



The Irrelevance of Empire: Visual Politics and the Working of *Beast and Man in India*

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Abstract

The study of visual politics enables competing idioms of image and text to address common concerns, to backchat and to quarrel bitterly in silence as in speech. Lockwood Kipling's 1891 text, *Beast and Man in India* uses commentary and illustration to speculate on colonial orthodoxies of governance and national identity. He develops his argument in response to multiple pressures. The immediate motive is to correct the interpretation of India that the Oxford Orientalists offer. His long-standing professional commitment is to outline an Indian aesthetic countering the contemporary official view, with which he engages guardedly. Finally, there are the early stirrings of nationalism on which he speculates with self-avowed scepticism and anxiety. Within a larger context, JLK (the signature Lockwood Kipling uses) compares the behaviour of the British industrial underclass with that of the Indian rural poor. He examines the way in which a new class in India is beginning to develop, the product—he believes—of a clerkly if irrelevant education and nascent nationalism. JLK engages with these emerging groups in a way that is unsound to straitjacket as either conservative or liberal because he tries to think through the many contradictions that are at work. He tips his hat to diverse authorities but remains bleakly realistic about the irrelevance of the empire, the romanticising of rural India that administrators and nationalists claim as their fiefdom and the complex aspirations that shape the verbal and visual idiom. *Beast and Man in India* embodies the contradictory impulses of its author, its time, its readers and subjects and its methods of representation. Today, digital archiving brings the text out of antiquarian reading-rooms into the dubious democracy of cyberspace. Text and image can cut loose from each other. A reader can construct and study a fresh genealogy of an image by comparing illustrations without necessarily referring to the framing literary argument. It is also possible to reconstitute images at will. These kinds of freedom are absent from the original configuration of image and text. What happens when the politics of commentary clashes with the politics of illustration? What critical consequences result when readers hold on to one idiom and gloss over the other?

Keywords: Visual politics, colonial orthodoxies, digital archiving.

A large claim made for the study of visuality within popular culture suggests that the discipline enables its students to redefine their own selves, and the identities of the collectives—families, communities and nation-states—that they constitute and shape. “Acts of seeing become acts of knowing as viewers/ consumers imput new meanings to familiar

images. Such agency enables a civil society to grapple with change, to process change through indigenous sociologies of knowledge.... The visual realm is very often a critical component in this process in South Asian modernity” (Freitag 2003: 366) Two significant lines of inquiry into the politics of visual culture follow from this fundamental principle. One possibility is a grand narrative of how a single medium constructs a historical moment. The other is the give-and-take of micro-conversations across texts and media to understand the way in which a historical phase develops. Often this happens from a vantage point far removed from its period of formation. This latter method highlights embarrassment, inconsistency and ignorance while it goes on its way, rather as an ordinary conversation might. It has little of the neatness of its alternative, but those who engage in it can hope for more excitement. This article therefore looks at selected micro-narratives to address two concerns. It tries to understand how Lockwood Kipling plays visual and literary narrative against each other to open up areas in nineteenth-century India that his contemporaries were unable or unwilling to see. It also looks to assess the ways in which—in today’s world of free and seemingly accessible digital texts—such exchanges across literary and visual frontiers actually work. In both cases, JLK’s work functions as a critical prism. It will help to position his world and then to study our own.

Received wisdom does not lead us to rate JLK highly. An early memoir—written by old school friend—sentimentally attributes Rudyard Kipling’s inwardness with India to JLK’s influence. “Native life, so staggering and bewildering and seemingly profound became like an open book—and all in the shortest time possible [owing to JLK’s guidance] so that [Rudyard Kipling’s] genius preserved all its pertness, its élan, its dash, its joy of discovery and creation” (Beresford 1936: 317). The anecdotal quality of the memoir, however, does not make it a helpful critical resource. A fulsome tribute from a young acquaintance of JLK has a similar effect. “[JLK] would... pour his kindly wisdom into my callow mind.... When I think of the lines, ‘His little, nameless unremembered acts of kindness and of love,’ I think of wise and gentle John Lockwood Kipling” (Lawrence 1928: 18). Recent biographies take us a little further as they attempt to locate JLK on the colonial grid. The following description is a good example of this method. “[JLK’s] museum stood in a broad avenue between the whitewashed walls of the European quarter and the cobbled lanes of the ancient Indian walled city of Lahore: opposite it was the Kipling family’s bungalow in a compound of its own—therefore neither in the European nor the native quarter” (Adams 2005: 23). While this opens up a perspective on JLK’s work in terms of political location, it does not move towards a conclusion supported by textual or material evidence. It suggests an interesting line of inquiry but does not proceed with it. In contrast, JLK’s critics are specific and scathing. Perhaps the most comprehensive dismissal he receives is because of the way his work facilitates the construction of an anachronistic imperial persona “...Confusion is [inherent in his work] and is finally, the one thing that typifies the narratives of empire and Englishness... identified in turn-of-the-century imperialism: increasingly devoted to the labour of fabricating English identity” (Baucom 1999: 85–86).

Against such an attack, more general efforts to recognize JLK’s role as a theorist of a new kind of relationship between art and an emerging national identity pale into insignificance. Even when cultural historians make the effort to think through JLK’s critical achievement, they tend to focus on his gallant defence of Indian design rather than the spirited advances he makes in visual and political practice. From this perspective, he appears a minor if valuable figure in a closed chapter of imperial history. “Most remarkably, he opposed the tide of Victorian imperialism and its concomitant attitudes of cultural superiority and preserved the bases of native handicrafts against the often debilitating effects of misguided and wholly commercially oriented government policies” (Tarapor 1980: 54–55).

Moreover, attempts to study JLK as one of a group of art theorists usually bracket him with the revivalists—those who seek to restore a regressive and obscurantist past. Such writers, we hear, were “confident that they were shoring up the British Raj by shoring up India's artistic, social, and political traditions: that is, their authentic India, in contrast to the India of cities, factories, and machines” (Hoffenberg 2004: 194). From this position to the conclusion that JLK remains an apologist for the empire is but a step. When his co-workers like John Griffith come in for recognition in their attempt to apply “Victorian academic traditions” (Llewellyn 1980: 368) to Indian industrial design, JLK qualifies only for a token acknowledgement. Even at best, it is difficult to distinguish between JLK the curator and JLK the archival entry. Both approaches, though otherwise dissimilar, have in common their insistence that JLK's strategies of visuality relate to colonial orthodoxies alone. In contrast, I wish to use this article to demonstrate—through the self-standing 1891 text *Beast and Man in India*—that JLK's tactical deployment of narrative and image is of value when one wants to think through visual culture and hierarchies of power even today.

It may be a good idea to begin by trying to establish the fractured motives that lead up to this illustrated commentary. The immediate purpose is the need JLK feels to inform the stay-at-home reading public in Britain that daily life in India has none of the hallowed philosophy of which Max Mueller and the Oxford Orientalists write. Such a public insists, moreover, that the recruits they send out to administer India read texts that are at once alien to their inherited way of life and unhelpful to their work as government servants. “...books like the *Prem Sagar* and other mythological stories are given as Hindi lesson books to subalterns and others who wish to pass examinations in the vernacular” (JLK 1891:113). The domestic readership needs a reminder that—in common with all systems of belief—the religions of India such as Hinduism have “decay inherent in [their systems] and [their] history is one long chronicle of protest, dissent, and change” (JLK 1891: 7). *Beast and Man in India*, will, JLK thinks, function as such a corrective. He believes that the text will reveal a civilization that is habitually cruel to its animals, whether in the daily grind of work in the field and on the road, or in the ritual slaughter that worship requires. Indeed, it is necessary if humiliating, to admit at the outset that the text functions continually on the level of diatribe, directed toward India, “a nation which [is] not a nation” (JLK 1891: 105) largely because it has people who are yet to develop into citizens with social and civic responsibilities.

Available biographical evidence does not reveal whether JLK attempted to publish in India before choosing a London-based publisher. However, it is possible to suggest two good reasons for this choice. Administratively, London was the metropolis that determined colonial policy. JLK, who had worked as an educationist and artist with administrators throughout his career would have been aware of this. All major artistic and industrial projects needed bureaucratic and financial clearances from policymakers based in London if they were to take root in India. In the process of colonial knowledge-production, London continued to be the institutional never-centre for the empire. Specifically, London was home to *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, begun by the Government of India. This periodical sought to manage and fund a course of design—in both the fine arts and in industry—throughout South Asia, as the following account indicates.

.... the publication complemented art schools, exhibitions, museums, and direct trade in defining and bringing traditional Indian art and artists to a wider audience and, in doing so, strengthened the position of such art's advocates, both inside and outside of government circles. Among those key figures were John Lockwood Kipling (1837–1911) and his nemesis, Sir George M. Birdwood (1832–1917)... who duelled within and outside of the leather covers of the Journal. [Other] authors and commentators included the Anglo-Indian officials, critics, and art school administrators who were shifting the popular perceptions of Indian art and using artistic

productions as part of their social and economic rebuilding of British India... (Hoffenberg 2004: 192–93).

At this point, however, JLK's second and more complicated motive emerges. He realizes that responsibility cuts both ways, and that there is little to put in the hands of an Indian reading public by way of representations of their own animal-life. He comes to realize that there is a serious gap in the education of the Indian reading public as well:

The native of India is but now beginning to learn to care for accurate statements of fact, whether in a literary, scientific, or artistic sense. The Education Department, which, after all is only the stress of the time brought to a point, and represents the will of the upper classes of the people as much as that of their British fellow-subjects, is determined that this reproach shall be removed, and imports the illustrated lesson-books and wall-pictures of Western schools. In all that concerns the well-being of animals and people, improved knowledge cannot but do good, but the extinction of the [fabled animals] of romance... will not be accomplished without regrets (JLK 1981: 328).

In other words, JLK believes that the Indian reading public has requirements that he and his contemporaries need to consider. This new Indian readership comprises youngsters to whom the government needs to impart a new kind of education. Such a public needs an innovative textbook that will set out a history of representation of animal life that is original and relevant in two ways. The history needs to chronicle Indian rather than European experiences. It also needs to illustrate contemporary times and not reproduce the fabled past of romance. Clearly, JLK believes that education is a matter of both literary and visual narratives. Indian students need a text to which they can relate, and in which they can take legitimate national pride because it uses Indian artistic traditions, methods and motifs to depict a reality that is close to their lived experience. He dismisses the legacy of “boulevard orientalism” (JLK 1981: 292) in literature and illustration because it prioritizes the fantastic and exotic at the expense of the familiar. The sub-title of JLK's text “a popular sketch of Indian animals in their relations with the people”, reveals much that is important to him in his project. It is popular in the sense that it deals with the ordinary work that falls to the lot of animals and their keepers in India.

It is also important to JLK that he protect his work from the class stranglehold that seems to him to bedevil writing in both Britain and India. He often makes some space in his narrative for working-class people. JLK tries to discern some commonality—however fugitive—between the lives of factory workers in Britain and Indian artisans. When discussing their common love for caged birds, for instance, he says, “... there is a family likeness among bird-fanciers everywhere. A Spitalfields weaver or a Staffordshire potter, if he could speak the language, would find himself quite at home with Indian bird folk...” (JLK 1891: 25). Again, his political affiliations resist an either/or option between conservatism and liberalism. Both JLK's family history (marked like that of his wife by Methodism) and his professional engagement (with the work of Ruskin and Morris) reflect an involvement with the conditions of the British working-class. Many families that stood aside from the conservatism of the Church of England “reached their socialism through their Christianity, and claimed to have found in the labour movement a more authentic expression of Christian values that the churches had lost sight of” (McLeod 1986: 46). Professionally, anti-industrialism (that does not translate into anti-imperialism) is fraught with irony in that “Ruskin was as much a Tory imperialist as a precursor of late-Victorian socialism” (Brantlinger 1996: 468). The striations of *Beast and Man in India* are those of the intellectual inheritance of its writer, and of its age.

Most of all, however, it is a text about relationships, however incomplete, painful or even brutal these might be. JLK prioritizes the known and the familiar because he sees India not at the meridian of its imperial glory but instead as “the land of waning wonders” (JLK

1981: 292). He links his responsibility to his fissured readership expressly to this twilight phase of the empire. J.K.'s illustration of an 1888 piece by his son titled 'The Enlightenments of Pagett, M P' in *Under the Deodars*, and reprinted in the liberal monthly, *The Contemporary Review* (sometimes thought to be the product of their joint authorship) demonstrates his knowledge of, and exasperation at, the 1885 founding of the Indian National Congress. Pagett M P, who comes out from England believing in the need for democracy in India is foppish and feeble. Orde, the upstanding Commissioner is the centre of the portrait while the Indian farmer stands upright in proud possession of his rural dignity. At the same time, the terms in which Orde speaks of the young Congress sympathizer, suggest a consciousness that the future is less assured than he might wish. The piece deplores but anticipates, nonetheless, a generational shift:

The young orators of the Oxford Union arrived at the same conclusions [as young Indians do with the Congress] and showed doubtless just the same enthusiasm. If there were any political analogy between India and England, if the thousand races of this Empire were one, if there were any chance even of their learning to speak one language, if, in short, India were a Utopia of the debating-room, and not a real land, this kind of talk might be worth listening to, but it is all based on false analogy and ignorance of the facts (Kipling 1888).

Rudyard Kipling might have "more than punched his weight" (Allen 2008: 286) in the attacks made by his newspaper in India on the Congress. It is still fair to ask, however, how—in the light of this exchange on early nationalism—his father's combination of commentary and illustration actually works in *Beast and Man in India*. J.K. appears deeply critical of "young [Indian] students debating politics and local self-government with that love of wordy abstractions and indifference to practical considerations which have always been marks of the Hindu" (J.K. 1981: 157). Since he cannot wish them away, however, we might speculate on how he looks towards a future of which they form a part. What does J.K.'s India signal?

This question becomes easier to answer if we select any one cluster of narratives and images through which to pick our way. In that event, an interesting choice is J.K.'s treatment of traditions and illustrations that cluster around the elephant. Representations of the elephant are important because they allow us to study the way in which J.K.'s analysis cuts across boundaries. To begin with, the elephant is important J.K. and his contemporaries because it indicates the extent to which the government is able to civilize the wilderness and bring it under control through a network of roadways and telegraph poles. An older authority whom J.K. quotes approvingly, writes of the way in which the spread of an administrative regime shows itself in the extent to which elephants are—or are not—in demand: "In the rude and unopened parts of the country, where rivers are to be forded, and forests are only traversed by jungle paths, their labour is of value.... [rather than] in more highly civilised districts, and wherever macadamised roads admit of the employment of horses..." (Tennent 1861:110).

J.K., writing under a sense that the romance and reality of the empire are fading even as one looks, writes of how the elephant comes to the rescue of civil or military arrangements that break down. "He shines most as a special Providence when the cattle of a baggage train or the horses of a battery are stalled in a bog or struggling helplessly at a steep place" (J.K. 1891: 240). At the same time, the elephant is—so to speak—a government in full dress, not working-dress. When J.K. shifts to writing of elephants that Indian rulers own he intensifies the splendour of their regalia. "The beast is a pageant in himself, and when arrayed as only the Oriental knows how, he is splendid in colour and majestic in mass" (J.K. 1981: 218). Even when he sketches a richly caparisoned elephant, however, J.K. is careful to ground his work. He may orientalize the trappings of the animal but not its movements. Figure 1 suggests how J.K. makes this fine distinction. The painted forehead of the animal, its heavy howdah and tasselled canopies suggest the love of ornamentation that J.K. wants the reader to associate with the excessive pomp and ceremony of a petty ruler. When he represents the

elephant itself, though, he is careful to treat it realistically. JLK positions the fore and hind legs exactly as Tennent—detailing his observations—recommends. “The real peculiarity in the elephant in lying down is, that he extends his hind legs backwards as a man does when he kneels, instead of bringing them under him like the horse or any other quadruped.... It is to the structure of the knee-joint that the elephant is indebted for his singular facility in ascending and descending steep activities...” (Tennent 1861: 109). JLK’s draughtsmanship gives the reader an elephant that is at least as true to life as it is exotic. He holds on to this commitment even in his later collaboration with Flora Annie Steel when he illustrates a collection of Indian folktales. The particular story that he handles, ‘The two brothers,’ requires an elephant to identify the hero of the story by bowing low before one of the characters. Here too the initial impression is that of a slightly melodramatic fantasy. The frame of the picture is a Saracenic archway, but just when we are about to dismiss it as a piece of tawdry fantasy, the elephant’s posture holds our attention. Its fore legs begin to go down, but its hind legs start to splay out backwards, and we realize we are again looking at everyday reality in the midst of an otherwise escapist parable.



Figure 1 ‘*Waiting for the raja*’

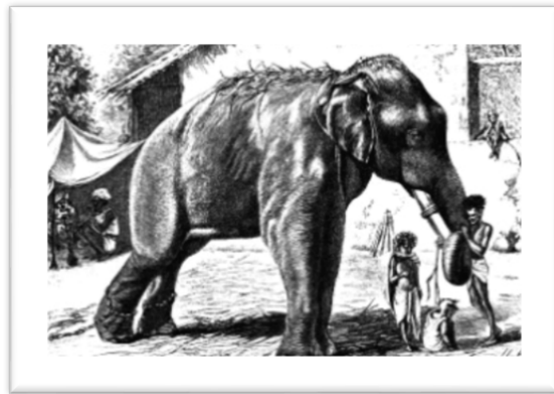


Figure 2 ‘*Undress*’

Another kind of boundary that JLK recognizes, and seeks to negotiate, concerns the terms on which he represents people in what is essentially an animal world. This is a tricky proposition because he wants the reader to remember that in “the polity of animals” (JLK 1981: 222) the elephant is the lord of all creation, and automatically takes precedence among all those who tend him. He also condemns the way in which three generations of every mahout’s family are able to live off the earnings of a single elephant on the government payroll. He makes few allowances for the grinding poverty in which such a family is likely to live. “... mahouts have no conscience, and steal without a qualm. Ages of slack-handed usage have settled that the servant of the elephant and three generations of his family shall live on the beast he is paid to cherish” (JLK 1981: 242). They stint their animals and brutalize them in captivity. Even while JLK is ready to acknowledge the general feeling among the British that mahouts love their charges, he excoriates their cruelty. “But that does not prevent their showing an indifference to their comfort, characteristic of all Orientals, whose talk often drips with sentiment, while their practice is of dry brutality” (JLK 1981: 242). No excuses can find a place here but there are two exceptions to the common jeremiad. The first relates to the way in which JLK sees the elephant as being a thing apart from every other living creature. “The beast is in truth a noble anachronism, belonging to a young world time of denser foliage than this dried-up age which packs hay in trusses and treasures ensilage in pits” (JLK 1891: 242). He associates the animal with a kind of prelapsarian innocence in its

combination of beauty with an intelligence that enjoys training. To the elephant, humanity is an inconsequential irrelevance. It comes from an earlier world without the pressures of economy, expense and vindictiveness, in which people do not yet exist. The second relates to the way in which JLK realizes he needs—despite his misgivings—to people the world of the elephant. He negotiates this difficulty by introducing children into the picture. They are as poor and wretched as the families from which they come but JLK endows them with a different nature. Their intense love for elephants in their care leads them to be skilful keepers. Moreover, their youthful audacity impels them to paint themselves into a world from which adults sometimes step aside. “...frequently you will see...one of the mahout’s little boys leaning with folded arms and legs crossed at ease against the foreleg of the foremost elephant. He is as near nude as may be, but from the complacent grin on the unkempt little monkey’s face you might fancy he considered himself the most important figure in the show” (JLK 1891: 233). When JLK sketches children (Figure 2), despite the different kinds of poverty that he shows, he suspends judgment. For a brief poignant moment, shorn of the pomp and panoply of spectacle, beast and man stand together.

A more complicated situation that JLK negotiates is that which relates to his representation of Ganesh. Usually his comments on Hindu myth and on religious or philosophical treatises that deal with the subject are scathing. He condemns the “the topsyturvy morality of the East [that] would give a [high] place to the Levitically clean Hindu, who would die sooner than eat flesh, but who would also rather die than touch or help a dying man of a low caste near his door...” (JLK 1891: 9). JLK tempers the wind—and that only occasionally—for Krishna alone. This is possibly because Krishna comes across as a comparatively recent member of the pantheon and because he seems responsive to love and beauty. To JLK the Hindu pantheon “appear[s] as merely monstrous creations of a disordered and sensuous fantasy” (JLK 1891: 113). This is a particularly disturbing thought to him because he believes that people fashion themselves and their conduct in the image and likeness of the gods that they create: “...for the God you make must be in some sort the man you are or would like to be” (JLK 1891: 114). When JLK comes to write of Ganesh, therefore, we might reasonably expect a bitter denunciation for the elephant-headed god.

This does not happen. JLK is sufficiently surprised himself to shuffle things off by explaining that artistic representations of the elephant—and therefore of Ganesh as well—are true to nature in a manner that is atypical of Indian painting and sculpture, of which Figure 3 is an example. “While other animals represented in Hindu art are merely decorative and conventional, or awkward and ill-understood, there is invariably a strong feeling for nature in Hindu elephant sculptures and paintings” (JLK 1891: 208). An ability to evoke and celebrate nature is hardly specific to depictions of the elephant. Even JLK’s own work on birds and their representation gives this explanation the lie. The elephant evidently excites his wonder as no other creature does. “The elephant has always been one of the wonders of the world, amazing in his aspect and full of delightful and surprising qualities. Nor does familiarity lessen his hold upon the imagination of mankind” (JLK 1891: 208).

It tempts JLK to wander across three worlds: the animal, the human and the divine. He lifts a gambolling elephant from the Sanchi stupa and fuses it with an illuminated capital letter to begin his chapter. He goes on to reproduce one of the most common images—a seated Ganesh sculpted in stone (Figure 3)—and then replicates a deliberately non-realistic lithographic print of Shiva, Parvati and the infant Ganesh. Through his deployment of a range of art forms, JLK makes a deliberate attempt to reach out to a range of people. Sanchi might well strike a chord with the thoughtful traveller of the time or with a diligent pilgrim. A householder would probably respond to the replica and a trader would be most likely to display a print or lithograph in a shop.

In this broad-based appeal, that intentionally cuts across barriers of ethnicity, gender and trade, JLK stays close to what he sees as the peculiar charisma of Ganesh. “The traveller and the pilgrim look to Ganesh for protection, the merchant for fortune, the student for advancement, and the housewife for luck” (JLK 1891: 231). Up to this point, he gives his reader a faithful and detailed chronicle of the various kinds of images that the different media create.

JLK lets himself go, however when he gives us in Figure 4 his own, self-avowedly irreverent response to the image of Ganesh. He speculates on what Ganesh would look like if he were to stand up. “If Ganesh stood,” muses JLK, he would be most likely to resemble a trader who is as fat as he is prosperous, “...the very image of many fat, rupee-worshipping *baniyas*, to be seen all over India” (JLK 1891: 212). This little episode is complicated for various reasons. To begin with, the character-sketch of the village trader or *baniya* of whom JLK writes is one that is distinctly dishonourable. Denzil Ibbetson’s ethnographic survey—that JLK constantly has at his elbow throughout *Beast and Man in India*—offers this reading. “He spends his life in his shop and the results are apparent in his inferior physique and utter want of manliness. He is looked down upon by the peasantry as a cowardly money-grubber...” (Ibbetson 1883: 291). JLK goes on to narrate a comic parable that criticizes greed. Ganesh—on seeing the penury of one of his mendicants—blackmails a greedy moneylender into parting with much of his wealth to the beggar. If indeed JLK derives his image of Ganesh from the village trader, as he says he does, we might well wonder how Ganesh successfully hoodwinks a representative of the same trading-class. Why does JLK locate his Ganesh within the same constituency as the person he chastises? At the same time, although JLK endows his standing Ganesh with the ignoble physique of the village moneylender, he credits him with the joviality of Falstaff and with the comic conceit of Nick Bottom, ready to play any role that offers itself. “He seems, as he sits meditatively poising his heavy head, to be the Nick Bottom of the Hindu Pantheon...Like Falstaff, he appears to chuckle over his bulk...” (JLK 1891: 211).

The illustration has many exciting features. To make an animal or an anthropomorphic character stand is to endow it with human qualities such as autonomy of thought, speech and decision. Notice the twinkle in Ganesh’s eye, the swagger in his upswung arm and the mock admonitory gesture he makes. The shadow he casts on the ground behind him is significant. As with his pose, it is clear that JLK sees him as being fundamentally human. JLK’s Ganesh is a comic hero rather than a revered deity. In part, this is because JLK wishes to suggest the easy traffic across the sacred and the divine that such a folktale evokes. Perhaps he wishes to retrieve the popular humour and earthy feeling that he believes academic studies of Indian religion obscure. In the process, he seems to endow the elephant with the ability to be all things to all people, in a far more inclusive way than his commentary—uncharacteristically generous though it may be—suggests.

When Rudyard Kipling re-tells substantially the same story in *The finances of the gods*, the cleverness of the scheme captures his imagination. He rates such stories as being among “a few, but these are the very best, my father gave me” (Kipling 1891: xiii). For JLK, however, the entertaining physical presence of the elephant-god is at the centre of the story.



Figure 3 ‘Ganesha: From an ancient Hindu sculpture’ Figure 4 ‘If Ganesha stood’

It is a natural question to think about the range and scope of the influence of JLK’s work. He is clear that his “pen and pencil essay” (JLK 1891: 14) will open—through its engagement with everyday life—a side door into Indian life, thought, and character, the threshold of which is still unworn. To JLK, any attempt the attitude of Indians towards their animals is welcome, and he is ready even to hail the racing enthusiast as “a missionary, spreading no ignoble Gospel” (JLK 1891: 189) because the latter works for better conditions for horses. He does not clarify whether he means that people in India—irrespective of ethnic origins—need to take forward this conviction, or whether the British in India—on reading his book—need to instruct their subjects in this way. At the same time, however, he is unlikely to want to preach to the converted alone. Since JLK has little fault to find with the British in India with regard to their treatment of animals, we have to conclude that at some point in the future he anticipates Indian readers. JLK believes that *Beast and Man in India* will serve its turn if it trains its Indian readers to develop their powers of observation and study sufficiently to become professional naturalists, able to write and sketch their own histories. His analysis of the terms and conditions of knowledge-production in late colonial India is important largely because he focuses on its inadequacies. The passage shows the way in which he looks forward to a time when Indians will write their own accounts of natural history. Is *Beast and Man in India* such a textbook? It is not as far as its account of animal life goes, since it draws on a multiplicity of sources—folklore, legend and oral history—that may not be uniformly verifiable. At the same time, as we can see from the range of illustrations offered in the chapter on elephants that only an Indian reader is likely to recognize the lithographs that represent contemporary bazaar art, just as it is more likely that an Indian reader can share JLK’s insistence that such a manual of art-history is necessary. We might say that those who

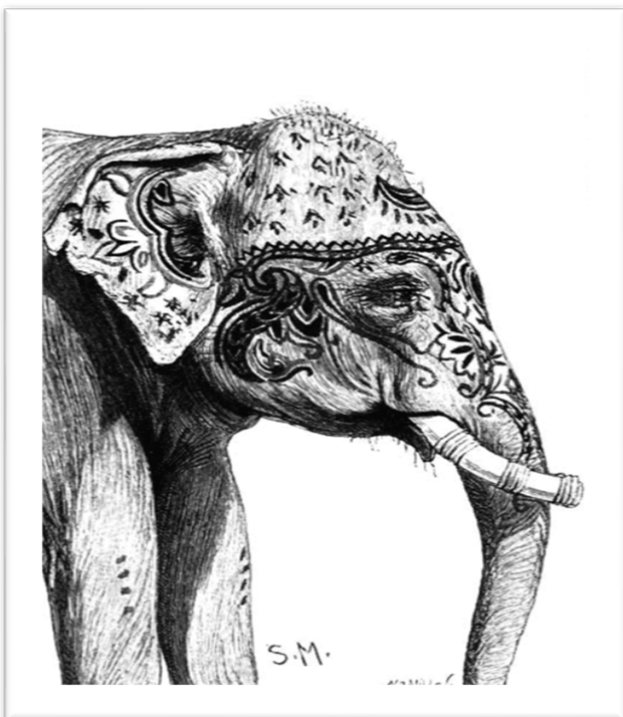
teach such readers are more likely to find such a manual useful, but we must remember in that case that some of JLK's colleagues (whose works feature here) including his successor as Principal were Indians:

Our modern school-books, in which lessons on animal life and humane animal treatment are wisely included, may do something... and in a few generations we may hope for an Indian student of natural history. At present this splendid field is left entirely to European observers, who mostly look at nature along the barrel of a gun. Which is a false perspective (JLK 1891: 14).

Notice that when JLK excludes the perspective of memoir-writing hunters, he does more than protest western cruelty. He deliberately keeps out the upper class—civilian or military—because his concern is with a more comprehensive readership. Even when he refers to the enjoyment he derives personally from such memoirs, JLK is careful to position his work differently. He may describe one such writer, Aberigh Mackay, as being “one of the brightest and most original, as well as one of the most generous spirits who ever handled Indian subjects” (JLK 1891: 176). Even so, JLK does not limit his point of view as Mackay often does to that of the hunter, so as to obscure everything else. His account does not include comic hyperbole, as Mackay's more fashionable bestseller does. “Even here everything is strange to me; the common native has become a Bheel, the sparrowhawk an eagle, the grass of the field a vast, reedy growth in which an elephant becomes a mere field mouse” (Mackay 1881: xvii). He may praise another of his precursors for being “a master of Indian woodcraft and a Nimrod of varied experiences” (JLK 1891: 220). However, JLK is unlikely to sound the note of camaraderie that often characterizes tales of the hunt. We will not encounter good cheer and fellowship that depends on a distance from wildlife in JLK as we do in other writers. “What a night of pleasant anticipations and merriment it was! Everybody was happy, and we occasionally heard the trumpet of the elephants, fully three miles distant, as they fed and disported themselves about the river” (Sanderson 1879: 149).

JLK, however, focuses on relationships, not just between animals and people, but also among writers, illustrators and their readers. This has to do in part with the nature of his successive professional appointments. JLK began as a teacher in the Bombay School of Art, went on to become Principal of the Mayo School of Art in Lahore, and then curator of the Lahore Museum. He often demonstrates a need to teach others to think, to draw and to write so that those who come after them can have a valuable legacy to inherit. It is arguable though, that in his need to build a group of people around him who shared similar ideals he runs the risk of reducing the originality of his own work.

Figure 5 ‘A painted elephant’



A good example is Figure 5, a detailed representation of the forehead and tusks of a painted elephant. As always, JLK is scrupulous to credit the illustrator. The initials ‘S M’ remind us that it is Munshi Sher Muhammad, a colleague at Mayo. However, there is a risk that collegiality might erase the distinctiveness between an illustration by JLK and that of another member of his group. It is true

that this is an argument that occurs when any artist tries to develop a collective like a studio with which to work, and at least JLK insists on individual signatures. Nonetheless, it reminds us that—if JLK believes that teaching and the development of group awareness are his primary aim—he might prioritize a common artistic idiom, as it were, over originality of response.

Another reason as to why the impact of JLK's witness is less compelling than we might expect is because his contemporaries and successors are often more eager to romanticize rural life in northern India. In this JLK is unlike George Birdwood, his opponent on the subject of art education and design choice for late imperial India. Birdwood is much more likely to use broad brushstrokes to paint an idealized India that is a Luddite's delight. Birdwood glamorizes village India compulsively, whether in relation to nature or in relation to self-sufficient cottage industries:

The English working man must provide for house rent, coals, furniture, warm clothing, animal food, and spirits, and for the education of his children before he can give a mind free from family anxieties to his work. But the sun is the Indian workman's co-operative landlord... from whom he gets almost everything he wants, and free of all cost but his labour contribution...' (Birdwood 1884: 106).

In contrast, JLK makes a meticulous and often angry analysis of the effects of illiteracy, hostile weather, rural indebtedness and grinding poverty. His social realism produces pictures of village life that—even when appealing—are not exotic. Birdwood's lavish plates depict the grandeur of the subcontinent in the manner of a museum cabinet. Against them, JLK's "pen and pencil essay" (JLK 1891: 14) that tries to show routines of both village life and wildlife—so that the history of illustration comes through clearly—anticipate a historical moment that will try to prioritize the ordinary and the familiar.

This is why criticism that seeks to place him among traditionalists seems unfair. "The search for authenticity often led Birdwood, Kipling, and others back to themselves, as they defined, organized, and legitimated what became known as 'traditional' Indian art" (Hoffenberg 2004: 193).

So far, this article has tried to understand how JLK's work leads us to redefine boundaries of experience, and the relationships that cut across these boundaries. I now wish to draw attention to the ways in which—when text and image deliberately stand aside from each other—JLK overturns commonly accepted hierarchies of reading. He reorganizes the way in which commentary, illustration and fiction relate to each other. In what seems to be an interlude of pure fantasy in his chapter on elephants, JLK tells the reader of folktales and legends, including one that suggests elephants dance on moonlit nights "... the elephant *beau monde* meets by the bright Indian moonlight in the ballrooms they clear in the depths of the forest, and dance mammoth quadrilles and reels to the sighing of the wind through the trees and their own trumpeting..." (JLK 1891: 225–26). He describes the *nautch khana* of the wilderness in a slightly self-conscious way, as he is aware that—against the background of a field study—this tale of moonlit revelry belongs to another mode of writing. When JLK wishes to underscore the authenticity of an observation or vignette, he illustrates it. Conversely, when he wishes to blur the boundary between field observation and storytelling he domiciles his tale within the commentary without drawing attention to it with a sketch.

JLK is careful to separate the content from the text. when his more famous son retells it as 'Toomai of the elephants' in the 1893 anthology *The First Jungle Book*. G. H. Strang illustrates the stories in *The First Jungle Book* but JLK handles a few select panels, of which this is one. Rudyard Kipling's account is substantially the same, except that he extends JLK's cameo by introducing a boy-hero (Toomai) whose devotion and courage in looking after his father's elephant enables him to see midnight revels of wild and tame elephants, the climax of which is a grand dance. JLK illustrates this story with a panel at the head of the chapter. The

panel is Ruskinian in terms of the relation it sets up between the individual components of the picture, in terms of their graded significance to the central narrative and in terms of their compositional relationship to each other. As Figure 6 shows, a herd of elephants occupies a receding 'V' shaped formation at the centre of the panel. Silhouetted against the setting sun, they lift their trunks to salute a boy carried on the shoulder of the senior-most trapper to acknowledge the salutation. It is a great moment because as a rule only the viceroy ever received the salute of a *keddah* or a corral of elephants. I draw attention to this panel to point out that JLK is careful to emphasize that is apart from the written text. By placing the scene first within a mock-Saracenic fretted archway and then within a larger trellis border he achieves two effects. The first is the conventional nod to Ruskin's rules to indicate compositional hierarchy while constructing a panel. Within this apparent revivalism, however, there is a significant shift. Ruskin's views, particularly with reference to Indian art, supported traditional hierarchies of power. While concerned about the security of the empire, he inveighs against the plunder of its wealth. "Every mutiny, every danger, every terror, and every crime, occurring under, or paralyzing, our Indian legislation, arises directly out of our national desire to live on the loot of India" (Ruskin 1884: 111). "A 'revivalist' at heart [in his commitment to reintroduce traditional art forms and modes of production] and a sympathiser with the aristocracy against the middle classes, [Ruskin's] ideal society lay in the past....A supporter of the British Empire, he never seriously questioned European superiority in relation to other nations" (Mitter 1997: 239). This is clear from his acerbic comment on the relationship between industrialization and imperialism in India. "Our rule in India has introduced there, Paisley instead of Cashmere shawls..." (Ruskin 1884: 36). In sharp contrast, JLK's chosen moment involves a new kind of democracy, or a flattening-out of traditional authority. This is characteristic of the way in which—even as he preserves the semblance of structures of power—he sets them aside in an unexpected way. Again, this suggests not a clear-cut political choice between liberalism and conservatism as a recognition that the future may not run along the lines of the present. A child receives a salute that is usually a viceroy's prerogative. JLK gives his readers a horizontal panel so that the child occupies the foreground at the centre of the saluting herd. The second is to emphasize that the moment—and its illustration—are both special because the double border cordons off the panel from the fiction that follows. It is the other face of JLK's non-illustration of a similar moment in *Beast and Man in India*. There he was keen to stand aside from labelling the elephant-dance as fact. Here he is keen to both foreground the triumphal moment that recognizes the importance of the dance, and yet to keep it a little aside from the fiction that follows. JLK's panel overturns the neat post-colonial assumption that—in cultural mappings of the empire—discourses on animals necessarily underwrite the same ideologies as does fiction. "...both the novel [presumably other kinds of fiction as well] and the menagerie share a sense of the empire as a preeminent expression of English spirit [and] also as something that England's domestic cultures struggle to grasp in its usual aspect" (Koenigsberger 2007: x) As with 'The finances of the gods,' and 'Moti guj—mutineer' the Toomai panel demonstrates that accounts of animal life do not re-inscribe the values of fiction. As a rule, JLK hesitates in relating observations to fiction simplistically, and is thoughtfully interrogative of reconfigurations of authority.



Figure 6

Is it possible to end easily with the statement that J.K.'s illustrations or “*chitrakari* display the work of hybridization?” (Bhullar 2013). We can look—as this article tries to do—at the way in which impulses to disobey, to re-configure, and sometimes to overturn inherited pieties in governance, belief and writing work into his illustration. No single comforting truth however seems to emerge beyond this. To some extent, the absence of a central spine of ideology—the same quality that makes J.K. challenging to read—explains why no inheritor readily steps in to J.K.'s legacy. When Rudyard Kipling illustrates his own short fiction in *Just So Stories*, his work seems far more simplistic. His sketch of the primitive elephant exaggerates its trunk—presumably for the benefit of his young readers—but has nothing of the grandeur or complexity with which J.K. endows his *hathi*, or “the handed one”, the phrase he uses to denote the trunk. Subsequent illustrators who experimented with representations of elephant life did so largely for children and tended to rely on infantilism or on allegory. J. H. Shepard in Milne’s *Winnie the Pooh* series creates a Heffalump in Piglet’s nightmare that is a preposterous blend of Rudyard Kipling’s sketch and a primitive mastodon. The most recent Disney version creates a Colonel Hathi dawn patrol that—in a comic disciplinarian march—offers a marketable but conformist allegory. It is now possible—given that digital archiving makes it possible to read J.K.’s work in electronic editions rather than in antiquarian collections with restricted access alone—to access these and other illustrations more rapidly and cheaply than in the past. It is also possible to trace, retrieve and compare the way in which images evolve, both within a single text and from one text to another. Will this bring new readers to people a new kind of public space? Or will readers only assume that the sketches wait upon the literary text, and mirror the agenda of the latter, without generating their own debate? The visual politics of J.K.—deceptively compliant, curiously disobedient—can stand scrutiny again.

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List of illustrations

Figure 1: JLK, 'Waiting for the raja,' *Beast and Man in India*. Available at: The%20Project%20Gutenberg%20eBook%20of%20Beast%20and%20Man%20in%20India,%20by%20John%20Lockwood%20Kipling_files/image_061.jpg. Accessed on 18 August 2013.

Figure 2: JLK, 'Undress,' *Beast and Man in India*. Available at: The%20Project%20Gutenberg%20eBook%20of%20Beast%20and%20Man%20in%20India,%20by%20John%20Lockwood%20Kipling_files/image_059.jpg. Accessed on 18 August 2013.

Figure 3: JLK, 'Ganesha: From an ancient Hindu sculpture,' *Beast and Man in India*. Available at: The%20Project%20Gutenberg%20eBook%20of%20Beast%20and%20Man%20in%20India,%20by%20John%20Lockwood%20Kipling_files/image_055.jpg. Accessed on 18 August 2013.

Figure 4: JLK, 'If Ganesha stood,' *Beast and Man in India*. Available at: The%20Project%20Gutenberg%20eBook%20of%20Beast%20and%20Man%20in%20India,%20by%20John%20Lockwood%20Kipling_files/image_057.jpg. Accessed on 18 August 2013.

Figure 5: Sher Muhammad, 'A painted elephant,' *Beast and Man in India*. Available at: The%20Project%20Gutenberg%20eBook%20of%20Beast%20and%20Man%20in%20India,%20by%20John%20Lockwood%20Kipling_files/image_060.jpg. Accessed on 18 August 2013.

Figure 6: JLK, 'Toomai of the elephants,' from Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book*. Available at: The%20Project%20Gutenberg%20eBook%20of%20The%20Jungle%20Book,%20by%20Rudyard%20Kipling_files/ch06.png. Accessed ON 18 August 2013.