

Introduction

Circulating Crisis: Colonial Newspapers and Print Culture

At the start of Eleanor Catton's *The Luminaries* (2013), Walter Moody, an upper-crust Briton newly arrived in New Zealand in 1866 to try his hand prospecting in the gold fields, makes his way to the town of Hokitika. Worn after a harrowing journey through a storm, he checks into the shabby Crown Hotel and calls for refreshments. After his first pot of tea, Moody takes stock:

The maid had left yesterday's newspaper beneath the teapot—how thin it was, for a sixpenny broadsheet! Moody smiled as he took it up. He had a fondness for cheap news, and was amused to see that the town's *Most Alluring Dancer* also advertised her services as the town's *Most Discreet Accoucheuse*. A whole column of the paper was devoted to missing prospectors (*If this should reach the eyes of EMERY STAINES, or any who know of his whereabouts . . .*) and an entire page to Barmaids Wanted. Moody read the document twice over, including the shipping notices, the advertisements for lodging and small fare, and several very dull campaign speeches, printed in full. He found that he was disappointed: the *West Coast Times* read like a parish gazette. But what had he expected? (22–23)

A parish gazette: Moody's condescension telescopes the metropole's dismissal of both the settlement on the edge of empire and its threadbare print culture. But what to Moody looks "thin," "amusing," and pedestrian

is the stuff of powerfully entwined histories he is incapable of perceiving; it takes a Catton to unfurl these stories. Over eight hundred pages, each of the items Moody patronizingly ridicules—the dancer, prospector, barmaids; shipping notices, advertisements, and campaign speeches—blossoms under Catton’s expert hands to produce a rich narrative of the personal, financial, emotional, and ethical negotiations of life on the edge of empire. That Catton’s tale—which the *New York Times* calls “a lively parody of a 19th-century novel” (Roorbach)—begins with a newspaper whose every section the novelist will tease apart and use to imaginatively reconstruct a colonial world speaks to the importance of newspapers as her source material, as well as to a twenty-first-century sensibility towards this particular form of print culture that is finally receiving its scholarly due.¹

Like Catton’s, this book plumbs the depths of newspapers, though it is neither fiction nor eight hundred pages long. *Empire News* is an account of Anglo-Indian newspapers in the years preceding and immediately following the Uprising of 1857.² Unlike existing accounts of Indian newspapers, which concentrate on the press of the presidency capitals of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, this book’s focal point is an English-language newspaper from an “upcountry” province—a “parish gazette” twice over—with a cluster of Calcutta newspapers serving to situate and augment the analysis. The questions that animate my study of these newspapers between 1845 and 1860 are shaped by Book History, as well as by the intellectual dispensation I will shorthand as postcolonial.³ As I examine some half dozen Anglo-Indian newspapers in the period before the high noon of the

1. During a visit to Hokitika, after the book had won the Man Booker Prize, Catton “said she did most of her research while she lived overseas, aided by online newspaper archives from the National Library of New Zealand” (Mussen).

2. Deeptanil Ray and Abhijit Gupta eschew “Anglo-Indian” because it “implies a sense of integration never realised in the field of newspapers and periodicals in nineteenth-century colonial India” (245, n. 1). Their use of “British” is unsatisfactory, however, for it fails to distinguish between colonial and metropolitan domains, a central thrust of this book; I also refrain from “native,” their preferred term for Indian newspapers. The events of 1857 have been referred to as the Sepoy Mutiny or First War of Independence; for the limitations of these terms, see Priti Joshi, “1857.” Indian contemporaries referred to the events as *ghadar*, an Urdu word meaning outburst or disturbance (Farooqui 394).

3. See Loomba et al. for a number of excellent essays on whether postcolonial studies is or should be behind us, whether it has been superseded by “globalization,” or whether it should be replaced by “transnational studies.”

Raj and anti-colonial challenges to it, my emphasis is on circulation and rupture, connection and crisis. Newspapers are material objects dependent on movement. Their circulation can coalesce communities, as well as produce collisions. This book traces the material circulation of a set of Anglo-Indian newspapers—their circuits and routes, editors and printers, exchanges and borrowings—even as it is alert to the gap that lies between physical movement and claims about circulatory effects. (While editors and publishers often declaim the range and influence of their prints, the transmission of ideas is difficult to trace and requires care on the part of a scholar.) If circulation is the lifeblood of newspapers, impediments to their transmission can be a death knell. This book trains its attention on moments of rupture as well, when newspapers were literally blocked, unable to access sources or readers. For newspapers, ruptures often occur at moments of historical upheaval. In British India, the narratives of empire that emerged at such moments of crisis are as central to grasping the workings of the British Empire in India as moments when the flow of print was relatively stable. Of the crises I address in this book, one, the Uprising of 1857, received widespread attention and was understood as globally significant in the annals of the British Empire; the second, a sensational 1851 trial that pitted the East India Company⁴ against an Indian, registered more locally, though the “parish gazettes” read it through the prism of and as a test of empire. Attending to both global and local-global crises and their coverage in the Anglo-Indian press, this book examines the making and breaking of empire.



Though newspapers were central to the dissemination of print culture and the development of modernity—birthing the growth of the bourgeoisie, class consciousness, nationalism, and, in India, vernacular languages and literature, as well as anti-colonial nationalism—they are only now beginning to receive the attention that has been bestowed on books. Some of this belatedness is an archival matter, an issue we shall return to in a moment; some is the outcome of an Anglo-American academy that has been book-focused. Yet, as scholars of print and reading culture repeatedly remind us, newspapers, journals, and reviews circulated more widely than

4. Also referred to as simply “the Company” or EIC.

books. In nineteenth-century Britain, for instance, more people consumed newspapers or periodicals more often and more consistently than they did books (Hughes 1; McKitterick 50). While books and serials existed in overlapping, not separate, spheres, most of the innovations of the period—the serialization of fiction, illustrations, developments in the steam press—had their trial run in the periodical press (Brake, *Print* 11–16; Law and Patten 144). Graham Law and Robert Patten write, “The emergence in Britain of print-capitalism . . . is apparent rather earlier in the part and periodical sectors than in that for books themselves, where the first edition tended to remain something of a limited circulation luxury item until relatively late in the century” (147). Unsurprisingly, the periodical press was also more lucrative than the book industry. As Patrick Leary and Andrew Nash note, “Even the most successful novelists, including Dickens, turned to the expanding periodical press as an outlet, not simply for their fiction, but for stories and non-fiction of various kinds, as well as for the steady income promised by staff and editorial positions” (178).

The number of newspapers and periodicals published in Britain in the nineteenth century was colossal. The *Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals* lists approximately 73,000 distinct titles of newspapers and periodicals published between 1800 and 1900. By comparison, the number of novels that appeared during Victoria’s reign was approximately 50,000 (Leary and Nash 174). And while newspapers and periodicals are frequently catalogued together—to wit, the *Waterloo Directory*—the differences between them are considerable. Most prominent is that newspapers have a built-in obsolescence and fleeting life span. Newspapers are, in Benedict Anderson’s memorable phrase, “one-day bestsellers” (35), with the date stamp at the head of each issue announcing its shelf life. Laurel Brake notes that this transience is central to the business model of newspapers as “editors had an interest in purveying the impression of the alleged ‘ephemerality’” of their product in order “to ensure that the last issue was abandoned when its more topical and news-rich successor was ‘ready’ for purchase” (“Longevity” 7). For a researcher, as Linda Hughes soberly puts it, nineteenth-century newspapers and periodicals represent “a materiality so massive that it exceeds scholarly ability to document it” (5).

Painstakingly documenting and analyzing this staggering archive over the last twenty-five years, scholars have noted its many gaps. In an essay that moved the study of periodicals from specialist journals to the mainstream of literary studies, Sean Latham and Robert Scholes direct us to study periodicals not “merely as containers of discreet bits of infor-

mation,” but as “autonomous objects of study” (517–18). As we do, they caution that the surviving archive contains many “holes,” the largest one being advertisements that were stripped when periodicals were preserved. Brake, a pioneer in the study of Victorian periodicals, and James Mussell, the visionaries behind the digitization of nineteenth-century periodicals and newspapers, add discarded wrappers and supplements or multiple runs of a day’s paper to the list of holes. The archive we access today, they equally soberly note, is merely “the remains” (Brake and Mussell). In pointing to the material gaps in the archive, these scholars underscore Derrida’s insight that the “nostalgic desire for the archive” as a place of origin or “absolute commencement” or completion is a fever (“*mal d’archive*”) and is misguided (57).

Compounding the gaps in the archive of down-market print is its fragility, which David McKitterick captures in this passage:

There remains a largely uncharted mass of cheap literature, printed on low-grade brownish wood-pulp paper from worn stereotypes and often reusing materials that had begun their existence somewhat further up the economic scale. Much of this kind of mass-produced literature, for which no-one expected a long life, has disappeared completely. Much of it has no doubt been pulped. Much of it has simply disintegrated. Even when it was new, little found its way into the contemporary surveys of press output. It is difficult now to recover much of its manufacture, circulation and use. (16)

In other words: the archive is staggeringly vast on the one hand and also gap-filled and disintegrating on the other. In Margaret Beetham’s succinct phrasing, “we have both a bewildering excess of material and some crucial absences” (97).

Yet against McKitterick’s gloomy appraisal of so much lost print is this passage from an article entitled “Starting a Paper in India” that appeared in *Household Words* in 1853:

Then the type. I could not think of allowing my manuscript to be “set up” in anything but Figgins. A particular friend of mine, called Iniquity Smith, had once remarked to me that a little production of mine looked “uncommon tidy” in Figgins, and the conversation to which that remark led informed me

of the fact that Figgins was the prince of type-founders. Now there happened to be plenty of every other sort of Figgins's type in Calcutta, except Figgins's long primer, not a letter of which was to be had for love or money; and the long primer was absolutely necessary for the leading article. There were founts of types cast by other founders in the market, but they would not "make up" with Figgins, and therefore were of no use to me. At last I heard of a second-hand fount, or set of types, and bought it for fifty pounds. The heading of the paper, the column rules, the leads, and the chases or iron frames within which the type is jammed were soon got ready by native artisans, and nothing now remained but to engage the establishment. (94)

The juxtaposition of these remarks with McKitterick's is fruitful: if McKitterick is haunted by ephemerality, the second passage is imbued with the material and tangible. While McKitterick takes up metaphorically weighty matters of survival, access, and preservation, *Household Words'* playful piece is preoccupied with the literal weight of typefaces and reminds us that the even commodities that were not expected to survive were designed with considerable care. And while McKitterick's passage lacks agents ("simply disintegrated"), the second bustles with characters, from the speaker himself to the font-setter Figgins to the shadow "native artisans" who produced the newspaper. While differences abound, both passages grapple with movement—the first through time, the second across space. Between them, these passages capture several conceptual issues *Empire News* takes up and that hinge on the two senses of "transitory": fleeting and in transition.⁵ Throughout the course of this book we will encounter caesuras in the archive. These gaps are the result of factors intrinsic and extrinsic to newspapers: their material fragility, their inconsistent preservation and marginality in the universe of print, and their susceptibility to state regulation. Working with the gaps requires flexibility and reading methods that call for ingenuity.

Scholarly attention to nineteenth-century Indian newspapers is tied to the burgeoning scholarship on British newspapers and periodicals in

5. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists "of the nature of a passage or transition" as a rare usage of the word, last used in 1592 ("Transitory." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 1989. Accessed 13 July 2017).

the Anglo-American academy. With the launch of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals in 1968, the scholarship on British newspapers and periodicals grew rapidly. Richard Altick's *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution, 1841–1851* (1997) and Andrew King's *The London Journal 1845–83: Periodicals, Production, and Gender* (2004) focus on single journals, while others have attended to networks of editors and publishers (Humpherys and James; Leary); the radical or popular press (Allen and Ashton; Conboy; Gilmartin; Jones); national identity (Connors and MacDonald; de Nie; Legg; Potter); and gender (Brake; Onslow). With digitization, the field has grown further, particularly in newspaper studies.⁶ The pioneering work in the Anglo-American academy on periodicals and the British Empire was J. Don Vann and Rosemary VanArsdel's 1996 *Periodicals of Queen Victoria's Empire*; the volume's subtitle "An Exploration" is a salutary reminder that but two decades ago colonial periodicals were largely uncharted territory. The scholarship on India that followed in the wake of their edited volume concentrated primarily on India and Indians in British periodicals. Chandrika Kaul's *Reporting the Raj: The British Press and India, c. 1880–1922* (2003) offers an in-depth analysis of the relations between Fleet Street and the Foreign Office in London, while David Finkelstein and Douglas Peers's *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth-Century Media* (2000) includes essays on the coverage of India in the *Indian Magazine*, *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, *Illustrated London News*, and *Household Words*. Javed Majeed's essay in the latter volume on two Urdu periodicals from India is the exception. Not until 2004 did the study of periodicals published in India receive a boost in the Anglo-American academy with a *Victorian Periodicals Review* special issue, *The Nineteenth-Century Press in India* (edited by Julie Codell), that included essays by Máire Ní Fhlathúin, Edwin Hirschmann, and Debapriya Paul on Calcutta's newspapers.⁷

6. More data and greater access do not equal better scholarship; Jerome McGann writes that today we face vast amounts of data and the ability to "quickly annotate just about anything we've never heard of" (*New Republic* 14). Paul Fyfe warns that "digital collections inevitably condition much of the research we undertake" and urges conversations about methodologies to sort, access, and analyze this plethora (716).

7. Hirschmann's biography of Robert Knight, editor of both the (Calcutta) *Statesman* and Bombay-based *Times of India*, has subsequently appeared in print, while Deborah Logan's *The Indian Ladies Magazine, 1901–1938* attends to an Indian periodical of the twentieth century.

The first printing press was brought to the Indian subcontinent by Portuguese Jesuits in 1556; by the end of the eighteenth century, India had over forty printing presses, a type foundry, and a paper mill (Dharwadker 108). Print took off and flourished in the nineteenth century, never, however, replacing preprint cultural traditions.⁸ Vinay Dharwadker puts the number of newspapers and periodicals published in India in the nineteenth century at 14,000 (126). These include papers edited by Indians and non-Indians, and represent print in some forty languages. Ephemerality and vulnerability haunt this archive as well: most of those 14,000 journals, Dharwadker reports, failed, but “hundreds” survived and some “even reached large regional and national audiences” (126). Mrinal Kanti Chanda, the indefatigable chronicler of the Bengal press, however, laments that “the files of old newspapers . . . are completely going out of use for scholars for want of scientific preservation in the libraries” (*History* [2008] xiii). Those that survive are often missing numbers and of poor quality. In *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India*, Ulrike Stark adds that the challenges of Book History on the Indian subcontinent include “the scarcity of basic empirical data on just about every aspect of production, transmission, and consumption. Factual knowledge of material, infrastructural, and operational aspects of the regional-language book trade, of author-publisher and publisher-bookseller relations, of readership and consumption practices is still limited. Seldom extant, Indian publishers’ and booksellers’ archives are not readily accessible and lie mostly untapped” (7). Notwithstanding such onerous archival challenges, a handful of Indian and Pakistani scholars have studied the nineteenth-century Indian press, though much of the work on newspapers is almost a half century old or older.⁹

Newspapers were a form of information gathering and dissemination introduced into the subcontinent by the British. Christopher Bayly’s *Empire*

8. Ghosh argues that “residues of preprint era were to continue to impinge on the world of Bengali print well into the early twentieth century” and that “early book producers—authors and printers—therefore conformed to preprint tastes” (35, 37). She makes a strong case for the “continuing importance of oral and preprint traditions that prevented the printed text from being fixed in certain ways” (44).

9. Today, scholarship on Indian print culture and the book trade is flourishing at Presidency and Jadavpur Universities under the guidance of Swapan Chakravorty and Abhijit Gupta. Others who have produced rich accounts of print culture in India include Priya Joshi and Francesca Orsini.

and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870 is a formidable account of information networks and social communication in the nineteenth century and offers a rich history of the epistemological shifts wrought in the encounter between Britons and the peoples of the subcontinent. Newspapers initially rivaled and ultimately displaced scribal and court-sponsored newsletters, or *akhbarats*. When print newspapers first started to appear in late eighteenth-century India, they overlapped with the *akhbarat*, which had a distinct system of knowledge production and dissemination. Careful not to idealize these newsletters, Bayly describes them as “documents of almost tedious detail, describing court ritual and gossip” (72); yet they also contained “a good deal of social information” that rulers used “to create a climate of opinion or justify a political move” (72). Bayly characterizes the knowledge newsletters contained as “the deep knowledge acquired by magnates with roots in the villages and political sympathy which comes from ties of belief, of marriage and from a sense of inhabiting the same moral realm” (144). The differences between *akhbarats* and newspapers were material—scribal versus print—and linguistic, as well as socio-epistemological, with disparate conceptions of what counted as news, newsworthiness, and an audience. Newspapers, Bayly writes, represented “institutional knowledge” (144) in contrast to the “embodied” or “affective and patrimonial knowledges” of *akhbarats* (55).

The first print newspaper on the subcontinent appeared in 1780. Unlike the court-sponsored *akhbarats*, *Hicky’s Bengal Gazette* was brought out by a man with a long-standing grudge against the Government of India (effectively, the EIC), the governor general (Warren Hastings), and the chief justice of the Supreme Court (Elijah Impey). By all accounts, James Augustus Hicky’s attitude towards the authorities was irreverent, vitriolic, and, from the perspective of the governors, libelous. The adjective often used to describe him was “scurrilous” (Chakraborti 5; Otis xi), and even one of the newspaper’s friendliest biographers describes the newspaper as a place for “ventilating grievances” (Nair, *History* 42). By contrast, Partha Chatterjee, whose project in *The Black Hole of Empire* is to chart the appearance of mechanisms that permitted the expression of colonial citizenship, sums up the contribution of *Hicky’s Bengal Gazette* as “offer[ing] the first forum in Bengal where the government’s policies could be publicly debated” (112).¹⁰

10. Two book-length studies of *Hicky’s Bengal Gazette* have appeared recently: P. T. Nair’s 2001 volume and Andrew Otis’s 2018 book.

Rivals to *Hicky's* sprung up quickly, and the newspapers and periodicals of the next two decades were chiefly published and edited by Anglo-Indians. The explosion of newspapers, however, only occurred downstream of two events: the establishment of the Baptist Mission's type foundry and press in Srirampur (Serampore, in British accounts) in 1800 and the lifting of government interventions in and censorship of print, first in 1818 and then more substantially in 1835. In the first forty years of its establishment, the Baptist Mission Press cast types in over forty languages and brought out materials in thirty Indian languages and dialects, as well as in Arabic, Armenian, Burmese, Malay, and Thai (Chakravorty 319; Dharwadker 111). By the 1820s, vernacular-language newspapers in Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, and Urdu started to appear. The effects of the press and its technology gradually transformed the intellectual and social landscape of the subcontinent: "One of the most far-reaching effects of print between about 1800 and 1835 was the more or less simultaneous invention of modern prose in various languages, including Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu" (Dharwadker 112). Newspapers were at the forefront of this invention. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Indian-owned and -edited newspapers, both in English and vernacular languages, flourished and, with the rise of the nationalist movement in the 1870s, assumed an increasingly anti-colonial and largely nationalist stance.

Accounts of the press on the Indian subcontinent fall into roughly three categories. Studies of the late eighteenth century focus primarily on the emergence of the press and on the government's tense relations with and wavering support for a free press.¹¹ A second set of studies attends to the rise of periodicals published and edited by Indians and in an Indian language. Due to the subcontinent's linguistic diversity, much of the scholarship on the Indian press focuses on the emergence and growth of a single vernacular tradition.¹² Lastly, numerous studies have appeared on the role of the press in the anti-colonial, nationalist struggle.¹³ Monitored and suppressed by the ratcheting-up of anti-nationalist censorship laws such as the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, Indian-owned and -edited newspapers have survived archivally as a result of being policed. The trials of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and the *Bangabosi* in the

11. See Boyce; Nair, *History*; Mukhopadhyay.

12. See Chakraborti, N. A. Khan, Ramakrishnan, Stark.

13. See Agathocleous, Hofmeyr, Narain.

final decades of the nineteenth century capture anti-colonial resistance and have received considerable attention from scholars. As this schematic suggests, the literature on the nineteenth-century press in India consists of gaps, most notably in the forty years between 1835—when Charles Metcalfe repealed censorship laws—and 1878 when a jittery Government of India passed the Vernacular Press Act that imposed restrictions on the non-English-language press. From the colorful fates of James Hicky (the pioneer), James Silk Buckingham (who allied himself with Indian editors in the 1820s and was deported for critiques of the government), and J. Stocqueler (who purchased the Tory *John Bull* with Dwarkanath Tagore in 1833 and transformed it into the Whig *Englishman*), the historiography of India newspapers skips some half a century to anti-colonial outlets such as the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

Empire News steps into this gap to analyze English-language newspapers between 1845 and 1860. Situated between the pioneering years of the news media and the ferment of the anti-colonial struggle, these middle years have been neglected. Bhrahma Chaudhuri, an early scholar of Indian newspapers, considers 1830 to 1850 the “formative years of Indian periodicals” (178), while Bayly refers to the 1830s and 1840s as the “age of hiatus, when social change was crippled by economic depression and government penury . . . [and] the deepest changes of this era can be seen in the information order: the rapid diffusion of print media into north Indian society” (212). Yet no scholarly account of the newspapers of this period exists. In attending to English-language and Anglo-Indian newspapers, this book offers a history of the role of the press at a moment when British territorial expansion was slowing and its colonial bureaucracy expanding. The standard account of Anglo-Indian newspapers is that they were belligerent bullhorns for empire and functioned in isolation from their vernacular-language contemporaries. While there is some accuracy to the description, several Anglo-Indian newsmen worked in conjunction with Indians and fostered the growth of Indian newspapers.

The most prominent example of such transactional exchange is embodied in Rammohan Roy, the Bengali reformer who, in addition to owning and editing the Bengali-language *Sambad Kamudi* (est. 1821), worked with Anglo-Indians in press ventures such as the *Unitarian Repository* (est. 1823) and the *Bengal Herald* (est. 1829).¹⁴ The latter was a joint

14. Chanda (*History* [1987]:84–85, 115–17).

venture of Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore (the landowner, industrialist, banker, and grandfather of the litterateur, Rabindranath), Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Nilratan Halder, Rajkishan Singh, and Robert Montgomery Martin.¹⁵ Most of these men played an active role in multiple newspapers, but none more so than Dwarkanath Tagore, who was proprietor or financial supporter of two of Calcutta's most important and rival newspapers, the *Englishman* (from 1833) and the *Bengal Hurkaru* (from 1834). While Tagore's involvement in newspapers was largely financial—he left the editing to Anglo-Indians such as Stocqueler and James Sutherland—Roy's involvement was both more intellectual and personal. Chatterjee writes that Roy's transformation of “freedom of belief into the legal-constitutional form of the individual subject's right to liberty . . . could not have happened without [his] association with the emergent public sphere in Bengal of free traders and freethinkers,” including Anglo-Indian interlocutors (*Black Hole* 140).

Besides elites such as Roy and Tagore, numerous Indians working in Anglo-Indian presses—as printers and compositors, occasionally as correspondents—learned the trade in these workshops before moving on to establish their own newspapers or periodicals. Many of those who labored in the presses are lost to history, but some writers, such as Harish Chandra Mukherjee, who went on to own and edit the *Hindoo Patriot*, are known and we will turn to the cross-fertilization he represents in chapter 3. Anindita Ghosh summarizes the association between Indians and Anglo-Indians in the arena of print thus: “The pioneering Indian proprietors of vernacular presses were men who had been associated with European ventures for some time as teachers, authors, and printers of vernacular works. Having gained some knowledge of the trade, they moved on to establish their own businesses” (27).¹⁶ Though this symbiosis ruptured, Swaminath Natarajan, an early historian of the Indian press, indicates that the two press cultures severed at a later date than scholars have allowed: “The Mutiny was responsible for driving a wedge between

15. See Chanda (*History* [1987], 115–16); Chatterjee (119); Ahmed (70).

16. Ghosh's earliest example of such interactions is from 1807, and her most “dynamic” example is Gangakishore Bhattacharya, who worked as a compositor at the Serampore Press (27). Robert Fraser describes “early publishing in Bengal” as “collaborative” (18). Antoinette Burton, writing about imperial archives generally, argues that their contents are “likely to have been the collaborative product, as the India Office collections themselves are, of ‘native’ agency and state-sponsored information collection. They are hybrids rather than hegemony” (95).

English-owned and Indian newspapers and creating a distinction between the English language and Indian languages [sic] journals” (50). Prior to 1857, as we shall see, the traffic between Anglo-Indian and vernacular-language presses, though often difficult to tease out, was not negligible.



This book examines several Anglo-Indian newspapers, leaning heavily on one paper, the *Mofussilite*, with four additional newspapers—the *Bengal Hurkaru*, the *Friend of India*, the *Englishman*, and the *Hindoo Patriot*—forming the core of the sample and augmenting the analysis. On occasion, I draw on newspapers such as the *Agra Messenger*, crucial to the story I develop in chapter 2, or two London-based steamship newspapers, *Allen’s Indian Mail* and *Atlas for India*, that were busy in the circulation of news in 1857. The five papers comprising the core represent a range of types of newspapers and coverage: three papers were Calcutta-based (the *Englishman*, *Hindoo Patriot*, and *Bengal Hurkaru*), one from the Serampore Press in Srirampur, outside Calcutta (the *Friend of India*), one from the “mofussil” or provinces (*Mofussilite*). Two, in mid-century, were dailies (the *Englishman* and the *Hurkaru*); one, the *Mofussilite*, was twice weekly (for a time, it was triweekly); and two appeared once a week (the *Friend* and the *Hindoo Patriot*). With the exception of the *Hindoo Patriot*, all were edited by Anglo-Indians of various political stripes. From 1834 until his death in 1846, Dwarkanath Tagore owned the *Bengal Hurkaru* while also providing considerable “financial assistance” to its rival, the *Englishman* (Chanda *History* [1987] 35; Natarajan 47). The *Hindoo Patriot*, on the other hand, was kept barely alive by its editor and proprietor, Harish Chandra Mukherjee, who subsidized it with his meager salary working at the military auditor’s office.

Print runs and circulation numbers are always difficult to ascertain, particularly so in the landscape of Indian newspapers where office books have not survived.¹⁷ Chanda offers some numbers in his *History of the English Press in Bengal, 1780–1857*. Culled painstakingly from newspapers themselves and seldom comparative, these numbers provide nothing like

17. See Stark (7). The biographer of John Lang, the founder of the *Mofussilite*, bemoans the lack of office books or business papers: “There are no diaries and practically no letters. He is seldom mentioned in the writings of his many friends and acquaintances” (Crittenden, *John Lang* xii).

a systematic portrait, merely glimpses and hints. In 1839, the Serampore-based *Friend of India* had over 500 subscribers, a number that climbed to almost 3,500 in 1860 (Chanda, *History* [1987] 49; *History* [2008] 5). It boasted a subscriber base all over the subcontinent, in Britain, even the Strait Settlements, and was the Anglo-Indian newspaper best regarded by Bengal's young elite; Chanda writes that it was "uniformly in demand by the natives," with over 100 Indian subscribers in the mid-1850s (*History* [1987] 50). By contrast, the *Hurkaru* and the *Englishman*, Chanda writes, "[never] could . . . become popular with the natives," with approximately 20 Indian subscribers each in 1843 (*History* [1987] 34). What they lacked in Indian readers, they made up in Anglo-Indian readers: in 1833, the daily *Hurkaru* had 726 subscribers, while the *Englishman* in 1837 had a postal circulation of 376 copies, a number Chanda characterizes as "respectable" (*History* [1987] 403, 169). The *Hindoo Patriot*, by contrast, at its height in 1857 had only 36 subscribers, almost all Indian (Chanda, *History* [1987] 334–37). The *Mofussilite*, publishing from outside the region and one of only a handful of English-language papers in the North-Western Provinces, had, by its own account, 133 subscribers at the end of its first year in 1846 and "upwards of eleven hundred" in 1850; its published tally of subscribers in 1852 lists 738 names.¹⁸

Why the *Mofussilite* as anchor? The name of the newspaper is derived by adding the Latinate suffix "-ite" to the word "mofussil," itself an Anglicization of an Urdu word whose Persian and Arabic root, *mufaṣṣal*, meant "to divide or classify."¹⁹ By the late eighteenth century, "mofussil" had been absorbed into the Anglo-Indian vernacular and was used to refer to parts of India outside the presidency capitals of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, or more generally, provincial India. The *OED*'s first reference to "mofussil" appears in 1781 in that first print newspaper, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*, which included the following sentence: "A gentleman in the Mofussil, Mr.

18. *Mofussilite*, 10 January 1851, and *Mofussilite*, 2 March 1852. Subscribers and postal circulation tell only a partial story: James Long, who studied the Indian press in 1859, estimated ten "readers or hearers" for each copy of a book or issue of a newspaper (xv, xxxiv).

19. The nineteenth-century Hindustani suffix would have been "mofussil-walla" [masc.] or, in the "vulgarized" Hindi that was emerging in the central plains of the subcontinent, "mofussil-ka." For the growing usage of "ka/ki" in the 1840s, see Bayly (286).

P, fell out of his chaise and broke his leg.”²⁰ The unfortunate Mr. P. who cannot manage to maintain himself in his vehicle captures the disparaging connotation attached to the term in common parlance, something akin to country bumpkin. The mofussil—or a posting in the mofussil—could strike despair in many an Anglo-Indian official’s heart. Yet, in 1845, the term got a makeover with the appearance of the *Mofussilite*. Proudly donning a mantle of marginality, the newspaper claimed the secondary status and perceived invisibility of the provinces; its founding assumption was that a “parish gazette,” distant from the center of power permitted it autonomy and the ability to express itself without constraints. A mofussilite, in this reworking, was a person who challenged the Government of India *and* a mentality. It is this oppositional stance that interests me: What did it look like to inhabit the margins of empire? How was this identity fashioned and how did it conceive of itself? Did a space for critical distance to colonialism exist in colonial communities in mid-nineteenth-century India? What might such distance look like? Is marginality as a member of a powerful empire a chimera?

The *Mofussilite* was launched in 1845 by John Lang, who served as its fiery and caustic editor for several years. Lang was born and raised in Australia, the son of a Glaswegian trader and his Australian-born wife, who was the daughter of a transported convict.²¹ The senior Lang died eight months before his son was born (Crittenden 13–14); despite his attenuated connection to Britain, Lang junior developed a love–hate relationship with the “mother country,” variably desiring recognition from it and holding himself aloof from it. An ambitious young man, Lang entered Trinity College, Cambridge, for law, but was expelled within months for blasphemy, drunkenness, and “Botany Bay” exploits (Crittenden 38). He

20. *Hobson-Jobson*, the compendium of the Anglo-Indian vernacular, offers a comparative definition: “If, in Calcutta, one talks of the Mofussil, he means anywhere in Bengal out of Calcutta” (Yule and Burnell 570).

21. Lang’s mother, Elizabeth Harris Lang Underwood, was the daughter of John Harris, a transported convict, who never married Elizabeth’s mother in Australia as he already had a wife in England (Crittenden, *John Lang* 12). Harris was Jewish and it is unclear if Elizabeth’s mother was Jewish as well. When Elizabeth was young, Harris left her to be brought up in the home of a distant relation, James Larra, a man of “French Jewish extraction” (14, 51; this and all further citations for Crittenden refer to the book *John Lang* unless otherwise noted).

read law at Middle Temple in London instead, was called to the bar, and returned to Australia with an English wife. Unable to establish a practice in Sydney—related to a combination of his hotheadedness and injudicious participation in debates on the governance of the colony²²—Lang decamped for India in 1842. The reason he chose India is unclear, though it seems overdetermined: his biological father’s family did business in India, as did his stepfather, and his English wife had a brother living in India.²³ Lang’s marriage did not last, nor did he practice much law, but he settled in India where he became a prolific writer, publishing some dozen novels and volumes of poetry, as well as editing the *Mofussilite*. Though it is said that Lang was a resident of India all his adult life, in fact, he spent a good portion of the next twenty-two years shuttling between the mofussil of India and London, an expert on India in London and a gadfly to imperial powers in the mofussil. He died in India and is buried in Mussoorie, the hill station he often retired to for his health.

Lang is experiencing something of a renaissance in India these days: in 2014, India’s prime minister, Narendra Modi, presented his Australian counterpart, Tony Abbott, a “commemorative photo collage” consisting of Lang’s writings and archival documents from his life in India, a gesture seen as something of a détente between the two countries.²⁴ And in 2015, an elegant volume entitled *In the Court of the Ranee of Jhansi and Other Travels in India* by John Lang appeared in India. Brought out by a young publishing house with solid credentials, Speaking Tiger, the volume was reviewed positively by academics in respectable newspapers and magazines.²⁵ In the accounts of Lang that have appeared recently, both

22. Though earlier biographers (Roderick and Earnshaw) emphasized the prejudice in Sydney against emancipists (convicts and their descendants) and Jews, Lang’s more recent biographers deny that either anti-Semitism or anti-emancipist sentiment played a role in his disgrace (Crittenden 53–57; Keesing 43–55). Keesing writes, “[Lang] was undoubtedly amusing and brilliant; he was also flashy, conceited and when drunk at best silly, at worst objectionable” (32).

23. For Walter Lang’s family trade with India and Australia, see Crittenden (13); for Joseph Underwood, Lang’s mother’s second husband, see Hainsworth. For Lang’s brother-in-law, Andrew Turton Peterson, see Crittenden (63) and Keesing (39).

24. See Medcalf and “PM Gifts.”

25. Speaking Tiger Books is co-directed by Ravi Singh, formerly of the Aleph Book Company, which he left following the politicized withdrawal of Wendy Doiger’s *On Hinduism*, and Manas Saikia, who headed Cambridge University Press India. The

in India and in Australia, he is portrayed, in the words of Amit Ranjan, a Delhi-based researcher, as “a hero with the Indians.”²⁶ This reputation rests on Lang’s arguing—and winning—the blockbuster case of an Indian against the Government of India in 1851 (an episode I delve into in chapter 2), his defense of the Rani of Jhansi in 1854 (taken up in chapter 4), and his newspaper. Referring to the *Mofussilite*, Ranjan declares that Lang was “an anti-colonialist, with his constant lampoons, sometimes even harpoons directed against the East India Company.”²⁷

Though *Empire News* is far more than an account of Lang and the *Mofussilite*, Lang’s revival and current stature in certain circles can serve as a barometer of the legacy of the British in India today, as well as provide a portal into shifts in the critical analyses of the colonial period. Whether Lang *was* the champion of Indians as he is celebrated in some circles is a matter I shall address in the course of this book. Here it bears noting that his life and work mirrors that of another famous India-based journalist and writer: Rudyard Kipling. In some respects, we might think of Lang as “Kipling in a minor key,” the former’s life a precursor to his more famous successor’s. As if serially picking up where Lang left off, Kipling was born in Bombay in 1865, sixteen months after Lang died in Mussoorie. Like Lang, Kipling began his career in journalism, and both men used their day jobs as a springboard for their literary productions. Though the landscape of Anglo-Indian newspapers had altered considerably between 1845 when Lang started the *Mofussilite* and 1882 when Kipling started writing for the *Civil and Military Gazette* in Lahore, the two outlets were very literally linked: a dozen years after Lang’s death, his newspaper was absorbed into the *Civil and Military Gazette*. Much of Lang’s fiction was serialized in the *Mofussilite*, just as dozens of Kipling’s early stories appeared in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, where he served as assistant editor from 1882 to 1886. Their careers, of course, diverged considerably—Lang was no Nobel Prize winner and never wrote as widely or achieved the renown Kipling did—but their journalistic writings have more than a hint of similarity.

editorial team includes some of Indian publishing’s top names drawn from Penguin India, Roli, and Rupa Books. For reviews of the Lang volume published by Speaking Tiger, see Kanjilal, A. Kaul, and Venkatachalapathy.

26. Lang’s Australian biographer, Victor Crittenden, writes of his “sympathetic depictions” of the lives of “the native Indian people” (xii).

27. In “The Aussie Who Took On the British for Rani Laxmibai,” Archana Masih cites Ranjan as saying: “His novels had characters displaying resistance against the British.”

Moreover, Kipling's fissured stature—denounced as a strong imperialist by many critics, viewed by others as a clear-eyed commentator on the excesses of empire, and popular among readers—points to the ambiguous legacy of such figures who served as internal critics-*cum*-beneficiaries of empire.

Controversy about a Kipling—or a Lang or Anglo-Indian newspapers—rehearses debates inaugurated by postcolonial studies, debates that have subjected the analytic framework itself to scrutiny. Questions about postcolonial studies, its putative demise—premature to some, belated for others—and its continued utility have played out since at least the early 2000s. One critic has dated postcolonial studies to the years between Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism* and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's 2000 *Empire*, while another cites the same dates, though the reference points are Said and Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* (Loomba et al. 2; Helgesson 165). For many, postcolonial criticism's focus on the discursive, cultural, and epistemological has surpassed its utility, outpaced by a globalization that, they argue, requires new critical tools and approaches. Arif Dirlik, an early critic, writes that postcolonial studies' "preoccupation with colonialism and its legacies makes for an exaggerated view of the hold of the past over contemporary realities, and an obliviousness to the reconfiguration of past legacies by contemporary restructurings of power" (429). In his 1991 essay "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?" Kwame Anthony Appiah addressed the preoccupation with the legacy of colonialism and argues that while postcolonial scholars—in the West and in universities in formerly colonized places—adopt "the binarism of Self and Other . . . [as a] shibboleth," the lives and art of ordinary folk tell a different story: that "the broad shape of th[e] circulation of cultures . . . is surely that we are all already contaminated by each other" (354).

David Scott is more sympathetic than Dirlik or Appiah and values a postcolonial approach for its "strategy for investigating the trace of colonial effects in our postcolonial time" (386) and for "incisively and relentlessly demonstrat[ing] the essentialisms at work in older paradigms" (393). Nevertheless, he asks

whether the questions that have animated postcolonialism's genealogical critique of colonial knowledge continue to be questions worth having answers to. I wonder whether the historical context of problems that produced the postcolonial effect as a critical effect has not now altered such that the yield of these questions is no longer what it was. I wonder, in

other words, whether postcolonialism has not lost its point and become normalized as a strategy for the mere accumulation of meaning. (392)

He concludes that it *has* lost its “point” and transformed from criticism to method (394). Jim Masselos, in his critique of Subaltern Studies—a field distinct, in its early days, from postcolonial studies but later more aligned with it—makes a similar argument: “once the basic point is made and accepted, that language reflects power and the systems of knowledge, and that knowledge is determined by the needs of power and is formulated through those needs, then perhaps there is little more to be said. The explanation may become mechanical and deterministic—and even circular Because it has happened therefore it is a product of power and that is essentially all that can be said. The explanation ceases to explain and tends towards reflex cliché and dogma” (115–16).

None—not Dirlík, Appiah, Scott, or Masselos—is an “Occidentalist” and none minimizes the significance or value of postcolonial studies; they merely believe its moment or intellectual ferment has passed.²⁸ The historian Fredrick Cooper too has argued that postcolonial studies “needs a shot in the arm,” but he believes that its lassitude can be rectified by giving “more weight to the specificity of colonial situations and the importance of struggles in colonies, in metropolises, and between the two” (401). Cooper, with Ann Stoler, has been advocating such a reorientation since their edited collection *Tensions of Empire*. In that volume, Stoler and Cooper caution against essentializing “the colonial” or “coloniality” as globally and historically singular. Even particular colonial regimes, they argue, “were neither monolithic nor omnipotent” (6), but “shot through with conflicts” (21). Attending to such conflicts exposes the precarity of colonial regimes (even while acknowledging their immense power). Like Stoler and Cooper, Cheryl Beredo, a historian of US–Philippines relations, describes “the colonial project as simultaneously powerful and fragile, as at once repressive and unsure, as both ideally ordered and manifestly unruly”

28. Critics of Subaltern Studies have charged *it* with losing its ferment when it abandoned the focus on reconstructing the lives and experiences of subalterns and took a turn towards colonial discourse analysis. Ludden characterizes this shift as “[c]olonial representations had begun to overwhelm subaltern activity” (19). Sumit Sarkar, himself a former member of the Subaltern Studies Group, articulated these criticisms most sharply in his 1997 essay “The Decline of the Subaltern in *Subaltern Studies*.”

(13). Thus, in contrast to the view that colonial power was all-pervasive, such critiques suggest that we approach colonial power as constructed, debated, up for grabs.

The conflicts Stoler and Cooper urge us to be alert to only become visible when we examine the “colonial domain [as] distinct from the metropolitan one” (3). In the colonies, as Nathan Hensley elegantly puts it, the

particular shape and strategies [of imperial policies] on the ground derived . . . from an ensemble of *ad hoc* responses to local conditions. Key decisions were made not just by grand strategists, but politicians responding to domestic necessities, bureaucrats buried in paperwork, and governors in the field seeking to advance their own careers. The Empire was not, as Sir John Seeley put it in 1883, acquired in a ‘fit of absence of mind,’ but it was nevertheless generated from an array of competing motivations, and at no point was its achievement guaranteed. (522)

The work of postcolonial studies today is to attend to these ad hoc responses and competing motivations, to what Stoler and Cooper call the “protracted debate . . . [that] went into defining dichotomies and distinctions that did not have the predicted effect” (8).²⁹

Such interventions, particularly Cooper’s, are precipitated by the field’s tendency to repudiate the Enlightenment and with the “occlusion that results from turning the centuries of European colonization overseas into a critique of the Enlightenment, democracy, or modernity” (403). Rather, the goal and challenge is to

really provincialize Europe. To do that is not to invert the narrative of progress to expose its underbelly, but to examine the limits as well as the power of European domination, the unevenness and conflict within Europe itself; it is to study systems of power and representation in interaction with each other, neither presuming the centrality of modern Europe as a reference point nor shying away from analysis of power as it actually was exercised. (Cooper 416)

29. In many postcolonial accounts, Stoler and Cooper write, “European agency too often remains undifferentiated, assumed, and unexplored” (16).