Colesworthy Grant's Portraits of Colonial Society in India: Lithography, Liberalism, and the Global Making of Middle-Class Culture, *c.* 1833–57

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The bourgeois class is international: it must necessarily wield across national differences.[1]
(Antonio Gramsci, 1918)

Art's role in the making of middle-class culture over the long nineteenth century has primarily been studied through a national or European lens. Yet middle-class 'culture' in the broad, Thompsonian sense of the word was not formed within Europe and then exported, but rather emerged coterminously and transnationally across a world increasingly integrated by European imperialism, the penetration of global capitalism, and technologies affording faster transportation and communication.[2] The homogeneities distinguishing middle-class culture across various national contexts reflect a material history of global integration, as transnational material conditions afforded shared forms of cultural practice, experience, and representation.[3] At the same time, patterns of homogenization indicate the severe asymmetries of power that structured nineteenth-century globalization, with 'hegemonic' forms of middle-class culture rooted in, and reconfiguring in turn, local distinctions of rank, race, and gender.[4] To explore how art histories focused on the national making of middle-class culture might be decentred and placed within this transnational framework, this article explores a case study from nineteenth-century Calcutta (present-day Kolkata), tracing how the changing class interests of British society in India determined fraught negotiations over the representation of race and gender in South Asia's colonial print culture.[5] This art-historical account is grounded in the material history of global integration by foregrounding the relationship of artistic practice to a technological force driving nineteenth-century globalization: lithographic printing.

Lithography fundamentally reshaped the international field within which print culture was produced and consumed during the first half of the nineteenth century. Named after its ability to multiply marks made directly onto stone, by 1820 the medium had spread from Bavaria, where it was invented in 1796–98, to territories across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.[6] Liberating print culture from a dependence on metropolitan investment and established traditions of artistic expertise, lithography flourished within globalizing commercial and scientific networks, reshaping visual public culture within so-called peripheral, provincial, or colonial territories.[7] Cities like Calcutta became nodes within an international circulation of illustrated periodicals, magazines, scientific manuals, and diverse visual ephemera. As James Gelvin and Nile Green have demonstrated in modern Islamic contexts, this artistic culture was promoted in turn by the expansion of steam

Detail from Colesworthy Grant, *Rongonatjee Monohurdoss*, c. 1840 (*plate 2*).

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XX | X | Month XXXX | pages XX-XX

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navigation: not simply because steam afforded widespread distribution, but because the technology fostered an interlinked culture of more rapid communication within which illustrated periodicals thrived.[8] Ships had traditionally taken upwards of four months to sail around the Cape of Good Hope, often with complications caused by the monsoon winds. In 1838, the East India Company's new steam-cutter *Atalanta* reached Bombay (now Mumbai) in a record forty-one days, Calcutta in fifty-four.[9] In this new technological environment, lithographic printing afforded a geographically and temporally integrated print culture, connecting metropolitan and colonial cultural centres across the globe into a decentralized network of artistic production and consumption.[10]

The work produced in Calcutta by the artist Colesworthy Grant (1813–80), which forms the explicit focus of what follows, exemplifies how lithography possessed a distinctive political force during a period in which emergent, middle-class interests were reconfiguring the political and cultural character of the East India Company. When Grant arrived in Calcutta as a clerk in 1832, the utilitarian Bentinck administration (1828–35) was overseeing a significant programme of social and economic reform.[11] The dimensions of this process were transimperial: in 1833, with the significant backing of free-trade and anti-slavery Northern industrialists, a Parliamentary Charter Act stripped the Company of its remaining monopoly on trade with China, animating fierce debate over the role of the colonial state and the character of its newly liberalized economy among a society that was itself being reshaped by the 1832 Reform Bill's reimagining of British citizenship.[12] Grant spent his career in India providing illustrations for a range of educational publications, while additionally teaching the application of art to utilitarian fields of knowledge, first at the Engineering College at Howrah, then as Professor of Drawing for the Civil Engineering Department at Calcutta's Presidency College.[13] In what follows, the connections between lithography's technical and material affordances, international middle-class culture, and this context of liberal and utilitarian reform are explored through a focus on two print portrait series that Grant released intermittently during the 1830s and 1840s, in periodicals and magazines produced in Calcutta but distributed internationally. These were later collated and republished in albums, the format in which they primarily survive today.[14]

The first, titled *Lithographic Sketches of the Public Characters of Calcutta*, harnessed lithography's ability to mimic sketching in order to portray a series of largely middle-class colonial officials in a deliberately expeditious style, evocative of a direct, *ad vivum* encounter. The lively intimacy of these portraits was enhanced through the medium's ability to transfer facsimile autographs, which Grant applied below his sitters' likenesses. The album thus materially contributed to a public culture, while also picturing its sitters according to an ideal conception of the modern liberal subject: as private individuals who actively asserted their individuation within the public sphere. Grant essentially depicted his sitters as 'bodies who write'.[15] Yet, unlike European examples of this burgeoning Romantic-era format, the artist's portrayal of colonial Calcutta's middle-class public was exclusively masculine.

Grant's second project, which ran concurrently with the first, was 'a series of sketches, as complete as possible, of the various tribes or classes of men who may be denominated Oriental'.[16] These portraits, later bound in albums entitled *A Series of Miscellaneous Rough Sketches of Oriental Heads*, exhibit a complex overlapping of visual modes. Many are concerned with delineating ethnic, racial, or religious classifications in the mode of colonial ethnography; others are reminiscent of the 'Cries of London', suggesting equivalences between the idea of a metropolitan 'urban residuum' and the colonial construction of racial distinction; several adhere to the visual logic of

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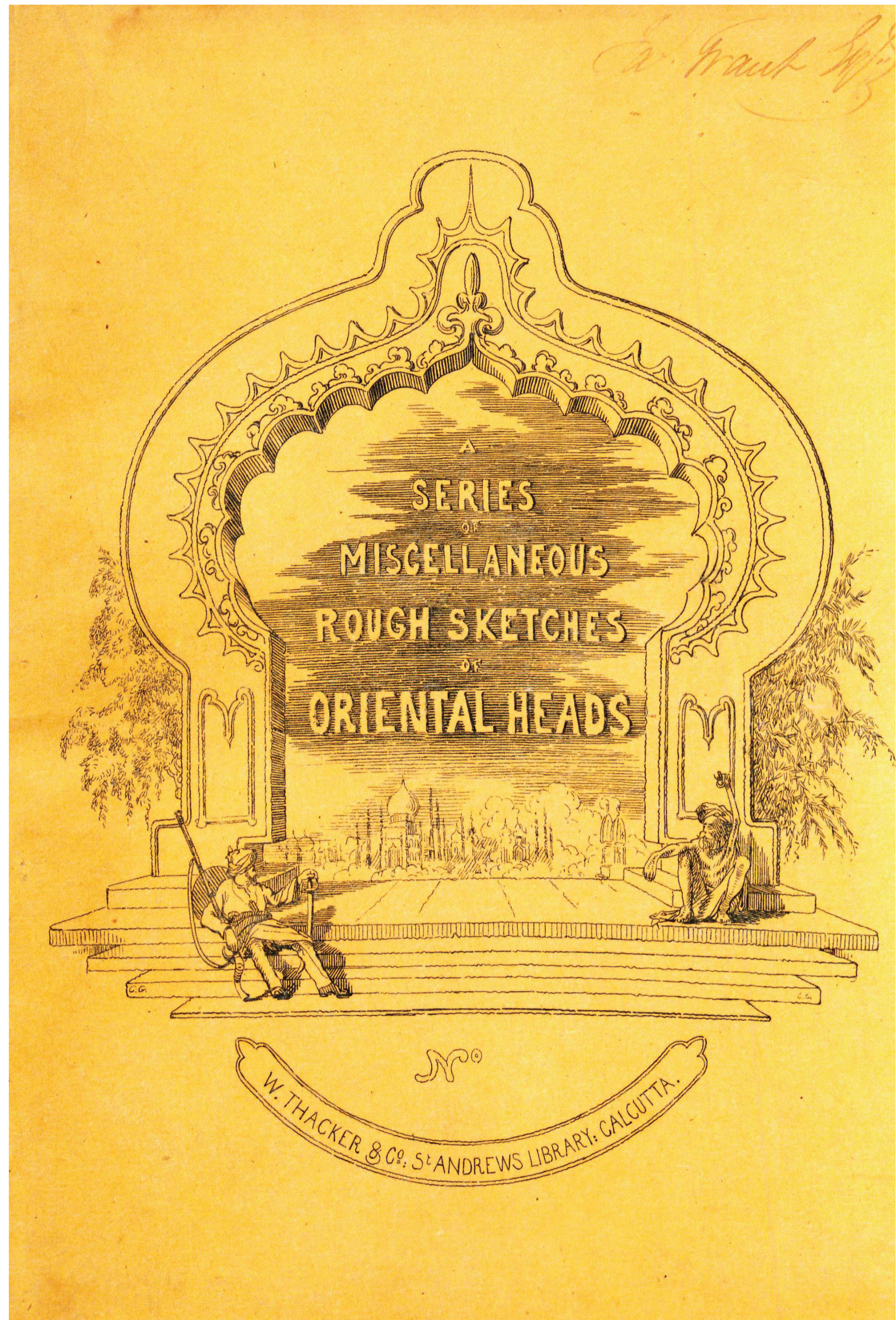

1 Colesworthy Grant, *Title Page*, *c.* 1842, in Colesworthy Grant, *A Series of Miscellaneous Rough Sketches of Oriental Heads*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

the costume album, picturing external signifiers of social rank and occupation in order to taxonomize a hierarchic vision of society.[17] As Bernhard Cohn, Nicholas Dirks, and Thomas Metcalf among others have shown, these artistic modes produced forms of knowledge closely entwined with practices of colonial rule, while also codifying clichés about foreign nations.[18] A wrapper design for Grant's project certainly incorporated a host of 'Orientalizing' visual tropes (*plate 1*): a multifoil arch; an onion-domed mosque; and a Hindu ascetic – a figure frequently used to epitomize India's religious difference.[19] Yet many of Grant's portraits also reflect a qualification that the artist published in a letter requesting new sitters, in which he asserted how,

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> respectable individuals [. . .] would be preferred to the lower orders, as presenting, generally speaking, the greater share, both in appearance and costume, of the characteristics of their tribes or countries, and having in many instances a degree of *individual interest* attached to them.[20]

Accordingly, *Oriental Heads* included portraits of a range of named, male individuals: from aristocratic nobles and the *nouveau riche*, to those engaged in middle-class professions such as lawyers, bankers, and teachers. In prints from the 1840s, these portraits additionally featured facsimile autographs in the specific language and script appropriate to the ethno-linguistic identity of the sitters: Devanagari for 'Rongonatjee Monohurdoss', a 'Goojratee Merchant of Bombay' (*plate* 2); or Malayalam for 'Uttam Sarup Nirmal Budh Jolishi Shunkernath', a 'native of Travancore and

2 Colesworthy Grant, *Rongonatjee Monohurdoss*, c. 1840, in Colesworthy Grant, *A Series of Miscellaneous Rough Sketches of Oriental Heads*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

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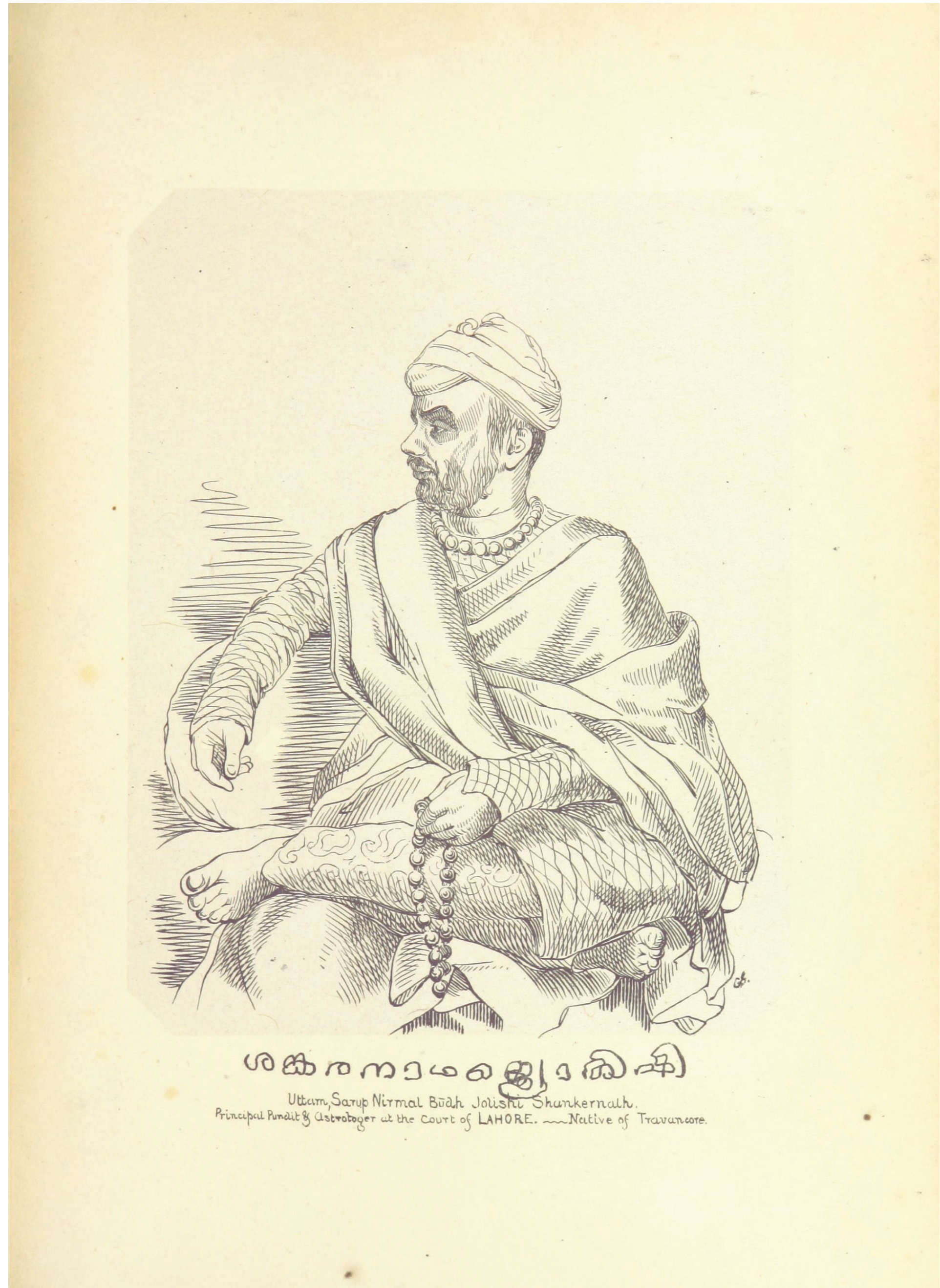

3 Colesworthy Grant, *Uttam Sarup Nirmal Budh Jolishi Shunkernath*, *c.* 1838–50, in Colesworthy Grant, *A Series of Miscellaneous Rough Sketches of Oriental Heads*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

principal pundit & astrologer at the court of Lahore' (*plate* 3). As a result, Grant's *Oriental Heads* combined visual regimes of knowledge production premised on classifying and epitomizing South Asian society, with a format associated with the public presentation of a unique, agentic individuality.

The following analysis unravels these tensions by first locating *Oriental Heads* in relation to previous European print projects that sought to taxonomize 'those denominated Oriental', stressing how the technical and material affordances of lithography shifted the parameters of what has been termed 'colonial knowledge', along with the social practices involved in its artistic representation.[21] The argument then turns to the relationship between gender and race in defining Grant's project to picture Calcutta's *Public Characters*, before showing how these identities intersected in ambivalent ways within the middle-class, reform-orientated institutions in which

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Grant was active. *Public Characters* was first serialized within the *India Review*, a periodical edited by the 'strenuous reformer' Dr Frederick Corbyn (1792–1853), who joined Grant in participating in a number of voluntary associations that, in seeking to reshape the character of colonial society, defined novel ideas about the white, middle-class male.[22] From 1839, Grant acted as the secretary and drawing master of Corbyn's Mechanics' Institute and School of Art, an institution riven by conflicting ideas about the relationship between white colonial society and so-called Anglicized South Asians.[23] Exploring these institutional contexts reveals how Grant's prints negotiated transimperial developments in the class politics of British imperialism according to the complex intersection of racial and gender identities circumscribing white colonial society in India. The article concludes by arguing that a focus on Grant's prints thus not only foregrounds lithography as one of the technological forces integrating global middle-class culture, but, more significantly, reveals how this homogenization was inflected by a range of local contingencies shaping identity and power, preventing the colonial regime from ever constituting, to use Ann Laura Stoler's words, 'a secure hegemonic bourgeois project'.[24]

Colonial Lithography and its Forms of Knowledge

In 1844, Captain Scott of the warship *Phelgethon* offered Grant permission to sketch several prisoners being transported onboard. These men were victims of an extensive system of penal transportation, through which the East India Company both supressed regional unrest and coerced the labour mobility essential to expanding its economic interests across the Indian Ocean World.[25] As the artist recorded in the portraits' captions, the sitters were 'criminals […] condemned to perpetual labour in irons on the East of Martalan', a territory annexed in 1826 following the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824–26). Such economic and geopolitical concerns were mystified in a description that Grant released to accompany the portraits, however, which emphasized instead the prints' ethnographic value as representations of an 'unhallowed profession': 'that diabolical and extraordinary fraternity of THUGS'.[26] Preoccupying the fantasies of colonial administrators and metropolitan audiences alike, 'thugee' was a central trope in nineteenth-century colonial discourse, as banditry caused by the collapse of indigenous military employment, forced sedentarization, and chronic crop failures was reinterpreted as the arcane rites of a religious cult dedicated to the Tantric goddess Kali.[27] If invoking this colonial stereotype was an attempt to legitimize the Company's exploitation of unfree labour, Grant's description nevertheless became incoherent upon mentioning the supposedly liberal governmental apparatus through which the 'thugs' had been convicted. For turning to the 'indisputable authority' of official legal verdicts, the artist admitted that 'three of these infamous heroes dwindled into the, comparatively, insignificant notoriety of 'DACOITS', or bandits.[28] Moreover, the 'evidence elicited upon […] trial' transformed the sketches into portraits of named individuals, whose lengthy legal biographies were detailed in the text. One of the portraits (*plate* 4) even features a quote in which the sitter's defence contradicts the artist's erroneous classification: 'I'm a poor Bagbanee!' – a gardener, not a cultic assassin.

These portraits and their false descriptions exemplify the complex tension between personhood and typehood in the 'regimes of knowledge' underpinning the colonial state's 'coercive network'.[29] Grant's use of specific legal biographies combined uneasily with his positioning of the portraits as representatives of a sensationalized media phenomenon. Equally, the literal control manifest in the physical act of Grant's sketching, which entailed a command over the bodies of individual men bound in

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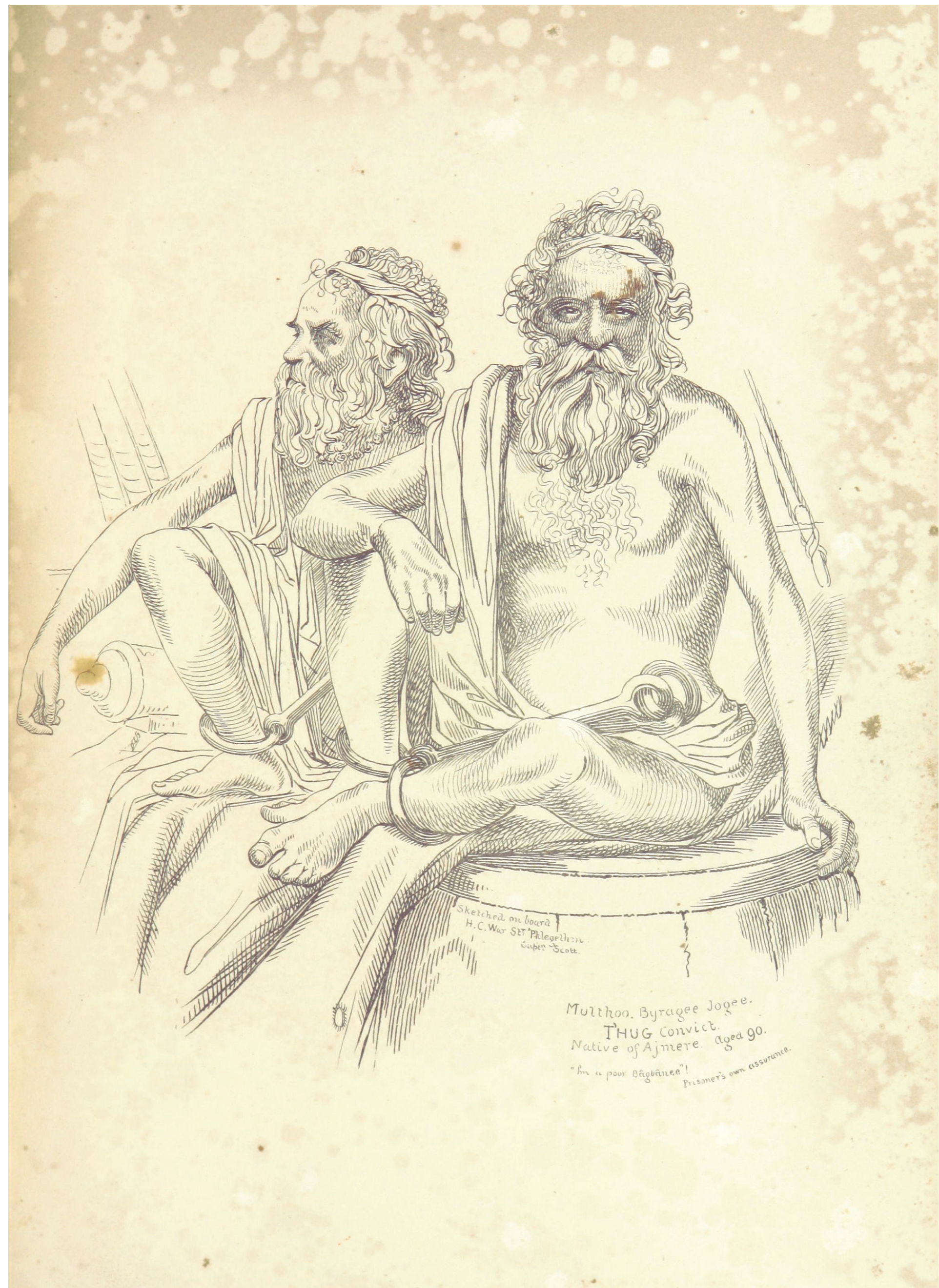

4 Colesworthy Grant, *Multhoo*, *THUG Convict*, c. 1838–50, in Colesworthy Grant, *A Series of Miscellaneous Rough Sketches of Oriental Heads*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

chains, contrasted with the lack of determinacy in classifying and rationalizing this violence according to established taxonomic categories of knowledge like costume. Grant even bemoaned that his ability to visually convey information was hindered by his sitters each wearing the 'customary costume [...] alike to the inmates of a prison'.[30] These contradictions converged on the person of 'Rambul, alias Ram Singh' (*plate* 5), who, 'had his importance been known', might have 'occupied a more conspicuous position [...] the estimate of his character being influenced by *external appearances*, which seemed to bespeak him "a fellow of no mark"'.[31] This compositional defect was redressed in the text, however, where Grant provided a detailed legal biography of this 'Jemadar [lord] of Dacoits'.[32] Costume as a category of interpretation, and physiognomy as a practice of deducing knowledge from 'external appearances', thus proved insufficient for deciphering or conveying information, undermining the

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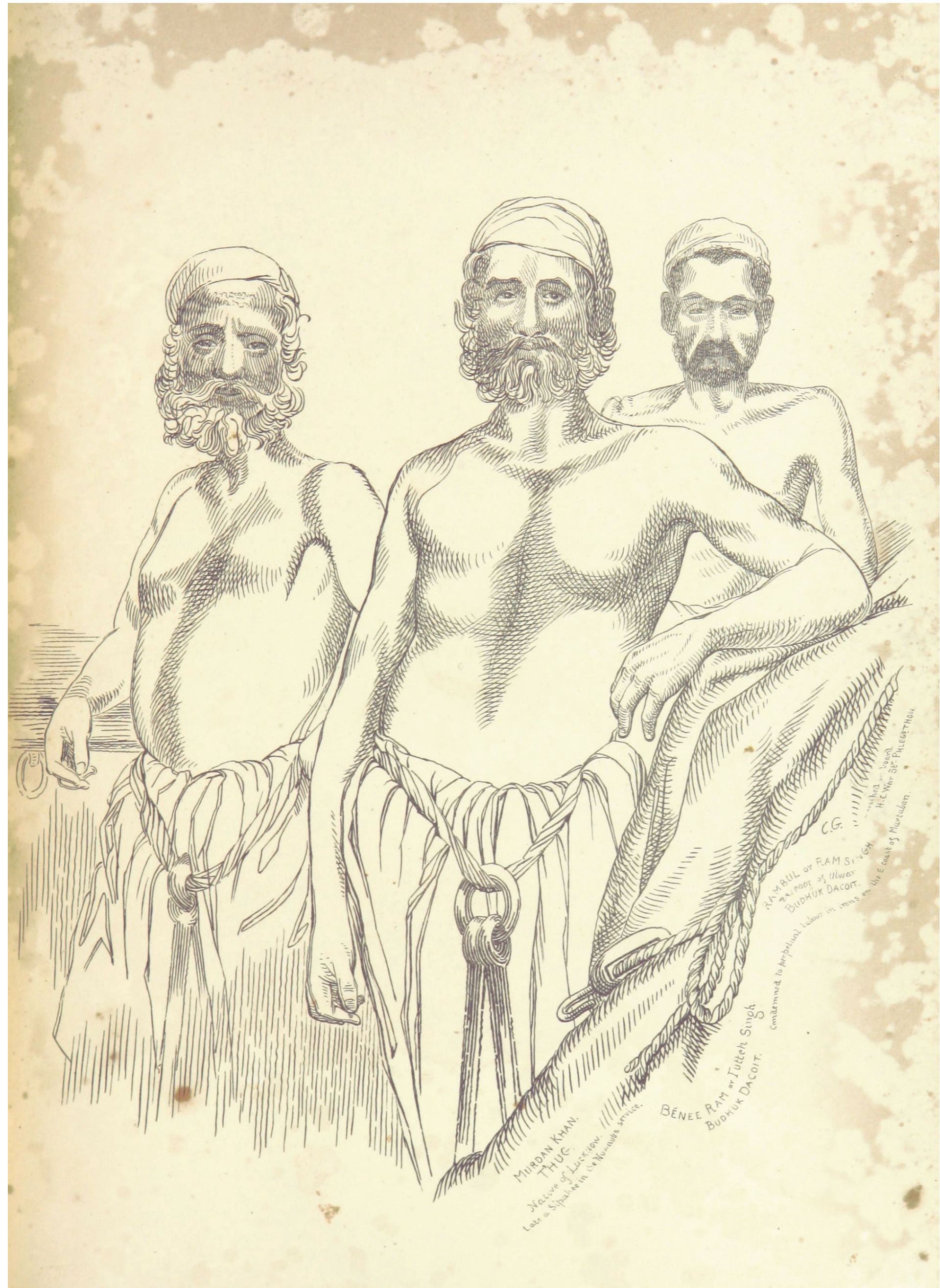

5 Colesworthy Grant, *Convicts*, 1844, in Colesworthy Grant, *A Series of Miscellaneous Rough Sketches of Oriental Heads*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

established frameworks through which images in social taxonomies had typically participated in knowledge production. Instead, the artist relied on those textual systems of knowledge that structured contractual relations between individuals in a modern liberal society.[33] Caught between practices of visual stereotyping and the novel legal and ethical categories of liberalism, Grant's portraits exemplify Taylor Sherman's analysis of the colonial state's 'penchant for ruling collectives up against the self-imposed liberal desire to govern individuals' – an ambivalence that appears to have destabilized traditional artistic strategies for conveying knowledge.[34] The following section argues that lithographic periodical culture both catalysed and mediated such contradictions by reconfiguring the institutional spaces in which information about South Asian peoples was popularly produced and consumed, primarily by resituating such practices within an expanding colonial literary

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sphere. Crucially, and as Grant's portraits of chain-bound prisoners highlights, this transformation altered the frameworks through which ideas about agency and individuality determined the legitimacy of real physical violence – with visual strategies making sense of the contradictions on which various forms of discipline and state coercion operated.

Before the establishment of lithographic presses in India, artistic attempts to produce social taxonomies had largely existed as manuscripts or archival projects: typically the work of South Asian artists commissioned by state actors, and usually comprising corpuses of sketches or watercolours combined with assorted written documents.[35] Print publications with pretentions to elite knowledge found little official patronage and generally remained commercially unviable, despite attempts by artists to operate within the intellectual frameworks of institutions involved in the production of colonial knowledge, such as Caclutta's Asiatick Society (renamed the Asiatic Society in 1825).[36] In 1792, the artist Arthur William Devis (1762–1822), likely working under the patronage of the Society's first President, William Jones (1746–94), publicized ambitious plans for a synoptic print series of Indian industries and occupations titled the *Economy of Human Life*. Devis' project failed to materialize, however, despite the artist adapting a comparative historical framework that Orientalists like Jones had applied to the study of India.[37] Financial difficulties plagued another synoptic attempt to taxonomize the peoples of South Asia prior to the establishment of lithography: Balthasar Solvyns' (1760–1824) *Manners, Customs, Character, Dresses, and Religion of the Hindoos*, first published in 1796.[38] Working in India without official permission, and beyond the elite institutions in which his project might have secured patronage, Solvyns' returns were meagre; a subsequent attempt to republish the work with *L'Institut de France* bankrupted its publisher and forced the artist into penury. While still fraught with risk, depictions of the colonial landscape – often working across multiple artistic modes, from the militaristic and exploratory functions of the topographic, to the civic humanist valances of the Grand Style – proved a more commercially successful means to capture or signify knowledge in the years straddling the turn of the nineteenth century. Even so, Natasha Eaton has convincingly shown how 'colonial print-making was repeatedly marginalized' within a 'parallel modernity' of colonial consumption, which privileged the contingent, fetishistic qualities of European prints according to an 'emporium effect' – a term that Eaton uses to contrast the place of chance lotteries and 'conspicuous excess' in the colonial print market to the disciplining, 'civilizing' strategies of the metropolis' 'museum effect'.[39]

Although colonial printmaking remained constrained throughout the last decades of the East India Company's existence, new modes of metropolitan print-capitalism, largely catalysed by lithography, did begin reshaping the dichotomy between metropolitan and colonial patterns of consumption, while also reinventing the way colonial knowledge might be consumed as a marketable commodity.[40] Lithography's inventor, Alois Senefelder (1771–1834), had acquired a British patent for the technology in 1801; over the next decade, the medium was established in England via continental networks of commerce and emigration.[41] Popular with fashionable, middle-class communities, the medium's appeal was notably expanded through the activities of Rudolph Ackermann (1764–1834), who in 1817 established a press in London publishing the art periodicals and drawing manuals through which he cultivated a broader audience for traditionally elite, 'polite' forms of cultural practice like amateur sketching.[42] Ackermann's taste-setting periodical *The Repository of Arts* enjoyed subscription facilities that mapped onto British imperial geography. One notice listed services in 'New York, Halifax and Quebec, the West Indies, Hamburg, Lisbon, Cadiz,

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Gibraltar, Malta or anywhere in the Mediterranean, the Cape of Good Hope and any part of the East Indies'.[43] Such geographic reach transformed the 'fetishistic' character of European prints traced by Eaton, and afforded instead a regular, rhythmic, and globally integrated field of print consumption. Crucially, this shift brought projects associated with the production or communication of colonial knowledge into new formats and patterns of consumption that neither reflected Eaton's metropolitan 'museum' nor the colonial 'emporium'.[44] Instead, costume albums and ethnographic imagery began to participate in an intertextual culture of international news and fashion, characterized by serialization and the 'periodicity' of regular publishing rhythms; the cultivation of middle-class and female audiences; the marketing of prints within periodicals that defined middle-class taste; and the construction of both amateur engagement and artistic value through complex relationships between lithographic illustrations and more traditional and expensive artistic commodities, such as albums of hand-coloured aquatints.[45] Crucially, the first lithographic press was established in India in 1821, just four years after Ackermann's began publishing in London, and was similarly devoted 'chiefly if not solely' to the promotion of amateur drawing.[46] Rather than conceptualizing lithography's impact on print consumption as primarily driven by metropolitan developments, it thus seems more accurate to consider early British lithography as a transimperial phenomenon, travelling and intersecting with the global dimensions of British amateurism – the result of sketching's prominent place in the curricula of the military and commercial academies that trained Britain's merchants, soldiers, and colonial officials, including the East India Company's college at Haileybury and its military seminary at Addiscombe.[47]

Grant certainly conceived the portraits of *Oriental Heads* within this new model of middle-class print consumption – as illustrations, often taken after amateur sketches, circulating within the regular publishing rhythms of news and current affairs. The series was framed as a continuously evolving project, released as individual portraits in periodicals or published as limited, thematically coherent sets of images, usually bound with a descriptive text. Unlike earlier costume albums or ethnographic projects like Devis' or Solvyns', Grant's totalizing plan to produce 'a series of sketches, as complete as possible' was thus not only conceptualized synchronically, in terms of social structure, but unfolded diachronically as the artist took advantage of opportunities for taking portraits determined largely by the East India Company's shifting military and commercial interests. Indeed, this open-ended, opportunistic character enabled the series to evolve as a real-time mirroring of topical imperial policy. A series of brutal wars on the North-West Frontier, which garnered acute public attention due to Britain and Russia's so-called 'Great Game' for imperial control in Central Asia, supplied Grant with sketches from amateur artists working in official capacities as soldiers, diplomats, and provincial administrators.[48] As a result, adaptations of amateur portraits from Iran, Herat, and the Punjab appeared in *Oriental Heads* following the first Anglo-Afghan war of 1839, while a set of autographed portraits of the Afghan Shah, Dost Muhummud Khan (1793–1863), along with several of the Shah's male family members, were released with a lengthy descriptive text in 1842. In 1844, Grant capitalized on the febrile controversy over Charles Napier's (1782–1853) annexation of the north-western territory of Sindh (1843), alongside the arrival in Calcutta of the dispossessed Amir, Muhammad Khan Talpur (1810–74), to release a set of autographed portraits of the Sindhi Amirs, bound with a personal account in which Muhammad Khan publicly critiqued the Company's aggressive expansionism and its betrayal of diplomatic treaties.[49] Such military action was the centre of reportage and debate within the periodicals in which Grant released his prints. The images, prominently

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displaying the signature's indexical trace of a unique agency, consequently positioned South Asian sitters as individual subjects of celebrity within an international, evolving media narrative. The unwelcome imposition of this particular construction of public identity can be inferred from an attached sheet of autographs, separate to the Amirs' portraits, which corrected several images in which the royals had provided a stately '*address* or *title*, rather than *duskhut* or *signature*', suggesting the rulers' desire to represent themselves through court protocols that emphasized their persons as embodiments of state sovereignty, rather than as private individuals positioned within a public media narrative about British action on the North-West Frontier.[50]

This use of notable portraits to illustrate current affairs highlights the cultural and political implications of the term 'heads' in Grant's title. For although the term evoked a potential link to colonial knowledge as generated through phrenology's attention to the skull – and the artist certainly had several connections to prominent phrenologists, as well as members of Calcutta's Phrenological Society – it is evident that the work also drew on the tradition of using 'illustrious heads' to explicate historical narratives. In Britain, this practice was pioneered in Joseph Ames' *A Catalogue of English Heads* (1747), and was popularized by James Granger's *A Biographical History of England [...] consisting of Characters dispersed in different Classes, and adapted to a Methodical Catalogue of Engraved British Heads* (1769).[51] The latter text, which sought to turn 'biography to system' by presenting 'illustrious heads' according to a synoptic class taxonomy, began a 'craze for extra-illustration' that was later termed 'grangerization'.[52] Consumers cannibalized portrait albums in order to interleave prints in new manuscripts, enabling a creative, personal engagement with both historical narratives and practices of social typing.[53] Importantly, figures like Ackermann expanded practices of grangerization to a broader, middle-class audience, with cheap lithographic albums and illustrated periodicals enabling consumers to engage emotionally and creatively with historical narratives and international affairs by recombining popular print culture in scrapbooks and commonplace albums.[54] As Marcia Pointon has shown, such developments were foundational to a middle-class model of history as vested in exceptional individuals, whose portraits made the past both accessible and a material possession of the national community.[55]

The tension between individuality and typicality in Grant's portraits thus seems to have stemmed in part from the artist drawing on the connections between portraiture, biography, and historical narrative in an expanding middle-class culture of illustration, despite the series' basis in artistic conventions premised on ethnographic abstraction. A collection of portraits depicting independently named officers in the Company's Sepoy regiments, for instance, enabled the artist to establish a visual contrast between the unique individuality of senior figures in the foreground, shown with evident markers of rank in their military costume, and the social aggregate of the military body behind, where disembodied bayonets fade into a strict, staccato rhythm of verticals, generating a potent metaphor for the military's disciplining of the individual (*plate* 6). Similarly, the contrast in political agency separating Muhammad Khan's public critique of the Company's military activities and Grant's transcription of a convict's protestations of innocence, mirrored the distinction between the artist's careful depiction of the Sindhi Amir's royal costume (*plate* 7) and the shocking representation of a predominantly nude, ninety-year-old man burdened by chains. Costume consequently appeared in the series not as a universal method for visually taxonomizing colonial society, but rather as one signifier among others to discriminate those whom the colonial state deemed worthy of possessing individuality or agency. Moreover, like James Granger, Grant repeatedly framed this distinction

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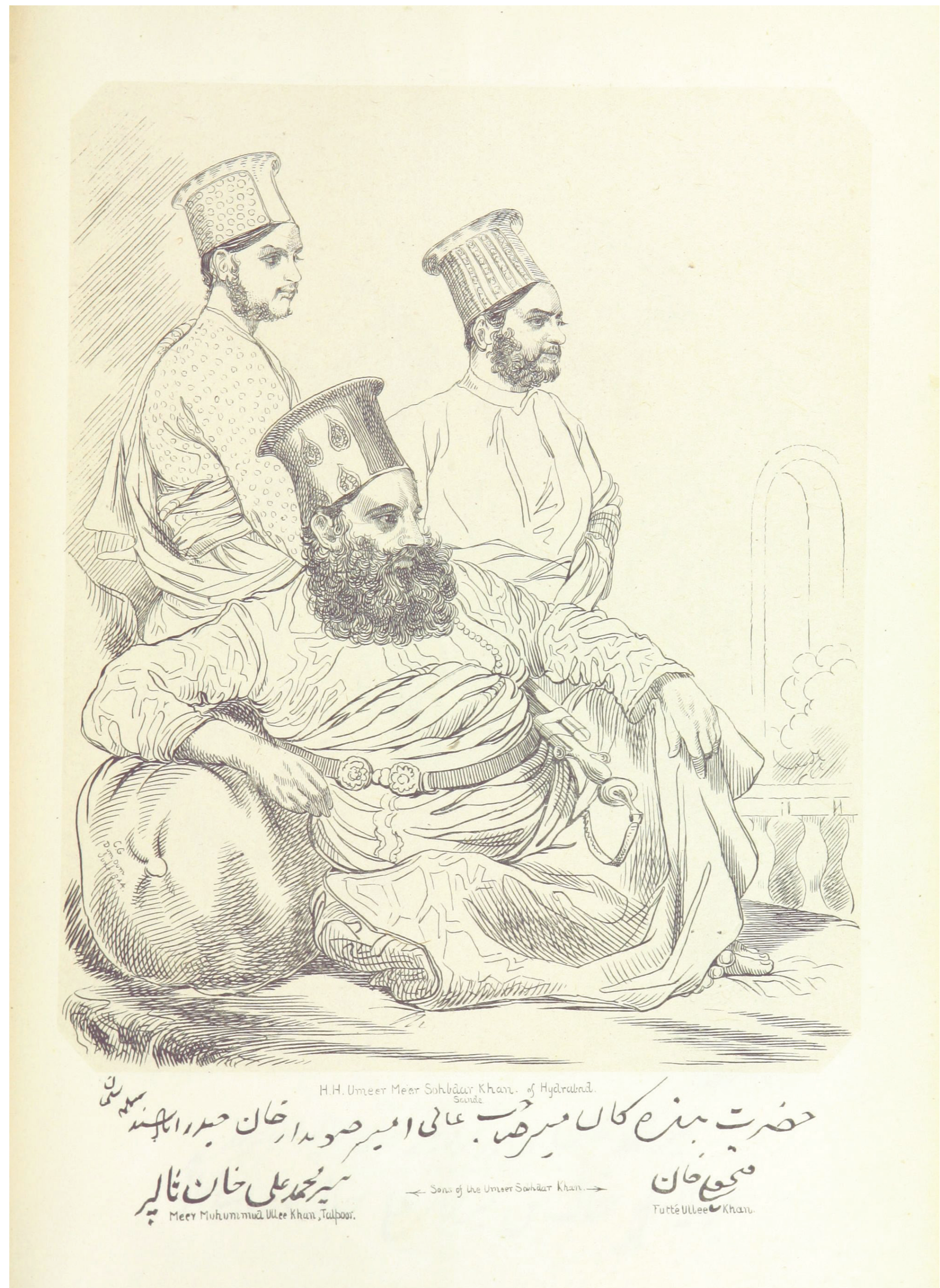
6 Colesworthy Grant, *Roshun Khan*, *c.* 1838–50, in Colesworthy Grant, *A Series of Miscellaneous Rough Sketches of Oriental Heads*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

between biographic and taxonomic forms of knowledge according to a hierarchy of class, describing Hindus as 'divided and sub-divided into classes or shades of rank and purity, resembling the list of precedence in the British Peerage, from the blood royal duke to the youngest sons of esquires' – a statement that maps well onto the twelve 'classes' through which Granger turned 'biography to system', which began with 'Kings, Queens, Princes', moved through 'Officers of State' and 'Peers', and ended with 'deformed Persons, Convicts'.[56]

At the same time, Grant's description of Hindu 'classes' using terms with evident racial and biological connotations, such as 'shades' and 'purity', cautions how, to draw on Ann Laura Stoler, 'racial thinking was not subsequent to the bourgeois order but constitutive of it'.[57] As Stoler's work has shown, metropolitan ideas about class were fundamentally inflected by the transimperial construction of racial boundaries,

particularly as newly enfranchised middle classes defined the character and limits of civil society.[58] The work of Holly Shaffer has equally demonstrated how global flows of portraiture and ethnographic imagery intersected in complex ways to produce the 'internal frontiers' of middle-class regimes.[59] Indeed, the relationship of *Oriental Heads* to these transnational processes can be highlighted by comparing the album to a set of lithographs analysed by Shaffer: an 1834 album created by the Berliner sculptor Johann Gottfried Schadow, titled *Heads Representing Typical Head-Formations of Different Races*.[60] This work structured a comparative ethnology of national types using the same division at the heart of *Oriental Heads*: European nations were typified using a range of 'illustrious heads' taken from renowned portraits or death masks, including those of Friedrich II, Napoleon, Kant, Newton, and Mendelssohn; whereas non-European peoples were predominantly characterized according to a



7 Colesworthy Grant, *H. H. Umeer Meer Muhummud Khan*, 1844, in Colesworthy Grant, *A Series of Miscellaneous Rough Sketches of Oriental Heads*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

range of ethnographic sketches, including images first published by Solvyns. Racial and civilizational difference was thus constructed according to a liberal dialectic between individuality and public recognition: unlike the unnamed portraits of non-European types, figures of celebrity or public renown were presented as both epitomizing and distinguishing European societies. By assimilating copies of historical portraits, sculptures, death masks, and various ethnographic prints into an additive, scrapbook aesthetic, Schadow's album not only presented illustration as the basis for this public imaginary, but mirrored *Oriental Heads* in framing the aggregation and serialization of such 'Miscellaneous Rough Sketches' as a method of sociological inquiry. Foregrounding diachrony and the lithographic sketch, both series arguably anticipated the hugely popular metropolitan portrait series known as *physiologies*, which Martina Lauster has shown abandoned physiognomy as a simple 'characterology' and instead used sketches to journalistically anatomize the national 'social body' as it developed.[61] This is not to claim the direct influence of prints like *Oriental Heads* on cultural developments in metropolitan Europe, however, but rather to emphasize how the global construction of ethnological boundaries intersected with the emergence of novel ideas about individuality and celebrity, as Europe's newly enfranchised middle classes adopted the public sphere and its trans- and inter-imperial flows of imagery as the site in which they simultaneously defined their place in the nation and their nation's place in the world.[62]

If this comparison suggests a more complex entwining of race and class in Grant's binary presentation of 'illustrious' and 'characteristic' heads, then a crucial distinction needs to be drawn between the colonial public that Grant's work addressed and the audience for such later, metropolitan *physiologies*.[63] For instead of reflecting a national community back to itself, enfranchising a broad sodality of middle-class consumers, *Oriental Heads* was published for a predominantly white, colonial literary public – a minority ruling elite within South Asia. Rather than framing the public sphere as a space in which middle-class individuals defined the national community in which they were newly enfranchised, *Oriental Heads* consequently evoked notions of publicity in a context in which engagement with an English-language literary sphere largely distinguished white audiences as a public *separate* from the majority of the South Asian population they governed.

This dynamic is particularly marked in Grant's representation of 'coolies' – a derogatory term for East- or South-Asian workers subjected to indentured labour and mass coercive transportation.[64] Grant portrayed these labourers as a group portrait, with three figures standing among the crates used to ship cargo, generating a blunt metaphor for the coerced mobility – even fungibility – of non-white bodies within Britain's imperial economy (*plate* 8). Each man was classified further according to religion and region, with an ethnographic attention to haircut. In this sense, the portraits appear similar to those in other lithographic costume albums published in the 1820s and 1830s by artists like John Gantz (1772–1853) or Charles D'Oyly (1781–1845), in which people were stereotyped according to distinctive physiognomic features or the tools and contexts appropriate to particular occupations (*plate* 9 and *plate* 10). At the same time, the crates surrounding Grant's *Coolies* bear alternative names: proprietorial inscriptions addressing several Europeans involved in Calcutta's mercantile economy and the city's literary sphere. Grant named a shipping insurance firm; his brother George, a clockmaker; the owner of the 'British Library' in Calcutta, T. Ostell, who later republished *Oriental Heads*; and Joachim Hayward Stocqueler (1801–86), the editor of a periodical that featured the artist's prints, as well as a liberal paper called *The Englishman*, which he owned with the Bengali entrepreneur Dwarkanath Tagore (1794–1846). Just

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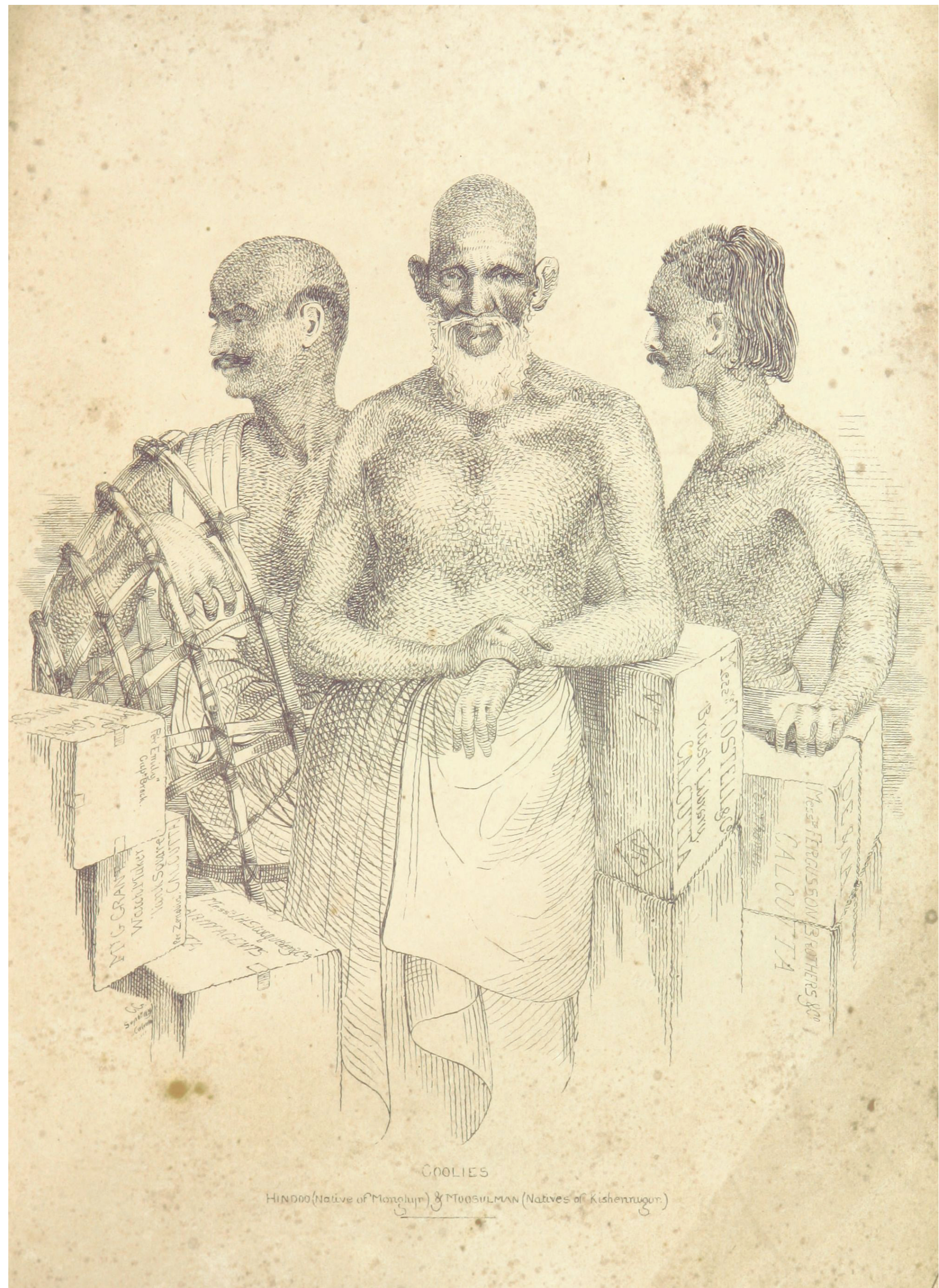

8 Colesworthy Grant, *Coolies*, *c.* 1838–50, in Colesworthy Grant, *A Series of Miscellaneous Rough Sketches of Oriental Heads*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

as the artist's depiction of 'thugs/dacoits' had exhibited an emphasis on the textual – with a visually indeterminate categorization of the sitters' identities hinging on the artist's recourse to either legal verdicts or sensationalized journalism – Grant's *Coolies* thus presented the social divide between coerced colonial labour and the middle-class literary public that this economy supported as determined by a sitter's ability to signify their individuality in writing. This capacity ranged from the autograph's indexical trace of an individuality or celebrity recognized in current affairs; to a signature that marked private ownership within global flows of goods and unfree people; to those excluded from public life, and consequently signifying individuality's Other – a typehood categorized by race, geography, or religion, with type precisely the opposite of that romantic, embodied form of handwriting that lithographic facsimiles of autographs afforded. Unlike earlier ethnographic projects like Solvyns' or Devis', which had been

9 John and Justinian Gantz, *The Carpenters*, *c.* 1827, in John and Justinian Gantz, *Descriptive Letter Press to the Indian Microcosm*, Madras: John Gantz & Son, 1827. New Haven: Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art.

premised on the capacity of the European eye to visually classify and distinguish the colonial Other, *Oriental Heads* thus structured a social divide that was more subtly rooted in a person's capacity to engage with, and thus be recognized as *belonging to*, the emergent English-language literary sphere that lithographic printing had opened to middle-class society in colonial India.

Oriental Heads consequently exemplifies how lithography catalysed new patterns of colonial print consumption, shifting the conception, circulation, and instrumentalization of colonial knowledge into an expanding culture of illustrated news and current affairs. This shift altered existing methods of producing visual information about colonial society and generated a more complex array of claims to individuality, agency, typicality, or representativeness, which – as the contrast between named individuals, former monarchs, and unfree labourers powerfully demonstrates – entailed varying intensities of violence from the colonial state's 'coercive network'.[65] By linking social discrimination to an individual's capacity to participate in the public sphere, *Oriental Heads* was clearly closely entwined with Grant's simultaneous project to define Calcutta's *Public Characters*. The following section consequently establishes the latter series' emergence within Calcutta's literary sphere, before exploring how the two print series worked in tandem to regulate the ambivalences of the period's liberal, middle-class social reform.

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Gender, Race, and the *Public Characters of Calcutta*

Grant owed his first real patronage to the prolific editor and medical professional Dr Frederick Corbyn. Born in Manchester in 1792, Corbyn was appointed to the Bengal Presidency's Medical Service in 1813.[66] He founded an eclectic periodical called the *India Review* in 1836, featuring international news, literary reviews, and opinion pieces on science and culture. The periodical was distributed monthly at imperial centres including Allahabad, Bombay, and Madras (present-day Chennai), while copies were also shipped to Britain. The periodical contained copious illustrations and an unusual focus on the fine arts.[67] Each edition featured regular updates on artists and exhibitions in Europe and, in an article entitled 'Encouragement of the Arts in India', the editor emphatically declared his 'earnest desire to promote the fine arts; – that fascinating that enlightening study'.[68] The captions to Grant's earliest prints suggest that he had begun his first forays into lithography using T. Black's Asiatic Lithographic Press in Calcutta, but by 1836 he had joined a coterie of artists patronized as part of Corbyn's project to encourage the arts, publishing on the Medical Journal Press at Fort William. The editor credited Grant's increasing artistic capabilities to this patronage: although 'hitherto he has had but little encouragement', Corbyn charted the artist's incremental

10 Charles D'Oyly, *Fishers of Small Fry*, c. 1830, in Charles D'Oyly, *The Costumes of India*, Patna: Lithographic Press, *c.* 1830. New Haven: Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art.

improvement, 'proceeding step, by step, until he has attained that perfection which enables him to take striking likenesses', and thereby 'laying the foundation of the fine arts in India'.[69]

Although facsimile-autographed portraits swept across Romantic-era Europe – combining earlier practices of collecting signatures in *alba amicorum* with a growing middle-class market for 'illustrious heads' – Grant's adoption of the format for both *Public Characters* and *Oriental Heads* can be traced specifically to Corbyn's attempt to use the *India Review* to encourage artistic production in colonial India.[70] The editor subscribed to *Fraser's Magazine*, a popular metropolitan periodical that ran a feature between 1830 and 1838 named 'Fraser's Gallery of Illustrious Literary Characters', in which a biographical sketch of a public character written by the magazine's editor, William Maginn (1794–1842), was accompanied by a lithographic, facsimile-autographed portrait by 'CROWQUIS', the pen name of the artist Daniel Maclise (1806–70).[71] In an 1838 article in the *India Review*, detailing experiments aimed at an 'improvement in the blackness and polish of our ink', which reflected how lithography as a form of applied chemistry married with the wider scientific interests of the periodical, Corbyn included Grant's transfer facsimile of 'a very difficult subject from *Fraser's*': Maclise's portrait of the writer Caroline Norton (1808–77).[72] The apparent success of this imitation led Corbyn to announce that he had 'determined to give in future numbers after this attempt likenesses of the celebrated authors in Europe, which we are sure will be acceptable to our friends in the jungle'.[73] True to his word, early editions of the *India Review* carried several further portraits transferred from *Fraser's* 'Gallery'. 'It must be gratifying [. . .] to the lovers of the fine arts', Corbyn supposed, 'to find that Mr Grant is not behind the artist in London', a remark that exemplified lithography's ability to collapse the binary that Corbyn self-consciously characterized as metropolis/jungle – categories that retained civilizational connotations established by eighteenth-century attempts to link racial distinctions to differences in geography and climate.[74] Indeed, the editor remarked that the quality of these illustrations might 'throw out the hint to public men to whom we may introduce our rising artist'.[75] Such aspirations were fulfilled: from the later months of 1838, each publication of the *India Review* included a portrait of a Calcuttan 'Public Character', depicted, like the portraits in *Fraser's* 'Gallery', with facsimile autographs transferred below the sitters' likenesses.

Corbyn's aspirations were rooted in a Whig logic of improvement that mirrored metropolitan anxieties over the 'state of the arts', which had reached fever-pitch following the 1835 Select Committee on Art & Manufacture's damming judgement of British art as 'standing in a lower degree than that of almost any other country'.[76] In line with many metropolitan reformers' advocacy of state intervention, Corbyn had even passionately argued for government support of the nascent Indian Museum (then the private collection of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal), using the Louvre and revolutionary Paris as proof that 'a national museum is considered a national engine of education'.[77] By casting Grant's portraits as expanding and refining public taste, Corbyn thus framed the *India Review*'s artistic patronage within an international model of progressive politics. At the same time, doing so by mimicking Maginn and Maclise's 'Gallery of Illustrious Characters' raised notable political contradictions. Renowned as staunchly Tory, *Fraser's* pictured Whig dandies slouched in aristocratic affectation, whereas respectable authors were portrayed as epitomes of a new professionalism, rooted in self-disciplined manliness.[78] As Judith Fisher has shown, the 'Gallery' thus adapted a Byronic model of celebrity – in which genius is associated with the author rather than their literary output – yet defined such illustrious individuals according to the values that characterized the Victorian 'middling-sort'.[79] For Maginn, the literary

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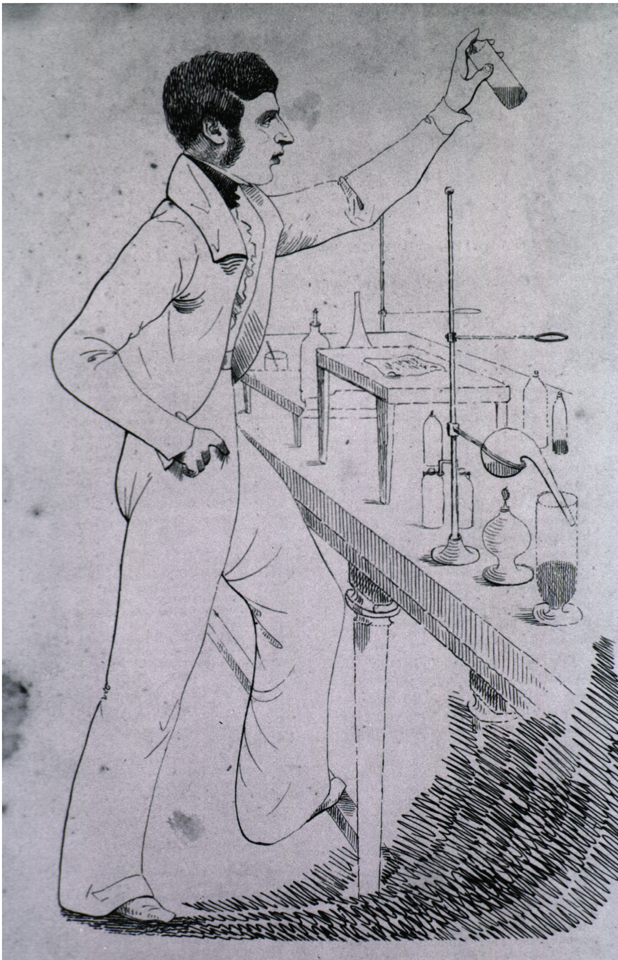

11 Colesworthy Grant, *W. B. O'Shaughnessy*, c. 1838, in Colesworthy Grant, *Lithographic Sketches of the Public Characters of Calcutta*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

celebrity had to present themselves as independent of aristocratic patronage, in possession of a professional expertise unavailable to their reading public, and vigorous rather than affected.

One motive for Grant's adoption of this format is the clear alignment between *Fraser's* values and the character of an increasingly middle-class regime in colonial India. Not only did near-continuous military action ensure that colonial society remained heavily militarized, but, following turn-of-the-century critiques of *nabobs*, comprised individuals highly cautious of the gendered criticisms associated with aristocratic displays of luxury or effeteness.[80] Grant depicted William Brooke O'Shaughnessy, the Professor of Chemistry and Natural Philosophy at the Calcutta Medical College, examining a test tube in a virile lunge (*plate 11*), while Major Eldred Pottinger, the 'Hero of Herat', was captured striking a similar pose amid props of heavy artillery (*plate 12*). The series' focus on military and professional careers, with a particular attention to the medical, legal and scientific occupations alongside leisure pursuits such as hunting and amateur science, essentially presented India's white colonial public as an aggregate of the *India Review*'s core audiences, alongside those groups who subscribed to the additional periodicals in which *Public Characters* was later released: the *India Medical*, which catered to the Company's professional doctors; the *Bengal Sporting* and *India Sporting Review*, both of which propagated a hyper-masculine image of the hunt; and the *Calcutta Christian Observer*, which lauded the self-disciplined evangelism that Kumkum Sangari has shown came to shape colonial debates over social reform and English-language education.[81] Released within the regular publishing rhythms of these periodicals, and with the autograph associating the sitters' embodied, agentive body with their public persona, Grant's portraits tied the bodily disciplines involved in *Fraser's* construction of middle-class masculinity to a collective vision of the colonial public as governed by conspicuously metropolitan values.[82] Grant's *Public Characters* essentially constructed the 'internal frontiers' of middle-class individuality in Bengal by foregrounding the ways lithographic periodicals integrated colonial India into a transimperial *British* public, minimizing that distinction between metropolis and jungle.[83]

Nevertheless, the image of manly agency and independence promoted by *Fraser's Magazine* did signify differently in the colonial context, where notions of dependency necessarily combined gendered connotations with racial ones.[84] Maclise's literary celebrities typically appeared in domestic contexts, crafting what Tom Mole has defined as a 'hermeneutic of intimacy' associating public renown with the embodied, private individual; in contrast, Grant's characters appear more frequently in public, professional contexts, in costumes related to their profession or, in the case of missionaries and soldiers, as actively performing their duties in the field.[85] Grant pictured the missionary A. F. Lacroix, for instance, haughtily gesticulating with his bible, a Bengali village visible in the background (*plate 13*). While in the metropolitan context, middle-class masculinity could be constructed through a dialectic between the

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12 Colesworthy Grant, *Eldred Pottinger*, *c.* 1838, in Colesworthy Grant, *Lithographic Sketches of the Public Characters of Calcutta*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

private individual and their access to a male-dominated public sphere, Grant's portraits thus appear to have reflected a more circumscribed sense of publicity, defined by the ways a professional occupation involved duties associated with the state's governance of its colonial subjects.[86] Undoubtedly, this distinction reflected the precarious nature of colonial Bengal's literary sphere, the result of the East India Company enforcing

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intermittent press restrictions until the sweeping press liberalization of the 1835 Metcalfe Act.[87] Yet the portrait series' focus on public life also seems a response to the colonial 'hybridity' that Swati Chattopadhyay has argued inflected 'the very centre of domestic life' in Calcutta, with state employment consequently drawing a more explicit boundary between the masculine professionalism of white individuals and the supposedly emasculated dependence of the population that they governed.[88] Accordingly, the seated figure on the left of Lacroix's portrait may have been read as a crucial attribute of his colonial identity, a foil dividing individuality from typicality according to a coding of public duties as both masculine and white.

Of course, this binary belied the increasing complexity of public life in colonial India, particularly during a period of significant social and economic reform. Not only did the 1833 Charter Act open the colonial economy to a range of Europeans without official state employment – particularly in opium and indigo production – but over this period white colonial society established a complex relationship to an emergent South Asian middle class.[89] Homogenized under the term *bhadralok*, a title connoting male gentility, this diverse social formation has also been characterized as a 'status group', with constituents ranging from elite landowners and aristocratic recipients of Company offices (*abhijat bhadralok*), to more financially precarious, English-educated employees of public institutions like schools and banks (*grihastha bhadralok*).[90] Over the first decades of the century, members of this emergent social formation asserted their identity and interests in both English-language newspapers and periodicals as well as an expanding Bengali literary sphere, most notably the milieu of radical authors known as Young Bengal.[91] Between roughly 1833 and the financial crisis that ravaged Calcutta following the collapse of the Union Bank in 1848, this literary presence was additionally matched by the *bhadralok*'s involvement in a series of public institutions promoting economic development in India's newly liberalized economy.[92] Significantly, both Grant and Corbyn were actually involved in the establishment of such an institution: the Calcutta Mechanics' Institute and School of Art. Exploring the fierce contestation over this organization's founding ambitions contextualizes Grant's portrait series within turbulent debates over the relationship between the *bhadralok* and white colonial society. Of course, such contestation has been the focus of excellent scholarship by social historians such as Sumit Sarkar and Tithi Bhattacharya, as well as postcolonial writers including Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.[93] Retracing its contours through the debate over the Calcutta Mechanics' Institute is useful, however, as it not only highlights the amorphous forms of colonial identity and community conceived in this particularly early moment of middle-class social reform, but highlights how Grant's two print series effectively mediated the ambivalences of this political moment – crafting a hegemonic image of the white, male *Public Character* as distinct from a hierarchy of subject positions sketched in *Oriental Heads*. This, in

13 Colesworthy Grant, *A. F. Lacroix*, c. 1838–50, in Colesworthy Grant, *Lithographic Sketches of the Public Characters of Calcutta*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

turn, foregrounds both lithographic printing and the artist's serialization of colonial knowledge within the rhythms of illustrated periodical culture as a crucial means of regulating that 'diachronic pressure' which – to use Edward Said's phrasing – middle-class reform programmes like the Mechanics' Institute placed on the 'synchronic essentialism' underpinning 'panoptic visions' of colonial society.[94]

The Calcutta Mechanics' Institute and the Ambivalences of Liberal Social Reform

In the metropolitan context, Martina Lauster has argued that 'the rise of mechanics institutes [...] has to be seen as one of the main causes as well as one of the main effects of the publishing revolution of the 1830s', part of a broader shift from 'polite to mass culture'.[95] The Calcuttan Institute was certainly established by central figures in Bengal's burgeoning periodical culture, with the idea originating with Corbyn and his friend the Reverend Thomas Boaz, a philanthropist and editor of the *Calcutta Christian Observer*, a periodical which featured Grant's portraits of missionaries. A prospectus was drafted by Colesworthy's brother, George Grant, at a small meeting held in January 1839, before being put to a public debate in Calcutta's Town Hall on 26 February.[96] Sir John Peter Grant, Colesworthy's cousin, was made honorary president; Corbyn and Boaz were appointed vice-presidents; and Colesworthy and George Grant became secretaries, with the former also acting as Drawing Master.[97] Both vice-presidents were formulaic in describing the Institute's function: members would disseminate metropolitan scientific and industrial knowledge in the subcontinent, resulting in economic development and the alleviation of indigenous poverty.[98] Such aims echoed missionary discourse about Britain's pastoral responsibilities to formerly enslaved people in the post-emancipation Caribbean colonies, where paternalistic ideas of progress were characterized by a clear distinction between the agents of improvement (white, middle-class missionaries) and Black people forced to assume working-class roles in a supposedly free Caribbean society.[99] Essentially, both Corbyn and Boaz emphasized that racial divide between agency and dependency, personhood and typehood, at the heart of Grant's *Public Characters*.

Nevertheless, the public debate at Calcutta's Town Hall revealed notable opposition to this conception of the Institute's function. Chastizing both Corbyn and Boaz, a committee member named Henry Harpur Spry (1804–42) claimed that not enough attention had been paid to 'another important class of our fellow citizens [. . .] the great body of East Indians in the city'.[100] Though semantically mobile, the term East Indian was typically used in this period to refer to India's mixed-race community, most notably by Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809–31), the leading poet of Young Bengal, who used the term to craft a form of patriotic belonging that encompassed his mixed English and Luso-Indian ancestry.[101] Following a utilitarian conception of free-trade, Spry remonstrated with this community for following 'one avocation – the pen'.[102] A mechanics' institute, he claimed, would 'divide labour', thereby diversifying the colonial economy and promoting the economic enfranchisement of East Indians within a commercial middle class.[103] A second committee member went further in connecting the Mechanics' Institute to the development of more inclusive forms of community. Michael Crow, Deputy Collector of Calcutta and editor of *The Reformer*, claimed that:

> Although Europeans who might join the intended institution would largely benefit by it, those who were likely to derive the most permanent benefit from it were his countrymen the Natives of India. He wished it to be

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> distinctly understood, that by Natives of India he meant not only those of his countrymen who were dressed in the costume of India, but also those like himself, in the costume of Europe. Dress, in his opinion, made no distinction, and he was not aware if any proper and definite line of demarcation by which those who were called Natives could be distinguished in their civil relations of life from those who were denominated East Indians (hear hear.) Every Native was an East Indian and every East Indian a Native. They both formed but one nation, and the few trivial distinctions which yet existed between them, would, he hoped, soon give way before the influence of education. (Cheers.)[104]

For both committee members, educational and economic opportunities heralded forms of identity and community built on the 'civil relations' of modern liberal society, thus transcending the significance of 'external signifiers' of race and culture.

Superficially, Grant's autographed portraits of South Asian individuals reflected the logic of such aspirations. *Oriental Heads* included men dressed in South Asian garments, with captions detailing the sitters' participation in precisely the kinds of literary endeavours, educational institutions, and voluntary associations that defined the middle class socially. The series featured Baboo Tarachand Chukruburtee, 'author of a Bengalee & English Dictionary' and a committee member of the Calcutta Mechanics' Institute; Madoo Rao, pundit at the 'Hindoo College'; Pundit Josedhiyan Missa, 'Professor of Mathematics at Sanscrit College Calcutta'; Baboo Goorooperaud Bose, the 'late head native accountant at Bengal Bank'; and Reverend Ter David Mackertick, 'Vicar of the Armenian Church'. Moreover, the artist's published writings mirrored Crow's in linking education to the development of a sense of local community, arguing that a 'correspondence of sympathy or feeling' might develop between Europeans and Anglicized South Asians, just so long as the former would 'overcome prejudices' and conceptualize themselves as residents of a colonial civil society in Bengal.[105] Reflecting how class distinctions shaped this conception of colonial community, the artist railed against the 'generalizations' of metropolitan prejudice, claiming that:

> The 'natives of Bengal' sometimes so collectively and sweepingly spoken of, will not need either exception, or advocacy, so humble as mine. I am happy in the acquaintance of a few native gentlemen of whose friendship and esteem I shall always be proud, and who, together with many of the rising generation, now educating […] are, I trust, calculated to prove to their country, both 'useful and ornamental'.[106]

Grant thus appears to have used the facsimile-autographed format of *Fraser's* 'Gallery' to signify the public recognition of agentic individuality certain South Asian men were accorded in colonial public life. The series cast 'those denominated Oriental' as differentiated between Anglicized individuals and lower-class social types, enabling, in the artist's own words, a 'just discrimination of the evil from the good'.[107] At the same time, Grant's description of upper-class South Asians as 'ornamental', a term connoting decoration and commodification that matched the album's continued visual focus on traditional clothing, suggested that 'external signifiers' did, in fact, remain a significant visual trace, legitimizing and sustaining the divide between *Public Characters* and *Oriental Heads*. To recall Grant's appeal for sitters, the series' entwining of illustrious heads and characteristic types essentially 'split' those portrayed between a public recognition of their individuality and the disciplinary, taxonomic colonial gaze: sitters appeared in the series as both 'respectable individuals' and as evidence

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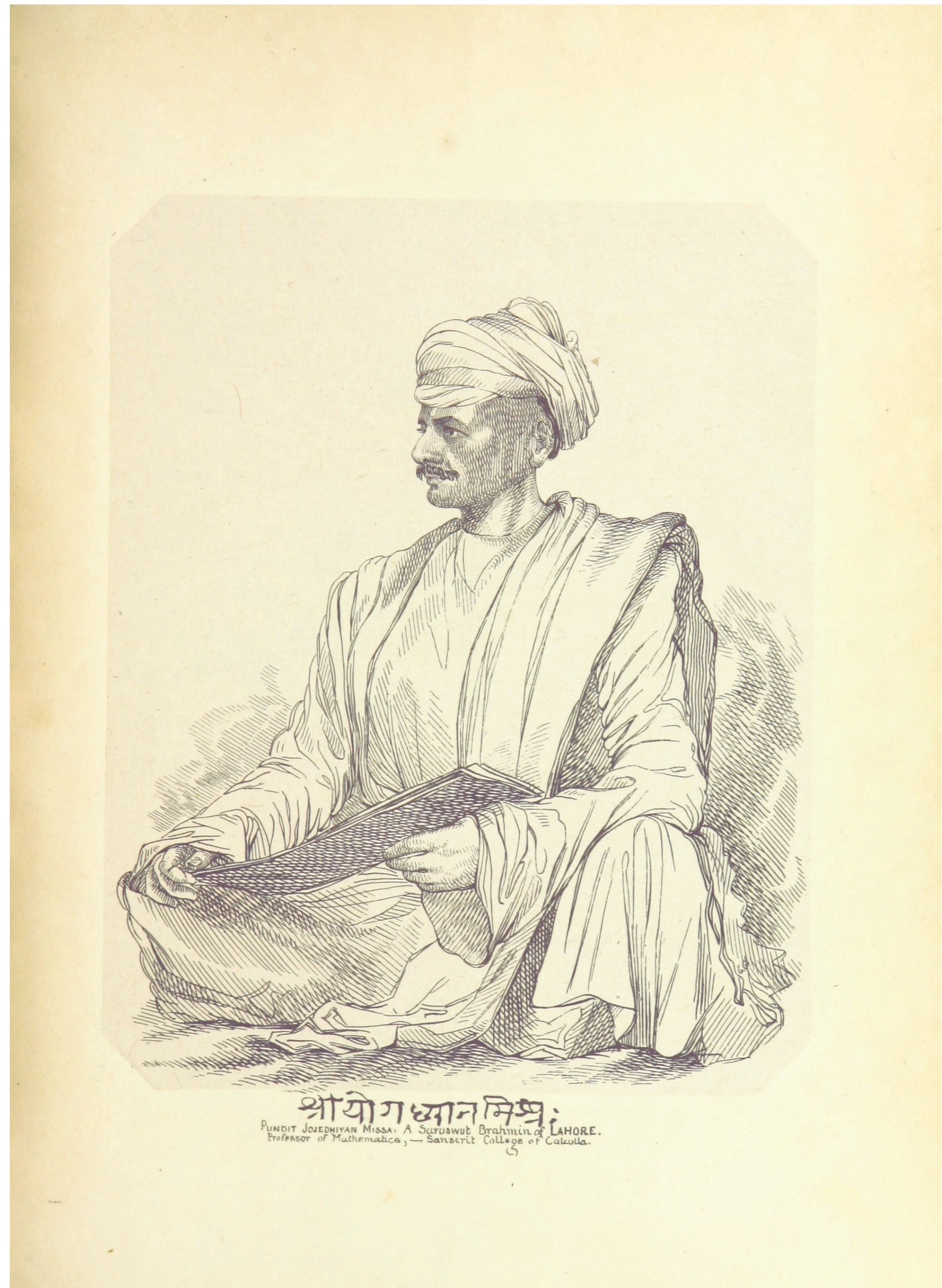
of the 'appearance and costume' of the various 'tribes or countries' Britain sought to classify and govern.[108] In other words, the portraits figured Anglicization as producing only a 'partial representation/recognition' of agentic individuality, a public identity that Homi Bhabha has theorized as a form of 'mimicry': 'almost the same, but not white'.[109] Often depicted seated on the floor, or with traditional technologies like a palm leaf manuscript in the case of Josedhiyan Missa (*plate 14*), the portraits essentially demonstrated how 'to be Anglicised was *emphatically* not to be English' – that 'external appearances' did, in fact, continue to mark *Oriental Heads* in their 'civil relations of life'.[110]

Such tensions, reflective of what Benedict Anderson has called the 'inner incompatibility of empire and nation', are perhaps most evident in Grant's portrait of Maharaja Kali Krishna Bahadur (1808–74) (*plate 15*).[111] A member of the *abhijat bhadralok*, Kali Krishna's wealth derived from his grandfather Raja Nabakrishna Deb's (1733–97)



14 Colesworthy Grant, *Josedhiyan Missa*, *c.* 1838–50, in Colesworthy Grant, *A Series of Miscellaneous Rough Sketches of Oriental Heads*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

15 Colesworthy Grant, *Maharaja Kali Krishna Bahadur*, *c.* 1838–50, in Colesworthy Grant, *A Series of Miscellaneous Rough Sketches of Oriental Heads*, Calcutta: W. Thacker & Co., 1838–50. London: British Library.

receipt of a significant financial reward for betraying Siraj ud-Daulah (1733–57) at the Battle of Plassey (1757), a key turning-point in Britain's colonial expansion. Grant depicted the Maharaja in three-quarter length, with a thoughtful, reticent expression and a collection of medals draped across his chest. These were the subject of an 1843 article in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, which described them as gifts from the Governor-General William Bentinck, King Louis Philippe of France, and 'William King of Holland', presented as rewards for Kali Krishna's literary translations.[112] Grant thus figured the noble's rank and social prestige as substantiated according to his recognition within a transimperial literary sphere. Moreover, while such aristocratic admirers recalled earlier colonial policies of courtly gift-giving, Kali Krishna's upright posture and his left hand's gentle contact with his sword hilt exhibited the middle-class, masculine values of *Fraser's* 'Gallery', thus linking his reception within

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an international public to the bodily practices through which Calcutta's white *Public Characters* had emphasized their links to metropolitan culture and its values.[113] This construction of public identity – or, more specifically, Grant's control over the Maharaja's portrayal – may have formed a strategic response to the shifting character of colonial civil society. The portrait not only countered metropolitan stereotypes of the femininized, overly sensuous Indian noble, but refuted caustic critiques of the *abhijat bhadralok* from within Bengal's indigenous literary sphere – where an uneducated aping of British fashions was mocked by figures such as Bhabani Charan Bandyopadhyay (1787–1848) and Peary Chand Mitra (1814–83), Grant's biographer.[114] The portrait essentially crafted an identity diametrically opposed to the so-called 'babu' and his private proclivities being developed in a uniquely Calcuttan form of urban mass media: the expeditious watercolours of the Kalighat School.[115] As such comparisons show, the illustrated periodical culture afforded by lithography did not foreclose alternative public spaces and strategies for constructing elite Bengali identity. Yet Grant's portrait of Kali Krishna does demonstrate how the expansion of lithographic periodical culture across a middle-class regime in India produced a homogenization of colonial and metropolitan conceptions of agentic individuality and the public recognition of social status, fundamentally shaping how South Asian elites negotiated the pressures and boundaries of colonial civil society. Consequently, Grant's portrait should be read 'contrapuntally', as establishing a gendered and class-derived 'derivative discourse' about public life and civic participation, against which indigenous society negotiated forms of identity and community as well as practices of resistance – a history traced in detail by scholars such as Indira Chowdhury, Mrinalini Sinha, and Partha Chaterjee.[116]

Significantly, returning to the debate over the Mechanics' Institute foregrounds how this framing of public life never constituted a 'secure hegemonic bourgeois project', but was contested in ways that can be read in the ambivalences of artistic projects like Grant's.[117] For just as Spry had condemned East Indians for using their English education to secure uniform careers as clerks and notaries, several attendees at the debate over the Mechanics' Institute actually critiqued the *bhadralok*'s use of the literary sphere to publicly self-fashion as elite males. Sir John Grant, whose upper-class identity afforded a less direct investment in Corbyn's ethnocentric definition of the commercial middle class, stressed the 'difference between institutions of this kind in Europe, and that which would be established here'.[118] In the metropole, the aim of mechanics' institutes had been to divert the 'attention' of 'the great body of men employed in mechanical occupations [...] from the pursuit of sensual gratifications to those of a mental character'; in India, they would instead combat upper-caste 'Hindu prejudices' about the 'dignity of labour'.[119] In setting up this distinction, Sir John compared the goal of the Institute to his own attempts to combat 'prejudices' at the Hindu College – the public educational institution established under the guidance of the Bengali reformer Rammohan Roy (1772–1833) and the crucible of Young Bengal.[120] Stocqueler, the journalist whose name had appeared on the crates beside Grant's portraits of 'coolies', followed Sir John in claiming that 'it was too commonly supposed, by the class who would benefit by the Mechanics' Institution, that their education has fitted them for higher pursuits than those of the artisan, and that the adoption of such a calling was beneath them'.[121] This conception of political economy trapped elites like Kali Krishna between competing regimes of social value, while also undermining the distinction between public life and private conviction that Partha Chatterjee has argued characterized indigenous responses to British rule.[122] As the editor of the *India Gazette* bemoaned in a review of Kali Krishna's poetry,

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which characteristically recognized the noble as 'evidence' of the colonial state's 'beneficial' policies:

> The Raja [...] is an evidence and representative of the beneficial effects that has been produced upon the wealthy Hindoos by the progress of education [...] Fifteen years ago a Hindoo of this description would have plunged into sensuality [...] Yet because the mode he has adopted does not fully meet the wishes or expectations of the reformers, he is met with a storm of obloquy.[123]

If liberal and utilitarian calls to diversify the colonial economy thus compromised the social status of those Anglicized South Asian men who entered civic institutions, it is crucial to stress how, in the years following the abolition of the Company's monopoly, a liberal ideology of free-trade and commercial development largely belied the fact that the majority of white colonial society occupied state functions premised on the extraction of wealth and resources from India to Britain.[124] In a review of Spry's *Modern India*, an extraordinarily utilitarian survey of India's economic 'potential', Corbyn had even stressed this inherent difference, arguing that liberalizing trade could certainly promote a commercial middle class in Britain, where 'manufactures, religious orders, judicial establishments abound, and [...] fill up the vast chasm between the prince and peasant', but that such policies were 'totally inapplicable to India [...] in which industry is almost exclusively confined to agriculture'.[125] Reformist projects like the Calcutta Mechanics' Institute thus centred liberal notions of economic progress even as members responded to 'market failures' that Amiya Bagchi has shown were 'inevitable given the prevailing structure of unequal economic interdependence of the world economy and the structure of power implicit in colonial rule'.[126] Public institutions essentially offered white colonial society practices of identifying with transimperial middle-class discourses about liberalism and political economy, while nonetheless mediating the impact of such ideas on indigenous society by affording forms of identity and community that, in a state fundamentally built on racial distinction and economic underdevelopment, sought only to enable what Bhabha has called 'authorised versions of otherness'.[127]

Critically, it was precisely this contradictory double movement that guided Grant's two lithographic series. *Public Characters* defined the identities of white society in India according to the masculine, middle-class values of a lithographic periodical culture that both homogenized transimperial middle-class society and worked to racially distinguish this emergent social formation in colonial contexts. In turn, *Oriental Heads* regulated the tensions that the liberal and utilitarian principles defining this class's interests in the metropole introduced to strategies of knowing and governing colonial society. Portraits of Anglicized men accompanied by their autographs foregrounded the liberal conception of recognition within a male-dominated public as the basis of private individuation, at the same time as portraits of nobles such as Kali Krishna revealed how this public sphere was conceived according to the values and interests of the white colonial middle class. In addition, by locating the relationship between individuality and public reception within a literary field dominated by periodicals concerned with news and foreign affairs, the series enabled a range of agencies and forms of recognition to be defined according to shifting styles of colonial discourse. Aggrieved rulers appeared as subjects of international celebrity, Afghani soldiers as illustrations in historical narratives contextualizing British expansion on the North-West Frontier, and convicts as sensationalized ethnographic tropes. Grant's two portrait series, and their circulation within middle-class periodical culture,

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consequently afforded practices of conceiving and communicating colonial knowledge which responded to, and buttressed in turn, the shifting class basis of the East India Company's regime over the period between 1833 and the collapse and ultimate repeal of much of the previous decades' liberal reform following the mass violence of the Indian Rebellion in 1857–58.[128]

It is important to centre this violence. For in Bhabha's analysis, social reform's strategic failure to replicate metropolitan society, or to make Anglicized subjects English, produces an 'ambivalence of colonial authority' that transforms '*mimicry* – a difference that is almost nothing but not quite – to *menace* – a difference that is almost total but not quite'.[129] Thus the necessity of continuously re-establishing difference leads colonial discourse to 'alienate its own language of liberty', and exhibit its 'disciplinary double': 'pseudoscientific theories, superstition, spurious authorities, and classifications'.[130] The supposed universality of liberal justice is undermined, for instance, by patently false and sensationalized tales about India's cult assassins, the result of political anxieties over social unrest which substantiated violent repression and the transportation of unfree labour.[131] Such anxieties were certainly central to Corbyn's conception of the Mechanics' Institute; his review of Spry's *Modern India* had stressed the alleviation of indigenous poverty precisely because he detected 'a flame yet in the native bosom which burns for national rights and independence'.[132] Spry, however, had already rationalized the colonial regime's violence through the 'disciplinary double' of Grant's indeterminate classification of individual convicts, including in his *Modern India* a lengthy account of 'thuggish phrenology', and thus invoking a pseudo-scientific knowledge that he had acquired by shipping the skulls of several executed 'thugs' to the phrenologist George Coombe in Edinburgh.[133] Following the Rebellion, this 'scientific racism' would come to dominate ethnological projects seeking to rationalize the violence of the colonial state's 'coercive network'.[134] Equally, the ambivalent recognition of elites like Kali Krishna in colonial civil society would contradict a post-1858 policy of re-Orientalizing Indian monarchs as loyal vassals within Queen Victoria's 'neo-feudal' empire.[135] Grant's lithographic portrait series were thus products of a brief and contradictory moment of liberal social reform between 1833 and 1857. Over this period, a transimperial culture of affordable periodicals and lithographic illustration enabled an increasingly middle-class regime in India to reconfigure the racial and gendered politics of colonial rule, establishing a conception of public life that afforded South Asians certain forms of civic inclusion precisely as it established contradictions and ambivalences that would surface in the violent response to 1857–58. Crucially, the core aim of this article has been to show how these developments were intrinsically connected to the globalization of lithographic printing, which through its technical and economic accessibility enabled transnational shifts in the social recognition and public display of agentic individuality to reshape colonial society and its practices of governance.

'Laying the Foundation of the Fine Arts'

Corbyn's exaggerated claim concerning Grant's impact on colonial artistic production mirrored lamentations by the artist himself over 'the almost non-existence of the fine arts' in India.[136] Modern scholars have frequently taken such statements at face value, resulting in much of the academic literature characterizing this period as an artistic lacuna set between the aristocratic patronage of oil painting in the late eighteenth century and the grand architectural schemes of the post-1858 Raj.[137] While such an account accords with fine art production, this preoccupation with more traditional media has led art historians to overlook figures like Grant, who participated in a

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booming culture of lithographic illustration. More importantly, this oversight has obscured how print culture shaped a turbulent moment of political, economic, and social change.

In contrast, this article has shown how Corbyn's extravagant claim was only half-true: that far from being the first to introduce the fine arts to India, Grant nevertheless did contribute to the establishment of a cultural foundation on which an emergent, middle-class colonial public asserted its identity and interests. Prints like Grant's did not simply reflect or communicate political ideas, therefore, but were products of a technological innovation that *in itself* was a political force. Lithographic printing fundamentally altered how colonial knowledge was conceived, communicated and instrumentalized in practices of imperial governance. It worked to homogenize the artistic self-fashioning of a transimperial middle class, and mediated the impact that the novel political programmes defining this class's identity made on colonial society. Lithography like Grants consequently not only rebuts a narrow focus on traditional media in accounts of British art in colonial India, but provides a way to think about the Britishness of such art *through* lithography's global circuits, exploring how mobile print cultures like periodical illustration crafted those distinctions of power and identity that defined Britishness across the world.[138]

Notes

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