁰⁰ *The Englishman*, 19 February 1858.

¹⁰¹ William Howard Russell, ‘The War in India,’ *The Times*, 5 April 1858.

¹⁰² See Blunt, ‘Home and Empire.’

Visually, Khan's portraits were noted by contemporaries for being 'excellent Photographic likenesses on glass [plate negatives], which were not however quite clear when transferred to paper.'¹⁰³ This haziness has increased in subsequent years so that the photographs of the *Lucknow Album* tend towards an evanescence that lends itself particularly well to an interpretative framework built around bereavement, with group portraits of fallen families (c.1855; Figure 15) and panoramas of pre-war cityscapes like 'View of the city of Lucknow taken from the top of the Ferad Bux and looking in a westerly direction' (1855; Figure 16) both taking on a plaintively spectral air. However, the mnemonic tenor of such scenes was only dominant when they were thought to be located securely within British registers of viewing. When colonials considered the imagery's availability to Indian eyes, it acquired a threateningly insurgent resonance through its capacity to serve as a form of military reconnaissance: the panorama, for instance, looks towards the colonial Residency complex in Lucknow, which was where the British were besieged and bombarded during the lengthy fighting for control of the city during the Uprising.

The evocative surface distortions of Khan's salt-paper prints and the ghostly aura that permeates them are formal features that might not appear greatly amenable to the military's demand for clarity and accuracy, but images such as these still existed in a colonial culture that celebrated the reality claim of the photograph above all other types of visual media because of its indexical relationship to the thing it represents.¹⁰⁴ Photography had started to be officially incorporated into the military structures of British imperialism in 1855, when the East India Company had introduced the practice to its curriculum at the Military Seminary at Addiscombe. The militarisation of the medium was accelerated by the crisis in India, but this was a process that had already got underway within British thought during the Crimean War: in March 1854, the *Journal of the Photographic Society of London* had reported that while 'Hitherto Photography has flourished as one of the arts of peace... It seems not unlikely that it may now be pressed into the service of war.'¹⁰⁵ In accordance with this more martial trajectory for the technology, photographs of the contested Baltic coastline were being

¹⁰³ *Bengal Hurkaru*, 4 November 1856

¹⁰⁴ Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 17.

¹⁰⁵ *Journal of the Photographic Society of London*, 21 March 1854, 177.

taken from aboard a British ship, and military engineers were ‘receiving instructions’ in the practice.¹⁰⁶

It was against this backdrop that some colonials in India started to attribute to photography a potentially decisive military agency. In September 1858 – by which time the famous sieges and battles of Cawnpore, Lucknow, and Delhi were over but pockets of Indian resistance were still holding out against the British in what had become a guerrilla conflict – Sir Arthur Buller, Justice of the Supreme Court of Calcutta, gave a speech at the city’s School of Industrial Art in which he asked his audience to consider the boon that photographs of militarily occupied buildings and landscapes would have been to British generals during the upheavals of the previous year, and to think ‘what an advantage it would be to them even now to have such pictures of the Hill Forts and fastnesses to which the scattered rebels are daily fleeing for refuge.’¹⁰⁷ While this indicates that photography was not currently being utilised by the East India Company army for such strategic purposes, it also highlights the fact that the technology was becoming a conceptual, if not always literal, lens through which the conflict was viewed – and upon which military success or failure may well be hinged.

Buller’s speech demonstrates that, during violent crises, aesthetic practices such as photography were constituted as much by fantasies and fears regarding their potential agency as by any actual usages. In fact, the wartime discourse that emerged around Khan’s photography in India should to some extent be seen in relation to the economy of hearsay concerning the suspected scale of insurgent brutality and the scope and strength of the rebellion; colonials were assailed by ‘a hundred and one rumors,’ as the missionary Rev. Alexander Duff put it.¹⁰⁸ There were incredible reports in

¹⁰⁶ *Journal of the Photographic Society of London*, 21 April 1854, 189.

¹⁰⁷ *The Englishman*, 14 September 1858. Buller’s speech made him popular within the colonial photographic community, and led to the Photographic Society of Bengal foregoing its customary requirement for a one-month notice period for the election of a member in order to officially incorporate him into the fold. *The Englishman*, 19 September 1858.

¹⁰⁸ With breathless drama Duff described the experience of Calcutta during the war as follows: ‘rumors of secret night meetings of the Mohammedans – of fantastical devotees rousing the ignorant multitude to rise up and murder the enemies of their faith – of hundreds of disbanded Sepoy mutineers in the native town panting for

colonial newspapers of cameras that were capable of capturing the processes of a shell bursting from a cannon that were ‘too transitory for the eye to ascertain when it happens,’¹⁰⁹ and of miniature photography that would mean ‘In war the most elaborate instructions might be carried in a button or the head of a pencil case...[and one would need] but a magnifying glass to save the use of spies, and men from hanging.’¹¹⁰ In many ways such rumours about photography can be seen as outpacing the circulation of actual photographs during the war, meaning that the practice’s appearances at the level of discourse was perhaps more important for mediating the events of the rebellion for the British than was the medium’s visual presence.

It is therefore only by paying attention to the role that ‘photography’ or other media played as discursive tropes – ones asked to do work making sense of the Uprising – that a proper assessment of these practices’ wartime agency can be made, and a full account given of their ability to serve as a prism through which conflict was viewed. In the words of Jonathan Crary (quoting Gilles Deleuze) on the earlier camera obscura, photography was “simultaneously and inseparably a machinic assemblage and an assemblage of enunciation,” an object about which something is said and at the same time an object that is used.’¹¹¹ It was precisely because of photography’s existence as an ‘assemblage of enunciation’ – something about which the British spoke and wrote, often with an eye to any possible martial utility – that the notion of Khan’s insurgent camera was able to take hold.

revenge – of thousands of desperadoes from the neighbouring districts swarming in the bazaars thirsting for plunder – of numbers of native police, weak, cowed, and disaffected – of suspicious looking characters prowling about the houses of Europeans in the dark – of insolence, and strange glances, and mysterious whisperings of native servants – of regiments on the plain detected in treasonable correspondence with those in the fort – of the personal danger of the Governor-General, and of the Government House being actually in possession of traitorous native guards – of intercepted letters said to specify the plan to be adopted, and the very hour when all Europeans were to be swept away in a deluge of blood – these, such rumors, some more or less exaggerated, and some, it may be, wholly unfounded, tended to raise the public terror to fever heat.’ Rev. Alexander Duff, *The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and Results* (New York: Robert Cater & Brothers, 1858), 17.

¹⁰⁹ *The Englishman*, 20 October 1858.

¹¹⁰ *The Englishman*, 30 March 1859.

¹¹¹ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992; 1998), 30.

In terms of the early history of photography in India, the British attribution of a ‘practical’ anti-colonial dimension to the medium is highly significant. For although Khan’s links with the insurgency has been empirically noted, the agency of photography in South Asia during the Victorian period has still been theorised more or less exclusively as a means of imperial empowerment.¹¹² Christopher Pinney has drawn on Derrida’s work on the *pharmakon*¹¹³ – an ancient Greek term simultaneously denoting a poison and a cure – to highlight the complex and mutable nature of the technology’s role in British India, but he has suggested that its duality was largely split along a temporal axis, writing that ‘From the announcement of photography in 1839 until (very roughly) the beginning of the twentieth century, photography was perceived [by colonials] as a cure.’¹¹⁴ A similar assessment has recently been made by Zahid R. Chaudhary, who writes that an ‘identifiable Indian “counter-photography” does not exist in the first few decades of photographic practice’ on the subcontinent, when the medium was ‘imbricated in a specifically imperialist representational terrain.’¹¹⁵

Colonial reports about the insurgent utility of Khan’s practice were thus disruptive to the intellectual, institutional, and economic structures of imperialism that had worked with great success to preclude both the theoretical and practical possibility of Indian photographers operating in a manner that was destabilising to colonial rule during the Victorian period. For much of the nineteenth century in India, the expensive and cumbersome ‘technomaterial base’ of photography meant that it was necessarily enmeshed with the ‘colonial *habitus*’ – a diffuse network of colonial sociality, finance, and bureaucracy that together formed the conditions of possibility for photographic practice.¹¹⁶ This imperial nexus didn’t explicitly censor photographers

¹¹² See Fraser, *Indian Mutiny in Photographs*; and ‘Lucknow Photography and the Indian Rebellion,’ in Robin Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹¹³ Jacques Derrida (trans. by Barbara Johnson), ‘Plato’s Pharmacy,’ in *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

¹¹⁴ Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 17.

¹¹⁵ Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire*, 29-30.

¹¹⁶ In drawing on the notion of a ‘habitus,’ Pinney is following Bourdieu. See Pierre Bourdieu (trans. by Richard Nice), *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

so much as it put into effect a set of subtle circumscribing mechanisms and a ‘tacit system of codes’ that ‘came to define in certain respects the proper use of photography,’ making it work more or less in harmony with the ideologies and practices of British imperialism even when it was not being explicitly used or directed by colonial agents, or even within imperial institutions. Under the pressure of violent crisis, however, this colonial *habitus* can be seen as losing some of its efficacy at reproducing the Raj-friendly mode of photographic culture that had taken root in India, as the militarisation of photography in British thought rendered Indian proficiency with the medium a potential concern.

Yet even prior to the Uprising, there were signs that Khan’s practice already represented a kind of threat to imperial privilege. Khan had once offered his services free of charge to colonials in Lucknow, producing domestic scenes, like this portrait of Lieutenant Lewin and his wife (c.1856; Figure 17), that conformed to European bourgeois portrait formats and as such provide a good example of Indian photography operating within the aesthetic and ideological parameters of the colonial *habitus*. Even so, relations between the photographer and his British sitters were sometimes fraught. One colonial resident, Henry Polehampton, wrote of how Khan

kept me waiting so long, that it would have been derogatory to my dignity (a matter to which one has to attend carefully in India) to stay any longer. So I came away unsuccessful once more.... [He] is getting bumptious through having so much notice taken of him. He is the only man in the station who does daguerreotypes, and everyone wants them; so he is becoming an important person.¹¹⁷

Polehampton therefore saw Khan’s monopoly of photography at the Lucknow station as a source of troubling social empowerment for the Indian.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, because Khan ‘does not take pay...one has no hold over him,’ meaning that Khan had

¹¹⁷ Rev. E. & Rev T. S. Polehampton (eds.) *A Memoir. Letters, and Diary, of Rev. Henry S. Polehampton, M. A. Chaplain of Lucknow* (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), 141-42.

¹¹⁸ See Blunt, ‘Home and Empire.’

managed to disengage himself from the financial arm of the colonial *habitus* at least.¹¹⁹

Still, while the British in Lucknow might have ceded to Khan the monopoly over the camera, they were not about to surrender their claims to superior aesthetic ability. Polehampton believed the results of his sitting were ‘bad’;¹²⁰ Captain John Arthur Bayley claimed Khan ‘failed several times’ until the colonial sitter had ‘explained’ things to him enough that he ‘performed his part satisfactorily’;¹²¹ and at a Photographic Society of Bengal meeting at which Khan’s images were shown, it was said that they were ‘more interesting for the subjects than for the knowledge of the art displayed.’¹²² Khan was thus paid in neither coin nor compliments for his troubles.

Supercilious assessments such as the above drew their strength from the institutionalised imperial paternalism that had come to characterise Anglo-Indian artistic relations in the Victorian era. The years prior to the Uprising had seen an unprecedented surge of interest being shown in utilising aesthetics as a ‘civilising’ interface between coloniser and colonised, with British models of education being promoted in the art schools that had been established in Madras (Chennai), Calcutta (Kolkata), and Bombay (Mumbai) during the early 1850s.¹²³ On the one hand, these sought to cater to the British impulse to preserve those traditional Indian arts and crafts that had so impressed visitors at the Great Exhibition of 1851; yet on the other, they looked to spread European methods of draughtsmanship as part of a broader ‘civilising mission’ that was grounded in assumptions about the superiority of British taste.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Polehampton, *A Memoir*, 142.

¹²⁰ Polehampton, *A Memoir*, 225.

¹²¹ Quoted in Fraser, *The Indian Mutiny in Pictures*, 18.

¹²² *The Bengal Hurkaru*, 23 February 1858.

¹²³ For accounts of colonial art schools in India, see Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*; Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New ‘Indian’ Art*; Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*; and Mahrukh Tarapor, ‘John Lockwood Kipling and British Art Education in India’, *Victorian Studies* 24: 1 (Autumn, 1980): 53- 81.

¹²⁴ Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, 36.

The implications that Indian photography held for some of the structuring prejudices of these schools have not yet been considered. In achieving an approximation of perspectival depth mechanically, however, photography potentially destabilised a foundational assumption of such institutions: that Indians must be systematically taught a rational understanding of perspective via the inculcation of western methods of draughtsmanship. As late as 1933, a British psychologist argued that Indians ‘see objects in a manner much further from the principles of perspective than do the majority of Europeans.’¹²⁵ In the nineteenth century, art school advocates had thus positioned perspective as part of a larger imperial project of making Indians into ‘rational’ and ‘modern’ subjects.¹²⁶ It was said that a programme grounded in the practices of perspectival naturalism was necessary to teach Indians ‘to rectify some of their mental faults, to intensify their powers of observation, and to make them understand analytically those glories of nature which they love so well.’¹²⁷ Such views echoed Thomas Babington Macaulay’s famous and influential *Minute on Education* (1835), in which the historian had urged the creation of a system that would anglicise a section of Indian society.¹²⁸

This high-handed culture nurtured a persistent British belief that Indians were simply unable to properly comprehend the photographs they were shown. In 1869, a plan to start photographing convicts was rejected by some colonial officials on the basis that their Indian policemen would be incapable of recognising people from such images.¹²⁹ Even a prominent Indian scholar who utilised photography in his research into South Asian architecture was the subject of a smear campaign by a British historian working in the same field, who claimed that his Indian counterpart’s eye was ‘uneducated’ when it came to the matter of interpreting the medium.¹³⁰ And it wasn’t

¹²⁵ Quoted in Natasha Eaton, *Colour, Art, and Empire: Visual Culture and the Nomadism of Representation* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 130.

¹²⁶ Christopher Pinney, “Photos of the Gods”: *The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 19.

¹²⁷ Sir Richard Temple, *Oriental Experience: A Selection of Essays and Addresses Delivered on Various Occasions* (London: John Murray, 1883), 485.

¹²⁸ Thomas Babington Macaulay (ed. Henry Woodrow), *Macaulay’s Minutes on Education in India: Written in the Years 1835, 1836, and 1837 and Now First Collected from Records in the Department of Public Instruction* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1862).

¹²⁹ Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 64.

¹³⁰ Quoted in Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 73.

just photography, either: in 1855, Sir Henry Yule wrote of the ocular incompetence of the average Indian in regards to wide-ranging western representational practices, claiming that ‘all who have lived in India will bear testimony to it, that to natives of India, of whatever class or caste, unless they have had a special training, our European paintings, prints, drawings, and photographs, plain or coloured...are absolutely unintelligible.’¹³¹ Without British intervention, then, photographs were not expected to be properly legible to someone like Khan at all.

What this means is that rumour of Khan’s capable insurgent deployment of photography had the capacity to short circuit the aesthetic civilising mission of the British, discrediting legitimising narratives of the coloniser’s optical eminence at the same time as it threatened to facilitate the military downfall of imperial armies. It is unknown whether insurgents did in fact attempt to utilise photography during the conflict. Yet even if this was merely the product of British paranoia, it evidences a colonial acceptance of an equivalence of techno-visual competency between Briton and Indian: the British were after all recommending that photography be used in exactly this manner to help in their own war effort, believing that a ‘proficiency in the Art might guide a General to victory, and enable him to overthrow the strongest fortresses.’¹³²

The primary point which I am making both here and in the sections that follow is that the threat of insurgent photography went deeper than any literal danger of military violence that photographs could facilitate through their value as reconnaissance. In the context of an imperial art-school pedagogy that positioned European aesthetics as a formative factor in the creation of capable, perceptive and self-determining agents, insurgent photography pointed to a sophisticated and rational Indian agency, one that was particularly dangerous during violent crisis because it was operating outside of – indeed, it was actively hostile towards – British rule.

¹³¹ Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission*, 89.

¹³² *The Englishman*, 14 September 1858.

Agency and Aesthetics

Imperial preoccupation with photography as a military tool was symptomatic of a more fundamental interest in the martial instrumentality of specific kinds of art and vision. In its perspectival functioning, photography was embedded within an older epistemology of vision that drew its authority from Cartesian discourses of rationality and had previously found notable expression in single-point linear perspective and the camera obscura.¹³³ This rationalised visual order was monocular in nature, privileged sight over the other senses, and approached space as an *a priori* set of geometrical coordinates to be delineated in an ‘objective’ manner. Such ‘Cartesian perspectivalism,’¹³⁴ as it has been termed, gave rise to a highly privileged form of agency, since it implied ‘a gazing, observing subject, a subject who, through and by depth, is able to stand aloof from the dramas and intricacies of an objective, grid-like world positioned “beyond” and “outside.”’¹³⁵ As such, scholars have written of it providing a visual register of the privilege that characterised the imperialistic worldview, since it rendered the observer ‘a god-like figure on whom the different angles of the world converged.’¹³⁶

Yet while perspectival depth might have posited a disembodied viewer, it enabled a mode of representation that was marshalled towards the decidedly embodied processes of warfare. ‘The gaze is an inalienable part of action, of instrumental activity, of the effort to achieve goals and objectives, to grow more efficient and more sophisticated’ – and the British knew it.¹³⁷ Draughtsmanship was a key component of Britain’s martial pedagogy, with linear perspective being seen as particularly important within this: at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, perspective was

¹³³ Suren Lalvani, *Photography, Vision, and the Production of Modern Bodies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 2.

¹³⁴ Martin Jay locates Cartesian perspectivalism as one of three scopic regimes of modernity. See Martine Jay, ‘Scopic Regimes of Modernity’, in Hal Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), 3-23.

¹³⁵ John Wylie, ‘Depths and folds: On Landscape and the Gazing Subject’, *Environment and Planning: Society and Space*, 24 (2006): 522.

¹³⁶ Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography & Exhibitions: Representations of the “Native” and the Making of European Identities* (London: New York: Leicester University Press, 1999), 12.

¹³⁷ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 95.

taught ‘In theory and practice’ in order to qualify students for ‘drawing from nature’;¹³⁸ while at the East India Company’s Military Seminary in Addiscombe, there was a course teaching ‘the Elements of Perspective, Landscape, and Figure Drawing in pencil and brush, and Photography.’¹³⁹ Drawing masters at this latter seminary published educational books on perspective, with one writing that ‘to the military man’ drawing was something that ‘might prove of infinite service,’ and that ‘the study of perspective’ was the ‘first and most important step towards the attainment of an art of such extensive utility.’¹⁴⁰ The contemplative detachment from the world implicit within Cartesian perspectivalism was thus adopted with an eye to corporeal military engagements.

Since linear perspective was such a key enabler of soldierly agency, it might appear strange that the British sought to use colonial art schools to impart this martial advantage to an Indian population that they subdued by military force. Yet, as noted, multiple forms of agency were supposedly nurtured by the artistic naturalism which perspectival practices facilitated: moral and intellectual concerns were also at stake, making aesthetic education central to the imperial ‘civilising mission.’ The British ambivalence towards the particular efficacy – moral, mental, or martial – of the naturalistic practices being taught in India was fuelled in part by the discrepant processes of imperial domination, which was achieved either by what Ranajit Guha (taking his cue from Antonio Gramsci) has termed ‘dominance *with* hegemony’ or by ‘dominance *without* hegemony.’¹⁴¹ Dominance *with* hegemony was a form of colonial rule in which direct coercion was suspended and the colonised exhibited an amount of complicity in the imperial project; dominance *without* hegemony was a form of colonial rule perpetuated more or less by coercive force. India’s ocular abilities could

¹³⁸ *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Consider the Best Mode of Re-organizing the System for Training Officers for the Scientific Corps; Together with an Account of Foreign and Other Military Education* (London: George E. Eyre & William Spottiswoode, 1857), 405

¹³⁹ *Report of the Commissioners*, 267.

¹⁴⁰ Theodore Henry Fielding, *Synopsis of Practical Perspective, Linear and Aerial* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1836), 29. A book on perspective was also published by a later master of drawing at the military college in Addiscombe. See Aaron Penley, *The Elements of Perspective: Illustrated by Numerous Examples and Diagrams* (London: Windsor and Newton, 1866).

¹⁴¹ See Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997).

signify in radically different ways to the British according to the presence or absence of this hegemony.

To teach European naturalistic art practices to Indian students within a framework of hegemony was to cultivate them as helpful agents complicit with the legitimisation of British imperial culture. ‘When working *with* hegemony,’ as Daniel Rycroft has written, ‘the colonized collaborated within the dominant political and cultural systems’ of the British, and as such they were ‘marked by a *subjecthood* that was recognized by the colonial administration as loyal, knowable, and useful.’¹⁴² By participating in the aesthetic practices of the coloniser, Indians could acquire a mode of agency that effected the normalisation of colonial forms of life and contributed to the overall stability of imperial rule. But as violent crisis loosened the grip of hegemony, those ‘western’-style Indian visual practices that had once been so neatly assimilated into the imperial project could gain the potential to act as a counter-hegemonic insurgent threat.

Prior to 1857, the Anglo-Indian collaboration that was constitutive of dominance *with* hegemony was something that was frequently expressed within imperial discourse through tropes that highlighted the unifying nature of certain (western) visual practices. Rycroft has demonstrated how, in the early 1850s, British audiences were made aware of Indian complicity with the imperial project by illustrations like ‘Aerolite’ (1855; Figure 18) in the *Illustrated London News*, which showed native elites participating in the sophisticated museum spectatorship associated with Britons engaging in the ‘metropolitan exhibitionary complex.’¹⁴³ The ‘exhibitionary complex’ privileged sight as an educative tool and had developed in earnest in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, finding triumphal expression in the hugely popular Great Exhibition in 1851. It was predicated on the transfer of objects from private collections into public arenas, wherein they were available to be viewed throughout society as statements of power.¹⁴⁴ As Tony Bennet has theorised

¹⁴² Daniel J. Rycroft, *Representing Rebellion: Visual Aspects of Counter-insurgency in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 147. Emphasis in original.

¹⁴³ Rycroft, *Representing Rebellion*, 147.

¹⁴⁴ Tony Bennet, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (Oxon: Routledge, 1995), 60-61.

it, the availability of such material to the public helped to foster compliant citizenship, since it enabled people ‘To identify with power, to see it as, if not directly theirs, then indirectly so, a force regulated and channelled by society’s ruling groups but for the good of all.’¹⁴⁵ For Briton and Indian alike, such viewing practices were coded in terms of edification, signifying ‘the acquisition of modern knowledge and rationality.’¹⁴⁶

Numerous British depictions of the crowds at the Great Exhibition showed South Asian visitors incorporated into these edifying viewing practices (1851; Figure 19), strolling around the display courts alongside of British spectators in a harmonious multiculturalism that chimed with the lofty claims which the world’s fair made for its ability promote international peace. Peter H. Hoffenberg has argued that the later exhibitions that were held in British colonies over the course of the nineteenth century similarly posited ‘the act of seeing’ as ‘a shared, integrative activity’ that functioned as ‘a metaphor for [imperial] federation’: ‘Vision provided an aesthetic link, but also a synthesized empire and nation; it integrated imperial subjects and national citizens in a shared, simultaneous experience of the shows.’¹⁴⁷ This shared experience was essentially a shared pedagogy: visitors were given access to a wide range of materials from which to gain knowledge about a variety of cultures and their interrelations, but on a more fundamental level such shows were ‘about teaching vision and the ways to manipulate the processes and products of sight.’¹⁴⁸ A shared ocular praxis thereby civilised and unified what might otherwise have been antagonistic imperial factions.

However, the sense of crisis in international relations that was engendered by the Crimean War and the Indian Uprising in the 1850s was severely disruptive to this quixotic take on the pacific value of a shared imperial vision. For as the *Illustrated London News* scene with which this chapter began shows, the nature of the processes and products of sight that were being taught in international exhibitions could shift dramatically: the rational sophistication redolent in the vision of the ‘exhibitionary complex’ is shown by the products of the military court in the 1862 show to be also

¹⁴⁵ Bennet, *The Birth of the Museum*, 67.

¹⁴⁶ Rycroft, *Representing Rebellion*, 166.

¹⁴⁷ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 71-73.

¹⁴⁸ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 71.

complicit in the scopic processes underpinning industrialised warfare. Of course, an Indian looking through the sights of the gun here would not automatically learn a militarily useful mode of vision – more likely they would be struck by the spectacle of imperial strength. But all the same, violent crisis had worked to recalibrate the valences of sight, which could no longer be understood to function as a securely palliative or prophylactic interface between coloniser and colonised. It was now also a militarised one.

This ability of violent crisis to shift the terms of aesthetic debate was made particularly explicit in January 1858, when the art critic John Ruskin gave a lecture at what was perhaps the most important site of the didactic exhibition culture of mid-nineteenth-century London: the South Kensington Museum, wherein was stored many of the collections that were first displayed at the Great Exhibition. Indian artefacts formed a key part of the emerging curriculum of art and design here – a curriculum that would be transported to India as teachers from South Kensington took up positions in the colonial art schools on the subcontinent. Ruskin – well aware of the centrality of Indian art to the museum’s pedagogy – used his lecture as an opportunity to launch a sustained indictment of the type of agency that he believed was fostered by South Asian aesthetics. The previous months had seen Britain gripped by reports of sensational atrocities that were allegedly being committed by Indian rebels against the colonial populace – ‘treachery, cruelty, cowardice, idolatry, bestiality, – whatever else is fruitful in the work of Hell’ – and for Ruskin it was Indian modes of art and vision that had paved the way for the enormities of such insurgent violence.¹⁴⁹

Ruskin’s argument took the state-of-emergency lexicon emerging about wartime India and used it to intervene in the ostensibly pacific terrain of pedagogical doctrine in the arts.¹⁵⁰ It went as follows: Indian art was prey to abstraction and conventionalised forms rather than naturalism, and as such it had supposedly turned its back on a God-given reality. Given this unholy retreat from the world, it was liable to corrupt both the sight and the soul of those who were unfortunate enough to become habituated to

¹⁴⁹ John Ruskin, ‘The Deteriorative Power of Conventional Art Over Nations’, an inaugural lecture delivered at the South Kensington Museum, January 1858, in John Ruskin, *The Two Paths: Being Lectures on Art, and its Application to Decoration and Manufacture, delivered in 1858-9* (New York: John Wiley, 1859), 16.

¹⁵⁰ Eaton, *Colour, Art, and Empire*, 92.

its aesthetic mores. The presence of Indian objects in the South Kensington Museum was therefore problematic for the institution's didactic ambitions. 'Does it not seem to you,' Ruskin asked, 'more than questionable whether we are assembled here in Kensington museum to any good purpose?'¹⁵¹ His summation of the pernicious effects of India's non-naturalistic aesthetics was damning:

To all the facts and forms of nature it wilfully and resolutely opposes itself... the people who practice it are cut off from all possible sources of healthy knowledge... they have wilfully sealed up and put aside the entire volume of the world, and have got nothing to read, nothing to dwell upon, but the imagination of the thoughts of their hearts, of which we are told that "it is only evil continually." Over the whole spectacle of creation they have thrown a veil in which there is no rent. For them no star peeps through the blanket of the dark – for them neither their heaven shines nor their mountains rise – for them the flowers do not blossom... They lie bound in the dungeon of their own corruption, encompassed only by doleful phantoms, or by spectral vacancy.¹⁵²

Since Indian art had no secure empirical anchoring in the world, then, its viewers were apparently prey to a malignant solipsism, as the 'dissembling conventions of Indian design all-too-easily mutated into the disloyal designs of the mutinous Sepoy.'¹⁵³

In other words, the types of sight that the exhibitionary complex encoded were potentially laced with violence. According to Ruskin, the Indian artefacts lurking in British collections were potentially dangerous items that threatened to undermine the rationality of vision that was presupposed by the exhibitionary complex, functioning instead 'to summon and send forth, on new and unexpected missions, the demons of luxury, cruelty, and superstition.'¹⁵⁴ But Ruskin was far from disinterested in this assessment. The anti-empiricism attributed to India stood in contrast to the 'go to

¹⁵¹ Ruskin, 'The Deteriotive Power of Conventional Art Over Nations,' 18.

¹⁵² Ruskin, 'The Deteriotive Power of Conventional Art Over Nations,' 19.

¹⁵³ Tim Barringer, *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain* (Paul Mellon Centre for British Art: Yale University Press: London: New Haven, 2005), 267.

¹⁵⁴ Ruskin, 'The Deteriotive Power of Conventional Art Over Nations,' 18.

nature' strictures that he had been preaching in his own writings for over a decade.¹⁵⁵ The moral challenge that the critic launched against the South Kensington Museum was thereby motivated in part by a desire to position his own work in favourable relation to the war in India, which was being discussed by many commentators in terms of a Manichean battle between Indian savagery and British civilisation. If Indian art had an immoral agency, not only could the South Kensington Museum's exhibition of such errant aesthetic conventions be framed as inviting 'the hasty degradation of our country' – it could also be reasonably assumed that other types of art could have a moral agency.¹⁵⁶

Ruskin attempted to capitalise on the unseemly associations between Indian aesthetics and violent insurgency by moralising – but in the process effectively *militarising* – his own aesthetic prescriptions for naturalism by aligning them with the British counterinsurgency operation in India, which was just then gaining strength after an initially feckless response to the crisis. Yet the militarisation of Ruskin's aesthetic theory was not without complications. For one thing, the critic believed strongly that it was to the Highlander soldiers that Britain owed most for the 'avenging in the Indies,' yet upon his recent trip to Scotland he had been struck by the country's lack of art of any sort, much less any that conformed to his prescriptions.¹⁵⁷ To circumvent this issue, Ruskin posited a Scottish closeness-to-nature that supposedly mirrored the kind of communion with the world that he believed was achieved through artistic naturalism, remarking that 'You will find that all the highest points of the Scottish character are connected with impressions derived straight from the natural scenery of their country'.¹⁵⁸

Rather opportunistically, then, Ruskin falls back upon the perceptual foundation necessary to achieve his preferred mode of art (an engaged relationship with the world) so as to register a complementarity between his naturalistic aesthetic theory and the Scottish agents of colonial counterinsurgency. Such a harmonisation of naturalism with Scottish martial valour is emblematised for Ruskin by a rugged cliff

¹⁵⁵ See John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, I, (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1848).

¹⁵⁶ Ruskin, 'The Deteriotive Power of Conventional Art Over Nations,' 18.

¹⁵⁷ Ruskin, 'The Deteriotive Power of Conventional Art Over Nations,' 15.

¹⁵⁸ Ruskin, 'The Deteriotive Power of Conventional Art Over Nations,' 12.

in the Highlands which is called ‘Craig Ellachie’ by the local clan, who supposedly see in this rocky promontory and its ‘few scattered pines’ and ‘flush of heather’ a potent symbol of their country, ‘and of the influence of that country upon themselves.’ This receptiveness to nature is given an explicitly military twist, for the ‘love of the native land’ is most ‘beautifully indicated in the war-cry of the clan, “Stand fast, Craig Ellachie.”’ An engaged relationship with the world is therefore posited as the grounds for the ‘assertion of indomitable courage’ in battle, and Ruskin even imagines this war cry of naturalism bellowing across Indian fields ‘darkened with blood’ as Scottish soldiers quelled the insurrection.¹⁵⁹

So, in contradistinction to the dislocation from the world that was supposedly characteristic of Indian art and vision, Ruskin’s counterinsurgency aesthetics were grounded in an intimate relationship with nature. He believed, moreover, that this had a powerfully moral agency that was ‘protective and helpful to all that is noblest in humanity.’¹⁶⁰ Yet within this moral vision was an implicit economy of martial utility; the sort of sight that emerged from Indian aesthetics was not just spiritually unsound: it was completely incompetent, and as such it stood in contrast to the perspicacity of the vision that supposedly emerged from naturalistic practices.

As a result of the crises of the 1850s, then, aesthetic theories were being mined for their relative martial value. The crossover between morality and martial utility that Ruskin’s theory of vision presumes is most clearly evoked in the following passage:

as the ignoble person, in his dealings with all that occur around him, first sees nothing clearly, – looks nothing fairly in the face, and then allows himself to be swept away by the trampling torrent, and unescapable [sic] force, of things that he would not foresee, and could not understand: *so the noble person, looking the facts of the world full in the face, and fathoming them with deep faculty, then deals with them in unalarmed intelligence and unhurried*

¹⁵⁹ Ruskin, ‘The Deteriotive Power of Conventional Art Over Nations,’ 21.

¹⁶⁰ Ruskin, ‘The Deteriotive Power of Conventional Art Over Nations,’ 15.

strength, and becomes, with his human intellect and will, no unconscious nor insignificant agent, in consummating their good, and restraining their evil.¹⁶¹

The basic contours of this argument are that abstraction leads to a weathervane existence; a person rendered ‘ignoble’ by their aesthetic detachment from the world also suffers an erosion of individual agency, becoming a pawn in events that they fail to grasp. Naturalism, by contrast, gives rise to the calm exertion of ‘intelligence’ and ‘strength’ under the guidance of a moral compass. The invocation of those qualities in the context of a speech that sought to portray the aesthetic dynamic of war implies that naturalistic modes of art and vision give one a military edge (“Stand fast, Craig Ellachie”). It was therefore not only British military academies that were encoding art as an enabler of soldierly agency; in Ruskin’s view, naturalistic aesthetics had a martial instrumentality that Indian practices – for all of their alleged encouragement of cruelty – lacked.

Exhibiting War

The militarisation of aesthetics that the crisis in India engendered was also to find expression in the writings of art critics who attended the November 1857 exhibition at Hogarth’s Art Rooms, No. 5 Haymarket, which displayed Dr. John Murray’s photographs of Indian architecture and landscapes – many of which showed sites of relevance to the on-going war in India. Born in Scotland, Murray had joined the colonial medical service in the 1840s and became one of a number of skilled amateur photographers operating on the subcontinent in the early years of the medium. His forte was architectural studies – with a special emphasis on the Taj Mahal – and can be seen in the context of the increased colonial drive towards the documentation of monuments around this time, an amateur supplement to the state-led ethnographic projects that were employing contemporary professional photographers like Linnaeus Tripe (1855; Figure 6)¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Ruskin, ‘The Deteriotive Power of Conventional Art Over Nations,’ 47. Emphasis added.

¹⁶² See Pelizzari (ed.), *Traces of India*.

Yet, in a perceptual shift akin to the one undergone by colonials looking at photographs taken by Khan, images such as Murray's 'The Samman Burj in the Fort-Palace in Agra' (1855; Figure 20) that had initially been taken as a record of architecture – in this case, Agra Fort – took on a newly martial resonance for viewers in London when these buildings found themselves protecting British colonials from attacking Indian armies. Then, this photograph became less significant as an architectural profile of the lavishly ornamented tower in the centre of the scene and more significant for its inclusion of the defensive moat and wall that separates that tower and the building it adorns from the surrounding landscape, as the gaze is reoriented towards militarily informative details.

While Murray's images are not 'war photographs' as such – they were taken prior to the outbreak of hostilities – the exhibition was nevertheless an emotionally charged environment for metropolitan viewers, with one critic writing of seeing the scenes 'through a blood-red haze.'¹⁶³ Noted for their size ('very large, being eighteen by fifteen inches'), the photographs were approached by critics with magnifying glasses in order to properly inspect the details captured by the camera.¹⁶⁴ Such careful looking formed part of an ostensibly dispassionate engagement with the visual data that was consonant with the ocular prescriptions of Ruskin and which I will be arguing worked to ameliorate public anxiety over the viability of the defences of Agra Fort, inside of which 6,000 colonial Britons and their servants were besieged by insurgents. Ultimately, my reading of this overlooked London exhibition is intended to demonstrate precisely what kind of looking the British believed to be necessary in order to glean military information from photographs, and thus works to provide a framework for the fear that Britons in India felt at the prospect of hostile insurgents looking at similar types of images with an eye to their military value.

Murray was the Civil Surgeon of Agra, but he had gone on furlough at the very start of the insurgency and was consequently in Britain at a time of keen public interest in India. He had started practicing photography in 1849, although the first extant images of his are from 1855 and it was from this batch that he selected photographs to be displayed in London in 1857. Despite his imagery having been produced prior to the

¹⁶³ *The Athenaeum* no. 1582 (20 February 1858): 246

¹⁶⁴ *The Art Journal* 19 (December 1857): 386.

Uprising, Murray's exhibition should nevertheless be seen in the context of a mid-nineteenth-century surge in visual war reportage. The illustrated press had created an unprecedented demand for representations of warfare, and the British public would have been particularly conversant with colonial counterinsurgency from previous crises in South Asia such as the Ceylon Insurrection (1848) and the Santhal Hul (1855-56), the visual journalism on which conflicts has been the subject of a sustained treatment by Rycroft.¹⁶⁵ Yet the more pertinent lineage for these photographs is the imagery that emerged from the Crimean War when the professional photographer Roger Fenton (1819-1869) had travelled out to Balaclava in 1855 and produced images of battle-scarred landscapes and soldiers at rest. These photographs were exhibited in London in September, attracting much public interest and providing the primary point of comparison for the war photography that subsequently emanated from the Uprising (Fenton's name was invoked numerous times in the reviews of Murray's exhibition).¹⁶⁶

Since Murray's images were circulating in Britain as the Uprising was still in process, they helped to mediate public perception of the unfurling crisis in India. The initial rebellion of sepoys that had taken place at Meerut on 10 May 1857 was first reported in Britain in *The Times* on 27 June. Even by telegraph news took at least six weeks to arrive from India, whereas the more detailed despatches that had to be sent by sea took almost three months.¹⁶⁷ The result of this time lag was 'an almost unbearable anguished aspect of the situation' for the British public which Christopher Herbert has argued led to an extraordinary outpouring of writings about the revolt as people

¹⁶⁵ See Rycroft, *Representing Rebellion*, 2006. Murray was incorporated into this emergent discourse when two of his calotypes – one of Agra Fort's façade and one of the interior – were engraved for the 5 September 1857 issue of the *Illustrated London News*. *Illustrated London News*, 5 September 1857. The newspaper article mistakenly attributes the illustration – which is termed 'From A Photograph' in the caption – to the India-based artist, William Carpenter. For the original photograph of the façade, see Sotheby's 1999, lot 76; for the original of the interior, see Sotheby's 10 May 1990, lot 69.

¹⁶⁶ See 'Framing the Crimea: The Narrative of Photographs in Exhibition', in Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca: London: Cornell University, 1996).

¹⁶⁷ Don Randall. 'Autumn 1857: The Making of the Indian "Mutiny"' *Victorian Literature and Culture* 31.1 (2003): 4.

sought to overcome the ‘maddening remoteness of events.’¹⁶⁸ Amidst the proliferation of unreliable reports about the horrors occurring in India, it is perhaps unsurprising that Murray’s photographs – with their indexical anchoring in Indian sites – were highly popular.¹⁶⁹ On 1 December 1857 a series of 30 salt-paper prints had been published by the convener of the November exhibition, Joseph Hogarth, who evidently still considered Murray’s photographs to be of marketable interest two years later when he published a further 25 of them.¹⁷⁰ In fact, such was the ubiquity of Murray’s work during the war and its aftermath that by the time some of his images were shown at the 1861 Architectural Exhibition on Conduit Street, *The Saturday Review* wrote that they have ‘been so often engraved and described that they cannot lay claim to the same degree of interest’ as the other views of India exhibited.¹⁷¹

Scholarship about images of the Uprising that were seen in Britain while the war was still raging in India has tended hitherto to consider the controversy surrounding Joseph Noel Paton’s entry for the 1858 Royal Academy exhibition in London.¹⁷² The artist’s *In Memoriam* (1858; Figure 21) initially showed a group of Indian sepoy entering a building inside of which some distraught and wan-looking British women and children were huddled together in states of pale fear, catatonic prayer, and familial embrace. It thus conjured memories of the slaughter at Cawnpore (Kanpur) that had followed a three-week siege in which the vastly outnumbered British – decimated not just by bombardments and narrowly thwarted insurgent cavalry charges but by hunger and disease as well – had surrendered to the rebel leader, Nana Sahib, after being given assurances of their safe passage up the Ganges to Allahabad. Yet

¹⁶⁸ Herbert, *War of No Pity*, 22.

¹⁶⁹ The success of Murray’s work was also partly due to its novelty: photographs of India were still rare in London, and his were then ‘among the largest landscapes that the camera has...produced.’ *The Morning Post*, 14 November 1857.

¹⁷⁰ See Dr. John Murray, *Photographic Views in Agra and its Vicinity* (London: J. Hogarth, 1857), IOR Photo 101; and Dr. John Murray, *Picturesque Views in the North-Western Provinces of India* (London: J. Hogarth, 1859).

¹⁷¹ *The Saturday Review*, 9 March 1861, 245.

¹⁷² See Alison Blunt, ‘Embodying War: British Women and Domestic Defilement in the Indian “Mutiny”, 1857-8’, in *Journal of Historical Geography* 26: 3 (2000): 403-428; Pamela Fletcher, ‘“To Wipe Away a Manly Tear”: The Aesthetics of Emotion in Victorian Narrative Painting’, in *Victorian Studies* 51: 3 (Spring 2009): 457-469; Julia Thomas, ‘A Tale of Two Stories: Joseph Noel Paton’s *In Memoriam*’, in Julia Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Value in Word and Image* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004), 125-144.

upon boarding the boats prepared for them by Nana's men at the Satichaura Ghat, the British were massacred: those who were not killed instantly were captured, the remaining men executed, and the surviving women and children – about 200 of them – imprisoned for days in nearby Bibighar house.

It was what happened next that etched Cawnpore – and the name 'Nana Sahib' – in the memory of the British. As General Henry Havelock's troops made their unforgiving approach towards Cawnpore – summarily executing any Indians suspected of links to the insurgency as they went – there was an order given to kill the British captives.¹⁷³ The rebel sepoys under Nana's command refused to carry this out, and so in the end the women and children were methodically hacked to death inside of the house by less scrupulous local butchers. The scene that greeted Havelock's army was infamously gruesome. The following is a fairly typical description of what became known to the British as the 'house of horrors':

the rooms were covered with human gore; articles of clothing that had belonged to women and children, collars, combs, shoes, caps, and little round hats, were found steeped in blood; the walls were spattered with blood, the mats on the floor saturated, the plaster sides of the place were scored with sword cuts, and pieces of long hair were all about the room.¹⁷⁴

Meanwhile, the bodies of the dead themselves were found crammed into a nearby well. Both sites were to become potent emblems of the war to the British: the Cawnpore episode was an emotive spur towards the brutal excesses of the counterinsurgency campaign, as well as an unsettling spectre haunting all subsequent moments of British vulnerability in India.

¹⁷³ Although Nana Sahib was believed by the British at the time to be responsible for ordering the massacre, the historical record is unclear on the matter; it may well not have been Nana that gave the order. See Andrew Ward, *Our Bones Are Scattered: The Cawnpore Massacres and the Indian Mutiny of 1857* (John Murray: St Ives, 2004).

¹⁷⁴ David W. Bartlett, *The Heroes of the Indian Rebellion* (Columbus, Ohio: Follett, Foster & Co., 1859), 262.

Such was the affective potential of the Cawnpore episode that Paton's decision to deploy a high level of realism to bring the atrocity to the walls of the Royal Academy provoked considerable criticism. Indeed, such was the public outrage with the artist for alluding to the massacre that he sought to deflect further opprobrium by repainting an area of the scene, substituting Highlander troops for the offending Indian figures that were encroaching ominously on the female sanctuary. This alteration served to transform a historical depiction of impending slaughter at the hands of anti-colonial Indian men into a fantastical one of imminent saviour by Scottish soldiers, and reportedly left Queen Victoria herself to breath a sigh of relief.¹⁷⁵ Such a move evidences an almost talismanic faith in the powerful agency of the visual, as the alterations to Paton's painting act as a countervailing force against the troubling historical fact of the Cawnpore massacre.

It is with such talismanic faith in mind that I read the criticism of Murray's exhibition, which while less sensational than *In Memoriam* nevertheless had the same grisly moment as a key point of reference. Cawnpore had demonstrated the potentially catastrophic consequences of a broken siege for colonial Britons, and Murray offered photographs of a fortress still under siege, its defences laid bare before the eyes of gallery-going Londoners. What I want to suggest is that during the upheavals of the Uprising, image making was mobilised as a form of intervention: Paton intervened in the historical reality of the Cawnpore episode; the viewers of Murray's exhibition would do likewise. In some ways this demand for intervention can be seen as emanating from the very nature of crisis. Crisis registers a time of great difficulty and danger, and conjures a sense of disorder and paralysing confusion; but it also designates a crisis point – a moment at which something must (be made to) change. It is from this call to action (and arms...) that the instrumentalisation of the aesthetic sphere which I am tracing can be seen to emerge.

How was such interventionism operative in Murray's London exhibition? Initially it would seem that it was not. The reviews are curiously summary in their discussion of the siege, swinging instead from general statements about the 'important and painful events of the Indian insurrection' to laudatory descriptions of Murray's 'rendering

¹⁷⁵ Thomas, 'Joseph Noel Paton's *In Memoriam*, ' 125.

[of] the minute prospects of some of the finest cities.¹⁷⁶ *The Morning Post*, for instance, after a brief allusion to the photographs representing ‘notable scenes of the war,’ proceeded to catalogue the ‘minuteness of architectural detail’ within the images: ‘the quality and texture of the stone...the elaborate carvings, the arabesqued ornaments, and the costly inlaid work with which the Eastern architects delight to decorate their buildings.’¹⁷⁷ When the review describes a photograph of Agra Fort it focuses on the architecture in a similar fashion (‘the material is sandstone, the prevailing colour being a strong brick red, contrasting harshly with the white marble employed in the construction of some of the buildings’) and concludes with a formal description of the photographs (‘now golden brown, anon of a rich reddish sepia hue, now grey and lucid, presently almost of a black Indian ink lustre’).¹⁷⁸ Only elliptical references to the siege are made, while the imagery is responded to in terms of the materiality of both the fortress depicted and the photographs themselves.

On first consideration, then, it would appear that the obsession of the reviewers with the degree of detail in Murray’s photographs was a way of suspending a proper engagement with the potentially troubling reality of the siege in India. As Steve Edwards has written, the ‘sentence that appears utterly dazzled’ by the minutiae of a photograph reads ‘as if microscopic details exhaust consciousness, filled it to excess, so that no room was left for reflection.’¹⁷⁹ Cawnpore was the most traumatic episode of the entire war for the British, and its ghost would likely constitute a sufficient stimulus for a retreat into thought-annihilating abandonment to minutiae. Yet if we recall Ruskin’s martial characterisation of empirical vision, then the detail-obsessed descriptions of Murray’s photographs can be seen as something more than this.

Pertinent here is the manner in which the enumeration of architectural details within the reviews could yield an alternative assessment of the likelihood of the fortress successfully withstanding insurgent assaults than that which was offered by the historical account of the fortress given in the exhibition’s catalogue. The author of that catalogue, J. Middleton, was the Principal of the East India Company’s College at

¹⁷⁶ *The Morning Advertiser*, 9 November 1857.

¹⁷⁷ *The Morning Post*, 14 November 1857.

¹⁷⁸ *The Morning Post*, 14 November 1857.

¹⁷⁹ Steve Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories* (China: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 59.

Agra, and his entries for the photographs of Agra Fort offered a visual description of the architecture as well some relevant military history.¹⁸⁰ He attests to Britain's past might in India by noting that during the Second Anglo-Maratha War (1802-1803) the building had been taken 'with little difficulty' by Lord Lake.¹⁸¹ But such praise also implies the ineffectualness of the very fortress that now protects the British, causing Middleton to make the ambivalent assertion that 'Defended by Englishmen it is perhaps impregnable; though against them of no great strength.'¹⁸² This analysis provides an uneasy negotiation between the denigration of Indian military and architectural prowess and the assertion of the safety of Britons now besieged inside of an Indian military building.

It would appear that Middleton's historicising sat somewhat uneasily with the reviewers of the exhibition. While *The Morning Post* repeated word for word the author's formal description of Agra Fort, it produced its own totally contradictory account of the fort's military history, asserting that it actually 'stood a long siege before it was taken by Lord Lake.'¹⁸³ This was a historically dubious assessment, since the 1803 Siege of Agra had only lasted for two weeks before the British claimed victory, whereas during that same war Lake had also led a siege against Bhurtpore that had lasted for three *months* before finally forcing him to withdraw from it altogether. Despite this, however, in every review in which the 1803 battle for Agra was mentioned it was the incorrect but consolatory story of a sturdy fortress withstanding a lengthy siege that was to be propagated.

This alternative account of Agra Fort's defensibility was made possible by allowing the visual data gleaned from the photographs to intervene in the historical record in a manner that testifies to what Pinney has termed 'the un-knowability of the limits of the camera's prosthesis.' For in the early days of photography, the power of the

¹⁸⁰ It is highly probable that the catalogue was the same as the booklet that J. Middleton wrote to accompany Murray's December publication of an album of salt-paper images from the November show. The exhibition review from 14 November in *The Morning Post* recalls verbatim the later December booklet's description of Agra Fort, indicating that Middleton's text was used beforehand for the exhibition.

¹⁸¹ J. Middleton, in Dr. John Murray, *Photographic Views in Agra and its Vicinity*. Emphasis added.

¹⁸² Dr. John Murray, *Photographic Views in Agra and its Vicinity*.

¹⁸³ *The Morning Post*, 14 November 1857. Emphasis added.

medium could appear ‘so great that it might be able to reach back in time just as it might reach out in other ways.’¹⁸⁴ The critics of Murray’s exhibition relied much less on historical rigour for their account of Agra Fort than on an empirical engagement with the photographs: *The Morning Post* provided an inventory of the fort’s defences and concluded that it ‘is a place of considerable strength’; *The Literary Gazette* wrote that ‘Within that serried and multiplied rampart of walls, finished at the top with palisading...our beleaguered countrymen will be quite safe’;¹⁸⁵ and *The Art Journal* delighted in minutiae while approaching the photographs of Agra Fort in a way that backed up the spurious account of its military history with visual description: ‘[it] stood a long siege before it was taken [by Lord Lake]; it is built of red sandstone, occupies a considerable area, and is enclosed by a ditch... it may readily be believed that it is sufficiently strong to repel a numerous attacking force.’¹⁸⁶

In other words, the attention that the reviewers paid to photographic detail was not an aesthetic retreat from traumatic wartime events so much as a particularly consolatory heuristic device for confronting the uncertainty of the siege. Their approach anticipated the martial dynamic of Ruskin’s South Kensington speech by privileging observant vision and realistic representation within an epistemology of warfare: *The Morning Advertiser*, for instance, believed that ‘a greater amount of knowledge of the actualities of the Indian war can be gained from the study of these views than from any amount of written description.’¹⁸⁷ Indeed, the empiricism encouraged by critics was explicitly coded in terms of martial strategy, with it being claimed that the ‘military man’ could use these images ‘as if he studied reality,’ making them ‘a great service to a party attacking, showing as they do, for instance, in the view of the fort of Agra, the defence within defence which exist.’¹⁸⁸ These photographs therefore enabled the public to engage with colonial warfare in an unprecedented way, adopting the role of the ‘military man’ themselves in order to make their own assessments of

¹⁸⁴ Pinney, ‘The Colonial Dromosphere,’ 125. In making this claim Pinney is drawing on Anthonella Pelizzari’s notions of ‘memory-retrieval’ in British photographs of battle sites from the Anglo-Mysore wars of the eighteenth century. See Maria Anthonella Pelizzari, ‘From Stone to Paper: Photographs of Architecture and the Traces of History,’ in Pelizzari (ed.), *Traces of India*, 45.

¹⁸⁵ *The Literary Gazette* 3 (7 November 1857): 1075.

¹⁸⁶ *The Art Journal* 19 (December 1857): 386

¹⁸⁷ *The Morning Advertiser*, 9 November 1857.

¹⁸⁸ *The Morning Advertiser*, 9 November 1857.

their compatriots' safety via the inspection of features from sites of an ongoing conflict.

The martial tone of these reviews can be seen alongside those images from the later International Exhibition that showed visitors similarly militarising their vision within the gallery-going context. In both cases, the sights of war are incorporated into a safe metropolitan environment that enables viewers to experience in some small way the ocular dimension of conflict, with viewers encouraged to adopt lines of sight that overlap with the subject position of the 'military man.' As stated in the introduction to this thesis, the militarisation of aesthetics that started to occur in Victorian culture from the 1850s onwards can be understood as a genealogy for modern-day visual stagings of violence, notably the military vision of drone strikes.¹⁸⁹ In the blurring of the boundaries between the phenomenology of civilian leisure in London and that of military manoeuvres in India, these Victorian exhibition spaces anticipate the 'military-entertainment-complex' of today, in which interactive footage of Predator Drone attacks from popular videogames such as *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare II* (2009) are 'eerily similar to those broadcast by the military from the UAVs [Unmanned Aerial Vehicles] in the Middle East.'¹⁹⁰ As Roger Stahl argues, the 'blurring of the lines between citizen and soldier' within such visual zones is symptomatic of a 'larger social militarization, of the recoding of the social field with military values and ideals.'¹⁹¹ It was just such a martial recoding that visitors to the military court of the 1862 exhibition were concerned with: 'Seriously,' wrote one, 'there is no avoiding warlike works; and alas for the fact!'¹⁹²

Insurgent Vision

The upheavals of the Uprising in India meant that a static exhibition such as Murray's photographs enjoyed in London was out of the question for photographers until late

¹⁸⁹ Page 12.

¹⁹⁰ Shaw, 'Playing War', 790.

¹⁹¹ Roger Stahl, 'Have You Played the War on Terror?', *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23: 2 (2006): 113.

¹⁹² Quoted in Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 201.

1858.¹⁹³ Instead, the dissemination of photographs occurred for the most part through social networks. In February 1858, one British photographer recorded showing images to one of the leading military figures of the Uprising, General James Outram, over dinner and afterwards ‘sent him some copies with which he has been pleased.’¹⁹⁴ Photography was therefore active in framing the war for prominent combatants whose actions were of significant consequence, and it was doing so while the conflict was still in process: at the time of viewing these images over dinner, for instance, Outram was engaging in clashes with the rebel stronghold of Lucknow from a fortified base outside of the city.

In other words, informal networks of image exchange could potentially affect British decisions that pertained directly to the counterinsurgency campaign. Following the British reoccupation of Delhi in September 1857, for instance, proposals had been made for the retributive razing of the ancient capital. Under the spectre of this full-scale demolition, numerous photographers sought to take views of the city.¹⁹⁵ One of these was Murray – recently returned from London – who recorded in his diary on 1 March 1858 that he spent ‘the evening with Mr Saunders...[and] Sir J[ohn]. Lawrence & showed them the Delhi [photographic] views which were much admired’; a few days later, Murray ‘called on [Charles] Moravia – Balson – Chamberlain Buckley – [Thomas] Metcalf...[and] had a great photographers talk.’ Such meetings offered a photographic prism through which to view the potential ruin of the city; as Murray noted, one man who viewed his photographs ‘does not approve of Delhi being destroyed – & won’t do it.’¹⁹⁶

These informal social occasions complemented the more structured realms of image circulation occurring in photographic societies. The work of Murray, Felice Beato,

¹⁹³ In Calcutta in August 1858, numerous photographers exhibited images related to the war. *The Englishman*, 27 August 1858.

¹⁹⁴ Patrick Gerald Fitzgerald, *Diary and Record of Service of Patrick Gerald Fitzgerald*, 26 February 1858. Mss Eur A140.

¹⁹⁵ See ‘The Combative Camera’ section in Chapter Two for an account of these Delhi photographers.

¹⁹⁶ Dr. John Murray, *The Diary of Dr. John Murray*, 1 March 1858, 5 March 1858. Murray’s diaries are unpublished and in a private collection. I have been working from a digitised copy which I acquired from the website that sold the diaries. There are also transcriptions of some of the diary entries in the unpublished manuscripts of John Fraser, *The Indian Mutiny in Pictures and Dr. John Murray of Agra*.

Charles Moravia, and Harriet and Robert Tytler was all passed around in some of the official monthly meetings of the Photographic Society of Bengal that continued in Calcutta throughout the Uprising. It was at one such meeting in February 1858 that a Mr Palmer showed some of the absent Ahmad Ali Khan's portraits and architectural scenes, with the Indian photographer's association with the rebels being invoked as context.¹⁹⁷ The city of Lucknow, where Khan had lived and worked, had become a key site of the war when British soldiers and civilians found themselves besieged inside the Residency complex there for 148 days, many dying from sniper fire, bombardments, hunger or disease – a battle that continued into March 1858 and was thus not resolved when some of Khan's images (precisely which ones we don't know) did the rounds among colonial photographic circles in Calcutta.

Khan's insurgent use of photography was seen as having a potentially decisive impact on the fighting in Lucknow. A few days after the above meeting of the photographic society, a journalist in Calcutta alleged that Khan had taken photographs of the Residency buildings and 'of the entrenchments and batteries erected for their defence'; and just as the reviews of Murray's exhibition in London had conceptualised architectural photography in terms of its martial utility, so too was it said to be Khan's photography which '*fully accounts* for the remarkable precision of the enemy's fire, and the partiality with which they singled out apartments into which to pour shot' during the insurgent assault on the besieged Lucknow Residency.¹⁹⁸ Such use of photographs relied on the kind of empirical analysis expounded by the critics of Murray's exhibition, as well as a sophisticated comprehension of the relationship between the photographic index and its architectural referent. This sophistication gives the lie to the fecklessness of the Indian mode of vision that was evoked by Ruskin and assumed by colonial art theory; indeed, it was precisely the kind of analytical vision that the British had believed needed to be taught to India via the promulgation of such British artistic practices.

¹⁹⁷ *The Bengal Hurkaru*, 23 February 1858.

¹⁹⁸ *Daily News*, 30 March 1858. Emphasis added. The same report was published in *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 3 April 1858, and the *Illustrated Times*, 15 May 1858.

The threat of Khan's photography was not limited to its implications for siege defence, however. It was also said that the photographer had 'turned his proficiency in the art to practical account, by taking the likenesses of Europeans, and then handing them over to the Nana Sahib' – the insurgent leader infamous, it will be recalled, for his alleged ordering of the slaughter of British men, women and children at Cawnpore.¹⁹⁹ Gone now are the old colonial certainties that Indians 'scarcely ever recognise' portraits of any kind, for the implication here is seemingly that Nana could use these images to better target the European populace of India for execution.²⁰⁰ Such Britons' fears about their portraits making them known to the enemy were the sting in the tail of their desire, expressed by Sir Arthur Buller, to acquire a photograph of Nana, one that 'multiplied and scattered in ten thousand copies, would familiarize every eye with those detested features, and hound him from his hiding place to inexorable doom.'²⁰¹ Photography was a medium through which both Indian 'treachery' and colonial 'justice' could be administered, as the domestic resonance of the bourgeois portrait format was recoded in terms of martial strategy.

Anxious reports like this evidence the fact that the British felt terrorised by the prospect of capable Indian eyes looking through the lens. Photography was a technology with a potentially promiscuous agency: neither exclusively 'British' nor even 'imperial,' it could be part of the aesthetic armoury of both insurgent and counterinsurgent elements in the Uprising, thereby upsetting the assumptions inherent within the 'endlessly repeated' colonial claim about India's 'pre-scientific theological mentality' and its symptomatic fear of technology.²⁰² Insurgent photography launched a challenge against imperial narratives concerning Britain's role as the vanguard of techno-civilisation in South Asia, with the British admission of India's photographic proficiency anticipating the aporia at the heart of present-day Anglo-American discourses about Al-Qaeda, which is cast as a medieval throwback operating in binary contrast to a progressive western modernity at the same time as it utilises cutting-edge weapon and internet technologies that actually disrupt the basis

¹⁹⁹ *The Englishman*, 19 February 1858.

²⁰⁰ Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission*, 89.

²⁰¹ *The Englishman*, 19 September 1858.

²⁰² Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 106

for making such a distinction between the temporalities of religious fundamentalism and secular capitalism.

This is not to say that the insurgents of 1857 were straightforward technophiles – their hostility towards the recently established telegraph cables in India has been well documented, with one rebel on route to his own execution decrying them as ‘the accursed string that strangles us!’ – but reports of insurgent photographers do lend an additional layer of complexity to the fraught techno-relationships that were being forged under colonialism.²⁰³ The consequence of the cross-cultural agency of early photography in India was a ‘war of images,’ to borrow a phrase from Serge Gruzinski.²⁰⁴ The potential dynamic of such a war was made manifest during the Uprising by the president of the Photographic Society of Bengal, who upon showing some of Khan’s photographs said he ‘hoped soon to exhibit a photograph in another capacity’ –presumably meaning one of Khan captured or killed, and thus consolidating his downfall by responding in kind to the specifically photographic nature of the threat which he supposedly posed to the British.²⁰⁵

The desire to use photography to record – and so reinforce – the defeat of insurgents was something that was acted upon by the British in Cawnpore. The colonial reoccupation of that cantonment saw a frenzy of vengeance unleashed upon those members of the local population who had allegedly been complicit with the recent massacre of British civilians. Amid this climate of retribution, some members of Nana Sahib’s army, as well as one of the butchers who was accused of hacking to death colonial women and children, were required to sit for their portraits with the amateur photographer and Cawnpore resident, Dr. John Nicholas Tresidder (whose work is considered at length in Chapter Three). While some of these insurgents sit slumped with a traumatised stare (1859; Figure 22), others appear fiercely confident in the face of their own capture (1859; Figure 23), seemingly refusing to be cowed by the photographic act that would in many cases have been a prelude to their execution. Here, the war of images plays out within the image-making event itself, as

²⁰³ Quoted in Pinney, ‘The Colonial Dromosphere,’ 117.

²⁰⁴ Serge Gruzinski, *Images at War: Mexico from Columbus to Blade Runner (1492-2019)* (Durham: London: Duke University Press, 2001). Pinney has also used this phrase, to refer to later, twentieth-century photography in India.

²⁰⁵ *The Bengal Hurkaru*, 23 February 1858. Emphasis added.

photographer and sitter battle for control over the meaning of the pose – be it defiance or defeat.

Considering the newly combative framework for photographic practice, it is perhaps unsurprising that moves were made by the British near the start of the Uprising to racially police the Photographic Society of Bengal in Calcutta. When the society had been instituted in 1856, some of its founding members were Indian. Many more became members within the year, and 348 Indians attended the opening week of the society's first exhibition in March, at which numerous Indian photographers were represented – all of which can be seen in the context of the 'colonial exhibitionary complex' that Rycroft has shown worked to secure imperial hegemony by incorporating Indians into the viewing practice of the British.²⁰⁶ Yet within months of the eruption of the Uprising, not a single Indian member remained.

The ostensible reason for this dissolution of multiculturalism was the 'anti-British' views of a founding Indian member of the Photographic Society of Bengal and prominent scholar of South Asian cultural history, Rajendralal Mitra (c.1823-1891).²⁰⁷ On 6 April 1857, the eve of the Uprising, Mitra had given a speech in which he condemned the rapacious practices of British indigo planters on the subcontinent.²⁰⁸ At the time these comments appear to have passed with little notice, but following the outbreak of widespread Anglo-Indian hostilities in May the speech began to stir discontent among many Britons.²⁰⁹ It was alleged that Mitra's speech was mendacious and indicative of his hostility to the British community as a whole,

²⁰⁶ *The Englishman*, 24 April 1857.

²⁰⁷ For an account of Mitra's career as a scholar in India, as well as his reincorporation into British colonial society, see Malavika Karlekar, *Re-Visioning the Past: Early Photography in Bengal, 1875-1915* (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 134-148.

²⁰⁸ For accounts of the politics of pigment production in India, see: Jordanna Bailkin, 'Indian Yellow: Making and Breaking the Imperial Palette', *Journal of Material Culture* 10: 2 (July 2005): 197-214; Natasha Eaton, 'Nomadism of Colour: Painting and Waste in the Chromo-Zones of Colonial India, c.1765-c.1860,' *Journal of Material Culture* 17: 1 (March 2012): 61-81; Michael Taussig, 'Redeeming Indigo', *Theory, Culture & Society* 25: 3 (May 2008): 1-15.

²⁰⁹ 'A Member,' 'To the Members of the Photographic Society of Bengal. [An address, signed: "A Member," opposing an intended resolution to expel the Rajendralal Mitra for speaking against the Indigo Planters at a public meeting.] (Calcutta, 1857).

and that such sentiments rendered him ‘unworthy of continuing to be a member’ of the society which he had helped to establish.²¹⁰ Mitra was asked to resign, which he refused to do, consequently giving the group – by now widely agitating for his removal – a problem, since the rules would not allow for the expulsion of a member.

There was talk of dissolving the society and instituting another one, *sans* Mitra, but many believed that ‘whether specially provided for in the rules or otherwise, every Society possesses an inherent right to expel any member...who might render himself obnoxious.’²¹¹ This sort of a move towards expulsion was absolutely unprecedented: as one man wrote in an impassioned letter to his fellow members, the Asiatic Society had existed ‘for seventy-three [years] without finding any necessity for the step which the Photographic Society is now asked to take.’²¹² Nevertheless, to the delight of many a motion for expulsion was carried on 19 August; the society ‘deserves no small amount of credit for turning him out,’ stated one letter to *The Bengal Hurkaru*.²¹³ In response, all other Indian members of the society – as well as some renegade Britons – resigned in protest. It was reported incredulously that an opposition photographic society had been formed including Mitra as Secretary, Mr James Bruce as President, and Major Thullier as Vice President: ‘We wish the new Society every success which it is not likely to get,’ wrote a disdainful local newspaper.²¹⁴ Indian members were not brought back into the original society until 1862. Surprisingly, the first to be readmitted was none other than the one-time insurgent photographer, Ahmad Ali Khan, who was now working under the alias ‘Chota Meah.’²¹⁵

Why was Indian membership anathema to the British in those militarised years following the Uprising? A possible motive was offered a few months following the expulsion of Mitra when it was stated that Khan had once been a ‘pupil’ of the society before he had passed his photographs to anti-colonial forces, a fact that hinted at the potentially damaging consequences of incorporating Indians into the photographic

²¹⁰ *The Englishman*, 17 July 1857.

²¹¹ *The Englishman*, 17 July 1857.

²¹² ‘A Member’, ‘To the Members of the Photographic Society of Bengal,’ 7.

²¹³ *The Bengal Hurkaru*, 23 August 1857.

²¹⁴ *The Bengal Hurkaru*, 15 December 1857.

²¹⁵ Gordon, ‘Monumental Visions,’ 138.

fold.²¹⁶ But the impulse to monopolise photography during the war can be seen as having a complex psychology that exceeded any rational assessment about the insurgent threat of the imagery. It is worth noting the terms in which Sir Arthur Buller had conceptualised the practice's efficacy in capturing Nana Sahib, for in the Chief Justice's rhetoric it was the pullulating photographic *image itself* rather than the people in possession of it that was to 'hound him [Nana] from his hiding place'; and while this was likely done for dramatic effect, it nevertheless chimed with Buller's assertion that the practice brought 'the aid of magic to help us in our business.'²¹⁷ Such associations recall Walter Benjamin's assertion that the invention of photography made 'the difference between technology and magic visible as a thoroughly historical variable',²¹⁸ and Pinney has recently written on the aura of enchantment surrounding the practice within nineteenth-century western thought.²¹⁹ With this in mind, the British desire to monopolise the medium can be seen as serving an almost apotropaic function.

These dangerous magical valences can be understood in more worldly ways. In an argument that attempts to retain a sense of the threatening origins of mimesis in sympathetic magic, Michael Taussig has rearticulated its occult menace in epistemological terms. He argues that if one takes seriously the heuristic value of mimesis – its capacity to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge about that which it represents – then one cannot respond to the Other's images of oneself via 'the defensive manoeuvre of the powerful in subjecting it to scrutiny as yet another primitive artefact, grist to the analytical machinery' of Enlightenment rationality, for that 'very mimicry corrodes the alterity by which my science is nourished...[and now] I too am part of the object of study.'²²⁰ In other words, photographs of British persons and places possessed a threat for the coloniser when they were circulating within *Indian* networks because this transformed the British into the object of Indian

²¹⁶ *The Englishman*, 19 February 1858.

²¹⁷ *The Englishman*, 19 September 1858.

²¹⁸ Walter Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', in Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: London, England: Harvard University Press, 2008), 27.

²¹⁹ Christopher Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), 63-64.

²²⁰ Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (Routledge: New York: London, 1993), 8.

analysis, consequently rendering precarious Britain's privileged imperial detachment. Such an erosion of imperial privilege is especially potent within insurgent photography, which in its very possibility launched a challenge against the ocular hierarchies of colonial aesthetic theory at the same time as it posed a potentially existential threat to the British themselves.

Violent crisis thus created the conditions in which the uses and meanings of photographic practice were rendered unstable. As British power was challenged, so too was the imperial agency of photography: the tumult of unrest rendered the colonial *habitus* temporarily insecure in its ability to 'subtly mould and constrain the possibilities of photography.'²²¹ Imperial anxieties over insurgent photography can be interpreted as either Britain becoming aware of the potential sting in the tail of an aesthetic 'civilising mission' that sought to imbue Indians with sophisticatedly analytical optical abilities, or of the redundant nature of that mission in the first place due to Indians already having such abilities. Either way, these issues point to the *menace* that Homi K. Bhabha has located in colonial mimicry, in which 'the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal.'²²²

Thus what was at stake during the wartime furore over Mitra at the Photographic Society of Bengal was not simply the notion of Indian membership, but the desirability of the imperial paternalism that had informed colonial aesthetic culture since at least the Great Exhibition of 1851. This was made clear in a letter to the Calcutta-based newspaper *The Englishman*, where one Briton identifying himself only on racial grounds as an 'ANGLO-SAXON MEMBER' of the society voiced a desire to ethnically cleanse all colonial aesthetic institutions of British India:

The native must be greatly elevated in the scale of humanity, before he can call upon us to incur the expense and trouble of teaching him either Photography, or any one of the fine arts... the majority [of members] are Europeans who prefer the society of their fellow countrymen to that of "Fat Baboos", and who, having neither promotion nor reward to expect from the

²²¹ Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 30.

²²² Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 129.

Government for their labours on behalf the Bengalees, dislike the idea of any portion of their funds being appropriated to such a work, and therefore had better consider before the monthly meeting, whether it would not be advisable to establish a Photographic Society consisting exclusively of Europeans members.²²³

The Uprising thus catalysed a desire in some Britons to inaugurate a new aesthetic apartheid, arrogating back to themselves the artistic practices that an imperial pedagogy had previously sought to spread. The effects of this were limited: imperial art schools remained active. But it shows that, for some at least, any idealistic internationalism associated with the arts crumbled under the pressure of a violent colonial crisis that mocked the Great Exhibition's rhetoric of peace.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced a widespread militarisation of aesthetics that saw diverse practices – photography, draughtsmanship, and exhibition viewing – which had once been feted for their civilising qualities, become feared for their combative agency within military engagements. This martial shift would ultimately have reverberations in the military court of the 1862 International Exhibition in London, in which out of all the countries on display Britain was ‘the only one which has attempted anything approaching a full and complete exhibition of its implements of war.’²²⁴ In times of crisis especially, then, aesthetic theory and practice were not rarefied pursuits operating at a distance from ‘real-world’ affairs – they were seen as key contributing factors in crafting the mode of agency that could participate meaningfully in such affairs. Theories of vision and representational practices were both appraised for their value at facilitating forms of military intervention, as the uncertainties of unrest created the demand not just for elucidating visual data, but also for action.

²²³ *The Englishman*, 9 July 1857. Emphasis added.

²²⁴ ‘The Jurors Report,’ quoted in Shaffner, *The Illustrated Record of the International Exhibition*, 53.

2

Martial Artists: Image Making in the Field, c. 1857-1919***Introduction***

In 1901, the Australian-born and London-trained artist Mortimer Menpes (1855-1938) cast a wry eye on a phenomenon that he believed was endemic to the late-Victorian engagement with warfare. He claimed that military campaigns were increasingly mediated affairs within which journalists had conspired to claim a privileged status for themselves: newspaper reporters and war artists ‘suited one another to perfection,’ for while ‘one described his companion in the midst of bursting shells, the other sketched him in that uncomfortable but gloriously conspicuous position.’²²⁵ Such was the reputed potency of these swashbuckling journalists within *fin-de-siècle* combat zones that by the time Menpes himself was employed as a ‘special artist’ for the illustrated magazine *Black and White* during the Second Boer War (1899-1902), he could speak acerbically of believing that military generals were entirely ‘unnecessary’ on the battlefield, since ‘as anyone knows who has studied the records of recent wars, *it is almost invariably a special correspondent who leads the troops to victory, or directs great operations, or comes to the rescue of Field-Marsals.*’²²⁶ Of course, the artist’s tongue is firmly in cheek here, but what if we take seriously the martial agency that he is describing? After all, the trope of the artist-in-the-field impacting on the processes of warfare was not uncommon, and in what follows I provide an account of the trend that does not dismiss it, *a la* Menpes, as emerging entirely from the career-enhancing conceit of text- and image-based journalists.

So, what sort of agency did attain to the acts of image making that were occurring with increasing frequency in moments of invasion and occupation during the

²²⁵ Mortimer Menpes (transcribed by Dorothy Menpes), *War Impressions: Being a Record in Colour by Mortimer Menpes* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1901), 140. As with many of Menpes’ books, the text is billed as being ‘by Dorothy Menpes,’ and scholars have thus usually cited her as the author. Yet the first-person voice deployed in the narrative is from Mortimer Menpes’ perspective, and an obituary of Mortimer claimed his daughter was his amanuensis (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April 1938). I will therefore be citing Mortimer as the author throughout.

²²⁶ Menpes, *War Impressions*, 138. Emphasis added.

Victorian period? As seen in the previous chapter, the martial agency of art was partly the consequence of certain images structuring vision in militarily useful ways. Yet while *looking* at pictures might have facilitated various forms of military action, the very act of *making* those images within violent crises – and, perhaps more importantly, *being seen making them* – already constituted an intervention into conflict. Such activities didn't only mediate warfare by creating retrospective visual narratives of events; they were also actively part of warfare, nodal points in which artistic and military imperatives were negotiated in ways that affected the tenor of the violence being documented. Of primary concern below, then, is how the image-making event itself was deployed in ways that overlapped with the strategies of colonial invasion and suppression – that is, how the processes of photographing- and sketching-in-the-field intersected with the exigencies of imperial power in times of crisis.

Two sets of tropes are put into play for this. The first consists of British artists, photographers, and soldiers shown in perilous moments that drew attention to the vulnerability of the body in conflict. Such vulnerability was loaded with positive valences as it was framed in terms of colonial derring-do, which used the fragility of life in the empire to make an argument for the dashing courage of the coloniser. One of my key aims is to lend some analytical complexity to these self-promoting tropes, which admittedly garnered much of their appeal from the simplicity of their take on violence. I suggest that as 'precarious life' was increasingly subject to visual consumption, so too was the deliberate engineering of violence for artists and photographers to become a tantalizing prospect.²²⁷ The chapter thus moves from a consideration of the imperilled *imperial* bodies that were the lifeblood of the derring-do topology towards a darker, related set of images depicting the subjection of the *colonised* body to physical and psychological peril. The camera in particular was deployed in disturbing ways: psychologically disturbing for the colonised as they were posed in a manner that highlighted the precarious status of their life under Britain's imperial regime; but also, in some cases, ethically disturbing for the coloniser as anxieties developed about documenting people *in extremis*.

²²⁷ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004).

The majority of artists and photographers looked at here are those that were operating in the warzones and counterinsurgency climates of South Asia in the latter half of the nineteenth century – most notably in India around the Uprising of 1857, Burma following the Anglo-Burmese wars of 1852 and 1885, and Afghanistan in the Second Anglo-Afghan War of 1878-1880. These territories were all within the geopolitical orbit of British India, but the artists and photographers who gravitated towards them in times of conflict were frequently working within a journalistic network that had a global reach. Their increasing presence in the combat zones of Asia should be understood in the context of the broader ascendancy of visual war reportage in the Victorian and Edwardian eras. A comprehensive account of such newspaper imagery – which has so far received highly limited consideration in scholarship, with the non-European context in particular having been neglected – is beyond the scope of this chapter.²²⁸ Yet while my focus is South Asia, my argument works towards a more general theory regarding the increasingly interdependent relationship that was forged between visual media and violence as the traumas of warfare were exploited for their currency as an aesthetic spectacle.

Menpes might have mocked the grandiose claims that artists made to martial exploits, but under the pressure of violent crisis the image-making event was capable of attaining a highly combative agency. Image production was frequently discussed with recourse to violent metaphors, while the very activity of working in the field was entangled with a history of colonial attempts to control foreign territory. The conspicuous occupation of contested landscapes by the apparatus of the artist or the photographer and the dynamic of the tableaux that were arranged for their benefit often served to instantiate – and even amplify – military aggression, as the authorial privilege to arrange a scene was harnessed to buttress the imperial privilege to dominate space. For sure, artists exaggerated their wartime agency, but they did so within a culture that was highly receptive to the idea that acts of image making could stage genuine interventions into conflict.

²²⁸ A good but Eurocentric account is given by Michele Martin, *Images at War: Illustrated Periodicals and Constructed Nations* (Toronto: Buffalo: London: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

Precarious Life (A Performance)

The artists and photographers who were operating during military crises consolidated an emerging media consciousness among British colonials and thereby worked to inform the nature of both their psychological and physical engagements with the violence of imperialism in the nineteenth century. Image makers often worked in ways that channelled the experience of war through pre-established narrative frames; this demanded certain actions of artists and photographers, but it also placed expectations on combatants in the ambit of the camera or the sketchbook, who were encouraged to act in accordance with tropes being promoted in the press. The presence of image-making technologies in the conflict zones of empire thus created a historically novel arena within which the assaults of warfare could be encountered.

In many ways, however, this was an arena that served to highlight the limitations and vulnerabilities of imperial bodies, for to make images in the field was to be exposed to numerous contingencies. The ‘protean technical base’ of photography imbued the early practice with a cumbersome materiality that relied on the ‘trudge’ and ‘the movement of feet’²²⁹ in order to organise ‘[photographic] apparatus, chemicals and human subjects in challenging climatic conditions and diminishing time.’²³⁰

Sketching, too, was the product of the ‘laboriousness’ of ‘physical labour,’ its processes of observation existing in ‘the tensions between the knowledge of the study and the threat of the field.’²³¹ To be ‘on the spot,’ as the illustrated press put it, was to be vulnerable to weather, to time, and to violence.

Not that one would necessarily know this from much of the consequent imagery. The aesthetic conventions that colonial artists and photographers worked with often elided the precariousness inherent to fieldwork, even as the attendant written accounts of such activity sought to emphasise the sense of peril. One amateur photographer working during the Indian Uprising was Assistant-Surgeon Patrick Gerald Fitzgerald,

²²⁹ Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 29.

²³⁰ Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 24.

²³¹ Luciana Martins and Felix Driver, ‘John Septimus Roe and the Art of Navigation, c.1815-30’, in Barringer, Quilley & Fordham (eds.), *Art and the British Empire*, 64-65. Also see Felix Driver and Luciana Martins, *Tropical Visions in the Age of Empire* (Chicago: London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

whose diary is a chronicle of so many fraught wartime experiences ('while I write another shot has taken out a piece of the house,' reads one entry).²³² Amid fighting for the control of Lucknow in February 1858, Fitzgerald took his camera to the top of the Alumbagh, a palatial enclosure that had been fortified by insurgents at the start of the war and subsequently captured by the British. His *View from the roof of Alumbagh* (1858; Figure 24) surveys a landscape devoid of human presence, a bleak emptiness upon which an 'X' marks the site of the grave of General Henry Havelock, who had recently died of dysentery following his prominent role in the brutal counter-insurgency campaign that was still working to quell the insurrection that had engulfed India since May 1857. Yet the desolation, death and danger of this scene are tempered by the triumphalism implicit in the 'monarch-of-all-I-survey' perspective, as the perilous occupation of a strategically valuable position is couched in terms of a soaring panopticism that was seemingly not prey to the limitations of the body.²³³

By approaching a site of imperial mourning from such a transcendent position, Fitzgerald's photograph of Havelock's grave and its vacant environs works to frame death as an object of cathartic contemplation rather than as an immediately personal threat. It lends itself well to the framework of belatedness and absence that has predominated in scholars' approaches to photographs from this period, in which the 'central technomaterial fact of all photography relating to the 1857 Uprising is that...[the] photographer only had the scene of an event that has long gone' and of a 'stage, long empty.'²³⁴ But this assumption that photography functioned as a mnemonic tool necessarily operating after-the-fact of war's violence is in tension with Fitzgerald's actual experience of his practice. As recorded in his diary, another photograph taken on the roof of the Alumbagh that same day was a group portrait of some soldiers who 'were very unsteady and consequently have not come out very distinctly.' Their unsteadiness was not unwarranted: insurgent cannon fire sailed over their heads at the time of taking the photograph.²³⁵

²³² Patrick Gerald Fitzgerald, *Diary and Record of Service*, 22 November 1857.

²³³ See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

²³⁴ Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 123.

²³⁵ Fitzgerald, *Diary and Record of Service*, 8 February 1858.

To look at Fitzgerald's portrait of these insouciant figures on a balcony (1858; Figure 25) – some standing, some sitting, but all resolutely languid – one would be hard-pressed to see the scene as something constituted by violent threat. The easy poses of the men operate in a similar manner to the disembodied viewpoint of Fitzgerald's other rooftop photograph in that they work to deny the conditions of vulnerability under which the image was produced. While not visually apparent, however, the perilous circumstances of production were clearly a significant aspect of the image-making process for Fitzgerald, who recorded the insurgent assault in both his diary and in the caption underneath the group portrait in his photo-album, both now held in the India Office of the British Library.²³⁶

So while the early camera's technomaterial limitations meant that it necessarily failed to register the shots that assailed photographers and their subjects during warfare (except perhaps indirectly, as a blurring of the figures that indicates reactive movement), the very act of taking a photograph – and being seen to take it – was providing a frame for the very violence that scholars have noted for escaping the actual frame of the image. Insurgent incursions on Fitzgerald's practice were not uncommon: on one occasion a rebel shot had killed a nearby officer's servant while the photographer was attempting to take a view of the gateway to the Alumbagh, and there are numerous references in his writings to conducting photography under fire during the Uprising. Many of Fitzgerald's attempts 'proved failures,' but in those that were successful the hazardous conditions were still not explicitly recorded. The significance of such war photography therefore resides as much – if not more – in the violently precarious conditions of its making as it does in the ostensibly pacific or triumphal representational content of the image, a fact that strains against the current emphasis of scholarship in this area on the material qualities of the photograph and the phenomenology of its reception by viewers.²³⁷

²³⁶ Patrick Gerald Fitzgerald, *Patrick Gerald Fitzgerald Collection: Album of Miscellaneous Views in India Including Mutiny Sites* (c.1857-1868). PDP/Photo 591. In this album Fitzgerald dates the rooftop photograph to January 1858, but his diary records it being taken in February.

²³⁷ See 'Photography and Empire' section in the Introduction of this thesis for an overview of the literature that has privileged the dissemination and consumption of photographs over the conditions of photographic production.

How should we see the vulnerability of those colonials who were involved in the processes of image making in the field? For some scholars, the fact that visual production was enmeshed in potentially dangerous interactions of the body with contingent spatiotemporal contexts lays down a challenge to the sense of imperial privilege contained in the ‘monarch-of-all-I-survey’ trope that was key to the aesthetics of empire.²³⁸ A focus on the embodied nature of vision has presented the imperial eye ‘not as transcendent, all-knowing, global, but instead as situated, partial, local.’²³⁹ Yet while such a ‘grammar of contingency’ might speak to a ‘loss of privilege,’ this loss was clearly not of all that much concern to those colonial artists whose public image was increasingly invested in an imperial discourse of derring-do, which worked to make a virtue of the body’s precariousness by articulating it in terms of bravery.²⁴⁰ A focus on the vulnerable processes of image making cannot be seen straightforwardly as a disruption of imperial privilege, then, for such vulnerability existed within a wider discourse that worked to channel moments of uncertainty and threat into narratives of imperial heroism. In other words, colonials were actively encouraged to find themselves in peril, situating the body in relation to violence so as to conform to a swashbuckling ideal.

Artists and photographers making images in warzones helped to bring the experiences of combatants into dialogue with these broader imperial narratives of derring-do. The precedent for audacious photographic acts such as those committed by Fitzgerald in India in 1858 had emerged a few years earlier during the Crimean War as newspapers ran reports about the photographer Roger Fenton and his assistant being wounded from shot and shell as they attempted to work under fire.²⁴¹ Indeed, the group of officers in Fitzgerald’s *On the roof, Alumbagh* recall the sort of group portraits commonly taken by Fenton during that earlier war, which frequently coded the conflict in terms of masculine camaraderie rather than violence (1855; Figure 26). Fitzgerald’s diary records the names of the men whose group portrait he took under fire as well as ‘a man of the 98th whose name I forget.’²⁴² This forgetting implies

²³⁸ See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.

²³⁹ Martins & Driver, ‘Art of Navigation,’ 65.

²⁴⁰ Jenny Dubow, ‘“From a View on the World to a Point of View In It”: Rethinking Sight, Space and the Colonial Subject’, *Interventions* 2: 1 (2000): 100.

²⁴¹ *Daily News*, 20 September 1855.

²⁴² Fitzgerald, *Diary and Record of Service*, 8 February 1858.

limited interaction with the soldier – a fleeting encounter defined by its position in regard to the photographic event, which offers a new framework in which to forge relationships and experience the triumphs and traumas of conflict.

At times, then, the image-making event served as a physical and psychological space that mediated between the uncertain here-and-now of the body's engagement with violent crisis and the comforting martial tropes that were emerging in contemporary journalism. The demands imposed by the press for certain types of stories exerted pressure on colonials to conduct themselves accordingly. When the war artist William Simpson was covering the Second Anglo-Afghan War for the *Illustrated London News* in 1878, for example, he claimed he had soldiers pose for him while under fire so that he could make a sketch for a scene depicting the 'First Shot' of the campaign. 'The Afghan War: Attack on the Ali Musjid – The First Shot (About 10am, Nov. 21)' (1878; Figure 27) was published on 28 December 1878 and shows de-individualised soldiers in the bleak vastness of a mountainous landscape on which is marked the positions of the Afghan army. The scene thus coordinated the imperilled pose of these soldiers with many of the keynotes of visual war reportage at this time, abstracting a fairly generalised set of tropes – a shadowy enemy, a forbidding terrain, an energetic body of British troops – from the precarious performances of particular men.

Simpson was one of a select few Victorian war artists that experienced success enough to make recognisable not only their imagery, but also their names – a rare enough thing in the context of a visual journalism that mostly dealt in anonymous illustrated reports.²⁴³ The precedent for such success was set during the heavily-depicted Crimean campaign (Simpson was referred to as 'Crimean Simpson' throughout his career due to his early stint in the Baltic) and over the course of the nineteenth century the scenes of war artists were increasingly to shape the British public's perception of conflict.²⁴⁴ But the point I want to make here is that for actual

²⁴³ The other most well-known war artists of the period were Melton Prior (1845-1910) and Frederic Villiers (1851-1922). See Melton Prior, *Campaigns of a War Correspondent* (London: Edward Arnold, 1912; Frederic Villiers, *Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure* (London: New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1920).

²⁴⁴ For an account of the imagery of the Crimean War, see Ulrich Keller, *The Ultimate Spectacle: A Visual History of the Crimean War* (Gordon and Breach Publishers: Amsterdam, 2001).

combatants the effect of this imagery could be bolstered by real-life encounters with the (famous) artists responsible for it. Visual journalism could consequently bleed into warfare in very real ways; Simpson's sketches for 'The Afghan War' scene saw the actual field of battle being overlaid with a tableau representing that very same field in a slightly earlier – and more newsworthy – state of combat (the 'First Shot'), something that blurs the distinction between authentic eye-witnessing and the realm of theatrical re-enactment. One is being folded into the other, as journalistically literate soldiers pose in the middle of conflict 'with the idea that they would appear as heroes in the illustrated [London News].'²⁴⁵

This sort of ruggedly exposed practice was key to the self-fashioning of war artists. When Simpson wrote of the above episode, he presented himself as an old hand at military campaigns who was in some ways more capable and experienced than the troops themselves. 'They were both looking a little scared,' claimed Simpson of the men that he had posing for him, 'and I asked if this was the first time they had been under fire, and they said yes.' The artist then boasts of reassuring the anxious novices by pointing out to them the 'very important' and 'consoling' fact that 'when bullets are knocking about, there is more space around a man than the space he occupies.'²⁴⁶ Such jocular insouciance clearly fits itself to the mould of derring-do, and in a letter by Simpson published alongside the newspaper illustration of the resulting scene the artist duly told of being 'out in the thick of it...so it is all very rough.'²⁴⁷ But Simpson's light-hearted paternalism in regards to the 'scared' soldiers also enacts a kind of usurpation in regards to military authority – precisely the usurpation that Menpes was so scathing about when he referred waspishly to the 'absolutely unnecessary' nature of military generals in conflict, such was the fierceness of reporters according to their own self-aggrandising reports.²⁴⁸

Still, the battle-hardened persona to which Simpson stakes a claim was not entirely without justification. His career, like other visual journalists, was more or less dependent on violent crises. By the time he was being condescending to soldiers in

²⁴⁵ William Simpson, 'Experiences', 6. The Mitchell Library, Glasgow, 12840a.

²⁴⁶ Simpson, 'Experiences', 6.

²⁴⁷ *Illustrated London News*, 28 December 1878.

²⁴⁸ Menpes, *War Impressions*, 138.

Afghanistan in 1878, he had been a correspondent in the Crimean War in 1855, arrived in India in the tumultuous aftermath of the Uprising in 1859, was attached to Britain's punitive expedition to Abyssinia in 1868, and had covered both the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) and the Paris Commune (1871). These journalistic ventures had made the artist popular enough for him to publish illustrated accounts of travels that were not undergone explicitly for war reportage, as well as enabling him to establish himself as an authority on Oriental architecture.²⁴⁹

Considering the far-reaching nature of Simpson's success in the Victorian period, he has so far received a highly limited consideration in scholarship – with the exception perhaps of his Crimean imagery.²⁵⁰ The literature that has emerged on the artist's engagements with myriad geopolitical crises has tended to limit itself to reproductions of his own diaries and sketches alongside some basic biographical information.²⁵¹ There has been little in the way of an analysis of the manner in which the very presence of artist-reporters like Simpson in such warzones was actually spawning new ways of conducting and experiencing conflict for those involved in it.

A story that Simpson told about his time in the Crimea shows how tangible could be the effects of artists on warfare. Simpson claimed to have commented to an army captain about the fact that he had seen no fighting that day; in response to this, the soldier offered to have his men fire a cannon at the Russians so that Simpson could 'have some experience' – but he also warned Simpson that the a return shot would be the consequence of this aggression. The artist assented to the offer, consequently

²⁴⁹ See William Simpson, *Meeting the Sun: A Journey All Around the World Through Egypt, China, Japan and California, Including an Account of the Marriage Ceremonies of the Emperor of China* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1874); and William Simpson, *Picturesque People: Being Groups from all Quarters of the Globe* (London: W. M. Thompson, 1876).

²⁵⁰ See Peter Harrington's articles: 'The First True War Artist,' *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* 9: 1 (Autumn 1996): 100-109; 'Simpson's Crimean Sketchbooks,' *The War Correspondent* 19: 1 (April 2001): 10-12; and 'The Defence of Kars: Paintings by William Simpson and Thomas Jones Barker,' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* LXIX: 277 (Spring 1991): 22–28.

²⁵¹ See Mildred Archer, *Visions of India: The Sketchbooks of William Simpson, 1859-1862* (Topsfield, Massachusetts: Salem House, 1986), and Richard Pankhurst (ed.) *Diary of a Journey to Abyssinia, 1868, with the Expedition Under Sir Robert Napier KCSI: The Diary and Observations of William Simpson of the Illustrated London News* (Hollywood, CA: Tsehai, 2002).

watching as the British fired at the enemy position only to have a Russian gun promptly ‘return the compliment’ with a shell ‘that struck the outside of the parapet, then burst, throwing up in the air a great quantity of earth and stones, which came down in a shower upon us.’²⁵² Since some of this debris landed on Simpson’s conveniently open sketchbook, the artist ‘left some of the earth in the right-hand corner, and worked it into the light and shade of a shell.’²⁵³ This transubstantiation of the dust from a shell into a depiction of a shell is likely too much of a good story to be true, but the initial manufacturing of military conflict for the entertainment of an artist is a good demonstration of the combative agency to which artists could sometimes lay claim and use to construct narratives about their image-making process.

Soldiers who aided the production of a suitable *mise-en-scène* for artists such as Simpson were effectively being interpellated by a journalistic discourse that presented itself to them not merely as text- and image-based newspaper reports to be consumed, but as something to engage with and perform for in the midst of battle itself. This is symptomatic of the broader adjustment of modern consciousness to new technologies of visual production and their impact on the perception of violent events, which started to be interpreted as newsworthy spectacles. When one British troop witnessed a Gurkha soldier chop off the head of an Indian insurgent in the 1857 Uprising, for example, he wrote that ‘Atkinson should make a sketch of this for the Illustrated London News.’²⁵⁴ George Franklin Atkinson was a regular correspondent for that newspaper, which on 10 October 1857 duly published an image by the artist – who presumably had been told of the event by this witness – depicting a Gurkha, knife in hand, grabbing hold of an insurgent’s head (1857; Figure 28). Beneath the illustration was an article in which the decapitation scene was explained.²⁵⁵ The proliferation of artists and photographers in warzones was therefore creating new frames of reference for the violence witnessed by combatants; but more than this, it was potentially shaping their very actions in accordance with the demands of visual journalism for certain types of subject matter.

²⁵² William Simpson (ed. George Eyre-Todd), *The Autobiography of William Simpson, R.I. (Crimean Simpson)* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1903).

²⁵³ William Simpson, ‘In the Trenches Before Sebastopol’, 232.

²⁵⁴ Quoted in Christopher Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny: India, 1857* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 295.

²⁵⁵ *Illustrated London News*, 10 October 1857.

Authorial Privilege / Imperial Violence

The above episodes constitute subtle examples of a phenomenon that will crop up throughout this chapter: the overlaps of, and at times tensions between, artistic and military modes of authority in times of violent crisis. Menpes ridiculed the extent of authority which the army attributed to artists by telling of a general in the Boer War who ‘would often come up to me (such was the faith placed in correspondents) and ask me, who have [sic] no habits of war and never did have a lucid moment at all in relation to military matters, if I could enlighten him concerning a certain situation’:

“Yes,” I would answer without a moment’s hesitation: I can”; and, beckoning him to be seated, would begin, with great dignity and importance, to draw my map. With a pathetic struggle to look intelligent, the General would follow the sweep and curves of my everlasting river, frowning over the darts and arrows, and would finally end up by saying, “Yes: pretty serious!” and go away to think it out. There was no end to the capacity and adaptability of this map of mine. I always used it when in difficulties as to localities. Intelligence officers, artillery officers, local men – all were impressed by it.²⁵⁶

Visual production was thus seen as a privileged source of military knowledge. Yet it was not merely an epistemological authority (albeit an ill-founded one, if Menpes is to be believed) that attached itself to artists and photographers. Also willingly ceded by combatants was a certain amount of authority to occupy sites and orchestrate scenes within zones of conflict – the ability to command a pose, for instance, or even the shooting of a cannon.

So how should we think about these sorts of artistic interventions in military terrain? On the one hand, as I have indicated, the obliging nature of the military in regards to artists was because combatants were increasingly attempting to situate themselves within the journalistic narratives that those artists helped to produce. But such cooperation would equally have been extended to text-based war reporters, and so in

²⁵⁶ Menpes, *War Impressions*, 142.

this section I want to think about the specificity of the agency that attained to the visual arts in such circumstances. The constituent materiality of image-making practices was fundamentally different to that of text-based journalism, with the necessary apparatus interpolating the landscape in much more conspicuous ways, visibly altering the composition of contested terrain with the sight of cameras and tripods, sketchbooks and easels, people and props.

The authority of the artist or photographer over the zones of image production that opened up within colonial crises was grounded in a long theoretical and practical history of western art that was centred on the studio environment – that is, a space in which persons and objects were coordinated for the aesthetic benefit of an artist. The basic theoretical model of the studio that I am wanting to evoke here is that laid out by Michelle Grabner in her introduction to a collection of essays on the subject, in which she states that the archetype of the studio from seventeenth-century Europe to mid-twentieth century America and beyond is that of ‘a “room of privilege,” a domain of male authorship.’²⁵⁷ Grabner suggests that even many of those postmodern cultural forums that rejected autonomous creative solitude in fact left intact the long-standing notion of a creative master operating within a privileged site of production. Victorian image makers were thus reared within a well-established and tenacious tradition of affording artists authority over the arrangement of people and objects in certain spaces – a control that was crucial to their practice insofar as the aesthetic ideals of the time tended to be guided by naturalism and therefore the ability to draw accurately (according to the prevailing artistic conventions that policed ‘accuracy’) from life.

It was due to this pervasive cultural desire for accuracy that the authorial privilege sometimes afforded to the artist in their studio was first able to disengage itself from the traditional confines of that space and become imbricated with the territorial sovereignty of imperialism. As demand increased for representations of foreign territories, image makers were required to operate in the field. William Hodges (1744-1797), for example, is renowned for his pioneering practice of painting *en plein air* (in the open air) while joining Captain Cook on his famous voyages to the South

²⁵⁷ Michelle Grabner, ‘Introduction’, in Mary Jane Jacob & Michelle Grabner (eds.), *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists* (Chicago: London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 2.

Pacific islands in the late eighteenth century – voyages that took place on an official level for the purpose of scientific endeavour but nevertheless saw many territories being casually claimed for the British Crown along the way.

Actually, as Bernard Smith has written, most of Hodges' paintings were produced in the security of Cook's cabin on board the ship, which looked out onto the harbour and thus enabled consistent ocular engagement with the subjects being painted (which, in the case of Hodges, often amounted to coastline views) while also providing the convenience and the safety of a more or less traditional 'indoor' working space. Smith points out that the security aspect was of particular importance because at ports en route to the Pacific, such as Madeira and Cape Town (a Dutch colony until it was ceded to the British in the early nineteenth century), the authorities 'forbad the depiction of harbours, their fortifications and environs,' meaning that the paintings produced of such areas from Cook's cabin constituted clandestine acts of reconnaissance that were entangled in the geo-strategic knowledge-gathering practices of imperial powers.²⁵⁸

In fact, the very notion of working *en plein air* was to a certain extent developed in accordance with the needs of British imperialism. While the painting process of Hodges was actually an indoor affair, by 1801 the Board of Admiralty were issuing instructions to Captain Matthew Flinders regarding his expedition to Australia stating that the resident artists be given 'time to finish as many of their works as they possibly can *on the spot where they may have been begun.*'²⁵⁹ Such instructions effectively throw the weight of the navy behind image makers operating in the colonial field; as Michael Charlesworth has noted, what we have here is a 'truly extraordinary' occurrence in which 'the Lords of the Admiralty, of all people, should, during the last third of the eighteenth century, be making demands on professional

²⁵⁸ Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (Hong Kong: Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, 1992), 111. Even once he was in the Pacific, William Hodges was confined to the ship for painting because of his vulnerability to the islanders: 'the natives had little respect for private property,' Bernard Smith has written, making Captain Cook's cabin 'about the only place where one's equipment might be reasonably safe.' Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*, 111.

²⁵⁹ Quoted in Michael Charlesworth, 'The Picturesque, William Hodges, Photography, and Some Problems in Recent Interpretations of Images of India,' *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 23: 3 (2007): 379. Emphasis added.

artists...that anticipate revolutionary nineteenth-century painting practices by the French Impressionists.²⁶⁰ Historically, then, art-in-the-field was intimately tied to a logic of imperial instrumentality: namely, the demand for accurate delineations of distant territories being prospected for colonisation.

Given this historic entanglement of artistic and imperial agencies, it is perhaps unsurprising that we find instances of artists presenting their practice as a signifier of invasion. When Simpson was indulging his passion for architectural history in Afghanistan during the war in 1879, he sent back a sketch which was printed in the *Illustrated London News* on 19 April showing his endeavours from the perspective of an Afghan soldier defending the mountains that the artist and his entourage were climbing to explore. ‘Dangers of Archaeology at the Pheel Khana Tope’ (1879; Figure 29) depicts an incident in which Simpson ‘heard the crack of a gun, and the whistle of a bullet went past very close... At last an Afghan with a gun... was seen running round the corner.’²⁶¹ In adopting the perspective of the Afghan fighter, the image shows Simpson’s exploits as an emblem of foreign aggression to the local populace. Indeed, the Afghan’s hostility is no surprise given the likely nature of the escort with which Simpson was travelling. The artist boasted of his habit at the start of the war of going out and sketching alone in what the army thought to be ‘a reckless manner,’ but an order was soon issued ‘that a guard was to be given me when I left the camp to sketch.’²⁶² The ability for an artist to operate safely in the field was

²⁶⁰ Charlesworth, 379. More than this, the plein air ideals that informed Impressionism were given their theoretical texture by Charles Baudelaire’s essay ‘The Painter of Modern Life,’ in which he enthused about the sketches being taken ‘on the spot’ by Constantin Guy while the artist was working as a war correspondent for the *Illustrated London News* during the Crimean campaign. See Charles Baudelaire (trans. P. E. Charvet), *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (London: Penguin, 2010)

²⁶¹ William Simpson, *Notes and Recollections of My Life to My Dear Daughter Ann Penelope Simpson* (a partial transcription by Paul Bucherer-Dietschi of the Foundation Bibliotheca Afganica). Acc. 11877 (ii), National Library Scotland (not paginated). This is a different manuscript to the one cited earlier under a very similar, but shorter, title by the same author (Simpson, *Notes and Recollections of My Life*.) Both manuscripts can be found in the National Library of Scotland, but one is paginated and one is not. Thus, in future footnotes, the particular manuscript can be identified by the presence or absence of pagination.

²⁶² Simpson, *Notes and Recollections* (not paginated).

therefore to a certain extent contingent upon being embedded in the army, enfolding the *en plein air* methodology within military occupation.

Such a militarisation of art-in-the-field is something that finds echoes in the language used to describe the practice. It is well known that the camera was frequently equated with the gun (and I will have more to say on this later), but less well documented is how drawing was sometimes framed in comparably weaponised terms. In an early-Victorian German travel account of India (translated into English for the British market), the author and amateur draughtsman, Dr. Werner Hoffmeister, offered a particularly explicit manifestation of this when he inserted a chapter subheading entitled ‘Sketch-book – Weapon of Defence,’ wherein he boasted of the fact that when the ‘importunity’ of the natives ‘exceeded all bounds, I assumed an attitude as if about to draw their portraits; instantly they fled, neck and heels, as if driven away by some evil spirit.’²⁶³ Meanwhile, Simpson – ever the promoter of himself as the epitome of courage and pluck – claimed to have been the first over the barricades in the Paris Commune, ‘heavily armed with a sketch-book, a pencil, and a penknife.’²⁶⁴ The construction of such a privileged artistic agency may have relied on embellishments, exaggerations, or even outright fabrications, but it still rendered the vulnerability of fieldwork congruent with a cultural desire for (imperial) mastery.

The weaponised language used to describe sketching-in-the-field is often deployed humorously (so too are many of the camera / gun analogies), but I would suggest that it is nevertheless grounded in the sincere faith which the previous chapter showed was placed in the martial utility of certain visual practices. The sketchbook was touted as a ‘most dangerous article to be found in your possession’ during warfare due to the ‘spy fever’ that could prevail; indeed, both of the major special artists employed by the *Illustrated London News* were actually arrested as spies: Simpson in France during the Franco-Prussian War, and fellow correspondent Melton Prior in the Herzegovina Uprising (1875-78).²⁶⁵ These sorts of events were fundamental to the fashioning of journalistic derring-do, and they were consequently popularised in both

²⁶³ Dr. Werner Hoffmeister, *Travels in Ceylon and Continental India; Including Nepal and Other Parts of the Himalayas, to the Borders of Thibet* (Edinburgh: William P. Kennedy, 1848), 451.

²⁶⁴ Simpson, *Autobiography*, 261.

²⁶⁵ Simpson, *Autobiography*, 241.

text and image.²⁶⁶ Simpson in particular appears rather desperate to present himself as dashing, daring, and dangerous; in his autobiography he goes so far as to draw the reader's attention to an old quote by a journalist commenting on how the artist apparently 'sketches as coolly under fire as in his own room.'²⁶⁷

Since image-making practices were coded in terms of masculine aggression, their visibility within violent crises was considered a highly fraught affair. In Mason Jackson's 1885 history of the 'pictorial press,' the author gave a summary of the subterfuge that was apparently necessary in order for correspondents to operate:

Besides being frequently arrested as spies, and undergoing the privations of beleaguered places, they had also to run the risk of shot and shell, and sometimes they were obliged to destroy their sketching materials under fear of arrest. The danger of being seen sketching or found with sketches, in their possession was so great, that on one occasion a special artist actually swallowed his sketch to avoid being taken up as a spy. Another purchased the largest book of cigarette papers he could obtain, and on them he made little sketches, prepared in case of danger to smoke them in the faces of his enemies.²⁶⁸

Reports like this show that special artists existed within a culture that confirmed their own self-promoting tales and so worked to consolidate the manly ideal of the artist-in-the-field as a rugged individual who, for the enemy at least, was seen as a potentially threatening presence.

²⁶⁶ Both men sent sketches of their arrest to the *Illustrated London News*. See Melton Prior, 'Arrest of Our Special Artist at Ragusa,' *Illustrated London News*, 25 December 1875, and William Simpson, 'The War: Arrest of English Correspondent at Metz', *Illustrated London News*, 20 August 1870.

²⁶⁷ Simpson, *Autobiography*, 261.

²⁶⁸ Mason Jackson, *The Pictorial Press: Its Origin and Progress* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1885), 332. It would appear that William Simpson had read – or perhaps was the original source for – this tale of an artist smoking a cigarette paper with secret sketches on it so as to avoid detection as a spy. In his 1901 autobiography, the artist claimed that 'At Forbach [in 1870] the idea occurred to me of sketching on a book of cigarette papers. One could do a good deal on a book of that kind, and in the event of being apprehended, could make a cigarette of the sketch and smoke it before the eyes of one's accusers.' Simpson, *Autobiography*, 242.

While the historian Jackson's tale of an artist smoking cigarette papers with drawings on them in order to evade detection as a spy has the whiff of fiction about it, the basic notion of miniaturisation is sound. The sketchbooks used by war artists rarely tended to be larger than one's hand, and when viewing them in the archive the sense in which this was an image-making technology designed for mobility and covertness becomes tangible. So too does their palm-sized smallness index the body in a way that speaks to a sense of genuine peril – a vulnerability that is not simply a foil for narratives of imperial heroism, but a primal exposure to violence. The imagery from Simpson's small Crimean sketchbooks seems much more characterised by a threat that has not yet been fitted to the model of derring-do which he cultivates so fastidiously in his writings: graves figure prominently, as do dead bodies that are traced by tremulous pencil lines that themselves seem to dramatise an anxiety about life's precariousness (1855; Figure 30). These fragile lines cannot carry the masculine hubris that rendered palatable the vulnerability inherent to fieldwork. On these Lilliputian pages, sketching-in-the-field appears not as swashbuckling aggression, but as delicate and mournful documentation.

Given this manifestation of wartime vulnerability in the furtive *smallness* of the image-making apparatus, what should we make of a scene like *Panoramic view of Pagan, looking S. W. by S.* (1855; Figure 31), in which a large sketchbook and a fold-out sketching chair conjure the prolonged presence of a colonial artist on a vantage point overlooking a landscape which at that time lay just beyond the far-eastern limits of imperial territory in the region? This is one of 106 watercolours that Colesworthy Grant produced when he was commissioned to accompany the embassy sent by the East India Company to Burma in 1855 in order to formalise the new territorial boundaries that had been emerged following the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852).²⁶⁹ That controversial conflict – effectively started by the 'Combustible Commodore' George Robert Lambert when his pride was hurt during negotiations with the authorities in Rangoon over the fining of British merchants – had led to the

²⁶⁹ These are now mounted one-to-a-page in a large leather-bound album housed in the India Office Collection of the British Library. PDP/WD540.

annexation of Lower Burma by the British.²⁷⁰ Yet the sovereignty of Upper Burma (where this view was drawn) was still held in the balance; even as the embassy was making its way to see the Burmese king, the Company was being accused of ‘a great political blunder’ for not having simply annexed Burma in its entirety.²⁷¹

Grant’s tranquil-seeming scene of scattered temples and winding pathways extending along the bank of the Irrawaddy river in the still-independent city of Pagan (Bagan) is actually an image of what was, from the British perspective at least, a landscape in crisis. The war had given way to a state of guerrilla conflict: pillars demarcating the new boundary lines had been pulled down by the Burmese (‘a declaration of war,’ according to one colonial newspaper),²⁷² villages within newly British territories were being terrorised by repeated raids from across the border,²⁷³ and a British captain had been killed while installing telegraph cables in the region.²⁷⁴ At the level of explicit representational content *Panoramic view of Pagan* admits none of this unrest; indeed, its portrayal of ruins and unkempt shrubbery strewn in irregular fashion across a landscape which is glimpsed from behind an incubating foreground situates the image within the aesthetic terrain of ‘the picturesque,’ which had an investment in visual

²⁷⁰ The circumstances of the Second Anglo-Burmese War sparked an outcry among some in Britain. In January 1852 Commodore Lambert had been sent to extract £1,000 in compensation from the Burmese for the allegedly unjust fining of British merchants by the authorities in Rangoon. After rudely turning up in the Burmese governor’s courtyard unannounced and without conforming to basic Burmese etiquette by removing his shoes, Lambert was told that the governor was asleep. Taking this as a slight, Lambert commandeered a Burmese ship, fired on Rangoon’s port, and imposed a blockade. Governor-General Dalhousie (while censuring Lambert in private) publicly upped the demand for compensation from the Burmese to £100,000, which, when refused, triggered the declaration of war in April. See MP Richard Cobden’s searing contemporary polemic on the issue, *How Wars Are Got Up in India: The Origin of the Burmese War* (London: William & Frederick G. Cash, 1853), and the disdainful response from John Clark Marshman, *How Wars Arise in India: Observations on Mr. Cobden’s Pamphlet* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1853). For a modern account of the scandal, see Oliver B. Pollak, ‘A Mid-Victorian Cover up: The Case of the “Combustible Commodore” and the Second Anglo-Burmese War, 1851-52’, *Albion* 10: 2 (Summer 1978): 171-183.

²⁷¹ *The Englishman*, 13 July 1855.

²⁷² *The Englishman*, 13 July 1855.

²⁷³ Minute by the Honourable J. P. Grant, dated 28 April 1855, No. 38, 3 July 1855. IOR/L/PS/5/224.

²⁷⁴ ‘Major A. P. Phayre to Cecil Beadon, 30 April 1855.’ IOR/L/PS/5/224.

delight that suppressed elements of political tension.²⁷⁵ Yet while such formal properties mostly elide conflict, the stress placed on the materials of the colonial artist can be read as a combative motif.

The implications of Grant's emphasis on his presence become clear when it is viewed in light of the artist's previous trip to Burma in 1846. At that time, a peace had existed between the British and the Burmese for over 20 years. Grant was an independent traveller and not embedded, as he was in 1855, within a post-conflict East India Company embassy that was accompanied by an escort of 440 soldiers. With the complexion of Anglo-Burmese relations as it stood in the 1840s, Grant had found himself severely limited in what he could draw.²⁷⁶ Significantly, the artist was arrested as a British spy, with the Burmese authorities detained him while speaking 'the ominous words "stranger" – "foreign country" – "war between the nations" – "examining – making writings of Forts."'”²⁷⁷ Grant's image-making capacities were therefore severely curtailed by a Burmese state that among other things manifested its sovereignty by way of restrictions on foreign artists whose practices were viewed in terms of their potential military use.

All of which is to say that Grant would have been well aware of the anxieties that the conspicuous production of images on Burmese terrain could cause in the local authorities when he came to enjoy his newly unimpeded access to the landscape in 1855. *Panoramic view of Pagan, looking S. W. by S.* is just one instalment of a six-part panorama that the artist produced from atop the upper terrace of the Gawdawpalin Temple in Pagan. That his motives for this heightened view of prospective colonial land was a military one is hinted at by the fact that earlier on during the trip Grant had produced *Rangoon - from the platform of the Great Pagoda*

²⁷⁵ Gary D. Sampson, 'Unmasking the Colonial Picturesque: Samuel Bourne's Photographs of Barrackpore Park,' in Hight & Sampson (eds.), *Colonialist Photography*, 84.

²⁷⁶ 'I can hardly say from what cause, unless, as I believe, the pride, intolerance and avarice of the...Burmese,' wrote Grant in his illustrated account of the trip, '[but] I have consequently been disappointed in my desire of obtaining a likeness of [the Burmese governor of Rangoon]; nor have I found the Pongees or priests, of whose personals I also desired to secure drawings, a whit more come-at-able.' Grant, *Rough Pencillings*, 31.

²⁷⁷ Grant, *Rough Pencillings*, 43-44.

(1855) and *Prome, from the Southern heights* (1855), both of which were taken from vantage points that had been used for strategic purposes during previous Anglo-Burmese wars – a fact that the artist noted in his written account of the expedition, *Notes Explanatory of a Series of Views taken in Burmah during Major Phayre's Mission to the Court of Ava in 1855* (1856).²⁷⁸

Grant's panoramas have a distinctly cartographical feel to them which could certainly address the knowledge-gathering concerns of a colonial power weighing up the pros and cons of a full-scale invasion of Burma in the event of the embassy yielding unsatisfactory results. What interests me here, though, is the extent to which the actual act of producing that imagery functioned as an intimidating spectacle of military surveillance to a Burmese populace engaging in episodes of anti-colonial struggle. Grant's inclusion of his sketching apparatus draws attention to a prolonged, sedentary and visible process. Such an unhindered practice functions to highlight the post-war limitations on the sovereignty of an independent Burma that would once have been capable of putting a stop to Grant's operations, or at least of forcing him to work in the furtive manner of those war artists for whom mobility and covertness were key.

Quite apart from any militarily useful images produced, then, the image-making event itself could work to augment the projection of imperial power. While not quite the morbid humming of the Predator Drones that circle the territories that today's global powers consider insurgent, Grant's aerial view partakes in a similar logic, in which a conspicuous imperial eye signifies the erosion of the surveyed population's safety and sovereignty. At the margins of British India, where the European presence (never mind its specifically artistic manifestations) had not yet been normalised for the local population, the presence of artists like Grant would likely be viewed in terms of the havoc-wreaking expansionist policies of a broader imperial-military complex.

²⁷⁸ This was never published commercially, but a copy has been held alongside the album of images in the East India Company records since 1856. Considering the numerous illustrated books that Grant had published in the past, it seems likely that he had hoped to one day work this up for publication. See PDP/WD540.

Nowhere is such an interlacing of image making and imperial expansionism stated more explicitly than in the front-page illustration which was published by *The Graphic* on 12 July 1879 to mark the resolution of the Second Anglo-Afghan War – another borderland conflict of the Raj (1879; Figure 32). The special artist Frederic Villier's scene showed not the might of Britain's imperial armies, but the new Amir of Afghanistan, Mohammad Yaqub Khan, posing for a colonial photographer, John Burke (1843-1900).²⁷⁹ When the previous Amir, Sher Ali, died in 1879 shortly after his country had been invaded by the British because of its diplomatic ties with Russia, his successor to the throne signed the Treaty of Gandamak, which ceded control of foreign policy to the British. This geopolitical coup is staged by Villiers as the ability of Burke to produce images on subjugated landscapes, as the new puppet-ruler status that Khan had agreed to with the treaty is dramatised in terms of his malleability in the hands of an authoritative British photographer, who stands in a commanding position over the seated sovereign. The actual photographs by Burke, in which Khan is shown with British and Afghan companions, are ignored. It is the *performance* of taking a photograph that is invoked to mark a significant shift in the dynamic of sovereignty in Asia, as the authorial privilege to construct a suitable scene dovetails with the imperial privilege to construct a quiescent state.

Alternative readings of this scene are possible. After all, authority here is not the preserve of a privileged photographer – it is highly diffuse. Burke's authorial privilege channels Britain's (partial) imperial sovereignty over a ruler of Afghanistan who is simultaneously subjugated as a satrap and celebrated as a sovereign by being the focus of this act of photography. The complex dynamic of the scene could be said to conform to the model put forward in Ariella Azoulay's influential recent book, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (2008), which states that 'photography's form of political relations are not organized around a sovereign power,' since 'the photograph escapes the authority of anyone who might claim to be its author, refuting anyone's claim to sovereignty.'²⁸⁰ What Azoulay means here is that neither the photographer, the subject, nor the state are completely in control of the content or significance of the photograph, which no single agent or entity can ever determine. This model has

²⁷⁹ See Omar Khan, *From Kashmir to Kabul: The Photographs of Burke and Baker, 1860-1900* (Munich: London: Prestel, 2002).

²⁸⁰ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 112.

enabled Azoulay to argue for the emancipatory potential of photography, which refuses to operate fully in the control of power and always opens up a possibility of resistance. It has a particular attraction when approaching acts of colonial photography, since it disrupts the masculinist authorial and imperial privilege that lays claim to mastery over *mise-en-scène* and meaning.

Still, I would like to hold onto a reading of Villier's scene that retains a sense of imperial control working more or less effectively through the photographic act. The dispersed power represented by the relationships that constituted this image-making event merely demonstrates the real-life operations of imperial sovereignty, which was never total in its power. Within Azoulay's model, the presence of Burke's authorial sovereignty would problematise the imperial sovereignty of Britain and Afghanistan in such a way as to deny any operative sovereignty within the scene: she essentially views sovereignty as a zero-sum game. But this was not how the British saw the imperial structuring of power: 'Sovereignty has always been regarded as divisible,' wrote the legal scholar Sir Henry Maine in 1862, 'there is not, nor has there ever been, anything in international law to prevent some of those rights [of sovereignty] being lodged with one possessor and some with another.'²⁸¹ Imperial power was not necessarily ineffectual for being partial, then; indeed, the splintering of power was in many ways essential to the composition of empire.

Villiers' inclusion of the photographer in the frame does not to dissolve or diminish British claims to sovereignty, then, but takes the vagaries of holding partial power by proxy in an immense and alien landscape and crystallises them into familiar art historical tropes of authorial privilege. A makeshift studio is constructed amid the vastnesses of Afghanistan, and imperial sovereignty is collapsed into the control of an artist over these 'studiofied' surroundings – an immediately legible motif that operated as a sort of journalistic shorthand for the complex geopolitical developments advertised by the front-page newspaper spread.

The mechanics of visual production under the pressure of violent crisis – be it with a camera or in sketchbooks large and small – thus frequently emerged in the colonial

²⁸¹ Quoted in Barbara Ramusack, *The New Cambridge History of India: The Indian Princes and their States*, III, 6, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 94.

landscape as a cipher for military power. As Villier's sketch of Burke's act of photography intuits, the actual pictures that resulted from image-making encounters were not necessarily the most important things about them. The image-making event itself could serve as a nodal point among the wider processes of imperial domination, a site at which artistic, military, and imperial modes of authority were entangled. A pertinent art historical lineage for the authorial privilege that was harnessed to buttress imperial privilege in such sites is what Svetlana Alpers has identified as the 'theatricalized' nature of Rembrandt's studio, wherein models figured as actors under the painter's direction.²⁸² This culturally conferred authority to command a pose – to create a theatrics of empire that was aesthetically compelling – meant image makers had a particularly powerful hold on the nature of the body's engagement with violent crisis.

The Combative Camera

So far, the image-making event has been dealt with in two respects: firstly, its status as a theatrical arena in which colonials could render their experience of warfare contiguous with established aesthetic tropes and media narratives; and, secondly, as a signifier of imperial power and aggression to invaded peoples. These strands were interwoven in the experiences of those *colonised* men and women who were not only confronted with the intimidating sight of colonial image making on their land, but also incorporated as sitters into theatrical (and threatening) tableaux.

It is worth reiterating here a point made in the introduction to this thesis: that for many of the people over which the British exercised varying degrees of imperial control in the nineteenth century, European visual culture would have been encountered – if it was encountered at all – not as a series of images to be viewed, but in rare moments of exposure to artists and photographers working in the field.²⁸³ Such exposure was often the consequence of intense regional crisis – unrest, famine, warfare – and so the presence of colonial artists and photographers may well have

²⁸² Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise: The Studio and the Market* (Chicago: London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 75.

²⁸³ See page 36.

been viewed by locals as malignly intertwined with such crises as opposed to merely representing them. Certainly the mechanics of colonial image making sometimes worked in gruesome coordination with the atrocities of imperialism.

Summing up this interrelation of image making and imperial atrocity is a French caricature of the British response to one of the numerous horrifying famines that left tens of millions dead in India in the late nineteenth century.²⁸⁴ ‘La Famine aux Indes’ (1899; Figure 33) dramatises the indifference of the British to the plight of the starving in terms of a beefy colonial officer overseeing an Englishwoman taking a photograph of famine victims. Some stand aghast at this careless act of image making; others cover their faces to avoid being photographed.²⁸⁵ The distressed Indian reaction to being made to pose means that in spite of the woman’s expression of something like pity, any humanitarian impulse for this image-making event is cast as irrelevant (this is after all a French satire, but not necessary unperceptive in its insights because of that). The distancing effect of reducing famished people to photographic props is shown to be inextricable from the systemic aloofness of an imperial apparatus that was heavily implicated in the spread of hunger, with colonials speculating on hordes of grain as Indians were forced to march many miles to brutal labour camps (rations in some of these were lower than those administered under the Nazi regime at the infamous Buchenwald *lager*).²⁸⁶ The taking of the photograph not only works to represent the *results* of imperial famine policy here – it operates in an essentially performative manner, enacting the deadly imperial policy of indifference.

The emphasis that ‘La Famine aux Indes’ places on the act of photographic production and its instantiation of systemic cruelty – as opposed to the potential for the viewing of any consequent photographs to garner humanitarian concern – sits somewhat awkwardly within the interpretative framework that recent scholarship has

²⁸⁴ See Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocaust: El Nino famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: New York: Verso, 2001).

²⁸⁵ In the 1870s, Colonel Willoughby Wallace Hooper did take disturbing photographs of skeletal Indian famine victims. Hooper’s humanitarian credentials are somewhat lacking, however, and John Falconer’s summation of the photographer as gravitating towards subject matter *in extremis* seems apposite. See John Falconer, ‘Willoughby Wallace Hooper: ‘a craze about photography’’, *The Photographic Collector* 4 (Winter 1983): 258-285.

²⁸⁶ Davis, *Late Victorian Holocaust*, 26.

brought to bear on atrocity images. In her discussion of the photographs of torture at Abu Ghraib, Peggy Phelan has claimed that above all else ‘atrocity photographs provoke questions about reception; to an unusual degree, the significance of an atrocity photograph depends on what viewers understand, feel, and do upon encountering it.’²⁸⁷ This interrogation of viewer response has been the defining feature of recent literature on photographs of violence.²⁸⁸ Such a privileging of image reception emerges from a desire to assess the ethical challenge laid down by these pictures: ‘What actions do they prompt? What actions do they prohibit?’²⁸⁹ Yet since the very act of taking the Abu Ghraib photographs was fully part of the humiliation and harm that they were recording, one might equally take the perspective implied by the French caricature and say, *contra* Phelan, that the significance of the atrocity photograph depends to an unusual degree on what *the people who were being photographed* understood, felt, and did upon encountering the camera.

Either way, the capacity for the act of taking a photograph to marshal the violent, literally torturous policies of counterinsurgency did not begin at Abu Ghraib. In the rest of this chapter, I will be arguing that in rare but significant instances the taking of photographs in South Asia from the 1857 Uprising onwards started to work in accordance with the intimidating tactics of colonial counterinsurgency, creating what were historically unprecedented but grimly prophetic visions of an imperial violence that was increasingly difficult to disentangle from the visual media that recorded it.

The combative agency that attained to the act of photographic production at this time has heretofore been underestimated because of a persistent emphasis on the belatedness of photographers to sites of violence. There is an odd dissonance in scholarship whereby we are asked to look at images such as Felice Beato’s photograph of suspected insurgents being summarily hanged before an Indian crowd

²⁸⁷ Peggy Phelan, ‘Atrocity and Action: The Performative Force of the Abu Ghraib Photographs’, in Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller, and Jay Prosser (eds.), *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2012), 51.

²⁸⁸ See Batchen, Gidley, Miller, and Prosser (eds.), *Picturing Atrocity*; Maria Pia Di Bella & James Elkins (eds.), *Representations of Pain in Art and Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2013); and Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

²⁸⁹ Phelan, ‘Atrocity and Action,’ 51.

in Lucknow on 21 June 1858 (1858; Figure 1) while simultaneously being told that the photographer ‘arrived in Lucknow too late’ to capture the events of the Uprising because ‘the official “history of the mutiny” had already entered its memorializing stage.’²⁹⁰ Scare quotes notwithstanding, this view works to reinforce the notion that the history of the insurrection resided in a series of key traumas and triumphs for Britons in the famous sieges and battles in Agra, Cawnpore, Delhi, and Lucknow, which Beato did indeed miss, while sidelining the importance of the brutal tactics of what effectively amounted to imperial-state terrorism against the Indian population in the aftermath of these events.

Late-Victorian strategists looking back over a century of conflict recognised how fundamental this punitive later stage of warfare was not only to suppressing the Uprising, but also to the entire character of colonial occupation. As Major General Charles Edward Callwell wrote in *Small Wars: Their Principle and Practice* (1896):

It should be noted that campaigns of conquest and annexation not infrequently pass through two distinct stages. In the first stage the forces of civilization overthrow the armies and levies which the rulers and chieftains in the invaded country gather for its defence, a few engagements generally sufficing for this; in the second stage organized resistance has ceased, and is replaced by the war of ambushes and surprises, of murdered stragglers and stern reprisals... [During the Uprising,] as the supremacy of British military power in India became reestablished, and as the organized mutineer forces melted away, the campaign degenerated in many localities into purely guerrilla warfare, which took months to bring to a conclusion. As a general rule the quelling of rebellion in distant colonies means protracted, thankless, invertebrate war.²⁹¹

For Callwell, this fluid and indeterminate ‘second stage’ of warfare relied on administering dramatic levels of imperial force because ‘fanatics and savages must be thoroughly brought to book and cowed or they will rise again’ – and it is primarily this *psychological* dimension to colonial strategy that I will be arguing photography

²⁹⁰ Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire*, 77.

²⁹¹ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 26-27.

was able to tap into during counterinsurgency campaigns.²⁹²⁻

Beato's gruesome photograph of a public hanging barely hints at the extent of the retribution that the British visited on India during the convulsive years of 1857 to 1859. 'Not one man in ten seems to think that the hanging and shooting of 40 or 50,000 Mutineers beside other rebels, can be otherwise than practicable and right,' wrote a distressed Governor-General of Bengal, Lord Charles Canning, to Queen Victoria, admitting that such 'rabid and indiscriminate vindictiveness... is impossible to contemplate without feeling something like shame for one's fellow countrymen.'²⁹³ One British military commander had rendered the Indian countryside quiescent 'by the very simple expedient of burning all the villages in the line of march, and hanging everybody with a black face falling in his way.'²⁹⁴ As late as 1859 a colonial was able to write to his aunt about Beato's photograph of the execution and claim that it showed a practice that had been commonplace and was still in effect now, if only infrequently: 'How did you like the picture of that man hanging,' he asked, 'I thought it would have shocked you all, when first the mutiny began it used to be a daily occurrence, but now it [is] getting quite rare.'²⁹⁵ This terrorising purge far outlasted the military engagements on which the imperial history books tended to dwell.

So, photographers who have been noted by scholars primarily for their belated documentation of the wreckage of past battles were still operating within a fierce and tenacious counterinsurgency climate. Thus when the amateur photographer Dr. John Murray arrived back in India on 12 November 1857 following his furlough in Britain (therefore missing the successful London exhibition of his own work which was examined in Chapter One), he found himself detained in Calcutta until January 'in consequence of the road to Agra [where Murray lived and worked] being in part in possession of the rebels.'²⁹⁶ While in the colonial capital, Murray received the only official East India Company commission given to a photographer during the Uprising, going on to produce a litany of ruinous views of sites on which heavy fighting had

²⁹² Callwell, *Small Wars*, 228.

²⁹³ Quoted in Darlymple, *The Last Mughal*, 402.

²⁹⁴ Bhonlanauth Chunder, *The Travels of a Hindoo to Various Parts of Bengal and Upper India*, vol. 1, (London: N. Trubner & Co., 1869), 335.

²⁹⁵ Quoted in Fraser, *Indian Mutiny in Photographs*, 76.

²⁹⁶ Murray, *Diary*, 1 January 1858.

occurred, such *Hindoo Rao's House, Delhi* (1858; Figure 34), that are fairly typical of the memorialising character of much colonial photography from this time, even if his instructions were equally about marking the sites on which colonial rule was regenerating.²⁹⁷

The photographs and diaries that Murray produced during his commission provide us with the fullest account of the experience of a photographer operating within a counterinsurgency campaign not just in Delhi during the Uprising, but in all of nineteenth-century India. His images from this convulsive period are the results of experiments with different chemical methods, which he elaborated in his diary, and they consequently often lack the clarity of both his earlier and later work. But the murky sepia tone that suffuses these photographs does lend a dystopian gloom to the scenes of devastation being recorded. Representative here is Murray's scene of the lonely Flagstaff tower in Delhi (1858; Figure 35), where the British had briefly sought refuge during the Uprising: set back against a foreground of churned and shadowy earth, the structure emerges as if bathed in an eerie crepuscular light.

As with many of his images from this period, the surface of Murray's photograph of the flagstaff tower is distorted by marking that the doctor attributed rather defensively to 'the imperfect apparatus and inferior quality of some of the paper which I procured at Calcutta, together with the unfavourable state of the weather at Allahabad and Cawnpore.'²⁹⁸ Such unwanted intrusions on the image demonstrate the contingency of photographic practice at this time as it negotiated numerous competing techniques and material, a particularly fraught enterprise when the climatic uncertainties of fieldwork were added to the mix. On top of this, many of Murray's Indian sitters appear blurred, indicating that they moved during the exposure time and thus refused to be merely the immobile props that this colonial photographer positioned them as. Authorial privilege was thus undermined on numerous fronts, and the ease with which

²⁹⁷ At Allahabad, the Governor-General wanted photographs of all 'the buildings in course of adaptation or construction as Barracks and Hospitals, and... the intended sites of any such buildings'; at Benares (Varansi), Murray was required to execute 'a set of views of the Raj Ghat entrenchment, conveying as clear and complete impression of the works as possible.' India Public Consultations, IOR: P/188/49, 22 January 1858, No.68.

²⁹⁸ 'Letter of J. Murray, Esquire, M. D., to C. Beadon, Esquire, Secretary to the Government of India, dated 20 March 1858.' IOR/188/52.

Indian sitters could disrupt colonial photography through movement gives nuance to the imperial power dynamic which was put into effect by the photographic scene.

Relatively little attention has been paid to Murray's wartime work. An unpublished biography of the doctor by John Fraser is notable for its empirical substance regarding the details of the man's life, but its hagiographic stance seems unable to properly engage with the aggressive inflections to Murray's practice during the Uprising. War photography is dealt with in only a few lines (most of the rest of the book being dedicated to the doctor's work on cholera).²⁹⁹ Yet Murray's writings forge a striking equivalence between the technical experiments that he was conducting in photography and the extreme violence of British reprisals occurring around him. Following his arrival in Delhi in February 1858, he offered this typically laconic (and ungrammatical) diary entry:

There were 87 rebels hung this morning 23 by the military at the Kotwalee & 64 at the Jail by the civil authorities – The last batch of [photographic] Plates turned cloudy & bad – from making experiments diminishing the strength of gum & citric acid.³⁰⁰

Less than a week later, Murray gave the following account of a day of architectural tourism, photography, and summary executions:

Went to the Kootub [Minar] with Brig. Chamberlain Mr Layard – Sir T. Metcalf & Capt Rothsay – on the way Sir T.M. the magistrate picked up one of the Delhi badmashes [rogue or criminal] who had lived near the Jumma Musjeed during the siege – *tried & hanged him & also tried & condemned to be hanged two of the King's sowars* – their execution was deferred – returned by Humayoon's Tomb & saw several pretty lace work marble tombs to the Royal family in the village near – *day cloudy – pictures inferior.*³⁰¹

These seemingly everyday occurrences demonstrate just how precarious life was for

²⁹⁹ John Fraser, *Dr. John Murray of Agra*.

³⁰⁰ Murray, *Diary*, 22 February 1858.

³⁰¹ Murray, *Diary*, 27 February 1858. Emphasis added.

the Indian community that had slowly started to return to Delhi from late 1857 onwards following their reduction to refugee status in the wake of the violent British capture of the city.³⁰² Murray's practice was operating in intimate proximity to this destabilising violence, and any focus on sites that had relevance to *previous* fighting should be viewed in the context of such persistent Indian persecution.³⁰³

Murray was just one of a number of photographers working in Delhi in the months following its brutal reoccupation by colonial forces. Beato, Charles Moravia (1821-1859), and the husband and wife team Robert (1818-1872) and Harriet Tytler (1828-1907) – residents who had had to flee the city when it was captured by rebel sepoys at the start of the Uprising – were all active there in 1858. Interest in the city was especially great because it had been the site of some of the most significant fighting of the war, but also because since the British had regained control there had been serious talk of razing the ancient Mughal capital to the ground as a punitive display of imperial strength (the plan wasn't implemented, but the extent of plunder and destruction was catastrophic nonetheless). This razing was of particular concern to the Tytlers; for them, Delhi was not merely a series of war ruins to be dispassionately recorded, but a colonial home to be re-engaged with.³⁰⁴ Their work emerged from a genuine fondness for Delhi as a place: the pair took up photography when they heard that the city was to be destroyed, with Harriet in particular being 'addled by the thought that, as matters stood, no pictorial presentment would remain of all that Imperial grandeur.'³⁰⁵

Amid the chaos of executions and plunder, photographers conversed about techniques. It was Murray who advised the Tytlers on their photographic process, but the latter pair's imagery is significantly more polished than his in terms of surface

³⁰² Anon., *The History of the Siege of Delhi, By An Officer Who Served There* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1861), 279.

³⁰³ For an account of Delhi during the Uprising, see Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal*.

³⁰⁴ See Harriet Tytler, *An Englishwoman in India: The Memoirs of Harriet Tytler, 1828-1858* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

³⁰⁵ *Statesman*, 22 August 1905. Harriet first embarked on a panoramic painting of the palace in Delhi. She was introduced to photography by Robert, originally for the purposes of assisting her with this painting. See *The Englishman*, 31 March 1859.

effects.³⁰⁶ Indeed, the work of the Tytlers is altogether neater in composition and content than the raw scenes of Murray: there is an almost sanitised, museum-like feel to photographs such as *Front of Hindoo Rao's House* (1858; Figure 36). Partly this is because the scenes are striking for their eerie, unvarying depopulation. The Tytlers' India emerges as an un-lived in world in which emptiness is the dominant theme: 'blankness, the void...the object of the frame is absence itself.'³⁰⁷ This has been characterised by scholars as a mournful meditation on sites with an acutely personal significance; the locations were mostly ones 'they already knew, where friends and acquaintances had died,' and which were thus 'sufficiently resonant with loss not to require further elaboration.'³⁰⁸ Yet depopulation is ominous considering the murderous logic of counterinsurgency in Delhi at the time; as one British soldier wrote in a delighted letter to a colonial newspaper, 'All the city people found within the walls when our troops entered were bayoneted on the spot.'³⁰⁹

Photographers never directly represented these mass killings in Delhi, but what Achille Mbembé has ghoulishly termed the 'necropolitics' of colonialism are arguably alluded to in sublimated form by the Tytlers.³¹⁰ Emptiness can be seen as envisioning the genocidal drive of counterinsurgency, with the excision of Indians evoking a cathartic tabula rasa through its performance of a virtual ethnic cleansing that appears grimly foreboding when seen in the context of the large-scale hangings that Murray's diary recounts. These people-free scenes are so very striking because the insertion of Indian figures into landscapes or architectural scenes was such a prevalent trope of colonial art and photography. Both Murray and Beato, for instance, followed on from established picturesque traditions with their almost unvarying inclusion of Indian sitters in the photographs that they produced during the Uprising.

³⁰⁶ At a Photographic Society of Bengal meeting in March 1859, Robert Tytler 'took occasion to express how much he was indebted for assistance to the kindness of Dr. Murray and M. Beto [Felice Beato]: he has used the subjoined formula, which he received from Dr. Murray.' *The Englishman*, 31 March 1859.

³⁰⁷ Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire*, 40.

³⁰⁸ Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 126.

³⁰⁹ Letter from a soldier in Delhi to *The Bombay Telegraph*. Quoted in Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal*, 364.

³¹⁰ See Achille Mbembé (trans. Libby Meintjes), 'Necropolitics,' *Public Culture* 15: 1 (2003): 11-40.

Anonymised staffage is usually given little thought. However, just as the battlefield tableaux of the amateur photographer Patrick Gerald Fitzgerald (with whose rooftop photographs this chapter began) and the war artist William Simpson worked to mediate warfare for the colonial soldiers involved in their theatrics, so too would the poses of these Indian men have informed their engagement with the counterinsurgency regime of the British. It is impossible to know precisely how the Indian figures would have felt as they were required to sit by sites of recent violence while summary executions continued to proliferate around them, but it is possible to get some sense of what colonials made of these sorts of fraught photographic encounters. The camera was no innocent instrument in the imperial imaginary: it was a marker of advancement and aggression, and its presence in combat zones should be viewed against the backdrop of the weaponised metaphors that rendered the taking of a photograph an act of symbolic violence.

Not only was image-making-in-the-field *per se* steeped in the history of imperial conquest that I traced in the previous section of this chapter – photography was seen as a particularly potent emblem of such aggression. The professional photographer Samuel Bourne (1834-1912) – whose picturesque take on the Indian landscape turned him into the most commercially successful practitioner operating on the subcontinent in the nineteenth century – offered the following account of the technology’s symbolism.³¹¹

the curious tripod, with its mysterious chamber and mouth of brass, taught the natives of this country that their conquerors were the inventors of other instruments besides the formidable guns of their artillery, which, though as suspicious perhaps in appearance, attained their object with less noise and smoke.³¹²

Photography is weaponised by Bourne, seen as part of a broader imperial arsenal. As Chapter One showed, such a militarisation of photography was particularly extensive

³¹¹ See Sophie Gordon, *The Imperial Gaze: The Photographs of Samuel Bourne (1863-1870)* (New York: Sepia International and the Alkazi Foundation, 2000); and Xavier Guégan, ‘Samuel Bourne and Indian Natives: Aesthetics, Exoticism, and Imperialism.’ PhD thesis. University of Northumbria. (2009).

³¹² Samuel Bourne, ‘Photography in the East’, in *The British Journal of Photography*, 1 July 1863, vol. 10, (Liverpool: London: Henry Greenwood, 1862), 268.

during the Uprising, as the prospect of using photographs in strategically useful ways provoked both excitement and anxiety in the British. Yet Bourne is expressing his faith in – or, perhaps more aptly, *fantasy about* – the ability of his practice to shock and awe India not with the indexical realism and reproducibility of the photograph, but through the weapon-like visual effects of the photographic apparatus.

In other words, the cameras and tripods which were being situated by colonials among the ruins of Delhi could have a combative agency regardless of what type of photographs were actually being produced or how they were being used: the material presence of the camera alone served as an intimidating signifier of the broader techno-military complex of imperialism. So, the numerous photographers criss-crossing the resonant sites of a city in a state of on-going counterinsurgency were not merely belated recorders of a violence that was securely in the past: they were themselves capable of functioning as a spectacle of imperial aggression – or at least of conceiving themselves to be such.

Psychological Warfare

The combative agency of the camera within moments of violent crisis was not merely the product of the web of violent metaphors through which photography was theorised. On occasion, the technology was deployed in ways that worked to maximise and prolong the exposure of Indians to the terrorising practices of counterinsurgency. Recall the impression made on Lieutenant Arthur Moffat Lang, with whose comments this thesis began, by the professional photographer Felice Beato as the latter went about documenting the hanging of alleged Indian rebels in Lucknow:

I saw a crowd about the gallows in front of the Moti Mahal & riding up I saw a Sepoy & a Band Nauk of the 48th N.I. just swinging off, and the Photographer, Beato, with his apparatus arranged a few yards off! and I saw him go up & steady the bodies, when life was extinct, to be nicely

photographed! *I should think the Photographing must have impressed additional horrors on the scene to the natives.*³¹³

The photographic act thus works to amplify the already-horrifying spectacle of execution for the Indians required to stand witness to it. The fact that only Indians are included in the frame of the resulting photograph (1858; Figure 1) hints at how such spectacles were primarily aimed at intimidating the colonised population by way of highlighting the precarious nature of Indian life under Britain's counterinsurgency regime. I would argue that the taking of the photograph functioned to sharpen this sense of precariousness, and that the horror that Lang attributes to these Indians was at least in part due to their awareness that Beato's manipulation of *dead* Indian bodies was an extreme, unsettling and quite possibly prophetic form of their own *live* orchestration by the photographer for the purposes of the photograph.

Beato's photographic intervention in this moment of counterinsurgent retribution provides another instance of the authorial privilege enjoyed in the artist's studio mapping itself onto imperial space in a manner that complemented the strategies of colonial domination. In his diary, Lang gave some additional detail about the photographer's engagement with the scene, noting excitedly that Beato 'commenced a Photograph of...[the hanging men] the minute they were dead, running up to the Gallows & steadying them by holding their feet!'³¹⁴ This morbid assertion of authorship would likely have been alarming enough in itself, but Beato would also have required stillness from the living witnesses lest his photograph come out as a blur. For one thing, the stasis of the living Indian men would have worked to further highlight their malleability in the hands of the coloniser – note that two of these figures stand by the poles that had been supporting the base of the gallows, and had therefore most likely been required to carry out this execution before being required to pose as witnesses to it.³¹⁵ But more than this, their stillness would eerily mirror that of the hanging cadavers of their compatriots, whose deathly stasis is staged as a

³¹³ 'Letter of Arthur Moffat Lang to his brother Matthew Lang, dated 21 June 1858.' Emphasis added.

³¹⁴ Lang, *The Diary of A. M. Lang*, 21 June 1858. Add. MS 43825, f. 36.

³¹⁵ Thank you to Sarah Monks for pointing this out to me following a paper I gave at the University of East Anglia.

horrifying potential fate for those who are rendered equally paralysed by the photographic event.

Lang's choice of the word 'horror' to describe the Indian reaction to this cruel scene of imperial violence is striking to a modern reader because of its anticipation of the famous final words whispered by that embodiment of colonial savagery, Colonel Kurtz, in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), 'The horror! The horror!' Arguably, it is Beato's demand for the macabre immobility of his Indian figures that informed Lang's choice of word here: in the early nineteenth century, the Gothic novelist Anne Radcliffe had defined horror as that which 'contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates.'³¹⁶ This paralysing, nullifying effect of horror seems highly active within Beato's *mise-en-scène*, for as the execution is drawn into the ambit of the camera and its attendant apparatus, it becomes a theatricalised studio-space under the direction of a photographer: the difference between animate and inanimate, living and dead, is consequently collapsed, as everything is reduced to a manipulable prop.

Beato's intensification of the 'horror' of colonial violence positioned his practice as part of the *terror* that characterised Britain's counterinsurgency regime. In her recent book *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence* (2011), Adriana Cavarero has argued that what we call 'terrorism' would more aptly be termed 'horrorism.' This is because terror is etymologically linked to *fleeing*, whereas the 'well-known manifestation of the physics of horror...denotes primarily a state of paralysis,' which is more appropriate for describing the immobilising state of trauma that 'terrorism' as a violent event actually tends to induce in those who witness it.³¹⁷ Keeping this semantic exchange between horror and terror in mind, however, I still want to hold on to the word 'terrorism.' My deployment of this term is not intended to clarify its diverse meanings – quite the opposite, in fact, since there are various aspects of its etymology that I want to draw on.

³¹⁶ Anne Radcliffe, 'The Supernatural in Poetry', *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, part 1, vol. 16, (London: Henry Colburn, 1826), 149.

³¹⁷ Adriana Cavarero (trans. William McCuaig), *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2011).

‘Terrorism’ is a highly loaded and intensely problematic term that in modern-day discourse tends to be invoked to describe a violence used by non-state combatants against state powers; more specifically, the word situates itself in regards to the predominant geopolitical theme of the last decade, the ‘War on Terror.’ Yet since I am using it to describe the practices of an imperial *state* crackdown, I am harking back to the original usage of this term to denote a strategy of violence: the infamous Reign of Terror that the French state oversaw following the Revolution of 1789. Very broadly, then, it is this eighteenth-century Gallic pedigree of terror as a political weapon – that is, the public and theatrical deployment of violence by the state to render obsolete any dissent amongst the governed – that I am wanting to evoke.

The more particular valence of ‘terrorism’ that I am hoping to draw on is a recent one: its status as a strategy of spreading fear by amplifying the damaging psychological effects of violence through the use of media. Such a desire means that ‘unlike military operations, terrorism needs a witnessing third party and must be disseminated as images or narratives to be effective.’³¹⁸ Actually, acts of state terror like the hanging that Beato photographed in India were not widely disseminated as images amongst the Indian population; as I have said, by and large the colonised in South Asia had limited exposure to colonial imagery. Yet Beato’s supplementation of the initial horror of the hanging with the horror of the photographic event functions in a similar (if less far-reaching) manner to media dissemination in one key respect. It created, if only briefly, a mutually reinforcing relationship between a spectacle of violence and a technology of visual reproduction, which converge in the image-making event to heighten the psychological effects of the execution on those Indians who witnessed it.

This traumatising feedback loop between visual media and violence could even be put into effect when the violence being represented was long passed. Perhaps the most famous photograph that Beato took in India is his scene of the ruins of Sikandar Bagh palace in Lucknow (1858; Figure 37). At first glance, this looks like many of the rubble-strewn scenes of war-ravaged architecture that emerged from the Uprising. Indian figures stand in front of the crumbling façade of the Sikander Bagh complex,

³¹⁸ Alex Tickell, *Terrorism, Insurgency and Indian-English Literature, 1830-1947* (New York: Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 12.

surrounded by the wreckage that dominates the middle ground between the building and the viewer. In the foreground, however, it is not debris that clutters the floor – it is the skeletal remains of the Indian insurgents that had been massacred there by British forces storming the building on 16 November 1857. Skulls, ribcages, femurs, pelvises – all are scattered in a horrific explosion of bones, the viciousness of their deaths implied by the absence of any intact remains.

Beato did not arrive at this site until months after the actual massacre.³¹⁹ So the photograph does not depict the immediate aftermath of the battle; indeed, it isn't presenting anything like the authentic post-conflict composition of the site. The judicial commissioner of Lucknow, Sir George Campbell, recalled that by the time Beato had arrived, 'The great pile of bodies had been decently covered before the photographer could take them, *but he insisted on having them uncovered to be photographed* before they were finally disposed of.'³²⁰ This disinterment took place under the watch of a prominent agent of the colonial state: Campbell was responsible for 'the exercise of judicial functions' and 'the management of jails,' as well as having 'all the powers of a High Court,' notably the final decision 'in matters of life and death and all criminal appeals.'³²¹ His awareness of Beato's grave digging signals the photographer's entanglement with the 'colonial *habitus*' – that matrix of colonial permissions, finance, transport and consumerism that made photography possible.³²² Thus, while Beato was an Italian-born man raised in the British protectorate of Corfu and so not exactly a straightforward British colonial, the success of his practice was contingent upon working in accordance with imperial prerogatives. If the British did not want Beato setting up his tripod in front of a gallows, or exhuming the bodies of Indian men, then the photographer would not have been capable of doing so.

Hitherto, scholars have primarily discussed this grisly photographic reconstruction of the aftermath of battle in regards to issues of authenticity. Pinney's recent intervention in such debates has stressed the tension between the camera's fidelity to the scene it documents and our sense that the camera has somehow lied to us. Doubts

³¹⁹ See Fraser, 'Beato's Photograph of the Interior of the Sikanderbagh at Lucknow.'

³²⁰ Sir George Campbell (ed. Sir Charles E. Bernard), *Memoirs of my Indian Career*, II, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1893), 4. Emphasis added.

³²¹ Campbell, *Memoirs of my Indian Career*, 37.

³²² Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 30.

about the reliability of what is recorded are not assuaged by the indexical realism of the medium because such doubts are located in ‘the gap between the event recorded in the photograph and the event to which the photographs seems to gesture.... between “micro event” and “historical event.”’³²³ Yet what gets left behind in such talk about the nature of the photographic index and its relationship to ‘truth’ or ‘accuracy’ more generally is the way in which this relationship between the ‘micro event’ and the ‘historical event’ – between the photographic scene and the colonial massacre to which it gestures – was understood by those involved in constructing the macabre tableau. For, while the photograph was being taken, such a relationship was not defined by the indexicality of any resulting photograph, so much as by the theatricality of the image-making event – specifically, the positioning of living Indian sitters within a violent historical frame and against a wider backdrop of punitive counterinsurgent practices.

My shift away from the debates about the evidential status of Beato’s photograph towards how its theatricality operated within a framework of counterinsurgency takes its cue from Paul Arthur’s *Artforum* review of Errol Morris’s documentary on the Abu Ghraib imagery, *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008).³²⁴ In response to the director’s message that photographs have the capacity to ‘attract false beliefs,’ Arthur wrote, ‘Really? I thought the images under consideration, especially when supplemented by salient verbal contexts, revealed more about policy than about epistemology, more about state-sponsored barbarity than about media deception.’³²⁵ Without wanting to adopt Arthur’s dismissive attitude towards the value of epistemological interrogation, I do want to follow his lead here in thinking about what Beato’s photograph can tell us about the nature of Britain’s counterinsurgency campaign, or, more particularly, about the role played within that campaign by the ‘micro event’ of the taking of this horrifying photograph.

For one thing, it is worth noting that it is highly unlikely that Beato dug up these bodies himself; in fact, it is probable that the Indian men seen in the photograph had

³²³ Pinney, ‘Seven Theses on Photography,’ *Thesis Eleven* 113: 1 (2012): 144.

³²⁴ Also see Errol Morris’s book, *Believing is Seeing (Observations on the Mysteries of Photography)* (London: Penguin Press, 2011).

³²⁵ Paul Arthur, ‘The Horror,’ *Artforum*, April 2008.

first been required to disinter the corpses, then to arrange them according to the aesthetic demands of Beato, and finally to pose alongside of them (and if not these particular Indian men, then others standing outside of the frame). Whether or not this is how the bones got there, however, I would argue that Beato's fabricated scene of the aftermath of battle can still be viewed as functioning in a similarly terrorising manner to his photograph of the hanging: once again, a sepulchral framework is constructed for the stasis of the living Indian sitters, as the three men are arranged like so many more bones.

Dragging the skeletons of battle back into the light of day situating them within the ambit of the camera like this works to reactivate the intimidating psychological effects of previous imperial violence. In a manner akin to the loop of violent video footage that we see played in today's media after a terrorist attack, the initial horror of the event continues to reverberate through virtual repetition. The tableau that Beato constructs here collapses the distance between a past of frenzied slaughter and a present of the act of photography. A macabre and threatening equivalence is forged between the living Indian sitters and the cadaverous props, as each are turned into fodder for the camera.

The theatre of the photographer's 'studio' thus shadowed the theatre of war in a manner that highlighted the fragility of Indian existence under Britain's counterinsurgency regime. While it is Beato who provides the most sensational examples of photography working in terrorising coordination with counterinsurgent violence, more understated instances could still offer Indian sitters a horrifying demonstration of the jeopardy that they were in. On his way from Calcutta to Delhi in January 1858, Murray spent some time in Benares and gave this gruesomely detailed account of an execution that he had witnessed (and photographed) there:

Saw a mutineer blown away from a Gun – *Took a view No. 18 – when they were reading the sentence to him* then got out of the way the pieces of flesh and bone are scattered all round & the head goes bounding in front– the body appears to swell and burst – like a shell – death must be instantaneous The expression of the face was easy *Took some paper views – of the parade*

*ground & native lines & bells of arms.*³²⁶

The mode of execution that Murray is referring to here was one which was fairly common during the Uprising, in which insurgents were strapped to the mouth of a cannon and then blown apart (a style borrowed from old Mughal custom). The above entry indicates that Murray intervened in the last traumatic moments of a man's life by taking a photograph ('No. 18') of one of the condemned just before the gun was fired, but no image survives of what would presumably have shown a cannon-strapped Indian.

What happened to this photograph? It is not particularly surprising that Murray would want to depict the scene in the first place: numerous non-photographic illustrations of such events circulated in Britain during the Uprising and its aftermath. Yet Murray was working on a commission for 'Clemency Canning,' a name that had been derisively attributed to the Governor-General following the issue of his so-called 'clemency proclamation' in July 1857, which sought to limit the use of the death sentence to those insurgents who had actually harmed British people or property. It is thus possible that Murray destroyed the photograph in order to eliminate evidence of the ongoing (and possibly illegal) use of summary executions a full seven months after Canning had sought to curb them.

However, one photograph that Murray mentions having taken on that day which does survive appears to offer a partial reconstruction of the execution scene. *Parade ground, Benares* (1858; Figure 38) shows two Indian men sitting side-by-side next to a cannon in the centre of a military parade ground, and from the diary entry it appears that this would have been taken almost immediately after the photographer had watched the cannon-based killing. It is likely that these two sitters had also been witness to that grisly spectacle before being required to pose by the very sort of instrument that performed it, but even if they had not seen that particular execution, they would still have been aware of the prevalent use of cannons to despatch of Indian men suspected of links to the rebels. Compositionally speaking, the insertion of Indian figures here was not unusual – indeed, it is a staple of Murray's oeuvre – but

³²⁶ Murray, *Diary*, 18 January 1858. Emphasis added.

the specific circumstances of the pose mean that, like Beato's photograph of the hanging, this scene is one that intensified the exposure of its sitters to the terrors of counterinsurgency. The image-making event can be seen to serve as an unsettling re-staging of the execution, creating a supplementary arena of virtual punishment in which psychological intimidation is substituted for physical harm as the men are reminded of their vulnerability as Indians to colonial weaponry such as the cannon by which they sit.

The vulnerability of non-European men and women was something terrifyingly real during the Uprising. Following the war, Bholanauth Chunder – 'a fair type of the enlightened class of English-educated Bengalee gentlemen,' as J. Talboys Wheeler put it in the foreword to Chunder's book – offered an Indian perspective on the counterinsurgency regime of the British:³²⁷

The Martial Law was an outlandish demon, the like of which had never been dreamt in Oriental demonology. Rampant and ubiquitous, it stalked over the land devouring hundreds of victims at a meal... *It mattered little who the red-coats killed – the innocent and the guilty, the loyal and the disloyal, the well-wisher and the traitor, were confounded in one promiscuous vengeance.* To "bag the nigger," had become a favourite phrase of the military sportsmen of the day.³²⁸

The sense of generalised peril that Chunder evokes here is confirmed by numerous colonial accounts that delight precisely in the *indiscriminate* nature of Britain's vengeance. One soldier told of going around houses in Delhi and killing those found inside – 'They were not mutineers,' he added, 'but residents of the city, who trusted to our well-known mild rule for pardon. I am glad to say that they were to be disappointed.'³²⁹ It is therefore unlikely that the Indian men who were situated in relation to acts of imperial terror by colonial photographers felt in any way securely exempt from such violence themselves, something that potentially rendered the

³²⁷ J. Talboys Wheeler, 'Foreword,' in Chunder, *The Travels of a Hindoo*, xii.

³²⁸ Chunder, *The Travels of a Hindoo*, 321-322. Emphasis added.

³²⁹ Letter from a soldier in Delhi to *The Bombay Telegraph*. Quoted in Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal*, 369.

image-making event a psychologically destabilising experience.

In certain circumstances, then, acts of documentation were also acts of aggressive intervention. The psychological effects of being photographed *in extremis* rendered such photography controversial even when it worked in harmony with relatively uncontroversial (to the British, that is) methods of state-sanctioned violence. This supplement of ethical uncertainty that the act of recording brings to violence was made very clear during the Third Anglo-Burmese War (1885-86) when the Provost-Marshal Willoughby Wallace Hooper (1837-1912) caused a moral outcry in Britain by taking photographs of condemned Burmese dacoits (bandits) as they were being executed by a British firing squad (1886; Figure 39). As one colonial noted, there was something very odd about ‘the [British] spirit which revolts at the operation of photographing a batch of men at the moment of their execution, when their execution in batches is accepted as an ordinary incident in the subjugation of a conquered people.’³³⁰ So what was it about Hooper’s photographic documentation that seemingly affected the moral tenor of killing in such a way as to launch a challenge against its legitimacy?

Something latent within both this and the previous chapter has been the harnessing of an economy of aesthetic pleasure to the violent processes of colonisation. Exhibition spaces intended to inform and entertain were militarised; naturalistic art was framed as an instrument of war; exciting tropes of derring-do were performed in the midst of combat; picturesque conventions of staffage developed with visual enjoyment in mind were put into play on locations marked by trauma. This investment of aesthetics in ocular delight is what makes visual documentation of violence so potentially fraught. Now more than ever this is the case, as drone technologies reproduce the visual experience of videogames that are thoroughly enmeshed in an economy of pleasure, thus arguably embedding an enjoyment factor within the technological structure of contemporary warfare. The aesthetic logic of visual media thus brings new ethical consideration to the violence it documents.

³³⁰ Grattan Geary, *Burma, After the Conquest: Viewed in its Political, Social, and Commercial Aspects from Mandalay* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1886), 243.

The episode in Burma accordingly provoked a debate in parliament and an official inquiry in India. It has been written about in detail by John Falconer, who has shown that *The Times* journalist who broke the story harbored a grudge against the military,³³¹ as well as by Pinney, who sees in this event a reification of the metaphors of ‘photography’s mortiferous *eidos*: the camera as trigger and a ballistic photographic image, hitting the spectator “like a bullet” as Walter Benjamin would later write.’³³² Primarily it reveals the ethical exorbitance that attaches to the deployment of photography in violent circumstances: the message being that to kill is fine, but to capture that killing on camera is morally suspect. And it was specifically photography, rather than visual representation as such, that was the issue here. The *Illustrated London News* garnered no backlash when it published scenes by both William Simpson and Melton Prior depicting men standing before colonial firing squads.

Yet what troubled the British about representing such scenes photographically was not the indexical realism of the consequent photograph so much as the potentially *terrorising* nature of the photographer’s intervention in the event. The extent to which Hooper’s actions were problematic seemed to rest on whether or not he had altered military protocol in order to arrange the scene to his liking in a manner that unnecessarily protracted the killing for the condemned. In other words, whether or not his authorial privilege to compose a scene within studiofied terrain had usurped the imperial privilege to orchestrate the killing of the colonised. The article in *The Times* gave this account of the episode:

The ghastly scenes which constantly recur in executions carried out by the Provost-Marshal constitute grave public scandals. The Provost-Marshal, who is an ardent amateur photographer, is desirous of securing views of the persons executed at the precise moment when they are struck by the bullet. To secure this result, after the orders “ready”, “present” have been given to the firing party, the Provost Marshal fixed his camera on the prisoners, who at times are kept waiting several minutes in that position. The officer commanding the firing party is then directed by the Provost Marshal to give the order to fire at

³³¹ Falconer, ‘Willoughby Wallace Hooper: ‘a craze about photography.’”

³³² Pinney, ‘The Colonial Dromosphere,’ 128.

the moment when he exposes his plates. So far no satisfactory negative has been obtained, and the experiments are likely to be continued.³³³

This photography-induced time lag between the words ‘present’ and ‘fire’ was to become the main point of contention. When the Viceroy of India, Frederic Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood, 1st Marquess of Dufferin, responded to the parliamentary questions that emerged about Hooper’s methods, it was the photographer’s authorship of the scene that he addressed, claiming that the Provost Marshal ‘did not arrange details of the execution so as to suit his camera as alleged,’ and that since the condemned men were blindfolded, ‘they were consequently unaware of what was going on, and no delay took place.’³³⁴ In a defensive letter to *The Times*, Hooper similarly asserted that ‘no delay of any kind took place,’ and that the men ‘knew nothing of the fact that the camera was there.’³³⁵

The capacity of the photographic act to cause psychological disturbance thus worked to corrode the legitimacy of state-sanctioned killing. Such was the ethical anxiety over the matter that Dufferin put a stop to all military executions in Burma upon hearing the news.³³⁶ It is perfectly possible that the camera was deployed by Hooper in this instance with the specific aim of creating a more sensational and psychologically destabilising scene, if not for the blindfolded men about to be shot, then for the crowd of witnesses. As noted in the initial article in *The Times*, ‘These proceedings take place before a crowd of mixed nationalities, and cannot fail to have a demoralizing effect.’³³⁷ Hooper was charged with maintaining order in recently occupied Burmese territories, and his regime was not averse to demoralising spectacles: on one occasion, the naked corpses of some recently executed Burmese men were carried through the streets with ‘entrails...protruding from one body through the wounds made by the bullets.’³³⁸ Recalling Lang’s belief that the taking of

³³³ *The Times*, 21 January 1886.

³³⁴ ‘No. 19. Telegram from Viceroy Dufferin to Lord Randolph Churchill, 2 February 1886,’ *Telegraphic Correspondence relating to Military Executions and Dacoity in Burmah* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1886), 9.

³³⁵ *The Times*, 4 March 1886.

³³⁶ ‘No. 16 Telegram from Viceroy Dufferin to Lord Randolph Churchill (extract), 26 January 1886,’ *Telegraphic Correspondence*, 9.

³³⁷ *The Times*, 21 January 1886. Emphasis added.

³³⁸ *The Times*, 29 January 1886.

a photograph heaped additional horror onto already-horrific proceedings, the staging of the execution for a photographer can be seen not merely as symptomatic of imperial callousness, but actively part of the counterinsurgent spectacle of exorbitant cruelty.

I am not arguing that these incidents were characteristic of colonial photography as such; in fact, the camera's terrorising intervention in acts of colonial violence was a rare occurrence. However, while Hooper himself claimed that he only attempted to take a photograph of executed men once, *The Times* reported that 'The photographing of the prisoners...was not an isolated case,' a fact backed up by none other than the viceroy, who admitted that he had 'heard of prisoners being photographed on such occasions.'³³⁹ Considered alongside Murray's reference to a lost or destroyed photograph of a cannon-strapped insurgent in 1858, these comments imply that the imagery which we have available to us is not the full story, and that the deployment of the camera in coordination with acts of violence was becoming a tantalizing prospect for those on the front line of empire, even as it caused moral panic in the administration as a whole.

Conclusion: Towards a Recent History of Atrocity...

Amritsar, 13 April 1919. An Indian crowd gathers at Jallianwala Bagh to celebrate the festival of Baisakhi. They do so, however, under a regime of martial law instituted by the British government to deal with the growing state of anti-colonial unrest in the Punjab. A curfew is in effect, all meetings are banned, and tensions are rising. A few days earlier, protestors demanding the release of imprisoned leaders of the Indian Independence Movement had been fired upon by the British military, causing violent eruptions in which five Europeans had been killed. One woman, an English missionary called Miss Marcella Sherwood, had been set upon by an Indian mob, beaten, and left for dead on Kucha Kurrichhan street, leading to the notorious 'crawling order,' whereby all Indian men needing to use that street were forced by the British to crawl down it on all fours.

³³⁹ 'No. 14, Letter from Viceroy Dufferin to Lord Randolph Churchill (extract), January 24 1886,' *Telegraphic Correspondence*, 8.

Fraught as Anglo-Indian relations were at this point, the peaceful assembly within the garden enclosure at Jallianwala Bagh was not looked on kindly by the soon-to-be-infamous Brigadier-General Reginald E. H. Dyer. Apparently anxious that an insurrection was about to occur, Dyer took fifty Gurkha troops to the enclosed space and – without warning – ordered them to open fire on the 15,000 to 20,000 Indian men, women and children gathered inside. After ten minutes of shooting into the panicked crowd as they stampeded towards thin exits, all ammunition was spent. The British estimated the dead at 379, with another 1,100 wounded; the Indian National Congress, however, gave a much higher toll: 1,000 dead, with 1,500 wounded.³⁴⁰

Ipswich, 3 October 1980. A local newspaper publishes a letter from a reader who is indignant at a recent article in which the incident in Amritsar over 60 years earlier was referred to as a ‘massacre.’ Objecting to the term, he makes a plea of mitigating circumstances, providing an account of the regional turbulence that preceded Dyer’s command to fire – ‘five Europeans murdered, three banks burned, railway stations burned, trains derailed and tracks destroyed and looting of goods trains’ – and claims that the Brigadier-General ‘saved India’ with his actions. ‘How do I know all this?’ he asks, ‘I was there,’ adding, ‘I have photographs taken in Amritsar...which I should be pleased to show anyone interested.’³⁴¹

To look at these photographs today, it seems strange that Mr R. M. Howgego – who doesn’t state in his letter whether or not he was the photographer – invoked them in the context of an argument that sought to justify Dyer’s violent suppression.³⁴² For what they show is not Indian upheaval, but the harsh and violent methods of the British in response to that upheaval. In *A wounded prisoner* (1919; Figure 40) we see an Indian man crouching on the floor in chains which rise up and outside of the frame of the image, presumably held by one of the colonial soldiers whose torso is cropped

³⁴⁰ Nick Lloyd, *The Amritsar Massacre: The Untold Story of One Fateful Day* (London: New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 180.

³⁴¹ ‘Letter to the editor from Mr Howgego, 23 Woodville Road, Ipswich,’ *Evening Star*, 3 October 1980. From press cutting held alongside photographs in the British Library, PDP/Photo 566.

³⁴² Mr R. M. Howgego [?], *Views in Amritsar at the Time of the 1919 Massacre*. PDP/Photo 566.

from the scene but whose legs we see standing over the captive. The Indian man does not look to the camera, which is evidently being held by someone who has crouched down close to and level with the prisoner. Behind this prisoner another one stands with his hands shackled in front of him; he too looks away. Yet two men are looking: in the background, one Briton and one Indian can be seen watching the spectacle of public captivity, and the spectacle of the taking of the photograph of a man *in extremis*, as the image-making event is deployed to draw further attention towards an already conspicuous subjugation.

Two more photographs depict Indian men crawling down Kucha Kurrichhan street as punishment for the attack on the British woman which took place there. They are disturbing images, saturated with imperial *Schadenfreude*: the British pose with these Indian men, capturing their humiliation on camera, performing it for the camera (1919; Figure 41). The parallels with Abu Ghraib are striking; indeed, it is impossible to disentangle these images from scenes like that of the casual, almost bored-looking U.S. soldier Lynndie England holding a leash attached to a naked Iraqi who is sprawled miserably on the prison floor. In *Making an Indian man crawl through the streets as a punishment* (1919; Figure 42), for instance, the soldiers and the victim are engulfed in shadow to the extent that it is hard to see, but within this murkiness it looks as though one soldier is holding something attached to the crawling man – a chain? a leash? – which more than being difficult to see in the shadows is actually difficult *not to see* in the shadows because of Abu Ghraib. It is most likely the soldier's rifle pointing towards the subjugated figure, but these images are necessarily seen through the filter of a more recent history of atrocity photography.

It is in the context of the Abu Ghraib photography that Howgego's invocation of these images starts to make sense as a plea for the justness of the Amritsar massacre. Stephen F. Eisenman's *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (2007) positioned the iconography of abuse in those images within a longer European art history of the pathos formula in which suffering is aestheticised while 'the supposed bestiality of the victim justifies the crushing violence of the oppressor.'³⁴³ The Amritsar photographs, it seems, are being used by Howgego to illustrate this cruel circular logic: a logic in which the

³⁴³ Stephen F. Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (Reaktion Books Ltd: London, 2007), 101.

gleeful debasement of the Indian man by colonials is seen as evidence that such debasement was necessary in the first place.³⁴⁴

What I have attempted to show in this chapter is that such cruel tableaux existed as part of a wider aesthetic matrix of imperialism that was starting to naturalise violence as a spectacle to be consumed through visual media. Henry A. Giroux, writing about the highly disturbing but remarkably underreported ‘Kill Team’ photographs showing American soldiers posing with the corpses of Afghan civilians they had murdered for pleasure,³⁴⁵ argues that ‘The question should not be whether these Kill Team photographs are worthy of aesthetic appraisal but whether the very category of the aesthetic becomes useful in telling us something about how the attitudes, values and actions that produced these photos becomes intelligible.’³⁴⁶ Giroux sees symptoms of the sadism that underpinned the Kill Team atrocities in a ‘particular notion of hardness and aggressive masculinity [that] has become commonplace in a society in which digestible spectacles of violence are endlessly circulated through proliferating media forms.’ Early visual war journalism’s investment in masculine tropes of derring-do, which sought to present war as a stage for heroic action, can therefore be seen as a lineage for this ‘ideology of hardness and the affective economy it justifies.’³⁴⁷ An economy, that is, in which the ‘precarious life’ of aggressor and victim alike are staged for pleasurable aesthetic consumption.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁴ These were not the only photographs taken in response to the episode in Amritsar. Indian photographers recorded the bullet shots in the walls of the Jallianwallah Bagh enclosure as evidence of the imperial atrocity, while the British photographed areas in which there had been unrest prior to – and thus attempting to present some rationale for – the brutal massacre. See Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 85-92.

³⁴⁵ Mark Boal, ‘The Kill Team: How U.S. Soldiers in Afghanistan Murdered Innocent Civilians,’ *Rolling Stone*, 27 March 2011.

<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-kill-team-20110327>.

³⁴⁶ Henry A. Giroux, ‘Disturbing Pleasures: Murderous Images and the Aesthetics of Depravity,’ *Third Text* 26: 3 (2012): 272.

³⁴⁷ Giroux, ‘Disturbing Pleasures,’ 263.

³⁴⁸ See Butler, *Precarious Life*.

3

Intervening in the Aftermath: Photography and Citizenship in Cawnpore

Introduction

Shortly following the brutal massacre of British soldiers and civilians by insurgents in Cawnpore during the 1857 Uprising, the town was recaptured by colonial forces and left under the control of Brigadier-General James Neill (1810-1857). Brimming with righteous fury, Neill instigated a punitive reign in which any Indian man suspected of associating with the rebels was summarily hanged. Yet those who were thought to have been ringleaders were confronted with a much more fearful fate than this. Prior to execution, some were brought to the ‘house of horrors’ within which local butchers armed with meat cleavers had recently hacked to death hundreds of sick and starving colonial women and children. These condemned men were then forced under the threat of the lash to lick clean a portion of the blood that still swamped the floor, something that was anathema to high-caste Indians and had been devised to make them believe that ‘they doom their souls to perdition.’³⁴⁹ The animus that motivated this grisly retribution was potent and persistent. One tourist, writing over 30 years later, noted that memories of the massacre ‘seems to hang over Cawnpore like a cloud even to this day, and to cause bitterness in the minds of Englishmen, who everywhere else regard the natives about them with no other feeling than of the kindest possible nature.’³⁵⁰ The traumatic resonance of such places raised urgent questions about how civil society could be reconstructed in the wake of internecine conflict, and about how a peaceable community could be imagined on sites defined by crisis and rupture.

This chapter examines the aesthetics of colonial citizenship that emerged in India as a consequence of 1857 in order to assess the visual strategies via which the British attempted to stabilise a post-conflict imperial regime on landscapes that were haunted

³⁴⁹ George Dodd, *The History of the Indian Revolt and of the Expeditions to Persia, Chin, and Japan, 1856-7-8, with Maps, Plans, and Wood Engravings* (London: W. & R. Chambers, 1859), 144.

³⁵⁰ Thomas Stevens, *Around the World on A Bicycle: From Tehren to Yokohama, II*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1889), 340

by these spectres of instability, violence, and death. Far from calling into question the sense of belonging that colonials felt in India, memories of the trials and traumas of the Uprising were highly instrumental in crystallising an imperial identity. Such mnemonics of the Raj have been well documented, with Ian Baucom arguing that British visits to significant sites from the rebellion constituted acts of ‘pilgrimage’ that wedded the practices of tourism to a cartography of warfare in a manner that ensured the traveller in India was fed an imperial narrative of loyalty and betrayal.³⁵¹ Art and photography formed a key part of such tourism, both in popularising certain routes and sites and in helping to frame people’s experiences of what were for the British potentially traumatic locations on which relatives, loved ones, and compatriots had died.³⁵² The encounter with these locales might have been a deeply personal experience, but, as Manu Goswami has noted, the overarching “‘mutiny tours” performed the task of establishing the concordance between the empirical, embodied practice of touring with an idealized imperial script’ that emphasised heroic Christian masculinity.³⁵³

The stress that scholars have placed on the *touristic* dimension to such sites has meant that each is situated within an itinerary of imperial shrines encountered transiently across northern India as opposed to being theorised as places embedded within multi-dimensional towns and cities. This chapter therefore takes a different approach in that it centres on the localised practice of an amateur photographer and surgeon in Cawnpore, Dr. John Nicholas Tresidder (sometimes spelled Tressider), arguing in particular that his studio was a nodal point within the restructuring of Anglo-Indian relations that occurred during the tumultuous months and years that followed the colonial reoccupation of this garrison town in the summer of ‘57.³⁵⁴ Cawnpore was the most significant site on the imperial map of war tourism that scholars have

³⁵¹ Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 107.

³⁵² For an account of the dissemination of images of resonant sites from the 1857 Uprising, see Narayani Gupta, ‘Pictorializing the “Mutiny” of 1857,’ in Pelizzari (ed.), *Traces of India*, 216-239.

³⁵³ Manu Goswami, ‘“Englisness” on the Imperial Circuit: Mutiny Tours in Colonial South Asia’, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 9: 1 (March 1996): 54.

³⁵⁴ The British Library spells this ‘Tressider,’ but the captions in the album read ‘Tresidder,’ a spelling that I have had confirmed in conversation with Robert Haskins, one of Tresidder’s descendants and a family historian.

delineated, but it was also a lived space, a mixed-race society reconstituted in the shadow of atrocity and its memorialisation. Nowhere does the complexly multi-layered nature of the town appear more tangible than in Tresidder's work, which offers a portrait of its post-conflict complexion that is woven from domestic, professional, and martial strands of British and Indian society, and can be seen in part as an attempt to inaugurate new spaces that were not defined by the hostile binary of Briton versus Indian which had come to reign during the recent war.

Tresidder's imagery comes to us in a little-studied personal album that the doctor (and/or possibly his wife) compiled in the 1860s.³⁵⁵ Nearly 200 pages host carefully arranged groupings of albumen or salt-paper prints with handwritten captions that cover everything from handcuffed Indian men awaiting execution for insurgent activity to tranquil scenes of colonial picnic parties. Throughout, I have illustrated these photographs as part of the (often-titled) pages they occupy rather than in isolation, such is the importance of the relationships that are forged between the pictures. This imagery was evidently not conceived in terms of discrete items, but as a photographic mapping of the familial, social, and political networks of colonial India.

Its scope and post-conflict context mean that the Tresidder Album affords a uniquely detailed insight into the fluid meanings of photographs as they were produced and compiled in ways that formed multiple narratives about the loss, revenge and rapprochement that constituted colonial warfare in India. On the one hand, Tresidder formulated a sense of Indian criminality and difference through his encounters with the scenes and persons from the recent war; on the other, he positioned his studio as a levelling space that enabled notions of Anglo-Indian equivalence to develop. The doctor paid particular attention to the British and Indian personnel of the civil establishment of Cawnpore, and I suggest that in doing so he located 'progressive' imperial institutions – namely hospitals, the police, and the courts – as privileged sites for rehabilitating Anglo-Indian relations in a time of unprecedented crisis.

³⁵⁵ The Tresidder album is now held along with the doctor's medical diary in the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts, New Delhi.

Such a rehabilitation will be discussed here in regards to wider nineteenth-century liberal concerns over the viability of Indian citizenship – as opposed to mere Indian subjection – within the British Raj. Citizenship will be thought of not exclusively as a constellation of specific rights (voting, for example), but as a particular way of being seen to belong in society – a belonging that was instantiated in an engagement with, and appearance within, certain types of images, monuments, and spaces. As Judith Butler notes:

there are extra-legal conditions for becoming a citizen, indeed, for even becoming a subject who can and does appear before the law. *To appear before the law means that one has entered into the realm of appearance or that one is positioned to be entered there, which mean that there are norms that condition and orchestrate the subject who can and does appear.*³⁵⁶

It is this ‘realm of appearance’ – the conditions of visibility for (Indian) citizenship – which this chapter is primarily concerned with. By looking at the multivalent appearances of Indian figures in photography studios, colonial albums, and war tourist sites, I argue that the formal demands of certain types of photographs – in particular the carte-de-visite and the picturesque landscape – sometimes exerted a pressure to establish the necessary ‘realm of appearance’ within which Indian figures could emerge as citizens, as their compositional status within colonial photography raised troubling questions about their political status within the imperial regime.

Citizens of the Studio

British awareness of the potential for Indian insurrection was perhaps never greater than in the years that followed the Uprising. For the colonial government, a key concern raised by the war was that far too little was known about the religious, cultural, and political sensitivities of India.³⁵⁷ Colonial photography’s agency within the post-1857 counterinsurgency mentality of the Raj has thus been theorised by

³⁵⁶ Judith Butler *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), 140. Emphasis added.

³⁵⁷ Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 149.

scholars in predominately Foucauldian terms, with the medium's value to the knowledge-power nexus of imperialism being especially great because its indexical truth claims lent scientific legitimacy to the anthropological projects that sought to collate potentially valuable information on colonised peoples (c.1868; Figure 43).³⁵⁸ The sense of crisis that the Uprising engendered in the British did not simply subside once the war was over; it continued to inform the nature of colonial image making for years to come.

The photographing of Indian castes and tribes was a pursuit particularly encouraged in the wake of the rebellion by the first viceroy of India, Charles Canning, who had assumed the new viceregal title after power had passed from the East India Company to the British Crown in 1858, partly as a result of the Company's perceived incompetence for allowing such fierce anti-colonial feeling to develop in the Indian population. The diverse imagery which was received in response to his call was ultimately coordinated into an eight-volume collection of 468 albumen prints edited by Sir John William Kaye and John Forbes Watson, *The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress, of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan* (1868-75).³⁵⁹ It has been noted that while this was ostensibly a scientific project, any preoccupations with Indian ethnicity nevertheless took a back seat to concerns for political loyalty and 'an ongoing desire to provide practical clues to the identification of groups which had so recently had the opportunity to demonstrate either their fierce hatred of British rule or their acquiescence.'³⁶⁰ In its military pragmatism, this endeavour can be seen as another instance of the sort of combative aesthetics that the previous chapters have addressed.

Modes of visual production that were structured by military exigencies were symptomatic of an imperial consciousness that viewed Britain's Indian territories as things that were kept by force. There were more idealistic perspectives on Britain's

³⁵⁸ See John Falconer, "A Pure Labour of Love' A Publishing History of *The People of India*," in Eleanor H. Hight and Gary D. Sampson (eds.), *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place* (London: Routledge, 2002), 51-83.

³⁵⁹ Sir John William Kaye and John Forbes Watson, *The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress, of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan*, 8 vols., (London: India Museum, 1868-1875).

³⁶⁰ Pinney, *Camera Indica*, 34.

power than this, however. When news of the Uprising had first reached Britain, *The Economist* outlined a choice as to whether India was to be treated as ‘*a Conquest*’ in which the British were simply the ‘natural and indefeasible superiors’ to their ‘Asiatic subjects,’ or ‘whether we are to regard the Hindoos and the Mahomedans as our equal fellow citizens...ripe (or to be ripened) for British institutions.’³⁶¹ *The Economist*’s alternative to the rigidly hierarchical colonialism-as-conquest narrative of British rule was grounded in a liberal vision of realising the essential universal equivalence of Briton and Indian via the implementation of progressive reforms and an increasingly inclusive mode of Anglo-Indian political organisation.³⁶² But while liberal ideals like formal equality continued to exert a pressure on governmental thinking in India after the Uprising, the following decades saw much more insistence being placed on India’s fundamental difference from the British.³⁶³ The fixity of such difference – encased as it supposedly was in the timeless categories of race and caste – undermined liberalism’s progressive rhetoric. Indians emerged as specimens, not citizens.

Yet while photographic portraiture practices operated in systematic conjunction with ethnographic projects such as *The People of India* that sought to concretise a sense of Indian alterity, the ‘serial dynamic of photographic likeness’ was actually something that functioned to elide difference.³⁶⁴ Such seriality, I will be suggesting, was mobilised by Tresidder in the immediate aftermath of the Uprising to map Anglo-Indian relations in Cawnpore in a manner seemingly informed at least in part by a politically liberal drive towards post-conflict rapprochement. However, this was done at the very moment when ideals of Anglo-Indian political harmony had never appeared more drastically divorced from the vicious realities on the ground, and so what we find is liberalism being articulated within a context that is essentially unable to sustain the liberal argument, an aporia that is expressed in the schizophrenic arrangement of photographs as they are stuck into the Tresidder Album in ways that

³⁶¹ *The Economist* 15 (26 September 1857): 1062. Emphasis in original.

³⁶² For an account of the ideology of liberalism in British India, see Thomas R. Metcalf, *The New Cambridge History of India: The Ideologies of the Raj*, III, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

³⁶³ Metcalf, *The Ideologies of the Raj*, 59.

³⁶⁴ See Lara Penny, ‘The Carte de Visite in the 1860s and the Serial Dynamic of Photographic Likeness’, *Art History* 35: 4 (September 2012): 728-749.

created narratives of cross-cultural relations which sometimes channelled and sometimes challenged the concept of Indian citizenship.

Before I prioritise the civic content of the Tresidder Album too much, however, it is worth noting that the thematics of the photo-assemblages throughout its pages are often related to domesticity. The intimacy of the album is especially apparent in the informal use of ‘Emmie’ in the caption for Tresidder’s wife, Emily, in a section that is headed ‘Personal.’³⁶⁵ Indeed, the entire album is framed in such terms: opening with portraits of himself and both his late and current wife (c. 1856-1864; Figure 44), it goes on to include such everyday colonial items as ‘My favourite trotting cart,’ a scene in the top centre of page 6 (c.1858-1864; Figure 45) which is replete with the eponymous cart and an anonymous Indian attendant. Its size is such that it could easily have served as a point of focus for more than one person at a time, enabling (family) group viewings in which the imagery’s broader political narratives could unfurl in relation to the very personal identifications between particular persons, places, and things. The sense of violent political crisis that permeates the pages dedicated to the recent war is thus balanced by another form of imagery that re-stabilises the British presence in India by anchoring it in the reassuring features of the colonial everyday.

The album mostly covers Tresidder’s life working as a doctor in Cawnpore and then Agra in the late 1850s and early 1860s, as well as some time spent on sick-leave in England around 1863 and his subsequent retirement in Falmouth. It is hard to know whether it was compiled all in one go or cumulatively, but it includes photographs taken by Tresidder himself as well as ones by contemporary photographers in India such as Donald Home Macfarlane (1830-1904), Dr. John Murray, and Felice Beato (although none are attributed to their makers); it is thus a document of image-circulation as much as it is of image production. Many photographs include Tresidder himself as a sitter, so he obviously had input from somebody else when producing these images. Such dispersed authorship is also indicated by the arrangement of the album itself, which, judging from its similarity to contemporary women’s

³⁶⁵ The Tresidder Album, 7.

albums³⁶⁶ and the gendered nature of this practice at the time, may well have been the work not of Tresidder but of his wife, Emily.³⁶⁷ But the captions in the Tresidder Album are nevertheless written in the photographer's own hand, as can be verified by comparison with his medical notes in the diary held in the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts, New Delhi.³⁶⁸ The album is thus likely best understood as the product of a more than one author.

Tresidder was lucky to be alive to take any photographs in the wake of the war. He had been the civil surgeon in Cawnpore prior to the breakout of the Uprising in May 1857, but following the death of his first wife there in December 1856 he had taken furlough from the following March and travelled to England,³⁶⁹ where he married his second wife, Emily Hooton, in Camberwell on 15 August 1857.³⁷⁰ The doctor that was chosen to replace Tresidder during this absence was Assistant Surgeon H. P. Harris,³⁷¹ who along with his wife and child was killed in the massacre in Cawnpore in July – a cruel historical irony.³⁷² Tresidder returned to India while war was still waging, and in February 1858 was back in Cawnpore treating one of the only colonial survivors of the atrocities there for an insurgent bullet wound that he had received to the thigh amidst the fighting that continued to plague the town for many months following its recapture by the British.³⁷³

The near-total annihilation of all the men, women, and children that Tresidder would have known personally and professionally in Cawnpore prior to the war lends the

³⁶⁶ This was suggested to me during a conversation about the album with Renate Dohmen.

³⁶⁷ See Patrizia di Bello, 'Mrs Birkbeck's Album: The Hand-Written and the Printed in Early Nineteenth-Century Feminine Culture', *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 14 (2012): 1-36.

³⁶⁸ Tresidder's medical diary and makes no mention of photography.

³⁶⁹ *Allen's Indian Mail*, vol. XIV, January – December 1856 (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1856), 66.

³⁷⁰ Andrew Winter (ed.), *The British Medical Journal, Being the Journal of the British Medical Association* (London: Thomas John Honeyman, 1857), 724.

³⁷¹ *Allen's Indian Mail*, vol. XV, January-December 1857 (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1857), 19 May 1857, 304.

³⁷² Sir Edward Arthur Henry Blunt, *List of Inscriptions on Christian Tombs and Tablets of Historical Interest in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* (Allahabad: W. C. Abel, Govt. Press, 1911), 114.

³⁷³ Mowbray Thompson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (London: Richard Bentley, 1859), 252.

album's emphasis on family and friends a particularly poignant quality. It can be seen as emerging from a defiant reassertion of colonial domesticity on the very site that had become infamous for its witnessing of the violation of the home environment when Indian men had entered Bibighar, 'The House of the Ladies,' and slaughtered the mothers, wives and children who were imprisoned inside.³⁷⁴ The extent to which these events continued to haunt Tresidder's own domestic environment can be gauged by the fact that he gave the name 'Cawnpore' to the house he retired to in England.³⁷⁵

Yet the rehabilitation of British domesticity that the album proclaims is just one element of its much larger project of visually reconstructing colonial society in Cawnpore. This project is made particularly explicit in the paired scenes of Cawnpore church undergoing architectural reconstruction on page 20 (c.1858-1864; Figure 46), but it also weaves its way through the assemblages of portraits that work to flesh out the operations of a colonial *habitus*. The second page of the album (c.1858-1864; Figure 47) supplements Tresidder's initial identification of himself as a husband with a portrait of him on the top right-hand side of the page standing against a white backdrop and captioned in terms of his public role, 'J. N. Tresidder The Civil Surgeon – Cawnpore.' This professional persona is situated within a series of similar portraits that constitute the local medical network, most notably the Deputy Inspector General of Hospitals, Dr. Dickson (whose pose is identical to Tresidder's), as well as numerous Indian medical staff, including civil surgeon orderlies for the police and the hospital on the same page as Tresidder, and assistant surgeons and doctors on the following page. Tresidder and his British colleague both stand in their photographs while all but one of the Indians sit, thereby establishing a precedence that is underpinned by the higher placement of the British doctors on the page.

Ultimately, however, Tresidder's engagement with hierarchy and race is considerably more nuanced than this initial differentiation would suggest. Europeans do not always enjoy compositional prominence within the album, nor do they often distinguish themselves from Indians through pose. By and large, Tresidder's imagery

³⁷⁴ For an account of the importance of the figure of the British woman within accounts of the Uprising, see Jane Robinson, *Angels of Albion: Women of the Indian Mutiny* (London: Viking Press, 1996).

³⁷⁵ Thank you to Robert Haskins, one of Tresidder's decedents and a family historian, for this information.

is unconcerned with formulating India in terms of difference via a fixation on religion, race, or caste; instead, I would argue, its treatment of Indians can be placed within a bourgeois framework for conceptualising the colonial state. The album's engagement with *private* life does tend to uphold Anglo-Indian distinctions; on page five of the album, titled 'J. N. T 's Family' (c.1858-1864; Figure 48), there is a collage produced from the individual portraits of Tresidder's servants, which coalesce to form a mass of Indian difference (more on this later) against which the white domesticity personified by Tresidder's children – who are represented in separate, individual portraits on the same page – can be established. But the album's dealings with the *public* sphere seems to de-prioritise such racial segregations, with Cawnpore society emerging as a network of bourgeois institutions that find expression in the fairly dedifferentiated portraits of the British and Indian personnel of the medical establishment, the judiciary, and the police

All of those photographed by Tresidder are placed in the same studio environment: they sit in the same chair (upon which can be seen in some images the initials JNT – John Nicholas Tresidder – carved into the arm), against the same white backdrop, and all adopt very similar poses.³⁷⁶ In the album, they are each defined in terms of their role within a professional matrix, as for example 'Ahmad Ali Khan. Govt Pleader (Barrister) Cawnpore' on the middle left-hand side of page eleven (c.1858-1864; Figure 49). As such, Tresidder was mobilising photography to portray Indian men in much the same way as it had been used in the mid- to late-1850s by William James Heaviside, the drawing master at the East India Company's military seminary at Addiscombe, to emphasise the professionalism of young colonial cadets, encouraging a broad uniformity of pose individuated by captions detailing name and rank.³⁷⁷ The regimented poses are in both cases a means of becoming situated within the symbolic order of the imperial apparatus.

Notably, the standardisation of setting and pose in Tresidder's portraits of Cawnpore's civil establishment recalls the bourgeois aesthetics of the *carte-de-visite*.

³⁷⁶ These initials can be seen in the portrait of 'Native Doctor Jail Hospital – Cawnpore' on page nine of the album.

³⁷⁷ William James Heaviside, *Photograph Album of William James Heaviside, Bengal Engineers*. PDP/Photo 42.

Such was the homogeneity of these relatively cheap and small commercial photographic portraits that, as Lara Penny has written, ‘Virtually the entire class of objects, estimated in the tens of millions per year at its peak, can be described in a few sentences.’³⁷⁸ Poses included sitting or standing, often by a table or chair and with props such as books, pillars, and curtains. Their interchangeability has been theorised by scholars in terms of offering an index of ‘emerging notions of equality in citizenship for the bourgeois body politic that emerged in the nineteenth century.’³⁷⁹ Accordingly, by the 1870s the *carte-de-visite* had become a popular format with the Indian elite, or *bhadra samaj*, who used the portraits as symbols of their social mobility and status (1870; Figure 50).³⁸⁰

Malavika Karlekar has pointed out that while some of these Indian patrons would have been self-consciously fashioning themselves in accordance with the poses of the British coloniser, ‘many were directed by an authoritarian photographic establishment used to peddling stereotypical models of “the professional.”’³⁸¹ This, though, would have been the case with some British patrons as well; and indeed, whether or not the *carte-de-visite* constituted authentic acts of Indian self-expression, its aesthetics of sameness still provided a counterweight to the aesthetics of difference that tended to characterise British imperialism.

The capacity for the respectable bourgeois professionalism redolent in such portrait formats to harmonise Anglo-Indian relations was articulated more or less explicitly by George Birdwood in his introduction to Sorabji Jehangir’s collection of photographic portraits of British and Indian men, *Representative Men of India: A Collection of Memoirs, with Portraits, of Indian Princes, Nobles, Statesmen, Philanthropists, Officials, and Eminent Citizens* (1889).³⁸² The book contained a mixture of prominent British colonials, Indian royals, and their ministers, a group of men who, as Birdwood claimed, ‘however else they may be otherwise discriminated, are all connected

³⁷⁸ Penny, ‘The Carte de Visite in the 1860s,’ 729.

³⁷⁹ Penny, ‘The Carte de Visite in the 1860s,’ 730.

³⁸⁰ Karlekar, *Re-Visioning the Past*, 71.

³⁸¹ Karlekar, *Re-Visioning the Past*, 86.

³⁸² Sorabji Jehangir, *Representative Men of India: A Collection of Memoirs, with Portraits, of Indian Princes, Nobles, Statesmen, Philanthropists, Officials, and Eminent Citizens* (London: Messrs. W. H. Allen & Co., 1889).

together by the honour they share in common, of having, in their various spheres of Imperial and Civic duty, won the confidence and affection of the people of India.³⁸³ The photographs provide an alternative to the anthropological mode of representing Indian figures and instead conjure what Pinney has described as ‘a de-ethnicized elite at ease with itself.’³⁸⁴ Their publication in 1889 can be seen as symptomatic of the increasing currency that had been gained by the notion of a formally equal status for peoples across the empire by the late nineteenth century, even if the British continued to display acute ambivalence towards the extension of this imperial equality to non-white subjects.³⁸⁵

Tresidder’s album is thus remarkable for positing a similar liberal argument three decades prior to Jehangir’s photographic intervention in these debates. Indeed, the uniformity of portraits is considerably more striking in Tresidder’s work than in Jehangir’s, which incorporates numerous backdrops and a relative diversity of poses. Geoffrey Batchen has argued that what the *carte-de-visite*’s interchangeable poses take for granted is that ‘class is a look that can be codified and imitated – it’s a mode of performance rather than an inherent quality.’³⁸⁶ Thus while some Indians look ill at ease in Tresidder’s studio (just as some Europeans do), the fact that others appear to adapt to the demands of the bourgeois portrait format with impeccable confidence (see the ‘1st native judge Cawnpore’ on the top left-hand side of page eleven in Figure 49) forges a shared aesthetics of citizenship within the colonial system. It presents an image of Indian men not as conquered enemies who are irredeemably different from the British, but, to use *The Economist*’s words, as ‘equal fellow citizens’ that are ‘ripe (or to be ripened) for British institutions.’

How did these shared acts of posing operate within war-torn Cawnpore? I would suggest that the aesthetic harmonisation of the Anglo-Indian professional that was achieved by Tresidder’s photography was something that marked out his studio space

³⁸³ Jehangir, *Representative Men of India*, v.

³⁸⁴ Pinney, *Camera Indica*, 97.

³⁸⁵ Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham: London: Duke University Press, 2010), 23.

³⁸⁶ Geoffrey Batchen, ‘Dreams of Ordinary Life: *Carte-de-visite* and the Bourgeois Imagination’, in J. J. Long, Andrea Noble, and Edward Welch (eds), *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots* (Oxon: New York: Routledge, 2009), 87.

as site of post-conflict rapprochement. Tresidder's encouragement of standardised poses points to a willingness to allow for the mutual performance of roles within the imperial apparatus to supplant ideas about essential differences between Britons and Indians at a historical moment in which their respective communities had never been more violently alienated from one another. Writing on *commercial* photography studios in India in the nineteenth century, Karlekar has noted that their openness to both British and Indian clientele imbued them with 'a curiously powerful status' within a colonial environment that was characterised by racially determined proscriptions of access to space.³⁸⁷ The particulars of Cawnpore's stratified geography will be looked at later on in this chapter, but serves to say here that Tresidder's amateur studio harboured a certain cosmopolitanism that went against the ethos of exclusion that the Uprising had engendered in many colonial Britons.

Tresidder's photography thus staged an intervention into the crisis of Anglo-Indian relations in Cawnpore, positioning itself as a healing agent within the fragile peace process. The men who visited the photographer's studio space would likely have been aware that both their British and Indian colleagues were sitting in equivalent circumstances, meaning that the studio became an arena within which the social antagonisms of imperialism – thrown into such sharp relief by the Uprising – were temporarily suspended in favour of a 'Photographic Civil Society.'³⁸⁸ If we recall that *The Economist* posited the logic of inclusion inherent to liberalism as an alternative to the view of India as a violent conquest, then Tresidder's inclusive practice can be seen as a palliative photographic treatment of the community, working to soothe the wounds of a ruptured imperial body politic while serving as a prophylaxis against future violent crisis by locating a certain bourgeois professionalism as the cooperative endeavour of multi-racial imperial citizens.

The Limits of Citizenship

Even as Tresidder's studio was staging a parity of professionalism between Briton and Indian, however, Cawnpore was in the throes of a vicious political purge. One

³⁸⁷ Karlekar, *Re-Visioning the Past*, 4.

³⁸⁸ Pinney, *The Coming of Photography to India*, 114.

man invited to sit for Tresidder was Mowbray Thomson, a soldier that survived the horrors of the siege and massacre in order to take up the post of Superintendent of Police in the town for a period following its recapture. According to Thomson, his duties as an officer ‘involved secret service, executions, raising native police, and the sale of plunder.’³⁸⁹ Executions were a daily occurrence under his reign; no Indian man could be considered safe from this purge, no matter how embedded he appeared to be in the imperial apparatus that Tresidder was foregrounding as a site for the harmonisation of Anglo-Indian relations. One prominent Indian policeman under Thomson’s command who had previously been instrumental in the arrests of numerous suspected insurgents was himself eventually accused of betraying the British, brought to trial, and – getting off relatively lightly under the circumstances – sentenced to three years imprisonment.³⁹⁰ Even the Indian executioner responsible for hanging the rebels was ultimately suspended from his own gibbet.³⁹¹

This paranoid climate of persecution was distilled into the studio space of Tresidder in much the same manner as were the politically liberal assertions of collaborative Anglo-Indian professionalism. Prior to execution, some condemned Indian men were placed in chains within Tresidder’s studio, a practice reminiscent of those episodes looked at in Chapter Two that demonstrated the British faith that was placed in the terrorising effects of taking photographs of figures *in extremis*. Two photographs of Gungoo Mehter on the top of page 49 (c.1858-1864; Figure 51) show the thousand-yard stare of a man sentenced to death for his alleged role in murdering British women and children. Mehter holds chains in his hand that sink down beneath the frame of the image and are presumably tied to the captive’s feet, as shown in a photograph lower down on the same page of Mummoo Khan, a ‘Paramour of the Queen of Oude,’ who was condemned to ‘transportation for life for [being] accessory to murder and a leader of Rebellion in 1857.’

Chains aside, however, these are strikingly familiar images. The poses of these men, sitting on the same chair against the same white backdrop, echo those of the British and Indian professionals who were also asked to sit for Tresidder in this space, thus

³⁸⁹ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore*, 206.

³⁹⁰ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore*, 247-248.

³⁹¹ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* 246.

providing a striking demonstration of Allan Sekula's maxim that 'every proper portrait has its lurking, objectifying inverse in the files of the police.'³⁹² Tresidder's studio was therefore weighted with a dual purpose: functioning 'both *honorifically* and *repressively*,' it anointed Indian professionals at the same time as it consolidated the downfall of Indian rebels.³⁹³

Above all, then, Tresidder's studio was an arena that channelled colonial sovereignty in a similar manner to the image-making practices examined in the previous chapter, when the artist's authority to mould his subject matter within the studio space was something that instantiated a broader imperial dynamic of power. In Tresidder's case, his studio staged both what might be termed a 'soft' sovereignty – the liberal extension of some kind of shared citizen-status within the colonial system – or a 'hard' sovereignty in which individuals like Gungoo Mehter were identified as persons subject to state-sanctioned imprisonment and death. To sit in Tresidder's chair was to be situated within a violently resurgent imperial regime.

Despite these overtures of imperial sovereignty, however, the incorporation of rebels into Tresidder's studio could still be troubling to the British. Once placed in front of the photographer's lens, these much-reviled Indian figures suddenly inhabited an arena that functioned to neutralise Anglo-Indian distinctions by filtering them through shared space and homologous poses. Therefore unlike the portraits that have been looked at so far, Mehter for one was not identified in Tresidder's album with a laconic caption merely stating name and occupation; instead, he was conspicuously distanced from the British through an overdetermined account of his alleged atrocities:

Gungoo Mehter – Tried at Cawnpore for hacking to death with swords the Futtegharh fugitives taken by the Nana [Sahib] – also for Hacking the women & children at the Slaughter house Cawnpore on 15th July 1857 and for throwing the living wounded with the dying and the dead together into the Well – also for cutting off the arms, noses, and ears, of 9 of Havelock's spies – seven of whom died in consequence – The two living mutilated men

³⁹² Allan Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive,' *October* 39 (Winter, 1986): 7.

³⁹³ Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive,' 6. Emphasis in original.

were part of the evidence against him – Convicted and Hanged at Cawnpore
8th Sept / 59.³⁹⁴

Tresidder thus deployed text in the album to anchor this rebel portrait in a discourse of criminality, but on an aesthetic level it was not dissimilar from the standardised poses of colonial professionalism that had worked to foster a harmonious environment with a liberal aesthetics of shared citizenship.

That this insurgent occupation of the studio was troubling to the British is evidenced by a remarkable double-page spread of the Tresidder Album entitled ‘Cawnpore’ (c.1859-1863; Figure 52). On the top of right hand side of the spread, page 48, is a photograph of an elderly Islamic cleric who had issued a decree stating that it was moral for Muslims to kill Christians. Again, this portrait mimics the bourgeois tone of the poses of professionalism seen earlier, as do the two portraits beneath it, one of an Indian man called Nana Narain Rao and the other of his son. During the Uprising, Rao had helped the British by passing them information about the notorious insurgent commander, Nana Sahib,³⁹⁵ but he was nevertheless suspected by some as being ‘one of those double-dyed traitors who hang on the skirts of success and are driven backwards and forwards by every gust of fortune.’³⁹⁶ The inclusion of his portrait (an Indian man whose allegiance to the British was uncertain) underneath the portrait of the cleric (whose antipathy to the British was known) speaks to the difficulty of identifying people as friends or enemies in the murky context of counterinsurgency – and especially within a portrait format in which British and Indian men manifested themselves in more or less equivalent aesthetic terms.

The ability to create an aesthetic mode that could emphasise the distinction of British colonials from Indian insurgents was evidently an issue for veterans of the insurrection like Tresidder. Beneath the images of Rao and the cleric is an

³⁹⁴ Tresidder Album, 49.

³⁹⁵ Nana Sahib, as a Cawnpore resident, was once one of Tresidder’s patients. Consequently, following the war, when an Indian man was captured in the early 1870s and accused of being that elusive ex-commander of an insurgent army, it was Tresidder who was relied on to confirm that it was not the fugitive.

³⁹⁶ John William Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857-58*, II, (London: W. H. Allen, 1870), 393.

assemblage of portraits entitled ‘Cawnpore friends’: this is a photomontage of the *white* members of the colonial community, whose heads have been cut from their bodies and arranged to create a composite negative from which to secure this remarkable combination print. (Earlier in the album, Tresidder had done the same with his domestic servants, whose Indianness was contained in a collage and thus segregated from the surrounding photographs of a colonial domestic environment which they subtended with their labour.) The Caucasian unity asserted by the assemblage here appears to be founded on a jointly Christian sense of loss, which is encapsulated by the two-part panorama, ‘North burial ground – Cawnpore,’ which unfolds to span the double-page spread. The death of Europeans is made to literally hang over the post-conflict composition of Anglo-Indian relations in the town.

What we have here, then, are the properties of the photographic portrait – its seriality – acquiring implications that were not fully palatable to the British. The very form of the photograph is therefore reworked as figures are selected, cut out, and stuck together in a manner that recuperated the very racial demarcations that Tresidder’s portraiture practices had earlier worked to elide; strikingly, the combination print of Europeans is then placed as if under siege from the enemy cleric and the possibly disloyal Indian men. Even the ‘loyal native of Cawnpore’ on page 47, the left hand side of the spread, is left formally divorced from the colonial community: because his unreconstructed portrait format resides outside of the composite image of Europeans, his image is situated in visual relation to the insurgent preacher and the ambiguously aligned figure of Rao on the facing page. The Indian population is thereby partitioned into friends and enemies according to imperial notions of ‘loyalty’ – but the colonial community is still seen as formally distinct from both of these Indian categories.

The key point of this is that the spectre of violent crisis confronted colonials with the limits of their capacity to sustain a coherently liberal mode of political and aesthetic praxis through the production of Anglo-Indian sameness. Homi K. Bhabha has identified ambivalence of this sort as a constitutive feature of political liberalism as expressed in the colonial context, wherein the ability for the colonised Other to ‘mimic’ the habits of Europe doesn’t validate the imperial mission so much as it causes deep anxiety in the coloniser, who struggles to maintain a stable sense of self or a distinct aura of authority that can legitimise their dominance over subject

peoples.³⁹⁷ Photography was a potent cause of this sort of anxiety, since its own formal logic raised troubling questions about the relative status of Briton and Indian under the imperial regime.

The studio and the album thus offered cathartic spaces where schizophrenic desires could be addressed, with the formal possibilities of the photographic medium being explored in ways that paradoxically crystallised: 1) a comforting sense of Anglo-Indian harmony within the institutions of the civil establishment, as formal equality was compellingly rendered by the aesthetics of the standardised photographic portrait; and 2) a faith in the inviolate nature of the white community against a demonstrably unstable Indian ‘loyalty,’ as the standardised portrait was segmented and spliced until it could satisfy the imperial craving for racial distinction. In this double movement, the Tresidder Album serves as a visual register for one of the key ideological antagonisms of the post-Uprising empire in India, ‘the effort to preserve elements of an ongoing liberalism within a conception of Indian “difference.”’³⁹⁸

Sightseeing and Segregation

If, as I claimed in the introduction to this chapter, citizenship was something that was instantiated through an engagement with, and appearance within, certain types of images, monuments, and spaces, then Tresidder’s ultimate refusal to allow Indian figures to appear in the same aesthetic terms as Europeans was a disruption of the conditions of visibility for Indian citizenship: it was a rejection of the aesthetic condition within which Indians could be compellingly imagined as potential fellow citizens by the British. Indian people could therefore not even inhabit the necessary ‘realm of appearance’ (to use Butler’s phrase) within which to start making legal claims to citizenship. Indeed, they could not physically appear in some realms in Cawnpore at all. The discrepant citizenship-status that was implied by Tresidder’s experiments with mono-racial photomontage was something that was inscribed onto the stratified post-conflict landscape of the region itself.

³⁹⁷ For an account of the ambivalence of colonial discourse, see Homi K. Bhabha, ‘Of Mimicry and Man: Ambivalence and Colonial Discourse’, *October* 28, Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis (Spring, 1984): 125-133.

³⁹⁸ Metcalf, *The Ideologies of the Raj*, 49.

For the British, the defining characteristic of Cawnpore post-1857 was the memorial garden that had been built on the site of the well in which insurgents had thrown the mutilated bodies of British women and children – both dead and dying – during the war, and which had been found by horror-stricken colonial soldiers when the town was reoccupied. According to the artist Edward Lear (1812-1888), the gardens that were subsequently built there were reminiscent of Hyde Park,³⁹⁹ while another visitor claimed they were ‘of such richness and beauty as to be exceeded by none in England.’⁴⁰⁰ This transplantation of an English park aesthetic to India followed in the footsteps of similar colonial environments in Simla and Barrackpore that were structured by a ‘picturesque’ take on landscape.⁴⁰¹ But the Cawnpore park was unique in that it had been paid for by a punitive levy imposed on the local Indian population. Theoretically public, the gardens were off-limits to all Indians unless they applied for a special permit from the authorities – and even then they were excluded from entering the area surrounding the well itself, which was nestled behind a large Gothic screen designed by Sir Henry Yule and overlooked by Baron Carlo Marochetti’s mournful statue, the ‘Angel of Cawnpore’ (1860; Figure 53).⁴⁰²

The Cawnpore well had been covered up, cordoned off, and sanctified via the erection of a Christian cross while war was still waging. Marochetti’s plaintive angel was placed there after Viceroy Canning had asked the sculptor to produce something a little more sober than some of the proposals that the government had so far received (notably, the depiction of dead children lying at the feet of a British woman pierced by a sword).⁴⁰³ According to Andrew Ward, tourists visited the well and gardens more

³⁹⁹ Vidya Dehejia and Allen Stanley, *Impossible Picturesqueness: Edward Lear’s Indian Watercolours, 1873-1875* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 7.

⁴⁰⁰ C. F. Gordon Cumming, ‘Cawnpore and Lucknow’, *The Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for the Members of the English Church* (ed. Charlotte M. Yonge), vol. VIII, parts XLIII – XLVIII, July-December 1884 (London: Walter Smith, 1884).

⁴⁰¹ See Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*.

⁴⁰² For an account of the regulations for the Cawnpore memorial garden, see: ‘W. H. L. Impey, Chief Secretary to the Government of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, to Hewett, Esq., C.S.I., C.I.E., Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, dated 15 January 1902.’ IOR/L/PJ/6/591, File 142: 20 February 1902.

⁴⁰³ Stephen Heathorn, ‘Angel of Empire: The Cawnpore Memorial Well as a British Site of Imperial Remembrance,’ *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, vol. 8, no. 3 (Winter 2007), 14.

often than they did the Taj Mahal in the decades following 1857, and it continued to be a popular location with colonials until it was rechristened the Nana Rao Park and filled with statues of prominent Indian fighters from the Uprising following Indian Independence in 1947.⁴⁰⁴ Such was the traumatic resonance of the Cawnpore site for the British that it was claimed that grass would not grow over the graves of the children.⁴⁰⁵ If colonials needed to pass by the entrance to the park, it was customary to dismount from horse and carriage and walk as a signal of respect.

Racial policing of the site during the colonial era had not been without controversy. In 1901, a British evangelist for the temperance movement, Mr. Smedley, visited Cawnpore with an Indian friend and attempted to enter the gardens with him. Smedley was told by the British soldier on guard that the Indian man required a pass, but when a demand was made to be shown the regulations to that effect, the soldier was unable to point to any sign explicitly stating the rule; in fact, the only sign that did exist was one saying ‘No Dogs,’ leading a furious Smedley to declare in future public speeches that this was evidently meant to be a disparaging reference to Indians as well. The episode was reported in the colonial newspapers, and even formed the basis for a question in the House of Commons.⁴⁰⁶ For Smedley, the real outrage lay in the fact that the garden was maintained by public funds, making it ‘an absurdity not to allow those to enter in who contribute the greater portion of the cost in the shape of taxes.’⁴⁰⁷ No taxation without assimilation, in other words.

For many colonial Britons, however, the apartheid in effect at Cawnpore was something to be cherished. The first colonial soldier assigned to guard the park was Private Murphy, who along with Mowbray Thomson was one of the only European survivors of the wartime upheavals in the town. Said to be an ‘inveterate

⁴⁰⁴ Andrew Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered*, 550.

⁴⁰⁵ ‘An Old Indian’ [Frederick F. Wyman], *From Calcutta to the Snowy Range; Being a Narrative of a Trip Through the Upper Provinces of India to the Himalayas, containing an Account of Monghyr, Benares, Allahabad, Cawnpore, Lucknow, Agra, Delhi, and Simla* (London: Tinsley Brothers: Calcutta: Wyman & Co: 1866), 81.

⁴⁰⁶ Commons Sitting on Monday, 27th January 1902.

⁴⁰⁷ *Advocate*, 8 December 1901. Quoted in ‘W. H. L. Impey, Chief Secretary to the Government of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, to Hewett, Esq., C.S.I., C.I.E., Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, dated 15 January 1902.’ IOR/L/PJ/6/591, File 142: 20 February 1902.

drunkard,⁴⁰⁸ Murphy nevertheless took seriously his job of keeping the Indian at bay, and boasted to one approving British tourist of how he had ‘not over-gently ejected’ Indian men from the park on a couple of occasions, when, in addition to their illicit entry into the memorial gardens, they had supposedly been displaying ‘grossly disrespectful conduct and deliberate levity in this sacred spot, directed...at the Memorial itself.’⁴⁰⁹

One did not have to be a damaged veteran of the Uprising to find the presence of Indians on sites of insurgent atrocity unsettling. As late as 1905, one tourist wrote the following account of seeing ‘a wild looking fanatical Yogi’ on the riverside in Cawnpore, apparently regaling an Indian crowd with the tale of how the British had once been massacred by rebels on this very spot:

We could not feel then that Marochetti’s beautiful angel over the Well represented the presiding genius of Cawnpore, but rather that the fiendish spirit which had animated [the insurgent general] Nana Sahib was only smouldering, and that fifty years of Western secular education, as assimilated by the Hindu, would not protect us from another outbreak of treacherous fanaticism.⁴¹⁰

For this man, the very proximity of Indian figures to sites of atrocity was disruptive to any progressive imperial notions of Anglo-Indian harmony, as the veneer of Europeanisation loses out all-too-easily to the fanatic insurgent supposedly within every Indian. Spaces such as this therefore framed any occupants in combative ways, activating binary contrasts that created, as Ian Baucom has written, ‘a narrative of the impossibility of imperial intimacy’ between Britons and Indians.⁴¹¹

All of this colonial anxiety over seeing Indians situated on sites of atrocity should be borne in mind when looking at the photographs taken by both amateur and professional practitioners in the Cawnpore memorial park. It is telling that the pre-

⁴⁰⁸ A. Busted, quoted in Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered*, 551.

⁴⁰⁹ ‘An Old Indian’ [Frederick F. Wyman], *From Calcutta to the Snowy Range*, 81.

⁴¹⁰ A. H. Hallam Murray, *The High Road of Empire: Water-colour and Pen-and-Ink Sketches in India* (New York: Dutton and Company, 1905), 154.

⁴¹¹ Baucom, *Out of Place*, 108.

eminent Indian photographer in the nineteenth century, Lala Deen Dayal (1844-1905), does not appear to have produced an image of the memorial well and gardens, while he did take photographs (to be sold commercially) of other significant sites from the 1857 war which were not so vigorously policed on racial grounds. Indeed, a 1902 newspaper report about a group of Indians supposedly taking photographs of themselves on the marble steps leading up to the memorial well's enclosure was enough to warrant an anxious official despatch from the Secretary to the Government of India, who wrote that it was 'much to be regretted' if the claims were true.⁴¹² Yet despite the prohibitive permit system, the zealous groundskeeper, and the overall colonial paranoia about any Indian engagement with this site, a regular feature of the British photographs of the well and gardens is actually the presence of Indian figures – and the almost total absence of Europeans. While some photographs show the park as a vacant space, many scenes situate Indian figures within the confines of a zone defined by the very exclusion of such figures (c.1860-75; Figure 54).

The trepidation with which colonial photographers placed Indian sitters on this terrain can perhaps be gauged by the way that many of these scenes situate staffage behind a latticed fence that enclosed a decorative bed of palm trees and bushes. The compositional effect of this is to cordon-off the Indian men from the Gothic screen in the background and thus from the well itself. But this cloistering of the Indian figure was only operative in the image; as can be seen in Samuel Bourne's perspective on the fence and gardens (c. 1865; Figure 55), the fence did not actually provide any meaningful segregation from the rest of the park or from the central monument. These Indian men were inhabiting a restricted space, even as they were depicted in a manner ostensibly consonant with the apartheid regime.

Still, while the alien status of the Indian presence was fundamental to the organisation of the site, it is a presence that appears thoroughly naturalised in this attendant tourist imagery. This is because the colonial picturesque tradition within which these photographs are situated was one that routinely incorporated Indian figures into the landscape, positioned as objects for the aesthetic delectation of the colonial viewer. On an aesthetic level, then, the Indian men in the Cawnpore photographs are

⁴¹² 'Letter to from J. P. Hewett to W. H. L. Impey, dated 15 February 1902, Calcutta.' IOR/L/PJ/6/591, File 142: 20 February 1902.

unremarkable, and are easily explained by reference to a wealth of contemporaneous images that drew on established tropes of mostly indolent natives ambling unproductively around the landscape. This artistic lineage works to stabilise what in reality was the highly disjunctive – albeit perennial – presence of Indians in photographs of racially policed zones.

The presence of these men is thus testament to the potency of aesthetic templates, with the compulsion towards Indian staffage overriding the apartheid mindset of the British. As Tapatai Guha-Thakurta has noted of the picturesque aesthetic in India, it grew from ‘a filter...into a frame, inscribing itself into the body of the physical space and its structures.’⁴¹³ It is this inscribing of the landscape with the tropes of the picturesque which is at work in these photographs, a channelling of aesthetic form into physical terrain that, in this case, was in tension with highly emotive racial regulations. The relevant permits for Indian access to the park were presumably acquired by colonial photographers, and Indian men consequently placed on restricted Cawnpore ground, all in order to conform to a compositional mould that actually ran counter to the exclusionary ethos of the site itself.

A quixotic reading of these Indian figures might therefore see them as destabilisers of the apartheid regime in Cawnpore, with the artistic sense that Indians belong in the landscape staging a disruptive intervention into the political consensus on segregation. Certainly, it raises questions about different types of belonging to a place: political belonging as citizens, aesthetic belonging as staffage, and a geographical belonging as ‘native.’ The presence of Indian men in the photographs of the Cawnpore memorial gardens emerges from these latter modes of belonging, and far from promoting a broader political integration as citizens, the proximity of Indian men to the well would, if anything, likely have provoked an apartheid-hardening ire in the British. The well was a particularly evocative symbol of Indian guilt. As one poem had it:

Let *us* swear by that well e’en the Hindoo unborn
 Shall have cause to remember Cawnpore
 For vengeance the blood of the massacred cry,

⁴¹³ Tapati Guha-Thakurta, ‘The Compulsions of Visual Representation in Colonial India,’ in Pelizzari, *Traces of India*, 116.

For vengeance each true British heart beateth high,
 Who would not for vengeance be willing to die
 When he thinks of that well at Cawnpore?⁴¹⁴

Notable here is that even unborn Indians – unambiguously guiltless – are the targets of Britain’s extraordinary retributive impulse; as far as the writer is concerned, all Indians inherit a complicity in the massacre that took place. This was no fleeting feeling, either. Over a decade following the Uprising, one colonial tourist in Cawnpore still felt the need to make a plea to his fellow countrymen ‘not [to] attribute all this wickedness, by an indiscriminate or hasty generalisation, to “the natives.”’⁴¹⁵ For the British, then, Cawnpore continuously launched a challenge against the very notion of an ‘innocent’ Indian.

Given this animus, how should we see the colonial framing of Indians on Cawnpore ground? For Judith Butler the act of framing is a fraught endeavour: ‘a picture is framed, but so too is a criminal (by the police), or an innocent person (by someone nefarious, often the police), so that to be framed is to be set up...[something that] ultimately “proves” one’s guilt.’⁴¹⁶ Such a criminalising set-up seems especially pertinent to the earliest photograph of the well to have been taken, Dr. John Murray’s *The Well and Monument, Slaughter House, Cawnpore* (1858; Figure 56). Surrounded by churned earth, Murray’s well was only cordoned-off by a makeshift fence. The photographer makes compositional use of this memorialising structure by having his Indian sitter crouch between two of its posts, so that he is literally framed by the architecture through which the British were marking Indian crimes. Positioned so close to the well that it looks as though he could gaze down into its corpse-strewn depths, the man forms a counterpoint to the small Christian cross on the opposite side of the barrier, separated from divinity by the death of Europeans. His status as an Indian is framed by insurgent atrocity.

⁴¹⁴ J. R. B. ‘The Well at Cawnpore’, *The London University Magazine* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue, and Co., 1858), III, 189. Emphasis in original.

⁴¹⁵ Norman Macleod, *Peeps at the Far East: A Familiar Account of a Visit to India* (London: Stahan & Co., 1871), 280.

⁴¹⁶ Butler, *Frames of War*, 8.

Thus while the incorporation of Indian men into the memorial park was driven by a widespread aesthetic impulse towards staffage, it can also be seen as having a much more particular and site-specific significance, as the resonance of the well implicated these placid figures in the massacre that took place there in the summer of 1857. It is likely that such sitters were often the photographers' servants, ones who were suddenly made to stand for a generalised figure of the 'native' in a process of abstraction that functioned to erode the distinction between them as individuals and the insurgents responsible for the memorialised killing. 'To find oneself posed in a certain way, within a particular setting...let alone *as* someone else or embodying abstract qualities – is to see oneself anew.'⁴¹⁷ It is impossible to know how much any awareness of European artistic traditions involving staffage informed these sitters' perspective on the poses which they were being asked to strike on this site, but one imagines that the history of massacres and counter-massacres that the Cawnpore memorial stood for would not have been lost on them.

To state all of this in terms of the methodology developed in the previous chapter, the image-making events that occurred in this tourist space could potentially operate in psychologically destabilising ways for the Indian men being made to pose. Their status as innocent civilians lacked security here: firstly because they were essentially *persona non grata* in the memorial gardens, and secondly because the Cawnpore well commemorated a massacre for which all Indians were culpable in the eyes of the British. These tableaux could therefore work to highlight the persistent vulnerability of these men to what Literature scholar Alex Tickell has described as 'the fearful misrecognitions of a militia-led colonial society...[which] involve the potential interchangeability of any Indian man with a "mutinous" racial Other.'⁴¹⁸ While this interchangeability would have lost its edge of mortal threat under the 'peacetime' of colonial rule, it would still have shown the very category of a 'loyal' Indian integrated harmoniously into the imperial system as something that lacked stability in the British mind. The shadow of the Uprising cast these Indians in the role of potential insurgents, not potential citizens.

⁴¹⁷ Richard Wendorf, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Painter in Society* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), 135. Emphasis in original.

⁴¹⁸ Tickell, *Terrorism, Insurgency and Indian-English Literature*, 92.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced certain disjunctions between the formal properties of aesthetic practices and the political composition of Anglo-Indian relations. The formal equality between Briton and Indian that was redolent in the *carte-de-visite* was ultimately unacceptable to a colonial photographer haunted by the spectre of a violent Indian insurgency; the racial stratification of Cawnpore was not amenable to a picturesque mode of landscape which demanded Indian staffage. At times, then, the formal conventions of visual practices determined the nature of the Indian body's physical and symbolic position within the post-conflict imperial regime.

The camera was thus a mode of representation that raised questions about the status of Indians under the Raj. It did so at two levels: the point of production, when figures were posed, and the point of reception, when the resulting poses were viewed. The status of the Indian figure was not necessarily the same at each of these levels. Tresidder's reassertion of racial difference took place in the context of the album and therefore at the level of image reception, whereas his liberal extension of equality to British and Indian professionals was something that occurred in the more public space of the studio, as colleagues were posed in equivalent terms. Conversely, in photographs of the Cawnpore park the status of the Indian figure as *persona non grata* would have been more evident at the point of production, when groundsmen and permit regulations had to be overcome, than it would have been at the point of image reception, when the Indian figures could be viewed as aesthetically pleasing staffage. While at one level anxiety over Anglo-Indian discord might have swirled, at another it was assuaged. The British might have been in control of the camera, but the aesthetic forms which were available to them had their own logic – one that was not always smoothly in step with the imperial politics of the day, and which engendered fraught Anglo-Indian encounters.

4

The Art of Peace: Portraiture and Political Instability under the Raj***Introduction***

What does it mean for the aesthetics of a political regime to fail? This is the question posed by the vast 27-foot-long oil painting that Valentine Cameron Prinsep (1838-1904) produced in official commemoration of the spectacular ‘Imperial Assemblage’ ceremony held in Delhi on 1 January 1877 (1880; Figure 57). On the dais, cloaked in rippling blue velvet with an ermine tippet, is the Viceroy of India, Earl Edward Robert Bulwer-Lytton, his arm outstretched towards the stolid figure of Major Barnes, who comes bearing the scroll that gave rise to the fanfare that surrounds them – a proclamation heralding Queen Victoria’s assumption of a new title, ‘Empress of India,’ or *Kaisar-i-hind*.⁴¹⁹ The portraits of numerous South Asian rulers line the surrounding amphitheatre, many taken from studies produced by Prinsep during his year travelling through the so-called ‘princely states.’ Such was the size of this unprecedented imperial group portrait that it occupied an entire wall at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1880, but perceptions that it did not fit there either spatially or artistically permeated the reviews. For one critic, the work ‘suffers terribly from its discordancy with everything in the exhibition, while it ruins the effects of every other picture, not only in its vicinity, but while the glare of its colouring haunts the vitiated eye.’⁴²⁰ It seemed to launch an aggressive ocular assault against the show’s visitors: ‘its high colour shrieks at us in other rooms,’ leaving ‘the eye dazzled and the sense confounded.’⁴²¹

This chapter argues that the disorientating polychromatic discord of Prinsep’s *The Imperial Assemblage held at Delhi, 1st January 1877* was encoded as a crisis of imperial governance for Victorian viewers, disrupting the sober visual strategies that had emerged in Britain to picture political stability. A similar interpretation of the

⁴¹⁹ *Kaisar-i-Hind* was a title used to describe Victoria’s status that maintained its imperial resonance across numerous languages: the Latin *Caesar*, the Hindi *Qaisar*, and the Urdu *Kaisar*.

⁴²⁰ *Illustrated London News*, 1 May 1880.

⁴²¹ *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 3 May 1880.

politically insurgent significance of Prinsep's aesthetic failure at the Royal Academy was offered by a contemporary American critic, who mused on whether the garishness of the artist's painting was actually a form of Indian retribution against the British for the colonised country being coerced into financing the production of this work as a 'gift' for Victoria in the first place. 'Is it possible,' asked the *New York Times*, 'that the inhabitants of India resented this political move, and have begun their stealthy revenge upon England's Queen by undermining her health with this terrible picture?'⁴²² The political antagonisms of the Raj are thus posited, albeit jestingly, as the cause of an injurious visual disharmony in Prinsep's work.

Droll criticism aside, the expression of a political constitution through the formal properties of a pictorial composition was something that would have had traction in areas of contemporary British aesthetic theory. In a recent book on Victorian political imagery, Janice Carlisle has demonstrated that political discourse was often imbued with aesthetic concepts,⁴²³ with John Ruskin's work in particular identifying composition as 'an exhibition, in order of the notes, or colours, or forms, of the advantage of perfect fellowship, discipline, and contentment.'⁴²⁴ It thus follows that compositional *disorder* could imply discontent; certainly, there are shades of such thinking in Ruskin's argument, considered in Chapter One, that it was the lack of naturalism in Indian art that had created the damaging psychological preconditions for violent rebellion in the Indian population in 1857 (see pages 58-62). This chapter – taking its lead from recent work that has located colour as a disruptive 'chromozone'⁴²⁵ of empire – therefore sets out to argue that the offensively turbulent visual schema of Prinsep's 'kaleidoscopic combinations' can be read as a politically unstable aesthetic that worked to reopen the social fissures that the spectacle of the Assemblage had sought to overlay.⁴²⁶

The 1877 Imperial Assemblage was the first of three grand 'durbars' that married aspects of the Mughal ceremony with European feudal forms and were held as

⁴²² *New York Times*, 3 June 1880.

⁴²³ Janice Carlisle, *Picturing Reform in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 33.

⁴²⁴ John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1857), 245.

⁴²⁵ Eaton, 'Nomadism of Colour.' Also see Eaton, *Colour, Art, and Empire*.

⁴²⁶ *The Bury and Norwich Post, and Suffolk Herald*, 18 May 1880.

coronations of British monarchs as emperors or empresses of India – the latter two taking place in 1903 for Edward VII and in 1911 for George V. These formalised the imperial structure that had emerged in the aftermath of the 1857 Uprising when power had passed from the East India Company to the Crown and Indian royals had been promised some security from future conquest in return for recognising the ‘paramountcy’ of the British Raj. This was a period of rule characterised by ‘ornamentalism’ as well as Orientalism, with a framework emerging that was based on the careful calibration and representation of hierarchy.⁴²⁷ An imperial honours system with the Order of the Star of India at the top was nestled within an elaborate feudal aesthetics of empire in which Indian kingdoms were accorded between nine and 21 gun salutes according to their prestige in the eyes of the British, as well as being prescribed coats-of-arms designed by the Bengal civil servant Robert Taylor (these can be seen forming the backdrop to the Anglo-Indian crowd in Prinsep’s painting).⁴²⁸ The legitimacy of the imperial regime was increasingly invested in such iconography, with the spectacles of 1877, 1903 and 1911 anticipating ‘the mass political rallies of European totalitarianism and the aestheticisation of politics in the modern world.’⁴²⁹

A recent collection of essays about the role played by photography in these imperial durbars has uncovered myriad elements of Indian resistance or ideological tension within the photographic archive. Broadly, the essays locate the intersections between these events and a rising tide of anti-colonial feeling in order to trace a narrative in which ‘Over the course of three coronation durbars, maharajas decolonised their bodies’ within the spectacles themselves and their attendant portraits.⁴³⁰ The 1877 event has thus been cast in relative terms as less problematic for the British because less troubled by Indian resistance than the subsequent durbars, and perhaps partly

⁴²⁷ See ‘India’ chapter in David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin, 2002).

⁴²⁸ Robert Taylor, *The Princely Armory: Being a Display of the Arms of the Ruling Chiefs of India After Their Banners as Prepared for the Imperial Assemblage Held at Delhi on the First Day of January 1877* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Govt. Printing, 1877).

⁴²⁹ Julie F. Codell, ‘Photography and the Delhi Durbars: 1877, 1903, 1911’, in Julie F. Codell (ed.), *Power and Resistance: The Delhi Coronation Durbars* (New Delhi: Mapin Publishing in association with the Alkazi Collection of Photography, 2012)

⁴³⁰ Julie F. Codell, ‘Photographic Interventions and Identities: Colonising and Decolonising the Royal Body’, in Codell (ed.), *Power and Resistance*.

because of this it receives by far the least attention in the book. Prinsep's work is mentioned only in passing, yet as I will argue it is precisely here that the aesthetic fabric of the post-1857 regime in India was seen to fray.

Born in Calcutta, Prinsep had a family history on the subcontinent, but his training and career took place for the most part in Europe and saw him active in Pre-Raphaelitism and the Holland Park Circle, even if he was always a peripheral figure within such groups.⁴³¹ The oil portrait studies, immense history painting, and published travel account which Prinsep produced as a result of his year in India have gone virtually unstudied, but they represent one of the most expansive and prestigious commissions ever issued to a painter by the colonial government.⁴³² But the representational difficulties that ultimately beset Prinsep when situating individual Indian rulers within an overarching framework of imperial sovereignty at the *Assemblage* pointed to a broader breakdown in the aesthetics of peace in colonial India – the inability of colonial artistic conventions to envision the multi-racial Raj as a viable political entity.

The following chapter first explores the context for Prinsep's commission, situating his painting and the patronage behind it within the matrix of artistic strategies that had historically been mobilised by the British to project an image of their Indian empire as a legitimate political construct undergirded by treaties and diplomatic ties as much as by unilateral conquest. It goes on to examine Prinsep's encounters with royal Indian subjects, as portrait sittings became zones of discrepant imperial and Indian sovereignties in which coercive colonial demands clashed with the countervailing agency of maharajas, whose qualified acquiescence to imperial diktat is attested to by Prinsep's abandoned canvases. I argue that such representational breakdown finds echoes in *The Imperial Assemblage* scene itself, which, in its tumultuous chromatics, exposed a troubling disconnect between the exigencies of imperial rule over diverse peoples and the visual grammar of political stability.

⁴³¹ See Caroline Dakers, *The Holland Park Circle: Artists and Victorian Society* (New Haven: London: Yale University Press, 1999); and Jan Marsh, *The Pre-Raphaelite Circle* (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2005).

⁴³² It was thought by Luke Fildes that Prinsep would be knighted for his efforts. Dakers, *The Holland Park Circle*, 207.

Diplomatic Portraits of Empire

Two men greet one another with gestures of civility, and in doing so symbolise a historical shift in power relations before a diverse crowd of onlookers whose witnessing works to ratify the new dynamic. These are the broad thematics of Prinsep's luminous and imposing canvas, now displayed in the State Apartments at St. James's Palace in London, but the basic contours of this diplomatic *mise-en-scène* were laid down over a century before the artist came to paint *The Imperial Assemblage held at Delhi*. For most of this thesis, I have shown how a climate of warfare inflected colonial artistic practices: theories of vision were mined for their martial utility, while photographing- and sketching-in-the-field became terrorising spectacles of military occupation and surveillance. But the British were not unilateral in their response to the ever-present threat of unrest on the subcontinent, and here I trace a parallel narrative by considering the role of art on the other side of the imperial coin: those choreographed episodes of diplomacy that complemented the military foundations of British rule and (sometimes) staved off outright warfare.

The sublimation of colonialism's violence into tropes of genteel resolution was a core element of the visual narratives that developed about British power in India in the mid eighteenth century, when the English East India Company was first starting to flex its imperial muscle in earnest. Partly for reasons examined in chapters one and two, the representations of such early colonial history that subsequently emerged in the Victorian and Edwardian eras were fairly at ease with admitting the violence of imperialism; by then, emphasis was frequently placed on British soldiers in combat zones, with imagined scenes from the famous Ur-conflict of the Raj, the Battle of Plassey of 1757, being found in everything from special historical features on 'Battles of the British Army' in the *Illustrated London News* (1893; Figure 58) to the collectable Will's Cigarettes Cards (1912; Figure 59). Yet contemporaries of events such as Plassey were actually presented with a considerably less martial take on the acquisition of empire than this.

For instance, a prototype for Viceroy Lytton's forward tilting, open-palmed pose of genteel greeting in Prinsep's *The Imperial Assemblage* can be found in the history

painting which Francis Hayman produced in response to the British victory at Plassey for exhibition in London's Vauxhall Gardens in the early 1760s. While the finished, large-scale version of Hayman's scene has since been lost, an oil-on-canvas design is held by the National Portrait Gallery (c.1760; Figure 60) and centres on an avuncular British soldier engaging civilly with an Indian commander in the aftermath of battle. On the left is Robert Clive, the man credited with the East India Company's pivotal triumph; on the right is Mir Jafar, an Indian general who had struck a deal with Clive to betray the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-daula, by moving troops away from the action on the battlefield in return for the East India Company anointing him, Jafar, as nawab following Siraj-ud-daula's defeat. This coup placed the British in a position of unprecedented control over the new nawab, and paved the way for the extension of colonial influence across the subcontinent – an achievement framed for eighteenth-century audiences in Britain more in terms of Clive's diplomatic than military nous.

In Hayman's scene, the kindly pose of Clive works to position imperial warfare as a pretext for manly virtue by depositing the triumphalism of this violent historical moment into a visual scheme that located a classical pedigree for British power, recalling, as Romita Ray has written, Charles Le Brun's well-known scene of Alexander the Great displaying post-conflict magnanimity, *Alexander before the Tent of Darius* (1660-1661).⁴³³ War is referred to more or less asymptotically: while Hayman makes an allusion to the flesh-and-blood realities of the Battle of Plassey via the inclusion of the corpse of an Indian soldier in the bottom right-hand corner of the painting, this nod to violent conquest is marginalised within a scene that privileges the friendly encounter of Clive and Jafar. Compositionally speaking, military force is rendered incidental to the establishment of colonial power in Bengal; the central protagonists of the scene mirror one another's civil gestures, and it is from within this locus of Anglo-Indian accord that the British flag is raised over Indian terrain.⁴³⁴

⁴³³ Romita Ray, 'Baron of Bengal: Robert Clive and the Birth of an Imperial Image,' in Codell (ed.), *Transculturation in British Art, 1770-1930*, 24. Ray is drawing on the work of David Solkin here. See David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-century England* (New Haven: London: Yale University Press, 1993), 196-7.

⁴³⁴ A fulcrum of civility was a common compositional feature of Britain's imperial self-representations. A hundred years after Francis Hayman's founding scene of British India, Thomas Barker Jones's 1859 painting *The Relief of Lucknow, 1857*

As the history paintings of the early colonial period in India would have it, the East India Company's imperial ascendancy was the product of just these sort of genial encounters. In 1758, Benjamin Wilson (1721-1788) painted *Mir Jafar and his son Miran delivering the Treaty of 1757 to William Watts* (1758; private collection), which showed Mir Jafar and his son cordially delivering their treaty with the British to the East India Company's representative in Siraj-ud-daula's court. In 1774, Benjamin West (1738-1820) painted a statesmanlike Clive formally receiving the grant of Diwani – the right to collect revenue and implement civil justice in Bengal – from the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II in 1765 (1774; Figure 61), a scene that showed the Mughals passing on these privileges of imperial sovereignty to the British in a diplomatic ceremony while ignoring the catalysing force behind such apparent generosity, the East India Company's victory at the Battle of Buxar in 1764. Similarly, following the Third Anglo-Mysore War (1789-1792), the artist Mather Brown ignored the military dimension to the conflict in order to portray the delivery of the so-called 'definitive treaty' to the victorious Governor-General, Lord Charles Cornwallis, by the improbably happy-looking captive sons of Mysore's defeated ruler, Tipu Sultan (1793; Figure 62). The violence of colonisation was repeatedly put under erasure by reference to these supposedly palliative moments of Anglo-Indian political ceremony.

Prinsep's *The Imperial Assemblage at Delhi* was thus situated within a colonial genre of history painting that was predicated on a sort of diplomatic fetishism, with the architecture of empire seen not as a deadly relationship among warring bodies but as an abstractly legal relationship among treaties. This cannot be attributed wholly to bad faith, for in a very real sense it was a complex web of political treaties, rounds of formal and informal negotiation, and circuits of political ceremony that sustained the British presence in India. Significantly, though, Prinsep's scene differs from its eighteenth-century progenitors in that it removes Indian participation from the central

(now held in the National Portrait Gallery in London) showed an episode from the Indian Uprising in which the leader of a British relief force, Field-Marshal Sir Colin Campbell, greeted the beleaguered Lieutenant-General Sir James Outram outside of the besieged Residency complex in Lucknow. The men calmly shake hands amid the maelstrom of Anglo-Indian fighting, and the further one pans out from this central display of imperial phlegm the more chaotic and injurious the scene becomes, as if this gentlemanly gesture possessed apotropaic qualities capable of keeping the surrounding violence at bay.

action: all maharajas are consigned to the role of passive spectators of British supremacy here. However, while passive acceptance of British power reigns at the level of representational content, the very existence of Prinsep's populous scene was intended by the British to symbolise a more active Indian embrace of Victoria's imperial status. Unlike previous history paintings of colonial events, this was (ostensibly) a gift to the queen from the Indian subjects whose portraits line the background of the image.

The names of the 38 states that 'subscribed' to the painting are listed on the frame.⁴³⁵ While these included both British- and Indian-run territories, the viceroy had engineered the commission to appear as if it was specifically the Indian rulers who had spontaneously proposed it as a commemorative offering.⁴³⁶ Prior to the Assemblage in Delhi, a circular had been sent round to Indian royalty inviting subscriptions to the painting; and while the response appears to have been muted at best,⁴³⁷ Lytton nevertheless wrote to the queen claiming that her subjects were anxious to present her with 'a pictorial record of the event.'⁴³⁸ Indian agency was thus more or less ventriloquised by the viceroy for the sake of diplomatic expediency. Each of the maharajas who subscribed to have their portrait included in Prinsep's scene for Victoria had already received a medallion engraved with her image when

⁴³⁵ Working clockwise from the top left-hand side of the frame, these are as follows: Rajpootana, Tonk, Kerowlee, Jhallawur, Dholepore, Ulwur, Bhurtpore, Kisengurh, Boondee, Jodhpore, Jeypore, Oudeypore, Tanjore, Bombay, Bengal, Bewal, Bopal, Dorga Dhar, Duwitta, Bumptur, Rutlum, Jowrah, Chirkaree, Puwna, Chuwterpor, Ajeyurh, Central India, Jkend, Bhawulpore, Indore, Gwalior, Cashmere, Hyderabad, Baroda, Mysore, Rampore, Nabha Sikh.

⁴³⁶ 'Summary of Correspondence Respecting Mr. Prinsep's Picture of the Imperial Assemblage,' IOR DIEK 035/43, 1

⁴³⁷ The notable silence of the Indian rulers in the summary of correspondences regarding the commission is telling. Viceroy Lytton first asked political agents to make enquiries about the likelihood of Indian rulers subscribing to the commission. He hoped to be able to write to Victoria about 'the anxiety of the Native Chiefs to be allowed to present Her with a large oil picture,' but as the report says he 'does not appear [to have written] as promised.' Ultimately, a circular was sent around stating that 'a desire was expressed on the part of many Chiefs and Princes, to commemorate [the Assemblage] by a painting to be presented to the Queen,' but the report admits to not having seen any Indian replies on the matter. See 'Summary of Correspondence Respecting Mr. Prinsep's Picture of the Imperial Assemblage', IOR DIEK 035/43, 2.

⁴³⁸ Lytton quoted in online catalogue for the Royal Collections.

<http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/407181/the-imperial-assemblage-held-at-delhi-1-january-1877>.

they had been presented to Lytton during the ceremony of the Assemblage. Prinsep's group portrait thus added a sense of diplomatic reciprocity to these proceedings.

This sort of coercive artistic exchange was not new. Art – and in particular portraiture – had been active in episodes of diplomacy almost from the inception of Anglo-Indian relations. The sixteenth-century Mughal Emperor Akbar and his successor Jahangir both received British envoys that used artworks as gifts.⁴³⁹ In the 1760s, the British governor of Madras arranged for King George III to gift a portrait of himself to the Nawab of Arcot, Muhammad Ali, who in turn sent back his own portrait painted by the expatriate English artist, Tilly Kettle (1735-1786).⁴⁴⁰ In a series of articles on such early colonial portraiture, Natasha Eaton has described how the first Governor-General of Bengal, Warren Hastings, tried to conventionalise this practice of exchange in the 1770s and 80s, frequently gifting his own portrait while at the same time aggressively pressing European painters on Indian rulers who otherwise showed no enthusiasm for patronising western art.⁴⁴¹

Those maharajas who were required to ceremoniously receive and (reluctantly) gift portraits during the Imperial Assemblage were therefore partaking in a historically resonant act of imperial cultural hegemony. Hastings had imposed portrait-gifting practices on eighteenth-century Indian rulers in an attempt to supplant aspects of traditional South Asian gifting so as to render it compatible with East India Company concerns about corruption. The Mughal-derived *darbar* ceremony that the Assemblage had appropriated and adapted for British purposes was a ritual of 'incorporation' in which the person being admitted into the presence of the ruler was required to offer *nazar* (gold coins) and/or *peshkash* (valuables) in return for *khilats* (specific kinds of clothes that could also include other signifiers of authority such as animals or jewels). Offering *nazar* or *peshkash* represented an acknowledgement that the ruler was a source of wealth and wellbeing; receiving *khilat* symbolised the incorporation of the recipient into the body of the Indian sovereign, and thus into the

⁴³⁹ Eaton, 'Mimesis and Alterity,' 821.

⁴⁴⁰ See Eaton, 'The Art of Colonial Despotism.'

⁴⁴¹ See Eaton, 'Mimesis and Alterity'; 'The Art of Colonial Despotism'; and 'Critical Cosmopolitanism.'

body politic.⁴⁴² Yet it was the economic value of *nazar*, *peshkash*, and *khilat* that loomed large in the imperial mind, with such rituals of symbolic exchange being seen merely as opportunities for bribery and extortion.⁴⁴³ The interpolation of the portrait into this Indian custom was thus used to rid it of what was for the British a fiscally destabilising element.⁴⁴⁴

The Indian rulers on whom the portrait-gift was first imposed remained conspicuously hostile to the new hybrid practice. On occasion, the portraits that were received were given away contemptuously, and even those that were kept were sometimes hung upside down and allowed to rot.⁴⁴⁵ Acts of subversion such as this are unsurprising considering the scale of the usurpation that the portrait-gift had attempted to effect. The entire Mughal framework of reciprocity was being dismantled, with the East India Company expecting Indian rulers to patronise European portraitists only to then gift the resulting work back to the Company while increasingly receiving no portrait in return. A Mughal ritual of exchange had thus been aggressively transformed into a kind of tribute offered to the colonial British.⁴⁴⁶ But the disruptive ascendancy of the portrait-gift was relatively brief: Hastings, its main advocate, resigned as Governor-General in 1785, and his successors were more or less indifferent to cementing the practice. Colonial artists who had sought to capitalise on the Hastings-era need for European-style portraits increasingly started to go unpaid by Indian royals who otherwise made a point of their munificent patronage of Indian artists.

⁴⁴² Caroline Keen, *Princely India and the British: Political Development and the Operation of Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 176. This sartorial envelopment into the political system was arguably active in inverted form during the Assemblage, when Lytton presented Indian rulers with the queen's medallion – an item to be worn.

⁴⁴³ Eaton, 'Between Mimesis and Alterity,' 819.

⁴⁴⁴ For Hastings – a man whose ruthless imperial instincts were intertwined with a scholarly love of Indian culture – the portrait was the ideal object to substitute for fiscally destabilising items such as coins and jewels because according to the sixteenth-century Mughal Emperor Akbar's chronicle, the *Ain-i-Akbari*, portraits were already enmeshed in the performance of Indian sovereignty and thus capable of being weighted with the symbolic import necessary for Indian courtly ritual. As Akbar's chronicler, Ab'l Fazl, recorded, 'His Majesty himself sat for his likeness and also ordered to have the likenesses taken of all of the grandees in the realm. An immense album was thus formed; those who had passed away have received new life and those who are still alive have immortality promised them.' See Eaton, 'Mimesis and Alterity'.

⁴⁴⁵ Eaton, 'Between Mimesis and Alterity,' 822.

⁴⁴⁶ See Eaton, 'Between Mimesis and Alterity.'

By the Victorian period, however, there is evidence to suggest that portrait exchange had gained currency in independent networks of South Asian kingship. During his time in India following the Uprising, the artist William Simpson accompanied Viceroy Charles Canning on a tour of the subcontinent aimed at consolidating British power through a series of durbars. The artist was of particular use to the viceroy because Canning was keen that these ceremonies be seen in the pages of the *Illustrated London News* (presumably to realign the expression of imperial power with diplomatic tropes after media coverage had been dominated by scenes from the recent war). According to Simpson, the Indian royals who were visited by the viceroy also kept artists in their employ whose ‘principal work is to take portraits, often doing their master’s portrait to send to other rajahs, and doing rajahs and chiefs for their employers collection.’⁴⁴⁷

Thus when, in 1860, the Maharajah of Kashmir, Ranbir Singh, was asked to sit for a portrait with Simpson during one of the viceregal durbars which would soon grace the pages of the *Illustrated London News* (1860; Figure 63), he was able to ambush the British with a reciprocal action, suddenly admitting that he had his own artist in the durbar tent ‘enduring under very strange conditions’ to obtain a likeness of the viceroy: he was ‘concealed...under a kind of sofa, which had been placed as nearly opposite Lord Canning’s seat as it was possible.’⁴⁴⁸ This act of diplomatic subterfuge functioned to incorporate an unwitting viceroy into a mode of portrait praxis that was organised under the (covert) regal agency of the maharaja; at the same time, it situated within an economy of reciprocal exchange any portrait that the colonial artist Simpson might produce. The scene of Simpson’s that ended up in the *Illustrated London News* did not admit this reciprocity, but showed the viceroy receiving a Kashmiri shawl from Singh in an act of what the newspaper article termed ‘tribute’ – just one item among the horses, tents, beds, arms, and furs that were reportedly offered to Canning by the maharaja. But a certain equality of status was nevertheless enforced in the encounter itself even if it was denied in the visual documentation.

Essentially, what the maharaja’s willing exposure of his hidden portraitist laid bare was the Indian royal’s awareness that the portrait being requested by the viceroy was

⁴⁴⁷ William Simpson, *Notes and Recollections of My Life*, 125.

⁴⁴⁸ William Simpson, *Notes and Recollections of My Life*, 125.

not an innocently friendly gesture, but a manoeuvre that was enmeshed in the power plays, variously clandestine and conspicuous, of diplomacy. It is against this historical backdrop of overlapping British and South Asian circuits of portrait production and exchange that Prinsep's *The Imperial Assemblage in Delhi* should be viewed. The model of diplomacy for which Prinsep was made ambassador would not have appeared altogether new to Indian rulers, but its particular valences were open to change depending on how those rulers responded to the demands of the portrait sitting. Some, *a la* the Maharaja of Kashmir, sought to challenge the imperial significance of the proceedings by highlighting their countervailing Indian agency.

Gaps in the Paint

Prinsep used watercolour to sketch some of the less powerful maharajas in India, but the majority of Indian rulers sat for full-length oil portraits with the artist in their own kingdoms in the months following the coronation durbar. All of these portraits are of similar dimensions (around 100cm by 80cm, or 39" by 31") and are now held in the Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata, having been acquired from the Governing Committee of the Bengal Club in February 1936.⁴⁴⁹ Each figure is shown seated, with the exception of the young son of the Maharaja of Kashmir (1877; Figure 64), who stands in profile and can be seen as such behind Lytton in *The Imperial Assemblage Held at Delhi*. In various states of incompleteness, these are unloved canvases in which blank background (1877; Figure 65), unworked undercoating (1877; Figure 66), and cracked and fading paint (1877; Figure 67) attest to a history of indifference, neglect, and resistance.

How should we think about such gaps in the image? It is not sufficient to attribute the abandoned nature of these works to the fact that they were executed as studies for a larger, prioritised history painting. For one thing, Prinsep's portrait of the Maharana of Oodeypore (Udaipur), Sajjan Singh (1877; Figure 68), goes to the trouble of painting a wallpaper-patterned background that would have been of no use to *The Imperial Assemblage held at Delhi*, implying that the artist at one point had hopes of

⁴⁴⁹ Thank you to Jayanta Sengupta at the Victoria Memorial Museum for this information.

completing stand-alone representations of these figures. But more than this, the level of finish in the studies does not relate neatly to the prominence of the Indian rulers in the final scene. In the portrait of the young Rana of Dholpur, Nihal Singh (1877; Figure 69), for example, the shades of cream, highlights of white and strips of gold on his bejewelled clothes have been treated with considerable painterly attention and care in comparison to the flat-toned undercoating on the Maharaja of Mysore, Chamaraja Wodeyar IX (Figure 65). Yet in Prinsep's finished scene it is this latter (significantly more politically powerful) figure whose costume is most conspicuous, while the former fades into the shadows, blocked anyway by the heads of other rulers (1880; Figure 70).

Something that the gaps in the paint of these portraits do attest to is the consistently beleaguered conditions in which Prinsep found himself operating in India. In the painter's illustrated narrative of his travels, *Imperial India: An Artist's Journals, Illustrated by Numerous Sketches Taken at the Courts of the Principal Chiefs in India* (1879), an affected tone of bonhomie frequently gives way to moments of anger and anxiety in his attempts to deal with native royalty.⁴⁵⁰ He was on the front line of the British campaign to convey India's subordination: it was often left to him to deliver the message that the portrait sittings for which maharajas were paying was a 'gift' to Victoria as opposed to something which the rulers themselves would one day see the results of. Sittings were consequently fraught and fluid zones in which the dynamic of Anglo-Indian relations was negotiated and performed. The artist was interrogated by subjects such as the Maharaja of Bhurtpore, who 'bothered me a great deal to know what the [colonial] Government are going to give him for sitting, whether he is to have a copy (great Heavens!) of the picture, or an engraving.' It is 'rather hard,' Prinsep complained, 'that I should have to explain to them that they get nothing for their money.'⁴⁵¹

It was not only the maharajas whose expectations of treatment were readjusted in these sittings. A key motif of Prinsep's narrative is his sense of pride in his status as an artist coming into conflict with the severely curtailed conditions under which

⁴⁵⁰ Valentine Cameron Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist's Journals, Illustrated by Numerous Sketches Taken at the Courts of the Principal Chiefs in India* (London: Chapman & Co., 1879).

⁴⁵¹ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist's Journals*, 85.

Indian royals permitted him to operate. Lytton had initially thought that Prinsep could gather all of the necessary portraits in the brief time that everyone was on formally *British*-run territory in Delhi for the Assemblage, yet while a number of maharajas – in particular those from the more remote or inaccessible regions of the subcontinent – were sketched or painted by Prinsep in a flurry of activity in those few days, the number of sitters meant that the artist’s work sprawled beyond both this event and the boundaries of explicitly colonial terrain. Thus from the perspective of the Indian royals in whose kingdoms Prinsep found himself over the course of the following year, the portrait sitting functioned as a sort of reinscription of their subordinate status *vis-à-vis* an imperial suzerain. And while Prinsep might have dismissed as ‘children’ the rulers who viewed him with ‘suspicion’ on the basis of his role as an ‘accredited painter to the Government,’ his own hunting-based analogies cast his practice as a site of antagonism.⁴⁵² His mission was ‘to track the rajah to his lair, and there “fix” him,’⁴⁵³ while his first sitter was described as his ‘first victim.’⁴⁵⁴

Still, Prinsep might play the predator, but his reliance on the hospitality and cooperation of Indian rulers opened up a space for maharajas to use portrait sittings to assert countervailing narratives of native sovereignty, taking advantage of the autonomy they enjoyed within their own kingdoms to complicate attempts to take their likeness. Following the sittings, Prinsep was repeatedly required to put touches on his portraits in cramped spaces ‘singularly unfit for painting-rooms’ (‘what room in India is suitable for a studio?’⁴⁵⁵) and was sometimes even left with nothing other than his own hot travelling tent miles from where he was having his sittings⁴⁵⁶ (‘painting in a tent in this climate with a shining and blazing sun is next to impossible’).⁴⁵⁷ The artist’s woeful published narrative of his troubles can in some respects be seen as pre-empting criticism of his final painting by pointing to such difficult conditions of production.

⁴⁵² Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist’s Journals*, 74.

⁴⁵³ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist’s Journals*, 3.

⁴⁵⁴ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist’s Journals*, 30.

⁴⁵⁵ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist’s Journals*, 284.

⁴⁵⁶ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist’s Journals*, 234.

⁴⁵⁷ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist’s Journals*, 31.

The assault which some maharajas launched against the space of image facture must have been particularly galling for a painter such as Prinsep, whose investment in the notion of the studio as a privileged environment over which he held authorial sway was demonstrated by his inclusion in Frank Dudman's series of photographs of artists in their studios in the 1880s (1883; Figure 71). Here, he sits authoritatively in the centre of a capacious and sumptuous room filled with dozens of paintings, his gaze fixed on the viewer and his palette and brushes held in prominent view. Ironically, the artist commissioned the luxurious room in which we see him in this photograph just before travelling to India, when he had agreed to pay the architect Philip Webb up to £850 to make alterations to his house so that it could accommodate a larger studio.⁴⁵⁸

Yet Prinsep's authorial privilege was undermined in India even before the rulers consigned him to insulting studio environments. The artist tended not to find willing sitters, and had to negotiate continuously with the hostility or indifference of maharajas towards the mere prospect of a portrait sitting. In a typical lamentation, Prinsep complained that 'the Rajah is late again, later than ever... Confound all Rajahs! – Ah! here he comes! I must smile and be happy, with black rage at my heart.'⁴⁵⁹ On one occasion, the artist was kept waiting for days for a sitting that was ultimately cancelled altogether.⁴⁶⁰ Prinsep interpreted such tardiness through pre-conceived notions of Indian ineptitude, claiming that the rulers had 'no more idea of time than sitting hens.'⁴⁶¹ But it is interesting to note that a common motif of Mughal paintings of royalty had once been an hourglass indicating control of time, and thus while Prinsep's European aesthetic conventions meant that signifiers of this sort were unavailable to the maharajas in their *portraits*, the temporal mastery of an Indian sovereign could nonetheless be asserted through calculated belatedness in regards to the *portrait sittings*.⁴⁶²

Gaps in the paint of Prinsep's portraits therefore indexed fissures in Anglo-Indian relations. The state of finish was inextricably tied up with the difficulties that assailed

⁴⁵⁸ Dakers, *The Holland Park Circle*, 207.

⁴⁵⁹ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist's Journals*, 126.

⁴⁶⁰ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist's Journals*, 104.

⁴⁶¹ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist's Journals*, 126.

⁴⁶² Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and their States*, 147.

Prinsep in India, with rulers hampering the portrait sitting in order to inscribe the artist's practice with a sense of Indian independence. As a rule, then, the most incomplete portraits stand as testament to the assertion of a disruptive Indian agency. Prinsep's least finished painting was of his 'worst sitter,' the Maharaja of Gwalior, Jayajirao Scindia (1877; Figure 72), who also happened to be one of the most powerful. Scindia had sided with the British during the Uprising and by all accounts seemed more or less content with his situation under British rule; but for all that, his deference had its limits. As Prinsep reported after the Imperial Assemblage, '[Scindia] had behaved very badly the day before to the Viceroy, who made him Chancellor of the Empire, an English general, and gave him the title of Sword of the Empire, and twenty-one guns [in salute]; for all which Master Sindia forgot to say "thank you."'”⁴⁶³ Scindia's interaction with the British was therefore layered: on the one hand, he was a highly decorated model of militarily useful 'loyalty,' but on another, he rejected the sort of etiquette of respect that the British desired.

Such a rejection was made particularly manifest during Scindia's dealings with Prinsep, which appear to have been used to recuperate a sense of autonomy while going along minimally with British demands. In Delhi during the Assemblage, Prinsep had had an appointment for a sitting with Scindia but the maharaja never turned up; on an occasion when the artist did manage to get a sitting, Scindia left after only fifteen minutes, 'whereupon he invited me to Gwalior; and I shall have to go, bad luck to it!'⁴⁶⁴ In Gwalior, the maharaja moved constantly during Prinsep's attempts to paint him and said explicitly that if the British resident Sir Henry Daly had not personally asked him to do so, he 'wouldn't sit at all...after all what is the use? I don't get anything by it.'⁴⁶⁵ The artist's practice was thus caught between the imperial authority of the resident and the local authority of the maharaja, with the portrait sitting becoming a stage for the latter's ambivalent display of deference to an imperial suzerain.

⁴⁶³ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist's Journals*, 32.

⁴⁶⁴ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist's Journals*, 39.

⁴⁶⁵ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist's Journals*, 66.

Prinsep was eventually compelled to end the session when it became ‘impossible to keep him [Scindia] any longer,’⁴⁶⁶ and even had difficulty acquiring a set of the recalcitrant maharaja’s clothes from which to make independent studies (although the artist did ultimately manage to get some via Scindia’s son).⁴⁶⁷ This clash over the maharaja’s clothing was especially fraught. Previous accounts of the visual culture of the coronation durbars of 1877, 1903, and 1911 have tended to locate anti-colonial feeling only in the portraits from the latter two events because by that time Indian assertions of independence were finding visual expression in the attire that sitters chose to wear for their (photographic) portraits. Indian dress was heavily coded: whereas extravagantly bejewelled items had once been key to the self-fashioning of South Asian royalty, under the Raj these began to signify a lack of modernity to British eyes and thus worked to shore up imperial claims to supremacy. The British consequently expected such traditional dress to be worn at events like the coronation durbars, as the ornate Indian body was demarcated as ‘an imperial masquerade, whose assertions of wealth and dynastic privileges flaunted the lineage and traditions of Indian royals on the one hand, while cementing the currency of British imperial rule on the other.’⁴⁶⁸

Scindia ultimately fell prey to this sartorial snare: his constant thwarting of Prinsep’s attempts to get a decent sitting obliged him in the end to ‘put on his jewels’ and sit instead for his amateur photographer son, Bulwant Singh, in order to give the artist a photograph to work from in lieu of the physical presence of maharaja himself.⁴⁶⁹ Even so, by relocating the sitting into the realm of photography, the maharaja arrogated an amount of control over the conditions of his pose, keeping the image-making event within the family and mobilising a medium that was emblematic of the very modernity that the British sought to deny him by their stress on traditional dress. He was not the only ruler to do this: Prinsep was repeatedly given photographic portraits when he failed to capture likenesses during the sittings which were rationed to him, with the Maharaja of Jeypore (Jaipur) and the Maharaja of Dhār in particular making a point of their fluency with the practice.

⁴⁶⁶ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist’s Journals*, 66.

⁴⁶⁷ *Los Angeles Herald* 26: 116 (24 January 1897): 17.

⁴⁶⁸ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 154.

⁴⁶⁹ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist’s Journals*, 73.

The use of photography to explore alternative aesthetic trajectories for Indian royal identity is made tangible in a carte-de-visite portrait that Scindia had done by Bourne & Shepherd in the 1870s in which he eschewed ornate attire in favour of simple white Maratha dress (c.1875; Figure 73). This hints at the growing divergence between the maharajas and the British in regards to the fashioning of kingly authority; the imperial investment in elaborate ‘exotic’ costumes on Indian rulers meant that it only had to be visually denied to the British in order to start disrupting colonial categories, and as Julie Codell has demonstrated, maharajas accordingly ‘decolonised their bodies’ in the 1903 and 1911 durbars by ‘wearing simpler, martial clothes...and assuming masculine postures’ in the attendant official photographs.⁴⁷⁰

Unlike these later rulers, Scindia did not disrupt the official imagery of the Assemblage with his plain attire, but his reluctance to be painted on Prinsep’s terms meant that a commission based on a crude British notion of portrait-as-gift was reconstituted as a fluid image-making encounter in which an overarching framework of imperial hegemony harboured the countervailing assertion of South Asian sovereignty. Prinsep felt insulted by Scindia, writing that he ‘does not know what is due to an artist who has come a hundred miles for a sitting.’⁴⁷¹ Yet the maharaja was obviously not unfamiliar with the procedure: the room in which the sitting occurred was adorned with both Indian- and European-painted portraits of the ruler. Prinsep was unable to attribute Scindia’s restless movement to ignorance of etiquette, and was forced instead to appreciate it as an undercurrent of self-asserting agency within the wider framework of feudal subordination that was symbolised by the ruler’s acceptance of dressing up, sitting, and gifting. As another maharaja later told the artist, ‘It was not sitting Sindia found so unpleasant, it was being obliged to sit.’⁴⁷² The image-making event itself thus opened up a space for a resistance that is perhaps not immediately apparent at the level of representational content, legible only through the gaps in the surface of the paint – moments of imperial failure to properly mobilise Indian rulers for this diplomatic exercise.

⁴⁷⁰ Codell, ‘Photographic Interventions and Identities,’ 133.

⁴⁷¹ Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist’s Journals*, 67.

⁴⁷² Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist’s Journals*, 74

Composing Power

However hard Indian rulers like Scindia might have tried to hijack the significance of the portrait sittings, Prinsep was always going to have the last word. The high finish of the artist's *The Imperial Assemblage* served to paint over those cracks in colonial relations that had been registered by the interstices of the individual portraits. Yet I want to suggest that something of these maharajas' potential unruliness did smuggle itself into the vast and ill-fated rainbow-coloured canvas that Prinsep spent two years working on following his return to England in 1878. At the Royal Academy exhibition in 1880 there was a near-unanimous critical recoiling from a scene that functioned as 'an historical rememberancer [sic]' but which 'as a work of contemporary art...has nothing to commend it.'⁴⁷³ Yet there was also sympathy to Prinsep for having been dealt such a 'thankless task.'⁴⁷⁴ It was noted that the 'tinselled ceremony' of the coronation durbar was itself 'a fiasco artistically,' meaning that there was little scope for 'art-treatment.'⁴⁷⁵ The voices of the art establishment, *The Art Journal* and *The Athenaeum*, were particularly sympathetic in this regard, and offered the most (faint) praise – or at least the most tempered criticism – of what was a 'good picture in many respects,' a critical sensitivity that was possibly due to Prinsep's personal popularity within establishment circles.⁴⁷⁶

Such was the size of Prinsep's painting that is difficult to find precedent for it, but judging from the similarity of the figures in the bottom-left corner of the scene and those in Frederic Leighton's *The Syracusan Bride* (1866; Figure 74), it seems that Prinsep had his neighbour and friend Leighton's work in mind – a work which was noted for its scale by critics when it was displayed in 1866, but was still only half the size of *The Imperial Assemblage*. Generally speaking, it was classical subject matter of the sort that Leighton's scene addressed that predominated in large paintings: another possible point of comparison for Prinsep's scene was Paolo Veronese's 15 feet-long *The Family of Darius before Alexander* (c.1567; Figure 75), which had been bought for the National Gallery in London in 1857 (but, again, was only around half

⁴⁷³ *The Newcastle Courant etc.*, 30 April 1880.

⁴⁷⁴ *The Art Journal* 6 (1880): 218.

⁴⁷⁵ *Illustrated London News*, 1 May 1880.

⁴⁷⁶ *The Athenaeum*, 1 May 1880, 572.

the size of Prinsep's).⁴⁷⁷ In terms of scale, then, Prinsep's scene laid claim to an illustrious classical pedigree for Britain's Raj. Yet if such connections were made, they were made silently; mostly, the critics responded to the painting in terms of its role as a group portrait – an 'intractable multitude' of Indian rulers, military men, British governors, wives and daughters.⁴⁷⁸ The notion that the congeries of figures did not make aesthetic sense permeated the reviews.

Recalling Ruskin's belief that good composition in the arts was bound up with 'the great laws of Divine government and human polity,' it seems significant that numerous critics located the compositional failings of Prinsep's scene precisely in the constitution of the Anglo-Indian polity that was represented at the Assemblage.⁴⁷⁹ Critics believed that 'by marshalling the many-tinted actors in his drama Mr. Prinsep has been compelled by the immutable exigencies of etiquette and precedence to violate a good many laws and ordinances governing the juxtaposition of tones, the distribution of light and shade, and the symmetries of composition.'⁴⁸⁰ The political makeup of the Raj and its expression at the coronation durbar were therefore viewed as visually problematic.

For the *Illustrated London News*, aesthetic failure was basically inevitable given the political constitution of the subject matter:

how gaudy, under the Indian sun, *must* be this painted open-air pageant of rajahs, maharajahs, and British governors seated in one expansive semicircle (though not nearly so large as it in fact was), dressed in their gorgeous native or European costume, each backed by his banner given by the Queen, and each banner emblazoned with the grotesque and anachronistic heraldry of the British College of Arms.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁷ This scene was suggested to me in the helpful feedback which I received to a paper on Prinsep given at the Paul Mellon Centre on 22 November 2013.

⁴⁷⁸ *Illustrated London News*, 1 May 1880.

⁴⁷⁹ Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing*, 247.

⁴⁸⁰ *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 3 May 1880.

⁴⁸¹ *Illustrated London News*, 1 May 1880.

Such an attack on the heraldry (which was made specially for the Assemblage) appears in numerous reviews and meant that even Britain's attempt to render the 'intractable multitude' visually comprehensible as a viable political network bound by shared forms of imagery is seen to offer nothing more than further convolution. In other words, the entire aesthetics of empire – from the clashing variety of luminous costumes expected of the maharajas to the heraldic backdrops that gave feudal definition to imperial relations and the commemorative agency of Prinsep's diplomatic group portraiture – all of this was seen to jar and to falter.

In part, such critical recoiling from the aesthetics of *The Imperial Assemblage* can be read as a marker of the ambivalence with which the British approached ostentatious ceremony *per se*. Britain's self-perception as a Protestant country of ascetic values defined against the supposed lavish despotism of Catholicism and the Orient meant that there was a distinct sense of unease about the fanfare-and-trumpets form of imperialism that began to emerge in this period. Tracy Anderson's work on the late-Victorian viceregal portrait has shown that representations of Viceroy Lytton around the time of the Assemblage consequently imbued him with a 'dual body' upon which the spectacular feudal mode of imperial rule existed in tension with more sober-minded civic ideals of progressive colonial governance, something that played out sartorially in an interplay between (effete) ostentation and (manly) sobriety.⁴⁸² In commemorative photographs of Lytton such as Bourne & Shepherd's *Lord Lytton, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, Grand Master of the Star of India* (1877; Figure 76), for instance, the ostentation of the attire is undercut by 'a sense of discomfort, a metaphorical nakedness of the imperial body beneath this would-be emperor's new clothes.'⁴⁸³

Prinsep dramatised contemporary British anxieties over the imperial body becoming feminised due to the exigencies of ornate fashion in India by creating a shared palette of blue between Lytton's wife and daughter, the young Indian prince, and the viceroy himself (Figure 77). This unmaning of Lytton was seemingly not lost on the reviewers of Prinsep's painting, who singled him out for particular criticism while

⁴⁸² Tracy Anderson, 'Fashioning the Viceroy: Portraits of Edward Robert Bulwer-Lytton (1831–91)', *Visual Culture in Britain* 12: 3 (2011): 300.

⁴⁸³ Anderson, 'Fashioning the Viceroy,' 293.

praising the masculine bearing of the blood-red figure of Barnes.⁴⁸⁴ Visually, however, it is not the case that the viceroy's effete portrait fails to properly bear imperial authority where the imposing masculinity of the major succeeds. The gravitas of the entire encounter between these two men is rendered unstable by the pair of languid Indian servants in the bottom left-hand corner of the image, whose poses offer lackadaisical visual echoes of the gestures of both Lytton and Barnes. On the far-left, an outstretched arm draped indolently along the platform undercuts the solemnity of the viceroy's equivalent motion; on the right, the figure offers a subversively slouched approximation of the major's martial stance. This slippage between mimicry and mockery compromises both poles of imperial self-fashioning: extravagant pomp and staid masculinity both have their efficacy as signifiers of power challenged by these enervated reiterations in subaltern figures.⁴⁸⁵

The imperial entity envisioned by Prinsep was therefore political and aesthetically unstable: the main colonial protagonists strike highly discrepant postures of power in front of a discordantly heterogeneous crowd. In showing British rule personified with such varied sartorial properties in the diversely-attired figures of Lytton and Barnes, Prinsep played on contemporary anxieties over fashions 're-tailoring identities.'⁴⁸⁶ But more than this, the lack of formal cohesion among the British ruling classes in India meant that the artist had exploded the visual grammar that had emerged in Victorian art to situate individuals within a politically stable collective. Mass group portraits of political events like this were rare, but the stress that critics placed on the tumultuous polychrome of the myriad sitters' costumes and the staccato iconography of the banners in the background positions *The Imperial Assemblage* in more or less antithetical relation to one of the few comparable paintings of the period.

George Hayter's immense group portrait of 375 Tory and Whig MPs and peers passing the Great Reform Act of 1832, *The House of Commons, 1833* (1843; Figure 78), approached similar compositional difficulties to Prinsep in terms of collating numerous portrait studies of individual political figures into a visually

⁴⁸⁴ Anderson, 'Fashioning the Viceroy,' 302.

⁴⁸⁵ For an account of the slippages between mimicry and mockery in colonial discourse, see Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man.'

⁴⁸⁶ See Julie Codell, 'Victorian Portraits: Re-Tailoring Identities,' *Nineteenth-century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 34: 5 (2012): 493-516.

comprehensible unit.⁴⁸⁷ Completed in 1843 and bought by the Tory party for the recently established National Portrait Gallery in 1858, Hayter's *The House of Commons* was consequently on public view when Prinsep came to paint his imperial political group. Unlike Prinsep's work, however, Hayter's scene had been the subject of significant critical praise.⁴⁸⁸ Rows of monotonously clad men recede into the chamber, framed by the uniformly plain brown panelling of the political architecture. The 'uncompromising sameness' of the 'heavy and dusky' clothes worn by these politicians might have been seen by both Hayter himself and the critic of the *Illustrated London News* as the source of artistic difficulty to be overcome, but the effect of this unvarying sartorial palette is that the partisan nature of these men can be visualised within a unified aesthetic space.⁴⁸⁹ What Hayter's scene managed to achieve, then, was to situate the agency of individual people and parties within a cohesive collective framework.

The aesthetics of politics in Victorian Britain were thus a thoroughly sober affair, standing in marked contrast to the vibrancy of Indian attire. Interestingly, the deep brown of Hayter's Commons chamber, which does so much to contain the myriad figures within a coherent political space and can be seen performing a similar function in later paintings of the chamber which was built following the 1843 fire, is a hue that also came to dominate the backdrop of the political portrait.⁴⁹⁰ The classical trappings of the sort of *mise-en-scène* associated with the grand manner of portraiture that had been popular in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries increasingly gave way to decontextualised monochromatic spaces in the Victorian era. In the 1840s, Prime Minister Robert Peel's instructions about portraits he had commissioned

⁴⁸⁷ See Carlisle, *Picturing Reform*, for a detailed analysis of the history of this painting.

⁴⁸⁸ Carlisle, *Picturing Reform*, 74.

⁴⁸⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 27 May 1843. In his introduction to the 1843 exhibition catalogue, Hayter wrote, 'The colour of European costume cannot be considered favourable to an artist; the colours worn are nearly all the same, and, from the material of which they are composed, are less calculated to reflect light than silks or satins. These were some of the unyielding materials of such a work.' Quoted in Richard Ormond, *Early Victorian Portraits* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1973), 527.

⁴⁹⁰ See Henry Barraud, *Lionel Nathan de Rothschild Introduced in the House of Commons on 26 July 1858 by Lord John Russell and Mr Abel Smith* (1872; oil on canvas, The Rothschild Archive).

of his colleagues made clear the importance of modern dress and the absence of adornment.⁴⁹¹ This austere aesthetic was able to mediate between political polarities: when John Everett Millais came to paint William Gladstone (1879; Figure 79) and Benjamin Disraeli (1881; Figure 80) in the late 1870s and 1880s, he arranged these political opponents so that when seen together they could face one another antagonistically; and yet these portraits are so similar in stance, dress, and chromatics, that such rivalry is harmonised by a shared aesthetics.⁴⁹² The monochromatic palette was thus active in visualising the adversarial parliamentary system in terms of an overarching political stability.

These politics of monochrome should be borne in mind when we read that Prinsep's polychromatic *The Imperial Assemblage* was so 'inartistic' because 'the gorgeous dresses of the Indian chiefs, placed against a background of gaudy banners' amounted to 'kaleidoscopic combinations' – a metaphor of restless colour that refuses to be fixed, and one which occurs in more than one review.⁴⁹³ Note particularly how dresses that are individually 'gorgeous' become aesthetically offensive when seen as a group. The artistic appeal of lavishly ornamented Indian costumes to the British was well established by the Victorian period, thoroughly enmeshed in the 'picturesque' registers of colonial viewing that had developed in the eighteenth century as Britons filtered what they saw in India through familiar frames – with the 'picturesque' locating aesthetic pleasure in such things as wildness, irregularity, contrasts, and ruins.⁴⁹⁴ The costume of a maharaja was thus not in itself artistically problematic; indeed, Prinsep even incorporates some of his individual Indian sitters into the sober backdrop prevalent in contemporary metropolitan portraits not just by Millais, but by the likes of G. F. Watts (1817-1904), and James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), so that a mode of Indian dress that appeared 'medieval' to the colonial eye was assimilated into the portrait forms of Victorian modernity.

⁴⁹¹ H. C. G. Matthew, 'Portraits of Men: Millais and Victorian Public Life,' in Peter Funnell & Malcolm Warner (eds.), *Millais: Portraits* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1999), 143.

⁴⁹² While commissioned separately and thus not intended for display together, these portraits were frequently sold in engraving as a pair. Matthew, 'Portraits of Men,' 155.

⁴⁹³ *The Bury and Norwich Post, and Suffolk Herald*, 18 May 1880.

⁴⁹⁴ See 'Imperial Phantoms' in Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*.

Yet when seen en masse and as part of an imperial polity, maharajas did begin to mount an aesthetic challenge to the British: to a Victorian audience for whom a staid aesthetic signified political stability among diverse individuals, the riotous colour of the Raj could speak to dangerous political ferment. An account that sheds some light on the visual difficulties thrown up by the sheer colourful force of India's royal splendour was offered by another colonial artist at another coronation durbar, Mortimer Menpes at Edward VII's official proclamation as emperor in 1903. Menpes gave this description of watching the maharajas enter Delhi:

I feasted my eye on each elephant; I gloated over each magnificent combination and each harmony, the emerald greens, the carmines, the violets, the golds, and the vermilions; and the result was that, before I had passed more than half the glittering throng, my sense of colour was exhausted. I was satiated: I had seen too much. Then I realised that here in India, to avoid the danger of becoming colour-blind, one should nurse one's eyes, not stare and exhaust oneself in colour, but always keep some strength in reserve.⁴⁹⁵

Such enervating ocular effects strikingly recall earlier comments made about Prinsep's painting ('the glare of its colouring haunts the vitiated eye'; 'the eye [is left] dazzled and the sense confounded'). Indeed, if one reads Menpes' 1903 account alongside of the 1880 reviews of *The Imperial Assemblage*, it seems that Prinsep was remarkably successful in reproducing the violently disorientating visual impact of multiple maharajas on the colonial eye.

Why was the sight of multiple maharajas so visually confounding for the British? For Menpes, this was partly a problem of representation, as the injurious aesthetic overload of maharaja costume confronted him with the limits of his medium. Repeatedly, the artist's account swings from the visual excess of India to the stubborn materiality of painting:

I took out my paint-box and blushed. The folly of it, the absolute futility! Here I was standing before a scene which no artist save Turner should ever have

⁴⁹⁵ Mortimer Menpes (transcribed by Dorothy Menpes), *The Durbar* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1903), 35.

attempted to paint, calmly unfolding a stupid little paint-box and squeezing out tubes of Reeves's water-colour, pigment which, compared with the glowing tones around me, looked like mud.⁴⁹⁶

In the face of this insufficiency, Menpes grasps around for representational practices that lay outside of the predominate techniques of the western artistic canon, something that might meet the challenge of conveying the 'blaze of colour' before him:

Rembrandt couldn't have painted this scene... one felt the value of precious stones to work with, or something very different from ordinary pigment. It must be painted in the jewel-like, gem-like manner, and bit by bit, facet by facet. To attempt to paint it in flowing watercolour were to reproduce a sunset in silhouette. The crowd was a mosaic, and the people were like living tapestry.⁴⁹⁷

Those technologies of vision traditionally familiar to the west are thus shown to be moribund in the Indian context. As Saloni Mathur has noted, the imagery that Menpes consequently produced articulated his anxiety about the epistemological status of his medium by adopting points of view that demonstrate 'a unique self-awareness about the position of the viewer and its implication for knowledge,' with scenes such as 'State Entry as seen from the Jumma Masjid, 1903' (1903; Figure 81) dwelling more on the differential perspectives of the crowd than the spectacle itself.⁴⁹⁸ No (failed) attempt is made, *a la* Prinsep, to convey the maharajas as a totality. They are glimpsed only in impressionistic flashes of colour.

What I am getting at here is that within the available framework of colonial aesthetics, the colourful diversity of Indian rulers simply could not be easily seen as a political totality, and this was something that implicitly destabilised the structure of the Raj. There is an unspoken aesthetic category that haunts Menpes' visceral account of the

⁴⁹⁶ Menpes, *The Durbar*, 39.

⁴⁹⁷ Menpes, *The Durbar*, 41-42.

⁴⁹⁸ Saloni Mathur, 'The Durbar and the Visual Arts: Revisiting the Picture Archive,' in Codell (ed.), *Power and Resistance*, 84-85.

‘blinding colour’ of this royal Indian parade. His description of representational failure, belief in the injurious affective power of the scene (‘like looking at the sun’), and contention that J. M. W Turner ‘was the only man to paint this procession of native rulers,’ all situates the Indian spectacle within the sphere of ‘the sublime,’ a concept that had once been key to British artistic discourse.⁴⁹⁹ Turner’s work had been widely recognised for its encapsulation of the effect of boundlessness that eighteenth-century philosophers had attributed to the sublime, the currency of which dealt in ineffable vastness and uncontrollable threat.⁵⁰⁰ With notable exceptions, after around 1850 this aesthetic category had become marginal to mainstream British art; Menpes’ relationship to the concept was therefore indirect, but the challenge that it launched – ‘to paint the unpaintable’ – is clearly at work here for the artist, and frames the procession of Indian royals as a thing of aesthetic power beyond colonial capture.⁵⁰¹ The political difficulty of composing diverse rulers into a workable political unit is thus sublimated into the aesthetic problematic of the sublime.

Conclusion

The myriad hues of an Indian crowd can be seen to constitute a sublime visual force for the British, one beyond the representational capacities of European aesthetics and coded as injurious to the colonial eye. Even though the British actively encouraged maharajas to wear ornate dress, the effect of this was to create a spectacle that was could not be assimilated to the sober visual grammar that worked to picture a viable ruling class in Britain. True, the positioning of maharajas outside of such grammar functioned to deny them a form of political agency that was recognisable to the British (hence their increasing rejection of ostentation, as traced by Codell, over the course of the coronation durbars). So too did talk of Indian rulers appearing as a

⁴⁹⁹ Menpes, *The Durbar*, 46.

⁵⁰⁰ See Alison Smith, ‘The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner’, in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, January 2013, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/alison-smith-the-sublime-in-crisis-landscape-painting-after-turner-r1109220>, accessed 05 October 2013.

⁵⁰¹ Christine Riding and Nigel Llewellyn, ‘British Art and the Sublime’, in Llewellyn and Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, January 2013, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/christine-riding-and-nigel-llewellyn-british-art-and-the-sublime-r1109418>, accessed 05 October 2013.

fragmentary chromatic flux dovetail with imperial claims to legitimacy as a stable overlord pacifying inherently atomised and bellicose Indian kingdoms. But at a visual level, British power was not seen as stable: the formal dislocation between the ostentatious Lytton and the sober Barnes in Prinsep's painting mirrors the dislocations between the maharajas, as the aesthetics of British power are split to meet the exigencies of an imperial rule that believed some splendour was necessary to carry authority in India. Portraits of stable power were thus lost in translation.

Conclusion

The key trajectory of this thesis has been the militarisation of British visual culture that occurred between the high point of aesthetic optimism that was enshrined in the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the naturalisation of visual media's relationship with violence which found symptomatic expression within images such as the sadistic photographs taken by colonials of abused Indian men following the Amritsar Massacre in 1919. The crises endemic to British imperialism worked repeatedly to reframe aesthetic practices in martial terms, so that art and photography became not merely a means of documentation, but something that was complexly interwoven with the colonial processes of invasion and suppression. Primarily, I have theorised the role of image making under the pressure of violent crisis in terms of three interconnected themes, which can loosely be termed:

(1) Agency

Victorian aesthetic discourse was explicit in its positioning of visual praxis – from exhibition viewing to draughtsmanship – as a formative factor in the creation of perceptive and rational agents. As the first chapter's discussion of insurgent photography and colonial pedagogical theory set out to show, such an intimate link between agency and aesthetics meant that the latter was discussed with a particular degree of urgency during moments of violent crisis. The perceived realism of European naturalism could (supposedly) render one more capable of dealing with crises because it nurtured a perspicacity that allowed for militarily useful assessments of situations to be made. Such assessments could in turn facilitate situation-altering interventions, making the use of such things as the camera – especially the Indian use of the camera *against* the imperial regime – an incredibly fraught affair for the British during episodes of unrest. Technologies of vision were not merely tools to be used, but also things that crafted modes of looking, thinking, and acting; they were therefore things that were seen to inform the very parameters of one's engagement with crisis, and to have a potentially decisive impact on the processes of conflict.

(2) Narrative

Over the course of the Victorian period, the practices of war artists and photographers were active in effecting broad shifts in media consciousness among colonials because of the attendant ascendancy of the illustrated press (a subject on which much remains to be written, particularly in terms of the imperial context). The proliferation of image makers on sites of conflict meant that combatants were increasingly made aware of the journalistic framework through which their martial exploits could potentially be viewed. What Chapter Two in particular attempted to show is that the artist or the photographer was often a visible presence on imperial terrain whose conspicuous handling of materials – be it the sketchbook or the camera – mediated crises for colonials by acting as a journalistic signifier on the landscape, one that worked to provide a point of contact between the imperilled experience of individual bodies and the visual tropes of derring-do which were common in contemporary newspapers.

For colonials, then, the presence of artists and photographers could serve as a coping device, since it placed moments of threatening precariousness into dialogue with narratives of imperial heroism. (Conversely, to the indigenous populations of South Asia, the sight of colonial image making was viewed as an intimidating spectacle of surveillance that was entwined with the crisis-laden expansionist activities of the imperial state.) Acts of visual production and the wider narratives of warfare that they represented were thus incorporated into the front-line experience of colonisation, providing a media lens for the violence of warfare – and even encouraging combatants to act in accordance with journalism's motifs.

(3) Encounter

Most central to this thesis has been the notion of the image-making event as a space in which highly fraught colonial encounters could take place, as relationships between British and Indian figures were staged in accordance with both artistic and political imperatives. Frequently this functioned to intensify crisis; as chapters two and three both showed, the aesthetic drive towards staffage could highlight the precarious nature of life in the empire by demanding the physical presence of Indian figures on

sites marked by violence (a drive so ingrained in the processes of image making that it even circumvented racial segregation). But sometimes the logic of visual media was able to counter atmospheres of political emergency, serving a palliative function that helped to inaugurate spaces that were not subject to combative Anglo-Indian binaries: the leveling effect of the photographic portraits looked at in Chapter Three, for instance, found its political coordinates in liberal notions of shared citizenship at a time when actual colonial relations had never been more strained. Such visual forms were not consigned to the virtual sphere, but were channeled through the image-making event – whether it was taking place in the studio, the field, or a maharaja's palace – in ways that helped to structure the politically-loaded encounters of the coloniser with the colonised.

Aesthetic conventions thus bled into the physical landscape in a manner that shaped the phenomenological engagement of both Briton and Indian with unrest, and it is this permeability between virtual forms and actual experience that the four chapters of this thesis have primarily addressed. The aesthetics of imperial crisis were not just a set of conventions that framed unrest after-the-fact, with visual tropes aiding the production of narratives that enabled certain understandings of conflict to develop. They were also something that had a material impact on the body's relationship with crisis in the first place, as the formal conventions of various media gave rise to particular actions. What might seem to be fairly abstract notions of authorial privilege that had developed in European aesthetic thought had tangible effects, for it meant that image makers operated in an environment that afforded them the authority to orchestrate people and props into scenes which were informed by aesthetic conventions. Such conventions may have been heavily inflected with the political logic of the times, but they were not reducible to it, and consequently art and photography exerted their own pressure on the nature of British dealings with colonial crisis.

Illustrations

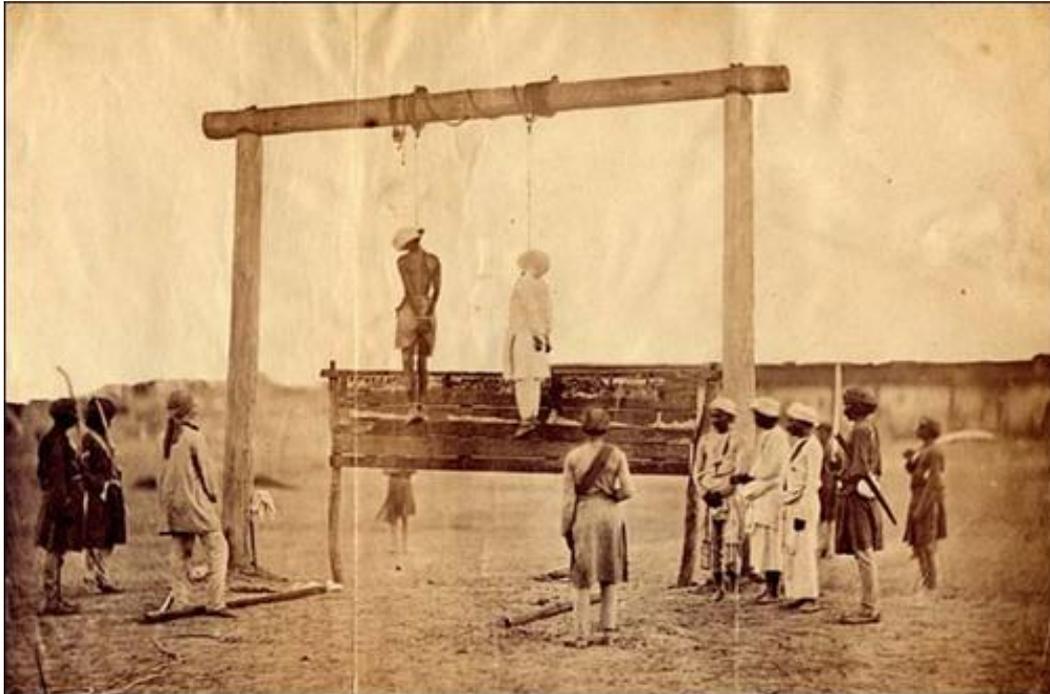


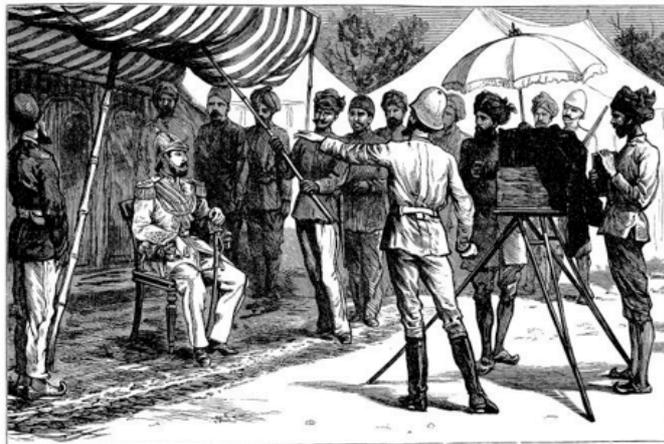
Figure 1 Felice Beato, *The Hanging of Two Rebels* (1858). Albumen print. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.



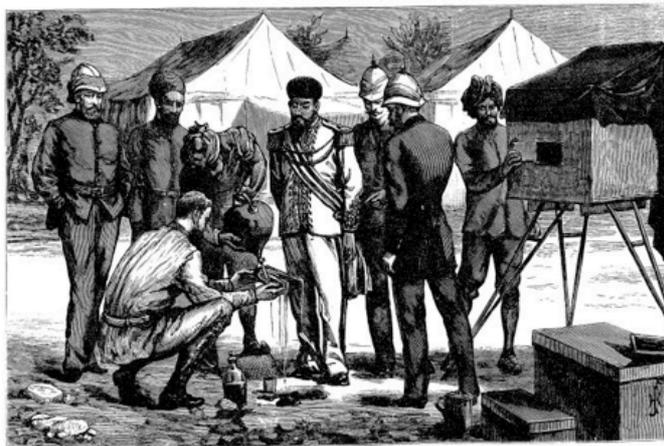
Figure 2 Colesworthy Grant, 'Nathaniel Wallich, MD. FRS. Professor of Botany, Medical College Calcutta,' in Colesworthy Grant, *Lithographic Sketches of the Public Characters of Calcutta, 1838-1850* (Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1850) [originally published in *Medical Journal Press*, Calcutta, c. 1840]. Lithographic print. Copyright © The British Library Board, P2635.



Figure 3 Anon., 'The Ruins of Paris,' *Illustrated London News*, 24 June 1871. Wood engraving.



MR. BURKE POINTING THE AMEER



"FIXING" THE NEGATIVE

THE END OF THE AFGHAN WAR — PHOTOGRAPHING THE AMEER YAKOUB KHAN AT GANDAMAK

Figure 4 Frederick Villers, 'Mr Burke posing the Ameer,' *The Graphic*, 12 July 1879. Wood engraving.

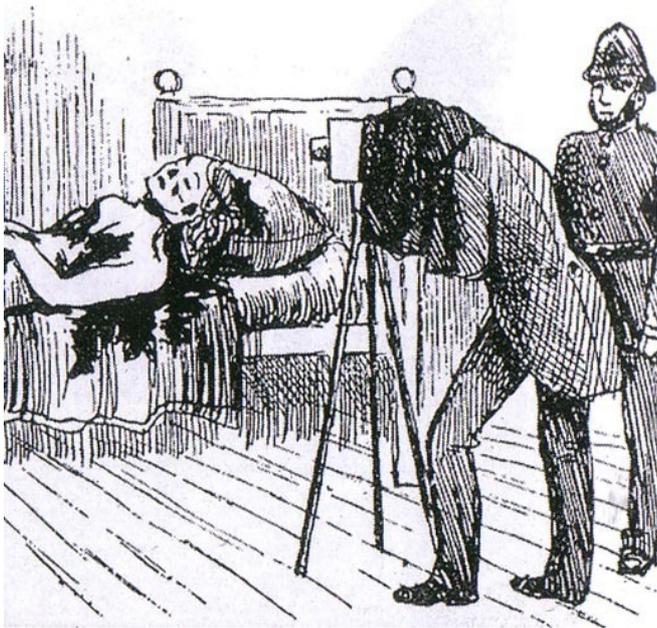


Figure 5 Anon., 'Mary Jane Kelly: Photographing the Body,' *Illustrated Police News*, 17 November 1888. Wood engraving.



Figure 6 Linnaeus Tripe, *The Thapinyu Pagoda, Pagan, Burma* (1855). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 61/1(15).

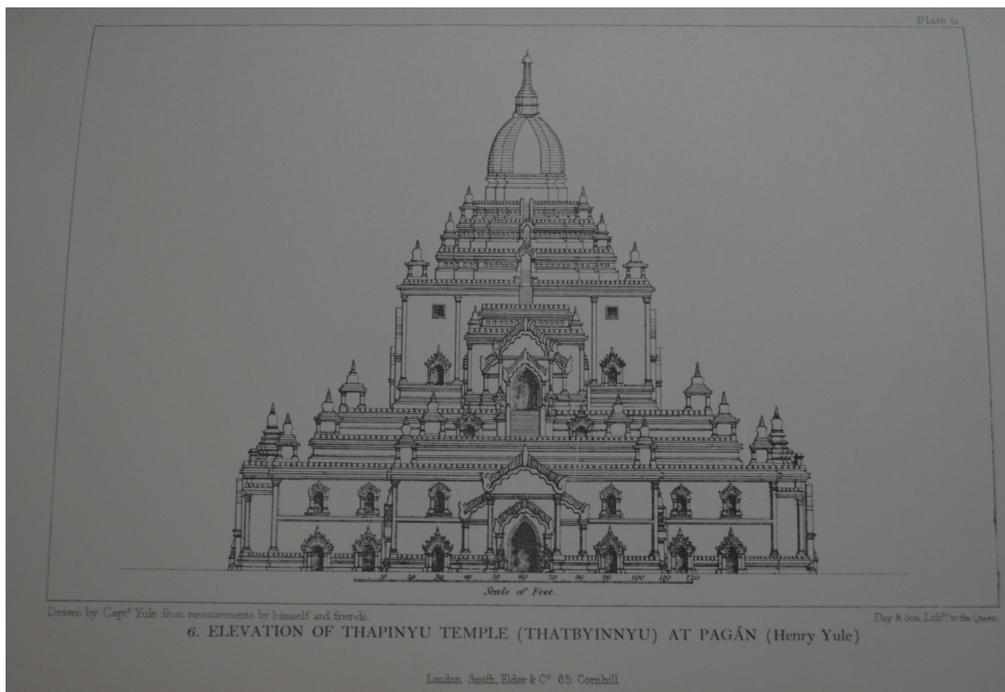


Figure 7 Sir Henry Yule, 'Elevation of Thapinyu Temple (Thatbyinnyu) at Pagan,' in Sir Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1858). Lithographic print. Author's photograph from book. Yale Centre for British Art, DS485.B81 Y85 1858.

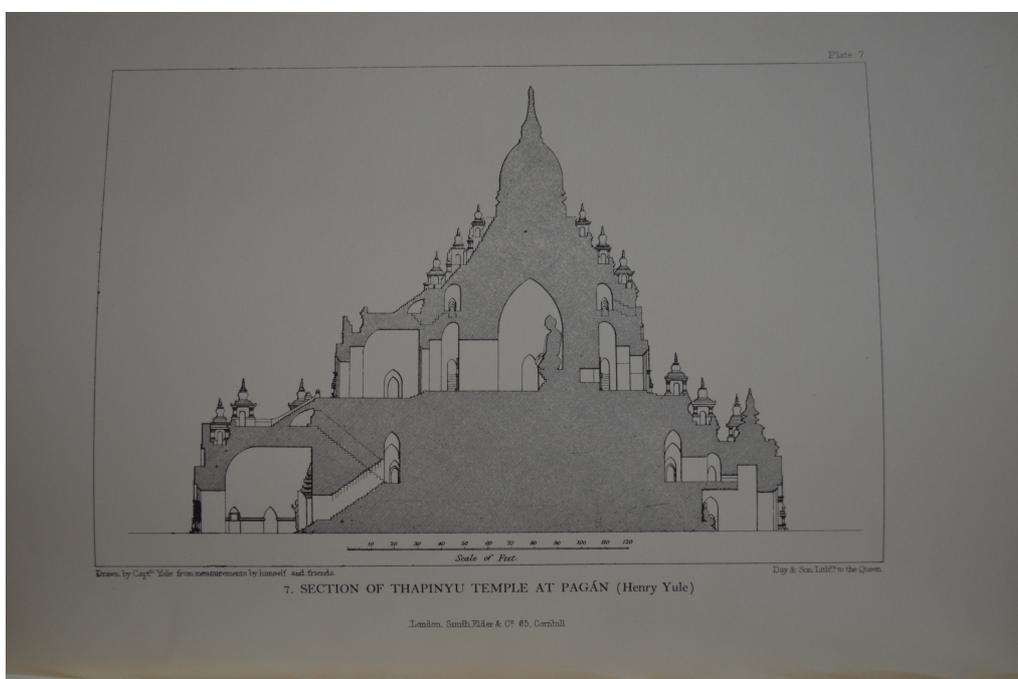


Figure 8 Sir Henry Yule, 'Section of Thapinyu Temple at Pagan,' in Sir Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1858). Lithographic print. Author's photograph from book. Yale Centre for British Art, DS485.B81 Y85 1858.

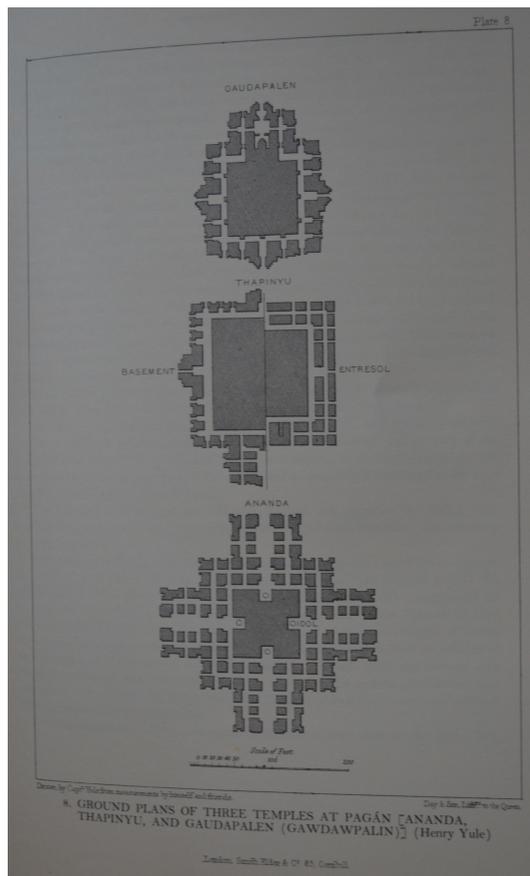


Figure 9 Sir Henry Yule, 'Ground Plans of Three Temples at Pagan [Ananda, Thapinyu, and Gaudapalen (Gaudawpalin)],' in Sir Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1858). Lithographic print. Author's photograph from book. Yale Centre for British Art, DS485.B81 Y85 1858.

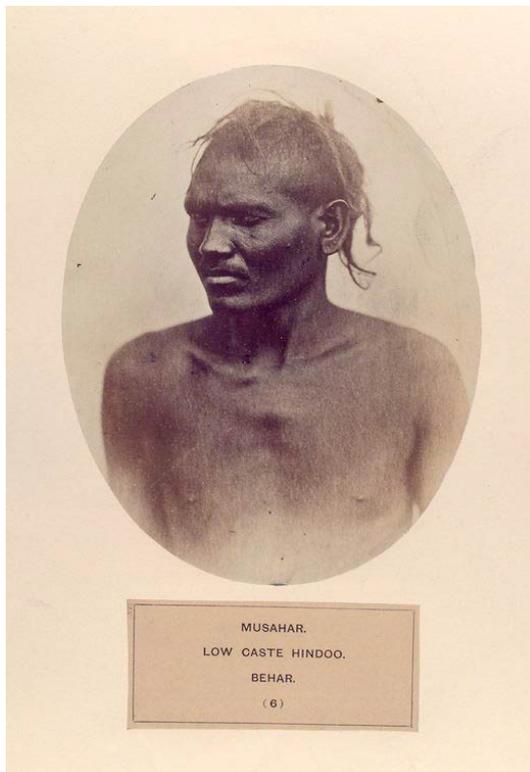


Figure 10 Anon., 'Musahar. Low Caste Hindoo. Behar,' in Sir John William Kaye and John Forbes Watson, *The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress, of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan, I*, 8 vols. (London: India Museum, 1868-1875). British Library, IOL.1947.c.344.



Figure 11 Dr John Murray, *Moree Gate, Delhi* (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 52/(5).

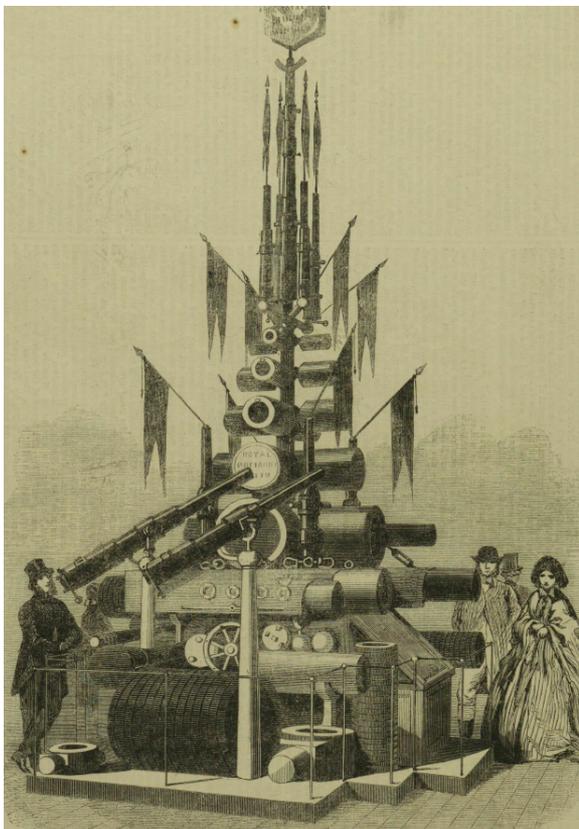


Figure 12 Anon., 'Trophy of Armstrong Guns and Coils from the Royal Gun Factories, Woolwich,' *Illustrated London News*, 14 June 1862.



Figure 13 Anon., 'Iron Figure Castings by M. Ducler, of Paris, in the International Exhibition,' *Illustrated London News*, 14 June 1862.

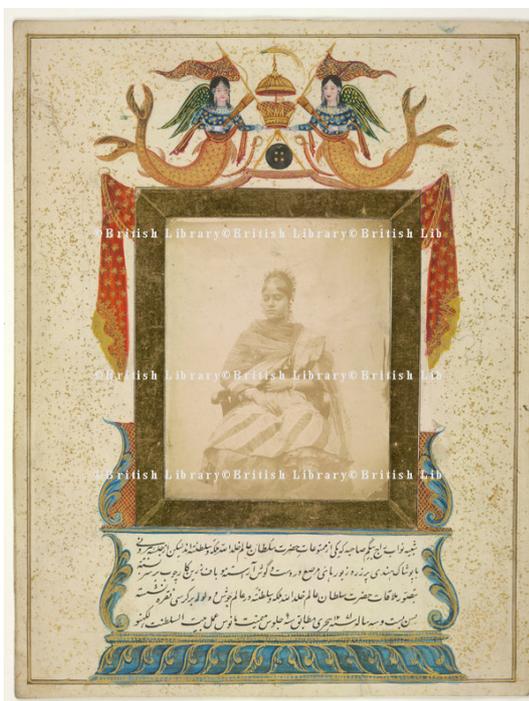


Figure 14 Ahmad Ali Khan, *Nawaub Raj Begum Sahibah of Oudh* (1855). Salt paper print on card mount. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 500/(3).



Figure 15 Ahmad Ali Khan, '[Group portrait with] Miss Ommaney, Mr Ommaney killed in Residency by round shot in head, [Miss White], Mrs Ommaney, Miss Ommaney [and Mrs Kirk], [Lucknow],' in *The Lucknow Album*, I, 2 vols. (c.1856). Salt paper print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 269/1(63).

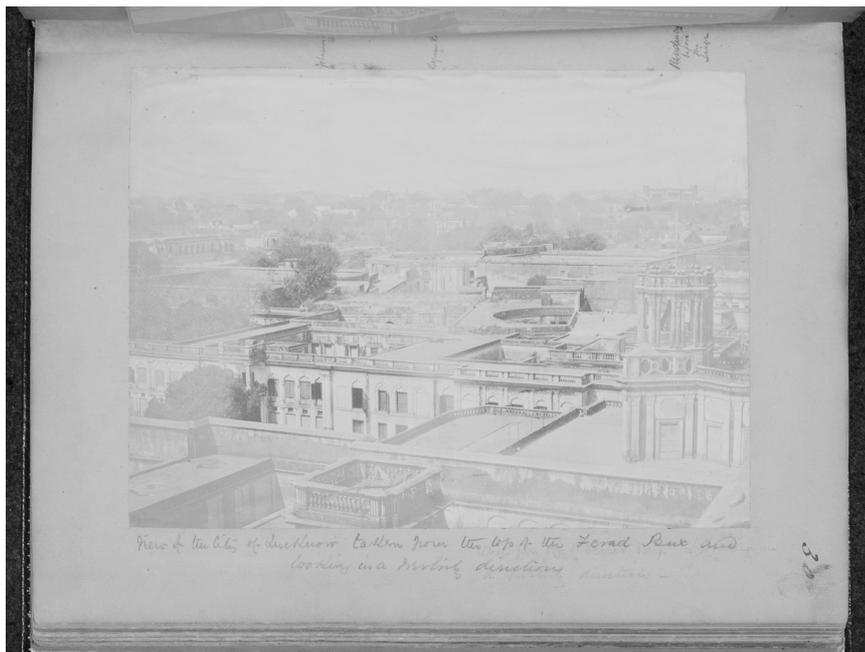


Figure 16 Ahmad Ali Khan, 'View of the city of Lucknow taken from the top of the Ferad Bux and looking in a westerly direction,' in *The Lucknow Album*, I, 2 vols. (c.1856). Salt paper print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 269/1(31).



Figure 17 Ahmad Ali Khan, '[Portrait of] Mrs Lewin [and] Lt Lewin, [Lucknow],' in *The Lucknow Album*, vol. 1, c.1856. Salt paper print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 269/1(69).



Figure 18 Walter Sherwill, 'Aerolite', *Illustrated London News*, 13 December 1851. Wood engraving.



Figure 19 Joseph Nash, 'India no. 2,' in *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851* (London: Dickinson, Brothers, Her Majesty's Publishers, 1852). Colour lithograph. University of Exeter Library, Open Research Exeter (ORE).



Figure 20 Dr John Murray, 'The Samman Burj in the Fort-Palace in Agra,' [1855], in *Photographs of Agra and its vicinity* (London: John Hogarth, 1857). Salt print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 101/(5).



Figure 21 Sir Joseph Noel Paton, *In Memoriam* (1858). Oil on canvas, $48\frac{3}{8}$ / $37\frac{7}{8}$ inches (123 × 96.5 cm). Private collection.



Figure 22 Dr. John Nicholas Tresidder, 'Gungoo Mehter' (1859), in *The Tresidder Album* (1859-1863). Albumen print. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.



Figure 23 Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, 'Joala Peisad - The Nana's Commander in Chief at Cawnpore' (1859), in *The Tresidder Album* (1859-1863). Albumen print. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.



Figure 24 Patrick Gerald Fitzgerald, *View from the roof of Alumbagh, looking towards the Charbagh & Lucknow*. (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 591/(11). The 'X' on the bottom left marks the site of General Henry Havelock's burial.



Figure 25 Patrick Gerald Fitzgerald, *On the roof, Alumbagh* (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 591/(7).



Figure 26 Roger Fenton, *Lieutenant-General Sir J. L. Pennefather and Staff, Crimea* (1855). Albumen print. National Army Museum. NAM. 1964-12-151-6-8.

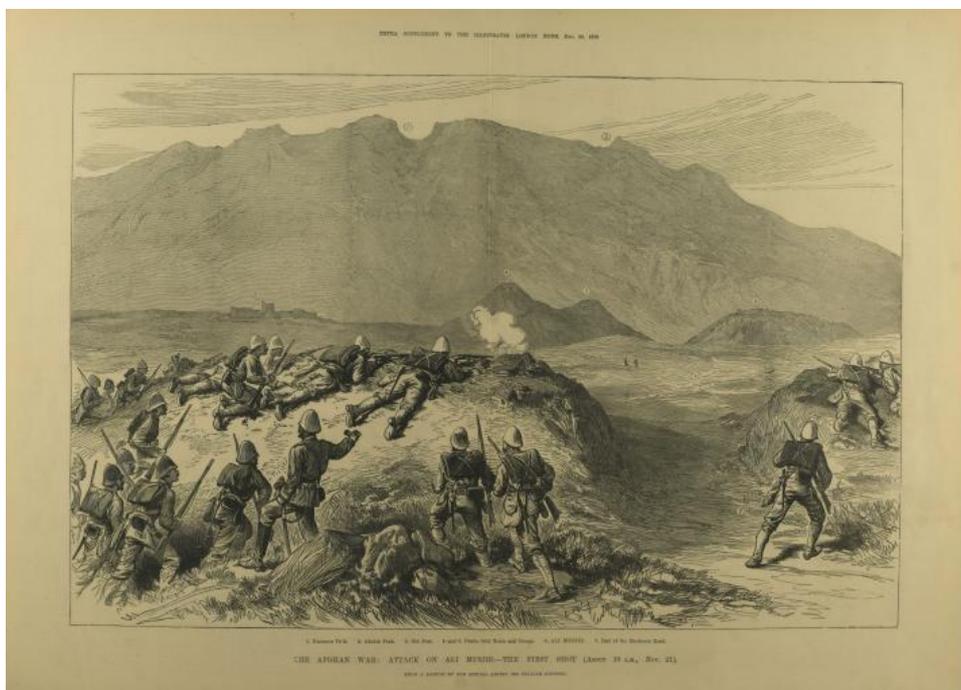


Figure 27 William Simpson, 'The Afghan War: Attack on the Ali Musjid – The First Shot (About 10am, Nov. 21)', *Illustrated London News*, 28 December 1878. Wood engraving.

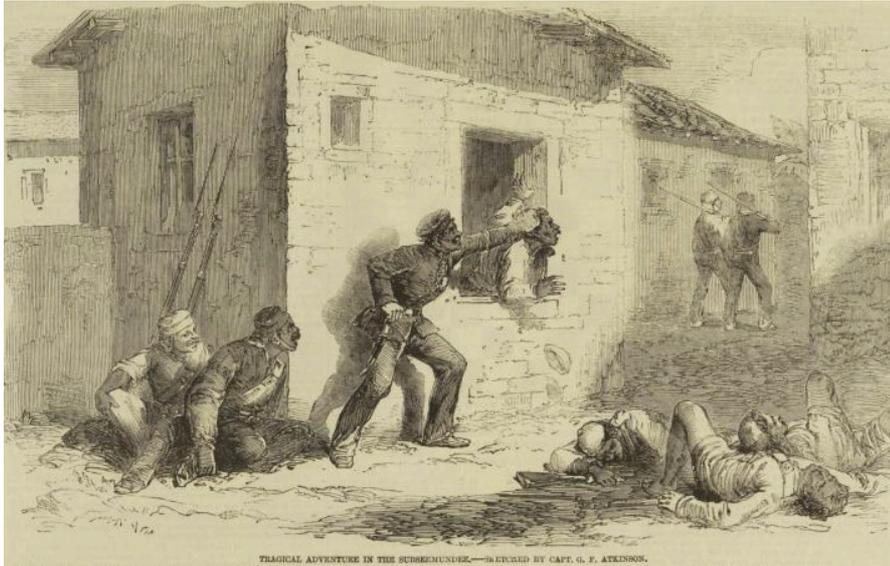


Figure 28 George Franklin Atkinson, 'Tragical Adventure in the Subseemundee,' *Illustrated London News*, 10 October 1857. Wood engraving.



Figure 29 William Simpson, 'Dangers of Archaeology at the Pheel Khana Tope,' *Illustrated London News*, 19 April 1879. Wood engraving.



Figure 30 William Simpson, page from *Balaklava Sketchbook, October to December 1854* (1854). Graphite on wove paper. Yale Center for British Art, B1977.14.34.27.



Figure 31 Colesworthy Grant, *Panoramic view of Pagan, looking S. W. by S* (1855). Watercolour, 13 x 18.5 inches (33 x 47cm). Copyright © The British Library Board, WD 540(23).



Figure 32 Frederick Villier, 'Mr Burke posing the Ameer,' *The Graphic*, 12 July 1879. Wood engraving.

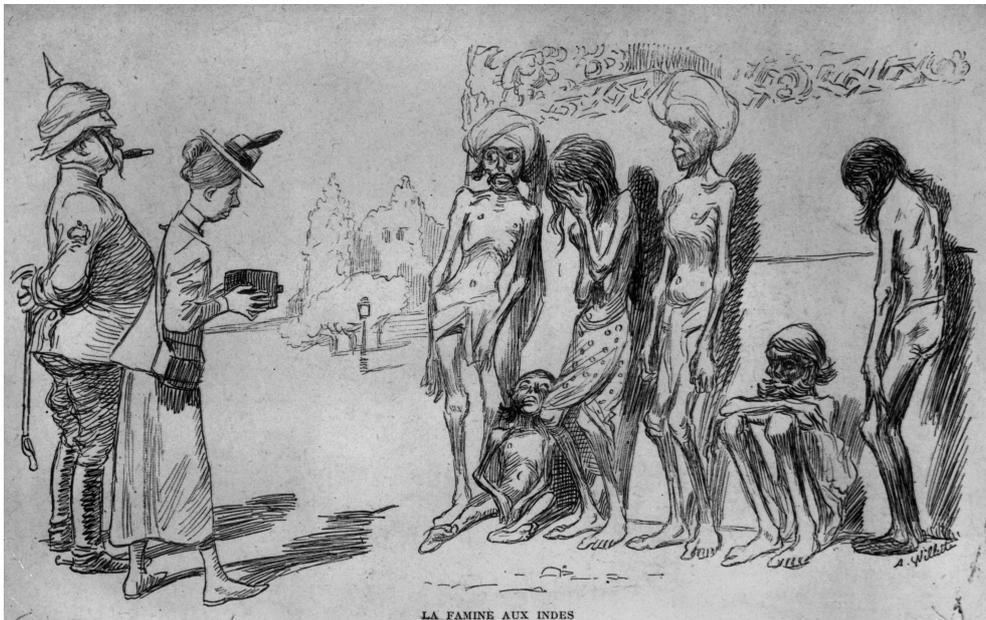


Figure 33 Leon Willette, 'La Famine aux Indes', *uméro spécial du Rire* (23 novembre 1899). Cote : Est. V.R. Cart. 5, ch 19. Wood engraving.



Figure 34 Murray, *Hindoo Rao's House, Delhi* (1858). Albumen print.
Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 52(1).



Figure 35 Dr John Murray, *Flag Staff Tower, Delhi* (1858). Albumen print.
Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 52/(8).



Figure 36 Harriet and Robert Tytler, *Front of Hindoo Rao's House* (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 193/(8).



Figure 37 Felice Beato *The inside of Secundra Bagh where 2000 men were killed* (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 27/(2).



Figure 38 Dr John Murray, *Parade Ground, Benares* (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 52/(39).

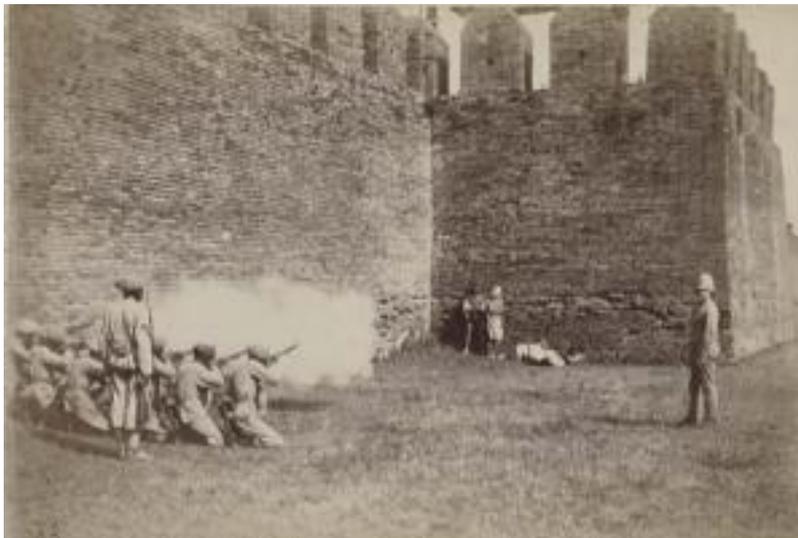


Figure 39 Willoughby Wallace Hooper, *Execution of dacoits at Mandalay* (1886). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 447/8(1).

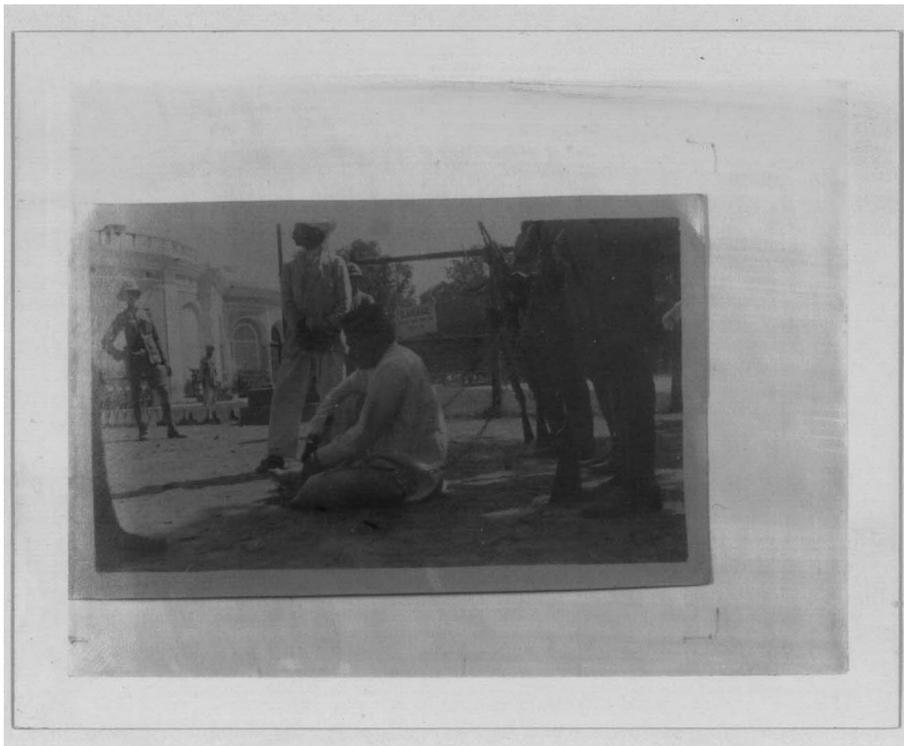


Figure 40 R. M. Howgego [?], *A wounded prisoner* (1919). Silver gelatin print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 566/(5).

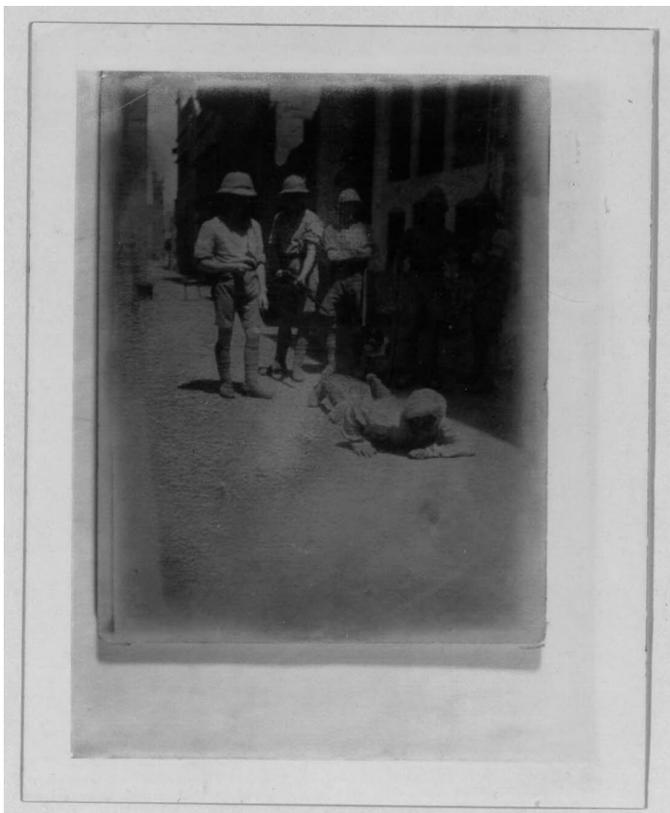


Figure 41 R. M. Howgego [?], *An Englishwoman was attacked in this street. As deterrent Indian who wanted to go down it had to crawl* (1919). Silver gelatin print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 566/(4).



Figure 42 R. M.
Howgego [?], *Making an Indian crawl through the streets as a punishment* (1919). Silver gelatin print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 566/(4).

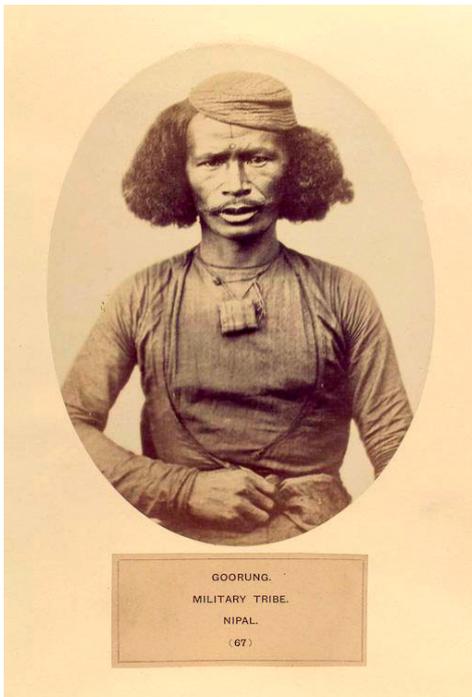


Figure 43 Sir Benjamin Simpson, 'Goorung, Military Tribe, Nipal,' in Sir John William Kaye and John Forbes Watson, *The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress, of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan*, 8 volumes (London: India Museum, 1868-1875). British Library, IOL.1947.c.344.



Figure 44 Dr. John Nicholas Tresidder et al, 'P. 1,' in *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864), page 1. Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.

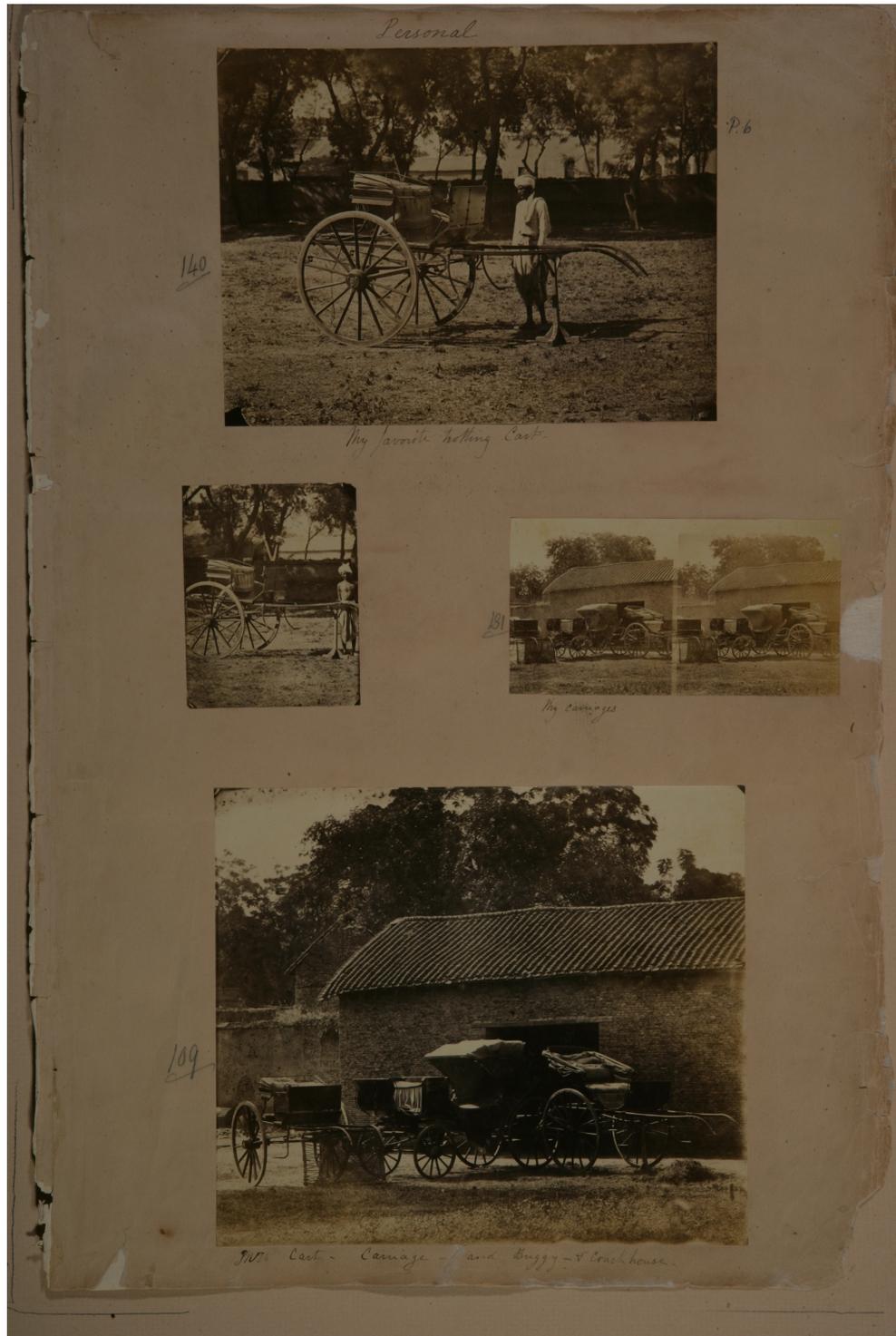


Figure 45 'Personal,' in *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864), page 6. Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.



Figure 46 Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, 'Cawnpore,' page 20 of *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864). Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.



Figure 47 Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, 'Cawnpore Civil Establishment,' page two of *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864). Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.

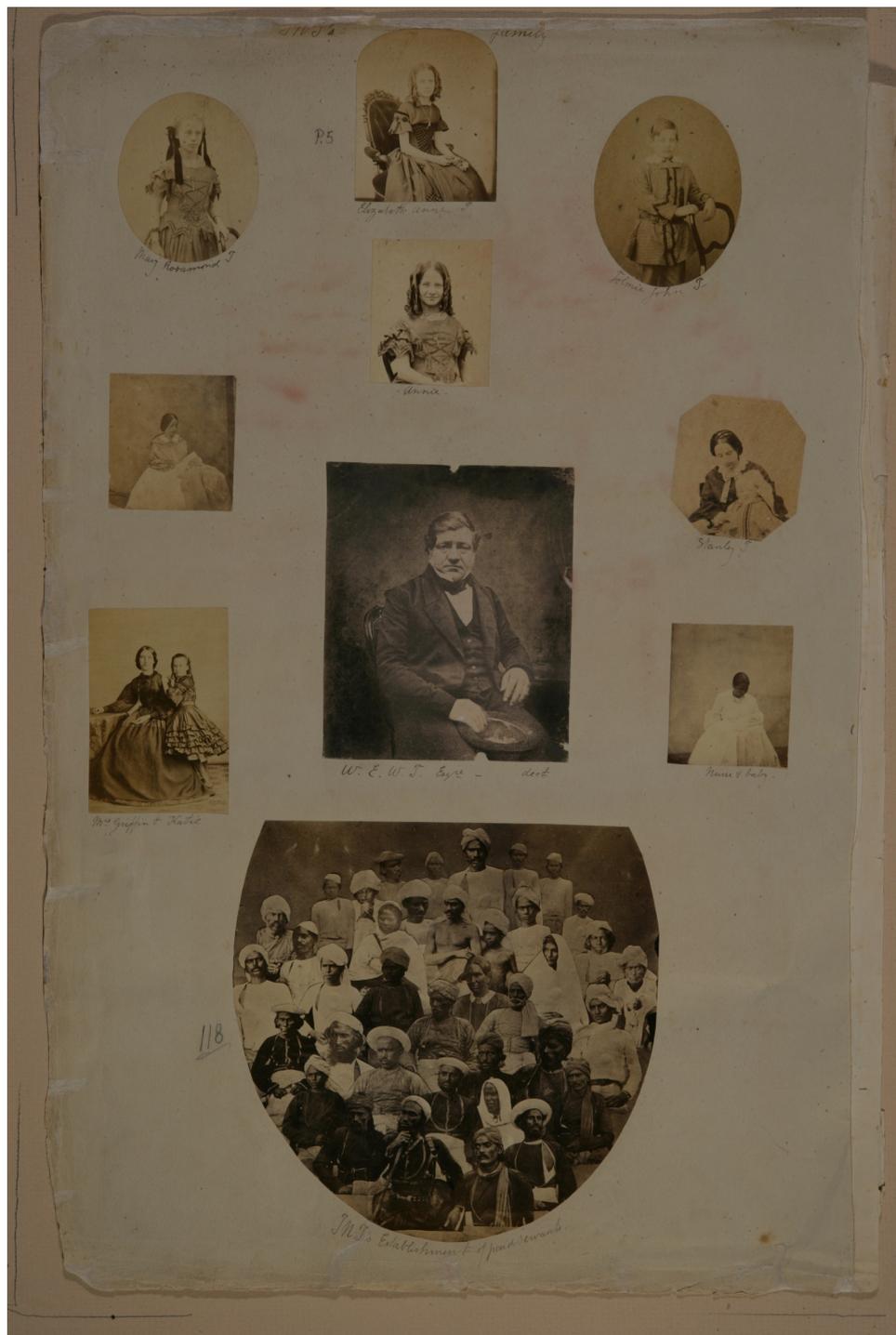


Figure 48 Dr John Nicolas Tresidder, 'JNT's Family,' page five of *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864). Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.

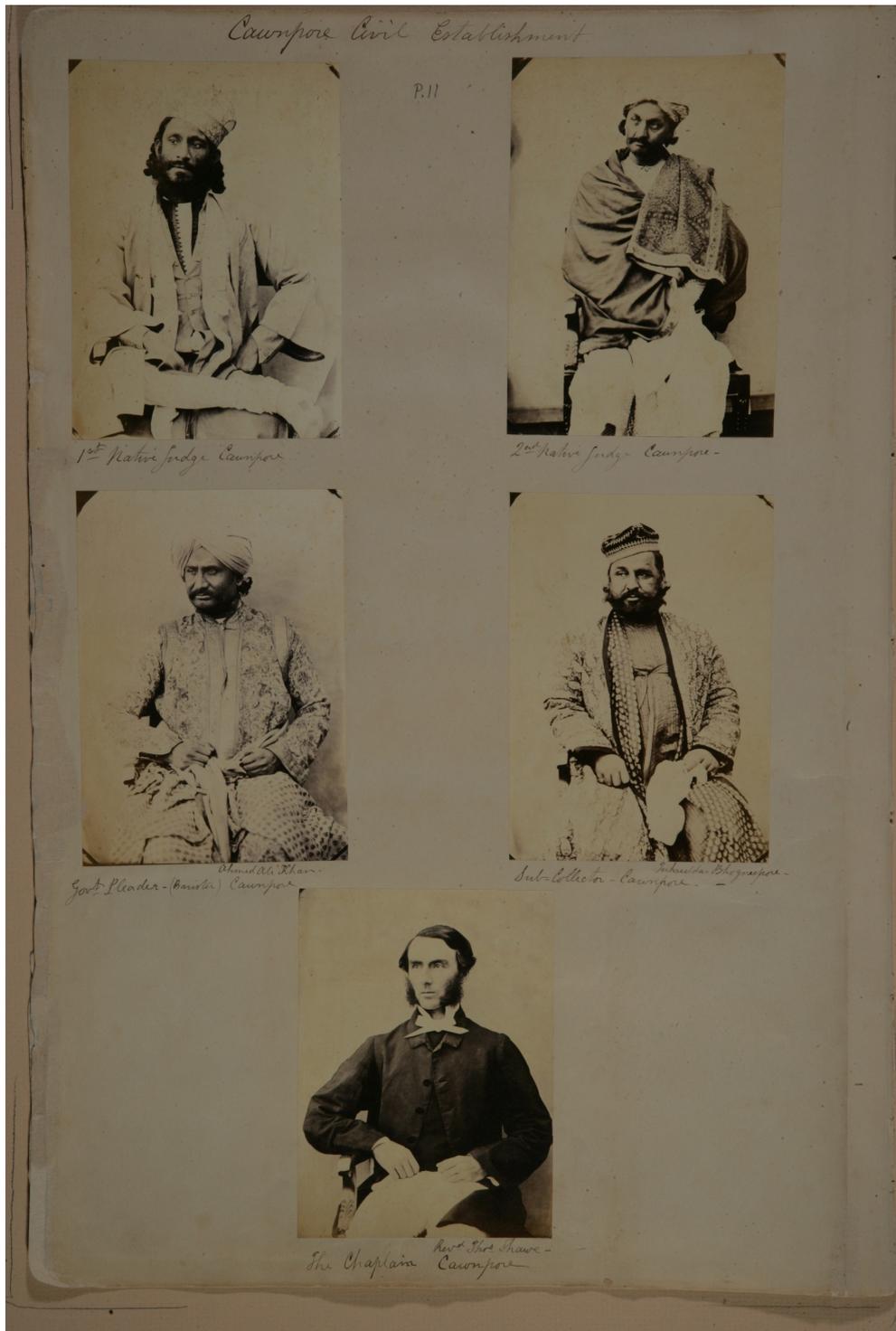


Figure 49 John Nicholas Tresidder, 'Cawnpore Civil Establishment,' in *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864), page 11. Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.



Figure 50 Bourne & Sherpherd, *Mr Nanabhoy B. Jeejeebhoy* (1870). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 127 / (87).



Figure 51 Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, 'Cawnpore,' in *The Tresidder Album* (c.1858-1864), page 49. Albumen and salt-paper prints. The Alkazi Collection of Photography.



Figure 53 Carlo Marochetti, *Angel of Cawnpore* (1860). Marble. Kanpur Memorial Church. Photography by Samuel Bourne. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 11/(44).



Figure 54a Samuel Bourne, *Outside of the well* (c.1860). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 394/(60).



b. Bourne & Shepherd, *The Memorial Well, Cawnpore* (c.1865). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 11/(45).



c. Anon. *Memorial Well, Cawnpore* (1880). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 50/2(95).



d. Bourne and Sherpherd [?], *People beside the well at Cawnpore* (c.1865). Albumen print. Royal Geographical Society, S0002702.



e. John Edward Saché, *The Memorial Well, Cawnpore* (c.1870). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 2/3/(80).



Figure 55 Samuel Bourne, *Memorial Well at Cawnpore* (c.1865). Albumen print. Victoria & Albert Museum, 53:299.



Figure 56 Dr. John Murray, *The Well and Monument, Slaughter House, Cawnpore*, (1858). Albumen print. Copyright © The British Library Board, Photo 52/(36).



Figure 57 Val Prinsep, *The Imperial Assemblage, I* January 1877 (1880). Oil on canvas. 10'x27' (300cm x 802cm). Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, RCIN 407181.

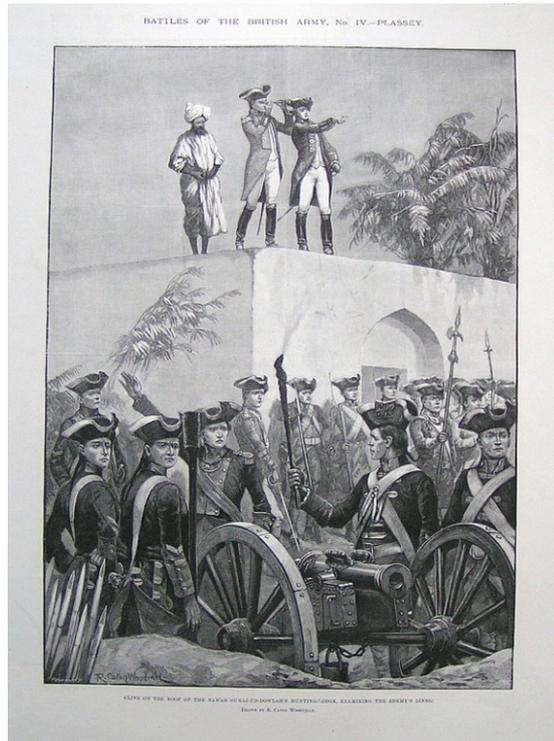


Figure 58 Richard Caton Woodville, 'Clive on the top of the Nawab Siraj-d-daula's hunting lodge,' *Illustrated London News*, 23 September 1893. Wood engraving.

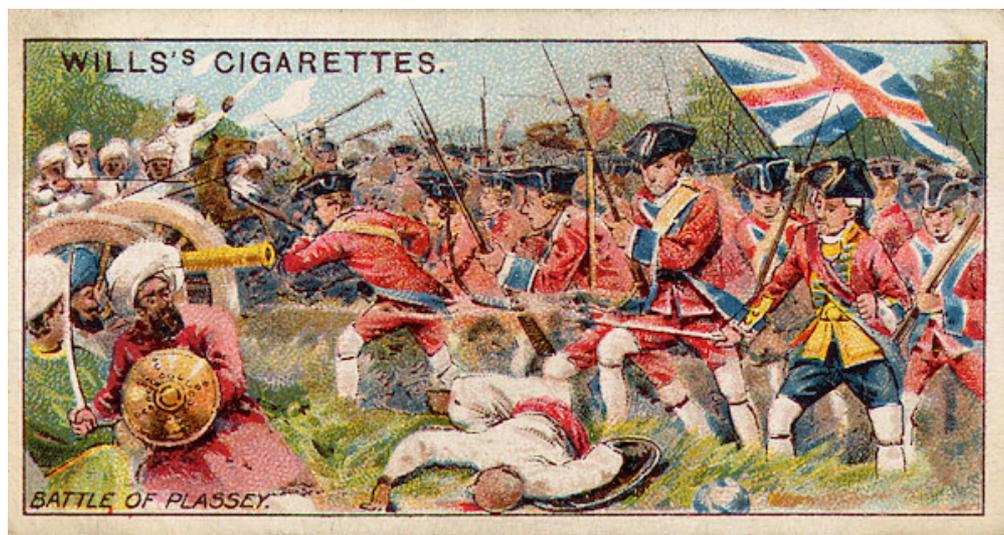


Figure 59 Anon., 'Battle of Plassey,' *Will's Cigarettes Card* (1912). Colour lithograph. Bridgeman Art Library, LLM455631.



Figure 60 Francis Hayman, *Robert Clive and Mir Jafar after the Battle of Plassey, 1757* (c. 1760). Oil on canvas. 39.5 in. x 50 in. (100cmx127cm). © National Portrait Gallery, London.



Figure 61 Benjamin West, *Shah 'Alam conveying the grant of the Diwani to Lord Clive* (c.1818; copy of original from 1774). Oil on canvas. 114 x 159 in. (290 x 400 cm). Copyright © The British Library Board, F29.



Figure 64 Val Prinsep, *Son of the Maharaja of Kashmir* (1877). Oil on canvas; 40 x 28 in. (99 x 71.1 cm)..Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata. R2785.



Figure 65 Val Prinsep, *Maharaja of Mysore* (1877). Oil on canvas; 35.5 x 27.8 in. (90.2 x 70.8 cm). Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata. R2779.



Figure 66 Val Prinsep, *Sir Salar Jung*, (1877). Oil on canvas; 42.6 x 33.4 in (108.2 x 84.8cm). Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata. R2776.



Figure 67 Val Prinsep, *H. H. Raja Dewas* (1877). Oil on canvas; 35.9 x 27.9 in (91.2 x 70.8 cm). R2777.



Figure 68 Val Prinsep, *Maharana of Oodeypore* (1877). Oil on canvas; 50 x 33 in (104 x 84cm). Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata. R2788.



Figure 69 Val Prinsep, *Rana of Dholpore* (1877). Oil on canvas; 35.5 x 27.9 in (90.2 x 70.8 cm). Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata. R2779.



Figure 70 Detail of Val Prinsep, *The Imperial Assemblage held at Delhi, 1 January 1877* (1880). Oil on canvas. Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, RCIN 407181.



Figure 71 Frank Dudman, *Val Prinsep A. R. A.* (1883). Photogravure. © National Portrait Gallery, London. NPG Ax27817.



Figure 72 Val Prinsep, *Maharaja of Scindia* [Maharaja of Gwalior, Jayajirao Scindia] (1877). Oil on canvas. 40.9 x 33 in (104 x 84 cm). Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata. R2783.



Figure 73 Bourne & Shepherd, *Maharaja of Gwalior* (c.1876). Albumen print. Alkazi Collection of Photography, 96.04.002 00016/1.

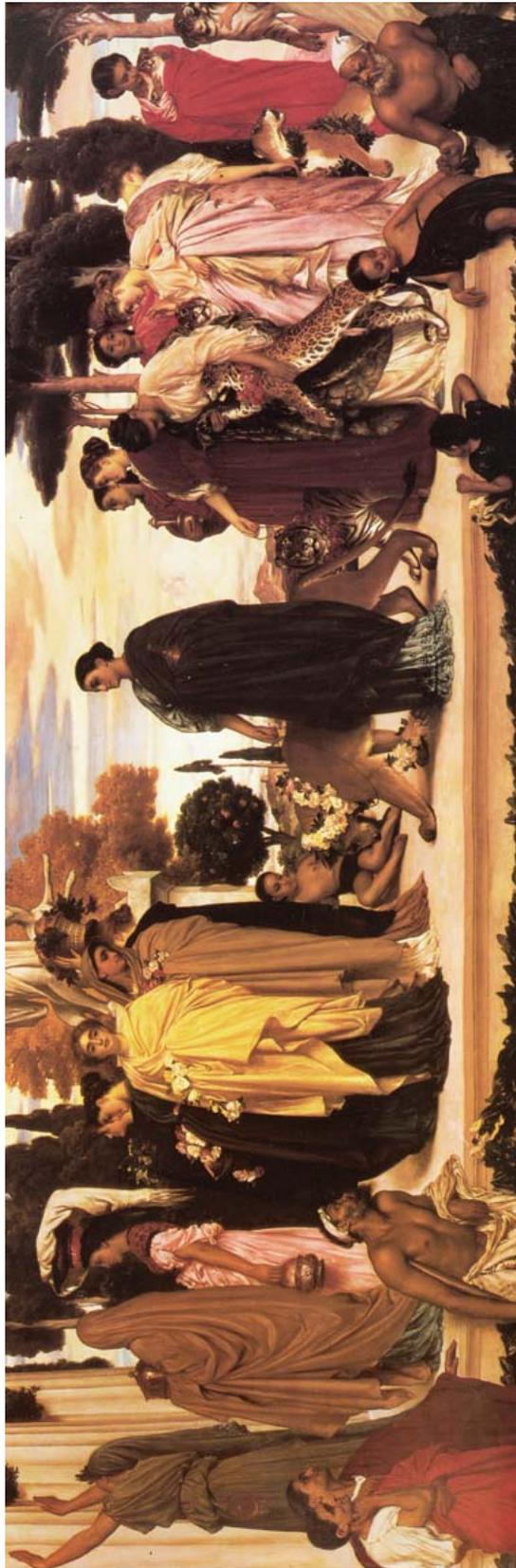


Figure 74 Frederic Leighton, *The Syracusan Bride* (1866). Oil on canvas. 134.7 x 424.3 cm (53.03" x 167.05"). Private collecti

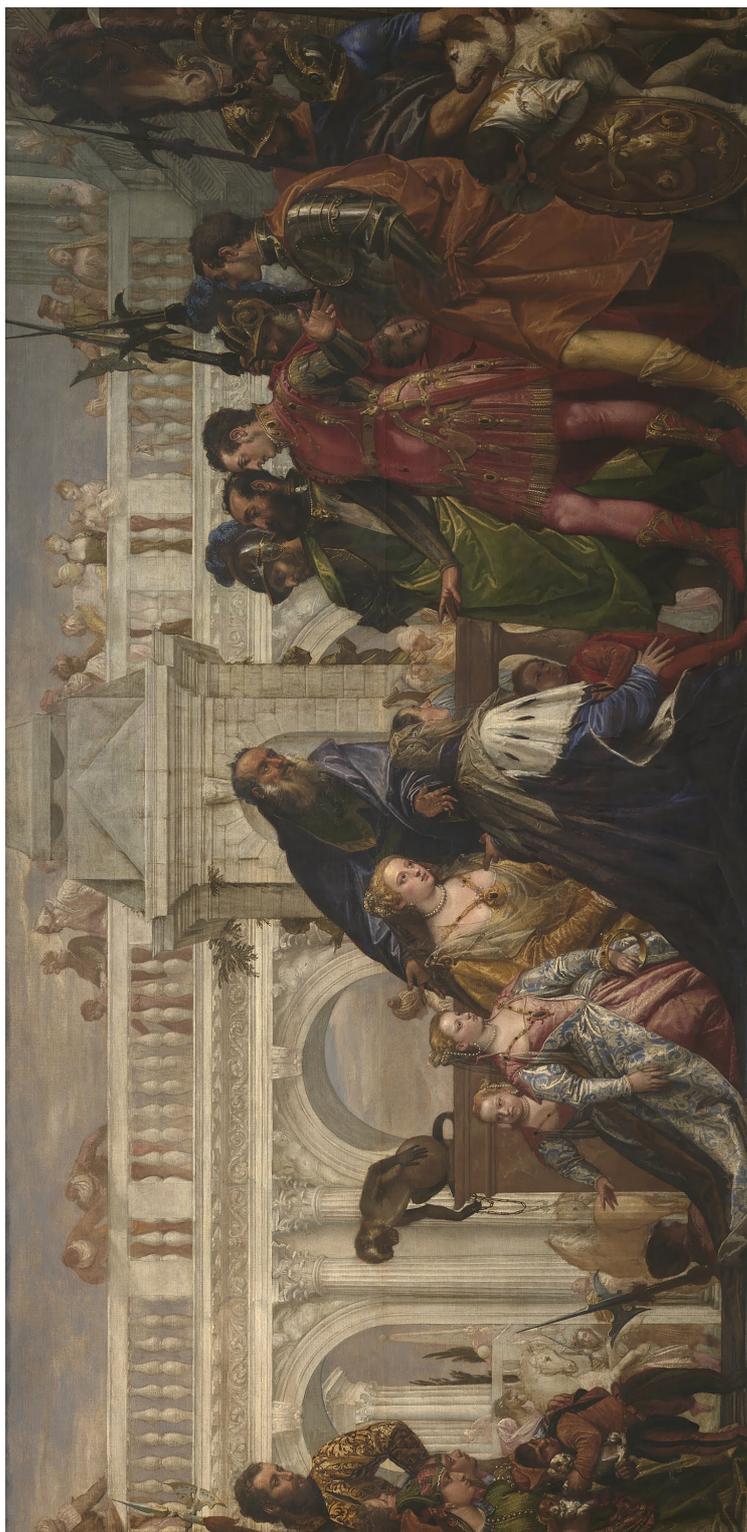


Figure 75 Paolo Veronese, *The Family of Darius before Alexander* (c.1567). Oil on canvas. 93 x 187 in (236.2 x 474.9 cm). National Gallery, London. NG294.



Figure 76 Bourne & Shepherd, 'Lord Lytton, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, Grand Master of the Star of India,' in J. Talboys Wheeler, *The History of the Imperial Assmeblage at Delhi* (London: Longmans, 1877). Woodburytype print. British Library, Photo 1054/(2).



Figure 77 Detail of Val Prinsep, *The Imperial Assmeblage at Delhi* (1880). Oil on canvas. Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, RCIN 407181.



Figure 78 George Hayter, *The House of Commons, 1833 (1843)*. Oil on canvas. 213 3/8 in. x 136 1/4 in. (5.420m x 3.460m). © National Portrait Gallery, London. NPG 54.

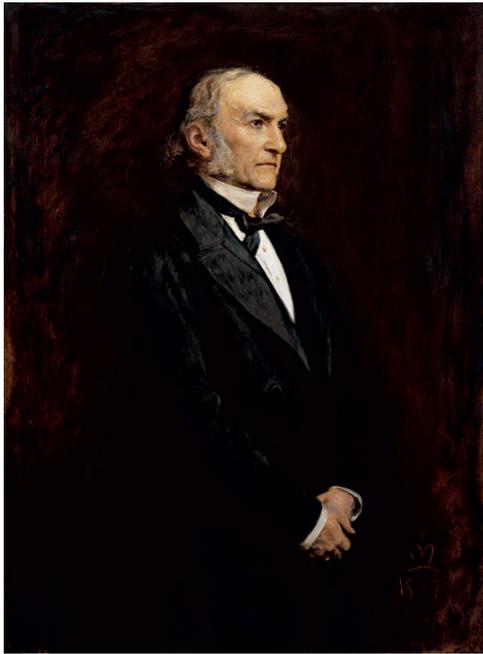


Figure 79 Sir John Everett Millais, *William Ewart Gladstone* (1879). Oil on canvas. 49 1/2 in. x 36 in. (1257 mm x 914 mm). National Portrait Gallery. NPG 3637.



Figure 80 Sir John Everett Millais, *Benjamin Disraelie, Early of Beaconsfield* (1881). Oil on canvas. 50 1/4 in. x 36 5/8 in. (1276 mm x 931 mm). National Portrait Gallery. NPG 3241.



Figure 81 Mortimer Menpes, 'State Entry as seen from the Jumma Masjid, 1903,' in Mortimer Menpes (transcribed by Dorothy Menpes), *The Durbar* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1903).

List of Abbreviations

Add. Mss	Additional manuscripts at the British Library.
Eur. Mss	European manuscripts at the British Library.
IOR	India Office Records at the British Library
NAM	National Army Museum
PDP	Print, Drawings and Photographs at the British Library

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