Gods in the bazaar : the economies of Indian calendar art/ Kajri Jain; Durham: Duke University Press. 2007. (1-28, 374-376 p.)

INTRODUCTION

CALENDAR ART AS AN OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE

If we confined ourselves to terms that referred directly or centrally to the physical object we would be confined to concepts like *large, flat, pigments on a panel* . . . perhaps *image*. We would find it hard to locate the sort of interest the picture really has for us.

MICHAEL BAXANDALL, *PATTERNS OF INTENTION: ON THE HISTORICAL EXPLANATION OF PICTURES*

Aapko Madam is se aur koi ganda topic nahin mila?
[Madam, were you unable to find a worse topic than this?]

CALENDAR PUBLISHER, OLD DELHI

Their gaze is everywhere, its benevolence suffusing cash registers, government offices, factory floors, laboratories, schools, buses, kitchens, streets, tea stalls, dining halls, temples, dams, missiles. If you have lived in or visited India, or indeed an Indian shop or restaurant anywhere in the world, you are unlikely to have escaped the purview of the cheap, mass-produced icons known as "calendar" or "bazaar" art (figs. 1–7). While the majority depict Hindu deities, there are also images from India's many other religions, including Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism, which are often placed for worship in personal shrines. There

1. A laminated bazaar print depicting Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, and a circular plastic calendar depicting Krishna and Arjun on the battlefield of the Mahabharat, above the cash register in a shoe shop, Sarojini Nagar market, New Delhi, 1991.

2. A calendar print of Lakshmi watching over a vegetable seller, Sarojini Nagar market, New Delhi, 1991.

3. A calendar from Mount Shivalik Breweries Ltd. depicting the infant Krishna, family residence, Munirka, New Delhi, 2000.

are movie stars, chubby babies, and seductive women; patriotic figures and personifications of the nation; animals, landscapes, and cityscapes, all in vivid, saturated colors often further embellished with gold dust, sequins, glitter, or flowers. Everyone has access to these images in some form, whether bought, given, or salvaged: as large, fancy, high-gloss calendars given to favored clients and associates; as smaller prints bought at roadside stalls; as inexpensive stickers, postcards, magnets, key rings, and pendants; as "antiques" in the collectors' market; as cutouts lovingly gleaned from printed incense or soap packages and "framed" with colored insulating tape. So they appear in all manner of contexts: chic elite living rooms, middle-class kitchens, urban slums, village huts, crumbling feudal mansions; hung on walls, stuck on scooters and computers, propped up on machines, affixed to dashboards, suspended from trees, tucked into wallets and lockets.

What first drew me to these images was, I think, a fascinated envy. As a student of visual communication at India's National Institute of Design in the 1980s I was deeply

4. A poster of saint-poet Guru Ravi Das (also known as Raidas) watching over workers at a shoe repair shop, Landour Bazaar, Mussoorie, 2000.

invested in the visual media as powerful tools of social change: the need of the hour, as my cohorts and I saw it, was to use professional design skills to foster education, primary health, social justice, environmentalism, cultural heritage, and so on. However, we were keenly aware that our skills had been developed at an institution that V. S. Naipaul had called "a finishing school for the unacademic young, a playpen . . ." (Naipaul 1979, 123). We also had a strong suspicion that the spare, streamlined, internationalist design idiom we were schooled in was inadequate to the task of "communicating" to the constituencies in need of these crucial "social messages." Our top-down developmentalist self-righteousness was confronted by the sheer abundance and luscious visual force of what—our envy whispered to us—those constituencies *really* wanted: the intense colors, lavish ornament, compassionate smiles, and clear gazes of calendar art. To communicate with this audience, we needed to engage with these images: to find out what people saw in them, and how, why, and when they came so profusely to inhabit the everyday spaces

5. A landscape calendar distributed by a Hindu jewelry store on display in a Muslim-owned barbershop, Landour Bazaar, Mussoorie, 2000.

of modern India. . . . . So, swearing under our breaths at Sir Vidia, we put down our Letraset catalogues (it was that long ago) and Pantone swatches and, for better or worse, took ourselves off to university.

As I write this, many years later, that envy has only intensified, even as my youthful confidence in "social communication" has diminished. This intensification is a response to the spectacular reappropriation of the calendar art idiom within the political arena from the late 1980s onward. My envy now is directed not so much at the images themselves but at those who do not wait to conduct any academic soul-searching before blatantly harnessing the visual idioms of calendar art to their political projects—Hindu nationalism in particular. One arguably productive consequence of the ease with which such political projects harness these forms to their agendas is that many on the left in India have had to reassess their own basis of authority in the secular-modernist language of

6. Posters depicting nationalist leaders decorating a roadside tea stall, Sarojini Nagar market, New Delhi, 1991.

7. A 1996 calendar advertising candidates for the Bharatiya Janata Party, neighborhood shrine, Varanasi, 1995. Ganesh is seated on a lotus, which is the BJP's election symbol.

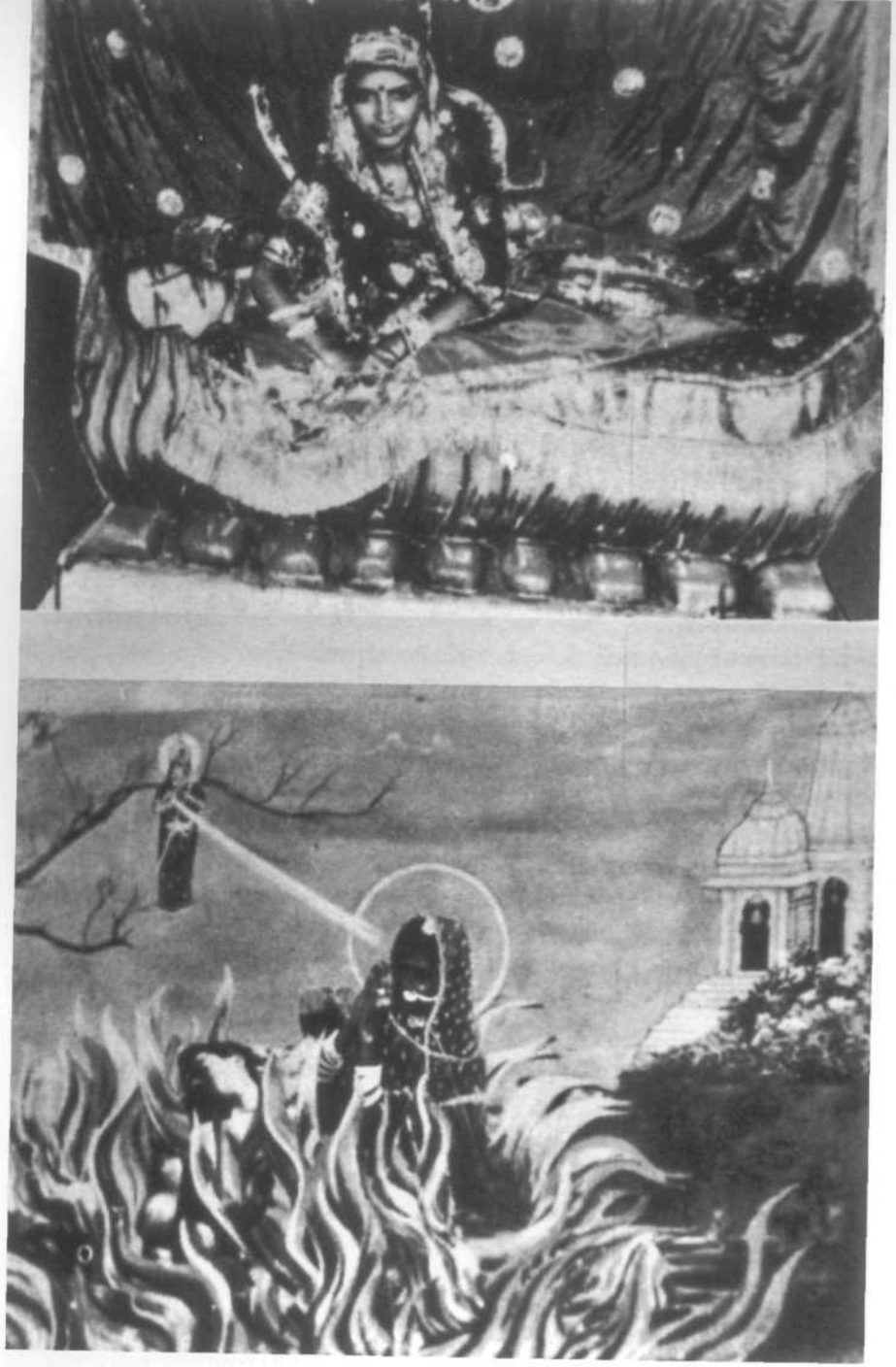
history versus myth, reason versus desire and faith, objective facts and realist representations versus seductive narratives (although this quandary is by no means confined to the Indian context). The following example should clarify why such a reassessment should be necessary.[1]

"NOT A JUST IMAGE . . ."

The print on the following page (fig. 8a and b) is one instance of the images this book is about. It depicts the eighteen-year-old Roop Kanwar, who was burned as a *sati* on her husband's funeral pyre in 1987 in Deorala, Rajasthan. The print consists of two images, each assembled as a mix of photomontage and painting. The top one shows Roop Kanwar calmly smiling on the pyre with her husband's body across her lap. In the bottom one she is being consumed by flames as her hands are joined in prayer over her husband's body; in the air, in front of a tree, hovers the mother goddess (*devi/mata*), who is sending a beam of light toward Roop Kanwar's haloed head; in the background on the right is a temple.

This picture figures in an intriguing exchange in *Trial by Fire*, a documentary centering on this *sati* incident made by the pioneering activist-filmmaker Anand Patwardhan in 1994. A male voice off-camera, presumably Patwardhan's, is directing questions at a woman who is working on the floor. We know by now that this woman, Godavari, is a cook and belongs to the Rajput or *kshatriya* community, as do Roop Kanwar's in-laws (who initiated the burning). The voice asks Godavari whether she thinks the picture has been faked using photographs of the couple's faces: Look at it carefully, he says. No, she answers, that's the way it is in the "photo" (Godavari uses the English word "photo" to describe the picture). The voice then asks how it is possible to take a photo of god (*bhagwan*), since no one else is able to see him. She replies flatly that it is possible, that even though we can't see god, the "photo" can show him: "Others can't see him, but he'll definitely come in the photo. He lives up in the trees, nearby. He hides and then appears in the photo—even the photographers [*photowale*] don't realize that it contains this—god. He comes on his own. . . ." As she continues, she too adopts the discourse of evidence but with her own lethal twist: "If you couldn't see god [in the photo], how would people know how she was burned, that it was god's rays?"

This exchange unfolds at the scene of a crime in which, as the film frames it, the picture and its dissimulations are implicated. But the picture's status as evidence is subject to a *differend*, a radical incommensurability between two positions with respect to



8a and b. A bazaar print depicting the *sati* of Roop Kanwar in 1987. (Collection of Rajeswari Sunder Rajan)

each other's frameworks of intelligibility or legitimacy (Lyotard 1988).[2] The disembodied male voice, appealing to secular reason, seeks to establish the falsity of the image on the basis that its human fabrication invalidates its putatively divine authority. Bringing the image into a juridical frame in order to institute the victim *as* a victim (unlike Roop Kanwar's in-laws, who had clear material motives in instituting her as a goddess, an embodiment of *shakti* or divine power) ties it to a realist regime of authority hinging on a distinction between truth and falsehood. However, for the woman on the floor, shown working as she considers these questions, the very existence of the image invalidates the terms of truth and falsity. Indeed, on the contrary, her claim that the "photo" itself renders the god-figure visible imbues the technology that produces the image with an extra charge.

Notwithstanding the neat binary oppositions in my glossing of this discursive encounter, the terms of debate are of course more complex and less plainly polarized. The incommensurability between these two frames of viewing does not imply that the people deploying them are primordially wedded to those frames, or that they have no recognition of each other's positions. This exchange indexes the filmmaker's collision with a limit of secular reason: a limit that reason identifies as "blind" faith. Here the refusal to subscribe to a regime of provable truth and falsity is tantamount to blindness, an inability to see at all. This clear ascription of incapacity underpins the inclusion of this encounter in the film as part of a dialectical process of "conscientization"; no auto-critique is intended here (although I did initially read it that way).[3] For this exchange also makes growingly evident the Rajput woman's defensive recognition (as a member of the community that perpetrated the *sati*) of what is, quite literally, at stake. This recognition is indexed by her rapid mimetic adoption of the filmmaker's deployment of the image as evidence: If it weren't for the "photo" how would people know whether Roop Kanwar's burning was a matter of divine or human instrumentality?

While the above exchange indexes the filmmaker-activist's confident (and certainly well-earned) moral authority, another critic sensitively registers a certain duress in her own endorsement of a certain type of *image juste* (just or correct image). In her analysis of visual representations of *sati*, including the same bazaar print from Deorala, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan writes: "I am therefore *obliged* to endorse, *admittedly in a certain idealizing and prescriptive way*, the forms of agitprop representations in theatre, film and posters as bringing us closer to the 'reality' of sati than does either the liberal discourse denouncing it or the popular and religious discourse glorifying it. It is not naturalistic or symbolic

images, but a certain specific mode of stylization that points to the idiom of pain" (Sunder Rajan 1993, 31; emphasis added).

Although the formal idiom Sunder Rajan supports is not naturalistic, here again the ultimate aim is to engender an accurate apprehension of reality. Again, as in the previous exchange, the overarching frame is a juridical one: in bearing witness to the reality of the victim's pain in order to do justice to it, the image must accurately communicate the affective essence of that pain. As an example of an image that does communicate "the essence of pain," as opposed to the bazaar print, Sunder Rajan cites a poster produced by a local activist organization. This is a stylized, starkly graphic, single-color painted image intended to depict a woman struggling to escape the *sati* fire, "restoring" her subjectivity by simultaneously instituting her as victim and agent. The artifice of religious propaganda is fought here through the artifice of secular counterpropaganda, with the difference that while the former's mode of seduction refuses the issue of dissimulation altogether, the latter operates in an economy of truth and falsehood. Although the secular counterpropaganda's grim agitprop literalism signals its own artifice through its crude execution, it is still legitimized for the critic by its greater representational fidelity to the reality of *sati*: that is, the woman's pain. Note, however, that this poster relies heavily on the mediation of large written text to contextualize its image: again there is a sense here that the image is potentially treacherous, that it cannot be trusted to do the job on its own. The reliance on text means that unlike the calendar print, the poster does not directly address those who are illiterate (particularly many rural women such as Godavari).

These two instances illustrate how the default mode of critical thinking about the role of images in social and political change has tended to be a juridical one, but, ironically, one that often fails to do justice to the work of the image. At times, as we have seen, this approach appeals to the evidentiary status of images as witnesses (true or false) or as evidence per se (real or fake). At others it implicates images as perpetrators of the crime (good/bad, innocent/guilty), so for instance "objectifying" (wrong) depictions of women perpetuate patriarchal practices (fig. 9) while more positive (right) models engender desirable social change. Thus the initial driver of scholarly attention to mass-cultural images has tended to be their implication in various forms of regressive politics and social practices: Marxist and feminist scholars, critics, and cultural practitioners have taken the lead in seriously examining various forms of popular visual culture everywhere. In India this is certainly true of calendar art (see Guha Thakurta 1991; Rajadhyaksha 1993b; Sunder Rajan 1993; Uberoi 1990). As with this book, the resurgence of a violent, repressive Hindu nationalism from the late 1980s onward has been another defining context for analyses of the political efficacy of visual mass culture and particularly of religious imagery—although of course it is hard to separate the injustices of religious absolutism from those of class, caste, and patriarchy (see Bharucha 1993; Brosius 1999; A. Kapur 1993a; Kaur 2000; Lutgendorf 1995; Pinney 1997a, 2004; A. Rajagopal 2001).

9. Calendars on sale on the pavement in Chandni Chowk, Delhi, 1992.

As often as not, analysts tend to approach these images juridically, as evidence from a crime scene. Maybe this is not a problem per se, for it has been the self-declared role of critique (at least in the Frankfurt school version) to identify the relationships between cultural forms and economic, social, and political practices, with the ultimate aim of articulating this analysis with revolutionary agency. The problem is more with the forensic mode of analysis that this juridical context tends to foster. To put it succinctly, the more explicitly politically invested the critical analysis of an image, the likelier it is to resort to the representational realism that has come to us epistemically and institutionally bundled with the modern discourse of justice (including social justice). As a result, the

less likely it is to be able to engage—to apprehend or to counteract—the other forms of power available to the image. Particularly unhelpful here is the casting of subjects who do not participate in an economy of truth and falsehood as variously inadequate: as gullible, "blind," and inarticulate, their agency surrendered to pernicious forms of superstition, fetishism, and seduction.

Underpinning the forensic-juridical mode is a particular formulation of the power and authority, treachery and seduction of the image as primarily residing in its representational capacities, which in turn primarily inhere in its visual appearance—as opposed, for instance, to its other qualities as a circulating object. Epistemologically, this formulation draws on a positivist formation of knowledge in privileging the authority of visual evidence. At the same time, in terms of its moral economy, it draws on a Platonic notion of mimesis—and mistrust of images—in positing that the primary ethical locus of an image is its adequacy or inadequacy to truth or reality. To the extent that this formulation emphasizes the meaning of signifiers within the picture frame, apprehended through a primarily visual engagement with the image, and fails to take adequately into account the efficacy of images as circulating objects or of viewers as embodied beings (or rather denigrates this as fetishism, as a lack in the subject), it belongs to an "ocularcentric" discursive field (Jay 1993). In all these respects, as postmodernist and poststructuralist critiques have variously demonstrated, such default ideas about the work of images belong to a specific post-Enlightenment epistemological and ethical lineage emanating from bourgeois Europe: a lineage that also strongly informs modern ideas of subjecthood, agency, and routes to social justice. The self-descriptions of bourgeois-liberal modernity have rested on particular formulations of subjects and objects and the relations between them, as well as about the public sphere, property, rights, the proper place of religion, art, commerce, and so on, all of which have come to bear in various ways, and with varying degrees of force and consistency, on the discursive frames within which images circulate. A number of ideas pertaining to images have thus come to be closely interlinked: ideas about the efficacy of representation; the authority of visual evidence; the imaging of identity; the notion of "fine art"; taste as an arbiter of social distinction; the institution of authorial property; and the denigration of fetishism, of technological mass production, and of commodity relations.

In the following study I explore how this "epistemic bundle" that ties the work of images in with particular formulations of subjectivity, agency, and justice is both unraveled and reconstituted by the multiple image practices and discourses that have come to coexist in postcolonial India. In doing so, I do not intend to discredit the evidentiary analyses of images mobilized in struggles for social justice; to the extent that they have become part of a certain common sense, shared by state institutions and civil society, these realist strategies may still offer a potent mode of immanent critique. But in order to specify the terms of negotiation between the epistemic bundle I have described and other regimes of image value and efficacy, I do seek to resituate it within the institutional legacies of colonialism and their attendant epistemological, moral-ethical, and aesthetic formulations. More specifically, I deploy a historically and ethnographically grounded approach to Indian "calendar" or "bazaar" art to locate this epistemic bundle in the colonial and postcolonial careers of the modernist, bourgeois-liberal public sphere—or, more accurately, of the normative terms in which it has described itself both to itself and to its others.[4]

RE-FRAMING THE VERNACULAR

I began with the *sati* print as an extreme instance of the way in which bazaar images can be implicated in matters of life and death. This example shows how the politics of the image is primarily approached through a juridical frame. Simultaneously, the exchange I described also demonstrates how the deployment of such a frame in a postcolonial setting can—and perhaps must—elide other ways of valuing and engaging with images. In particular, it highlights the tensions between traditions of secular and devotional reason: between the ocularcentric treatment of images as vehicles of linguistic ideation and the "blindness" of faith or the power of facticity. To the extent that the latter practices refuse a secular juridical frame based on an economy of truth and falsehood, their difference from this economy is not quite of the same order as that of those reactive postmodernist critiques whose temporality—coming *after* the modern, both announcing and orchestrating its demise—is inherently nostalgic.[5] And yet their relationship with this economy is not that of pure otherness, either. As I hope to show, these economies themselves, as well as the relationships between them, have been constituted through ongoing encounters and exchanges, stemming from exploration, migration, trade, and conquest. Further, as we saw in the case of Patwardhan versus Godavari, these engagements are characterized by the complex coexistence of acknowledgment and disavowal, of "mimesis and alterity" (Taussig 1993b).

In this book I describe some of these coexisting regimes of value and efficacy across which bazaar images have come to circulate in modern India, examining how the relation-

ships between these economies have varied, in different registers, between articulation, exchange, and incommensurability (here I am using the term "economy" in its broadest sense as a system of value within the context of exchange). Taking my lead from conversations with consumers and people in the Indian calendar industry, firsthand observation of the industry's structure and functioning, and an analysis of images themselves as well as their contexts of circulation, I situate calendar images at the intersection between the aesthetic context of a commercial or mass-cultural form defined in opposition to "fine art" and the ethical context of what historians have called the "bazaar" (Bayly 1983; R. Ray 1984, 1992; A. Yang 1998).[6] In doing so, I seek to make three, related, interventions.

First, I use calendar images as an entry point for mapping a certain aspect of what Akhil Gupta has called the "postcolonial condition" (Gupta 1998, ix, 10–11). Specifically, I describe how, in the context of these images, postcolonial subjects function across *epistemically disjunct yet performatively networked* worlds: the worlds of bourgeois-liberal and neoliberal modernism on the one hand and those of "vernacular" discourses and practices on the other. Of all the fraught categories—"traditional," "native," "indigenous," "local"—that might be deployed for the specificity of the forms of postcolonial experience I seek to describe, I want to suggest that "vernacular" comes closest to resisting the pitfalls of primordialism and romanticism.[7] Vernacularity is not pure, systemic, temporally primordial, or territorially bounded; it speaks to the heterogeneity of postcolonial idioms and forms of experience while addressing their contemporaneity and currency, and their implicitly subordinate relation to hegemonic forms of discourse and practice (in short, their subalternity). In the Indian instance it is particularly useful as a category that can be associated with location but is not tied to it, steering clear of both the valorization of the "Indian village" characterizing South Asian studies and cultural practice for the better part of the twentieth century and the equally ideologically loaded "urban turn" (Prakash 2002) being celebrated at the turn of the millennium.

If the dictionary defines "vernacular" as both a "*nonstandard* language or dialect" and "the *normal* spoken form of a language" (emphasis added), this contradiction is already embedded in its etymological root, the Latin *verna*, meaning "slave born in the master's house" (Merriam Webster Online). Vernaculars are normal but not normative; they can be modern but not modernist. This implicit, indeed inherent, power relation is perpetuated in the more vernacular uses of the word itself: for instance, a friend who studied in a Marathi-language school in Powai (on the outskirts of the city formerly known as Bombay, now Mumbai) recalls being denigrated as a "vernac" by children from the city who were taught in English. And yet, unlike "subaltern," which speaks exclusively to a position of subordination within a given power relation, rendering itself vulnerable to romanticization, the "vernacular" can be simultaneously subordinate within one set of power relations and dominant in another. As I argue in chapter 3 in relation to the bazaar, this is a useful corrective to overly polarized binary constructions of postcolonial difference.

Like "vernac," the terms "calendar art" and "bazaar art" come to us loaded with connotations of a vernacular denigration of the vernacular, within a hierarchy of vernacularity.[8] In common usage these terms describe not just the illustrated calendars that businesses distribute annually to their customers and associates, but also wall posters and the smaller images known in the industry as "framing pictures," as well as the ephemeral objects such as key chains and magnets that are both gifted and sold. These categories are often extended to include the visual idiom sometimes deployed in comics and book illustrations, advertising, packaging, theater, film, and television (particularly mythological epics). Even though "calendar art" refers to a particular function and "bazaar art" to an arena of circulation, both have come to be used as properly generic terms in that they refer both to a set of expectations on the part of consumers and critics of a specific range of subjects and their visual treatment and to a set of imaginings on the part of producers of who these consumers are and what they want.[9] Here the use of the Hindi word "bazaar" works to align this form with a vernacular, non-English-speaking audience: "bazaar" art is not the same as "commercial" art, as I elaborate in chapter 1. Still, as I explain in chapter 2, this is not a primordial difference but one born out of exchange: it is essential to keep in mind the relational nature of the bazaar's vernacularity and the particular form taken by the bazaar as a part of the colonial economy and its post-independence legacy.

Given that this genre of printed images catering primarily to the South Asian market emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, at the peak of colonial rule, it could be described as having been "born in the master's house" (although one of my aims in the first three chapters is to provide a nuance to this narrative of its origins). Not only did it emerge in a physical space under imperial occupation, it also, at least in part, emerged from institutional contexts such as art schools and princely courts that championed visual technologies introduced from Europe: printing, photography, naturalist modeling, and perspective. Despite its initial warm reception by "native" and colonial "master" alike, for the better part of the twentieth century this genre was either reviled or ignored by scholars and critics. Within the industry, too (as I describe in chapter 4,

and as the publisher in my epigraph reveals with some flair), people continue to subscribe to the idea of its inferior status. On aesthetic grounds, it has been condemned for its derivativeness, repetition, vulgar sentimentality, garishness, and crass simplicity of appeal; on nationalist grounds, for being a western-influenced, hybrid, inauthentic, un-"Indian" idiom as opposed to the rich classical and folk "traditions"; and on ideological grounds, for being part of a commercial culture industry that feeds off the credulity and ignorance of "the masses" as opposed to an "autonomous" critical modernist art practice, and in particular for reinscribing patriarchal, feudal, caste-based, and Hindu nationalist structures of representation.

Some scholars have shed the baggage accompanying the labels "calendar art" and "bazaar art," seeking different terms to describe these images. For instance, H. Daniel Smith (1995) has called them "god posters," given his interest in the religious subjects depicted by the overwhelming majority of prints, while Christopher Pinney's (1997a, 1999, 2004) use of the term "chromolithographs" foregrounds the technology of mass reproduction and an earlier, pre-Independence context. I want to argue, however, that the vernacular terms "calendar art" and "bazaar art" should be central to the way in which we conceptualize these forms. My adoption of these terms speaks directly to the central themes in this book, to its methodological and theoretical-rhetorical approach, and from there to its disciplinary affiliations. Thinking about calendars *as* calendars made me interested in the way that calendar images circulate in the bazaar, which in turn meant examining the notion of the "bazaar" itself, and how (as I describe in chapter 5) this arena of circulation has inscribed images in an economy where sacred, commercial, ethical, aesthetic, and libidinal forms of value are closely intermeshed. Just as this avenue of investigation was opened up by paying attention to vernacular categories of description, my analysis relies heavily on interviews to map the discursive fields of art, commerce, religiosity, and visuality within which views about calendar prints are formulated, replete (if I might be permitted the oxymoron) with disjunctures, elisions, excesses, and expressions of lack.[10] Central to my approach to the politics of bazaar images, which I address most explicitly in chapters 6 and 7, is the thesis that power relations are not only maintained but can also be challenged through performative reiteration (Butler 1990a, 1993, 1997a; Case 1990; Sedgwick 1990). Accordingly, holding on to and repeating denigrated categories such as "calendar art" and "bazaar art" in order to confront and reframe their terms of subordination—that is, the terms of modernist self-description—becomes an expropriative move, a means of productively countering the weight of "lack" they carry.

Similarly, I want to hold on to the "art" in "calendar art" in order to ask how that might relate to—and reframe—the "art" in "art history." What happens when ungraspable numbers of lurid, pungent, frequently tatty, often undatable, questionably authored, haphazardly archived, indeterminably representative, hitherto undisciplined Indian bazaar pictures come crowding into the chandeliered baroque halls and immaculate modernist spaces of art history: Do they render "the master's house" unrecognizable? If my own experience of often being thought of as an anthropologist rather than an art historian is anything to go by, there must be ways in which they do. Of course, if Indian bazaar images are seen not as art historical but as anthropological objects, this is largely due to their status as mass culture. It is also in some part because of the disciplinary geopolitics according to which art history has lavished its most granular attention on finely differentiated Euroamerican periods and places ("northern Renaissance" as against "Asian art"), in inverse proportion to anthropology's "other" spaces and times. Bazaar images, in their abject modernity, are doubly peripheral to the spatiotemporal categories of the world according to art history, which in its teleological predilections has tended to terminate the narrative of "Indian art" with the messy inauthenticity engendered by colonialism (although the work of Geeta Kapur, Tapati Guha Thakurta, and Partha Mitter has done a great deal to redress this).

In keeping with its vernacular status, however, calendar art—as I hope to demonstrate, particularly in chapters 3, 4, and 5—has more to do with "art" than art might be willing to admit. But here I must emphasize that despite my enjoyment in acknowledging bazaar artists, and its possible side effects in terms of constituting a countercanon, my aim is not to protest their marginalization by the terms of art history or the art system, or to seek their inclusion within those terms. It is quite the reverse: to see what might happen to art history and *its* terms if they acknowledged the porosity of their interface with realms that aren't quite "art" and aren't quite "history." Here I am concerned in particular with the ways in which calendar images interrupt modernity's narrative of art's supersession of the sacred: a narrative that is deeply embedded in the practice, history, and criticism of art, as well as in modernity's secular self-image. This narrative is itself an index of the mutually constitutive relationship between Europe and its others, for as I suggest in chapter 5 the modern theorization of the aesthetic developed in conjunc-

tion with that of the fetish, which was informed in its turn by trading encounters with "primitive" others cast as anterior within a civilizational telos (see in particular Pietz 1985, 1987).[11]

Underlying my second set of interventions, then, is the issue of the relationship between (the self-image of) art, which sets itself apart from commodities, the sacred, and the ethical arena in general, and image cultures such as that of the bazaar, in which images have a primarily ethical charge, and which does not claim such clear distinctions between the arenas of commerce and the sacred. This coexistence of disjunct frames of image efficacy and value has methodological ramifications, which I seek to explore through my analysis. In attending to the networks in which calendar prints circulate, I attempt to think together their representational or visually signifying aspects and their efficacy in their capacity as objects: as sacred icons, commodities, gifts, items of ritual exchange, and items of libidinal investment, or "fetishes." Mass-cultural forms such as calendar art demand a mode of analysis that can address the levels of signification mobilized by multiplicity, repetition, and circulation, while icons—again, like calendar art—demand attention to forms of auratic objecthood that do not stem from authorial originality but from performative practices in the realms of circulation and reception. Such images require something more than textual readings that treat them as static and singular, with successive iterations of the "same" image collapsing into the "original." By addressing the corporeal aspects of images and of the ways in which people engage with them, I seek to provide a processual account of their power and efficacy. Here I deploy a reproductive rather than productive model of mimesis, which aims to capture the differences engendered through reiteration.

For many the idea of "visual culture," drawing heavily on anthropology, cultural studies, and film and/or media studies, has represented the kiss of either life or death for art history (see, for instance, Bryson, Holly, and Moxey 1994; Crow 1996; Jay 1996; Mirzoeff 1999). However, despite—or, rather, because of—my allegiances to a certain (primarily British/Australian) strand of cultural studies and my use of anthropological concepts and methods such as "ethnographic" interviews, my approach here also seeks to expand and refine the understanding of what "visual culture" entails. For a start, one of my aims is to show how bazaar prints problematize the very notion of visuality as the definitive modality of the image. My consistent use of the word "image" rather than "visual" does not, therefore, signal the dematerialized virtuality implied in formulations of visual culture that address the prevalence of digital technologies in a postmodern age. On the contrary, it is an attempt to speak to those aspects of objecthood that are often seen as peripheral, if not irrelevant, to "the sort of interest the picture really has for us" (Baxandall 1985, 6; see epigraph). While the notion of visuality in "visual culture" already considers the corporeality of the viewer and the multiple sensory modes of engaging with images, it has had relatively little to say about the corporeality of the image itself. Art history, in contrast, has had a great deal to say about the corporeality of images, but these descriptions have tended to privilege their formal expressive characteristics, or their location within a specific context, over significances generated through their movement and temporality, their circulation and exchange, their rhythms and orchestrations, their enfolding into habit and ritual (for an exemplary text that does address the latter aspects, see Asendorf 1993).

In addition, "visual culture" is often deployed as a rubric for everything outside the purview of the "fine art" system: popular or mass culture and the visual phenomena pervading everyday life, and what might be called non-Western systems of image making. Calendar art is patently both (although I will argue in chapter 4 that it also problematizes the mapping of aesthetic onto social distinction, affecting the very terms on which high culture is distinguished from low). However, as I have already suggested, in both of these capacities (though not in all contexts) calendar art has had, and continues to have, a relationship with the "art" against which "visual culture" is defined. "Fine art" is part of the genealogy of calendar art, and to this extent calendar art can be seen as part of a wider history of art—even though, like even the most canonical objects of art history, it is not fully containable within the terms of the fine art system. To recognize these leaky interactions across what might otherwise be seen as disconnected, hermetically sealed cultural worlds is to problematize the charge of cultural relativism that is often leveled against visual culture, along with that of populism (see, for instance, Crow 1996, 34–36; Jay 1996, 44), as well as visual culture's oppositional relation to art history. In other words, designating "visual culture" as a category separate from art history forecloses the opportunity for a reevaluation of the terms of art history itself.

My final point about visual culture also relates to the problem of working with loaded categories of analysis such as the "visual": in this case, "the subject" itself. Visual culture has been positioned as "a tactic with which to study the genealogy . . . of postmodern everyday life from the point of view of the consumer, rather than the producer" (Mirzoeff 1999, 3). Similarly, albeit in criticism of this approach, a survey of opinions on visual culture in the influential journal *October* addressed the suggestion that visual

studies, through its putative disinterest in the material conditions of production in specific media, was "helping, in its own modest, academic way, to produce subjects for the next stage of globalized capital" ("Visual Culture Questionnaire" 1996, 25). Leaving aside the universalist, teleological underpinnings of both of these positions, they both address visual culture's attempt to attend to subjective modes largely downplayed by art history: "consumption" or "reception" rather than "production." Tracing the various forms of efficacy of bazaar images suggests that the production of subjectivity and the genealogy of everyday life are neither solely a matter of the "production" or the "consumption" of objects/images, nor of both thought together, but also of their circulation (if indeed it is possible to make such a clear distinction between these arenas in the first place: see Deleuze and Guattari 1977). In part, my foregrounding of the *networks* inscribed by calendar prints through their production, distribution, and use takes up Georg Simmel's suggestion, as elaborated by Arjun Appadurai, that value emanates from the arena of exchange (Appadurai 1986, 4). But it also proceeds on the intuition that taking an object-centered (rather than properly ethnographic) approach might help to address the inconsistencies, disjunctures, and motilities *within* "the subject" or "culture." Furthermore, it would address those processes and forms of efficacy located not solely within individual "agents" but also in a trans-subjective arena, in an interstitial realm between and across subjects and objects (or even, far more tenuously, in abjection). In this respect, then, if "reception" refers to the engagements of "end-users" with images on the model of consumption, this is not a book about "reception"; my aim, however, is to work with a more expansive notion of reception that addresses the wider fields of significance of images generated through every stage of their careers.

POSTCOLONIAL GRANULARITY

Thinking in terms of the various overlapping networks traced by the object offers the possibility of exploring questions of value, efficacy, and power without relying too heavily on the much critiqued fictions of either the transcendental sovereign subject or the subject of historical or structural determination. It would promise instead to address more directly the multiplicity of fields of power traversing the subject, as well as the processual modalities of subjecthood emanating from the transformative and/or reconstitutive encounters between bodies, be they objects, images, or living beings, mortal or divine (for one critique of the "continuist narrative of identity," see Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 20–21).

At stake here is the recognition of modes of political subjectivity and political processes that are not reducible to participation in "civil society" in the bourgeois-liberal sense (to take up Partha Chatterjee's distinction between the delimited arena of civil society and a wider, more inclusive notion of "political society"; Chatterjee 1997). Also at stake is the related issue of characterizing the subjects and processes of capital in a manner that does not assume the homogeneity of moral and political economies, albeit within a regnant order of global capitalism. As we will see, the plural genealogies of bazaar art come together in ways that show how mass culture and commodification—and indeed "capitalism" itself—have unfolded as much through protean articulations with varying social formations and political, symbolic, and moral economies as they have through formal attempts to impose a homogeneous "globalized" code of conduct in the marketplace. The calendar image, as commodity, business gift, sacred object, decoration, advertisement, keeper of secular and sacred time, and commuter on pan-national, transnational, and varyingly "local" circuits, is an index par excellence of the polymorphous intimacies between capital, formal and informal institutional arrangements, and multiple sites and registers of identity formation.

The third intervention this book seeks to make, therefore, is to steer a path between the "cultural imperialism" thesis and overly romantic valorizations of local resistances to the spread of capital. Indeed, I contend that the institution and maintenance of disjunct yet coexisting worlds is integral to capitalist expansion. Here I describe how the bazaar formation can be seen as a site for what I want to call the vernacularization of capitalism. I argue that processes of globalization, including colonialism, have depended on mobilizing the differentials between "formal" and "informal"—or what I prefer to call vernacular—economies. So while these processes foster homogeneity in some respects (as the cultural imperialism thesis would have it), in others they necessitate the continued coexistence of the disjunct worlds that postcolonial, globalized subjects must negotiate. While this analysis is grounded in the Indian context, to the extent that the postcolonial condition is not geographically confined to the postcolonies it should also be pertinent to thinking about the cultures of capitalism more generally.[12]

My method in tracing these productive differentials between economies is primarily ethnographic, taking its main impetus from the contestations, partial adoptions, reconfigurations, and elisions of bourgeois-liberal formulations by those using, producing, and circulating popular images in late-twentieth-century India (see in particular chapter 4).[13] Here areas of stress that might from one point of view appear as disjunctures and

"failures" in the postcolonial public sphere and everyday life become indices of the complex coexistence between the genealogies of a colonially introduced modernity and of vernacular realms of experience that stand in a fraught relation to notions of primordial cultural identity. My approach here takes its cue from the ongoing scholarship on India that has sought to track the postcolonial unraveling and reformulation of a number of modernist categories: nationalism (Chatterjee 1986), culture (Dhareshwar 1995b), historicism (Chakrabarty 2000), art (Guha Thakurta 1992), development (Gupta 1998), the public sphere (Freitag 1991a, 1991b), civil society (Chatterjee 1997), scientific reason (Prakash 1999), childhood (Kumar 2000), and aging (Cohen 1998). I see this as a second moment of postcolonial studies, which builds on critiques of colonial constellations of power, knowledge, and desire in order to describe how the very categories available for thinking and operating within postcolonial modernity continually reinscribe its alterity.

This project of mapping postcolonial modernity in its non-self-identity is not quite the same as those strands of postcolonial studies, now relatively well-represented in the transnational academy, whose preoccupation is with critiques of Orientalism and narratives of the colonial moment, or with discourses of hybridity and inter- or transculturalism framed by multicultural identity politics. To the extent that these latter versions of postcolonialism can work at a performative level to recenter colonizing subjects, metropolitan locations, or the anteriority of "India" at the expense of engaging with the messiness of the postcolonial present in postcolonized spaces, such as modern India, they can serve to reinstitutionalize colonial power relations within the academy.[14] In one sense the distinction I am making simply has to do with the objects of study. But this difference in focus translates into a matter of *interest*, in all its senses. This interest acquires its force in the illocutionary register of performance, concretized at the institutional sites of knowledge production: it is a matter of what forms of knowing, belonging, and being in the world are affirmed, enhanced, perpetuated, made possible, or denied, by whom and for whom. One general example here is the impact of postcolonial studies on the teaching of literature: even as English departments were revitalized in the 1980s and 1990s, revising their canon to include translations and writing in English from the postcolonies, programs in Hindi language and literature dwindled and in some cases (such as at the University of Sydney) disappeared altogether. Again, as this instance illustrates, the aim here is not to endorse a nativist valorization of location but to address vernacular forms of knowledge that may or may not be associated with location, and are sites for minoritarian potentials.

This is not to deny that understandings of colonialism and of multicultural identity politics—that is, of metropolitan formations—are *also* crucial to an engagement with postcolonial modernity. Colonial and neocolonial forms of knowledge and institutional structures are inextricably folded into contemporary everyday life and self-reflexivity in the postcolonies, as are the forces brought into play by transnational networks (Appadurai 1996). This imbrication renders futile nativist attempts to "re"-claim precolonial or "local" "tradition" and pushes postcolonial specificity toward more elusive fragments and fault lines. Equally, alternative formulations of postcolonial modernity must continue to be informed by the many contestations of, and variations on, bourgeois modernity from within "Europe" or the "West"—including postmodern and poststructuralist critiques, with their reanimation of counterhegemonic philosophical traditions. What is more, as I myself argue in chapter 5, demonstrating how the postcolonial arena renders modernist categories inconsistent—even as they continue to have social and institutional force—cannot but serve to clarify how bourgeois modernity's self-image has disavowed its own constitutive heterogeneities.

However, it is only at a certain level of descriptive granularity or detail that "postcolonial difference"—and the differences *within* that overarching category—make their presence felt, resisting existing theoretical frames. I see this as the strength of the ethnographic approach, as a process of description that aims to estrange its own terms of analysis in productive ways. A key aspect of this act of description is the identification and acknowledgment of various putatively a-modern, aberrant, lacking, backward, or contradictory forms of everyday experience. The performative recognition—not to mention the textual sanction—of lived experience and memory at this level of granularity is accompanied by a particular kind of enjoyment, one that I sense in myself when reading the literature on and from India that plays back, without exoticism or irony, familiar terms that recognizably conjure very specific ways of being in the *modern* world: *mastipan*, a certain kind of enjoyment (Kumar 1988); *bazaar*, a certain kind of economic organization (R. Ray 1992); *adda*, a certain kind of social gathering (Chakrabarty 2000); *satthhiaana*, a certain kind of ageing (Cohen 1998). This is not the same as saying that all forms of postcolonial experience deserve to be affirmed or celebrated: I could add to my list communalism, a certain kind of social conflict (Pandey 1990); riots, a certain kind of crowd violence (Das 1990); and *sati*, a certain kind of murder (L. Mani 1998). What is enjoyable is the rare resonance between formal academic or institutional knowledge and forms of experience hitherto unacknowledged in such "official" domains (even as this reso-

nance must also provoke a critical analysis of how and why the ideological ground might have shifted to enable such an acknowledgment). There is also an enjoyment in being relieved of the guilt of inauthenticity through the further recognition that the specificity of these forms of experience lies not in their "traditional" consistency, purity, and self-presence but in their entanglements and (dis)identifications with other, modernist, modes of modernity.

It is this performative vein of enjoyment in granular description, in its difficult difference and not-quite-sameness, that I hope to work as I examine the practices and discourses of artists, printers, publishers, and agents in the calendar industry and outline a genealogy of bazaar images in their various contexts of circulation. Given, however, that my account inhabits the same disjunctive spaces as its subject, it remains vulnerable to internal contradictions—such as its professed distance from the logic of canonization even as it performatively constitutes a countercanon. Even as my analysis problematizes the institution of authorship, it indulges in the pleasures of saying and hearing largely unacknowledged names in the proper places of art and academe, and of seeing them in print: not just Raja Ravi Varma and M. V. Dhurandhar but also Aras, Courtallam, Mulgaonkar, Narottamnarayan, Nirmala, S. M. Pandit, Kondiah Raju, Rangroop, Rastogi, Sapar, Sardar, Shaikh, Indra and B. G. Sharma, Singhal; not just Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, and Lahore but also Sivakasi, Nathdwara, Gulbarga, Kolhapur, Gorakhpur, Nagpur, Meerut.

"... JUST AN IMAGE"

In looking at calendar art as a network inscribed by reiterative flows of objects and people, I have chosen to concentrate on its pan-national aspect rather than exploring a particular region, tradition, subgenre, or theme (here my approach differs from that of Guha Thakurta 1991; Inglis 1995; McLeod 1991; or Uberoi 1990). My main focus, therefore, is on the centralized production and distribution system that, since the 1960s, has converged on the small town of Sivakasi in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. However, I cannot pretend to offer a definitive description of what is an extraordinarily extensive and intensive, complex, mostly informal, and (therefore) rapidly mutating system. The "Bengali market," for instance, is a huge regional market (also catered to by Sivakasi), which I do not address in any detail, as is the case with other, smaller segments, such as the locally produced calendars for "Muslim" markets. My attempt here can only be to provide a broad sense of the lineaments of this system, with Sivakasi as a major node from which I map a few pathways in thinking about the interpenetrating webs of circulation of calendar prints. My hope is that this account might generate some interest in the many other pathways, connections, and genealogies that remain unexplored.

The first section of the book traces a genealogy of calendar art in relation to its commercial contexts. Chapter 1 ("Vernacularizing Capitalism: Sivakasi and Its Circuits") starts in the present with the printing industry based in Sivakasi, describing its organization as the major centralized site for the production of calendars and prints, which are distributed pan-nationally through an extensive and intensive network of publishers and mobile agents. I outline how this constitutes a parallel realm of image production not only to fine art and folk art or craft but also to the largely English-medium arena of agency advertising: it is primarily a vernacular arena of family businesses whose ethos has been quite distinct from the corporate model adopted by multinationals with a majority Indian ownership and state-run enterprises. While both secular and religious nationalisms work with transcendent ideas of nation based on an essential cultural commonality, the networks of the calendar industry inscribe an intervernacular arena that is able to work both with and across religious, communitarian, and linguistic differences. In this context the networks of circulation of images often function in a performative register to counteract representational messages inscribed within the picture frame.

Chapter 2 ("When the Gods Go to Market") situates the genealogy of this vernacular commercial realm in the colonial "bazaar": the "informal" or "indigenous" sector of the economy delineated by the historians Christopher Bayly (1983), Anand Yang (1998), and Rajat Kanta Ray (1984). Rather than seeing the bazaar as evidence of continuity with a precolonial Indian "proto-capitalism," I approach it in terms of the specific form it acquired under colonial rule. Here I examine how the deterritorializing movements engendered by colonial trade, conquest, and missionary activity configured the bazaar as an arena for producing and circulating images, and how these nomadisms registered in the images themselves. I then describe the reterritorializing movement whereby images were harnessed toward defining or actualizing a proto-nationalist vernacular "cultural" domain in the colonial period up until the 1920s. In this context I discuss the artist and print entrepreneur Raja Ravi Varma, reading his lithographs not just as pictorial actualizations of a nationalist myth of origin but also as one of the first mass-manufactured "Indian" commodities, objects that traced the two-way traffic between the colonial public sphere and the bazaar.

Chapter 3 ("Naturalizing the Popular") continues the chronological trace of images

in the commodity realm, positioning calendar art in relation to other twentieth-century culture industries such as the cinema and illustrated magazines as well as to commodity aesthetics as such: labels, packaging, and advertising. Against accounts of Indian popular aesthetics that see this as an iconic realm distinct from and resistant to Western canons of naturalism and realism, I argue for a more historically informed understanding of the "popular," which acknowledges its constitution via the commodity realm and its appropriation of new image-making techniques. I suggest that naturalism and other pictorial technologies served to reconfigure or recontextualize existing forms and thereby expand the domain of commodity address, bringing hitherto segregated constituencies into a common arena of consumption and thereby instituting new imagined social configurations. However, these "imagined communities" instituted via "print capitalism" belie Benedict Anderson's predication of nationalism on a post-sacred scenario (Anderson 1991). This chapter describes some of the many ways in which modern, commercial forms of religious and mythological imagery became a primary site for the production and reconfiguration of various forms of identity, including the national.

The next section, "Economy," addresses the frames of value in which bazaar images circulate, examining what the continued presence of religiosity in the public arena has meant for the trajectory of post-Enlightenment aesthetics in the postcolony. In chapter 4 ("The Sacred Icon in the Age of the Work of Art and Mechanical Reproduction") I rely substantially on interviews to examine how discourses and practices of the aesthetic have been adopted but in a contradictory, disjunctive fashion. For instance, people in the calendar industry say that calendar icons are meant for the rural, uneducated masses even as they themselves pray to them every day; artists sign their names to paintings even though customers do not choose images according to the artist but according to the subject; calendar artists paint gods and goddesses and say that what they are doing is "realism." These disjunctures problematize key categories in post-Enlightenment discourses of aesthetic value: artistic judgment and taste; autonomy as opposed to commercial and other forms of interest; authorship and originality. In doing so they provide clues as to the heterogeneous frames of value that are brought to bear on, and are reinforced by, these images. Chapter 5 ("The Circulation of Images and the Embodiment of Value") seeks to specify the terms of negotiation between the different moral and libidinal economies within which bazaar images circulate. Here I relate post-Enlightenment ideas about the image to a moral economy where value is seen as deriving from production, while images in the devotional-cum-commercial ethos of the bazaar emanate from a moral economy where value is based in circulation and exchange. In this context I revisit the notion of the fetish—one of the few concepts that speaks to the nomadism or animation of images as objects, as well as to corporeal engagements with them—looking at the significance of its denigration in bourgeois moral economy.

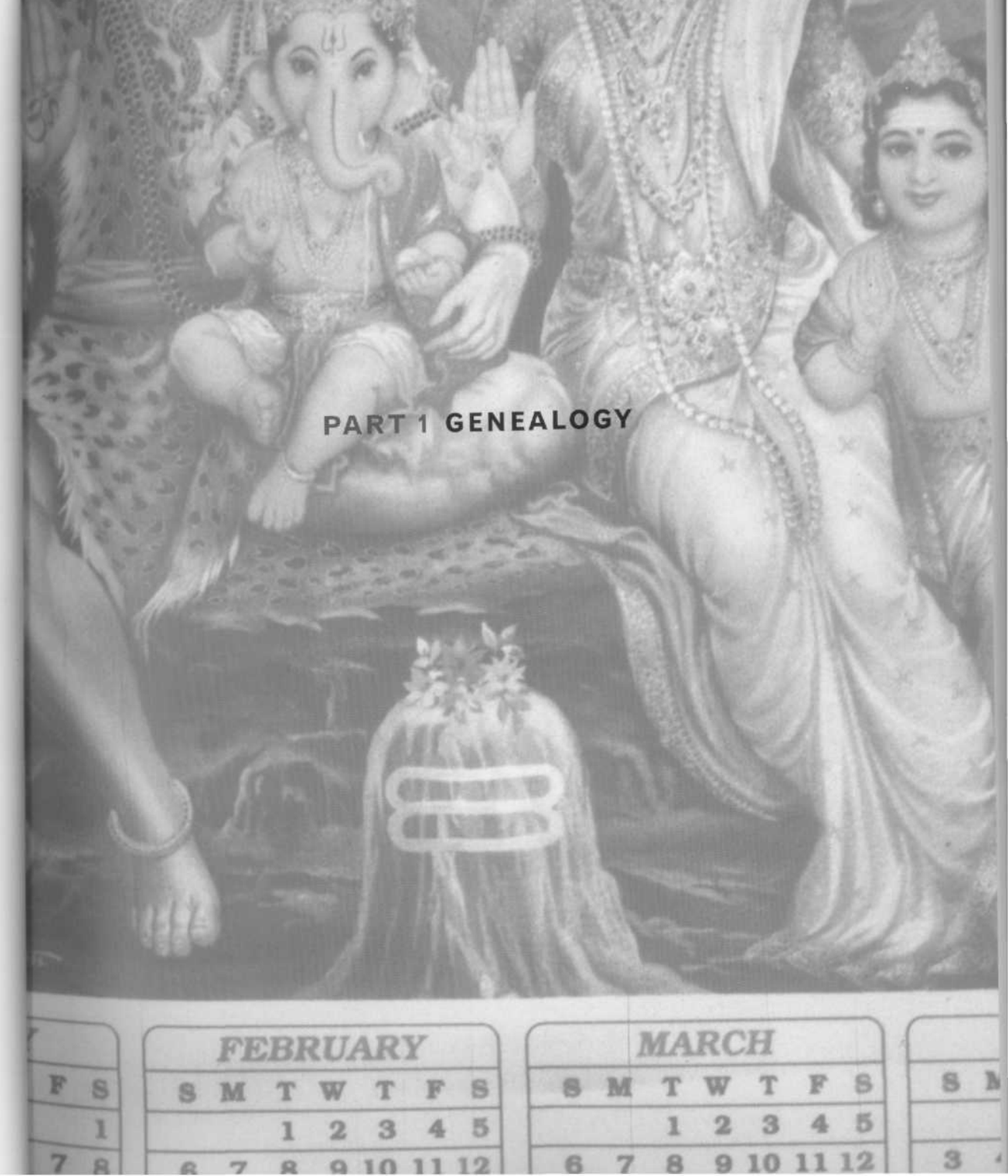
The last section, "Efficacy," seeks to develop an approach to the politics of images that takes into account the trans-subjective arenas in which images circulate, problematizing "reception" studies that primarily focus on the responses of individual subjects. Chapter 6 ("The Efficacious Image and the Sacralization of Modernity") looks at the highly mediated relationship between mass-cultural images and the political arena, and the notions of efficacy that are mobilized in relation to public images—including the idea of auspiciousness and its "secular" equivalents. I explore how the very publicness and mass mediatedness of an image gives it an added valency for its viewers, through their awareness that the image is exposed to a public gaze—or rather, to the gaze of an other or others imagined in historically specific ways. Here I discuss the ways in which not just the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Shiv Sena but also the avowedly secular Congress Party sought moral legitimation for their rule by recourse to the ethical framework of the bazaar.

Chapter 7 ("Flexing the Canon") is an experiment in applying the approach to images outlined above to the writing of cultural critique. Here I revisit an earlier set of debates around the emergence of a new figure in calendar art, that of the god Ram in a muscular, violent form, with the resurgence of a militant Hindu nationalism in the late 1980s. What I both argue and try to demonstrate is that what is required from critique in this context is not so much the condemnation or censorship of particular kinds of images, which chiefly serves to shore up their power and efficacy, but a creative, expropriative reframing within the context of alternative narratives.

My conclusion offers some thoughts about how the analysis of calendar art might illuminate the cultural aspects of globalization in post-liberalization India. It also considers how such an analysis might be relevant for thinking about art history, critique, and practice, present and future.

If one organizing principle of my narrative is its object-centeredness, another is to remain mindful of the chasm between the work of the image and the work of language (and the academic text in particular), allowing my argument about the performative aspects of the image to inform the performative aspects of the book itself. Accordingly, the images are not intended as illustrations as such but constitute a parallel thread to the dis-

cussion, even as they maintain a resonance with what is being said within the text. If this at times produces an effect of disjuncture, this is an invitation to apprehend the possible encounters with the image not only within the registers and contexts that I describe, but also in others that I do not. It is also a way of gesturing, from within the harnessing of images to one particular narrative, toward the heterogeneity of the image: its irreducibility to a visuality mediated exclusively by language. Within the text, too, I somewhat polemically maintain a relative abstinence from close formal analyses, although it would be absurd to abandon this procedure altogether. As with my substitution of "image" for "visual," keeping "reading" in abeyance is an experiment in slowing down what are often all too hasty links between what images seem to be saying, what they mean, and what they do.



NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. The title of the next section alludes to Jean-Luc Godard's famous saying, "Not a just image, just an image" ("Pas une image juste, juste une image"; a more accurate translation of "juste" in the first instance would be "correct" rather than "just"); Godard quoted by Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze 1995, 38). "[A] 'just image' is an image that exactly corresponds to what it is taken to represent, but if we take images as 'just images' we see them precisely as images, rather than correct or incorrect representations of anything" (translator's note: Deleuze 1995, note 1, 190).
2. "A case of differend between two parties takes place when the 'regulation' of the conflict that opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties while the wrong suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom. . . . The differend is signalled by this inability to prove. The one who lodges a complaint is heard, but the one who is a victim, and who is perhaps the same one, is reduced to silence" (Lyotard 1988, 9–10). Gayatri Spivak's famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Spivak 1988) can be seen as elaborating on this formulation.
3. Anand Patwardhan, personal communication via email, 2001.
4. For the colonial administration, managing racial/cultural difference (the two were typically conflated) meant that the public sphere to which it addressed itself could not simply take on the terms of the bourgeois public sphere in Europe, as described by Jürgen Habermas (Habermas 1989, 1974). Habermas's neo-Kantian formulation has been subject to criticisms on several fronts (including by Habermas himself). However, for my purposes its valency does not lie in its status as an accurate empirical account but in its status as a normative framework for European modernity's self-descriptions, from which modes of publicness in the postcolonial nation-state (and indeed in the centers of colonial power) can be seen to depart—in both senses, as beginning and as divergence.
5. This is most clearly evident in the work of Jean Baudrillard, whose cool tone barely contains its keening for the real.
6. My use of the term "ethical" relates to the ethos as an arena where moral economies are put into performative practice: I elaborate on this further in chapter 5.
7. For a succinct discussion of the problems with notions of indigenousness, see Gupta 1998, 18–20.

8. These "degrees of vernacularity" are akin (though opposite in desirability) to the "degrees of whiteness" that Ghassan Hage elaborates in relation to minorities in multicultural Australia (Hage 1998), insightfully describing the processual cultural gradient between the categories of "white" and "black" otherwise seen as binary racial opposites. "Whiteness" here is a marker not just of race but of cultural-political dominance and national belonging.
9. This formulation of genre is primarily informed by film studies: see Gledhill 1985; Neale 1980; Stam 2000.
10. As with all ethnographic encounters, my own deployment of these interviews carries the danger of subjugating these "vernacular" accounts to an academic "master" narrative. Here I can only invoke Deleuze's reading of the Spinozan notion of ethical encounters: every encounter is necessarily criss-crossed by power relations, but the question is whether the resultant force amplifies the productive, "joyful" forces in the bodies involved or diminishes their capacities (Deleuze 1988, 27–28).
11. Of course, art history has analyzed and acknowledged its deep complicity in the teleological project of European modernism. It has also been interested in questions of mass reproduction, commodification, and the wider networks in which images circulate ("visual culture" addresses these issues among others), and in critiques of ocularcentric visuality and the forms of modern subjectivity it inscribes. But art history has been one of the slower disciplines to actualize the radical potential of these challenges in its institutional practices, probably because of its close articulation—particularly ironic given the putative autonomy of the art objects on which it is centered—with the heavy institutional machinery of art markets, publishing, museums, and other culture and heritage organizations, and *their* continuing investments in civilizational narratives and notions of auratic originality, authorial genius, uniqueness, and representational expressivity.
12. My starting point is "India" rather than "South Asia," given that the latter category tends to ignore the differential histories of state-formation in the region over at least the past fifty years.
13. My account is largely based on interviews with artists, publishers, printers, and consumers, and firsthand observation of various aspects of the industry. Field research was conducted between 1994 and 2001; I also build on work I did in 1991–92 for my master's dissertation (K. Jain 1992, published 1995). This, in its turn, built on eight years of participant observation, as it were, of the visual field in India, both as a student of visual communication and as a design professional. The little quantitative information I gleaned about this largely informal industry is too inaccurate and conflicting to use, so any estimates of numbers must be seen as little more than educated guesswork: the process of finding—or generating—accurate quantitative data would have been disproportionate to the aims of my project. For the same reason, pre-twentieth-century historical data is mostly from secondary sources.
14. Of course this is not necessarily so: a case in point was the untiring political work of Edward Said, who was the first to insist that he was not a scholar of the Middle East (for after all, Orientalism is about the Western imperial imaginary), but who did not cease to engage publicly with its contemporary condition.