TIGER FILES: TEXTUAL AND VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF TIGERS IN SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores a robust history of verbal, visual, and material images of tigers that has circulated in literary and popular culture from the pre-colonial through the postcolonial periods, particularly in texts from or about the South Asian subcontinent. I read representations of tigers as indexes of a series of relationships: between humans and the natural world, between colonizers and colonized, and between diasporic or displaced subjects and imagined homelands. I argue that to track representations of tigers over time and across man-made borders is to measure the material relations of humans both to the natural world and to each other; the impulse to control tigers is duplicated and advanced by colonialism. British accounts of “man-eating tigers” in tiger hunts in particular reveal the dynamics of the process. The authors register both attempts at colonial self-fashioning, and anxieties about nation and gender; recurrently, an over-asserted masculinity in word or image opens itself to queer readings. In showing how the British take up images from the Moguls, and how in turn anti or postcolonial Indian writers reference, appropriate, or redirect aspects of colonial texts, I explore how ideas about India and Indians move within and between Indian and British cultures, and later within global culture. Through readings of a range of texts (hunting narratives, children’s literature, poems, contemporary novels, tourist advertisements), artworks (mogul art, illustrations in books or magazines, European classics, carvings, and artifacts), songs and films created by natives (such as, Rabindranth Tagore, Satyajit Ray, and Amitav Ghosh) and non-natives (such as, Helen Bannerman, Rudyard Kipling, Yann Martel, Ang Lee and Téa Obreht), I show how images of tigers are generated, return, and evoke or overwrite other texts in colonized locations. Drawing from postcolonial, queer/gender,
diasporic, ecological, visual culture, and folklore theory, among others, I assess as well how representations of tigers render visible complicity, resistance, or the residual difficulty of taming meaning. My project discovers in the end that for all the ways that they are caged, trafficked, or kept “wild” through conservation efforts, the tiger lives on as a magnificent, endangered, threatening, and often elusive figure.
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INTRODUCTION

When my paternal grandfather died in 1968 we inherited his house in Calcutta. This meant clearing out things he had accumulated in order to make room for my family of six. The house had only one floor, but a stairwell in the back led to a rooftop. I took the task of going through a pile of things on the stairwell landing. There were silver serving dishes and platters, a lacquer incense burner studded with slivers of precious stones and washed in gold that my father had brought back from Burma during World War II, and a dusty roll that looked like thick parchment paper. When unrolled, it turned out to be a tiger skin rug. At once, I wondered about the circumstances that had led to the death of this tiger, how its skin ended up in my grandfather’s possession and why it was rolled up and stored away. My father had the rug cleaned and spread it beneath his favorite rosewood coffee table. For many years following, the tiger rug became a source of stories about my grandfather’s work as a district magistrate in the colonial government. How my grandfather acquired this tiger skin rug, and what it signified to him, remains a mystery. But it seemed always to harken back to earlier periods with magnificent grandeur.

Three years before this encounter with the rug, I had a childhood vision of a tiger that was likewise mysterious. My sisters and I attended boarding school in the foothills of the Himalayas. At that time, my parents lived in New Delhi, and the journey from Delhi to Calcutta and then to Kurseong took many days. While on the leg of the journey from Jalpaiguri to Kurseong—on a narrow gauge train that had to stop and shunt back slowly as it climbed—I stared out of the window. We had stopped briefly around twilight. On either side of the tracks thick forests rose up. And suddenly I found myself gazing, mesmerized, into the amber eyes of a tiger. Only after the tiger walked back into the
forest did I register what I had seen. None of my fellow schoolgirls had seen the tiger, but, even though my vision of the tiger lasted only a few dreamlike seconds, its gaze lingers in memory.

These encounters of mine with tigers—rolled up like parchment or glimpsed from the train—as “things” or text-like objects out of the colonial period, or as the elusive and thrilling image of a wild and regal creature in its natural habitat, seem in memory to speak to my relationships to India itself. And, on further reflection, I realize that images of tigers in fact played around the edges of our consciousness during my childhood in India, whether in the forms of stories (some told by the British about India) or indigenous stories (some influenced by the experience of colonialism), or in any of a number of the popular cultural images of tigers that circulated.

Such images were revived for me several years ago when I began more formal research on the imperial and colonial connections between South Asia and the Pacific through the use of the word “man-eater.” In the Pacific, the term referred to people, but in South Asia and Africa it, generally, referred to animals. As my research progressed, I found that narratives and images of tigers recurred and seemed to be imbricated in colonial-native relations. The tiger—naturally, literally, and visually—sprung into view as a focal point around which ideas are reformulated and circulated. That is, the tiger can be seen as an iconic figure, or as what Slavoj Žižek calls a “sublime object,” that lends itself to colonial articulations, in which the tiger doubles for the native as the object of hunts, and embodies something threatening but undeniably graceful and resistant to domestication. Such images circulate back into Indian portrayals of tigers during the waning years of the colonial period and the drive toward independence, so that they come
to signify stances of resistance. Finally, in postcolonial re-articulations, particularly in the diaspora, the tiger comes to signify a complex range of longings, including those related to the problematic of mourning (loss and recovery) for the diasporic subject.

This dissertation explores the ways in which stories and images of tigers in print and visual cultures index the ways in which, during the colonial and postcolonial periods, ideas about India and Indians circulate both within and between Indian and British cultures. Representations of tigers in these heterogeneous tales and images index the complexity and range of circulations of cultural meanings, and the residual difficulty of taming such meaning.

My project begins with some discussion of the pre-colonial representation of tigers and the position that tigers occupied in the pre-colonial literature and “the Indian” imagination; however, the project concentrates in its main chapters on how aspects of the colonial experience/experience of colonialism (eighteenth and nineteenth century), and its aftermath (twentieth and twenty-first century), can be read through art, artifacts, and a range of texts that reference tigers. I explore the importance of the circulation of images itself—how images are generated, return, and evoke or overwrite other texts in the colonized locations where they have impact and/or are contested. My own movements as a diasporic South Asian are registered as well in a number of my narrative and interpretive choices. For instance, as mentioned, the fact that I have lived in Hawai‘i for
over twenty years informs my choice in this dissertation to bring attention to a connection between the Pacific and South Asia.\footnote{In Chapter I, I address this connection primarily through a posited linguistic transfer of the term man-eater from the Pacific to India: many further links might be made between South Asia and the Pacific, including the historical movement of South Asians as indentured (\textit{girmiit}) labor to Fiji and the circulation of colonial administrators among locations.}

Chapter I, titled “What’s Eating You? Man-Eating Tigers and Tiger Hunting Men,” provides background on the natural and environmental history of tigers and their habitats in South Asia. From there it argues that the British use of the word "man-eater" to describe tigers in India transposed an anxiety over cannibalism in the Pacific. That anxiety was strategically developed to establish and reinforce British colonial authority in South Asia. An authority that was tied to tiger hunting, which initially mimicked Mughal hunting practices, and grew to influence British ideas of masculinity. At same time, colonial hunting narratives demonized the tiger as a scourge to be eliminated.

Chapter II, “Catch the Tiger by the Tale: Literary Pursuits of Tigers in the Colony and Postcolony,” reads specific tiger references in stories, such as Kipling’s \textit{The Jungle Book}, and Tagore’s \textit{He (Shey)}, where special attention will be paid to how indigenous and colonial perspectives engage, intersect, and inform each other. Narratives about tigers during the colonial period appear pre-occupied, in particular, with tiger hunting. The sport becomes an index of Indian-British relations during the long colonial period, when tigers become part of that larger nexus of the attempt by the British to dominate what is threatening, to domesticate it, and to organize rituals around the native in the process of the hunt. The tiger hunt in such a reading exemplifies aspects of the colonial process,
how it positioned “natives,” and its inherent instability: the British needed Indian participation (a kind of incorporation of Indians as a subjected group into their rituals) in the very processes of “a hunt”—a hunt which can be seen as an attempt to control their own anxious fantasies, including that of being consumed, which Gananath Obeyesekere associates with the term “dark fantasy” (631).  

The third chapter of my project, “Eye on the Tiger: Reading Tigers through Visual Culture,” extends the analysis of Chapter II into the field of visual culture. To echo W. J. T. Mitchell on dinosaurs, there are more images of tigers on the earth than there are actual tigers. Emphasis, then, will be on selective examples, such as the poet William Blake’s famous poem/illustration, which I first encountered in boarding school. Blake’s pictorial counter-text to his poem “The Tyger” (1794), that is, might be taken as representative of ways that the tiger becomes a sublime image, within England, of metaphysical proportions. One might ask, how is it that Blake, who lives in England—a place that is not the natural habitat of tigers—comes to seize on the image of the tiger as an awesome symbol of “experience,” including evil, and why is it that Blake’s tiger looks more like a large, curious dog than a tiger?

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2 A term related to Freudian psychoanalysis and the genre of horror fantasy.
By what circuitous route does this creature of Blake’s imagination—representing experience in contradistinction to the “innocent” lamb—cycle back to postcolonial India and into a post-Independence classroom on the foothills of the Himalayas in Kurseong? How might we regard such a scene of instruction—in which a powerful native symbol is reworked within colonial iconography—now functions as pedagogy? Unlike Wordsworth’s “Daffodils,” that is, the tiger was an image that Indian children could
relate to and would necessarily process differently. This chapter examines a range of such images—from high culture examples of European paintings, precolonial Mughal art, a wooden “toy,” book and magazine illustrations, such as an advertisement in *The Economist* (Figure 2) that promoted travel and tourism to India by presenting an image of an almost hidden tiger, observable only through its eyes, staring out from the wild along with a quote from Gandhi. Thus, the cosmopolitan and the rational remain haunted by the “Incredible” and the eye/“I” in India takes the form of an exclamation point. In the dark the eyes of the tiger see without its body quite being seen. It thus haunts through its terrifying ability to camouflage itself and see in the dark, lingering as an image of stealth and mystery that might be there watching you. This image emphasizes the “call” of the wild without domesticating it, quite possibly evoking one of Gandhi’s influences, Henry David Thoreau, who stated that “in Wildness is the preservation of the World” (Thoreau v. V 224) and “[O]ur lives need the relief of such a background [the wilderness] where the pine flourishes and the jay still screams” (Thoreau v. I 179)—or where the tiger still stalks.

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3 “The Daffodils” was largely recited in the colonies as a pronunciation exercise, and thus appears frequently in postcolonial texts as an image absurdly mismatched to the contexts in which colonial subjects regard it, as in Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy* and Sia Figiel’s *Where We Once Belonged.*
FIGURE 2: TRAVEL ADVERTISEMENT IN *THE ECONOMIST*, 2009

What results in such later texts might be well-approached through Ella Shohat’s and Robert Stam’s notion of “temporality as scrambled and palimpsestic in all the worlds, with the pre-modern, the modern, the postmodern coexisting globally, although the ‘dominant’ might vary from region to region” (39). This leads Stam to conclude that “all cultures, and the texts generated by these cultures . . . are multiple, hybrid, heteroglossic, unevenly developed, characterized by multiple historical trajectories, rhythms and temporalities” (39). This palimpsestic approach will be a critical part of my analysis on how the image of the tiger, “despite erasures,” also provides “traces of previous inscriptions that have been overwritten” (Guha and Spivak 281).
Chapter IV, my concluding chapter, titled “Tiger Moves: Narrative Springs in Diasporic (Con)Texts,” returns to the question of the tiger as a figure that moves, taking along its sources, and that “springs” narratively. Reconstructed often nostalgically in memory, it surfaces periodically and with dramatic effect in literature, particularly in landscapes marked by traumatic rupture. Here tigers often index the authorial attempt to come to terms with the memory of colonialism and the experience of postcolonial displacement, as well as other critiques of capitalism and the ravages of war. My approach is most informed by diaspora theory, particularly as it relates to the South Asian diaspora, which I apply within a discussion of both the physical and tropic movement of tigers. The texts I read are considered in this sense as “tiger moves,” that open up new possibilities for thinking about diaspora across time and place, both literally and imaginatively. In this chapter, I move from a consideration of the Beatles’ version of a hunt tale (“The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill”), through readings of Yann Martel’s Life of Pi (and the screen adaptation by Ang Lee), Rajiv Joseph’s play Bengal Tiger at the Bagdad Zoo and Téa Obreht’s novel The Tiger’s Wife, to Amitav Ghosh’s novel The Hungry Tide, a novel which brilliantly encapsulates the arguments of the dissertation in showing the complexity of the processes, and the profound and imaginative uses to which the figure of the tiger can be put.

There have been many articles and books on various aspects of tigers and tiger hunting that cover issues. Among the most notable are natural scientists Ronald Tilson and Richard Nyhus, authors of a book-length treatment of tigers, Tigers of the World: the Science, Politics, and Conservation of Pathera Tigris; renowned wildlife historian Mahesh Rangarajan, author of the concise but data-filled record, India's wildlife history:
an introduction; historian of imperialism, James Mackenzie, who focuses on the impact of colonial endeavors on the environment in The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation, and British imperialism; and postcolonial critic, Anand Pandian, whose work notably introduces native perspectives as a countermeasure to imperial histories in an article titled, “Predatory Care: The Imperial Hunt in Mughal and British India,” an article published in Journal of Historical Society. However, there have been no book-length analyses of tigers as text and image in the contexts that this dissertation proposes. My ambition is thus to contribute to literary/cultural studies by describing and analyzing the reach of colonial connections, through language, literature, and art from South Asia, and then beyond, into the diaspora. Through all these periods and on into the foreseeable future, the tiger lives as a magnificent, endangered, threatening, and often elusive figure.
CHAPTER I

WHAT’S EATING YOU? MAN-EATING TIGERS AND TIGER-HUNTING MEN

One can look at history from two sides and divide it into the history of nature and the history of men. The two sides are, however, inseparable; the history of nature and the history of men are dependent on each other so long as men exist. – Karl Marx, The German Ideology (earlier form)

The history of tigers and man in South Asia—really, the Indian subcontinent—is a long, robust one that stretches from pre-colonial times, through the colonial period, and into the contemporary, postcolonial era. The nineteenth century in particular marks a period of major material changes in both human and natural worlds with disastrous effects on tiger populations, mainly as a result of relentless hunting practices. The process is recorded in a variety of cultural forms—including texts, songs, paintings, and sculptures—in which the tiger becomes a dramatically emblematic figure. Although many animals have been hunted in South Asia, such as the elephant, lion, and pig, only the tiger is regularly represented as both anthropomorphic and anthropophagic. That beguiling combination, in which the tiger at once signifies a crouching “nature” ready to spring, the threat and anxiety of cultural introjection, and human characteristics, animates this project. This chapter discusses the material base, and the ideologies that emerged from it, which motivate and contextualize descriptions of tigers. I move from considering the history and habitat of the tigers, to analyzing the dual vocabularies of anthropophagy and anthropomorphism reflexively used to describe tigers, and from there, to “reading” tiger hunting practices, pre-colonial and colonial. The hunt is regarded as the site of the most
violent engagement between men and tigers, and thus as an arena in which complex meanings are registered, including relational hierarchies involving race, nation, and gender. Hunts prove haunted, uncanny sites for the imagination. They are sites of self-fashioning as humans negotiate and attach meanings to the pursuit of tigers.

In the broad sweep of the historical imagination the tiger is, by turns, regal, threatening, endangered, and, as suggested, ever elusive. Thus to track the tiger back to its habitat as it recedes is, in a way, to measure the material relations of humans both to the natural world and to each other. The desire to control land and resources is at once a struggle with nature and among humans: the impulse to control nature is duplicated and advanced through the colonial process. Civilization seems to require eliminating, driving out, or enclosing the tiger, which represents in a sense some “thing” that can be captured or eliminated, but never wholly domesticated, except in circus acts that relentlessly reenact the dangerous process of taming. Even caged, the tiger threatens humans who would reach through the bars between animal and human. A notable “lesson” to this effect is given by a zoo keeper father to his son in *Life of Pi*, a text discussed in Chapter IV. Thus the record of the process of engaging tigers—who does so, how, and under what conditions—speaks to and imagines a significant and multi-leveled history.

I. **“Natural” History of the Bengal Tiger**

The textual tiger, as suggested, remains vitally attached to a larger story of ecological and political struggle (often, sadly, run by paper tigers) that is connected with
the fate of animals in the wild. One should then begin with, and keep in view throughout this pursuit of “tiger texts” and images, some specific data about flesh and blood tigers.

The Bengal Tiger, *Panthera tigris tigris*—who comes to stand in for the Indian tiger—is one of five remaining subspecies of tiger that has survived into the present day. (The other four are Siberian, Sumatran, Malayan, and Amur; a fifth exists only in captivity—Indochinese/South China). As Ronald Tilson and Philip Nyhus summarize its Indian history, the Bengal Tiger arrived in India approximately 12,000 years ago. Its original habitat ranged from Bangladesh, Bhutan, western China, India, western Myanmar, and Nepal (45); however, at present they occupy only 1% of their historic habitat (512). Tigers arrived in India after the land bridge between India and Sri Lanka was submerged, so they never inhabited that island nation. Sadly, the last tiger in Pakistan was shot in 1906 (316). From the mid-nineteenth century up until the 1960s, the tiger population and their habitat have shrunk drastically—the Bengal tiger has been officially on the endangered species list since 1969 (191).

Historically and into the present, one of the most important habitats of the Bengal Tiger is the Sunderbans (meaning ‘beautiful forest’ in Bengali), which is a large mangrove forest that sprawls over two countries, India and Bangladesh, and is home to the largest population of tigers that, by recent counts, number between 200-250. The Sunderbans have been described as a region of “tides and trees,” because it is the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers. As Tilson and Nyhus detail, it thus acts as a “buffer against the storms and tidal surges of the Bay of Bengal” (309). The unique environment of the Sunderbans is ideal for many “rare species of flora and fauna,” such as the Bengal Tiger, as well as a marine nursery, for such species as the Indo-gangetic
Both mammals figure as complex “characters” in the novel *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh, which will be discussed in the concluding section of Chapter IV.

Historical records of tiger populations are scarce, but their numbers were probably not. One important source for this information comes from old hunting records. According to the historian Mahesh Rangarajan, between 1875 and 1925 nearly 80,000 tigers were killed in Central India alone. Tigers were also common in Nepal’s Terai habitat, such that a multitude of tigers could be killed in short periods of time: King George V and his party shot 39 tigers in 11 days in 1911-1912, and the Maharaja of Nepal and his guests shot 433 tigers between 1933 and 1940 (32). Although disease, development (mainly encroachment into forests), and death by natural causes, have some impact on reducing tiger populations, there can be little doubt from Rangarajan’s outrageous hunting figures that big-game hunting (for trophies and bounty) contributed largely to the decimation of the tiger population over the last two hundred and fifty years, but especially in the late nineteenth century.

Today, people are crowding out tigers; the remaining three thousand or so tigers pose no real threat to humans. And yet, age-old anxieties and fears repeatedly resurface in reported encounters with tigers, such as a horrific incident in Ohio in 2012 when numerous tigers in captivity were killed, and periodic incidents of tiger killings in India and Bangladesh. In order to try and get a handle on human anxieties and fears of tigers—apprehensions not completely unfounded, of course—I turn to lexical considerations of the term most associated with tigers, and survey the views of a popular, contemporary nature writer as representative of how the problem is still commonly viewed.
II. MAN-EATER—WHAT’S IN A TERM?

One of the most remarkable things about the representation of tigers is the vocabulary that has developed around them. Most strikingly, the term ‘man-eater’ is used as a descriptive word and at times stands in for the Bengal tiger, which in turn stands in for tigers in India or even in some contexts for “incredible India” itself. Over time the term comes to seem like a requirement: writers must refer not simply to “tigers,” but “man-eating tigers,” without any attention to whether this is a general characteristic of some or all tigers, or a kind of inter-species hostility. One might imagine from reading these accounts, which range across centuries and genres, that humans are the preferred diet of tigers and that they are defined by this delectation.

The word “man-eater” clearly has connections to anthropophagy and primal anxieties. David Quammen, in Monster of God, suggests that the connection is related to the historical instability and uncertainty of man’s position in nature as both hunter (predator) and hunted (prey). This amounts to a very particular relationship “between one dangerous, flesh-eating animal and one human victim” (5), that make up a very short list of animals: tigers and other big cats (lions, jaguars, etc.), bears, sharks, crocodiles, and big snakes (pythons and anacondas). Quammen suggests that “man-eaters” as a concept are largely in our minds and fuel our imagination and fears from an earlier time when,

[G]reat and terrible flesh-eating beasts . . . shared landscape with humans.
They were part of the ecological matrix within which Homo Sapiens evolved. They were part of the psychological context in which our sense of identity as a species arose. They were part of the spiritual systems that
we invented for coping. The teeth of big predators, their claws, their
ferocity and their hunger, were grim realities that could be eluded but not
forgotten. (3)

This description evokes a primordial age when man and tiger competed for position on
the food chain before technological advances moved man into the dominant position,
where historically tigers alternated with man in dominating their encounters.

I agree with Quammen that a deep historical fear of man-eating animals fueled
human imagination in times immemorial, creating deep memory—spoken and written
into sayings, stories, and metaphors—that can easily be reactivated at any moment in
history. However, I would go one step further and suggest that the fear of man-eating
animals, especially big cats, is cloaked in a rhetoric that resembles a more unsettling,
fear—anthropophagy or cannibalism. Cannibalism as a cultural practice has built into it
an aspect of horror—a metaphysical apprehension that William Blake expressed most
memorably in his poem, “The Tyger,” of a God that knowingly creates a man-eater and
gives it “fearful symmetry” (although Blake’s accompanying image seems not terribly
fearful [see Figure 1]). How does such dread figure in the imagination and in literature,
what kind of impact does it have, and how can it influence actions and policy? The word
"man-eater" may have begun as a reference to anthropophagy but was extended to
include carnivores, lions in Africa4 and tigers in India, with increased usage and
disastrous effect in the mid to late nineteenth century.

4 The connections between Africa and India have some obvious parallels, both in relation
to wildlife and colonial processes. This project will occasionally refer to this parallel
connection, but will not engage deeply with discursive practices in Africa.
My research suggests that the term “man-eater,” as employed in nineteenth century India, functions as an indicator of colonial ambivalence towards the places that were colonized. The use of “man-eater,” suggesting atavistic impulses, connects with British notions of decay and the cycle of empire, which, as Beth Fowkes Tobin notes in *Colonizing Nature*, are connected to “the decline of Mughal political power” (23) during which the British, in various registers, relegate “Mughal and Hindu societies to a permanent past” (26). As Edward Said argued, "[T]he great voyages of geographical discovery from da Gama to Captain Cook were motivated by curiosity and scientific fervor, but also by a spirit of domination, which becomes immediately evident when white men land in some distant and unknown place and the natives rebel against them" (“Invention”181). Said has identified the "spirit of domination" and the "unknown place" that lay beneath the early voyages and contact which were accompanied with elements of "curiosity and scientific fervor." Thus, domination of the unknown creates an environment that made Ranajit Guha ask this question: "Can we afford to leave anxiety out of the story of the empire?" (487). Guha proceeds then to effectively argue for "anxiety" rather than "enthusiasm" as a way to read the imperial endeavor through a postcolonial perspective.

These two notions—the desire to conquer and the anxiety of conquest and contact—create a conflict at a particular historical and political moment in South Asian history in the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. At this time, when the British were making the transition from a mercantile presence to one of political dominance and governance in India, the “dark fantasy,” as Gananath Obeyesekere puts it, around incorporation and corporeal boundaries was transposed onto the image of the
man-eater as a natural feature of the Indian landscape. Thus the “spirit of domination” of the “unknown place,” “anxieties of the story of empire,” and the “western obsession with cannibalism,” noted by Said, Guha, and Obeyesekeere respectively, are all factors that have to be considered at the time when the tiger took on the descriptor of “man-eater.” These factors coincide with the British turning the carnivore into cannibal, which suggests that this construction went beyond the lexical implications. In the absence of any pretense that Indians themselves were cannibals, that is, the man-eating attributed to tigers could function as a metonymy for Indian people, and become a substitute focal point for anxieties that attend the colonial process.

In the early colonial period, “man-eating” tigers referred to a particular kind of tiger—usually one that was too old or wounded and therefore unfit to hunt animal prey. In the later colonial period, every tiger is potentially a “man-eater” and a threat to the “unsuspecting” and “incompetent” native. The impulse to categorize man-eaters, whether tigers or humans, is not historically unusual: as William Arens notes in The Man-Eating Myth, such classifiers’ “main function is the imposition of intellectual order by propounding categories to encompass all possible expressions of a phenomenon” (17-18). The latter colonial construction of tigers as man-eaters elides important histories of hunting on the subcontinent and native adaptation to the environment. Such constructions are superimposed by colonial machinery that created the “monster” out of anxieties and fears of the inability to adapt to the environment falling back on what they knew. Europeans had long abandoned adaptation for control over the environment with their formal gardens and eradication of species, such as the boar and wolf. They favored control over the environment by exterminating what they labeled “hostile” in nature.
Thus, the construction of tigers as man-eaters occurs at a time when Europeans had developed environmentally controlling technologies—in India guns, railroads, and other signs of modernity—that supported notions of the “white man’s burden.” These invest the scenes of tiger hunting with both materially violent and thematic force.

While reports about ritual cannibalism abound in writing about the Pacific, the Caribbean, South America, and Africa, there are actually few reports of cannibalism in South Asia. Even though the British were confused about many parts of the world, their writings about South Asia are occupied with establishing the subcontinent as predominantly Hindu and influenced by Brahmin vegetarianism rather than cannibalism. From the sixteenth century forward, accounts of India stress that, “These Gentiles will eate no flesh nor kill any thing. They live with rice, butter, milke, and fruits” (Foster 19). Strangely enough, meat-eating Muslims, who are obviously not cannibals and observe codified dietary laws, are overlooked in this account, as are non-Brahmin Hindu meat eaters, especially warrior and tribal communities. Although Muslims are a minority on the subcontinent, it was the Muslim Mughals from whom the British consciously wrested power, following a period of extended contact that included wars and negotiations related to mercantile interests. My supposition is that since the British could not find any credible evidence in India of humans eating each other, they projected the colonial needs and anxieties of their obsession with cannibalism onto “man-eating” tigers. Where this transfer occurs, tigers become doubles for the Native peoples.

In Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the Pacific, Gananath Obeysekere offers a critique on colonial writing as a “fiction” based on a discourse of the Other as savage in which both the colonial and the native engaged resulting in incidents that ranged from humorous to fatal, with the latter reinforcing the discourse.
The concern with tigers is evident, again, from the early accounts forward, as in the following eighteenth-century travel narrative description on Indian fauna:

The surrounding country abounds with beasts of prey, and game of every description. A gentleman lately engaged on a shooting party in the wilds of Plassey, gave us an account of their success in one month, from August the 15th to September the 14th, (1785) in which space they killed one *royal tiger*, six wild buffaloes, one hundred and eighty-six hog deer, twenty-five wild hogs, eleven antelopes, three foxes, thirty-five hares, one hundred and fifty brace of partridges and floricans, with quails, ducks, snipes, and smaller birds in abundance. (Foster 166, emphasis mine)

At this point, it seems, the carnivorous “royal” tiger has not yet acquired the descriptor of "man-eater." It is only later that the cannibal connection is remarked on, as in William Campbell’s *My Indian Journal*: “As we are now in the land of tigers, and shall have occasion before we leave it, to record several encounters with these interesting ‘anthropophagi,’ I shall…devote this chapter to a few remarks on the nature of the tiger” (163). Anxieties over extended contact reveal themselves through an obsession with the notion of "cannibalism" and that gets linked to the "civilizing" project. Remarkably, conquest and colonization turn to a ready-made vocabulary and simply transpose it to suit their desires in a new environment. In India, the strange application of the word "man-eater" to describe tigers, which later becomes synonymous with tigers, circulates as a signifier for dangerous savagery, which lends itself conveniently as a challenge to a "civilizing" project, so that tigers could come to figure as the native.
An interesting related lexical turn is a conflation of terms—man-eating carnivore and man-eating cannibal—in South Asian languages, too. In the *Practical Hindi-English Dictionary*, the word for man-eater, in romanized form, is *narbhakshi* (751)—the same word refers to both “cannibals” and animals that eat humans. Similarly, in the *Samsad English-Bengali Dictionary*, the Bengali word given is *narbhuk* (661). In Urdu, the word for cannibal is *adamkhor* or literally man-eater. The Sanksrit word for tiger is *vyaghra* (Monier-Williams 1036), for which Viagra, the male arousal pharmaceutical is named, but the Sanskrit word does not necessarily carry the gender or virility reference that the drug promotes, nor does it inherently mean the animal is also a man-eater. The Hindi (511), Bengali (Siddiki 975), and Urdu (Whyte 1107) word for tiger is *bagh*, all three appear to be derived from the Sanskrit word *vyaghra*.

Another lexical connection to tigers in South Asian languages is that the word for tiger, *bagh*, alternates for lions, such as *sher* or *singha*. One explanation for this lexical anomaly is not that Sanskrit based language speakers could not distinguish one animal from the other, but that the animals are highly regarded and respected each for their tremendous beauty, strength, and even supernatural qualities and in that hierarchy or classification system they are parallel and even identical—morphing into each other.

There is, according to Monier-Williams, a literary tradition from the *Atharvaveda* that often mentions a tiger with a lion (1036). A few examples, in translation, from the hymns of the Atharvaveda follow: “Powerful like a tiger is he, he is a lion and a bull in strength”

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6 The Atharvaveda is one of four ancient Sanskrit texts. A few examples from the text follow: “He that wears this talisman, verily is a tiger, a lion as well…”[VIII,5,12]; “(The waters) thus embracing him, the tiger, promote him, the lion, to great good fortune” (IV, 8, 7); and “Presenting the front of a lion do thou devour all (their) people, presenting the front of a tiger do thou strike down the enemies!” [IV, 22, 7]
(Devi VIII, 5, 12, 352); “compassing the tiger, rouse the lion to great joy and bliss” (Devi IV, 8, 7, 110); and “[B]rave like a lion, receive thy share from thy subjects, strong like a tiger drive away thy foemen” (Devi IV, 22, 7, 129). The evocation of the tiger and lion, written distinctly, in these ritual incantations that indicate the religious, magical, and supernatural aspects of the animals, become merged one into the other over time, possibly related to oral transmission over the written. Below are two artistic representations (one from a Mughal manuscript and another from Hindu folk art) depicting this animal “confusion,” where the “tiger” body “wears” a lion’s mane.

FIGURE 3: LION/TIGER IMAGE IN MUGHAL MANUSCRIPT

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In contrast to Devi, the Indian translator, I present Maurice Bloomfield’s 1897 translation (available online at: http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/av.htm) of the same line: “Presenting the front of a lion do thou devour all (their) people, presenting the front of a tiger do thou strike down the enemies!” which uses a more aggressive vocabulary.
It would appear that the artist who created these images are reflecting the native ambiguity about the tiger and lion. In the hunting scene, where the deer are in the background, and the hunting dogs are seated beneath the tree in which the hunter has sought refuge from the “maned” tiger, who raises a paw towards the hunter but does not seem to be particularly threatening to either the other creatures or the hunter. In the folk art image the tiger/lion is protective and represents the god Vishnu in the form of Narasimha—avatar of Vishnu (Aryan 130).

The English term “man-eater” registers tigers as inimical to man. Out of that emerges a fear and anxiety manifest in the ensuing attempt to control the animal and eliminate it from cultivated lands. The tiger hunt then becomes both a tool of extinction and a means of performing and ritualizing the process in heroic terms, as analogous in a way to the colonial process and assumption of power. The British took an existing practice, tiger-hunting, at a time when imperial interests and technology were undergoing important changes. This coincided with their need to demonstrate domination and control in the colony. Naturally, the results on the tiger population were disastrous. Thus, the
term “man-eater”—embedded with anxieties, fears, and horror that threaten authority—provides conceptual justification for the actions and meanings that come together in the practice and representation of tiger hunts.

III. PRE-COLONIAL SPORT HUNTING—SHIKAR

The image of the emperor as heroic hunter was carefully fixed in the minds of the subjects of imperial Rome, just as Persian, Assyrian, and Egyptian rulers had portrayed themselves as brave protectors of their people against ferocious animals that beset them. – John Mackenzie, The Empire of Nature (12)

Superficial, worldly observers see in killing an animal a sort of pleasure, and in their ignorance stride about, as if senseless, on the field of their passions. But deep inquirers see in hunting a means of acquisition of knowledge, and the temple of their worship derives from it a peculiar luster. – Abu al-Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari (292)

Hunting for sport was not a foreign concept prior to the arrival of the British in India. Like the Romans, Persians, Assyrians, and Egyptians before them, the Mughals developed protocols and meanings around tiger hunting. Accounts and images of Mughal emperors and Rajput princes engaged in ceremonial shikar (hunt) abound. One of the best sources on Mughal hunting practices is recorded by Abu al Fazl in Ain-i-Akbari, which lists some of the animals and birds hunted, such as tigers, elephants, leopards, dogs (which he notes “will attack a tiger” [301]), deer, buffalo, hawks, falcons, and waterfowl (Abu al-Fazl 291-308). The hunting party was a grand expedition led by the Mir-i Shikar
(Master of the Hunt), and organized by Qarawals (huntsmen) who surround the
shikargahs (hunting grounds—numerous places reserved for sport). Other members of
the retinue were the Qur (i.e., cooks, bearers, etc.), who were kept at some distance away.
Near them were the grandees who waited for the emperor. Men who looked after things
just sat down and watched, and behind them were the Mir Tuzak ready for service, and
the Khidmatiyya, along with other officers and the emperor’s servants. Only a select
number moved forward on the actual hunt and sometimes the emperor went alone (292-
293). Thus, the whole hunting expedition followed a rather strict social hierarchy that
was traditionally gendered male. ⁸

In addition to the hunting party, Fazl’s section on “Tiger Hunting” lists four
methods for hunting tigers: a large trapping cage in places frequented by tigers; a
poisoned arrow intended for the tiger, a glue covered sheep to bait the tiger—the glue
would aggravate and exhaust the tiger in which case it could be captured alive and tamed;
and lastly the hunter riding a male buffalo getting it to attack the tiger “on its horns, and
toss it violently upwards, so that it dies.” This last method is accompanied with the
enthusiastic claim that “[I]t is impossible to describe the excitement of this manner of
hunting the tiger” (294). The terms of the last description are obviously erotic. The erotic
exhilaration gets duplicated and repeated in British hunting narratives from the nineteenth
and twentieth centuries and those will be discussed later.

For the Mughal emperor Akbar, the location and hunt were not only for the
purpose of amusement but politically strategic. As Fazl notes, “[H]is Majesty always

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⁸ Mackenzie argues that preindustrial European hunting practices were not as gendered
and often required the assistance of women and children.
makes hunting a means of increasing his knowledge, and besides, uses hunting parties as occasions to inquire, without first having given notice of his coming into the condition of the people and the army. He travels incognito, and examines into matters referring to taxation. He lifts up such as are oppressed, and punishes the oppressors” (292). The spectacle of the hunt puts the emperor in among his people, establishes his power and authority, and ultimately serves to ensure that the citizenry pay their taxes.

The Ain-i-Akbari also relates five short narratives of tiger hunting which follow:

(1) One day, notice was given that a man-eating tiger had made its appearance in the district of Bārī. His Majesty got on the elephant, Nāhir Khān, and went into the jungle. The brute was stirred up; and striking its claws in to the forehead of the huge animal, it pulled its head close down to the ground, when the tiger was killed by the men.

(2) On another occasion, his Majesty hunted near Toda. The tiger had stretched one of the party to the ground. His Majesty aimed at the brute, killed it, and thus saved the life of the man.

(3) Once during a qamargha (game is enclosed in a living ring employing drivers) chase, a large tiger was stirred up. The animal attacked his Majesty, when he shot it in time through the head and killed it.

(4) Once a tiger struck his claws into a man. All who witnessed it despaired of his life. His Majesty shot the tiger through the body and released the unfortunate man.
(5) A remarkable scene took place in the forest of Mathura. Shuja'at Khan . . .
who had advanced very far, got suddenly timid. His Majesty remained
standing where he was, and looked furiously at the tiger. The brute cowered
down before that divine glance, and turned right about trembling all over. In a
short time it was killed. (294)

All five stories are accounts of saving a man in a particular location from death when
attacked by a tiger—like hunting, perception of the tiger as man-eater\(^9\) (the term is
mentioned in the first account) may not have been introduced by the British, but a tiger
that ‘attacks’ a man is not always a ‘man-eater.’ This distinction is not usually noted in
narratives because a tiger that attacks a man is assumed to be a man-eater. The
exceptional story is the last one, which is one of Akbar’s “miracles.” No attack occurs in
the encounter between Akbar and the tiger; instead, Akbar thwarts the tiger’s will to
attack through a “divine” gaze and forces the tiger to retreat from humans. This particular
narrative functions to glorify Akbar’s “deed” to a superhuman level, which both favors
and establishes his right to rule as emperor. These stories do not list rapacious kills. In
fact, the opening quote of this section speaks against random killing of any animal simply
for pleasure or sport, and suggests that sport be connected in service to the people. The
hunts were located on the emperor’s hunt preserves where rich and varied wildlife thrived
for the purpose of the hunt, and not in any random forest. (Significantly, some hunting
preserves of Mughal and Rajput royalty became conservation parks in India after

\(^9\) I have used the English translation of the *Ain-i-Akbari* from Persian by H. Blochmann,
and revised by Lieutenant Colonel D.C. Phillott, published by the Royal Asiatic Society
of Bengal in 1927, which makes me question the accuracy of the translation of the word
man-eater in the first account, because the stories are about “attacks” rather than “eating”;
the anxiety of being attacked appears conflated with the fear of being eaten.
independence). The Mughals also showed concern for religious difference by prohibiting hunting near Jain' sacred sites and communities, since the Jain community (Vegans) adheres strictly to the practice of non-violence that prohibits violence towards animals.

In another record of hunting, Memoirs of the Emperor, from the memoirs of Emperor Jahangir (son of Akbar), an avid and accomplished hunter who was not as circumspect about his hunting practices as his father, the following account appears:

As the hour of leave-taking of Kunwar Karan was at hand, I was desirous of showing him my skill in shooting with a gun. Just at this time the qarāwulān (shikaris) brought in news of a tigress. Though it is an established custom of mine only to hunt male tigers, yet, in consideration that no other tiger might be obtained before his departure, I went for the tigress. (Jahangir 286)

Jahangir prefaces his actions with his principle not to shoot tigresses, although this tigress is eventually “shot... in the eye” (287); nevertheless, he does express a deeper understanding that the tigress is necessary for the continued existence of the animal, an important consideration blatantly disregarded by colonial hunters in the nineteenth century. In another detailed tiger hunt account, Jahangir claims a tiger “terrified” and paralyzed the elephant he rode, seriously wounding his hunting party and, finally, had to be killed by someone other than Jahangir, Anup Ray, on whom he bestowed this title—“Singh-dalan,” or tiger-slayer (186-188), evoking the lion-tiger connection mentioned in the lexical analysis earlier. These stories of tiger hunts, I argue, are recast in telling ways in the colonial and post-colonial periods. The narrative script or plot remains similar, but
the actors change, as do the meanings given to hunting, in ways that reveal the internal cultural dynamics of each period.

Jahangir’s hunting prowess is well documented in his memoirs, which state that “[I]n the first twelve years of his reign” he “killed over 17,000 animals” and among these were “86 tigers” (14). Prince Salim, as he was known before his accession as emperor, after which he took the name Jahangir, commissioned a *muraqqa’* (album) or *Shikarnama* (hunting book) to visually represent his skill as a hunter, because, as Elaine Wrights notes in writing on Salim:

For the Mughals . . . hunting was much more than just a favorite pastime: it was an activity imbued with symbolism, the courage and expertise of the royal huntsman a reflection of his capacity to rule. A ruler who exhibited prowess in the hunt was endowed, it was thought, with the requisite, god-given prowess to protect the empire and all those who resided within it.

(Chester Beatty 69)

Unfortunately, only a few works survive from the album, and the one held at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin is a “painting of Salim inspecting his kill, in which a pile of dead rhinoceros and antelope frame the scene of a *shikari* . . . holding up the head of a dead lion for the prince to see” (Muraqqa’ 69). Since most of the *Shikarnama* is lost, images of young Salim’s tiger hunting exploits must be imagined, but written records remain. Before Jahangir and before Akbar, in the mid sixteenth century, Farid Khan (an Afghan) controlled parts of Bihar and Bengal and from there built a short-lived empire that lasted approximately five years. During that period, he introduced important reforms
related to standardizing the monetary system (establishing weight as a measure for the rupee), land reforms, and built strategic roadways, the most famous being the Grand Trunk Road – a highway that ran the breadth of India, from Sonargaon in present day Bangladesh all the way to the Indus in the north—that connected ultimately to the Silk Road. Farid Khan, is better known by the title Sher Shah, which was “conferred upon Farid by Sultan Muhammad Nuhani for having slain a tiger with a sword” (Abbas Khan 85). Akbar had commissioned a history of Sher Shah titled Tarikh-i-Ser Sahi; the word sher in his title is usually translated as “tiger,” except that the tiger/lion confusion persists and some call him the “Lion King.” Significantly, for the argument I want to make, is the way that Rudyard Kipling was inspired by this upstart Pathan warrior, who fought the Mughals and Rajputs to extend the Lodi Afghan empire. As will be discussed in Chapter III, he used a variation of his name, Sher Khan, to name the tiger in The Jungle Book. As discussed in Chapter IV, the re-writing of Sher Khan in anti-colonial writers becomes, in turn, both a turning away from and a return to stories inspired by this powerful King.

In contrast to the anecdotal reference in Tarikh-i-Ser-Sahi of the story behind Sher Shah’s title, the Mughals—Akbar, Jahangir, and others—kept detailed hunting records and observations of what they hunted. Prior to the Mughals, there is a noticeable lack of similar records by earlier Sanskrit historians “who were vegetarian Brahmins,” according Mahesh Rangarajan, and probably not interested or engaged in hunting for sport or subsistence. However, non-Brahmins did engage in subsistence hunting, which Rangarajan noted in this dialogue between Rama and Hanuman: “[M]en used traps, nooses, hid and hunted and killed for meat” (Abbas Khan 8). The emphasis on
subsistence hunting in any period is important, because tigers were hunted more as
trophies than as meat.

The accounts of Akbar and Jahangir indicate that their excessive Mughal hunting
practices were tempered by sympathy for the environment and deeply “imbued with
symbolism.” These apparently contradictory practices, in retrospect, provided for a
balance between man and nature that seems to vanish later. Eventually, the Mughal
hunting techniques of “match-lock and spear, fall-trap and arrow hardly made a dent on
numbers” (Rangarajan OAIW v. 2, 5) of the tiger population, and it did not, at the time,
ensure the Mughal ruling position on the subcontinent, which was gradually (eighteenth-
century) and then suddenly (nineteenth-century) lost. Before the Mughals lost their power
over the subcontinent to the British, there was a period when both the Mughal empire and
British enterprise “coexisted,” and not always peacefully.

The British presence in India began in 1612, with the East India Company. This
mercantile venture, primarily interested in trade, quickly proved profitable. In order to
extend trade, the British built and secured cantonments, initially for storage and short-
term living purposes. Over time, those holdings grew and land and locations upon which
the cantonments sat became occupied by the British. In order to maintain those holdings
and to increase them, the British East India Company began to shift from being a solely
mercantile venture, to a more aggressive acquirer of land and control, which included the
presence of British soldiers (800 according to some records) and native Indian soldiers
(sepoys) in the employ of the British. In 1757, those soldiers led by Lord Robert Clive
(Baron of Plassey) defeated Siraj-ud-daulah of Bengal in the Battle of Plassey (Palashi)
capturing Calcutta, which became the seat of British colonial power in India. Thereafter,
the Anglo-Mysore Wars (1766–1799, which were fought against Tipu Sultan) and the Anglo-Maratha Wars (1772–1818) expanded and consolidated British control of the Deccan. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Sikh Wars established British control of the northwest frontier provinces, Punjab, and Kashmir. By this time, the East India Company, or simply the Company as it was referred to, was a formidable power with tremendous political clout both in India and Britain; it vastly increased England’s wealth of Britain and its populace both at home and abroad, through employment in the Company and in the military, which had grown considerably larger from the approximately 800 soldiers under Clive. British imperial interests in India solidified with the appointment of Warren Hastings as Governor General in 1773, and by the mid-nineteenth century, after the Great Rebellion of 1857 (Sepoy Rebellion, which had its origins in rumors about the ammunitions factory just outside Calcutta in Dumdum), governance shifted from the Company to the British Crown, In 1859 the occupation and colonization of the subcontinent under the Raj was established, state sanctioned, and official.10

This brief summary of the transition of power from the Mughal rulers and various princely states to widespread colonial British control of India over many years shows that the British, Mughals, and other princely rulers, were all operating simultaneously across different areas of the subcontinent, and that they came in frequent contact, both hostile and hospitable, throughout the period. In that time, doubtless, exchanges of ideas and practices occurred, as nothing happens in isolation once cultures come into contact. Many anxieties, both real and imagined, emerge on both sides. However, it is important to see

10 This synopsis of the transition of power from the Mughals to the British derives from chapters 1-2 in Barbara and Thomas Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*. 
how shifts in power relationships produce particular anxieties in different places and cultures. For the British, the real anxiety of being out of their “realm” and having something to prove creates an over-determined response to the unfamiliar and strange environment in which they find themselves, producing a violent reaction to nature in general, and to tigers in particular.

One could say that the British learned about governance from the Mughals who, for centuries, had controlled portions of a country much greater than Britain. One could also say that the British “learned” tiger hunting from the Mughals. However, the process of establishing British authority necessitated a certain distancing, differentiation and separation from the former rulers—the Mughals. In tiger hunting the break in familiarity and continuity from Mughal to British practice, according to colonial wildlife historian John Mackenzie, involved the fusing of “two hunting traditions” (168): one was a mimicry of the spectacular imperial Mughal hunts; the other an aggressive display driven by the need to have “command of the Indian environment” (180). The combination of mimicry and desire for domination produced a bizarre aberration in the practice of tiger hunting. The British formed their own rituals in relation to an almost pathological need to put on display their ability to dominate others, both animal and human. This differed from the Mughal display of prowess, which proceeded from an investment in asserting a symbiotic relation to the natural world and other human beings. Thus, tiger hunting became the site where aggression and mimicry merged to form an uncanny reality. The inner logic of mimicry, as Lacan puts it, suggests a psychological and tactical need to blend into a new setting: “The effect of mimicry is camouflage . . . It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming
mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in warfare” (99). Taking on the look of Mughal practices, but altering the inner logic of those practices, was a way of simultaneously appropriating their position while aggressively exploiting it.

Drawing on Lacan, Homi Bhabha in “Of Mimicry and Men,” critiques the limitations of Indians mimicking Europeans as simply “authorized versions of otherness,” or as “almost the same but not quite” (130). “Mimicry,” Bhabha claims, “emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge . . . it is at once resemblance and menace” (127). Extending Bhabha’s critique—repeated and reversed in another register, not British and Indian, but Mughal and British—the same inferiorities and anxieties of “almost the same but not quite” result in an “ambivalence of colonial authority [that] repeatedly turns from mimicry – a difference that is almost but not quite – to menace – a difference that is almost total but not quite” (132). In the process of appropriation and establishing power “[T]he desire to emerge as ‘authentic’ through mimicry” seems to require violence in order to distance and separate from the original—the violence and rhetoric around tiger hunting gets re-inscribed to establish a new and different power dynamic in the colonial era. Tiger hunting becomes thoroughly appropriated by the British, such that its Mughal antecedents are almost entirely erased and hunting becomes the embodiment of a European practice. This shift is supported by policies and practices that distance and disenfranchise native hunters from colonial hunters, while simultaneously creating an environment for Indian royalty to mimic the colonizer’s hunting practices, in an uncanny circle of mimicry and repetition.

I argue that tiger hunting as practiced by the British is thus haunted by a peculiar history of appropriation. In “Sly Civility,” Homi Bhabha, focusing on colonial relations
related to proselytizing to the native, asks: “Why does the spectre of eighteenth-century despotism—that regime of primordial fixity, repetition, historylessness, and social death—haunt these vigorous nineteenth-century colonial practices of muscular Christianity and the civilizing mission?” (75). The terms “spectre” and “haunt” note the relative closeness and derivative practices of Mughal “despots” and the “vigorous” colonists, but with an important difference in which the latter emphasizes “superiority” and the interest and welfare of the people as “saviour” from the “wild,” “devouring” natural environment. In the process of creating a “new” practice, one that would be distinct from an earlier practice, the British driven by anxiety, rather than enthusiasm, become hostile towards the tiger, and by extension native Indians, killing one in practice for killing the other, in encounters that have become the stuff and remarkable events of history that can only be described as aberrant acts of governance compared to earlier Mughal hunting practices as symbolic expressions of a different sort of “protective” reign. Both mimicry and aberration figure in British “sport” hunting in India. During this period, a major shift occurs from ceremonial to systematic tiger hunting on the South Asian subcontinent. The unregulated and decimating practices of killing tigers, which almost led to their extinction, continued through post-independence, before shifting in the late twentieth century towards conservation and what Rangarajan has called the “Age of Ecology’ (OAIW v. 2, 3).
IV. Colonial Hunting—From Ritualized Hunts to Tiger Scourge

Accounts of exploration, missionary activity and military campaigns, together with biographies, memoirs and popular and juvenile fiction, abound in descriptions of the imperial chase. In addition, soldiers, administrators, professional hunters and wealthy travelers produced a seemingly endless stream of specialized hunting books, many of them dressed up as natural history. – John Mackenzie, The Empire of Nature

As John Mackenzie accurately observes above, there exists an extensive body of literature of first person narratives of hunting in general, and of tiger hunting in particular: in India, the tiger hunt became the ultimate hunting scene for displaying bravery and authority, and for establishing dominion over the lands. This required at once establishing the worthiness of the tiger as adversary, and asserting authority and power over it. Since tiger hunting was an established Mughal enterprise, it involved as well initially learning from local hunting practices and progressively appropriating them and turning them toward British imperial ends. Many critics have commented on these processes, but, as Mackenzie notes, a detailed look at “[T]he animals themselves, hunting techniques, and the complex set of social relations surrounding them, have inspired little interest” (7). Recently, however, environmental historians, such as Mahesh Rangarajan and anthropologists, such as Anand Pandian and Shafqat Hussain, have provided interesting perspectives on hunting in colonial India with connections to politics and power shifts, modernity and technology, society and British ideas of masculinity, and the environment.

The shift from Mughal rule and ceremonial hunts to ‘modern,’ ritualized tiger hunting, the killing of tigers, I argue, captures the colonial project at a critical moment in
history. That project, and resistance to it, gets represented in both narrative and visual forms in complicated and inter-related ways, in which the texts themselves inform, instruct and even mimic each other.

At the heart of this analysis is a recognition of the ways that the hunts figure the transition of power and its symbols from the Mughals to the British. In both cases, as Anand Pandian argues, hunting is established as a social function—the hunter assumes the power to protect the vulnerable public from the predations of the tiger. Power legitimates itself through what Pandian calls “predatory care” (80). For Pandian, the British attempt to distinguish themselves as more caring and democratic towards Indians than the Mughals, who they picture as strictly disciplinary and despotic: such an insistence on despots reinforces Bhabha’s comments earlier on the “spectre of eighteenth-century depostism.” Displacing and delegitimizing Mughal authority is crucial to an anticipated shift in power—Mughal to British—and the hunt provides a site for that change, carrying with it a host of anxieties and ambivalences related to the uncanny processes of colonialism driven by a fear of the loss of the colonizers identity and the desire to differentiate from and dominate the native.

Looking further into the comparison between pre-colonial, or “imperial,” hunts to the “spectacles of responsible force” of “[T]he British pursuit of maneaters” (79), Pandian claims that for the successive ruling powers, Mughals and British, “hunting practices were neither accidental nor arbitrary” (80), and that the hunting practices of the Mughal rulers, especially Akbar, and British colonial officers were the “most violent and visible spectacles of authority” (80), but they notably differed in some very important ways. The Mughal imperial hunt was an extension of the ‘garden of empire’—a term that
Pandian uses to distinguish Mughal form of governance from British. The Mughals, according to Pandian, “took grandees, warlords and petty potentates as the preeminent objects” for “cultivating their faithful loyalty through the spectacular exercise of … sovereignty” (81); in contrast, the colonial hunt was “[T]he ritualized pursuit of man-eating felines by British officials and soldiers” in search of “the hearts of wary and non-cooperative colonial subjects, facilitating the pastoral governance of wild peripheries” (81). Changes in tiger hunting practices, as a sign of power and authority from within institutional structures for the Mughals to revised symbols of power on the periphery for the British, are harbingers of the political transition from Imperial Mughal to colonial British in nineteenth century India. As Joseph Sramek argues, the British “consciously sought to emulate the Mughals and other Indian rulers by killing tigers…in the course of destroying these animals, they were also symbolically staging the defeat of …Indian rulers who dared to get in the way of Britain’s imperial conquest of India” (661). Thus, tiger hunting is easily read as an act of empire building, echoing John Mackenzie’s extensive work on the subject.

V. IMPACT OF MODERNITY AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS ON TIGER HUNTING

Parallel to the political power shifts from the Mughals to the British, the nineteenth-century was also a period of practical innovations as a direct result of the industrial revolution in Europe. One of the most significant technological innovations in relation to hunting was in weaponry, which served to “modernize” the hunt, making it easier to kill big game, marking a significant shift in the struggle for position on the food
chain between man (typically a British military officer or native royalty) and tiger to one that is less even, switching obviously in favor of man.

Joseph Sramek poses the question of how Mughal hunting was “markedly different from the later version of the sport?” (663), and his answer is the Mughal use of low technology weaponry, mainly “smooth-bore, muzzle loading muskets” that had a short range of fifty to 100 yards. Such weaponry required hunters to ride atop elephants in order to remain “safely above the typical range of a tiger’s spring . . .” (663), which became less necessary with the introduction of faster automatic rifles in the mid-nineteenth century. The innovations of modernity give the colonizers an edge in the colonizing process—alongside the modernization of weaponry came the development of railways.

In fact, the story of the Indian railways, as a sign of modernity, is closely connected to human labor and tiger hunting, and linked to my own history—my maternal grandfather and my uncles were all employed by the Indian Railways, as were many other Anglo-Indians.\textsuperscript{11} On the three-day journeys from Delhi to Calcutta, and from Calcutta to Kurseong the railway stations from my memory of Howrah, Sealdah and Assansol join with stations in Lucknow, Ajmer and Jalpaiguri to thousands of others that systematically linked remote and urban parts of the subcontinent in one of the most extensive transportation systems in the world. Old railway hands, engineers and other employees, shared their stories of encounters with tigers orally with family and friends. In my experience, the most memorable is the story told by a family friend, remembered

\textsuperscript{11}Anglo-Indians refers to mixed race Indians many of whom were educators and worked on the Indian Railways.
all these many years later, simply as Mr. King, who had an appointment on the railways and was stationed in Assansol in West Bengal. As I recall, he was on a shoot in the jungle and encountered a tiger that appeared to be in distress—the details of the distress are lost, but Mr. King “saved” the tiger and each went on their way. Years later, Mr. King, now retired and living in Calcutta, took his family to the circus where they had front row seats. One of the circus acts involved a tiger. As soon as the tiger came into the ring it hesitated and then walked right up to Mr. King and sat down in front of him, terrifying the rest of the audience while paying an homage to Mr. King for his act of kindness in their jungle encounter, years earlier. I was ten or eleven when I heard this story—gullible and completely taken in by every word. Mr. King was one of the best storytellers I have known, but it was not long before I recognized him to be an exaggerator and teller of tall tales, who took an age-old ‘act of kindness’ tale and retold it by connecting it to his life and work in India, Bengal, and tigers—a story that was simultaneously entertaining, memorable, and incredible.

The Indian railway system was proposed in 1843 by Lord Dalhousie, Viceroy of India and former British Board of Trade member. A proponent of the railways, Dalhousie spoke glowingly of “[T]he complete permeation of these climes of the sun by a magnificent system of railway communication” (Vaidyanathan 2), which was developed primarily for economic reasons, as stated in Dalhousie’s Minute on Introduction of Railways in India in 1850 requesting extensions of lines: “The great advantage which would result alike to the community and to the enterprises which opened up the Coal fields, from the early completion of a speedy cheap and certain access for the Coal to the port of Calcutta” (Srinivasan 28). The story of the Indian railway, as a sign of modernity
and progress, simultaneously served to undermine and transform the environment by creating much easier and faster access through and into the remote habitat and haunts of tigers.

Soon after the proposal to build a railroad was accepted and work began, the Rebellion of 1857 resulted in restrictions on Indians being armed. Legislation in the form of the Forest Act further limited the hunting practices of natives, such as the Bhils and Gonds. State-regulated policies made hunting by these communities illegal. The disenfranchisement from the land made it easy for the British to recruit from these communities to work on the railroads, and support extractive colonial ventures using displaced native Indians as labor to cultivate the poppy fields for the opium industry and tea gardens to meet the worldwide demand for tea. As a result, Bhils and Gonds were recruited and sold into indentured labor to work in the British colonies, in Africa, Trinidad, and Fiji. My research has shown an unexpected triangulation between tiger-hunting, the community of Bhils and Gonds, and British imperial and colonial projects, as well as the transition of tiger hunting as a more exclusively British practice. This last transition, as William Storey notes in his comparison of colonial big game hunting in various locations from the 1890s to the 1930s, expresses the “White man’s burden”: whether one is talking about hunting lions in Kenya or tigers in India, the British aim is to dominate natives and nature, or to dominate natives as part of nature. Nevertheless, this is also a period when Indian resistance to colonialism intensifies, prompted by a series of “protective” colonial policies and changes in native hunting to a more racialized, exclusive practice, while retaining the gendered aspect of the activity, with a few notable exceptions, such as the Rani of Jhansi.
VI. CONSTRUCTING BRITISH MASCULINITY IN RELATION TO TIGER HUNTING

Clearly, tiger hunting was primarily the domain of masculine activity in Mughal and British colonial society. However, the sport played an important role in the construction of British imperial masculinity as tiger hunting became a ‘naturalized’ activity of the British in India, and these ideas of masculinity were transmitted and circulated through a variety of texts. Tiger hunting, as Joseph Sramek (who covers the period 1800-1875) describes it, is gendered through-and-through, and connected to the British arrogation of authority, both toward Indians and toward itself. It is not just authority that is established, but male authority, an ego-ideal of how being a particular kind of masculine figure legitimates the role and function of the nineteenth-century colonist. Sramek thus reads the tiger hunts in relation to constructions of British masculinity in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, which, he claims, develops into a rhetoric of British nationalistic superiority.

The kind of nationalistic cant that Sramek identifies is evident in colonial memoirs from the era. In Walter Campbell’s *My Indian Journal* (1864), he states that one should “[N]ever attack a tiger on foot—if you can help it. There are cases in which you must do so. Then face him like a Briton, and kill him if you can; for if you fail to kill him, he will certainly kill you” (162). This is the closing paragraph of a chapter preceding one that is an exposition on the “character” of the tiger as justification for the British “philosophy” on hunting in the colony. Campbell’s evocation of a national ideal (“face him like a Briton, and kill him if you can”) is the basis of Sramek’s argument that “tiger
hunting was an important symbol in the construction of British imperial and masculine identities during the nineteenth century” (659), and he goes on to say that “[O]nly by successfully vanquishing tigers would Britons prove their manliness and their fitness to rule over Indians” (659). While the British are on tiger hunting “missions,” native Indians are consciously feminized,¹² and the Mughal empire represented as “decaying”—together such tropes work as a strategy to establish a new “protective” British authority.

The construction of British masculinity required a distancing from the Mughal and princely practices. According to James Tod, in Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, British writing from this period increasingly accuses Indian nobles of letting their hunting preserves become “over-populated with tigers and other wild beasts, thus endangering the welfare of local villagers” (v. 2, 751). Although Sramek claims that, initially, the Anglo-Indian relationship between hunters was one of admiration and mutual respect, it is a short time before the “lazy” gentry transitions to the “lazy native”; while the “strength” of mind and “stalwart” spirit of the British hunter is being developed through letters, diaries, and other “memoirs” of hunting that circulate back to Britain to establish and reinforce false ideas of supremacy both over the native and nature. Interestingly, ideas of supremacy were not exclusively between Anglos and Indians, for in the construction of British masculinity, as related to tiger hunting, a hierarchy existed between British hunters and British "paper pushing" colonial administrators in the city. This hierarchy put the hunter in the superior position—when tiger hunting, as John Mackenzie notes, was preferred to administrative duties and “[M]any officials cast their accounts of their time in India in the form of sporting memoirs, relegating work to the sidelines, as a

¹² See Mrinalani Sinha’s work in Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate" Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Century.
disagreeable duty to be fitted in among hunting experiences” (168). In some rare instances, the native hunter was more highly regarded than the “paper pushing” colonial administrators, gaining some small cultural prestige, though not political capital.

The relationship of British colonials to Indian hunters was, initially, more favorable. As Sramek notes, “[T]hese perceptions of total Indian helplessness were important to British notions that only they could truly be relied upon to kill tigers. At the same time, however, these notions were at odds with numerous instances of Indians who actively defended themselves” (669). As the construction of British masculinity became normalized, their denigration of Indians, elites and laymen, which eventually included native hunters on whom they had relied so heavily, became more obviously and disturbingly hateful. However, Sramek shows the “numerous, varied, and complex interactions between Britons and Indians” that gets submerged by the violence that emerges in the rhetoric of masculinity and nationalistic superiority that marks the writing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of the colonial period. Tangentially connected to that violence and British ideas of masculinity is the addition of anti-sodomy laws to the Indian Penal Code (section 377) in 1860-61. This law has no precedent in the Indian legal system and lends itself to being read as British anxiety over same-sex relationships. It is unclear whether same-sex attractions between British men and Indians provoked the law, or whether the attempt to codify in law homosocial anxiety was a response to observed behaviors among Indians or the British. However, given the general climate of homoeroticism that exists in many hunting narratives, one might posit that the laws were a response to intimacies observed in the field. Strangely, the anti-sodomy laws
(which were repealed) fueled homophobic responses from Indians, who were suspicious of the new laws and the intentions of the British.

As in many contexts in which male-male relationships in situations that preclude woman’s presence and involve demonstration of prowess, the hunts draw men toward “friendship” that borders on the homoerotic. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Sedgwick concentrates on the nineteenth century as a time when, after the specification of the homosexual, “male homosexual panic” became a crucial element in the construction of masculinity and the closet (12-13). Sedgwick describes a “plot” in which the masculine is drawn toward the masculine and panics at its own attraction. For Sedgwick this dynamic of desire was particularly pronounced in the Victorian period, given the general restiveness around sexuality. Philip Holden spells out the connections to colonial masculinity still more fully: “[J]ust as the colonized in the colonial narrative must be both acknowledged and disavowed . . . similar yet so different, so the homosexual must be excluded within heterosexual masculinity” (xii). The construction of heterosexual masculinity thus masks and mirrors homosexuality and is founded, to some extent, on Victorian anxiety and panic about homosexual expression.

Related to Sramek’s work, but taking a different approach, Shafqat Hussain argues that the masculinist claims of British hunters, in fact, stood on extremely shaky grounds of “fairness”—a concept that was “often suspended and violated” in the process of “constructing the hierarchical identities of the colonized and the colonizers” (113), especially in regards to trophy hunting (an important aspect of tiger hunting to be taken up later), which could not have been achieved without indigenous collaboration. Hussain discusses the differences between the views of indigenous hunters and the British towards
the environment and towards the prey. In the period before the establishment of the Raj, the British and Indian interaction was greater, because there was a greater dependency on natives to guide, carry food and supplies, and ensure the safety and security of the British hunter in the jungles of India.

VII. **Bounty Hunting Impact on the Environment and Wildlife**

The environment and wildlife preoccupy the writing of Mahesh Rangarajan, a nature historian, whose work on the wildlife of India informs everyone interested in the subject without exclusion; his insights on important ecological shifts are crucial to this work as well. Rangarajan credits the Mughals “penchant for record-keeping in both the written word and in the form of portraiture,”—which “arose from a heightened sense of curiosity and a deep sense of history” (IWH 19-20)\(^\text{13}\)—for records, such as Salim’s *Shikarnama*, that provide detailed, and often unexpected depictions of the time period. Rangarajan brings attention to “the range of observations . . . the hunting techniques of the tribals and the myriad ways of tracking down tigers” (IWH 20), and “Mughal techniques of observation and record,” which were remarkably detailed and, as he puts it, “could be the envy of the modern zoologist and the emotions expressed would be familiar to today’s animal lover” (IWH 15). Rangarajan also recognizes the contributions of British—i.e., “Corbett did more than catalogue and study animals in the wild” (IWH 70), and Forsyth’s observations of wildlife on tiger hunting expeditions—naturalists to the

\(^{13}\) Rangarajan also recognizes the contributions of Indians to the archives, such as Mansur who provided the “first accurate record” of the dodo when it arrived in Jahangir’s court [19].
archives and conservation of Indian wildlife. By acknowledging the contributions of the colonizer to important records of the environment, Rangarajan provides a balanced perspective that is insightful on many levels.

The transition from big-game hunting excesses to conservation has been described by William Beinart as follows: “Europeans first slaughtered game animals to the point of excess, then became more sensitive to the ecological problems involved in doing this, and eventually became ardent, but belated conservationists, the ‘penitent butchers’” (86). William Storey suggests that “colonial big-game hunting was an ‘invented’ tradition, appropriated from the original inhabitants of the colonies and reinterpreted” as an affirmation of “European power over Indian and African labor, often employing hundreds of servants to wait on few white huntsmen in the field” (137). The introduction of labor to support colonial (ad)ventures, is inscribed into tiger hunts as well. Where the hunter goes, a native work force goes as well. Where the tiger is displaced, it is partly to make way for development and mercantile systems on the subcontinent. The decimation or removal of tigers is thus connected to the history of developing new agricultural zones and railway systems to transport goods and peoples (Kerr 10).

Parallel to the development of railroads and extensive agricultural endeavors, including opium fields and tea gardens, the colonial government passed the Forest Act of 1878, which allowed for “the annexation of vast tracts of woodland, jungle, and hill . . . one-fifth of the land in British India had been declared government forest” (Rangarajan IWH 49) and gave the colonial government absolute authority over forest resources, such as timber, large quantities of which were used to build the Indian railways. This Act was not in the least protective of forests, but provided the basis for enacting and implementing
colonial policies of extraction, one consequence was bounty hunting allowing the state to offer “bounties” for the “extermination” of tigers and when “. . . larger rewards were given out for killing tigresses, and special prizes for finishing off cubs” (Rangarajan IWH 23) that blatantly disregarded Jahangir’s sentiment towards not hunting tigresses.

Bounty hunting was a huge break from the Hindu “association of . . . the elephant or the tiger with divinity” (Rangarajan IWH 9), and the hunting excesses of the Mughals—Jahangir and Akbar—paled in comparison to the indiscriminate tiger hunts spurred by bounty. Native practices—living with tigers and adapting to them, rather than engaging, enraging, and exterminating—were considered ignorant and superstitious. In some parts of India, “the tiger was viewed with almost religious awe, with residents hesitant to even take its name lest it do them harm. Villagers often viewed the great cats with ‘remarkable indifference’” and a “fair degree of tolerance” (Rangarajan IWH 30). Mughal hunting practices with respect for continuity of species are ignored, and bounty hunting takes out all the stops with the hunter single-mindedly hurtling forward in an over-determined aberrant manner, producing a rhetoric of violence and annihilation the spectre of which continues to haunt to this day.

Quickly, the spectacular, ritualized Mughal hunt devolved into indiscriminate slaughter of tigers by British hands during their colonial rule, and further marked racial domination “in the course of the nineteenth century,” including the appropriation of the terms “shikar (hunting) and shikari (hunter)” (MacKenzie 169) by the British in India. “After the 1870s,” MacKenzie writes, “during a period of ‘imperial bombast’ hunting practices became extravagant and excessive” (170) and “shikari stories became the prime preoccupation of male conversation in club mess and dinner party” (176). The idea for
“sporting men” to have a place to “discuss exploits in the field,” Callum McKenzie tells us, had circulated since the 1850s but had to wait to be realized in 1908 when the Shikar Club was established in London (70).

Bounty hunting had some bizarre proponents. In 1874, Major Tweedie, in connection to “exterminating” tigers in India, made this cracked pot comparison to moles and rabbits in England with tigers and snakes in India:

It becomes a question how far it would not be well to employ in each region where necessity exists a certain number of paid tiger-killers or snake-destroyers . . . whose sole and special duty would be to follow their vocation just like the mole-catcher and rabbit-killer in our country. If the extermination of creatures . . . were taken up as systematically in India as…in England, there is no reason why very satisfactory results should not be obtained.” (Rangarajan IWH 22)

Tweedie’s remarks bring to mind these comments by Bhabha where “the problem of truth turns into the troubled political and psychic questions of boundary and territory: Tell us why you, the native, are there . . . The colonialist demand for narrative carries, within it, its threatening reversal: Tell us why we [the colonists] are here” (“Civility” 78). They were there—in India—to “save” the Indians from the “maneating” predator—the tiger, and “[S]tories of their hunts . . . figured in after-dinner anecdote alongside tales of military campaigns. The tiger was the prime example of a lawless beast, whose conquest was held to be among the greatest blessings conferred by the Pax Brittanica” (IWH 25). Such stories are indicative of a culture that Callum McKenzie suggests was the basis for
“The Shikar Club,” which was an “organisation[s] marshaled to protect, encourage or celebrate the killing of wildlife for sport” (70) and for celebrating the “virility” of big-game hunting and the opportunity to share stories fostering fraternalism where the sharing of the hunting tale was likely to be a tall one.

Tiger hunters, sports hunters, bounty hunters, one and all, echo Akbar’s erotic exhilaration of tiger hunting. Accounts by British hunters are filled with references and sexual overtones of the hunting experience—thrill of the chase, an example of which follows.

Although some of the finest features of the sport are lost by pursuing this method of shooting from trees, yet there is something indescribably exciting in watching for a tiger’s approach. I have seen and shot many; and yet, to the last, the jungle king always burst upon my sight with a startling shot, that must be felt to be conceived. The noble brute, in all the consciousness of his tremendous strength, stand, in striped beauty, before you . . . [T]here he stands for an instant, full of life, a model of strength and activity combined.” (Campbell 164)

Juxtaposed to the rhetoric of virility, and from the same text, comes this comment about the tiger: “. . . a cowardly, treacherous, and bloodthirsty animal” and “sneaking, solitary maneater” (164), and “cunning, silent, savage enemy.” As Rangarajan notes, the “relative shyness of the animal was read as a sign of its essentially depraved nature” (IWH 25). The excitement of killing the tiger and the reason for killing it has the effect of reinforcement of the practice—a chilling “protective” prospect.
Thus, the bounty hunters, the disarming of native hunters, and the colonial government taking control of forests for extractive purposes, all contributed to and resulted in the development of a rhetoric and representation of tigers in tiger hunt accounts, which probably began as speech and story-telling and then got transferred into written records and documentation, which functioned to support and construct a travelling national identity that disseminated both in the colonies and the colonial homeland. In the case of tiger hunts of the imperial period those stories and accounts, told and written in English, circulated in Britain and helped to construct British national and masculine identities, which then gets re-cycled back into the colonies in a seemingly uninterrupted continuous line that eclipses the history of exchange and mimicry that preceded the state sponsored violence of colonialism and even becomes absorbed into native accounts in an endless cycle of mimicry and inter-textuality.

To cover a wide range of historical, political, and conservation background related to tigers—from the pre-colonial period onwards—is important for indexing the importance of tigers to the imagination against their presence in the material world, and serves to elucidate the particular ways in which they are framed. By the nineteenth century tiger-hunting shot out of control—the tiger population was decimated, and the British colony in India was established and resisted. These processes are registered in a wide array of texts about tiger hunts and other “sporting” stories and their re-articulation in British stories. The issues raised by scholars, such as Pandian, Rangarajan, Sramek, Mackenzie and others, are critical to understanding the phenomenon of tiger hunting and the various responses, British and Indian, to the seemingly rapid material changes of the nineteenth century as the basis for colonial tiger h(a)unting practices in India that
transformed the figure of the tiger practically into a ghost—moving the animal towards extinction in the material world but increasing its presence in the imagination.
CHAPTER II

CATCH THE TIGER BY THE TALE: LITERARY PURSUITS OF TIGERS IN THE COLONY AND POSTCOLONY

Tigers figure prominently in the literatures of many countries, often in ways that relate to cosmological, historical, and conceptual frameworks. During the colonial period in India, I argue, traditional representations of tigers become shot through with new associations, a process whose dynamics are seen most clearly at work in the tiger hunting and sporting narratives—what I call “tiger texts”—that proliferated during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In these texts, broadly speaking, one can trace a process through which British colonial writers appropriate Mughal structures of representation, while developing representations that bespeak their own self-fashioning and entanglements in the colonial process. Tiger texts of the sort focused on in this dissertation are marked by repetition, mimicry, elaboration—they change in relation to history, with each era adapting and redirecting tropes about tigers and tiger hunting that, over time, accrue meanings for both the colonizer and colonized. Various perspectives toward nature and tigers merge into a web of reproductions, producing a history that gets written on and about the land, in which the tiger stands in as a figure for economies and ecologies of fear and conquest.

This chapter seeks to understand ways in which tiger texts circulated and proliferated, carrying with them an attendant function to recruit readers into ideological complicity. Edward Said describes such networks of inter-confirming representations in Orientalism as a “textual attitude” that occurs “when a human being confronts at close
quarters something relatively unknown and threatening and previously distant” (93). In such cases, Said argues, the perceiver “has recourse not only to what in one’s previous experience the novelty resembles but also to what one has read about it . . . [T]he idea . . . is that people, places and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book acquires authority, and use, even more than the actuality it describes” (93).

When it comes to tigers and tiger hunting, the textual attitude that Said presents is not exclusive to the colonizer and, in fact, includes native readers and writers.

To analyze the form and scope of “textual attitudes” towards tigers, this chapter tracks several lines of texts about tigers and tiger hunting. These include hunting or sporting accounts by William Campbell, A.A. Dunbar Brander, Jim Corbett, and Arthur Strachan, which are situated in relation to the accounts by Dean Mahomet and Sir William Jones; juvenile fictions by Rudyard Kipling (The Jungle Book), read alongside Rabindranath Tagore (He/Shey); and a novella by Satyajit Ray (The Bengal Tiger Mystery). The “hunt”-narrative emerges as exemplary of the apprehensions focalized through the tiger. The attempt to show mastery over what poet William Blake referred to as the “fearful symmetries” embodied by the tiger can be seen as a constituent product of colonial imagining. Colonial sporting narratives, literally about the “hunting” of tigers, in that sense act as figurations of the dynamics of colonial pursuits as well.

I. **Hunting (for) Stories**

As long as game exists upon our planet there will be men whose special mission is to make war upon it, and as long as great hunters exist nobody
The British colonial tiger hunting narratives tellingly evoke and to a degree mimic the sentiments expressed in Persian by Mughal historians and hagiographers from the sixteenth century, which include representations of tigers as anthropomorphic and anthropophagic. The Mughal texts in particular perpetuate patriarchal values by portraying the hunt as an extension of an authority that rests, in part, on the need for masculine protection from danger through violence. Such protection against what threatens to rend or consume vulnerable, common people takes the form of benevolent domination and control. To provide effective protection, the Mughal rulers must evolve a system of surveillance, as well as systems of representation that present their actions against the terror of tigers as adventurous and heroic.

In adapting such features of Mughal tiger-texts to British aims and practices, significant differences emerged. Like the Mughals, the British present hunting as an image of necessary domination; however, in the British hunting narratives, authority and domination are more diffused (all British gentlemen might take up hunting) and represent a double-system of power, at the base of which is the notion of one nation coming to provide order and authority to another, rather than simply defending the people against (their own) “nature.” The British recast such dynamics as sporting events in which there is a proper order of “being sporting” – a narrative involving event, colonial personhood, and the (wild) antagonist. Particular narrative structures and investments emerge, which model ways of being a colonizer as a performance of masculine composure under
For the Mughals, tiger hunting remained an exclusive activity of the most privileged and high ranking Mughal aristocrats and emperors, so their written accounts are relatively few and limited to imperial histories. By comparison, as John Mackenzie argues, big game hunting in the colonial period was popularized as “the standard recreation” of men employed in the colonial establishment—civilian, military, and forestry (168). Every colonial hunter, in that sense, assumes the courage and command of the Mughals in the act of replacing them. This is a kind of admiring mimicry that appropriates the function of the Mughals, while reimagining these functions in relation to modernity and to regimes of knowledge that it both represents and defends.

Colonial British subjects in India—educated men who converted their diaries, field notes, and other accounts into machismo texts—were responsible for the proliferation of tiger hunting narratives published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The interest and market for their works, a regime of tiger texts, clearly reflects the way the colonial representational system was kept in motion through the production and reproduction of desires felt by reader-citizens in the colonial centers. John Mackenzie summarizes this mutually-confirming (and even circular dynamic) of production and reception as follows: “judging by reprints and new editions, this hunting literature sold well. It fed a market for the combination of natural history and tales of hunting exploits that were the accomplishments, real and imagined, of talented imperial amateurs and their readership” (168). A reader might dream of joining the colonial project and proving his own mettle; were he to do so, there were existing and evolving models for proper
behavior. The more texts were published, the more authority the genre accrued. In colonial hunting reading-lists, for instance, hunters referred to each other. In his Preface to *Wild Animals of Central India*, for instance, A. A. Dunbar Brander signs his text in relation to the “various accounts of sport and animals . . . mostly emanating from Bengal,” in a literary register that includes: “Baldwin, Blyth, Williamson, Rice, Shakespeare, Burton, Macmaster, Kinloch, Campbell, Barras, Hawkeye, Hume, Hodgson, Forsyth, Gordon Cumming, Sterndale, Simson, Sanderson, Jerdon, Pollok, Hamilton, Ball, Elliot, Leveson, Baker, Pollock, and Macintyre” (vii-viii). Such a roll might reference texts across colonial locations – for instance William Baldwin and Audley Blyth hunted mostly in South Africa.\(^{14}\) But tiger hunting centrally occupies the British colonial imagination, as seen in the titles of some “classics” of the genre: William Rice (*Tiger-shooting in India; being an account of hunting experiences on foot in Rajpootana, during the hot seasons, from 1850 to 1854, 1857*), William Campbell (*My Indian Journal*, 1864), William Gordon-Cumming (*Wild men and Wild Beasts*, 1873), Thomas Williamson and Samuel Howitt (*Illustrations of Indian Field Sports*, 1892), G. P. Sanderson (*Wild Beasts of India*, 1912), A. E. Stewart (*Tiger and Other Game*, 1927), F. W. Champion (*The Jungle in Sunlight and Shadow*), and Jim Corbett (*Man-eaters of India*, 1957). All of these texts represent the tiger as monstrous and magnificent, implicitly connected with the hidden and threatening qualities of India itself; and they characteristically employ inter-textual strategies of mimicry, repetition, and elaboration. This chapter focuses on the accounts of William Campbell, A. A. Dunbar Brander, Jim

\(^{14}\) Blyth died in a mysterious hunting accident that inspired Hemingway’s “The Short, Happy Life of Macomber,” a self-legendizing but sexually anxious account of a couple during an African safari.
Corbett, Dean Mahomet, Arthur Strachan, and Sir William Jones, whose works range from the seventeenth century through the twentieth century, as indexes of the ways that tiger hunting tropes developed and accrued meaning over time, and as illustrations of the senses in which narrators of tiger hunts imagined their accounts as having a pedagogical function. Colonial behavior and attitudes were at once formed, confirmed, and valorized.

At the same time, colonialism itself works through surveillance and the development of forms of monitoring the behavior of natives, and thus diminishing their autonomy. Often in tiger hunting texts this involves modeling scenes of native submission to the monitoring “gaze” of the colonist. The Indian who looks up admiringly at the British Hunter is both under his gaze and confirming of it. One can see this attitude moving from the institution to the self, as both the Indians and the British develop roles in relation to each other. Literary texts frame, enact, and recruit readers into this order of relations. They present the hunt as both a necessity and a model. Within these dynamics, one might see “optics” as emblematic: one recurrently “reads” about (or visually engages) the mechanics of who looks, how the gaze is directed, and from where. The process at the same time suggests monitoring at many levels, moving from external control to a regime in which positions are internalized and become self-perpetuating.

In "Panopticism" and "Science and Knowledge," Michel Foucault most explicitly suggests how scientific literatures—accounts of systems of surveillance, medical science, and classifying systems—were established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe. Through contact and colonialism, they travelled and became established ways to contain and control colonized communities all over the world. Foucalt’s work demonstrates that scientific knowledge is not devoid of political intentions, and that
science has been an important intellectual tool of colonial control and domination. However, the colonial gaze is never monolithic or wholly one-directional; rather, the colonial gaze can be used against itself within native forms of resistance and agency, and even turned in such a way as to undermine colonial authority. Insurgent texts often use this reversal as a central strategy.

Tiger texts register processes of picturing native participation in constituting the authority of non-native hunters as protective, scientifically advanced, and authoritative. The insidious apparatus of surveillance, whether disguised or obvious and manipulated for private or governmental control, is a recurring theme and expression of anxiety in tiger tales. Foucault foregrounds the history of anxiety at the base of the machineries of surveillance in his essay "Panopticism." Taking his title from Bentham's prison design, Foucault begins with a discussion of the plague and the role that containing the disease played in establishing a system that "segmented" and "immobilized" people so that violating the restriction carried with it the risk of "contagion, punishment, and possibly death" (195). The “success” of containment to control the plague resulted in a perfect set of control mechanisms, which were further developed to contain and restrict people for other reasons and became the basis for incarceration and prisons on a large and wide scale. It was also the basis of the development of "surveillance based on systems of permanent registration" whereby "individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the center and periphery" (197).

Foucault's critique of systems of surveillance exposes how the systems were developed out of a need to contain disease, and then developed further to punish and
discipline people in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe. This system extended beyond Europe and became much more widespread under colonial rule. Foucault goes on to note that the contemporary application of surveillance “is evidence of the imaginary intensity” that it had developed over a period of two hundred years,” which he sees as a threat that "must be detached from any specific use" (205). Systems of surveillance and containment continue to develop in sophisticated and crude ways to effectively control society in a dominating one-way exchange. Systems of surveillance are connected to forms of knowledge as well as behavior that may be developed in one location and that could have very different consequences when applied in another location. In these senses, Foucault’s description of regimes of surveillance applies well to tiger hunting narratives in South Asia. Careful readings of these texts indicate how systems of surveillance are initiated by anxiety, but ultimately create a greater anxiety and threat in the process of maintaining themselves as elaborate systems. In Jim Corbett’s story of “The Kumaon Maneater” and Satyajit Ray’s novella *The Bengal Tiger Mystery*, people are shown as regulated by the idea that they are being watched and evaluated. In this sense, there seems to be an important continuity between Jim Corbett’s role as a British spy and his narration of hunting expeditions.

At the same time, the underlying anxieties and fantasies of the unfamiliar are inscribed into acts of surveillance itself, along with prescriptions for addressing and rooting out the “necessity” that brings the British to India in the first place. For something to warrant oversight and acts of overseeing there must be something unruly in it that threatens to get out, that must be monitored until it can become self-monitoring, a point recurrently deferred. The trope of projecting threat onto tigers and reading them back—of
seeing the tiger as the natural double of the native, and of a wildness within—is strikingly evident in the tendency in tiger-hunting texts to anthropomorphize tigers. In sections like “On Tigers,” chapter ten of Walter Campbell’s My Indian Journal, the tiger is described as “skulking brute,” “hungry devil” whose behavior is marked by “cowardice” and “cunning” (164). The tiger attacks innocent, helpless villagers in what amounts to a kind of devious bullying: it is a “strong aggressive brute” that requires commensurately “aggressive” counterforce, like the British, who are equipped to “scourge” the “scourge.” The dynamics are dramatized as a kind of “theater,” at once an arena of conflict and a scene of spectacle:

The hungry devil knows well that he is an easy prey, for many a human skeleton lies bleaching in her den; she creeps towards her unconscious victim with the soft and noiseless tread of a cat—her long tail switches from side to side—her sharp claws dart from their velvet sheath—the devil is roused within, and glares in her flaming eyeballs—she throws herself forward with a lashing bound—and the stricken wretch is writhing in her fatal grasp; while with closed eyes and a low growl, expressive of savage delight, she sucks the warm blood from his mangled throat. (165)

An aura of horror fiction and eroticism dominates this anecdote. Except for the reference to the cat, the account could be about a female Dracula, evoking such images as “velvet sheath” to “flaming eyeballs,” and sucking “warm blood.” This highly embellished account relies on fictional strategies and suggests a range of investments that go beyond verisimilitude. The passage is literary, visual, perhaps psychosexual, and, most strikingly, presented as entertainment. It is as if the writer has become caught up in his own
defensive fantasy – the fear of being ravished by a “savage delight,” an occasion demanded by the trials of colonial manhood. One could posit that the narrative draws on strategies of entertainment to obfuscate, even from the self, the dangers necessary to justify the colonial project to those at home enjoying the economic benefits of colonization; at the same time, the authors repeatedly (re)discover a surreal quality in scenes in which they represent themselves as actors in a colonial frontier according to a script that unconsciously and uncannily repeats itself, even as it claims novelty of description.

In Campbell’s account, as in many others of the period, the native villager is “patient” and driven to “desperation,” yet committed to “avenging the death of their relations” and to “rid the country of this intolerable pest.” However, their efforts are feeble and only injure the animal, increasing its destructiveness and terrorizing of the landscape. Thus, according to the colonial hunting narrative, “the arrival of an European sportsmen is hailed as a blessing from heaven; and it is in seeking out and destroying such fearful scourges to the human race, that the principal charm of a sportsman’s life in India consists” (166). The fiction of the tiger’s fearful nature and the fiction of the charming British hunter-sportsman nicely seem to complement each other.

Meanwhile, to the degree that the native is also a hunter, he is both demeaned as a human being, and relegated to a supporting role. Ill-equipped to kill tigers himself, he is nonetheless skilled in tracking tigers for the hunt from a kind of primordial knowledge of them, and as a native informant about the terrain. In a sense, to catch a tiger requires a tiger-like native, at the same time that the hunt ultimately provides a lesson to the native in British efficiency. The native is at once half-savage and a willing, grateful, and
necessary accomplice in the subjugation of the landscape by the British. The Bhils\textsuperscript{15} are described alternately as “half-savage man,” “lynx-eyed,” “naked savages,” akin to “bloodhounds.” Campbell concedes that without the Bhil, the sportsman would never find his prey let alone kill it, and even suggests that the tiger is “half-killed” when the final shot is made (171). About the mahout, the elephant driver—the auxiliary of any colonial tiger hunt—Campbell says, “I have found them game to the backbone…not only willing but anxious to urge their elephants forward in the face of danger” (171).

The natives disregard for their own lives in order to “serve” the sportsman is another, common misrepresentation and non-recognition of unequal colonial power dynamics. In this process, as Beth Tobin argues in Colonizing Nature, every “compliment” of the native, and assertion of intercultural alliance and relation, takes place within a hierarchy of positions:

Though a colonial officer may have developed a deep affection for and an appreciation of the culture of the people he governed, and may have relied on native expertise to rule and to collect information, his structural relations, regardless of his affect and even particular actions, were based on unequal power dynamics, which were at heart, as in the case of the East India Company, a form of exploitation. A colonial officer benefited from these structures of exploitation, even if his actions were intended as neutral and disinterested. (xv)

\textsuperscript{15} A community of tribal native hunters used by colonial hunters as “guides” or “scouts,” but in fact did all the tracking and without their advice the hunter was less likely to succeed. Another tribal group also informing the colonial hunter were the Gond.
In Campbell’s text, while the native “helper” of the hunt (actually the leader) is undermined, the tiger’s strength is magnified. An apparently dead tiger even seems to muster enough strength to murder a native: “A Madras sepoy was killed some years ago while measuring a tiger which had fallen, and was apparently dead; the expiring brute struck at him, and fractured his skull by one blow of his tremendous paw” (174). The sepoy was likely sent to “measure” the tiger as one measures a hunting trophy; its entry into a hunting log or its size in future retellings would be an important part of the masculine self-projection of its British killer, not the menial unnamed sepoy who underestimated the tiger and thus died in the process.

But beyond the tiger’s “size” and resilience, the tiger seems to function as a screen for multiple forms of projection and imaginative uses. In Campbell, one tiger is described as having a “foreleg” that is the “most perfect and beautiful piece of mechanism that can be conceived supported by a bone as hard and compact as ivory” (175), and then constructed as a vicious “killing machine” that attacks bulls in the field “from mere love of slaughter…not to satisfy cravings of hunger” (176). While the hunter’s principled “sport” protects natives, the tiger’s wantonly threatens them. Shortly thereafter, Campbell presents an account of a Colonel Welsh of Mysore, “who captured tigers and set them out on a race course and on horseback they were shot” (177). In a bizarre twist, this barbaric incident of capturing, enclosing, and shooting tigers exhibits, for Campbell, the “cowardly nature of tigers” (177) rather than the perverse recreational activity of the Colonel.

As argued in Chapter I, a level of obsession and confusion emerges around the question of “man-eating,” commensurate with and drawing upon the British discourse of
cannibalism in other locations (such as Africa and the Pacific). The texts seem to become unstable at just the points where they assert authority. There is a lack of self-awareness about how—to echo Said—a tiger who is treated as ferocious may actually respond ferociously, so that one creates the “nature” of the tiger that one fears. For instance, at one point in his narrative Campbell asserts that not all tigers are maneaters. He opines “that a tiger, unless a confirmed maneater, will not attack a man by daylight” (180); however, this does not prevent Campbell himself from “frequently” killing “tigresses, with cubs of all ages,” an action he justifies with the observation that he has never seen “one evince any maternal affection when she herself was in danger” (180). While tigers are not necessarily dangerous in daylight, they must be attacked preemptively. It is never possible to know whether they have become “activitated” as man-eating tigers, which may be simply a potential within them. He claims that tigers have an “instinctive dread of man” which is converted into an addictive habit of maneating after an initial conflict with humans leads to a sampling of their flesh: once the “bloodthirsty tiger” tastes human flesh “the nature of the tiger appears to be changed” (181), and to gratify this hunger the tiger becomes “remarkably cunning.” Campbell shows the end-result of this process through the following anecdote:

Some years ago, a tigress in Kandesh was the terror of the country, which she haunted like a destroying fiend. She preyed entirely upon men shifting her quarters from village to village so rapidly, as to render it exceedingly difficult to mark her down. Today a man was carried off; every cover in the neighborhood was tried in vain—the enemy had decamped; and next morning another victim had disappeared from a village many miles
distant. Rewards were offered by Government for her destruction; they were doubled; but such was the dread inspired by this tigress, whose cunning was only equaled by her ferocity, that no one would venture to attack her. Matters became worse; whole villages were deserted; people hardly dared to leave their houses; and day after day some family was left mourning. Of course the Kandesh European sportsmen proceeded to beat up her quarters as soon as information reached them . . . Her hour was come at last. Captain Outram seized the favourable moment, and a ball, directly between the eyes, laid her dead upon the spot. Thus fell one of the most cunning and destructive brutes that ever infested a county. (181-182)

A jumble of views are juxtaposed in Campbell’s short piece on tigers and hunting; the tiger is both strong and cowardly; the European hunter is stronger and superior, if more savage by some other standard, and engages in “fair” or “sporting” hunting; the native hunter is not so “sportsmanlike,” because the natives “use poison, pitfalls, and traps” and “these hardly come under the denomination of hunting” (179); native hunters are indispensable to the hunt, but are described in subhuman, derogatory terms (“a hairy, bandy-legged, square built oddity, more like a satyr than a human being,” 183); the rhetoric exaggerates the threat of the tigers and that exaggeration spills into the stories, such as the account of Captain Skinner who “single-handed, and armed only with a spear” killed “tigers in the field off a little Arab horse” (178)—these are the beginnings of what one could call the “tall tale” or “yarn,” which circulated widely in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as did Mr. King’s account from my childhood retold in Chapter I.
A little over sixty years after Campbell, A. A. Dunbar Brander (1927) published *Wild Animals in Central India*, in which he employs science, referencing scholarly evidence from published articles, to provide a lot of “reliable” information to counter earlier mis-information about tigers that circulated in other unnamed hunting narratives, including reports of the “size” of tigers as recorded by hunters. Brander’s obsession with size is a detailed and utterly boring attempt to “scientifically” explain that a tiger’s real size varies greatly from imagined or exaggerated, bragging size, which may have some value as an attempt to introduce the “collection of information” referenced earlier by Tobin. Elsewhere, he confidently states that, “the users of the Sanskrit language, when this was spoken, were not acquainted with the animal as there is no Sanskrit word for tiger” (46). In addition to the inaccuracy of suggesting that Sanskrit had become a “dead” language, Brander’s suggestion that there is no word in Sanskrit for tiger introduces misinformation, gainsaid by my discussion in Chapter I.

Brander notes that the “[T]he tiger is the most important animal in India,” and even suggests “that associated in the mind of the sportsman with the mention of the word India, is the thought that it is the land of tigers” (44). This conflation of animal to place is not uncommon in contemporary usage, particularly in reference to the economies of developing nations, such as Indonesia and India. To his credit, Brander refutes the tiger’s propensity for “blood sucking” (76) that Campbell before him advanced and which Corbett after him reinstated. Brander admits that “[E]vidence of how man-eaters behave in killing, or towards a live victim is of course scanty” (78), and includes numerous observations of how tigers kill and devour animals but none about humans. “Anyone witnessing these attacks is bound to be awed by their ruthlessness, and the savage
ferocity of the tiger, and cannot help being struck with the lustful pleasure the tiger evidently takes in killing his prey” (75).

Such descriptions of the “savage” and “lustful” pleasure the tiger takes in attacking humans—just beyond the point where it can be witnessed and confirmed—echo accounts of cannibalism, tinged with anxieties about (homo)sexuality. Tigers seem to drag their human victims off the stage to kill them in isolation (63-66). In fact, it seems that the tiger only attacks humans who are on a tiger hunt. Humans are encouraged to follow “a golden rule to look upon any tiger which shows the slightest sign of life as a highly dangerous animal.” At such a sign, “lead should be poured into it until all signs of animation have ceased” (117). It is therefore not surprising that by the time Brander published his book in the early twentieth century, the tiger population had been decimated, and this was accompanied by a semantic shift whereby the Persian term *shikari* has been coopted to mean European hunter, erasing the particular role of the native hunter in Mughal India. The sexual behavior of tigers also interests Brander, who disputes earlier accounts by naturalists and authors William Thomas Blanford and Richard Lydekker that tigers are “monogamous,” explaining that he has “known a tiger to be in “tow” with two tigresses at the same time” (57). Delving into more detail about the sex life of tigers, Brander says: “When pairing, old male tigers sometimes become dangerous, possibly irritated by the resistance of the female who appears to expect a rough courting and often gets it . . . Another motive prompting aggression maybe the desire to ‘show off’ before the female—a common motive in animals, including man” (57).
In *Primate Visions*, Donna Haraway presents a feminist analysis that reveals how primate studies work to fix codes of gender, science, and race that continue to inform human practices today. Studies of primates, she suggests, are ways in which humans enter the physical spaces of the Other for extended periods of time to reassure ourselves of our humanity and survival, and as evidence that “one pole of a dualism cannot exist without the other” (12-13). Thus Brander’s description of male tiger “aggression” is supposed to distinguish humans from animals, but instead expresses an anxiety of the most advanced, yet flawed, animal—man. Haraway’s critique of primate studies disrupts narratives that fix the boundaries of race, gender, nature, and culture.

When applied to tiger hunting narratives this opens up possibilities for reading that reveal more about humans than they do about nature or tigers. Brander works through a series of patriarchal and “rational” equations: male hunter is to male tiger as male is to female; protection from “aggressive” male tigers requires adamant male hunters.

Thirty years after Brander, Jim Corbett published numerous tiger hunting narratives, the most well-known of which is *Maneaters of Kumaon* (1957), a well-written account employing amusing self-referential and self-conscious asides. Anand Pandian attests that Corbett used his tiger hunting expeditions to cover up spying and surveillance activities for the colonial government, because his hunting activities often took him to remote areas from where reports of unrest and anti-colonial sentiment originated (87). Nevertheless, Corbett’s name remains synonymous with tiger hunting in India, and he remains highly esteemed.16

16 Recently, a visiting South Asian independent scholar, whose hometown was in proximity to a tiger preserve named after Corbett, shared with me in a private
The introduction to *Maneaters of India* connects Corbett’s “factual” accounts to Kipling’s fiction in *The Jungle Book*: “These jungle stories by Jim Corbett merit as much popularity and as wide circulation as Rudyard Kipling’s Jungle Books. Kipling’s Jungle Books were fiction, based on great knowledge of jungle life, Corbett’s stories are fact and fact is often stranger than fiction” (v). Corbett’s narrative characteristically counters earlier views of tigers, only to reinsert them later; he is thoroughly caught in a web of intertextuality with the earlier hunting narratives; he opposes one form of anthropomorphizing tigers only to replace it with another. On the one hand, he decries the attribution to tigers of characteristics, such as “cruelty” and “bloodthirstiness,” which he claims come from an earlier time when tigers roamed the Terai plains and “there were ten tigers to every one that now survives” (xi). Instead, Corbett emphasizes the tiger’s favorable characteristics: “a tiger is a large-hearted gentleman with boundless courage” (xii). This rhetorical shift is for a good cause and in connection to a “call” to raise public support to prevent the extermination of the tiger: the new British tiger-hunting-expert, who formerly would have fought to suppress the tiger on behalf of the people, now becomes the advocate for its survival, though in game reserves. Tigers in the end should be preserved enough to keep the hunt going, so that an earlier role can be replicated, although the situation on the ground has been fundamentally altered. What could be wrong with such an appeal for conservation? Here I turn again to Donna Haraway as she questions and contends summarily with the discourse of animal rights: “But what does subject or history mean when the rules are changed like this? We do not get very far with the categories generally used by animal rights discourses, in which animals end up conversation fond reminiscences of how Corbett remains a hero and is venerated in the minds of Indians of various generations.
permanent dependents (“lesser humans”), utterly natural (“nonhuman”), or exactly the same (“humans in fur suits”)” (66-67). For Corbett, that is, preservation of tigers is ultimately motivated by the goal to preserve sufficient numbers of tigers to continue to provide sport for the big game hunter. This form of preservation had limited success in recovering tiger populations, which is why conservation as it is currently practiced in forest preserves, where hunting is prohibited, has only slowly managed to recover tiger populations. Thus, as Leigh Elizabeth Pitsko details in *Wild Tigers in Captivity: A Study of the Effects of the Captive Environment on Tiger Behavior*, while tigers in the wild dwindle, tigers bred in captivity are growing rapidly.

Corbett’s book is divided into chapters, each one named for a particular place and linked to the “maneaters” hunting grounds: the Champwat, Chowgarh, Mohan, Kanda, Pipal, Thak and the Bachelor of Povalgarh maneaters. The last is so named because this tiger was “from 1920-1930 . . . the most sought after big-game trophy in the province” (102). The tongue-in-cheek reference to the gender of the last tiger’s nickname and its pursuers is an amusing queer detail that highlights the homosocial activity of hunting and the homoerotics of the hunt. The exception to naming chapters for tigers is the one titled “Robin” after his dog. In *When Species Meet*, Donna Haraway draws a connection between men, hunting (representing the wild), and dogs (representing domestication), that privileges the man-dog relationship: “We are, constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh. Significantly other to each other, in specific difference, we signify in the flesh a nasty developmental infection called love. This love is a historical aberration and a natural cultural legacy” (16). Haraway presents a triangular relationship between humans, companion animals (dogs), and wild animals. While
humans bestow love on companion animals—a love that Haraway considers an “aberration” that has become naturalized into a cultural legacy, notwithstanding the numerous accounts of dogs attacking humans and many humans fearing dogs—their hostility and fear of “wild” animals remains, but often requires justification. By devoting a chapter of his book on hunting man-eating tigers to his dog, Corbett emphasizes both alliance and division among at least three species. Thus, the “government deputed” that the Champawat man-eater be shot because “the tiger, for some inexplicable reason did not die and was causing the government a great deal of anxiety” (3). The tiger purportedly had killed 434 people (3-4) – even in an overpopulated country the number is unusually high, and possibly fabricated. Clearly the government had a bounty on the tiger. The people of the village where a tiger had killed a woman are described as “fifty men, women and children . . . in a state of abject terror” (84). Corbett claims that “the people would starve if the tiger was not killed or driven away” and emphasizes that it was “The women and girls, some twenty in number [who] were eager to give [him] details” (5). One might wonder how—since there is no reference to an interpreter—the information was relayed to Corbett, who proceeds to describe the attack itself with theatrical vividness as a kind of sexual violence, which sounds like a metaphorical rape:

The woman was climbing down from a tree when the tiger approached unseen, stood up on its hindlegs and caught her by the foot pulling her into a ravine, the tiger released her foot, and while she was struggling to rise caught her by the throat. After killing her it sprang up the side of the ravine and disappeared with her into some heavy undergrowth. (6)
Corbett then roundly dismisses the native response to the attack, as if the natives are implicated by their failure to respond correctly to the sexual violation of their own women. They had apparently returned to the place where the woman disappeared, ringing and banging pots and pans, a method that contrasts with Corbett’s system of tracking the tiger “scientifically.”

The chase of the Champawat Tiger is basically a series of “victim” stories strung together for the benefit of “you who read this at your fireside” (22). If the Champawat tiger was not already doomed, it became so after an alleged attack on a “15-16 year old girl”: “The spot where the girls had been killed was marked by a pool of blood and near it, and in vivid contrast to the crimson pool, was a broken necklace of brightly colored blue beads” (19). Next, Corbett finds and follows “a blood trail” with a panicked native companion who “caught my arm and whispered in a voice full of tears” (20). Apparently, he was on the trail of the “same” tiger and this was her 436th kill (22). Not only does the “record-keeping” seem spurious, but it clearly serves the ends of the colonial authority deputed to restore “order” for the native villagers, who are described as “placated” and “saved” from their own environment. One might question how “restless” these natives were and whether Corbett had been sent under cover to report and control their “restlessness” on this hunting expedition?

Over the hundred and fifty year period between the writings of Campbell, Brander and Corbett, a system of tiger hunting narratives developed that reiterated colonial ideas, while introducing and indexing slight and subtle shifts in colonial tiger hunting tropologies over time. Against and alongside this tradition, as suggested in both Chapter I and this chapter, native traditions of describing tiger hunting developed along several
lines, including that of providing a counter-discourse within English. Much earlier, for instance, in the eighteenth century, about ten years before William Blake wrote “The Tyger,” Dean Mahomet published the first English-language travel account by a South Asian as a “series of letters to a friend.” I introduce Mahomet here, rather than as a precursor of traditions that Ray and Tagore would develop, to stress the range of positions within English in the early colonial period, and to sharpen a contrast between more and less sympathetic portrayals of tigers and what tigers signify to South Asians.

Mahomet’s letters covered his travels in India while in the service of the East India Company, before his emigration to colonial Ireland in 1784, where he married an Irish woman. As suggestive of his sensibilities, I include a passage from The Travels of Dean Mahamet, which juxtaposes a portrait of a harmless tiger with one of colonial disparagement of a religious site. The suggestion seems to be that things that appear threatening may not be, and that approaching them as hostile is tantamount to denigrating old structures of thought:

Twelve miles from Monghere, is a famous monument erected on a hill called Peepaharea [Pirpahar], which the love of antiquity induced us to visit: it is a square building, with an arch of hewn stone rising over a marble slab, supported by small round pillars of the same, without any inscription: and what is very remarkable, a large tiger, seemingly divested of the ferocity of his nature, comes from his den at the foot of the hill, every Monday and Wednesday, to this very monument, without molesting any person he meets on the way, (even children are not afraid to approach him) and sweeps with his tail, the dust from the lower part of the tomb, in
which, it is supposed, are enshrined the remains of some pious character, who had been there interred at a remote period of time. The people have a profound veneration for it, which has not been a little increased by the sudden and untimely fate of a Lieutenant of Artillery, who came hither to indulge an idle curiosity, and ridicule those who paid such respect to the memory of their supposed holy man, who had been deposited here. He imputed their zeal to the force of prejudice and superstition, and turned it into such contempt, that he made water on the very tomb that was by them held sacred: but shortly after, as if he had been arrested by some invisible hand, for his presumption, having rode but a few paces from the tomb, he was thrown from his horse to the ground, where he lay some time speechless; and being conveyed to Monghere on a litter, soon after his arrival expired. Here is an awful lesson to those who, through a narrowness of judgment and confined speculation, are too apt to profane the piety of their fellow-creatures, merely for a difference in their modes of worship. (52)

Mahomet’s use of phrases like “divested of ferocity of his nature” and “without molesting any person” at once acknowledges the standard perception of tigers and cleverly contradicts that perception. Instead of ferocity, Mahomet’s tiger respectfully “sweeps with his tail the dust from the lower part of the tomb” of what seems to be a Sufi shrine. This contrasts with the British officer who urinates on the shrine in blatant disrespect for “heathen” systems of belief, an action for which he is “cursed” and dies, not at the paws of the tiger, but mysteriously and seemingly as a result of his infraction of
local custom and practice. The story serves as a moral tale where the tiger is more knowledgeable and in line with local practices than the Lieutenant.

In marked contrast, one might consider Arthur Strachan’s patriarchal remarks about tiger hunting, over two-hundred years after Mahomet, in *Mauled by a Tiger*:

Tigers were particularly numerous in the district in which I was stationed for the last three years of my career in India, but they were seldom really aggressive to human beings . . . Any tiger may, however, become a killer of human beings, and in localities where they are numerous it is essential in the interests of the inhabitants, to keep their numbers in check. When a native is killed by either a tiger or a leopard it is the bounden duty of Europeans in the neighbourhood to do all in their power to rid the district of such a beast as soon as possible. (120)

Here Strachen does several things in quick succession: he seems to suggest that tigers are not necessarily dangerous, but that their potential to become “killer[s] of human beings” ought never to be minimized. Tiger numbers must thus “be kept in check,” and “Europeans in the neighbourhood” must see it as a “bounden duty” to avenge the killing of “a native” by a “tiger or a leopard.” The protective role of the colonizers who are, without invitation, “in the neighbourhood” to prevent the hypothetical threat of a growing number of tigers and to “avenge” the death of natives by tigers, creates a conflictual climate which, unsurprisingly, furthers the process by which tigers are decimated.

The idea that such processes are driven by the desire to protect the natives, and that, as Ranajit Guha says, there is a considerable anxiety to the story empire tells about
itself, emerges strikingly in a letter from Sir William Jones (the founder of the Asiatic Society) to Sir John Day (The Advocate General) (qtd. Archer 169). Jones details a tiger hunt, a huge production begun early in the day, in which "thirty elephants, with the servants, and refreshments of all kinds, were dispatched; at two we all followed in fly-palansins" (qtd. Archer 169). He notes that his "driver was a keen sportsman" but that "he and I spoke no common language." He then sets up the "destruction" associated with the tiger that precedes the actual sighting of the animal and supplies the reader with a reason for hunting the tiger—"I saw . . . an half-devoured bullock and two human skulls; with a heap of bones, some bleached, and some still red with gore." Threat confirmed, Jones’ narrative proceeds:

"The chase being over, we returned in triumph to our encampment, and were followed by the spoils of the morning, and by an accumulating multitude of the peasants from the circumjacent villages . . . The four tigers were laid in front; the natives viewed them with terror, and some with tears.

An old woman, looking earnestly at the largest tiger, and pointing at times to his tusks, and at times lifting his fore-paws, and viewing his talons, her furrows bathed in tears, in broken and moaning tones narrated something to a little circle composed of three Brahmans and a young woman with a child in her arms. No human misery could pierce the phlegm and apathy of the Brahmans, and with them there was not a feature softened; but horror and sorrow were alternately painted in the face of the female; and, from her clasping at times her child more closely to her
breast, I guessed the subject of the old woman’s story, and upon inquiry I found that I was right in my conjecture. She was widowed and childless; she owed both her misfortunes to the tigers of that jungle, and most probably to those which then lay dead before her; for they, it was believed had recently carried off her husband and her two sons grown up to manhood, and now she wanted food: in the phrenzy [sic] of her grief she alternately described her loss to the crowd, and in a wild scream demanded her husband and her children from the tigers; indeed it was piteous spectacle!

Dinner over, the tigers skinned, and the flesh and offal distributed, as soon as the sun declined, we returned to Chinsura; and here ends the history of the chace; in which I have been thus minute, that you may be tempted to accompany us in some future expedition; and if not, that you may be able to say that you have been authentically informed upon the subject by an eye-witness.’ (qtd. Archer 169-172)

In this detailed hunting narrative, the most telling element occurs when the story switches to the effect of looking at the dead tiger’s body on the villagers. The women in particular are effected, from an “old woman” whose “furrows [are] bathed in tears” to a “young woman with a child in her arms” whose face is “painted” with “horror and sorrow.” The “misery” of the women contrasts the “phlegm and apathy of Brahmins.” By representing native patriarchy as insensitive to the plight of their women, Jones positions himself as both hero and understanding witness: he claims to have marvelously “guessed the subject of the old woman’s story” and found “upon inquiry” that he “was right in his conjecture.”
One might ask: really? Instead, I suggest that this story projects the "man-eater" anxiety on the tiger and then presumptuously attributes the woman's loss to this particular tiger. There is an assumption that the explanation for the woman's grief is the one that this narrative provides, but it leaves out the fact that it is unlikely that this woman, like the driver of the storyteller, spoke any "common language." In this colonial account of a tiger hunt, the reader is assured that they “have been authentically informed by an eye-witness,” who happens to reinforce his own right—as an extension of the right of the British—to displace the native and represent himself in the light of a protector and authority over nativeness itself. Furthermore, this narrative (if one accepts the displacement of cannibalism as fundamental to descriptions of man-eating) illustrates Gananath Obeyesekere's statement that cannibalism was “noted . . . largely to edify and shock their reading public” (“British” 642). An approximation of "cannibalism" was imposed onto the thoughts of this village woman, regardless of the actual circumstances surrounding the incident. Obeyesekere is right about the sensationalizing quality of discourses of the threat of consumption which are significant because they accumulate in the public imagination, and are subsequently quoted by politicians and other influential people, who grow up with the stories, which thus come to materially influence policy.

The accounts in this section thus resonate with Said’s sense of the perceptual and material feedback loop through which the textual attitude has the “appearance of success.” His use of lions here as a metaphorical reference is particularly relevant to my argument: the wild animal of colonial imagination (doubling for the native “other”), can be seen as part of a system of relays, moving from text to ideology to material practice: different animals, different colonial contexts, but similar structure:
If one reads a book claiming that lions are fierce and then encounters a fierce lion…. the chances are that one will be encouraged to read more books by the same author, and believe them. But, if in addition the lion book instructs one how to deal with a fierce lion, and the instructions work perfectly, then not only will the author be greatly believed, he would also be impelled to try his hand at other kinds of written performance. There is a rather complex dialectic of reinforcement by which the experience of readers in reality are determined by what they have read, and this in turn influences writers to take up subjects defined in advance by readers’ experiences. A book on how to handle a fierce lion might then cause a series of books to be produced on such subjects as the fierceness of lions, the origin of the fierceness, and so forth. Similarly, as the focus of the text centers more narrowly on the subject—no longer lions but their fierceness—we might expect that ways by which it is recommended that a lion’s fierceness be handled with actually increase its fierceness, force it to be fierce since that is what it is, and that is what in essence we know or can only know about it. (Orientalism 93-94)

What starts as metaphor in this analogy between animal and human produces effects in which the figurative and the material become implicated in each other, and the tensions in their relationship are exacerbated by textual accounts. However, as much as this figures an attempt at manufacturing complicity among colonial texts and their readers, it opens up the possibility of developing counter narratives that avoid colonial, patriarchal
narrative structures and strategies. The picturing of the tiger made by colonials or, in some cases, anticolonials is marked by both reinscriptions and reversals.

II. TIGERS IN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

Children’s literature has long been recognized as a principle site for developing political consciousness in colonial societies. Stories involving beasts in particular encourage associations about what is threatening or friendly, a system of attitudes, and suggest patterns of adult behavior to imitate or avoid. This section focuses on four writers of tiger tales from different backgrounds, Helen Bannerman, Rudyard Kipling, Rabindranath Tagore, Hector Hugh Munro, and their respective works—Little Black Sambo, The Jungle Book, He/Shey, and “Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger.” They were contemporaries—all born within ten years of each other, Tagore (1861) in Calcutta, Bannerman (1862) in Edinburgh, Kipling (1865) in Bombay, and Munro (1870) in Akyab in northwest Burma (Byrne 5). Although they are not all strictly authors of children’s stories, they are intertextual in ways that speak to emerging attitudes and might thus be productively read as a cluster.

Bannerman, Kipling, and Munro spent considerable time in India, but while Bannerman and Kipling are well known for their works, such as Little Black Sambo, The Jungle Book, and Kim, Munro’s tiger text remains comparatively obscure. All three stories by the British writers are inspired by or set entirely in India; all three exemplify a

17 Popularly known by his pen name Saki, the cup bearer from the Persian poet Rubaiyat’s Omar Khayyam.
counter-hegemonic practice that refutes the idea that cultural influence remains unidirectional, with one culture acting and the other being acted upon. In fact, as much of post-colonial theory argues, cultural interaction becomes increasingly complex and hybridized over time, with borrowings often so great that points of pure origin recede out of sight. In this moment of encounter, one reads through exchanges and interactions that have transformed both cultures and the literatures that they produce.

One might begin by selecting a few biographical details that prove to be telling. Bannerman was a well-educated Scottish woman, raised in a household of staunch members of the Scottish Free Church. She studied Portuguese, French, Italian and German and was awarded a degree in Italy. Her childhood was spent in Madeira with her naturalist father, a conchologist later commissioned to catalog the molluscs from the oceanic expedition of the HMS Challenger in 1873-76. She married her childhood friend William Bannerman, who was commissioned to the Indian Medical Service, and accompanied him to India where she spent thirty-two years and raised two daughters (Hay 7, 11, and 15). Tagore, a native South Asian born in Calcutta, is one of the most famous Bengali intellectuals, a vocal anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist. Internationally recognized for his poem *Gitanjali*, for which he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, Tagore was a prolific writer and artist. A catalog of his work numbers over 4,000 items, including novels, songs, poetry, plays, short stories, paintings and sculpture (Khilnani 35). He wrote primarily in Bengali, his native language, and often translated his Bengali works into English himself. The translation of *He/She* was not undertaken by Tagore, and I rely on Aparna Chaudhuri’s translation. Like Tagore, Rudyard Kipling produced an extensive body of literature (poetry, short stories, novels, essays, and
children’s literature) and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (in 1907). He was born in December 1865 in Bombay (Mumbai) and left in 1871 to attend boarding school in England. He returned to India in 1882 as a reporter. In 1892 he married American Caroline Balestier and moved to Vermont where he wrote the two *Jungle Books* (1894, 1895). He published *Kim* in 1901 and the *Just So Stories* in 1902. Kipling “identified with the rulers and officials of the British Empire,” (Kipling and Plotz, series note) although he, like Tagore, refused knighthood. He remained a jingoistic supporter of the Boer War, for which he wrote war propaganda, even after he lost his son, John, in the Battle of Loos in 1915. In his lifetime and thereafter, his conservative political views resulted in his unpopularity with liberals and anti-imperialists (Plotz xiv).

Bart Moore-Gilbert, in “Kipling and Postcolonial Literature,” claims that “Kipling might be understood simply as a figure whom later non-western writers engage with only to dismiss.” For Moore-Gilbert, “[T]here is certainly evidence to support such a reading. Given his long association with India, hostility towards Kipling is, understandably perhaps, especially apparent in the subcontinent and its diasporas, with *Kim* and *The Jungle Books* - the main focus of the discussion . . . often identified by critics as embodying the most demeaning properties of colonial discourse.” Kipling’s “The White Man’s Burden” is perhaps the most egregious of his racist writings:

Your new-caught, sullen peoples,

Half-devil and half-child.

And when your goal is nearest

The end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.

The silent, sullen peoples
Shall weigh your gods and you.

*(Kipling Stories 359-361, excerpted)*

Unarguably, these views of Indians—“new-caught,” “half-devil,” “half child,” “silent” and “sullen”—are not limited to this poem and are evident in all his writing, and it is these representations that are an anathema to anti-imperialists and postcolonialists everywhere, because it memorialized the relationship of colonizer to colonized in the most appalling personal terms and served to glorify empire and validate the imperial project, by returning the native to some primal state in the jungle, thereby ignoring systems of knowledge, government, cultures and learning that goes back centuries.

Munro might be seen as simply in this line. Sandie Byrne’s recent biography (2007) of Munro frequently points to the similarities between Kipling and Munro, despite the fact that both their fathers were employed and sent to serve in the colonies and both were born there. Kipling’s father was in Bombay in the western part of India, and Munro’s father was in service to the Bengal Police, which administered British authority in Burma in the far eastern part of colonial India.¹⁸ Both were sent to England for their education. As a child, Munro returned to England with his older brother and sister, after his mother’s premature death in a bizarre accident in England (she was charged and

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¹⁸ British rule in Burma and connection to Bengal – 1824-1948, which following the Anglo-Burmese Wars was created as a province of India.
trampled by a cow), to live under the miserable conditions of viciously strict and unreasonable supervision of his aunts (father’s sisters) who were “guilty of mental cruelty” (Byrne 22). His stories are said to be influenced by Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (32), including shape-shifting animals, with some major differences (35), best summed up as follows: “Carroll makes nonsense of the rules, the orders, and the punishments, which never seem likely to be visited on anyone, but in the world of Saki’s boy-children, the rules have cruel and repressive intent and adults are indifferent, menacing, or positively sadist” (Byrne 35). The similarities and connection between Kipling and Munro are more notable to me than those between Carroll and either. Like Kipling, Munro was a conservative who “professed violent Tory opinions” (Byrne 41) and “dutifully upheld . . . imperialist values” (Byrne 6). Although Byrne’s biography notes the political similarity between the two, she overlooks the literary connection that I venture to make between Munro’s politically ironic *Not So Stories* and Kipling’s animal tales *Just So Stories*. As an adult, Munro returned to Burma to serve in the colonial police from where his letters to his sister “make it sound all very cushioned and jolly” (55), but in an inexplicable move Byrne prefers a hostile colonialist description expressed by a character in *The Unbearable Bassington*, who is contemplating an impending posting to West Africa, to be “closer to the truth” of Munro’s experience in Burma: “He would be in some unheard of sun-blistered wilderness, where natives and pariah dogs and raucous-throated crows fringed round mockingly on one’s loneliness, where one rode for sweltering miles for the chance of meeting a collector or police officer, with whom most likely on closer acquaintance one hardly had two ideas in common” (Byrne 55). Rather than assume a character is speaking for the author, my
analysis of “Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger” foregrounds colonialist elements in the narrative, while revealing anti-imperial aspects as well that emerge through Munro’s critique of privileged Britons whose privilege comes from their colonial connections and seems to be taken for granted.

Tigers figure traumatically in the Munro family from a much earlier generation. The most notable incident is perhaps a news item from Calcutta that happened at the end of 1792, when Saki’s great-great uncle, while hunting deer on Saugur island, had “an immense royal tiger spring on the unfortunate Munro” (Byrne 1-2). The attack proved fatal even though “[H]e lived 24 hours in the extreme of torture” (Byrne 2). The account of this particular attack circulated in England the following year and became memorialized in Staffordshire pearlware, known as “The Death of Munrow” (Byrne 1). One such piece believed to be made in 1825 sold at Christies for $50,190 in 2003, an image of which is reproduced below (Figure 5) (Stronge 87). The image both preserves the unblemished tranquility with which the British gentleman meets his violent end, and emphasizes the enormity and ambiguous aggression of the tiger’s deathly jaws: the tiger’s gaze seems unconnected to the man he is killing through an act that is halfway between a kiss and a bite. The two are mounted and sculpted into an iconic tableaux, with the tiger tale/tail almost as long as the man, whose clothes appear cut of the same cloth as the tiger’s skin.
Munro, the author, died in 1916 as a result of sniper fire in World War I (Byrne 1-3).

In order to explore how tiger tales borrow from western narratives and develop syncretically to include native perspectives, I take as a starting point the pedagogical, comparative strategy that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak articulated in the 1990's:

I also try to look at the subject position of the colonial intellectual within texts produced in the colonies at the same time as British or French texts: so I try to teach *Kim* and *Gora* at the same time. I am not supporting either—there is no dialogue between the two, and they are both constructed out of situations of power, and constructed differently. I think these are the two things, with my limited training, that I can do in the
English literature classroom: to see how the master texts need us in the construction of their texts without acknowledging that need, and to explore the differences and similarities between texts coming from the two sides which are engaged with the same problems at the same time . . . and each brings the other to crisis. (The Post-Colonial Critic 73)

The “subject position of the colonial intellectual” is stamped by colonial history, and even if “there is no dialogue” there often is a deliberate writing back, as in the example of Kim and Gora, which can also be said of The Jungle Book and He/Shey. Spivak’s ideas about how texts “engaged with the same problems” bring each “other to crisis” inform this analysis, particularly with reference to Tagore’s and Kipling’s work. There is no evidence that Tagore and Kipling were writing in response to one another, but as Ashis Nandy aptly puts it, “Tagore … tries to integrate a part of his Indian self modeled on the western man” (46) while “Kipling . . . tries to own up the Indian part of his western self” (46). Both authors, for Nandy, “deal with the loss and recovery of selves, and the anxieties and pain associated with that process” (46).

While Kipling and Munro were situated squarely within the apparatus of colonialism and imperialism, Tagore lived through, and was an intellectual leader within, the emergent period that Fanon has called “national culture”—a period filled with contradictions and dilemmas for native subjects trying to create themselves and emerge from the violent and powerful machinery of colonialism. According to Bill Ashcroft, Garreth Griffith and Helen Tiffin, “One of the strongest foci for resistance to imperial control in colonial societies has been the idea of ‘nation.’ It enabled post-colonial societies to invent a self-image through which they could act to liberate themselves from
imperialist oppression” (151). Fanon critiques the creation of the nation as “national culture”—namely, “the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence” (233). Ironically, Tagore is posthumously lauded as a nationalist; yet his writings, like Fanon’s, warn against what Fanon calls “the Pitfalls of Nationalism.” He was clearly both anti-imperial and anti-colonial.

Juxtaposing the literature of colonizer and colonized is more likely to create an environment and opportunity to examine the differences and similarities between both marginal/postcolonial and central canonical texts, and to explore the relations and connections, however discontinuous, between colonial literature through a postcolonial critique. In an environment where texts are studied beside each other, one is in a better position to understand, as Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin put it, “imperial process in colonial and neo-colonial societies, and . . . the strategies to subvert the actual material and discursive effects of that process” (117). Moreover, one can compare the effects of events and occasions that influence writers, and observe how similar issues, such as race, colonial condition, language, inform the cultural productions of the respective authors. The differences and similarities then begin to speak and collapse the poetics of witness toward the politics of perspective. Out of this sense of the locatedness and contingency of representations, postcolonial theory can better identify the tropologies as well as the slippages and ambivalences that texts and countertexts produce in each other. The colonizer and colonized express themselves differently on similar issues, but often do so in ambivalent ways.
III.  

**Little Black Sambo**

Helen Bannerman’s texts were enormously influential, genre-expanding, and notably different in emphasis from many other colonial texts. Perhaps because she wrote from a woman’s point of view, her texts work within the orbit of the old hunting representations without investing in male performances of the self during hunts. As will be suggested, she conflated racist iconography from various locations, but her texts speak to new milieus that were forming around the turn of the century in colonial India. *Little Black Sambo* (*LBS*) was published in 1899, and was one of a number of children’s stories that she published over decades with titles that contained the words ‘Little’ and ‘Black,’ including as *Little Black Mingo, Little Black Quibba, Little Black Quisha, and Little Black Bobtail*. According to Jan Susina, these popular books “embodied all the principles on which present day books for young children are based,” including a “moral purpose and tone” (237). Susina demonstrates how Bannerman directly influenced both Beatrix Potter (*The Tale of Peter Rabbit*) and Maurice Sendak (*Where the Wild Things Are*), at the same time that *Little Black Sambo* remains one of “the most racist texts in the history of children’s literature,” because Bannerman’s “text and illustrations have become emblematic of racial stereotyped texts” (237). Despite the book’s reach and staying power, she eventually sold all rights to *Little Black Sambo* for a mere five pounds.

By my generation, the text was widely regarded as offensive to African Americans, but its racism was not always recognized as directed toward India and Indians. For instance, Sanjay Sircar describes how the text, if not the images, was inoffensive to him as a South Asian boy. Although my education was filled with many other colonial texts, I cannot recall reading *Little Black Sambo*, or having it read to me.
Reading it now, however, by the light of post-colonial criticism, I can see that much is at stake in the seemingly academic arguments about its location and representational practices. Generations of Indian children have read and absorbed this book, without necessarily connecting it to their own experience, in part because the earlier editions included illustrations according to the first publisher of the book “where black children abound and tigers are an everyday affair” (Hay 2).

Although Bannerman lived in India for thirty-two years, it appears that when it comes to the location of Little Black Sambo controversy still remains. Some of this, no doubt, comes from the fact that, as Susina notes, shortly after publication of the authorized British (1899) and U.S. editions (1900), “the popularity of the book inspired numerous pirated editions and imitations that were illustrated, often by resetting the story either in Africa or the American South, using extremely racist images” (239). Bannerman’s representations of the characters in the story to be sure relied on the caricatures of her day to represent all people of color (like U.S. cartoon representations of Hawaiians in the 1890s) as racially black. South Asians were, and remain to this date, racially “black” in Britain. Blackface, of course, has never been an accurate representation of anything other than the racist distortions and anxieties of the white imagination: but as offensive as one finds such imagery, they can also be seen as part of a history of mimicry that seek to lampoon race relations, minimizing its own stakes, while presenting blackface children with an element of both belittlement and affection, almost-but-not-quite as objects deserving of pity. The image of Sambo in his outfit and sporting mojari on his feet from the 1899 edition which follows (from Wikipedia), suggests the
confusion of racial characteristics and the dynamics of mimicry, as the child rolls its eyes and imitates colonial clothing.

FIGURE 6: ILLUSTRATION OF LITTLE BLACK SAMBO, 1899 EDITION BY HELEN BANNERMAN

Questions about race, of course, wind up being questions about location, and vice versa, while simultaneously suggesting correspondences between black races in different locations. For the child to have “wavy” black hair and mojari leans the image toward India, but the ambiguity has inclined critics away from specifically located analyses. Elizabeth Hay, biographer of Bannerman, claims that the authorized edition is set in an imaginary place—a move that works toward making the story part of the general racism of the time, rather than specifically connected to Bannerman’s colonial identification. While there is in fact little to suggest that Bannerman, who spent much of her life in colonial India, set the story specifically in India, rather than Africa or the Southern U.S., or some imaginary “tropical location,” the story reads differently if one reads it in
relation to India. Certainly that is suggested by a setting where a jungle is easily accessed by all inhabitants, and where the pastoral agricultural (such as the tea gardens, poppy and indigo fields) and thriving industrial and mercantile realities disappear in preference for the wild, untamed, and potentially dangerous and threatening environment in the presence of the jungle and the tigers.

Another aspect of the story which has tended way from identifying it directly with India is the names of characters—mainly Sambo. Some claim that the name has African origins and was used generically to mean a person of mixed race in Britain and the U.S. (Hay v). Over time it might be thought to refer generically to African-Americans, Africans, Indians—anyone of color. Obviously, for Bannerman, the generic use of the name has derogatory associations and goes back “between the 1880s and 1920s” when “Sambo was the most widely used names of all the comic names for black males” who were “stereotyped as slow-witted” (Susina 239). Bannerman picks up the stereotypical name even as her character, Boskin notes, “triumphs over the tigers with his quick wit” (109). The ambiguities and potentials for post-colonial readings are furthered in several retellings of Little Black Sambo story, including The Story of Little Babaji (1996) by Fred Marcellino, and Sam and the Tigers: A New Telling of the Little Black Sambo by Julius Lester. Barbara Bader has disparaged the first because “ji is inappropriate for a child, and Baba is neither a first name nor anything else.” For Bader the story “is a confection: pert, posturing, Disneyfied figures in a spun-sugar Taj Mahal realm.” Against such a reading, Jan Susina argues that Lester’s Sam and the Tigers, set in the southern U.S.,

19 She is correct about the use of ji, but Baba is used as an affectionate term for a boy and it is a common address for father in Bengali.
successfully employs the trickster figure of African and African-American storytelling linguistically by using a “distinctive African-American voice,” including guest appearances by Brer Rabbit from the Uncle Remus stories, and representing Sam as a “more independent and heroic character . . . in that he announces he is old enough to select his own clothes…and must outwit five, rather than four, tigers” (244).

One could argue that, while Bannerman clearly recycles images, things Indian recurrently work their ways into her texts. For instance, the fact that Sambo’s parents are named “Mumbo” and “Jumbo” suggest a combination that translates into “nonsense”—Sambo’s genealogy appears to be literally “mumbo jumbo.” But one might note that such nonsensical rhyming of names and words is a common element/aspect of South Asian speech patterns often also textually represented; for example, Salman Rushdie in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, when elaborating on the nicknames of the character Rashid Khalifa, writes that he is known “[T]o his admirers” as the “Ocean of Notions . . . but to his jealous rivals as the Shah of Blah” (15). My own reading of *Little Black Sambo*, while acknowledging other critical perspectives, sees the specific milieu that Bannerman lived in as significant, though it is often occluded in colonial and post-colonial scholarship. Bannerman’s relation to the Anglo-Indian communities in which she moved, that is, is one in which extractive colonial relations and tropes of cannibalism continued to signify.

Of course, if one starts with the fact that British English used the name Sambo generically to refer to mixed race people, it might seem likely that Bannerman intended to represent the mixed race Anglo-Indian community. She resided in Madras, which like all the major presidencies, such as Calcutta and Bombay, had a sizable Anglo-Indian
community. I trace my connections to this community through my mother, and my maternal grandfather was born and brought up in Bangalore until he started working for the Indian Railways and had to move his family to the northern state of Rajasthan and the big railway colony in Ajmer. Like many contemporary South Asian scholars, Sanjay Sircar suggests that Sambo represents Indian Christians (143). But while Anglo-Indians are Christian, he ignores the mixed race aspect, which is an important colonial condition of lived liminality—caught between the colonizer and the native in every way—physically, linguistically, dietarily, to name a few—but in the perfect position to act as mediators and negotiators between the two.

But if this is so, and Sambo represents a kind of ambivalent South Asian positionality, what is being negotiated? The terms are so consistently those involving exploitation that one might think of Kal Penn’s dialogue in Van Wilder: The Rise of Taj (2006). When a preppy character in the film suggests, “Let's settle this the way our ancestors did,” Taj (Kal Penn’s character) in temporary serio-comic bewilderment asks, “You're going to exploit me economically?” This response references a history of centuries of British economic exploitation of India, which is also, I maintain, represented in Little Black Sambo as what Susina calls a “colonial text . . . written at the height of English expansion into India” (238).

This colonial plot seems written into the plot and details of Little Black Sambo. Dressed to kill, some would say, Sambo heads out for a walk in the jungle where he encounters four tigers separately, each of whom threaten to eat him. In response, he exchanges his accoutrements of civilization—red coat, blue trousers, green umbrella and purple shoes—for his life. Strangely, the tigers accept the exchange until Sambo is left in
the jungle naked and crying “because the cruel Tigers had taken all his fine clothes.” The uneven exchange in which Sambo and the tigers engage reads as an obvious allegory of economic exploitation, where the middleman has to become involved in a rather complex series of negotiations in order to “profit” from the exchange, where the tigers represent a dangerous element in an otherwise highly profitable (scientific and economic) “jungle” or natural environment.

However, human ingenuity can overcome the dangerous obstacle that the tigers represent, because even though Sambo temporarily outwits the tigers, they return with a vengeance as he hears a growl accompanied by his worst fear—“all the Tigers coming back to eat me up!” This manifests the recurring anxiety of cannibalism or resistance and appears to be conflated with issues of economic consumption. Sambo escapes up a tree and the tigers, gathered below, get into a ferocious fight; they tousle and tumble, grabbing hold of each other’s tails. The image is an excellent analogy of how tiger stories are hooked to each other by the tail/tale—and so spin faster and faster around the tree becoming a blur, like the hands of a tabla player in a fast taal, until there is “nothing left but a great big pool of melted butter (or ‘ghi’ as it is called in India) round the foot of the tree.” There are no guns and no one goes out to hunt tigers; instead, the tigers dissolve themselves as a result of their ferocious activity among themselves. In the end, Mumbo sees the butter and decides to make pancakes for supper, and “she fried them in the melted butter” that reflect their origins in “yellow and brown as little Tigers.” Finally the number of pancakes each member of the family eats sounds like the number of tigers killed by hunters—Mumbo “ate” twenty-seven; Jumbo fifty-five, and Sambo the most, “a Hundred and Sixty-nine.” Tigers are “tamed” and brought into the domestic sphere of the
household where they have been “churned” into a useful and tasty ingredient for consumption.

The tigers in Little Black Sambo are both familiarly anthropomorphic (they speak, and desire human clothing) and anthropophagic (they want to eat Sambo). But in the end in this juvenile allegory of transition and exchange, they merge or are consumed by one another, only to be ultimately consumed by Sambo and his family. If the result is a “charming story,” involving cute, innocent, yet innovative characters, who dress up and then wander off into the jungle, it yet it remains continuous with the energies of the earlier hunting narratives. As a woman, perhaps, Bannerman avoids the masculine plot—projecting and proving manliness against tigers—while evoking the environment of the hunt. However, she creatively makes the tigers disappear—melts them and has them eaten—reinforcing if in a sublimated form, rather than removing, the anxieties of empire in “distant locales.” The materials available for a feminist reading are left ambiguous in Bannerman’s denouement. She neither asserts masculinist presence (the colonial hunter with his gun) or diverges from colonial aims which spell the dissolution of tigers.

**IV. The Jungle Book**

Among my paternal grandfather’s papers were two carefully saved letters: one from Mountbatten honoring him as Rai Bahadur, a title of honor for service to the nation during the era of British rule, bestowed for his work as a colonial magistrate; the other letter was from Baden-Powell thanking him for his significant contributions to the Boy Scout organization for which he was a strong local advocate and promoter. It is the
second letter and that association that interests me in this project, because Baden-Powell was a great admirer of Kipling’s writing and negotiated an arrangement whereby *The Jungle Book* was required reading for Boys Scouts. To this day, according to the Boy Scout website, Kipling’s legacy is built into the organization’s vocabulary: “[I]n 1914, Baden-Powell began implementing a program for younger boys that was based on Rudyard Kipling’s *Jungle Book*. The Wolf Cub program began in 1916…A strong influence from Kipling’s *Jungle Book* remains today. The terms ‘Law of the Pack,’ ‘Akela,’ ‘Wolf Cub,’ ‘grand howl,’ ‘den,’ and ‘pack’ all come from the *Jungle Book.*”

From the colonial day to our own Boy Scout terms naturalize the vocabularies of juvenile colonial literature within the formative imaginations of boys, including Indians being trained within the British system.

These points of connection, apparently accidental, even ordinary, suggest the gradually diffuse and complex connections among the colonizer and colonized that emerged around the turn of the century, and that have some correspondence in the often ambivalent position of narratives produced by Indians themselves. My grandfather did serve in the colonial administration, but he was politically opposed to imperialism and colonialism, and raised his five sons to be nationalists. Each was educated, trained, and prepared for independence, fitted to serve the new nation, India. This process, however, did not come without a price, because independence meant that their homeland, present day Bangladesh, got cut out to form East Pakistan, and Calcutta in newly independent India became their ‘home’ and that of millions of Bangals (name for East Bengalis living in West Bengal) in the “internal” diaspora. That the ardent imperialist Kipling’s stories could provide models for training boys to be disciplined in ways that could find appeal in
those who would be involved in the drive against colonialism captures well the dynamics of the period, and potentially some ambiguities in Kipling’s texts as well.

There is at this point an extensive postcolonial critique of Kipling. Yet because of his wide reception among colonials and anti-colonials, mixed impulses remain to sort out his compelling imagination from his starkly imperialist views, and to imply some irreducible and unfinalized quality that performs the ambivalences discussed in postcolonial theory. In a characteristic introduction to *Kim*, Judith Plotz acknowledges that “Kipling’s writing is certainly informed, and sometimes deformed, by his political views” but asserts that “it is by no means reducible to these. This can be seen in his masterpiece *Kim*...and to a lesser extent in the two Jungle Books, colonial fictions in which ‘otherness’ is regarded with pleasure, not anxiety” (xv). The suggestion here is that, if Kipling is a racist-of-his-times, he is more in the exoticist line, and represents India in a confident colonial moment, rather than one attended by the multiple anxieties of early periods; his vision is thus one with which Indian subjects might even identify.

*The Jungle Book*, unlike *Little Black Sambo*, is a series of animal stories—reminiscent in some ways of the Indian *Panchatantra* stories—that opens in the animal world. The stories are interlinked through the man-cub Mowgli, a boy raised by wolves. As with Bannerman, there seem to be demeaning references to African Americans—as well as to the Romulus and Remus origin story for Roman imperialism—but the focal point remains on Shere Khan, a royal Bengal tiger, named after the Afghan Emperor Sher Shah, whose tiger hunting prowess remains legendary in South Asia (as discussed in Chapter I). Literally and figuratively lame, Shere Khan is introduced in the first pages as a toothless tiger out of both nineteenth century hunting lore and these old stories, but as a
Kipling repeats the suggestions that tigers only turn into man-eaters due to injury or old age, and then, in an expression of cowardice and cunning, attack “helpless humans” as the easiest target. In this case, the first human Shere Khan comes for is the infant Mowgli.

The stories are set up as a series of inter-reflecting, interspecial hostilities. That animals are presented as natural enemies (tigers and wolves) doubles and naturalizes the ways that humans are opposed to animals (i.e., tigers and humans), and, by extension, the ways that humans have pitted themselves against each other. As noted in an Introduction to the *Just So* stories, “Akela the wolf and Bagheera the panther are models of nobility, unlike the cruel and superstitious villagers” (xvi). The reader first encounters Shere Khan, the “ferocious man-eating tiger,” when Tabaqui (the Jackal) informs Akela (the Wolf) that Shere Khan has moved into the neighborhood. Tabaqui intimates that Shere Khan comes in search of easy prey, the infant Mowgli, who has crawled into a wolf family shelter. As Tabaqui says, “Shere Khan, the Big One, has shifted his hunting grounds. He will hunt among these hills during the next moon, so he has told me.” To which Mother Wolf responds with this description of Shere Khan: “His mother did not call him Lungri [the Lame One] for nothing,” said Mother Wolf quietly. "He has been lame in one foot from his birth. That is why he has only killed cattle. Now the villagers of the Waingunga are angry with him, and he has come here to make our villagers angry. They will scour the jungle for him when he is far away, and we and our children must run

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21 The name resonates with associations that recall the origins of European colonialism in the New World. Columbus, who thought he was discovering a passage to India, wanted to meet the Great Khan. As Peter Hulme notes, this led to the false etymology of cannibal as a reference to the “Khan-able” (22).
22 Perhaps Kipling here combines the Polynesian word for water with the river Ganga to come up with the village name.
when the grass is set alight” (6-7). Shere Khan arrives at the wolves cave demanding, “My quarry. A man's cub went this way . . . [I]ts parents have run off. Give it to me" (9).

Part of what’s at stake in Kipling’s representations, as it is to a degree in Bannerman’s, is the spattering of Indic words in colonial fictions, suggesting the authority of the colonial writer to the home audience. The story runs through seven chapters in which all the animals in *The Jungle Book* are named for the Indic word that means the animal (Baloo means bear; Bagheera in context can alternate meaning between panther, tiger, or leopard), or a characteristic associated with an animal (Akela means alone, although wolves are known not to hunt alone but in a pack; hence the uncharacteristic associations of “lone wolf”). This peppering of Indic words through a text is also something that the sports hunters use, such as Corbett who observes, “This is the Shaitan (devil) that killed my wife and my two sons” (28). Likewise much is made of Bannerman’s use of a single Indic word in *Little Black Sambo*—ghi—a rich butterish condiment used in South Asian cuisine into which the tigers merge to form.

The selective use of language is a strategy whereby the outsider uses language to represent familiarity—posing as an insider and using language to validate a position of authority, expertise and knowledge. This strategy also elides, invalidates, and silences the native voice and knowledge systems. Rather than really learning a language, the British habit of speaking louder as a way to communicate to others resembles the colonial use of occasional Indic words as an indicator of communicative competence without linguistic knowledge. This approach to language remains charmingly exotic to readers creating “magical worlds . . . whose citizens, whether human or animal, speak the richly rhetorical, archaized idiom that Kipling invented for Indian ‘vernacular’ speakers. These
enchanted Indian worlds have their own cultures” (Just So Stories xvi). In this way, the British colonial sports hunters and writers like Kipling and Bannerman get to represent India, the jungle, its occupants, and even “language,” not just for Europeans but everyone, including Indians. Their representations, through fiction, perpetuate a standard by which tigers and their environments are known.

Another Kipling critic, Jan Montefiore, draws out the colonial allegory found in The Jungle Book, in which, as in Little Black Sambo, animals are anthropomorphized “by being given the speech, memory, individual characters, societies, customs, and above all the ‘Jungle Law’ (like a conduct book). This models a civil code that governs the wolves as ‘citizens’ of the ‘Free People’ with maxims such as: ‘When ye fight with a Wolf of the Pack, ye must fight him alone and afar Lest others take part in the quarrel, and the Pack be diminished by war.’” However, the Law of the Jungle “forbids every beast to eat Man” (7), because “man-killing” perforce will “mean, sooner or later, the arrival of white men on elephants, with guns, and hundreds of brown men with gongs and rockets and torches” (7). This evocation of the hunt, ironically stated, nevertheless denies the reality on the colonized ground by presenting this myth as a “reason the beasts give among themselves is that Man is the weakest and most defenseless of all living things…that man-eaters become mangy, and lose their teeth” (7).

Shere Khan is of course doomed from the start, as whole ways of life are thought to be doomed in colonial literature. His destruction, like the tigers hunted by Campbell, Brander, and Corbett, is on the one hand required by rituals. Like the tired, ancient, magnificent native way of living, Shere Khan must be captured or slain, or occasion the

coming “white men on elephants, with guns.” Such an end seems engineered by the cunning (some would say) and resourceful (Baden-Powell might say) man-cub Mowgli, who as a mere youth carries out a plan that results in the tragic trampling death of Shere Khan by frightened cattle and the destruction of the “loathsome” village on the edge of the jungle. Celebrating the death of Shere Khan, like other hunters, Mowgli expresses his triumph erotically, in a climax of expression: “Mowgli made up a song that came up into his throat all by itself, and he shouted it aloud, leaping up and down on the rattling skin, and beating time with his heels till he had no more breath left” (68). At the same time, the narrative evocation of shamanistic, out of body experiences, conjured in Mowgli’s victorious behavior after defeating Shere Khan, and the pageantry associated with bringing the tiger’s body to Mowgli’s seat of power, Council Rock, while the nearby village is utterly destroyed, should give one pause. *The Jungle Book* is perhaps too easily read as simply a colonialist representation of India as one big jungle, on the edge of loathsome villages and villagers, which need to be “tamed” by a boy. Mowgli, raised by an animal hunted to extinction in Europe, a dog-like “friend” of man, ultimately restores and reinforces a dominant, and misleading, representation of people and places. His tale of anthropomorphic and anthropophagic tigers re-romanticizes the wilderness as rich in resources and occasions and as a place where character forms and authority commands.

Anglo narratives of tiger hunting, in the juvenile mode in particular, thus reinforce and reestablish colonial ideas about encounters with tigers as fearsome and dangerous and condemned. At the same time, they seem to open spaces for native writers to employ and introduce the reader to a parallel epistemology of native practices that confound the ‘real’ with the ‘dream’ worlds in order to expose anxieties of conquest and colonization.
Such encounters with tigers are a place to consider the possibilities of intellectual exchanges that emerge from a mutual exchange, between the colonized and the colonial, that is not only competitive but also, quite possibly, collaborative.

V. He/Shey

While Bannerman melted tigers into Indic butter, without actually hunting and killing them, and Kipling sets up the hunt in a way that references native systems of engaging tigers, Rabindrath Tagore’s tiger tales show the development of Native counterdiscourses. Tagore’s He (Shey) at once works within the orbit of the hunt and draws upon the panchatantra folk tales, in which tigers as both fearful nuisances and insignia of royalty are caught up in moral, pedagogical stories. In such stories, the tiger is dangerous, but not so much to be killed as out-witted.24 The tiger in Tagore does not figure as the “other”: the title He (Shey) is simply “the Bengali third person pronoun” (vii) that the translator decided to masculinize as “He,” though it could just as easily be “She.”25 Given that Shey is a collection of stories written by Tagore for the amusement of his nine-year old granddaughter, I would suggest that there is some gender ambiguity regarding the title and leave it there.

Shey, published first “as a whole in 1937,” was written over many years (xii). It has been described as “a modern fantasy” and likened to such whimsical works as Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Le Petit Prince (vi). Like Bannerman, Tagore (also an

24 Another tale of outwitting the tiger from the Indic tradition worth mentioning is The Tiger, the Brahman and the Jackal, even though it will not be included in this analysis.
25 In order to avoid the gender preference of the translator I will, hereafter, use the Bengali title Shey.
accomplished artist) accompanies his text with the following illustrations of tigers in Chapter 6, which contains what the translator calls, “tiger poems” (viii).

FIGURE 7: TIGER ILLUSTRATION #1 IN HE/SHEY BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE
Both sketches are tiger images—one sketch is a partial image with just a head, shoulders and a paw that depicts a tiger on the prowl, wearing a menacing and focused expression in the eyes, while the exaggerated whiskers emphasize its catlike liveness; the other headshot looks mongrelized, and echoes the Blake image (seen in the Introduction). The lines are pointed, the ink-in-jaw elongated and menacing. These might be seen as a pattern in Tagore of consciously domesticating and respecting tiger images, while imagining their complex relation to the history of colonial violence. Tigers figure frequently in Tagore, often as a stimulant to the imagination, as is clear in his 1930 Hibbert Lectures (compiled in *The Religion of Man*):
A child comes to me and commands me to tell her a story. I tell her of a tiger which is disgusted with the black stripes on its body and comes to my frightened servant demanding a piece of soap. The story gives my little audience immense pleasure, the pleasure of a vision, and her mind cries out, “It is here, for I see!” She knows a tiger in the book of natural history, but she can see the tiger in the story of mine. (135)

Tagore goes on to say that the tigers of the stories or fiction, unlike the commonplace of tigers in science books, is uncommon and “can never be reduplicated” because the “tiger of the story completely detached itself from all others of its kind and easily assumed a distinct individuality in the heart of the listener” (136). This somewhat mystical “creation myth” of stories is charmingly related as having its origin to entertain and possibly educate children, as noted in the beginning of Shey:

God in his wisdom, has created millions and billions of people, but the expectations of those people are far from satisfied. They say, ‘Now we want to create people of our own.’ So as the gods played with their living dolls, people began to play with their own dolls, dolls they had created themselves. Then children clamoured, ‘Tell us a story,’ meaning, ‘make people out of words’. So new creations evolved—fairy tale princes, ministers and their sons, spoilt queens and neglected queens, mermaids, the Arabian Nights, Robinson Crusoe, and many, many more. (1)

In the genealogy of tales, noted in the quote above, the connection to place and people get merged through an exchange of literatures.
In these lights, and with the richly-layered history of representations behind him, Tagore’s juvenile tiger-poems take on considerable resonance. In Chapter 6, he begins a poem for children with a serio-comic reminder that the hungry tiger is formidable:

There lived a fat tiger, the forest his home.
Day after day
In search of prey
His stripy frame would roam.
But he’d throw a fit
If he chanced to hit
With whisker-puffing heat
Upon the fact
His dinner lacked
A pound or two of meat.

The tigers in Tagore’s texts are “great ones for laughing—what they call ‘humorous’ in English. They bare their gums at the slightest provocation” (69). The humor towards tigers can be read as familiarity with an animal that is very much a part of the environment, while remaining dangerous if provoked. The dynamic is charmingly stated in the following exchange between storyteller and listener—where the storyteller is trying to convince the listener that tigers have rituals around their eating, just like Brahmanical human practices.

‘If tigers are so very religious, how can they bring themselves to kill for meat? And eat it raw, for that matter?’
‘Oh, that’s not just any old meat. It’s been sanctified by chanting mantras.’

‘What kind of mantras?’

‘Their very holy snarl-spell. They utter it before they make each kill. You couldn’t call that killing, could you?’

‘The most revered tiger-pandit maintains that if a tiger forgets to chant the spell before it makes a kill, it’ll be reborn as the beast it has killed. All the tigers are scared stiff of being reborn as humans.’ (He/Shy 60)

The tiger in this story/poem has actually violated a rather complicated ritual around food, when he uses his right paw instead of his left one (possibly Tagore’s critique of Brahmanical rituals), and for this transgression he is punished by “[A] tiger learned in the rites of roaring and other tiggerish customs” and sentenced to the “south-west corner of the square where the shrine of the tiger-goddess stands” and condemned to feed “only on a shoulder of jackal.” This punishment causes the tiger to clasp his “four paws in entreaty” and “howl piteously” (58), convincingly representing a combination of a prayerful position with a basically natural, animal response that serves to evoke the reader’s concern for the tiger’s pain. Tagore’s tiger takes on human characteristics of speech and language, not unlike Kipling’s tiger. However, Tagore in sensibility is subtly sympathetic with the tiger, following a long tradition of South Asian tiger tales that have their origins in the Panchatantra (Indic folk tales) and Jataka Tales (Buddhist inspired folk tales).26

26 While Kipling also draws from the Panchatantra, he makes the colonial association that tigers are a cannibalistic menace to humans.
VI. “MRS. PACKLETIDE’S TIGER”

“Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger” is a short story published in 1911 by Hector Hugh Munro. Munro, like George Orwell, who was born in Bihar and hunted big game, took up a position in Burma to serve in the Indian Imperial Police. Munro’s sexuality was, like many other Edwardians of his day, closeted, but it emerges between the lines. Written in the ironic style of other British writers such as Evelyn Waugh, “Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger” can be read as an anti-imperial tale, even as it re-inscribes colonialist perspectives, especially in its underlying hostility toward natives. They are in a sense blamed for the discomfort and moral anxiety he feels about the project he has joined. In such contexts, queer repositioning subtly takes an anti-imperialistic turn. The British emphasis on colonial masculinity is destabilized by sexual desires that circulate within it, and that are shown to be repressed in the colonial center as well.

“Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger” begins in London, on Curzon Street in Mayfair. Given that the street was named after the Governor General of India from 1899-1905, who was responsible for partitioning Bengal, the story seems immediately positioned as a colonial analysis, concerned with the circulations of people and ideas to India and back. The plot will move from the exclusive and fashionable neighborhood where Mrs Packletide lives, to India, and then back to Britain, and will be driven by the desire to prove the self by extracting resources from India. In the opening sequence, we learn directly that Mrs. Packletide desires something exotic in order to outdo her friend Loona Bimberton who “had recently been carried eleven miles in an aeroplane by an Algerian aviator.” So she heads out to “shoot a tiger,” because “only a personally procured tiger-skin and a heavy harvest of Press photographs could successfully counter that sort of thing” (115).
Mrs. Packletide’s competitive colonial character established, the story moves her quickly to India, where she locates a village and brings a willingness to pay “a thousand rupees for the opportunity of shooting a tiger without over-much risk or exertion.” This is welcomed by the “sporting and commercial instincts of the villagers” who are, conveniently for all, being harassed by an old tiger who preys on small domestic animals. The “villagers” in colonialist fashion are nameless and communicate using “tom-toms,” but the economic exchange of resources is adeptly negotiated regardless of language differences. The suggestion between the lines is that the Natives are quite adept at capitalizing on the colonial lady’s fantasies, both of performing for her social nemesis, and of rationalizing that she is helping the natives out in the process. Mimicking the hunting practices of a long line of European tiger hunters, Mrs. Packletide sets up watch from a *machan* (treetop platform) with a goat left as bait, accompanied by her “paid companion” Louisa Mebbin, whose bargaining instincts stem from a cheapness exhibited by privileged people among the less privileged displaying appalling insensitivity for fear of being made a fool. In due time, the tiger takes the bait. However, when Mrs. Packletide shoots at the tiger, her inept shot kills the goat, and “heart failure, caused by the sudden report of the rifle” results in the tiger’s death.

Kipling’s Shere Khan and Mrs. Packletide’s tiger are both geriatric, injured, and unable to easily hunt down prey in the wild. But though additionally lazy, Mrs Packletide’s tiger is still capable of plucking off dumb village livestock, while Shere Khan is much more malevolent and scheming and represented as the enemy of man. The major difference is that Shere Khan has been anthropomorphized; Munro avoids anthropomorphizing or attributing anthropophagic aspects to the tiger. In this story, the
humans are more repulsive than anything in the wild. The shooting of a tiger does not represent an attack on the natural environment so much as it does the diminishment of whatever Empire stood for. In a comic language, the text is headed toward a later “hunt,” like that in Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant,” in which the elephant represents British colonialism. Mrs. Packletide is feted and celebrated upon returning home to Curzon Street with her “tiger-skin rug.” Eventually, Louisa Mebbin blackmails Mrs. Packletide, threatening to reveal how she “acquired” the tiger skin to her social rival Loona Bimberton. Louisa succeeds in getting her “week-end cottage in Darking,” and Mrs. Packletide gives up big-game hunting because “[T]he incidental expenses are so heavy.”

Mebbin and Packletide have an unequal class relationship with Mebbin dependent on the wealthy Packletide. But too much goes into emphasizing this aspect in order to disguise another possibility. Mebbin, we are told, is only a “paid companion”; nevertheless, she has travelled extensively through Russia and Europe where she “saved many a rouble, francs and centimes,” and she is able to communicate in “Hindustani” (an imaginary language?), though utters no “Hindustani” words in the text. Only after Mrs. Packletide has displayed her hunting trophy at every possible social event back in England, where it appears Louisa has also been present, does Louisa’s grasping nature prompt her to take the opportunity to secure her future by blackmailing her wealthy hunting companion.

This story sets up a triangular relationship among three women: Mrs. Packletide, Loona Bimerton, and Louisa Mebbin. By referring to the relationship between at least two of the women as ‘companion’ (paid or otherwise), Munro introduces an ambiguity about their relationship even as he panders to heteronormativity. Mr. Packletide is clearly out of the picture and does not merit mention or appearance. Mrs. Packletide and Louisa
Mebbin embark on a male-dominated activity—big game hunting. Although few women are known to have accompanied a hunting party, less than a handful are known for having hunting tigers, such as the Rani of Jhansi. Coded into this story are many clues to suggest that attention is given, if not complete visibility, to what in America were called “Boston Marriages,” or to a lesbian relationship within the norms and repressions of Edwardian England. Mrs. Packletide must be accompanied by a “paid companion” who has “blackmailed” her into providing for her, which explains how women belonging to different social classes are kept in an intimate relationship. By deftly combining a number of different issues, this story reassigns the gender of the hunters to women, suggests some ambiguities about the relationship between the women characters, and critiques the trivial, acquisitive, exploitive and corrupt engagements between colonizer and colonized that move it towards an anti-imperial tale, even as it is bound by colonialist and heteronormative rhetoric.

VII. Bengal Tiger Mystery

Satyajit Ray, born in Calcutta in 1922, is best known internationally for his outstanding films, such as Apur Sansar (Apu Trilogy), for which he received an Oscar Lifetime Achievement award in 1992, shortly before his death. As Ashis Nandy shows, the Ray family was an “important presence in Calcutta’s social and intellectual life” (241). They were members of the Brahmo Samaj, 27 although Ray’s grandfather affiliated with the

27 A hybridized religion that renounced orthodox Hinduism and whose members were committed to social reform (241), including rights of women in a “culture that included
smaller sect of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, which was somewhat puritanical with regards to sex and violence. That position, Nandy notes, was one of dissent in a society where norms around sexuality were loose by Western standards (246). The Ray family had a “special relationship with children’s literature, art and theatre,” which became a “family tradition.” His grandfather, famous for his children’s literature, established the first magazine for children, Sandesh; his father contributed to the content and besides was a famous printer and publisher; his uncles “translated into Bengali popular English science fiction and crime thrillers for children” (Nandy 242). Ideologically, the family, “through their Brahmo connection with late Victorian culture,” were, like my father’s family, despite supporting nationalist thought and independence from Britain, were also Anglophile, and “proud of their British connection” (Nandy 242-243).

Many non-brahmin Bengalis, like Ray and Tagore, embraced western ideas of universalism as an oppositional strategy of dissent against centuries of an oppressive orthodox brahmanical hegemony. Their stories frequently use colonial plots and values to intervene in the politics of caste. The opposition to brahmanical orthodoxy was coupled with a strong anti-imperialist and anti-colonial position in which the indigenous, through a dynamic and highly productive engagement in all forms of the arts using vernacular languages, remained highly privileged, even though Ray and Tagore did most of their writing in the vernacular, they were also highly literate in English. Notably, Tagore’s translation of Gitanjali was awarded a Nobel Prize for Literature in English. Thus, affiliations with and acceptance of certain British or European values were adopted as a

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an identifiable substratum of matriarchy” (246), and who held their gatherings like an Anglican service.
form of resistance. This hybridity of culture—Bengali and British—among a certain class of Bengali intellectuals mirrors my father’s family.

However, as Mrinalini Sinha has pointed out, the Bengali intellectual was constructed as an “effeminate Bengali babu” in contrast to the “manly Englishman” that “were produced by, and helped to shape, the shifts in the political economy of colonialism in the late nineteenth century: the changing imperatives in the strategies of colonial rule as well as the altered conditions for the indigenous elite's collaboration with colonial rule” (Sinha 3). Thus, contestation and collaboration mark the complicated nature of “processes and practices through which two differently positioned elites, among the colonisers and the colonised, were constituted” in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century to which I also connect tiger hunting stories, particularly the next one.

Although a generation that saw Independence and Partition separates Ray from Tagore, both were natives of Bengal and Calcutta. As Nandy notes, “Ray lived in the pre-war, bicultural world of Rabindranath Tagore” and that “his outlook is derived from Tagore” (Nandy 247), or as another critic calls it ‘Tagorean synthesis,’ which combined ideas from East and West to influence thought and determine the actions of social reformers and nationalists in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengal (Ganguly 75). Like Tagore, Ray’s imaginative works extend beyond film—he wrote numerous short stories, articles, and novels in Bengali. Furthermore, Ray was educated at Tagore’s famous alternative to colonial educational institution, Santi Niketan. In 1961, he revived
a children’s magazine, *Sandesh*, founded by his grandfather. Ray regularly contributed, in serialized form, a series of detective and science fiction stories that were affectionately named for their respective protagonists, Feluda and Professor Shanku. Although Ray’s popular fiction was “apparently meant for children, Bengalis of all ages adored Ray’s thrillers and science fiction” (Nandy 248).

These popular culture texts had tremendous vogue and are one way that the form and genres of Britishness were carried over and rerouted by young Indians growing up in the post-Independence period. When I was thirteen and home from school for many weeks recovering from a serious illness, my friend lent me a bunch of books, among them was an Agatha Christie mystery—*Thirteen for Dinner*—and from the first body at the end of chapter one I was hooked, and by the time I recovered my health I had ploughed through the entire collection of murder mysteries at my local neighborhood association library. As a child, like millions of other South Asian children, I also read all the Enid Blyton mystery series. I have remained a reader of the detective/mystery genre and still prefer ones set in England, such as popular mystery writers like Ruth Rendell and Minette Walters. Although aware of Ray’s popular fiction, I have come to it as an adult. I became interested and read the Professor Shanku series several years ago for a project on science fiction. It came as a surprise to me recently to learn about the *Bengal Tiger Mystery* while preparing to give a lecture on South Asian film and came across

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28 Named for a Bengali sweetmeat, but the second syllable, desh, stands alone to mean nation or county or homeland, and later *Desh* is how the magazine was known.
29 Twenty-one titles published over a twenty year period between 1942-1962 in which five children (2 girls, including the androgynous “tomboy” George, 2 boys and a dog—nicknamed the Famous Five) get caught up in all sorts of adventures while solving mysteries in books titled uniformly *Five Go on a Treasure Island, Five Go to Mystery Moor*, etc.
information about a film being made based on Ray’s Feluda series. After reading this novella, I could see that an analysis of this text, for several reasons—establishing the native perspective on tiger hunting narratives, as well as a literary link between other South Asian writers, such as Tagore (from an earlier generation than Ray) and Amitav Ghosh (from the generation that followed Ray)—would be an important part of this dissertation. Feluda\textsuperscript{30} is the detective character of Pradosh Mitter, who embarks on sleuthing adventures, invariably accompanied by his cousin, Tapes, from whose perspective the narratives are told, mimicking Arthur Conan Doyle’s detective narrative style of the adventures of Sherlock Holmes retold to readers by his sidekick Dr. Watson. There are thirty-five stories that make up the Feluda series, starting with Danger in Darjeeling (1966-65) and ending with The Magical Mystery (1995-1996, obviously published posthumously). The tenth story in the Feluda series was written in Bengali and originally published as \textit{Royal Bengal Rahasya} in \textit{Desh} in 1974, a year after I arrived as an immigrant in Detroit; \textit{Rahasya} literally means man-eater, but is translated as the \textit{Bengal Tiger Mystery}.

\textit{Bengal Tiger Mystery} (written in twelve short chapters) is chock full of mostly colonial (Corbett and other British hunting accounts) and a few precolonial (Goddess Durga and Emperor Sher Shah) references to tiger hunting. The action begins in Calcutta where Feluda is “reading Thor Heyerdahl’s Aku-Aku” (436). He is invited by a mystery writer, Lalmohan Ganguli (a recurring comic character in the series) along with his cousin, Tapes, to visit the estate of a well-known shikari and writer, Mahitosh Sinha-Roy (fictional author of a fictional text, \textit{The Tiger and the Gun}), whose secretary, Sengupta,

\textsuperscript{30} Felu is a nickname when attached to the honorific ‘da’ signals their personal and hierarchical relationship—older brother.
has been, apparently, killed by a ‘maneating’ tiger. In this story, as in the series, Ray sets up an “all-male” world (Nandy 250). “Homoerotic impulses” are downplayed because the main characters, Feluda and Tapes, are cousins, and Ganguli is in an avuncular relationship to the two younger men presents less opportunity for a homoerotic reading that “the Sherlock Holmes stories” have undergone—a recent example being the British series, “Sherlock.” Like the hunt itself, this story privileges a rarefied homosocial setting.

The selling point to undertake this trip is the opportunity to see a tiger forest, which when proposed Feluda sarcastically remarks, “Where? I can’t think of any place other than the Sunderbans, or the Terai. Everything else is wiped clean.” (426) Nevertheless, Feluda accepts the job as he has “always been fascinated by tales of shikar” and “has read every book written by Corbett and Kenneth Anderson” (428). Besides, Feluda is a good shot even though he has “never been on a shikar” (428).

This story can also be read as mourning the progressive and rapid downturn in tiger populations through hunting practices that drastically changed the environment so that in places where tigers would be visible in the recent past, their paucity is attributed first to hunting with Sinha Roy accepting responsibility there and expanding the hunting critique to include other inhumane and profitable practices related to tigers in containment and entertainment, such as zoos and circuses.

I—and other shikaris like me—are to blame, for shikar was considered to be a sport. Even in ancient times, kings used to go on hunting expeditions which they called *mrigaya*. So did Mughal badshahs, and in modern times,
our British masters.\textsuperscript{31} It became a tradition, which we followed blindly.

Can you imagine how many animals have been killed in these two thousand years? But that isn’t all, is it? Just think of the number of animals that are caught every year for zoos and circuses!’ (438-439)

In the story, rumors of a man-eating tiger in the Kâlbun\textsuperscript{32} forest have been circulating, because the body of an “adhivasi boy was found in the jungle” with scratches on him that suggested that he had “been attacked by a tiger,” to which Feluda asks, “Just scratches? Didn’t the tiger eat the flesh?” (430-431). Soon we learn that the scratches and partially eaten body may have been the work of carrion eating jackals, demonized by Kipling in the cunning character Tabaqui who follows in the wake of Shere Khan consuming the discards and leftovers of a tiger’s kill. The rumor of the cause of death in the case of the adhivasi boy is juxtaposed with these claims by the shikari, Mahitosh Babu, who proudly states “I haven’t been able to reach three figures, I must admit. I killed seventy-one tigers and over fifty leopards” (433), just like the figures that the wildlife historian Rangarajan presented earlier, and the pancake eating family of Sambo.

After the reader is dragged, like the tiger’s prey, through a hodge-podge of Victorian hunting narrative myths about man-eating tigers—not unlike those that Campbell, Brander, and Corbett “recorded”—that are set up as one red herring after another in a trail that unravels to reveal that Sengupta was not killed by a tiger, but

\textsuperscript{31} My own sense is that Ray’s use of the Bengali word “sarkar” in the text is best translated to mean “government” instead of “master.”

\textsuperscript{32} In specifying the particular forest, Ray evokes and mimics Corbett’s practice of naming man-eaters after the geographic regions in which they have been reported to attack humans.
murdered by a “two-legged tiger” (465), because he had solved a riddle that would lead him and his assailant to a buried treasure. Unfortunately, as part of the denouement, a tiger is sacrificed—making a singular appearance as follows:

Then I saw a flash of yellow—like a moving flame—though the leaves of the trees that stood behind the temple. It moved swiftly through the tall grass and all the undergrowth, and slowly took the shape of a huge, striped animal: a Royal Bengal tiger. (478)

The tiger’s dramatic appearance is short lived as it is promptly shot in graphic details that are reminiscent of the earlier hunting narratives (479), including the gratitude of the local villagers who miraculously appear running to the spot where the body of the tiger lies and are “[T]hrilled to see their enemy killed, they were now making arrangements to tie the tiger to bamboo poles and carry it to their village” (479)—an image that uncannily mirrors the past and the future. In the end, as reward for solving the crime—a predictable end to all murder mysteries and a temporary end to violence and a return to social order until the next installment or episode of violence that keeps series and readers endlessly engaged in this highly profitable genre of fiction—Feluda is gifted a tiger skin. This end makes me wonder if the tiger skin I unraveled in my grandfather’s house, all those many years ago, might have been a gift.

The fictional representations of tigers by Bannerman and Kipling obviously exaggerated the propensity of tigers to stalk, kill, and devour humans. Similar images of the tiger were popularized in the nineteenth-century and continued into the twentieth-century in the hunting narratives of Campbell, Brander, and Corbett. These images were
not just held by colonists, but influenced and informed the indigenous South Asian writers—Rabindranath Tagore and Satyajit Ray—in their attempts to address new cultural formations, and to meditate on the complexities of post-colonialism. The examples in this chapter, then, link the hunters’ narratives and the fiction of Bannerman and Kipling, as well as that of Tagore and Ray, as part of a common system of representation. Tiger tales develop both as colonial strategies covering anxieties of being out of place and involved in a wholly extractive economy, and basic anxieties about the natural world from which nobody seems free, including native writers. Recently, the Croatian novelist Téa Obreht, has made a valiant attempt to recuperate the tiger in her marvelous, many-layered novel *The Tiger’s Wife*, which will be centralized in Chapter IV. Finally the question of whether modern “hunting” pursuits and traditional hunting practices, as represented in tiger tales, have something to offer each other, with each bringing the other into “crisis,” remains open and offers research potential for other formerly colonized locations and writers stamped by their particular colonial histories.
CHAPTER III

EYE ON THE TIGER: READING TIGERS THROUGH VISUAL CULTURE

Images of the Hunt are everywhere in Eastern and European art. As each culture and each medium has successively turned to man’s relationship with wild animals as a central theme first of human survival, then of human dominance, the art has become more self-conscious, more overlaid with symbolic meaning. – John Mackenzie, *The Empire of Nature* (8)

I. TIGERS IN THE FIELD OF VISUAL CULTURE

This chapter shifts from the lexical to the visual, suggesting how anxieties over extended contact, conquest and colonization developed into visual languages in which “man-eating tigers” function as complex and often ambiguous images of wildness, conflict, menace, and process of modernity. The visual in a sense corresponds with the lexical, without attempting equivalence; rather, it “corresponds” in the sense that lexical and visual fields exchange messages with each other, while calling on different faculties and techniques of observation, representation, and reception. As colonial cultures sought to exercise greater control over indigenous cultures, and as tigers were increasingly pushed to the margins, the conflict between men and tigers increasingly was seen and represented visually in symbolic terms. Historically, in terms of South Asian representation, the shift might be characterized as one in which the tiger becomes masculinized, as opposed to the traditional feminized associations of tigers as *vahana* (vehicle) of the goddess Durga. At the same time, insofar as there is a two-way transfer of
meanings, European iconicity reflects an increasingly enmeshed and male (homoerotic/homophobic) sphere. Thus, in many of the “classic” tiger paintings, tiger, man, horse, and setting are complexly composed in relation to each other, while removed in time and space from the scene of their production. The tiger images discussed in this chapter rarely stay in place, whether in a realistic or iconic form, but keep “springing” up in ways that uncannily mark a displacement. Few of the images in this chapter are set against landscapes identifiable as India, but all, I would suggest, however obscurely, reference “India” and the long history of appropriation, re-appropriation, and movement.

My analysis in this chapter invokes lines of thought in which the visual is provisionally separated from the lexical, and regarded as having a logical priority, as things must be seen and viscerally engaged before they are described. Seeing, however, requires its own grammars, vocabularies, inventories of images, and techniques and traditions that are both cognitive and cultural. The complex relation of “word” and “image,” of course, has several genealogies: W. J. T. Mitchell traces one from Greco-Roman traditions through George Berkeley, who in the eighteenth century “argued that eyesight is a ‘visual language,’ a complex learned technique that involves the coordination of visual and tactile sensations” (qtd. Mitchell 48-49). Mitchell highlights Charles Pierce’s contributions to our understanding of the differences between icon, symbol and sign, as well as the work of Erwin Panofsky, who linked literature and philology to art history through the term ‘iconology,’ suturing image/icons to language/word/logos (3). To follow these lines of thought rigorously would require crossing disciplinary lines into philosophy and art history, domains beyond the scope of this dissertation.
However, working within the general problematic set up in emerging fields where visual culture studies meets culture studies seems to offer provocative directions for my study of how “tiger tales” circulate, accrue meaning, and become indexical of cultural and ecological relations. There seems a foundational sense and value to John Berger’s anthropological observation that “[S]eeing comes before words,” because “[I]t is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words” and “[T]he relation between what we see and what we know is never settled” (7). The cognitive and cultural binds will not be resolved here; and in another sort of study, art history and criticism of the provenances of images and the history of their circulations would offer deeply relevant information. Here I confine myself to the more general “visual culture space,” in which images, iconic and ordinary, are often, without extended contextualization, read as a complex arrangement of icons, signs, and symbols that add meaning and enrich our sympathetic understanding of representations in ways that reflect and influence our ideas and views. Paintings, sculpture, illustrations, and photography become striking windows into politics, society, and signifying practices that mediate them. At the same time, especially in scenes of contact, conflict, and displacement, deeply backgrounded images engage each other in new contexts and are recombined in ways that make any act of assigning meaning an interactive point of view.

I thus find useful Ella Shohat’s and Robert’s idea of a “polycentric aesthetic” in which “[T]he visual is also an integral part of a culture and of history, not in the sense of a static backdrop…but rather as complete activating principle. The visual is simply one point of entry, and a very strategic one at this historical moment, into a multidimensional world of intertextual dialogism”(55). Shohat and Stam emphasize that ‘polycentrism’ is a
“systematic principle of differentiation, relationality, and linkage” in which “one history is read contrapuntally across another in a gesture of mutual ‘haunting’ and reciprocal relativization” (56). This perspective, a “gesture toward historical equity and lucidity,” recognizes as an aspiration the need to see relationally, whether this involves moving across textual and visual representations, or across cultural fields. It seems particularly applicable to my overall goal in the dissertation to both highlight the cultural specificities of my analysis in relation to South Asia, while aiming to “re-envision the global politics of visual culture” (57).

Implicit in any attempt such as mine to “read” across domains, and to even approach the cultural work performed by the circulation of visual images, is the need for a model of production and reception. Most useful to my work in this conceptual sense—in part as a caution to making assumptions about response—is the account of the circuitries of “Encoding/Decoding” that Stuart Hall provides. In the case of production, one might suggest that colonial regimes function as the hegemonic, although, as suggested in my earlier chapters, part of the British aesthetic mimics or derives from Mughal models; the provenance of images, for whom and for what they are commissioned or displayed and under what circumstances, is tremendously complicated. When it comes to reception, the difficulties perhaps multiply. Hall speaks of three positions: first, the dominant-hegemonic, where the reader fully shares the code and accepts and reproduces the reading; second, the negotiated position in which the reader partly shares the text’s code, but sometimes resists and modifies it in a way that reflects their own position creating contradictions; finally, the oppositional position in which the reader directly opposes the dominant position, understands it, and rejects it by bringing in
an alternative frame of reference (130-132). In other words, Hall’s codes illuminate, facilitate and suggest multiple levels of reception of the analysis of similar images, and suggest the sheer complexity of the processes inscribed in visual languages across the field of representation. One could take as an example, several images that depict the scene of the hunt, particularly those that show the hunter atop an elephant with tiger in the gun’s sights. Clearly, for a certain colonial reader, the dominant-hegemonic position has been successfully encoded through the colonial apparatus of representation and dissemination that move in alliance with ideological patterns of reception. At the same time, for Indian intellectuals of the period, educated within dual systems, the image might well be negotiated, or provide an occasion for oppositional reading and critique.

Exemplary for me in developing strategies of reading images against the grain of the hegemonic are the visual analyses modeled by Mieke Bal, Mitchell and Frederich Bohrer. Bal’s *Reading Rembrandt* reconsiders the “unspeakable event” that is depicted in narratives and art about the “The Rape of Lucrece,” including Shakespeare’s poem, as an example of how images can be unmasked and made to reveal the hidden structures of power, authority and violence, across creative expressive media, literary and visual. Mitchell’s work in *The Last Dinosaur Book* selects individual images from the archive of popular images to analyze a popular culture obsession with dinosaurs. His cultural analysis furnishes methodology by taking a single subject for content and direction and, for me, opens up the possibility to introduce colonial and postcolonial frames of reference. Frederich Bohrer’s work on the influence of Assyrian culture on Europe in *Orientalism and Visual Culture* suggests a model of reading in which “reception [can be seen] as a dynamic process in which meaning is not just passively received but also actively
produced” (5). Such approaches inform my reading in this chapter, particularly in relation to the object that came to be known as Tipu’s Tiger.

A theme of this chapter, in keeping with the general question about how visual narratives are seen, “told,” and circulated, is how densely inter-textual images prove to be, and how much visual response departs from a stockpiles of images. We are never wholly aware of where we start with an image, or how our ways of looking reinscribe hegemonic views, negotiate them, or oppose them. In a rough way, then, my own “sequence” of images and analyses self-consciously inscribes a personal narrative within a more wide-reaching one within the chapter. I begin with what for me is an everyday, but nonetheless surprising tiger image, one I actually see on the way to work, and then circle around between a “broader” exploration of tiger hunts and tigers from master artists of the European tradition. These latter images could be seen as a subgenre that perpetuates and reinforces particular ideas (some of them internally conflicted themselves) about tiger hunts and tigers in a chain of references beginning with Peter Paul Rubens and linking to Eugène Delacroix, Henri Rousseau and Rosa Bonheur. At the same time, I suggest through an analysis of South Asian visual representations of tigers and tiger hunting in precolonial, Mughal art that the European tiger image may have been aware of and a departure from the “Indian” ones. This would be more directly so in the nineteenth century colonial sporting narratives that included illustrations of the hunt, as in representative texts by William Rice and William Gordon-Cumming, where the visual provides credibility to narratives that were expected to be read “by the fireside” in Britain. Moving from book illustrations and back to art, I turn to the British artist John Zoffany’s sketch, Tyger Hunting in the East Indies, a black and white drawing now located in the
British India Office Library, that reveals some notable connections to illustrations in hunting narratives and the long traditions of the elements that represent the characteristic composition of tiger hunts in European art. Beyond the two dimensions of art, I chose to include in this analysis a “material culture” object that has been extensively studied by art historians, cultural anthropologists and historians, named for the Nizam of Hyderabad who commissioned it, and called Tipu’s Tiger. It is a three-dimensional and most remarkable artifact—an organ encased in a painted wood carving—with a rich and complex history of reception that confounds logic. An untitled image from an anonymous Indian artist rounds out the visual images of tigers and tiger hunting in this section.

An important underlying goal for my analysis will be to work within range conceptually of an indigenous approach to the visual, to strive toward recognizing what it might look like to regard images primarily through the optics of those with deeply backgrounded traditions and techniques of perception in relation to the represented objects. James Elkins and others have recently explored this aspiration in relation to the concept of unique cultural perspectives to the visual; for example, one might refer to a Japanese aesthetic to read any visual image, and consider how such a move could impact the entire field of visual culture. I take my cue in the South Asian context from a comparative philosopher, Arindam Chakrabarti, who has uniquely applied the indic arts appreciation theory of rasa. Rasa is documented in the treatise on theater, *The Natyashastra*,33 explicated by the ninth century Kashmiri philosopher, Abhinavagupta, and has subsequently produced an extensive body of criticism by Sanskrit scholars.

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33 Credited to Bharata Muni and written some time between 200 BCE—200 ACE.
Simply put rasa is the juice (ras) or essence of something tangible—such as a
performance, a text, an image—that is experienced intangibly through motor sensory
perception like sight, sound and taste. There are eight categories of rasa that reflect
particular mental states (love, laughter, fury, tragedy, disgust, horror, heroism, and
wonder), each of which is associated with a particular mood (love, mirth, anger, sorrow,
repulse, fear, energy, and astonishment) (Chakrabarti 352). Some rasa are more desirable
and others less desirable. In my analysis of tiger hunting images the rasas of terror,
horror, and astonishment prevail in the masculinized, aggressive images associated with
tiger hunts, while love and other gentler emotions are evident in more feminized
depictions. Although such imagined partitionings are not always clearly marked and
occasionally cross-over or blur, particularly in connection to expressions of homoerotics,
nevertheless the differences, interstices and intersections both complicate and enrich the
analysis of the visual. Therefore, my analysis considers all these approaches with
particular attention to examining the representation of violence associated with tiger
hunting, and how such images also reflect the tropes of colonialism—exoticizing
locations and peoples, while expressing hidden anxieties related to imperial/colonial
projects, sometimes reinforcing colonial institutions and at other times disturbing
hegemonic perspectives.

In *The Last Dinosaur Book*, Mitchell suggests that in the twentieth century there
are more images of dinosaurs than there ever were actual dinosaurs. Mitchell sees the
fascination with dinosaurs, moving from museums to movies, as symptomatic of human
nostalgia for the world they are destroying as well. Dinosaurs in popular and visual
culture come to double the human world and embody its central contradictions,
commodification at the site of nostalgia and a negating critique of contemporary value. Something similar could be said about tigers. Tiger images, both ordinary and iconic, far outnumber tiger populations, past or present. During the colonial period (the images of course have ancient sources and continue to act as signifiers of the sacred) and until today these images are freighted with additional layers of meaning. We live among the remnants of these images, which can be reactivated in various fora, such as a recent Ang Lee film to daily signs. How they are coded and read of course varies.

II. Visual Crosswalks: On the Track of Tiger Images

I see a tiger every day on my way to my office at the University of Hawai‘i Library in Mānoa, Honolulu: I park my car in the campus parking structure buried in a former quarry, take the elevator to the fifth floor and walk across at the street level between the Law School and the Law Library where I must cross Dole Street. In the last six months, at the pedestrian crosswalk is the following image of a tiger.
FIGURE 9: PEDESTRIAN CROSSWALK TIGER, 2012, BY MONICA GHOSH (PHOTOGRAPH)

This image, to my mind, bears an uncanny resemblance to the following image from a 1908 edition of *Little Black Sambo* (19).  

FIGURE 10: TIGER ILLUSTRATION IN *LITTLE BLACK SAMBO*, 1908 EDITION BY JOHN R. NEILL

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34 Internet Archive at: http://archive.org/stream/storyoflittlebla1903bann#page/18/mode/2up)
The “Pedestrian Crosswalk Tiger” will fade, shred and eventually disappear because it is exposed to the elements, mainly the Tuahine winds and rains of Mānoa. But over the past months it has been there as a daily reminder to me to get my “darn dissertation” done. Furthermore, this tiger functions as a reminder of both the vast body of tiger images that were charged by the images developed during the colonial period in India, and the problematic of reading such images out of texts. Like Mitchell’s dinosaurs, tiger images are widely disseminated, fragmented, dialogically interacting, disclosing connections among narratives, entering fields of vision in uncanny ways. Consciously or not, the pedestrian crosswalk tiger links to the illustration in *Little Black Sambo*, suggesting how images are informed and connected by a visual archive of literary and cultural texts, extending from the location of tiger habitats to scenes of colonial struggle for meaning and control over land and peoples to the places where tigers exist in the imaginations of their viewers only within the confines of zoos.

Pursuing the idea of how contemporary forms trail along images developed in earlier periods, and function within a legacy of artifacts whose creators may not be aware of the histories they evoke, I recall a recent trip to Toronto for a conference. I wound up on Gerard Street, a required visit on any trip to that city (a personal ritual that goes back to my life in Detroit in the 1970s-1980s, when I made frequent visits for long weekends and other family occasions) for a chaat feast. While walking around chewing paan, I stepped into a store crowded with all kinds of objects from kitchen utensils, empty packing boxes piled ceiling high and, on a cluttered shelf in the middle of the store, many forms of Hindu icons. Among these, I spied a Durga image (Figure 11), which can be taken as an example of what Kasri Jain refers to as “cheap, mass produced icons known
as ‘bazaar art’” (16). Although bazaar art has been denigrated as cheap, tacky, mass-produced and for the masses, Jain argues convincingly for the term as having valence that can be teased out in visual culture analyses because the bazaar, as the place from which these images circulate, inscribes the images with “sacred, commercial, ethical, aesthetic, and libidinal forms of value…closely enmeshed” (16). Jain’s move to recruit bazaar art for serious critical consideration has been important, but her analysis tends to focus only on what she calls “vernacular” forms of art, even as she reminds us that vernacular art “has more to do with ‘art’ than art is willing to admit” (17). My own analysis does not consider bazaar art as a separate category but, because of the wide circulation of vernacular art, continuous with, connected to, and related to fine art, especially indigenous visual representations of tigers.

It is in the spirit of inclusivity, not marginality, that the “Gerrard Street Store Durga” is represented here to signify the proliferation of tiger images that “enmesh” the ordinary with the iconic.
Most people in the west are familiar with the goddess Kali, and she has many followers in Bengal, but the goddess Durga, for whom the biggest and most elaborate puja is held every autumn according to the lunar calendar, is usually depicted riding a tiger just as she is doing in this image in a tacky store on Gerard Street in Toronto. Durga’s mode of transportation provides a uniquely South Asian visual representation that associates tigers with the feminine in a world of different gender balances. Another example of feminized visualization can be seen in the following tiger image by a Pahari\textsuperscript{35} artist (246).

\textsuperscript{35} A school of Indian art “distinct in spirit and idiom, flourished in the foothills of the western Himalaya from the seventeenth to the nineteenth-century.” It is associated with patronage Rajput courts (Ohri 1). This art form is named for the region represented—\textit{pahar}—which literally means ‘hills’ and refers to the hill regions of northwest India.
Generally, in the colonial and postcolonial worlds, the hypermasculinized image of tiger as hunter and prey dominates the visual culture of tigers. Even in earlier periods, if the intended prey within the field of vision is human, the tiger is doomed; if it is an animal in view, it will be prey. An example of the latter may be seen in the following Rousseau image titled *Combat of a Tiger and a Buffalo* (Schmalenbach 42), where the tiger is depicted with what looks like a mane combed down (reminiscent of lion/tiger confusion discussed in Chapter I) and it is not being set against man but has sprung upon a more realistic prey—a buffalo. From the image it appears that the fight is over; the tiger has
either begun or is about to begin feasting on the buffalo, whose one open eye registers his defeat by the smaller, more athletic creature as a kind of borderline sexual submission.

FIGURE 13: FIGHT BETWEEN A TIGER AND A BUFFALO, 1908, BY HENRI ROUSSEAU (OIL ON CANVAS)

These alternating images, regardless of race/ethnicity, are embedded and layered with political and social codes connected to what and how we see—images coded with values that Roland Barthes brilliantly reveals in his analysis of the Panzani advertisement in “The Rhetoric of the Image” (33-34). In the last few hundred years, masculinized images have dominated imagery of tigers as evident in the works of various European artists, including Rubens, Delacroix, Rousseau and Bonheur. Most of these artists never actually saw a tiger in its natural environment and must have relied on written accounts or other images for their creations. They tend to mix up the geographic locations by combining
“savage” animals from different locations in a single image or conflating locales (jungle, savannah, desert) that have been colonized/colonizable into an interchangeable “exotic.”

The seventeenth century painting, *Tiger, Lion and Leopard Hunt* (c. 1616), by Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens, illustrates the dynamic and fantastic complexity of colonial intensity around tigers. The image densely stacks historical contexts and motifs, at once representing a chaos of politics and social contestations, and asserting mastery through classical form:

![Tiger, Lion and Leopard Hunt](image)

**FIGURE 14: TIGER, LION AND LEOPARD HUNT, C. 1616, BY PETER PAUL RUBENS (OIL ON CANVAS)**

This image evokes the crusades, with the Islamic feathered turban man wearing a red robe on horseback perhaps figuring an “Ottoman,” who appears to be accompanied and
possibly “protected” by two men in European-style armor also on horseback. Given that it is a tiger “hunt,” they seem in any event to have initiated the attack and to be allied against the tiger. The scene projects a conflict between humans and large cats as a general category, but the location is indeterminate, other than that the action occurs near a body of water, which appears in the distance, visible only between the rearing horse’s legs. If the spotted animal is a leopard, then the addition of two tigers and a lion could conceivably be set in India, but all three animals are unlikely to be in the same geographic location unless they had been recently released from a zoo. This image is not set in a jungle, but staged as a battle between humans and animals in which the immediate outcome remains uncertain. The tiger is attributed a particular ferocity; while the leopard lies slain with a spear protruding from the abdomen, and a man in the left corner seems to have wrestled apart the jaws of lion as if it were an alligator, presumably protecting the muscular man directly beneath him from being eaten, the tiger seems wholly unscathed at this point, and more than a match for the dappled grey horse and the prostrate robbed man who was riding him but is now being laid out on his back.\footnote{An image that Rubens duplicates in another painting \textit{Samson and the Lion} that depicts the biblical story of Samson killing a lion by breaking his jaw (Rubens 220).} This is a compressed and composed scene of attack where the soldiers appear to be matched with animals and eroticized; two of the men appear dominated by man-eaters. If the tiger survives this encounter with humans and their spears, it seems improbable that he will prevail against future technological innovations. The history of the hunt, sculpturally monumentalized here, seems to pit human history against the tiger’s survival.

An example of inter-textuality or affinity among images, and of the naturalization of painted tigers as colonial signifiers, is suggested by the artistic line that runs from
Rubens to Eugène Delacroix. The latter reinvests the former with new significances, amplifying and reflecting the French colonial contexts of his day. Delacroix painted over fifty images of tigers, and he clearly derived his interest in tigers through careful formal study of Rubens. As suggested, for both the tiger has become a figure of an encounter (between the human/animal, civilization/savagery, primal/conscious), and the settings are imagined or psychologized landscapes; humans are located primarily by head dress or other garb that suggests but does not specify colonial locations. In Delacroix’s tiger paintings, the land we are in is exotic because it is a land where tigers can be met and grappled with as forms, where tigers spring up and are locked in fatal embrace with humans and their companion animals. Here the tiger seems the instinctual enemy of rational humans, visually reinforcing the interspecies hostility that was textually foregrounded in Chapter II.

Referencing Rubens’ *Tiger, Lion and Leopard Hunt*, in 1854 Delacroix presents the compounded figure of horse/rider as engaged in what almost looks like an intimate and violent dance with a tiger. The painting, now located in the collection of the Musée d’Orsay in France, visually references Ruben’s painting, but strips it down to a more focalized central image or tableaux.
FIGURE 15: TIGER HUNT, 1854, BY EUGÈNE DELACROIX (OIL ON CANVAS)

The turbaned and robed figure seems to float up off the horse in order to get the right angle to spear the tiger, who, while diminutive, seems to be tearing and throwing the terrified horse. To the right a red-robed, barefoot man approaches with a sword, and further back and just coming into sight from around a rocky promontory is another man riding a white horse with his hand on his sword ready for action. Although it is the men who have hunted the tiger, and who outnumber the tiger, it is their safety that the visual image puts into question and most values.

The European tiger image that most sticks in my mind, however, was “found” on the cover of a book of Henri Rousseau paintings on the coffee table in the home of the artist Mari Lyons in Woodstock. Rousseau’s tiger at first seems camouflaged, crouching
among the sort of rich and luscious foliage that one might find in the back of Mānoa
Valley in Paradise Park, Lyon Arboretum, or walking up to Mānoa Falls. A strong wind
whips the heliconia, red jade, grasses, tree branches and other foliage and the tiger, teeth
bared in a mask-like, sheepish grin (distant relative of the illustration from *Little Black
Sambo*, see Figure 9), rather than in a realistically threatening manner. The tiger’s hind
quarters are off the ground atop some tall plant life, the fore paws invisible, but given the
slope of the body it appears to be ambiguously either pouncing or drawing back.
 Appropriately, the image is titled *Surprise!*

![Image of *Surprise!*, 1891, by Henri Rousseau (oil on canvas)](image)

**FIGURE 16: SURPRISE!, 1891, BY HENRI ROUSSEAU (OIL ON CANVAS)**

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37 Mānoa is a valley located in Honolulu, Hawai‘i. The valley is the where the University
of Hawai‘i is located, a large residential neighborhood and at the back of the valley there
are several parks and an easy hike to a waterfall.
*Surprise!* resembles the following eighteenth-century Kotah\(^{38}\) image and extends the affinity of images beyond Europe and towards South Asia (Goswamy). Both images represent the tiger hunting and blending in with (almost as an extension of) both its actual and represented environments. Man does not figure in these images.

![Tiger Approaching a Waterhole](image)

**FIGURE 17: TIGER APPROACHING A WATERHOLE, C. 1790 (ANONYMOUS, KOTAH PAINTING)**

Rousseau is known for his bold jungle images, although he never left France, which prompted the National Gallery of Art show in 2006 (July-October) to subtitle an exhibit of his work “Jungles of Paris.” Thus, his paintings were “concoctions of a city dweller, shaped by visits to the botanical gardens, the zoo, and colonial expositions as well as images of distant lands seen in books and magazines” that represented images of

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\(^{38}\) A school of art named for the northern region in Rajasthan and associated with one of the most powerful Rajput states. The style of Kotah painting is influenced by Mughal and Rajput artistic tradition (Goswamy 7).
“seductive and terrifying faraway places reflected the desires and fears of a new modern world.”\textsuperscript{39} The interest and representation of lush foliage and botany could be an engagement with other kinds of genres involving exploration, exoticism that serves to contextualize the tiger.

Two more images by Rousseau that show the tiger as both hunter of and hunted by humans are of great interest to this project because each one reflects another colonial anxiety—\textit{not} British but French. The first image takes place in the “jungles of Paris” where a tiger, represented as a threat, is posed similarly but on the flip or opposite side of the tiger in \textit{Surprise!} The ‘victim’ of this attack is a black person lying on the ground; the color of the skin merges into the black shadowy jungle on the horizon even as the stark white robes contrast to separate his form from that of the jungle. His companion, spear in hand on the back of a rearing horse, appears to be prepared to confront the tiger.

\textsuperscript{39} National Gallery of Art. “Henri Rousseau: Jungles of Paris.” Online at: http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/rousseauinfo.shtm
FIGURE 18: *SCOUT ATTACKED BY A TIGER*, 1904, BY HENRI ROUSSEAU (OIL ON CANVAS)

The second Rousseau image occurs not in a jungle but in a dry desert that lends itself to be read as a projection of signifiers into difficult spaces, which is almost a principle of contestation. Like other classic works in this sub-genre, it is titled *The Tiger Hunt*:

FIGURE 19: *THE TIGER HUNT*, 1896, BY HENRI ROUSSEAU (OIL ON CANVAS)
Rousseau relocates the hunt to North Africa and a French colony. The tiger seems discolored, dimmer than the one feeding on a buffalo, but its face is clearer than those who have presumably captured it. The Africans seem to be comforting the tiger, who lies disabled on the ground with his head raised as if not yet dead. The fire-arm on the sand in the foreground, beside what might be a gunpowder box, describe a different technology in the fight against tigers and altered balances.

From the dramatic, agonistic images of Rubens, Delacroix, and Rousseau—all men—I turn to a more ‘domesticated’ image of a tigers painted by Rosa Bonheur, considered by many to be the most famous woman artist of the nineteenth century. Bonheur was known for cross-dressing, and her only long-term relationships were with women, her biographer Anna Klumpke and her childhood friend with whom she lived for forty years, Nathalie Micas (Slatkin 44). Bonheur is best known as an animaliere, realist, and sculptor. Her work provides an opportunity to introduce a queer female perspective. Bonheur’s work is striking for its realistic and intimate portrayal of tigers. As is clear in the following image, she studied the anatomy of animals by frequenting the abattoirs of Paris along with students of medicine and artists alike. However, as reported by Evan Goodrich in an 1873 issue of The Aldine, Bonheur’s painting of “The Tiger,” was one “upon which she had been at work for nearly thirteen months, and which she herself had frequently pronounced her chef d’œuvre.” Upon Goderich’s arrival at Bonheur’s farm he reports the following exchange:

40 Nineteenth-century art form, which emphasized the realistic representation of animals. Animalieres spent time studying animals in abattoirs (slaughterhouses), zoos and farms.
You want to see my ‘Tiger’? she exclaimed merrily. “Well, I have two of them – one alive, in a cage, and the other his portrait on canvas. You shall see the former first and then you shall be able to judge the latter. (118)

Apparently, when Bonheur “resolved to paint a tiger she, also, resolved to purchase one.” She acquired Nero (as he was named) from a menagerie in Blois in France for fifteen thousand francs and built a five thousand franc pavilion “entirely of iron and glass” for him on her farm (Goderich 118). This is how Nero became the model for her painting.41

FIGURE 20: THE TIGER, 1873, BY ROSA BONHEUR (OIL ON CANVAS)

Although the dry and dusty location contrasts starkly with Rousseau’s lush “jungle” paintings, both are possible representations of the range of tiger habitats. The Sundarban’s are one habitat of the tiger; the other, the Terai, at the foot of the Himalayas, has terrains that range from savanna, grassland, and forests.

41 Image online at http://www.oilpaintingsshop.com/rosa-bonheur/.
The life-like tiger form of the animaliere, Bonheur, is echoed in the image of the Bengal Tiger in a “Profile” containing facts, such as height, weight and diet (a typical diet being Sambar deer, chital deer, water buffalo, wild pigs, gaur, and monkeys—no mention of humans) published by the Wildlife Explorer, a stack of which I found in the waiting room of the Cancer Center at Queens Hospital in Honolulu.

The tiger’s night vision is six times better than ours. A mirror-like layer at the back of the eye reflects extra light. Hearing is the tiger’s sharpest sense. White spots behind the ears help tigers identify one another in the jungle. Every tiger has a unique pattern of black stripes on an orange coat. This breaks up the body’s outline in dense cover. The tiger’s powerful muscles and massive build are key to its hunting success; in seconds, it can kill prey that weighs nearly double its weight. Claws are used to grip prey and scratch trees. They retract when the tiger walks to remain sharp and allow it to stalk prey silently. Long canine teeth are used to stab and kill prey. Molars behind them act like scissors, slicing strips of flesh from a carcass. Long canine teeth are used to stab and kill prey. Molars behind them act like scissors, slicing strips of flesh from a carcass. Long canine teeth are used to stab and kill prey. Molars behind them act like scissors, slicing strips of flesh from a carcass. Long canine teeth are used to stab and kill prey. Molars behind them act like scissors, slicing strips of flesh from a carcass.

**CREATURE COMPARISONS**

The Siberian tiger is the world’s largest cat. Adult males may reach more than 11 1/2’ in length. Its coat is shaggier and paler than the Bengal tiger’s, equipping it for icy northeast Asia. The Siberian tiger occupies a vast territory and preys mainly on wild pig. There may be only 400 left in the wild. The Siberian tiger occupies a vast territory and preys mainly on wild pig. There may be only 400 left in the wild. The Siberian tiger occupies a vast territory and preys mainly on wild pig. There may be only 400 left in the wild. The Siberian tiger occupies a vast territory and preys mainly on wild pig. There may be only 400 left in the wild. The Siberian tiger occupies a vast territory and preys mainly on wild pig. There may be only 400 left in the wild.

**RELATED SPECIES**

There were once eight subspecies of tiger. Only five remain: the Bengal, Siberian, (below left), Sundaian, (below right), Indochinese and Caspian. Closest relatives include other ‘big cats’ in the genus Panthera — the lion, leopard, jaguar and snow leopard.

**FIGURE 21: PROFILE BENGAL TIGER (WILDLIFE EXPLORER INFORMATION SHEET)**

How and what does this diffusion of images between art and natural science, the location of the artists to the location of their subjects, and between time and place suggest? What I have observed is, first, that these images of tiger hunts and tigers, once you look for them,
are everywhere; and, once produced, can be picked up and read in a new context and in any location differently, but usually bear traces of origins like a palimpsest.

III. PRECOLONIAL (MUGHAL AND RAJPUT) IMAGES OF TIGERS AND TIGER HUNTS

![Figure 22: Akbar Tiger Hunting Near Nawar, Gwalior in 1561 (Mughal Painting)](image)

Mughal images of the tiger hunt reflect the spectacle that hunting assumed, with large parties of humans hunting many different kinds of animals, centered around the noble
figure of the emperor, whose prowess the images celebrate. Depictions of emperors, such as Akbar (Figure 22, Welch 147) and Jehangir, typify the visual genre, and suggest the intensity and eroticism of Mughal tiger hunting images. My analysis relies on the descriptions by B.N. Goswamy, a renowned art historian, who lectured at the Honolulu Academy of Art before it was renamed the Honolulu Museum of Art. The South Asian pre-colonial art chosen for this section generally depicts hunting events of the emperor(s) or the aristocracy, or a historical or fictional tale.

Visual representations of the feats of Mughal elites glamorized the singular abilities of the emperor, which were in turn reflected by the size and quality of his entourage, while paying great attention to details and accuracy in the representation of nature. An image that captures the grand spectacle of tiger hunting—*shikar*—comes from an opaque watercolor titled, *A Tigress Shoot in Open Landscape*, painted in 1788, accompanied by this text in translation, “On Friday, the 3rd of the bright fortnight of February/March, the year 1788 C.E., in the forest terrain of the Watchman of His Highness, Sadaram Ravat, one strong tigress was killed” (Goswamy 51). The scale in this image is far more grandiose than that in the European images, and represents the tiger differently: a panoptic view that situates the hunt and puts it in perspective to the overall situation, while conveying a particular value system, can be seen in the figure below:
FIGURE 23: *A TIGRESS SHOOT IN OPEN LANDSCAPE*, 1788 (ANONYMOUS, KOTAH PAINTING)

In this image there are three tigers, a few deer, drum beaters and many sword-waving hunters, all of whom are smaller in comparison to the largeness of the landscape. The hunting area is barricaded in a notable pattern based on the region, Kotah, of “rocks, rills, scrub, and the narrow stream across which a tiger bounds directly at the water-buffalo-hide shield of a foolishly brave huntsman.” In the middle, the patron’s “ghostly form,” atop a platform and up from the gulley of the stream, “fires point-blank” at the tiger’s rump and manages to kill the tiger as the translated note from the artist informs us (Goswany 51). The text emphasizes the prowess, strength, privilege and power of the
hunter in a faithful representation of a *shikar*, where the hunter and his inner circle of a few selected members of his party have broken away from the bigger party, now set back on the horizon with the elephants and remaining members, and embarked on the hunt. The smaller group sit on a platform at the base of a tree, their horses nearby, with the nobleman kneeling and holding his bow and arrow aimed and ready to shoot at a solitary leaping tiger; the others in the party are in various stages of readiness to back the main hunter or simply to witness his prowess. The tiger is not menacing or naturalistically individuated, but iconic, part of a tapestry.

A more “true-to-life hunter” is represented below (Figure 24) in an opaque watercolor on paper from 1625, titled *A Raja Slays a Tiger*, painted at Bundi (a Rajput stronghold). Here the hunter perches in a tree on a red carpet styled hammock or *charpoi* from where he batters down with “the butt of his matchlock” on “a ferociously credible wounded” yet leaping tiger, whose blood streams onto his rear flank (Goswamy 25). The dark starry night sky contrasts with the paleness of the “pathetic white cow” that now lies dead, having served as tiger bait. A “terrified fellow huntsman” scrambles up the tree and away from the tiger, while the raja, safely up a tree, is intent on proving his “skill and bravery.” This captures the “determined spirits of both man and beast,” while projecting a “cosmic metaphor: a good ruler triumphing over an evil monster” (Goswamy 25), and reinforcing the established order and social hierarchy of the time.
A similar sense of the preserved order of things is more playfully and erotically rendered in *Lovers in the Countryside* (Figure 25), an opaque watercolor and gold on paper from a Kishangarh workshop in Rajasthan, painted in the “third quarter of the 18th century.” The lovers recline on a carpet, enjoying an amorous, romantic interlude, with their horses standing close by, while a “massive tiger lies dying in the bottom right hand corner, bleeding from freshly received sword cuts, body partly immersed in water.” A shield and sword lie next to the carpet, suggesting that the tiger unexpectedly “intruded upon the couple’s moments of quietude and passion,” and was “bravely” dispatched. That the couple can then return to their lovemaking, while evoking and highlighting the eroticism, intensity and passion associated with tiger hunting (as noted in the Akbarnama and many other literary sources), and their intimate and ardent lovemaking, thereby restoring order though a prevailing “lyricism” accompanied by “the sensation of hearing the notes of a flute being played far, very far away” (Goswamy 179). A theme, that Goswamy reminds
us, appears in Indian tales, particularly the Sufi romance *Madhumalati*, in which Manohar is separated from his lover Madhumalati and must endure hardship and adventure in order to prove his love before being reunited with her (Goswamy 179). Thus disorder, as represented by the tiger, is merely a suggestion—a test—that has been promptly and unhesitatingly removed from the picture, so to speak, through the bravery and skill of the noble lover/hunter in the image.

![Lovers in the Country, 18th Century](image)

**FIGURE 25: LOVERS IN THE COUNTRY, 18TH CENTURY (ANONYMOUS KISHANGARH, OPAQUE WATERCOLOR AND GOLD ON PAPER)**
Thus far, all the images in this section focus on the hostile relationship between humans and tigers, but there are many exceptions, including the following opaque watercolor and gold on paper image titled *Ragini Todi*, painted in central India in the mid-eighteenth-century. The subject of this image, Todi—the ragini—was “a great favorite of painters” who generally visualized her as a woman “whose slender body is bright like the snow and jasmine flowers, her limbs anointed with saffron and camphor from Kashmir.” In this image, the ragini “occupies the very centre of the painting,” dressed finely in a “Decanni style sari” and “richly bejeweled . . . with pearl ornaments that adorn her head and hang around her neck” (Goswami 192). She is seated and playing a double-gourded vina surrounded by rapt animals: a pair of deer, a black buck, two hares, a pair of peacocks, and a docile tiger, flying parrots, and some water birds on the stream at the bottom. This Edenic, testosterone-free forest that the ragini inhabits, where she is one with and not opposed to nature, sits on the edges of a grand palace the white turrets and architectural features of which peek out between the trees in the distance and against the dark sky overhead. The most striking aspect of this image is the calming effect on the environment that the woman appears to have, suggesting an alternative world view that repeats a theme from other images of yogis who blend into their environments instead of opposing and engaging violently with nature that the male dominated hunting images promote.
The *Panchatantra*, a collection of ancient linked animal tales, which I mentioned earlier as an influence on Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* and Tagore’s children’s stories, inspired many illustrated manuscripts over time. Below is an image of a leaf from a *Panchatantra* series, an opaque watercolor and gold on paper from Mewar in Rajasthan painted in the “first quarter of the eighteenth-century,” titled *A Tiger’s Tale*. At the top of the image are three lines of text in Devanagiri script but in the language of “Rajasthani Hindi” are the beginnings of a tale which have been translated as follows, “[I]nside a
mountain cave . . . lived a tiger, brave and all-conquering, worsting even great elephants and other powerful animals in combat. Close to his lair, on a tree, lived a long-beaked bird. One day, it so happened that the bone of a boar whom the tiger had killed got stuck in his throat” (Goswamy 137). The multiple tigers in the image—one sitting regally in his cave, another attacking an elephant, a third attacking a boar—represent past events and present occurrences of the tiger in the story. The native artist here uses a “method of continuous pictorial narration,” which can be seen as a precursor of animation, and echoes the style of the hunting landscape of A Tigress Shoot in Open Landscape (Figure 23), particularly in the enhanced rock piling of the cave. The bird in the story is sitting on a tree, and a cheetah and two deer look on from a distance. The “tiger is rendered in great animation” in relation to its natural environment where it is a considerable foe of the fleeing bull, the elephant and boar, and the story which is connected to the “bone of the boar” being “stuck in his [the tiger’s] throat” (Goswamy 137) from which some future consequence will emerge and be depicted on another page, but in which humans do not figure.
Many of the ideas and themes in the Mughal images discussed above—particularly those that involve depictions of the tiger as adversary—are taken up by colonial artists. As suggesting about tiger hunting texts, this borrowing suggests both mimicry and aggression, and marks important social and political shifts that are developed in the following section, where the analysis focuses on a richly inter-textual work of material culture.
IV. Tipu’s Tiger

This section deals with the remarkable “life” of an object, a wooden organ named after the man who commissioned it towards the end of the eighteenth-century, Tipu Sultan of Mysore called Tipu’s Tiger an image of which is shown below.

![Tipu’s Tiger](image)

**FIGURE 28: TIPU’S TIGER, LATE 18TH CENTURY (VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, PAINTED WOODEN ORGAN)**

The effigy is six feet large showing a “tawny male tiger, all claws extended … atop a wooden … light complexioned man” marked by eighteenth-century European dress of his red coat and black brimmed hat (Davis 146). The soldier’s eyes are “wide open in distress” meanwhile the tiger “sinks his teeth into the man’s throat.” This close up shows the expression more closely.
On the tiger’s left flank a hinged wooden flap reveals the pipes and buttons that make this image into a functional instrument, an organ, whose sounds give the tiger and human distinctive voices. Additionally, there is a crank handle on the left shoulder of the tiger which when turned raises the left arm of the man “in futile supplication, and the apparatus emits sounds of a tiger roaring and human groaning” (Davis 146). Details on the British person’s clothing are more apparent in a drawing that was made into a postcard—and part of the collection of objects relating to Tipu’s Tiger—that was included in Susan Stronge’s catalog of variations on Tipu’s tigers shown below (Stronge 64).
There is some speculation that the inspiration for this image is connected to an incident in Bengal in the early 1790s, when a “young Englishman out shooting near Calcutta had been carried of by ‘an immense royal tiger . . . four and half feet high and nine feet long long’ . . . [T]he victim was the only son of General Sir Hector Munro,” whose grandson is the Scottish writer known as Saki, who authored the short tiger tale of nasty people doing nasty deeds in “Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger,” which is taken up in Chapter II. Tigers appear to figure in the Munro family in much the same way that they did with Tipu, such as the following image of a detail on the butt of a gun looted from Tipu after his fall in 1799 (Stronge 39):
Clearly, images of tigers figure prominently in Tipu Sultan’s possessions of which many remain in the possession of the British. In relation to Tipu, the tiger symbolizes resistance. The maxim: “It is better to live one day as a tiger than a year as a sheep,” is attributed to Tipu Sultan, who was nicknamed the Tiger of Mysore. (It is not clear whether this nickname was applied to him by the British, himself, or in retrospect by someone from another time and place).

My analysis of this object begins with applying the “biographical method” to the “life” of this wooden organ, which has been studied by many, including the cultural anthropologist Richard Davis, art historian Susan Stronge, and historian Kate Brittlebank. My analysis follows to a certain point the lines suggested by Davis, who defines the “biographical method” as the “history of its [an object’s] interactions with different interpretive communities over time” (9). This history reconstructs how the object was commissioned—for whom, by whom, and for what?—and considers as well its extraordinary journey over time and place. The journey includes encounters with diverse and still emerging “interpretive communities” of viewers, who “may engender very different meaning[s]” and “bring [their] community’s own interpretive strategies to bear within the encounter” (9). However, among my own strategies, as suggested at various points in each of my chapters, is an attempt to draw out the possibility of not simply supplementing such historically contextual readings with queer and diasporic modes of analysis, but of suggesting that these analyses are in some ways constitutive of this history. Part of being colonial and in India is asserting masculinity in a certain way and initiating displacements in the natural and human worlds.
Following Igor Kopytoff’s approach to objects in the collection *Social Life of Things*, Davis discloses how economic and social values vary through time as Tipu’s Tiger travels through different spheres of exchange. The extraordinary “life” of this particular Tiger from Mysore in South India to London, England began in the eighteenth century and continues into twenty-first century. Tipu’s Tiger is a painted wood effigy built by a Frenchman around a musical instrument—an organ—and named for Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore, who commissioned the object sometime in the eighteenth century. The organ has since “travelled” across continents, having “been relocated and valorized over time by various communities of response” (Davis xi); it is arguably today the most popular item “on permanent display” at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. This is one sense in which it is a “diasporic object,” and figures “diaspora.” It is, in other words, one of a “quantity of Indian objects present in England” in places “where the English public could satisfy its curiosity by viewing the world of objects made available through the British imperial endeavor” (Davis 167). As Davis notes in *The Lives of Indian Images*, Tipu’s Tiger was the “best-known object of the India Museum” of the East India House (London) where it was first exhibited, which was a secular place of business that also contained a museum and a library. Richard Altick, in *The Shows of London*, argues that it is “one of the most famous individual exhibits in London show history” (Altick 299).

The India Museum held and displayed “[T]he more curious of Britannia’s colonial acquisitions” and gave people in England the opportunity to “visually encounter the multitudinous and bizarre objects of the world made available through their empire-building adventures” (Davis 171). Here, Tipu’s Tiger symbolized recent events that the
British public knew well, such as the defeat of Tipu Sultan in a series of Anglo-Mysore wars that ended in his overthrow and the fall of Sri Rangapattana\(^\text{42}\) (Davis 172-173). In a strange and uncanny way, Davis remarks, “[T]he image of a tiger devouring a British boy/man was ‘proof of the tyrant’s ferocity’ and served to justify British conquest of India” (Davis 173). The popularity of the object is evident in the fact that it “was featured in early nineteenth century guidebooks, travel sketches, and literary works” (Davis 171).

Over time the image has spoken to many authors, including a canonized one, whose references to Tipu’s Tiger demonstrate the relationship between word and image that Mitchell raised regarding what we see, the cultural contexts from which we see, and how the visual gets represented textually. The first reference is in Barbara Hofland’s 1814 novel, \textit{A Visit to London},\(^\text{43}\) when the young heroine Emily, on a visit to India House, is “petrified” by her encounter with Tipu’s Tiger (qtd. Goswami 67), which leaves her “pale and trembling” (qtd. Goswami 67). Hofland proceeds with these details: “’This thing . . .’ said the librarian, ‘was made for the amusement of Tipoo Saib; the inside of the tiger is a musical instrument, and by touching certain keys, a sound is produced resembling the horrid grumblings made by a tiger on seeing his prey, on touching others, you hear the convulsive breathings, the suffocated shriek of his victim” (qtd. Goswami 67). A young boy accompanying Emily makes a similar observation about the organ: “nothing less than existing proof of such depravity could have led one to believe human nature was capable of such absurd hateful passions as that which possessed the tyrant in question” (qtd. Goswami 68, emphasis mine). The conflation of Tipu with the form of the

\(^{42}\) Anglicized and pictorialized in Robert Ker Porter’s painting—a 2,500 square foot canvas titled, “Taking of Seringapatam.”

\(^{43}\) My reference to \textit{A Visit to London} relies on Supriya Goswami’s analysis in \textit{Colonial Indian in Children’s Literature} for details in the novel.
tiger in the inanimate object establishes for the viewer (I would argue as Tipu intended) a threatening masculinity which makes “[T]he Englishwoman’s position . . . far more perilous than the Englishman’s” (Goswami 67), which is represented as hostile and aggressive. The second literary reference is from one of my favorite romantic poets, John Keats in the satirical poem “Cap and Bells,” the three verses (36-38) that give a sense of the usage appear below:

XXXVI.

Then facing right about, he saw the Page,
And said: ‘Don’t tell me what you want, Eban;
The Emperor is now in a huge rage,
‘Tis nine to one he’ll give you the rattan!
Let us away!’ Away together ran
The plain-dress’d sage and spangled blackamoor,
Nor rested till they stood to cool, and fan,
And breathe themselves at th’ Emperor’s chamber door,
When Eban thought he heard a soft imperial snore.

XXXVII.

‘I thought you guess’d, foretold, or prophesy’d,
That’s Majesty was in a raving fit?’
‘He dreams,’ said Hum, ‘or I have ever lied,
That he is tearing you, sir, bit by bit.’
‘He's not asleep, and you have little wit,’
Reply’d the page; ‘that little buzzing noise,
Whate’er your palmistry may make of it,
Comes from a play-thing of the Emperor’s choice,
From a Man-Tiger-Organ, prettiest of his toys.’
XXXVIII.

Eban then usher’d in the learned Seer:
Elfinan’s back was turn’d, but, ne’ertheless,
Both, prostrate on the carpet, ear by ear,
Crept silently, and waited in distress,
Knowing the Emperor's moody bitterness;
Eban especially, who on the floor gan
Tremble and quake to death, -- he feared less
A dose of senna-tea or nightmare Gorgon
Than the Emperor when he play’d on his Man-Tiger-Organ. (Keats)

According to Davis, Keats most likely saw the Tiger when he was turned down for a job by the East India Company, and incorporated the “man-tiger-organ” as the “prettiest of his toys” belonging to the emperor of the faeries, Elphinon (172). In the first passage, the eerie aspect of the “harsh moaning sounds” that emanate when the tiger is cranked evokes a haunting history of the violence to which Tipu Sultan was subject to at the hands of colonial expansion. In the second reference from Keats, the glory of the organ’s original owner has been erased, appropriated and re-placed with Elphinon. These examples suggest that appropriation is ‘haunted’ by origins.

Following the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the Indian Museum was disbanded and the tracks/events that led Tipu’s Tiger eventually into the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum are somewhat obscure. Again, at the Victoria and Albert Tipu’s Tiger proved to be a popular exhibit so much so that it has become the signature of the museum. The Tiger was seriously damaged when London was bombed in WWII, but after the war skilled conservationists repaired and put it back on exhibit in the 1950s. In
1955, the Tiger even travelled to New York to be displayed at the Museum of Modern Art in a show of Indian textiles and ornaments (Davis 179).

The movements of this remarkable object from Mysore to Britain—first the India Museum and finally to the Victoria and Albert—has fascinated me. The objects fame and record of appropriation as “colonial booty” is widely known but yet it has never been officially considered for repatriation. In fact, “among the great wealth of objects that passed from India to the United Kingdom during British colonial control” very few items have been requested for repatriation and even fewer actually delivered (Davis 180-181).

From the moment that I first saw Tipu’s Tiger, many years ago in London, I felt that the strange power of the image was connected to the interdeterminacy of the gestures it records, the mixed suggestions of intimacy and aggression. One feels at once how the tiger is presented as an overwhelming threat that has caught a surprised and almost amused British soldier, but also that the positioning of the bodies literalizes the image of two men laying down together. The soldier’s hand moves to cover his own mouth, as if to block his own vision of what is happening to him or to hide from the body that has mounted him. The ambiguity of the gesture speaks to that of the organ itself: is the soldier guarding his own face in shame, just a moment too late, signaling pleasure, or making a hushing gesture? That the image has become the most popular object on display at a Museum in the center of the former empire, named for the Queen of England and her spouse whose reign symbolizes British imperialism, raises questions about the sources of the object’s uncanny power: of what is it an organ?
Here one might recall various explorations of the “queer” subjectivities in colonial contexts. Philip Holden’s work on nineteenth century colonial texts are particularly apposite, calling for a “queering [of] colonial discourse” that examines “contradictions in texts that lend themselves to the leverage that queer theory provides” (xxiii). My own sense is that Tipu’s Tiger resonates with audiences in part for the old reasons, because it emblematizes a central moment in colonial perception, in which identity comes to crisis in the “panic” created by simultaneous attraction and repulsion. Caleb Crain, drawing on Eve Sedgwick, draws out the implicit connections between images of homosexuality and cannibalism through a reading of Herman Melville’s work. Crain begins with an account about a ship wrecked off the coast of Africa, La Méduse, which produced this series of unfortunate incidents:

The cowardice of the captain, who simply fled, and of the ship's officers, who cut loose the raft instead of towing it from the lifeboats as they had promised to those who boarded it, outraged the public. But it was the survivors' cannibalism that inflamed the popular imagination. (25)

Crain goes on to mention a work of art by Théodor Géricault that attempted to depict the scene of the men on the raft who cannibalized their shipmates, but avoided the actual cannibalism, which was instead “symbolized by physical intimacy between … men.” In reference to the painting Crain writes:

A twentieth-century viewer of the painting cannot help but notice what a twentieth-century viewer would call homoeroticism. In fact, they may see little else. (26)
One could say the same for Tipu’s Tiger – the tiger dominates the supine man, the tiger’s claws grasp the man around the thighs and chest, face to neck—the tiger appears to be nuzzling the man’s neck, who in turn shows no sign of struggle but of acquiescence, surprise and possibly enjoyment—in what could be read as a coded reference to homosexuality. Crain’s comments, with reference to the visual Gericault’s image, suggest that in the nineteenth century homoeroticism connoted homosexuality and cannibalism. In light of this comment, it becomes important to think about the destabilizing attempt by Tipu Sultan to commission a Frenchman to build this effigy that represents same-sex domination in an intimate encounter and simultaneously reproduces anxiety and panic, particularly in connection to same sex interdiction. If homosexuality was submerged in nineteenth century texts, then same-sex interdiction would have been doubly buried.

Queering Tipu’s Tiger is a bold attempt to release this fascinating object from the limitations of a strictly patriarchal reading and move it toward what Robert Stam and Ella Shohat refer to as “[A] polycentric approach . . . a long overdue gesture toward historical equity and lucidity, a way of re-envisioning the global politics of visual culture” (57). This reading reconnects the image to a historical event but revises it to uncover homoeroticism, which runs through all tiger-hunting texts.

It is also productive to consider diaspora not only as a term used primarily to refer to the dispersal of peoples but also for objects. This approach opens up different interpretive communities at any particular time in history—such as South Asian

44 The gender of the tiger is obviously male – Tipu’s nickname was Tiger. He commissioned this piece to mock the British attempts to overpower him in a series of wars.
immigrants to England and/or elsewhere who visit the exhibit, South Asian tourists from India, British colonialists and liberals—the possibilities for such communities are many.

V. Colonial Hunting Illustrations

This section focuses on two-dimensional tiger hunting visual images by artists and book illustrators set in colonial India. I read successively an image by the artist John Zoffany titled, *Tiger Hunting in the East Indies*; book illustrations that accompanied tiger hunting adventure narratives by William Rice, William Gordon-Cummings, and the team of Thomas Williamson and Samuel Howitt; and paintings by anonymous native artists.

John Zoffany painted portraits, conversation pieces, and theatrical scenes. He was born in Frankfurt-on-Main, trained at Regensberg and Rome in 1750, and came to England in 1760. There he painted “stage conversations,” and was an original member of the Royal Academy founded in 1768. In 1779 he set out for India to try and re-establish his finances (India Office Library and Records 48). He reached Calcutta in 1783 and, like another colonial artist William Hodges,45 was patronized by Warren Hastings the Governor General of India from 1773-1784, who commissioned him to create India inspired art, including portraits and landscapes (Tobin PIP 127). Hastings home in Alipore is now on the grounds of St. Thomas’ School and separated from the Calcutta Zoo by a wall and through which you can hear the animals, including the tiger roar that I recall when I was a student there between 1968-1970.

45 William Hodges published and illustrated *Views of India* in 1772. He also accompanied Captain Cook on his second voyage to the Pacific. His paintings of Hawaii are very different from the picturesque images of India that Beth Fowkes Tobin examines in great detail in *Colonizing Nature*. 

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Zoffany went to Lucknow but stayed in Calcutta from 1786-1789. His visit to India was a great financial success. After his return to London he wanted to revisit India but never did so (Archer Company Paintings 48-49). Below is a mezzotint, circa 1795, by John Zoffany titled *Tiger Hunting in the East Indies*, which is now held in the India Office Library in London (Archer India and British Portraiture 169).

FIGURE 32: TIGER HUNTING IN THE EAST INDIES BY JOHN ZOFFANY, C. 1795 (MEZZOTINT)

John Zoffany’s sketch was described by art historian Mildred Archer as "an unfinished sketch listed as 'Return from the Tyger chace,' still with Zoffany at his death" (168-169). In the sketch there appears to be a lot of action among the bare bodied Indians who are running hither and thither but mostly away from the tiger. The tiger lies in the center,
bathed in light although obviously injured and in agony; it remains fierce, necessitating caution on the part of the hunting party, although the beast is fated to be defeated and to become a trophy. The British *shikaris* with guns in hand are dressed as if they were still in Britain. Not a single one of them is on the ground or at the same level as the Indians or the tiger; instead, they appear to be stiff and possibly directing something from high atop the palanquins perched on elephants. The British officers atop the elephants are in the act of giving directions, implying that the British are "helping" the Indians to eliminate a menace and a threat to themselves, or even to rescue them from something that has come to stand for their own atavistic selves. The artillery trained on that poor, light-struck tiger places its threat excessively out of proportion in reality.

This image illustrates what Mary Louise Pratt calls “Imperial Eyes,”—eyes tinged with the imperial—which describes “other” locations in what she calls “monarch-of-all-I-survey.” Although Pratt focuses on the travel writing of contemporary travel writers, she notes that the imperial “discourse of negation, domination, devaluation, and fear,” are updated and duplicated and still contain a “rhetoric of triviality, dehumanization, and rejection” (219), that carries over from the colonial into the contemporary, conforming to cliches of location, as noted in Zoffany’s drawing, and echoes Sir John Day’s tiger hunting account covered in Chapter II.

Many hunting narratives included lithographs or sepia prints that were visual representations accompanying colonial hunting narratives. I explore three notable examples: William Rice’s *Tiger Shooting in India* (1857), which included twelve

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46 Developed thoroughly in her book so titled.
illustrations in chromolithography from sketches by the author as noted on the title page (four of the twelve have been duplicated for this section); William Gordon-Cumming, an officer in the Bengal Army, included sepia prints in *Wild Men and Wild Beasts* (1871) of various hunting scenes, including bears and boars, and one of a tiger being smoked out of a cave; and Thomas Williamson’s and Samuel Howitt’s *Oriental Field Sports* (1807), which has twenty illustrations of hunting scenes with nine on tiger hunting. Together, these images represent a particular colonial discourse, that Roland Barthes memorably noted as “submitting the image to a spectral analysis of the messages it may contain” (33) as related to the concepts of the denotational or literal/textual image, and the connotational or symbolic/visual/graphic image – when a system takes over the signs of another system it is connotational (37). In the following images, colonial domination may be precariously perched atop the elephant, but the focal driver of the action, as described in an article by Joseph Sramek, is that of “the calm, stoic British hunter ably protecting otherwise helpless and panic-stricken Indians” (671).

In a print entitled *Tiger Killed by a Chance Shot Near Meidah* from Rice’s *Tiger Shooting in India* (1857) and shown below, depicts an Indian on the far right who is clearly fearful of the imminent charge of a tiger while the British hunter is shown as dispassionately shooting it. The calm collectedness of the British hunter depicted in the print, though, is highly unrealistic for two reasons: the close proximity of the tiger and the title’s characterization of the scene as a “chance shot” (Sramek 671).
FIGURE 33: *TIGER KILLED BY A CHANCE SHOT NEAR MAIDAH, 1857, BY WILLIAM RICE (ILLUSTRATION)*

The native in awe of the hunter (or is it the tiger?), duplicates the action of the tiger, while the native’s hiding behind the hunter for protection—showing fear with hands flailing and feet running away as the colonial hunter stands with his feet firmly planted and steadily fires his “smoking” gun at the tiger—creates a sense of drama of native panic versus colonial calm. The calculated execution of a tiger coincides with impressing the native, and since the tiger is already halfway toward being a rug—see how it blonds into brindled landscape—with taming the land.

Another image shows a tiger hunt in progress titled *Order of Procession Following Wounded Tiger*. The men standing in front armed with guns and wearing “safari” outfits are apparently British soldiers—one of them is poised and ready to take a deadly shot to the already “wounded” tiger; kneeling on the ground is a native man also bearing a gun, who has probably led the British hunters to the tiger. Behind the hunters
with guns stand a host of other natives waving slingshots and beating on drums creating a scene that is reminiscent of Kipling’s description in *The Jungle Book* of what happens when man embarks on a tiger hunt, which ironically, according to Kipling, often involves “hundreds of brown men with gongs and rockets and torches . . .” (7).

![Figure 34: Order of Procession Following Wounded Tiger, 1857, by William Rice (Illustration)](image)

Alternately the positioning of the humans, particularly the natives, as if in battle—carrying and waving implements of war with one man scrambled up a tree on lookout—are led by two British hunters armed with modern weapons that one native also carries, but he remains kneeling with his gun butt resting on the ground and completely unprepared to shoot, unlike the British hunters who are close at hand cornering the wounded tiger. This tiger is no longer a threat to anyone. The schematic representation of this image highlights the space between the tiger and hunters, as well as a desired social and political hierarchy of the turbaned, dark-skinned native in local dress who are
necessary (as helpers) but strategically moved out of any real action (as ineffectual hunters), which is constructed as a privileged domain reserved for the colonizer that gets duplicated repeatedly time and again.

Rice’s illustrations also include a view of a tiger named for the location of its apparent haunt—in this case, it’s the Booj Tiger. Jim Corbett’s accounts of tiger hunts, discussed in Chapter II, are similarly titled or named for the associations with the locations of the man-eating tiger’s habitats or h(a)unting grounds, such as Kumaon, Champawat, and so on.

FIGURE 35: BOOJ TIGER, 1857, BY WILLIAM RICE (ILLUSTRATION)
The tiger in this image dwarfs the four hunters who are positioned safely on higher ground and removed from the tiger that they have tracked successfully. The same cannot be said in the last example from Rice’s set of images on tiger hunting titled Elliot Being Seized, which shows several natives facing away from the ‘danger’ of a man being attacked by a tiger while others are frantically trying to distract the tiger from attacking.
The attacked man loses his grip on his gun, as does the shocked British hunter who stands slightly apart from the natives—and his safari hat falls off his head. A native hands over his gun to the unharmed but surprised British hunter leaving himself vulnerable and at risk but displaying an unquestioning, simple loyalty to the colonial hunter. The phallic identification with guns and swords in this image are unavoidable.

![Illustration](image.png)

**FIGURE 36: ELLIOT BEING SEIZED, 1857, BY WILLIAM RICE (ILLUSTRATION)**

This is the only image in Rice’s illustrations that shows a reversal of the interspecies encounter with tigers and gives credibility to the story of the tiger attack on Munro which became memorialized in Tipu’s Tiger and a series of porcelain pieces that recreated the event. Fortunately for Elliot, he apparently survived this attack, because “[T]he tigress only dragged him about twenty or thirty yards, and the whole ‘scrimmage’ was over in two to three minutes.” After Elliot was rescued from the tiger and delivered to a town seven miles from where he has been attacked Rice, “wished Elliot goodby, to return to my sport, as I could no longer be any use to him” (108-109).
Moving away from Rice, to a sepia print in *Wild Men and Wild Beasts* (1871) titled *Smoking out a Tiger*, a work by William Gordon-Cumming, an officer in the Bengal Army, British hunters are depicted as taking all of the proactive steps against charging tigers, while Indians are shown as simply running away. Given that British hunters in both prints have guns while the Indians do not, the different reactions of the two are to be expected. This more logical explanation for the varied responses to charging tigers, though, interrupts the more racist and nationalist interpretations of the supposed difference between proactive British hunters and helpless Indians (Sramek 671).

![Figure 37: Smoking out a Tiger, 1871, by William Gordon-Cumming (Illustration)](image)

All these images, in one way or another, are added to the text because they provide a credibility to the narrative and serve as a form of witness to ‘reality’ that would otherwise seem too far removed and simply that of an imagination—as such the image is deeply
imbedded with the text. Nevertheless, these images also function to reflect an effective robust colonizer who puts himself in danger and even occasionally gets attacked while on the hunt, but lives to write the tale.

The team of Brigadier Thomas Williamson and Samuel Howitt collaborated to publish *Illustrations of Indian Field Sports*, which include these notable “plates, of coloured mezzotint engravings from drawings” done by Samuel Howitt (Preface), who also illustrated British hunting practices, such as the fox hunt. The illustrations are accompanied by textual notes that elaborate on the image, which are contributed by Brigadier Williamson—all are hunting accounts that range from hog (the landscape pictured in this image uncannily resembles the British countryside—signaling Howitt’s drawings of British field sport), bear, and the most challenging—tiger. Two tiger hunting illustrations appear below—chosen for their intervisual connections to images of tiger hunts that run through this chapter.

![Tiger Seizes a Bullock in a Pass, 1807, by Samuel Howitt (Colored Mezzotint, Illustration)](image-url)
This image is titled *Tiger Seizes A Bullock in a Pass*, where the tiger is creating havoc among the white bullocks and is represented with tail extended and in the colors of its tawny striped coat and quite large in comparison to the bullocks. Williamson’s narrative suggests that “Indian bullocks are much smaller in size and leaner,” but these bullocks resemble horses—probably an animal that is more familiar to Howitt. The most striking aspect of this image is the similarity to the image by Rousseau in *Combat Between a Tiger and a Buffalo*.

FIGURE 39: THE DEAD TIGER, 1807, BY SAMUEL HOWITT (COLORED MEZZOTINT, ILLUSTRATION)

The text that accompanies this plate is short (unlike the more extensive hunting narratives of Rice) and titled *The Dead Tiger*, which is an account that culminates in this fatal scene where the tiger has been “[B]rought to bay, he has apparently made a savage attempt to die gloriously by attacking his pursuers, and has no doubt succeeded in terrifying and perhaps severely wounding one or more of the elephants.” The narrative is obviously
written retrospectively and embellished with adjectives, such as “savage,” “gloriously,” “terrifying” and “severely wounding,” all of which are preceded with the ambiguity of what really happened marked by the word “apparent,” which brings into question the successive adjectives that are the stuff of yarns. The vocabulary of excess (like Zoffany) in relation to danger supports the colonial project to control and manage people and the environment, even as it is entertaining the readers back in England and in India.

VI. INDIAN ARTISTS REDRAW TIGER HUNTING IMAGES

During the colonial period, there are a series of similar images depicting the tiger hunt that contain all the elements we see in John Zoffany’s painting and Samuel Howitt’s illustration: a hunter—usually a European hunter, an elephant, a mahout to represent natives if other natives are not represented, and a tiger either attacking or being attacked, such as Charles D’Oyly’s aquatint from 1828 titled *Tom Raw in Danger*.

**FIGURE 40: TOM RAW IN DANGER, 1828, BY CHARLES D’OYLY (AQUATINT)**
*Tom Raw in Danger* has been described as an “unforgettable image of Englishmen on elephants attempting to shoot a tiger” that “combines actual location and scene with slapstick humor and an ironic use of traditional symbols of tiger and elephant” (DeAlemida 258). Although such images circulated widely, each one reflects varied content that alternate between mockery and mimicry of tiger hunting and ranges from duplicating to contesting and critiquing colonial power and authority in interesting and unpredictable ways. Next, I juxtapose two similarly composed images by native artists to read against one another, because while the elements are similar they depict very different perspectives.

**FIGURE 41: AN ENGLISHMAN ON AN ELEPHANT SHOOTING A TIGER, C. 1830 (ANONYMOUS, KALIGHAT PAINTING)**
The similarity of the basic elements in both images (even as the energy is markedly different) and the fact that they circulated widely lend themselves to Walter Benjamin’s analysis of how art functions in modernity in his seminal essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” where he observes that art in the present is inherently based on the practice and service of politics, and that the original and the imitation produce meaning in a revolving, intertextuality. While Benjamin states that the
"sphere of authenticity is outside the technical," or the original artwork is independent of the copy, through the act of reproduction something is taken from the original because of changing its context. Benjamin also introduces the idea of the "aura" of a work and its absence in a reproduction; and he looks at the changes in society's values over time, "the manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well."

While the composition of the Kalighat47 piece by an anonymous artist (Figure 41, *An Englishman on an Elephant Shooting a Tiger*, Jain 154) and the other painting (Figure 42, *A Tiger Hunt*, Archer Company Paintings 10) also by an anonymous artist from the Punjab, share elements and structure, the representations are vastly different because they clearly reflect very different "historical circumstances" and uncanny echoes of the British artists.

As Indian nationalism grew and resistance and rebellion became more violent and insistent, visually it was no longer possible to contain the Empire in the eclectic, even complacent, images of European hunters that we see in the Kalighat image. Instead, the second image, which mimics D’Oyly’s ironic image, remains a reflection of the British success in conquest, but the tiger in the image is “untamed” and intense as it springs

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47 Watercolor painting produced in the 19th century by artists in the Calcutta marketplace for sale to pilgrims visiting the Kālīghāṭ temple. The style is characterized by broad sweeping brush lines, bold colours, and simplification of forms suitable for their mass production. The paintings, usually 17 by 11 inches (43 by 28 centimetres), were done on blank sheets, with no attempt made to fill in the backgrounds. Most usually depicted were the popular Hindu deities, but scenes of contemporary life are also found. The school, which rose in response to the competition of cheap coloured lithographs, soon lost the contest and disappeared rapidly. The charm and vigour of Kālīghāṭ painting had an influence on a number of modern Indian painters (Encyclopedia Brittanica Online at: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/310175/Kalighat-painting)
wildly from the long grass madly clawing the elephant. The elephant and the *mahout* have been subjugated/colonized, and they are first in line and on a level to fight back the tiger, while one British man responds from high atop a *howdah* with his gun pointing directly above the tiger’s head and the older white man remains aloof and removed from the action observing with interest. The British appear to be the authority and in control, but the object of their anxiety remains. Is the tiger desperate and doomed in this print or will he slip back into the long grass to re-emerge again and again?

These tiger images reflect a range of anxieties and resistance that disturb the story of conquest, colonization and domination. Thus in the final analysis I return to Stuart Hall in “Encoding/Decoding,” where he notes an important point about how visual codes become naturalized:

> Simple visual signs appear to have achieved a “near-universality” in this sense: though evidence remains that even apparently “natural” visual codes are culture-specific. However, this does not mean that no codes have intervened; rather, that the codes have been profoundly naturalized.

(126)

The Zoffany image, *Tiger Hunting in the East Indies*, and many of the hunting illustrations easily lend themselves primarily to this particular type of reading, one in which the reader fully shares the text’s code and accepts and reproduces the preferred reading (a reading that may not have the conscious intention on the part of the author) and where the code seems “natural” and, possibly, “transparent.” However, some hunting illustrations, particularly *Elliot Being Seized by a Tiger*, are imbedded with anxiety and
uncertainty that—on the ground experience of colonial officers—modifies the dominant narrative to reflect their own position, experience and interest (as connected to the local) that could serve to contradict, modify and question the narrative of domination without actually changing it. Lastly, the oppositional code—a counter-hegemonic reading—positions the reader in a directly oppositional relation to the dominant code, in which the preferred reading is understood, but the text's code is not shared and actually rejected, bringing to bear an alternative frame of reference (130-132), which applies to my reading of the painting by the anonymous Indian artist. While Hall’s operational codes are supposed to be seen in any given image, my approach to separate the codes to read different images at different times is done strategically to show both continuities and disjunctions in the representation of tiger hunting images over time.

VII. Shooting Tigers with Cameras as Conservation Effort

What the photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially. – Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida

The epigraph from Roland Barthes’ Camera Lucida, written in response to his mother’s death, reflects on how photographic images function in society, infinitely repeating a “found” moment, which takes on a range of significations for different communities, while referring to a moment that has always-already been “lost.” The real history of “India” as it was transformed by colonialism is not to be definitively found in images, yet images like those of tigers and tiger hunts have an uncanny indexical power. At the same
time, to consider the role of photography in making and circulating colonial images is necessarily to become more aware of the relation of both changing technologies and changing ways of regarding objects, which never wholly transcend earlier forms of perception. The fact of photography, its claim to have “found” and “caught” something that is in the process of being lost, makes it a particularly haunting record of the passing of what it records. The issue increases in intensity, as Barthes registers in personal terms, in situation where the object is literally passing.

Photography as a medium adds to the potential for creating visual images that art had provided earlier, but the relative ease with which photographic images could be produced, duplicated and reproduced is exponentially greater than single works of fine art, which can only be viewed in museums and galleries. Compared to earlier forms of reproduction, such as printmaking and lithography, photography proves cost effective and increases accessibility. Photographs, from Niepce’s early image transference through Daguerre’s copperplates followed quickly by Talbot’s calotype and further refined by George Eastman with film—a breakthrough that popularized the medium allowing anyone to take and commercially reproduce images—to transition to digital photos that can be displayed on retina screens with greater clarity than when first produced in 1957, have all contributed significantly to visual literacy and visual culture that, despite a photographer’s intent and style “can be read in different ways” because “once photographic or artistic images are captured, they become documents that to some degree have a life beyond the intentions of their creators” (Beinart 218). Wildlife photography has the power document the environment even as it is being destroyed.
This section focuses on photographic images of tigers and tiger hunting, which run parallel to other industrial and mechanical changes of the mid-19th century, such as railroads and weaponry. Of all the photographers, Eadweard Muybridge was most influential to wildlife photography. He was born in England in 1830 and emigrated to the U.S. in the 1850s and lived in San Francisco. After a serious head injury, he returned to England to recover and there was introduced to art photography. Muybridge returned to San Francisco in 1867 and established himself as a leading photographer, having produced “a spectacular series of view of Yosemite Valley” (Muybridge publishers note). His personal life was strange—in 1874, Muybridge murdered his wife’s lover and pleaded insanity but, strangely, the jury ignored his plea and acquitted him a year later claiming that his victim “deserved his fate” (Muybridge publishers note). He had a career as a photographer for the U.S. in the Pacific. He lectured extensively both in the U.S. and Europe and, according to one record, he was scheduled to visit Australia and India.

Between 1884 and 1885, Muybridge photographed his famous studies of animals and humans in motion that was published in eleven volumes, titled Animal Locomotion, two years later—in 1897. His photographic studies of motion—by shooting images at high speed to capture successive movement—created the potential for motion pictures, for which he is considered the inventor. For his study, Muybridge photographed “wild” animals “at the Philadelphia Zoological Garden,”48 including several images of a “Tigress walking and turning around” (Muybridge 68-70), and from which the following selection was taken.

48 From the publishers note in Horses and Other Animals in Motion.
Besides the fact that these photos show the cramped, caged quarters of the captive tigers in the Philadelphia zoo, Muybridge’s work opened up the possibility and inspired photographers to expand their repertoire beyond the static post-hunt images to pre-hunt images of animals, tigers included, and into the field we now know as wildlife photography.

While guns remained the tool of relentless hunters in pursuit of big game; cameras offered contradicting options—a conscientious alternative to setting ones sights on tigers and other big game without contributing to their annihilation and possibly promoting the protection of wildlife; while simultaneously functioning as a visual record of the successful hunt—usually with the carcass of a recently killed tiger on display before the hunting party as seen in the next photograph.
FIGURE 44: AN 8FT 4½ INCH TIGRESS BY A. E. STEWART (PHOTOGRAPH)

The static post-hunt image was an important means by which tigers and tiger hunting were represented visually. According to Ryan James, photography allowed colonizing peoples “symbolically to travel through, explore and even possess spaces” (13) in the colonies.

Initially, hunters were photographed as a record of their success. John Mackenzie includes photographs of hunters with their kill, in Africa and in India, as an introductory image to each chapter of Empire and Nature. From chapter one comes this image of “The Prince of Wales (the future George V) with the Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior, a tiger and leopards, 1905,” provided by courtesy of the Royal Commonwealth Society, and followed by a color photo of a hunt taken by a photography named Ylla almost fifty years later, in 1954.
FIGURE 45: THE PRINCE OF WALES (THE FUTURE GEORGE V) WITH THE MAHARAJA SCINDIA OF GWALIOR, A TIGER AND LEOPARDS, 1905 (PHOTOGRAPH)

FIGURE 46: TIGER HUNT, 1954, YLLA (PHOTOGRAPH)
These images are the visual record of an event that has passed. They are intended to evoke the memory of the hunt for the hunting party and the admiration of the viewer. In these images the tiger is not a threat—it is dead and any anxiety or fear has been erased leaving evidence of one thing only—accomplishment. As Colonel A. E. Stewart recommends in *Tiger and Other Game*:

> If you have killed the tiger do not let any one touch him until you come down from your machan. If you can, take a photo of him from your machan; it is an interesting record of where he fell and the view surrounding him as seen from the machan. Then climb down and take other photos of him near at hand. If he is lying in long grass or an unsuitable place, have him carried to a clear spot. Photos are interesting records and should be in all shikar books in conjunction with the records in writing. (60)

In contrast to these photographs, the illustrations by William Rice actually draw the action of the hunt. Rice’s illustrations display some uncertainty and many anxieties about the power of humans against the power of the tiger—such as the image of the tiger attacking the hunter and shown earlier in Chapter III of *Elliot Being Seized* (Figure 36).

Paradoxical to the culture of hunting, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) was established in 1824, and included among its members and supporters the writers Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy. The latter wrote an ode titled *Compassion* about the mistreatment of animals most memorably caught in these lines:
But still those innocents are thralls
To throbless hearts, near, far, that hear no calls
Of honour towards their too-dependent frail;
And from Columbia Cape to Ind we see
How helplessness breeds tyranny
In power above assail.

Cries still are heard in secret nooks,
Till hushed with gag or slit or thud;
And hideous dens whereon none looks
Are blotched with needless blood.
But here, in battlings, patient, slow,
Much has been won – more, maybe than we know –
And on we labour stressful. “Ailinon!”

Although the impetus behind the RSPCA was not necessarily the protection of wild animals, some historians (i.e., Peter Hoffenberg) have speculated that the Hindu practice of ahimsa, nonviolence, may have influenced British ideas about the treatment of animals that manifested itself through the formation of the RSPCA, suggesting that the peculiar connections between colonizer and colonized can have surprising and unexpected influences on each other with progressive outcomes.

Wildlife photography was not initially taken up by Indian photographers. James Ryan in *Picturing Empire* notes that “Samuel Bourne was a commercial landscape photographer based in Mumbai in the 1860s and 1870s. The quality of his nature photographs is extraordinary and he was important in developing an Anglo-Indian aesthetic” (218). Along with his partners William Howard and Charles Shepherd, two

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49 Ailinon is an expression derived from the Greek name Linus/Linos that is a ritual cry used as a refrain of a dirge. According to the Argive story, recounted by the 2nd-century-ad traveler Pausanias, Linus, the child of Apollo (god of light, truth, and prophecy) and Psamathe (the daughter of Crotopus, king of Argos), was exposed at birth and torn to pieces by dogs. In revenge, Apollo sent a Poine, or avenging spirit, which destroyed the Argive children. The hero Coroebus killed the Poine, and a festival, Arnis, otherwise called dog-killing day (*kunophontis*), was instituted, in which stray dogs were killed, sacrifice offered, and mourning made for Linus and Psamath (who was killed by her father). [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/342644/Linus](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/342644/Linus)
other photographers, did major photographic work, portraits and landscapes, in India in the nineteenth century. As Indians became more involved with photography, Judith Gutman in Through Indian Eyes, notes that their images were different than Europeans.

Much Indian photography recorded formal scenes, their content influenced by domestic and social hierarchies. Physical representation and landscape were less important. Indian photographers did not try to produce symmetrical, choreographed, and romanticized landscapes. They expressed Indian life views—a different aesthetic and a different view of history in which individual lives were less significant. (Gutman 17)

Most Indian photographers were studio photographers and there is no evidence that they were wildlife photographers. By the twentieth century wildlife photographers through their photography were expressing views that were “potentially subversive of imperial modes of natural resource exploitation, in particular hunting” (Ryan). Among them, two notable wildlife photographers Arthur Strachan and W. S. Champion come to mind.

Arthur Strachan—mentioned in the introduction—first went to India as a hunter and “converted” to “hunting” tigers with his camera. This trend to capture the tiger on photographs was also the motivation for F.W. Champion’s book The Jungle in Sunlight and Shadow, which is, by its title, a photographic “attempt to give a genuine picture of life in the jungle just as it is—eager, happy, contented, throbbing life, with but occasional moments of passing fear and unhappiness” (1), and provides this image of a tiger with its “kill”: 

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Champion also set up a camera connected to a trip-wire in a tiger habitat that caught this image of a tiger “prowling along a jungle path” (Guggisberg 83):
Recently, a childhood friend from the old neighborhood in Calcutta—following the trend to use photography for the purposes of conservation—published a coffee table book of his tiger photographs *On Safari: The Tiger and the Baobab Tree*, in which he is “trailing tigers with his lens on the rugged terrains of Kanha, Ranthambore, Bandhavgarh, Corbett, Nepal and, of course, the Sunderbans.” An image of the book jacket catches a partial view of the tiger an eye, in profile, looking away from the camera.

![On Safari Book Jacket](image)

**FIGURE 49: ON SAFARI BOOK JACKET**

Non-Profit Organizations have been instrumental in raising global awareness of endangered species, such as tigers. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), a non-governmental organization involved in the conservation and preservation of the natural environment, was formed a hundred and thirty-seven years after the RSPCA in 1961. Recently, WWF has used photographs as a powerful tool against illegal poaching and hunting by publicizing images of lifeless tiger bodies piled high as an effective strategy to both educate and prevent violations of tiger poaching and hunting.

Photographs of tigers and tiger hunting are an important visual archive that functions to promote and validate hunting as well as critique it. “Images can transcend their intended purposes” (215) notes James Ryan, this is particularly true of photography, where some tiger hunting images simply appear to celebrate exploitation of the
environment, such as in post-hunt images of King George, whereas one could argue that others are more sympathetic to nature and environmentally sensitive, such as the nature photographs of Strachan and Champion. The most significant contribution that photographs from the nineteenth and twentieth century is that they have the potential to provide an accurate visual record—an archive—of a particular environment, which may no longer exist or which local and indigenous communities may be involved in recovering, politically or environmentally.

The gradual shift from predatory hunting to conservationism in the British Empire, exemplified by the rise of the imperial wildlife reserves, was reflected in and reinforced by visual images. Photographic safaris began in the early twentieth century, as did published books of photographs, promoting the beauty and fascination of wild animals. Photographs were certainly used to record hunting. Rather like the stuffed trophy before them, they became a certificate of human prowess (the triumph of humans over the environment) and animal death (the inevitable receding of the wild before the human) (229-230).

In this chapter I traced my own process with visual images of tigers, explored European, Mughal, colonial and postcolonial visual representation of tiger hunts and hunting, as well photographs. In the end, the images talk to each other, echo each other, inform each other, resist, and reimagine tiger hunting, in a cycle of image making where artists—colonial, precolonial, or contemporary—have represented environments that have undergone changes these remain important records for efforts of restoration and recovery, particularly for indigenous communities.
CHAPTER IV

TIGER MOVES: NARRATIVE SPRINGS IN DIASPORIC (CON)TEXTS

I. THE TIGER UNCANNY IN DIASPORIC SPACES

In contemporary contexts, a “postcolonial period” characterized by the movements of peoples and tears in the fabrics of societies, the tiger resurfaces in uncanny ways. The old tiger narratives which, as I have argued, functioned as colonial signifiers of “India” as a nation and of Indians as “natives,” in the present take up new haunts. Hunted as trophies, sold for “medicinal” purposes, ensnared and poached to be trafficked as spectacular objects for circuses and zoos, tigers move globally and mark the landscape spectrally. In the wild they may be the subject of major conservation projects, such as the Wildlife Foundation and Project Tiger.50 At the same time, they are repositioned across the globe, and often read as tropic echoes of migrants forced into labor for the profit or entertainment, or self-definition of first world nations. The conserved tiger (stalking the haunted grounds of the old game preserves), the zoo tiger, and the circus tiger are thus not surprisingly taken up frequently by contemporary authors, who see the tiger as a richly suggestive means of commenting on contemporary events.

Although the tiger as an icon of wilderness may be protected, conserved, contained, exhibited, or tamed to perform control of wildness—these very sites of control are constituted by the irrepressible anxiety that if the tiger escapes it will take on the human desire for revenge and “wander” through the landscape, inside and outside its habitat, to wreak havoc for its captors. As Roy of “Ziegfried and Roy” famously

50 Donna Haraway writes favorably of this Project in When Species Meet, which provides tigers with sanctuaries and protection in their natural habitat.
discovered, the tiger one thinks one has tamed may whimsically maim the hand that feeds it. The tiger’s very affections may be dangerous to humans, echoing the historic slippages between cannibalism and eroticism.\(^{51}\) Such iconic moments have many valences and consequences, suggesting, for instance, both the residual necessity for “surveillance” of diasporic subjects, who can never be trusted not to return to old ways, who are regarded as irreducibly dangerous and difficult to know, and the recognition that under any circumstances the tiger may have moves of its own. This chapter, then, takes “tiger moves” as represented in textual and visual culture to represent at once the physical movement of tigers around the globe and the resignifying or what I call “springing practices” used by contemporary authors—particularly but not exclusively South Asians in the diaspora—to embody and to effect movements of anti-(neo) colonial thought. A tiger move contains a spring—it stalks slowly or makes catlike leaps in meaning that jump the reader from the world into the text or vice versa. Images of tigers, as they have always been since antiquity, are mobilized as forms of commentary and critique.

As a South Asian in the diaspora, I am sensitive to the ways in which tiger images “move” and resurface: representations of tigers and tiger hunting, emerging in new contexts of rupture, frequent my imagination, appearing (as suggested in Chapter III), uncannily on walls or at cross-walks, and springing out of written texts. Following scholars of the diaspora, such as Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, and Homi Bhabha, I take “diaspora” itself as a name for critical strategies that offer resistance and dissent by the diasporic subject who writes, re-inflects and re-presents histories and ideas meant to

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\(^{51}\) Ziegfried and Roy used white tigers in their Las Vegas spectaculars. Roy was famously “attacked” by one of their tigers, Montecore, on stage in 2003; some posit that he was having a health emergency and that the tiger mauled him while trying to help.
trouble dominant narratives. I foreground how movements of peoples which, as Arjun Appadurai notes, occur “in directions that are not remembered...such as movements between the cities of Poona or Madras to Dubai and Houston” (34), are paralleled in literature by the movements of animals and stories about animals, particularly tigers, into sites of what Appadurai terms “disjuncture.” The primary texts selected for analysis in this chapter mark how disparate and often forgotten diasporas connect, intersect, and encounter and counter each other. Often they do so on terrain where the idea of home is threatened, in freshly war-torn lands. I read in turn sections from a Beatles song (“The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill”), a play by Rajiv Joseph (*Bengal Tiger in a Baghdad Zoo*), three novels (*Life of Pi*, *The Tiger’s Wife*, and *Hungry Tide*), and the film adaptation of *Life of Pi*. In such works—over and against the popular cultural background in which tigers appear in so many commercialized or incongruous spaces (including a Vegas bathroom)—“tiger moves” have an uncanny quality.

In Sigmund Freud’s essay on “The Uncanny,” the German term, “Unheimlich,” in the primary sense, refers to something ‘un-home-like’ or unfamiliar; significantly, though, as James Strachey notes, this word also contains the word ‘home-like’ nested within it (Freud, 220-221). The uncanny is an experience whereby that which had or has been familiar becomes suddenly and inexplicably strange and alien. This “echo” of home within the uncanny has new resonances in postcolonial contexts involving displacement or diaspora. In Freud, one could say, the movement is primarily from familiar to the unfamiliar, but here it has an additional sense of multi-directionality and varied movement in space. The uncanniness of “deja vu” involves a different sort of “re-turn,” as ideas and concepts echo differently in physically alien contexts. A moment like that in
Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocolypse Now* involving a tiger suggests the complexities of the dynamic. A Cajun-American cook on a gunboat bearing an assassin heads up-river. After an attack by the Vietcong, the cook goes ashore to walk in the jungle, where he is freaked half out of his senses by the growl of a tiger. On the one hand, the cook’s anxieties about the tiger double (and even exceed) those about the Vietcong—“Charlie in the bush.” But what is more striking is the unheimlich sense evoked by the tiger, which appears spectrally, and the rapidity and thoroughness with which it drives home to the American cook just how wildly out of place he is. As Conrad’s “Africa” is rewritten into an image of Vietnam (imperialistic war as uncanny echo of colonial exploitation), the tiger prowls at the interstices as an image of psychic terror. The uncanniness of the image emerges through multiple frames of reference, and illustrates Julia Kristeva’s sense of stories, restaged in alien contexts, as richly three-dimensional and dynamic textual spaces. As Kristeva puts it, “every text is informed by other texts which the reader has read, and the reader’s own cultural context” (35-61). In many postcolonial or diasporic contexts—like that in Coppola—intertexts take the form of critique, in which stories are duplicated, enhanced, deconstructed or reconstructed, in relation to colonial and hegemonic agendas, while always running the risk of complicity.

In my analysis, then, the tiger uncanny features a textured and simultaneous multidirectionality, in which the familiar may become strange and the strange familiar in a single gesture, and the textual world resounds with intertextual narratives.52 Kathy Ferguson models this sense of unheimlich working through popular shows like *Star Trek*, in which the familiar and the strange are interwoven or recombined to go beyond the “fearful and frightening,” resulting in a “welcome confusion” that has mass appeal. Notes from an introduction to a Colloquium for the Women's Studies Program at

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Ferguson considers how, in popular culture, texts crossings/crossovers may emerge in ways that are surprisingly progressive and unsettling. Ferguson shifts the emphasis of the uncanny away from the fearful and frightening, opening up a wider space for discussion of many different kinds of crossovers, especially cultural ones, by providing a framework and vocabulary to assess the socio-political impact of cultural crossovers.

In contemporary U.S. public culture, that is, tigers cross into and out of popular and political culture in a dizzying number of domains, from being appropriated and commercialized as names of sports franchises (the Detroit Tigers or the Cincinnati Bengals) or as cartoon figures selling cereals (Tony the Tiger saying “They’re grrrrreat”!!) to standing in for India itself as an economic signifier. For instance, on the recent cover of the March 2013, issue of the Economist a sleek Siamese cat perched on a stool regards itself attentively in a mirror and seems to see a Bengal tiger glaring back at him. We look over the cat’s shoulder at the stern, threatening face of a tiger accompanied by this text: “Can India become a great power?” (see image below). The “question” appears directly under the banner of “The Economist,” and presumably the tiger that looks down is the potentially “great” India (the South Asian version of an Asian economic tiger-to-be), and the cat who looks up, having sprung onto the stool, is the currently skinny, tame India.

the University of Hawaii, March 14, 2003. Permission granted from author to refer to her comments.
53 My thanks to Prof. John Zuern of the University of Hawaii for his reference to this image, which is online at: http://www.economist.com/printedition/cover/2013-03-27/ape-eu-la-me-na.
The translation between text and image poses as a business question what can be read still further as a statement about India’s position in the world: can there be a “becoming,” a return to the “wondrous”\textsuperscript{54} Indian past of primal energy. What is posited as possible is not the domesticated subject emerging from colonialism but a unpredictably magnificent “new” India. But can such a recovery of primal energy be framed outside of the neoliberal economic mirror? In such contexts, ranging from travel advertisements to global politics (Tamil resistance in Sri Lanka—the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), the tiger equation seems to be that the tiger =India =exotic—or, as the environmental literary critic Pablo Mukherjee more directly states it, that the “tiger is India’s national animal,” as if this “India” had existed as a nation state as such prior to colonialism and partition. Of course, an historian would want to problematize Mukherjee’s statement, and

\textsuperscript{54} My use of “wondrous” echoes Arthur Basham’s 1968 \textit{Wonder that was India} (1968), a history of India up to the Mughal conquest of Babur (whose name is the Persian word for tiger) in the sixteenth century.
I would argue that the tiger signifies not just India but also the eastern state of Bengal both before and after partition, including at different points in history East Pakistan and Bangladesh. In this sense the tiger is always-already a mobile figure of transnationalism, knowing no national boundaries, and as such exemplifies ideas of scattering and gathering that Homi Bhabha so eloquently states as a personal reflection: “[I] have lived that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, become a time of gathering” where “myths and fantasies, and experiences” are exchanged to produce “a historical fact of singular importance” (Location of Culture 139).

My approach then is to pursue ideas about tigers that circulate through global flows of culture in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and to ask how a specific part of the world gets appropriated through them. In the process I explore what alternative aesthetic, literary, and political reflections diaspora discourse might offer, and suggest ways in which pop-cultural representations become parts and parcels of a new and shifting (neo)colonial “Empire.” Some of the paradoxes of these flows are suggested by taking literally the desire for the conservation of the magnificent tiger in the wild, while asking how the widespread imperative to do so in the home place relates to the circulations and representation of tigers overseas. I pursue how selected texts represent tiger stories in song, drama, novels, and film in ways that complicate our understanding of reference points. Such questions drive the attempt in my analysis to mediate the memory of and coming to terms with colonialism and postcolonial dislocation. My readings of “tiger moves” in and about the diaspora take up Wittgenstein’s idea of a polythetic category, which, as sociologist Robert Cohen describes it, acts “as a chain
which changes over the links such that each link is closely related to the next, but the first link might be very different from the last” (157). Such linkages are sometimes apparent and sometimes subtle; the latter may be better served through critical analyses to make those connections and increase our understanding.

“The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill” is based on a little-known tiger-hunting event involving a “peace”-seeking, yoga-and-meditation-practicing Anglo-European who finds the “adventure” of big game hunting irresistible on “location.” This “adventure” becomes an occasion for the Beatles to simultaneously engage with extinction narratives and critique big game hunting and what it represents. Yann Martel’s novel, Life of Pi, is an engaging allegorical novel, especially popular on high-school reading lists, that brings into relief narratives of captivity and containment, tropes of cannibalism and issues of diaspora—of humans and tigers removed to places far away and remote from their places of origin/homeland. The next three texts are all set in war zones, or areas affected by war in my lifetime. Rajiv Joseph’s play Bengal Tiger in a Baghdad Zoo, like “The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill,” is inspired by an actual bizarre news event and develops into an anti-war critique of the U.S. war in Iraq, which produces a series of inhuman and inhumane exchanges between characters marked by greed, racism, hostility, fear and anxiety, suicide, death, and the horrors of war. Ghosts wander through the play as they h(a)unt and are h(a)unted raising philosophical challenges to the premises of war and violence.

In an article from 2003, titled “Today Iraq, tomorrow . . . Democracy,” Slavoj Žižek loosely links his position on Slobodan Milosevic and the former Yugoslavia to the
US’s war on Iraq and his views of Saddam Hussein, a link that connects *Bengal Tiger in a Baghdad Zoo* to the next novel in this analysis—*The Tiger’s Wife*. This novel, written by Croatian-American Téa Obreht, is set in contemporary Croatia with frequent flashbacks to the former Yugoslavia. It opens with a tale of a tiger attack at the local zoo, and is filled with “fables and allegories, as well as events borrowed from the headlines” (Schillinger) about private and public spheres as war zones. It disturbs dominant narratives by creatively alternating stories of folk and fable origins that are juxtaposed to stories of “fact” or “truth.” The strategy echoes that of *The Arabian Nights*, in which Sheherezade’s life is threatened by her new husband (the truth) against whom she defends herself through her story-telling ability (fictions).

Finally, Žižek’s analysis that linked two war zones (the former Yugoslavia and Iraq) is echoed on the border of Bangladesh and contemporary Bengal in India where humans, according to the literary critic Jonathan Steinwand, are pitted against nonhumans of “cetacean companion species” (dolphins) and “charismatic megafauna” (tigers) (194) in Amitav Ghosh’s novel *The Hungry Tide*. Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee describes Ghosh’s work as exploring “issues of refugee movements, migration, the disruptive and constitutive flows of global, colonial and neocolonioial capital, the etchings left by these communities and lands, the dynamics of resistance and appropriation” and “the cultural and historical environments of colonialism and postcolonialism” (113). The novel returns us to the environment of the Sunderbans (tiger habitat) along with Piya—a South Asian diasporic—whose research on dolphins reveals and re-members a rich indigenous tiger text, the story of Bon Bibi in the *Jaharnama*.

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These texts gather stories that recuperate the “power” or “springing processes” of tiger tales from unique perspectives, such as the Croatian and South Asian diasporas. They draw on loss, mourning, and recovery to re-member scenes of violence that stand in as alternative histories to disrupt state-sponsored dominant narratives of the same scenes. Each text re-inscribes the historical interspecies hostility of humans to tigers while creatively embedding pro-conservation, anti-war, anti-violence critiques, as well as introducing unique indigenous perspectives. These contemporary tiger texts engage variously with how tigers “travel” and “wander” across time and space, h(a)unted by a history of violence, yet offering correctives through powerful counter-perspectives.

II. “The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill” – A Song

In 1968, the year my grandfather died and Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, the Beatles came out with the *White Album*—a double album that caught the feel of a growing counterculture. For many of my generation, the tracks of that album are all too familiar—“Back in the USSR,” “While My Guitar Gently Weeps,” and “Rocky Racoon.” On the drive home from work one day, I was listening to KTUH (University of Hawai‘i’s student run radio) when “The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill” came on and as I sang along, the significance of the lyrics to my dissertation leapt out at me. The lyrics have a nursery rhyme quality, which the critic Ian MacDonald described in *Revolution in the Head* as, “[T]his lapse into tub-thumping banality that you will recognize as ‘The Continuing story of Bungalow Bill.’” Inspired by an event that occurred through the Beatles’ association with South Asia, the lyrics read as a critique of the (neo)colonial
views embodied in what has become an Anglo-American global swagger: in the song a pompous American has become head trophy hunter. The route through which the old tiger text resurfaces might be taken as typically and suggestively circuitous.

The initial connection of the Beatles to South Asia was through music and the relationship between George Harrison and sitarist Ravi Shankar, a Bengali who, like my father, relocated from Bangladesh to India after partition. Shortly after the Beatles’ visit to India, Bangladesh gained independence from Pakistan in 1971 following a violent struggle for independence when India came to the aid of Bangladesh. Harrison and Shankar collaborated in staging a concert at Madison Square Gardens to raise relief funds for victims of the war and to raise awareness about the newly independent country. It was the first time that such a big venue concert was held to promote a socio-political cause and it served as a model for FarmAid (Family Farmers) and LiveAid (Ethiopian Famine) in 1985. This concert was hugely successful in getting the word out about the independent nation and the need for international assistance to overcome the ravages of war. Overnight Bangladesh became widely known through the Concert for Bangladesh. However, in a Playboy interview John Lennon recalled problems about where money for the concert went: “it’s all a rip-off. So forget about it. All of you who are reading this, don’t bother sending me all that garbage about, ‘Just come and save the Indians, come and save the blacks, come and save the war veterans.’ Anybody I want to save will be helped through our tithing, which is ten percent of whatever we earn.”

Another earlier and important connection between the Beatles and South Asia was through the charismatic founder of what became known as TM or transcendental meditation, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who also taught his technique here in Honolulu
around 1959. Among the Maharishi’s followers were many Anglo-American celebrities who spent time at his ashram in Rishikesh in India. In 1968, the Beatles and the actress Mia Farrow were visiting the ashram to deepen their learning and practice of TM with the Maharishi. Other followers there were a mother and son, Nancy Cooke de Herrera and Richard (Rik) Cooke. According to several accounts, in the middle of his stay at the ashram, Rik took off to go on a full-fledged tiger hunting expedition that included elephants (visible on the side of the image) and the modern addition to safaris and shikars—a jeep. An image of Cooke and his shikari, Avi Kohli, post-tiger hunt is freely available on his website and has been duplicated here.

![Image of Richard Cooke and Avi Kohli after tiger hunt, 1968](image)

**FIGURE 51: RICHARD COOKE AND AVI KOHLI AFTER SHOOTING TIGER, 1968 © RICHARD A. COOKE III (PHOTOGRAPH)**

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56 Cooke is a professional photographer and has lived on Molokai in Hawai‘i since the 1990s.
Cooke’s tiger hunting expedition was mockingly, disparagingly lyricized by John Lennon, who claimed: “The Continuing Story Of Bungalow Bill was written about a guy who took a short break to go shoot a few poor tigers, and then came back to commune with God. There used to be a character called Jungle Jim, and I combined him with Buffalo Bill. It’s a sort of teenage social-comment song and a bit of a joke” (qtd. Turner 155). Mia Farrow, in her biography, corroborates the story: “[T]hen a self-important, middle-aged American woman arrived, moving a mountain of luggage into the brand-new private bungalow next to Maharishi’s along with her son, a bland young man named Bill. People fled this newcomer, and no one was sorry when she left the ashram after a short time to go tiger hunting, unaware that their presence had inspired a new Beatles song - Bungalow Bill” (26). Nancy Cooke’s complicity in the hunting expedition is justified using the oft-used but highly unlikely element of danger and threat that pits humans against animals in perpetuating the interspecies hostility in this statement, “Rik told me that he felt bad about it and said that he didn’t think he’d ever kill an animal again. Maharishi said, ‘You had the desire Rik and now you don't have the desire?’ Then John asked, ‘Don't you call that slightly life destructive?’ I said, ‘Well John, it was either the tiger or us. The tiger was right where we were’” (qtd. Turner 155). Apparently, after this incident, and possibly because of the song, Rik Cooke never hunted again and became a wildlife photographer instead, like Arthur Strachen before him.

Besides being inspired by the “American visitor to the Rishikesh community who departed for a few weeks to murder tigers before returning to resume his course of study”

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57 It is not clear why Farrow retained Bill (for Rik), but it could be that she deliberately re-named people in her biography for the purpose of anonymity.
spiritual self-improvement,” the song is “[I]n two disparate parts bluntly hammered together with four clumping bass-drum beats, and Bungalow Bill has a chorus half-consciously borrowed from Ray Noble’s Thirties standard ‘Stay As Sweet As You Are’” [130]. Recorded with “deliberately sloppy spontaneity in three takes, the track features backing vocals by almost everyone in Abbey Road at the time and some adroit mandolin and trombone impersonations by Chris Thomas on Mellotron” (MacDonald 259) and Yoko Ono on backup vocals.

The song opens with the questioning chorus that is repeated between verses and numerous times until the end: “Hey, Bungalow Bill/What did you kill/Bungalow Bill?” Thereafter, the verses succinctly capture the tiger-hunting event in which the “all American bullet-headed Saxon mother’s son” goes “out tiger hunting with his elephant and gun.” They arrive at the familiar location of the hunt “[D]eep in the jungle where the mighty tiger lies.” But though they are armed and primed for a hostile encounter with a tiger, they claim that the tiger took them “by surprise,” and so “Captain Marvel zapped him right between the eyes,” because “he looked so fierce” and “[I]f looks could kill it would have been us instead of him.” Evoking the comic book character and the comic book slang for the shooting serves at once to ridicule the incident and critique the American superhero role in the global politics of cold war era 1960s in a country that claimed non-alignment, while seeking “refuge” in an ashram.

According to music critic Steve Turner, the Beatles’ sojourn in India took their counterculture music and lyrics from the pop rock sounds and simplistic lyrics of “A

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58 Ray Noble was a popular British singer/songwriter whose success crossed over the Atlantic when he moved to New York in the 1930s.
Hard Day’s Night” and “Rubber Soul” to another level through acoustically based sound and lyrics, accompanied by a look that included longer hair, round Gandhi-like spectacle frames, Indian clothing. The kurtas and Indian fabrics that came to mark the dress of hippies, and to speak a pro-peace, anti-war rhetoric, are related to the image of the Beatles below.

FIGURE 52: THE BEATLES AT RISHIKESH BY PAUL SALTZMAN (PHOTOGRAPH)

These changes reflected a social and political awareness that helped make the counterculture globally appealing. This convergence is marked in my mind by the frenzy at the Delhi airport, and across the subcontinent, upon the arrival of the Beatles in India early in 1968.

Ultimately, the justification for this tiger kill returns to an earlier time, back through the colonial period and the hunting narratives of colonial hunters who saw the tiger as a scourge, and even earlier to the Mughals who held in high regard those who successfully hunted tigers. The colonial and postcolonial resurface through this “ordinary” song. But the narrative is altered and redirected as well in ways suggested by
Paul Gilroy, who reminds us that “[S]olidarity can help formulate acts of resistance and
music can advance that cause because it is a means of communicating information,
organizing consciousness, and testing out or deploying forms of subjectivity which are
required by political agency whether individual or collective, defensive or
transformational” (36). This song serves as a counter-narrative of located histories,
engages ideas about environmental histories of extinction in South Asia, and links to the
environmental histories of extinction of animals on other continents, such as the buffalo
in North America, lions in Africa, and jaguar in South America. This song protests the
endangering of species across continents, which, horrifically, parallels what Patrick
Wolfe calls the “logic of elimination” of indigenous peoples (387).

III. LIFE OF PI – A NOVEL AND FILM

Pi: Animals have souls. I have seen it in their eyes.

Pi’s Father: All you see when you look in an animals eyes are your own
thoughts and desires reflected back to you and it is false to attribute those
thoughts impressions onto the tiger. – David Magee, Life of Pi

In the screenplay of Yann Martel’s best seller Life of Pi (LOP), written by
Michigander David Magee, this father-son exchange is followed by a highly charged
scene in which a (goat) kid is rapidly killed and pulled through the bars of the cage by a
tiger. The father thereby “teaches” his son a “lesson” about animals that is connected to
this statement in the novel: “Tigers are very dangerous . . . I want you to understand that

59 Life of Pi is loosely based on the Brazilian writer Moacyr Scliar’s novella Max and the
Cats, in which a boy is stranded on a boat with a Jaguar during a journey undertaken to
escape Nazi persecution. The 3-D film, directed by Ang Lee, was released in November 2012,
you are never—under any circumstances—to touch a tiger, to pet a tiger, to put your hands through the bars of a cage, even to get close to a cage. Is that clear?” (34).

In her discussion of the *Life of Pi*, June Dwyer compares the book to the “grandfather” of English shipwreck novels, *Robinson Crusoe*, which represents the utilitarian Enlightenment view of “human dominance over animals.” Life of Pi, on the other hand, represents a paradigm shift where the logic of human dominance over animals is “replaced with an ecologically acceptable one of respect” (11). Furthermore, Dwyer notes another shift in shipwreck narratives from when the event was a “metaphor for the journey of life and not a specific event” to “the twenty-first century” in which “it is almost impossible to consider shipwrecks without also considering ecological concerns, . . . the role of nature, . . . the relationship between humans and animals” (10). Dwyer’s arguments echo Peter Singer’s summary remarks in “Equality for Animals?”:

“[I]ssues about humans, it was commonly assumed, should always take precedence over issues about animals. Now, thanks to organizations like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and vocal animal advocates all over the world, the view that animals are in some sense our equals is less likely to meet blank stares” (48). My reading pursues the meaning of this paradigm shift for the representation of tigers, while holding in view the difficulty if not impossibility of regarding any textual tiger without investing it with human values. If humans are only capable of thinking about animals

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60 This view underwent adjustment in the Romantic period; Dwyer cites Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as representation of an “awe of nature and a lesson in respect for animal life.”

61 According to Nietzsche, language and human thought can never be anything other than anthropomorphic: “If I define the mammal and then after examining a camel declare, ‘See, a mammal,’ a truth is brought to light, but it is of limited value. I mean, it is
anthropomorphically, one might question the motivations of conservationists as they preserve for posterity the sign of a fear of being consumed and devoured.

The novel (and the film, with some adjustments and blending of characters) follow a young Indian boy named by his uncle “Pi” (after a famous Parisienne swimming pool, Piscine Molitor, and cleverly abbreviated to the Greek mathematical number), whose family runs a zoo in Pondicherry (Puducherry), a former French colonial stronghold in southern India on the Bay of Bengal. During the Emergency\footnote{A period of horrendous oppression and human rights violations in India associated with forced sterilization programs and the imprisonment of socialist/communist activists among other repressive policies carried out under the directives of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in the period between 1975-1977.} declared and enforced by Indira Gandhi, the family falls on hard economic times, so his father sells the animals in his small private zoo to zoos in the U.S. and immigrates with the entire family to Canada. The parallels of humans and animals dispersals are expressly drawn: “The result was that the animals, like us, got their working papers. They were future Yankees, and we, future Canucks” (90). And so the family journeys to Canada aboard a Japanese ship, the Tsimtsum, in the mid-70s. Linking the processes by which the animals get their “papers” to humans is a recurrent anthropomorphizing strategy, in which, “the attribution of human characteristics to the non-human” can be an “unconscious strategy by which humans attempt to gain the benefit of whatever significance the world has to offer” (Cole 26), primarily “in response to doubt and disbelief” (Cole 28).

Arguably, the novel, as promised in the “Author’s Note,” is “a story that will make you believe in God” (x), so it engages in a light discussion of the precepts of at

 anthropomorphic through and through and contains not a single point that would be “true in itself,” real, universally valid apart from man” (251).
least three major religions—Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam—and of tolerance through Pi’s open-minded acceptance and practice of all three, as their differences are presented humorously in the argument of a Hindu pandit, a Muslim imam, and a Christian priest when they discover that Pi is practicing all their religions:

“Nonsense” cried the pandit. “Piscine was born a Hindu, lives a Hindu and will die a Hindu!”

“Piscine, can this be true?” asked the imam earnestly. “Hindus and Christians are idolaters. They have many gods.”

“And Muslims have many wives,” responded the pandit.

The priest looked askance at both of them. “Piscine,” he nearly whispered, “there is salvation only in Jesus.” (66-67)

The religious leaders argue about the merits of their religions for a couple of pages, with the pandit urging Pi to make a single choice: “Mr. Patel, Piscine’s piety is admirable . . . But he can’t be a Hindu, a Christian, and a Muslim. It’s impossible. He must choose” (69). One critic, Florence Stratton, notes that “[A]lthough reviewers of Life of Pi are…warm in their praise of Martel’s story telling abilities, they have found his treatment of religion unpersuasive” (6). This viewpoint is shared in Pankaj Mishra’s review in the New York Times Review of Books, which argues:63

Martel is unable to reveal adequately, after the flurry of colorful religious information in the early pages, the precise nature, or vacillations, of Pi’s

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faith. Clearly, the big questions about life and morality that any discussion of God provokes are as irrelevant to Pi on his lifeboats as they usually are in the animal kingdom. (18)

However, musings about god and religion are peripheral to what most interests me in the novel, which is how Martel brings the old colonial tropes of tigers and cannibalism to bear on his philosophical discussions of man, diaspora, and nature.

Two tigers in the novel are collapsed into one in the film, for economy. In the novel the tiger that devours the kid is called Mahisha “our Bengal tiger patriarch, a lanky, hulking beast of 550 pounds” (33). The other is “named because of a clerical error” after it was trapped by a bounty hunter hired to kill a panther that “was terrorizing Khulna64 district of Bangladesh just outside the Sunderbans” (132-133). The hunter’s name was switched with the tiger and Pi’s father retains it as the proper name of the tiger. In the first few pages of the novel (6), this tiger is introduced to readers by name only and as a character with both a first and last name, as one would name a human. It is almost a third of the way through the novel that we learn this “character” is a tiger named Richard Parker, who is nonetheless described as sporting “a stylish goatee” (190), like a gentleman in a colonial hunting narrative. The tiger’s name, Richard Parker, turns out not to be accidental, but a reference to several shipwreck narratives involving actual “Richard Parkers.” Edgar Allan Poe fictionalized a scene involving surviving cannibalism with a Richard Parker in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, a move described by Paul Lyons in American Pacificism as one in which “the line between literature and

64 Coincidentally, also my father’s birthplace, which is in Bangladesh. Before independence from Pakistan in 1971 such cross-border trade and human movements would not have been as possible.
non-fiction symptomatically collapsed, with novelists openly appropriating names, factual details, and scenes from non-fiction narrative” (49). A more famous scene, to which Martell ostensibly refers, features the crew of the Mignonette, and in which a Richard Parker was eaten (in the film there is a shot of a boat named the Mignonette). In Arthur Gordon Pym, Parker is marked off to be cannibalized when a “horrid morsel” is dropped by a bird in front of him. The narrator then says, “may God forgive me, but now, for the first time, there flashed through my mind a thought” (102). Perhaps not coincidentally, Pym’s dog in the book is named Tiger, and while in a frenzy he confuses the two, believing that “the body of Parker was that of Tiger” (93).  

Thus, the tiger’s name evokes nineteenth century archives in which anxiety around cannibalism is already a trope, and combines with colonial fears and anxieties of the Other which Marina Warner notes “justify . . . the presence of the invader, the settler, the trader, bringing civilization” (94). These are merged into a single “character” of Richard Parker, incarnated as a Bengal tiger in a twenty-first century novel about belief, diaspora, and cannibalism. As we learn, all the animals in the lifeboat represent Pi’s shipmates to whom he had attributed animal personalities, as if to signify the complications embedded in narratives of migration and survival at sea. According to Marina Warner, “fantasies” of cannibalism recur in moments of acute racism often linked to “attitudes to black immigration and to intermarriage between races” (97). This raises questions about Martell’s decision to engage the theme of cannibalism in this novel and

65 See Yann Martell, “How Richard Parker Came to Get his Name” at Amazon.com.  
66 In Toronto, where the South Asian immigrant population is highly visible, “Paki,” which I have been called on several occasions, is a racist reference to South Asians.
suggests that the forced dietary conversion that occurs on Pi’s voyage may have racial overtones that critics seem not to have considered.

Halfway across the Pacific, the Tsimtsum is wrecked in a storm. Pi loses his entire family and finds himself in a lifeboat where he is the only human survivor of the shipwreck, along with three animal companions—an injured zebra, a hyena, and the tiger Richard Parker described as “a wet trembling, half-drowned heaving and coughing three-year-old adult Bengal tiger” (99). The survivors from the ship-hold are soon joined by another survivor, an orangutan. Before long, the hyena attacks and devours the zebra and the orangutan. Later, the hyena is killed by Richard Parker, leaving Pi and Richard Parker as the only survivors on the lifeboat.

The event in which the “animals” devour each other for “survival” is the first version of the story that Pi relates, but when that tale is questioned by the officials investigating the shipwreck Pi succinctly retells the tale in which the animals are replaced by humans—a story of cannibalism. Once the lens of cannibalism is introduced, it brings to the front a host of other links to those narratives and sends the discussion of the relationship of humans and animals to the back. This reinforces Marina Warner’s statement that “[C]annibalism has become more salient today as a modern myth, easily fulfilling myth’s multiple functions, defining the forbidden and the alluring, the sacred and the profane, conjuring demons and heroes, saying who we are and what we want, telling a story which makes sense of things” (87). The second story—the cannibal story—is a “horrible story” (LOP 345) to the investigators and “emphasizes greed, cruelty, corruption, and futility” (Stratton 12)—a philosophical strategy of “associating cannibalism with secular materialism,” particularly “under late capitalism” where our
“modes of behavior” are “completely conventionalized” (Stratton 14). These arguments are all valid, but I remain unconvinced and even suspicious of another interpretation of Martel’s argument that suggests the decision to abstain from meat-eating, religious or otherwise, becomes irrelevant when faced with starvation and how satisfying and even enjoyable “feasting on human flesh and organs” (345) can be when you have limited or no choice of sustenance.

*Life of Pi* articulates many of these discussions in the earlier chapters, particularly capture, containment and cannibalism, and moves forward to an interesting interspecies relationship that shifts away from utilitarian models to an ecologically aware one, even if the tiger in the film is a masterful computer graphic image (CGI) that simulates the real or imagined thing in three-dimensions. Furthermore, the novel lends itself to a postcolonial analysis of how iconography (here of tigers) travels across time and place. The tiger text diaspora at times duplicates nineteenth-century tropes of tiger hostility (tigers as raw nature) and at other times redirects those tropes towards the possibility of alternate narratives to the colonial ones. In the end, the “animals” in the novel stand in for humans who have been turned into speechless, growling, roaring animals—a estranging move that has more to say about how we humans “see” animals (or each other) than about animals themselves, but one that relies on our preconceived ideas about animals as hostile, vengeful and devouring. As Richard Parker leaves Pi without a backward glance only to disappear into another “tropical” jungle off the shores of Mexico, anxieties shift, as it were, from one location to another.
IV. BENGAL TIGER IN A BAGHDAD ZOO – A PLAY

On October 19, 2011, in a private collection, or zoo, in Zanesville, Ohio, 49 “exotic” animals, including several animals that David Quammen lists as “maneaters,” were killed. There were 18 Bengal tigers, 17 lions, 6 black bears, a pair of grizzlies, 3 mountain lions, 2 wolves and a baboon. The carnage was reported as follows:

“These animals were on the move and were showing aggressive behavior,” said Muskingum County Sheriff Matt Lutz. “There were some very close calls,” the sheriff said. At times it was “almost hand to hand” combat with the animals, Lutz said.

“These are 300 pound Bengal tigers that we had to put down,” he said.

“These killings were senseless. For our guys to have to do this, it was nonsense, it was crazy,” the sheriff said.

ABC News’ wildlife expert Jack Hanna, who advised Lutz during the crisis, said it was especially heartbreaking to see so many Bengal tigers killed when they are on the verge of extinction. But the actions by the police saved a catastrophe, he said.

This event, covered by almost every network in the U.S., echoes uncannily against the colonial justifications of violence against animals as necessary for the protection of humans, as if such “senseless” averting of catastrophe were not a catastrophe itself.
The implications of the ways that contemporary neo-colonial “hunts” echo colonial ones—serio-comically analyzed in John Lennon’s anti-imperial lyrics—are explored more fully and poignantly in Rajiv Joseph’s play *Bengal Tiger at a Baghdad Zoo*. Joseph’s play suggests at once the absurdity produced by animals and persons being captured and moved around on imperialism’s checkerboard, and the uncanny way that the figure of the tiger returns and can be mobilized as a spring to consciousness about murders done in the name of protectionism. The tiger literally returns to haunt its murderer, in the process providing a critique of the processes that capture modern subjects in occupied zones.

Like “Bungalow Bill,” *Bengal Tiger in a Baghdad Zoo* references an historical event, in this case one from September 2003, after the U.S. invaded Iraq in “Operation Freedom.” Reuters reported that “A U.S. soldier shot dead a rare Bengal tiger at a Baghdad zoo after the animal injured a colleague who was trying to feed it through the cage bars.” The zoo manager confirmed that “a group of U.S. soldiers were having a party in the zoo on Thursday night, after it had closed. Someone was trying to feed the tigers,” and “[T]he tiger bit his finger off and clawed his arm. So his colleague took a gun and shot the tiger.” Upon investigation, the report notes, “[A]t the tiger’s now-empty cage, pools of blood showed that the soldier passed through a first cage intended only for keepers and was standing right up against the inner cage's narrow bars.” This event was not as widely reported by U.S. national media as the killings of maneaters in Zanesville.

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67 In March 2011, *Bengal Tiger at a Baghdad Zoo* opened on Broadway (it opened first at the Kirk Douglas Theater in Culver City, California in May, 2009). The play was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize in 2010. A graduate of the Tisch School of the Arts, Joseph is an award-winning playwright whose other plays are *Animals Out of Paper*, *The Leopard and the Fox*, *All This Intimacy*, *Huck and Holden*, and *Gruesome Playground Injuries* (bio in beginning of book).
The Baghdad Zoo used to be the biggest in the Middle East, but the reporter describes it as a “decrepit collection of dirty cages and sad-looking animals,” and describes how earlier that year “U.S. soldiers killed four lions that had escaped from the zoo.” He notes how “[H]undreds of other animals were stolen or let loose by looters in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of the Iraqi capital” (Reuters). This “emancipation of the zoo” occurred during the same period that “US military guards looked on passively as looters carried off artifacts of Iraq’s 6,000-year history from the Baghdad National Museum” (McDonnell 62), and highlights how “the ill-defined mission to Iraq” presented a problem to soldiers, who were “unsure whether their job” was “to liberate or loot” (Jones). Such escapades, which theater critic for the New Yorker John Lahr described as epitomizing “the recklessness of the American occupation” (76), are seriously tackled in Joseph’s two-act play, which Charles McNulty of the Los Angeles Times described as “No ordinary play. I’m tempted to call it the most original drama written about the Iraq war . . . [T]he imagination behind it is way too thrillingly genre-busting to be confined within such a limited category.” Disturbing events in reality, that is, produce creative work in the diaspora which often find echoes from the homeland that are reflected and represented in uncanny ways.

I saw the play on Broadway in New York City, along with many theater-going tourists, and so my analysis draws on both the experience of witnessing the performance at the Richard Rogers Theater in June 2011 and reading the play, which is made up of two acts of six scenes and four scenes respectively. The play has a significant number of lines in Arabic; with regards to the language Joseph also notes that “[T]here should be no subtitles for the Arabic” (146), but they are printed in Arabic and romanized. This use of
Arabic not only humanizes the Iraqis, but reminds us of the location as a historically significant place and not far from the ruins of Babylon, where, historically, language and gardens figured prominently.

The play is set in U.S. military occupied Baghdad in 2003, and the action centers around seven main characters: Tiger, who, according to Joseph’s note “can be any age, ideally he is older, scrappy, past his prime, yet still tough,” and can be “any race except Middle Eastern”; Tom (an African American) and Kev (white trash), two American soldiers in their early twenties; Musa, a former topiarist and now an Iraqi interpreter for the U.S. military occupiers, who, as a topiarist, created a ‘zoo’ of animal shapes that prompts Tiger to comment on the peculiarity of people like this, “[P]eople. First they throw all the animals in a zoo and then they carve up the bushes to make it look like we never left. Insult to injury. Insult to injury” (175). However, his sister, a teenager named Haida, was fond of the topiary where the “animals” are represented in shape only; and Joseph includes in his cast of characters Uday, “the eldest son” of the former leader of Iraq, Sadam Hussein, who was shot and killed by Special Forces in 2003; in Act II, Scene 3, a leper woman the only survivor of a colony that was bombed is also the only person who knows where Kev, who was in the palace when Uday was shot, stowed loot taken from “[T]he Hussein brothers mansion” where “[E]verything in the house was made of gold, practically” (151) “Gold out the ass, man. Gold everywhere. All their weapons were gold! Even their toilet was gold, boy! Goddamn!” (161).

Tiger (the character is capitalized hereafter) was played by Robin Williams, whose comedic talents made for an entertaining tiger and whose speaking role in the play was described by one newspaper critic as “profanity-laden rants about the elusiveness of
justice, meaning and God” (Gardner 2). Although Tiger is shot and killed in the opening scene of Act I, his character returns in spirit form to haunt people and places in and around Baghdad. Throughout the play Tiger offers critical insight, as when he recalls how he ended up in the zoo—the story of his captivity and dispersal follow:

Tiger: I won’t lie. When I get hungry, I get stupid. I screwed up twelve years back. I just followed the scent, took a bite, and then fhwipp!

Tiger: This tranquilizer dart comes out of nowhere, and I wake up in Baghdad.

Tiger: when you’re this far from home, you know you’re never getting back. (150)

In the zoo or in the jungle the tiger must die, but life in the zoo, according to the tiger is really bad—a reminder of the conditions at the Calcutta Zoo in the 1970s.

Tiger: Zoo is hell. Ask any animal. Rather be shot up and eaten than be stuck in a fucking zoo ten thousand miles from where you were supposed to be. Like that polar bear they brought in six years ago who committed suicide. Some world. (152)

If polar bears commit suicide while held captive outside of their natural habitat, so too the play suggests that those American military serving in Iraq are similar to these caged, unhappy animals confused by their new confines, unsure of how they should behave.
Kev, the tiger killer, whose character calls to view the epidemic of mental health issues facing veterans, commits suicide in the second Act and according to one critic possesses “a youth whose brutish bravado doesn’t mask his insecurity and fear” (Gardner 2).

Musa: What kind of action have you seen?

Kev: What kind?

Musa: Yes.

Kev: I killed a tiger.

Musa: You killed . . .?

Kev: A tiger. At the zoo.

Musa: I see. Why?

Kev: He bit off my friend’s hand! This tiger, he attacked him, this guy Tommy, he’s like my best friend over here. And so I shot the bastard in the gut. Bucka bucka! The tiger, I mean. And he died.

I saved Tommy’s life, you know? But everyone’s like . . . Everyone’s all like . . . I screwed up or something. Like I did something wrong.

I wanted to get the tiger and skin him. I wanted to make a carpet out of him, but they wouldn’t let me. Can you believe that? (153)
Killing the tiger validates Kev as a soldier – but the killing is out of context and the others’ reaction confuses Kev; doesn’t killing a tiger in the hunt allow one to have a trophy—the tiger skin? But in the play Kev is after a more valuable trophy—the gold toilet seat and gun of Sadaam Hussein’s (now dead) son Uday. Tiger’s death evokes a mournful nostalgia.

Tiger: I guess I was always going to die here. I guess that was my fate, from the start.

But I would have thought maybe I’d have one good day. A day like the Leos had. A brief foray out into the great wide open.

And I’m bigger then them. I am bigger than those motherfuckers.

So that’s what I look like. You go your whole life never knowing how you look. And then there you are. You get hungry, you get stupid, you get shot and die. And you get this quick glimpse at how you look, to those around you, to the world. It’s never what you thought. And then it’s over. (154-155)

Tiger’s death, as his ghost tells us, gives him a keen insight: “But here I am. Dante in Hades. A Bengal tiger in Baghdad. Now that I’m dead, I’m having all sorts of revelations about the world and existence. Things just appear to me. Knowledge, the stuff of the universe, it just sort of floats into me . . . Or maybe I’m floating into it” (176). Appearing to his killer first, Tiger is both haunted and haunting. Kev describes Tiger’s post-mortem appearance to Tom, “And the ghost of the tiger walked into the room . . . I’m telling you, man, it was crazy. But he wasn’t like in real life. He was, like, walking on his hind legs.”
Later, Tiger recalls an incident from before he was captured and put in a zoo, echoing the possibility of the fate of the tiger in *Life of Pi*.

Tiger: I just remembered something: sixteen years ago I killed two children. A little girl and boy. Sister and brother. . . . This was back in the Sunderbans, in West Bengal. Home! The only place these crazy stripes camouflage me. I’m telling you, for the most part, I’m very shy! I like to sit back and wait for something to walk by so I can kill it and eat it. I’m a simple guy with simple tastes. Anyhow, the two children had strayed away from their village. The girl was collecting wood or something. I watched them curve around a corner. I was absolutely still. The little boy, at one point turned and looked directly at me, into my eyes. But he didn’t register the significance. He never did. I was hungry. They were food. And I caused untold misery to the parents of those children. But what could I do? I’m a tiger. It wasn’t cruel. It was lunch! A basic primordial impulse isn’t cruel! (186-187)

In between Tiger’s reminiscences, Kev bemoans that he shot Tiger and comments on the effect of “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” which has driven him toward suicide: “I’m sorry! Okay? I’m sorry I shot you!” and “You know what, man? I wrote my brother about you. He said you’re just a figment of my imagination and shit. He said you were just one of those fucked-up things about the war” (186). Just before “Kev starts cutting his wrist,” Tiger wonders: “What if my every meal has been an act of cruelty? What if my very nature is in direct conflict with the moral code of the universe? That would make me a fairly damned individual. After all, *lunch* usually consists of the weak, the small, the
stupid, the young, the crippled. Because they’re easier to kill.” Reinforcing centuries of rhetoric on the “ungodly” tiger, Tiger accepts the burden of his nature as represented by humans, but reverses the gaze: “I’m guilty! That’s why I’m stuck here. I’m being punished. But you’d think the twelve years in a zoo, caged, never hunting, never killing, never breaking God’s ridiculous law . . . you’d think I would have atoned for my tigerness. But maybe that’s my way out of here. Assuming God exists, and assuming this punishment has a reason, I have to atone. I need you to tell me: How do I do it?” (187).

In Act 2 Tiger wanders the war-torn streets and neighborhoods of one of the oldest cities in the world where “[T]he street is literally on fire,” and as Tiger notes: “This place is lousy with ghosts. And the new ones are irritating. They’re walking around, wide-eyed . . . What happened to me? Where am I? You’re dead and you’re in Baghdad. Shut up.” Although not everyone that the Tiger sees can see him (with the exception of Kev), he encounters a girl who asks him if he is “going to eat her.” “No, I gave up eating children,” he replies and tells “her the bit about the two kids in the forest . . . and how I have all this guilt” (196-197). Thus, the Tiger as ghost has become fully anthropomorphized as a philosophical being in search of answers about God, nature and Being. He comments on injustice and the ravages of war, as represented in the words of Kev: “And algebra comes from the Arabic work *al jebr* which means “a reunion of broken parts”” (214). Answers are not easily come by, and, faced with the despair and destruction wreaked by an unjust and unjustified war, Tiger rails at “God” (he thinks Musa is God because he created the wondrous magical topiary in the midst of the mess of war) with frustration:
This? This isn’t enough! I want You to say more than this. You know what? You belong in a cage. We should hunt You down lock You up just like every other wild thing in the world. I can see it: God in a cage, right here. Finally get a look at You. All the mysteries of creation could be revealed at the zoo. Come see the God exhibit! Come watch the beast play! And we, the lousy dead, innumerable and in constant parade, would finally have our Holy Land . . . a cage in a garden in a burning city. Ohh … What a fucking sight! (241-242)

Frustrated by his foray into the realms of human thought. Tiger returns to “nature” and restores a semblance of order characterized by hunting tropes: “I’m fuckin hungry. So I’m just gonna sit back and wait for something to walk by so I can kill it and eat it. Rules of the hunt . . . Don’t fuckin move. Don’t make a sound. Be conscious of the wind: where’s it coming from. Be still. Watch. Listen” (242).

Out of the massively destructive war in Iraq, the play provides an anti-war message, delivered through a nuanced perspective that includes Iraqi characters who, unlike the Iraqi’s in the Oscar-winning film *Hurt Locker*, are not simply pawns in games of terror, such as Uday. Joseph’s characters are people with lives, relationships, and employment trying to make sense of the violence around them in their everyday existence – just trying to survive the horror of war, such as Masa. The play provides a counter in its difficult and historical intertexts to popular representations. As a critic for *USA Today* put it, this play “examines not just the brutality of war but its fundamental sources: lack of communication . . . clashing perspectives and desires” (Gardner 2), and serves as a “metaphor of barbarity and ruin” symbolized in the end by a stage that is “populated
almost entirely by ghosts” (Lahr 76). Furthermore, the tiger in the afterlife is cleverly imagined and represented to “register a darkening national mood” that did “observe, lament, and frighten.” I would argue against Lahr’s statement that the play did not “actually do much” (Lahr 76) and instead concur with Charles Isherwood’s review for the New York Times, which declares the play “smart, savagely funny and visionary.” One of the most thought provoking pieces in recent memory. Rajiv Joseph’s Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo returns us to the tropes of the hunt and the hunted, but used those tropes in the service of a thoroughgoing critique of the violent continuities within imperialist strategies of elimination.

V. The Tiger’s Wife – A Novel

From the war zone of Iraq to another war zone, the former Yugoslavia, and from one zoo to another zoo, I move to Téa Obreht’s The Tiger’s Wife, set in Croatia and published in 2011. That the main character’s grandfather (whose story is the basis of the title) carries around a copy of Rudyard Kipling’s The Jungle Book signals immediately that the text transposes colonial signifiers from India onto the ravished landscape of Croatia. As its title and references make clear, it is a book that makes the tiger a central icon for rupture and transformation. Appropriately, then, when an excerpt of the novel (Chapter 4) appeared in an issue of the New Yorker, it was accompanied by the graphic image below:

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Obreht claims to have been inspired by a National Geographic TV episode on Siberian tigers that portrayed the animal as “powerful yet delicate” (online interview).
The pictured tiger moves with pure, menacing predation, summoning up the image of a carnivorous world in which there is always a potential slippage: to “meet” a tiger in one of its many forms is potentially to become “meat.” The man-eating beast is defined by the skinned and torn prey, which hangs from its mouth. Its blood-stained paws are bigger in perspective than the outline of a human escaping with his life on a snowy landscape. As the New Yorker illustrator recognized, Obreht’s is a world in which humans are shadowed by “tigerness,” and the tiger can be seen as a terrifying force of destruction that stalks and hunts and springs out of a war torn land. By beginning and ending in a zoo, however, Obreht suggests how this menacing power is ultimately caged, contained, and
transformed in ways that reverse the roles of predator and captive; at the same time, however, what has left its massive print on the land is never effectively forgotten, and thus remain as wild and dangerous as ever.

Several tigers haunt the novel, establishing thematic lines, and a variety of intra and inter-texts. There are three zoo tigers. The first involves Nathalia’s childhood memory, when she accompanied her grandfather on regular visits to the zoo in the former Yugoslavia. The second is from her grandfather’s memory during WWII. This tiger was neglected and escaped to lead many lives, functioning as a sign of wartime chaos and as witness to the disruption and devastation of war; this tiger is a terrified fugitive who poses no real threat, yet terrifies those who encounter it. When it arrives in Galina, the grandfather’s village, this tiger is transformed, in the grandfather’s mind, into a companion creature. At the same time, he becomes an object of interspecies hostility, as expressed in the dialogue of the village gossip-mongers, who mate the tiger with the most disenfranchised person in the village, the abused wife of the local butcher Luka; she is the titular “tiger’s wife.” Lastly, there is a zoo tiger—a descendent of the Galina tiger—back in a zoo, caged and contained, consuming itself in a way that images contemporary Croatia. Besides the zoo tigers, there is an intertextual reference to another fictional tiger, Shere Khan from The Jungle Book, who is recast into a companion creature against Kipling’s menacing image. Obreht, directly and indirectly, links (and marries) these tiger tales to the characters in the novel: Nathalia, her grandfather, Luka, the “Tiger’s Wife,” and Darisa, a bear hunter. At given moments in the novel, she echoes and recasts tropes of fairy and folk tales, often reversing established roles through postmodern revisionary narratives. Obreht uses this series of tiger tales to comment on human movements.
(locations and diaspora) and social divisions (homophobia, misogyny and anti-Islamism) through a particular form (postmodern and postcolonial folk and fairy tales) as well.

The novel begins in the city zoo, where readers meet the main characters, Nathalia and her grandfather, who frequent the tiger “sanctuary,” where they commune and meditate on their lives and the conditions of the animals. Their ritual visits to the zoo become treasured memories, both signaling the closeness of their relationship and defining their relationship to tigers. Nathalia relates more viscerally to the tigers than to the other big cats in the zoo, such as the unhealthy panther with “ghost spots paling his oil-slick coat” and the “sleepy, bloated lion.” As she puts it, reverently:

tigers are awake and livid, bright with rancor. Stripe-lashed shoulders rolling, they flank one another up and down the narrow causeway of rock, and the smell of them is sour and warm and fills everything. It will stay with me the whole day, even after I have had my bath and gone to bed, and will return at random times: at school, at a friend’s birthday party, even years later, at the pathology lab, or on the drive home from Galina.

(4)

Nathalia’s admiring observation is followed by the telling of an incident in which a “friendly” gesture by the zookeeper, who foolishly reaches in to the tiger’s cage to “touch its flank,” quickly turns into “pandemonium” as “The tiger has the dustpan keeper’s arm the way a dog holds a large bone” (5). Onlookers rescue the zookeeper from the tiger by punching an “umbrella through the bars . . . over and over again into the tiger’s ribs” (5). The zookeeper escapes with minor injuries, but what is most telling is Nathalia’s
recollection that “My grandfather has not turned away. I am four years old, but he has not
turned me away either. I see it all, and, later, there is the fact that he wants me to have
seen” (6). This scene will echo the later questions in the book about the painfulness and
necessity of witness: does the act of witnessing aggressive violence carry with it a call to
corrective action, or is the act of reporting itself sufficient?

The grandfather’s visits to the zoo, occasions in which he re-members a chaotic
wartime story, are catalyzed by both Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* and traditional tiger
tales. He carries a textual companion in his “breast pocket: The Jungle Book” (3), which
was a gift from a learned apothecary in his village. As a boy he spent weeks “poring over
the brown volume with its soft pages. He read about the panther Bagheera, Baloo the
bear, the old wolf Akela. Inside the cover was the picture of a boy, thin and upright,
thrusting a stick of flame in to the face of an enormous square-headed cat” (105). But the
grandfather’s communion with the tigers has its source also in the story of the “Tiger’s
Wife,” a mysterious character who is never referred to by name (4). “I once knew a girl
who loved tigers so much she almost became one herself,” Grandfather tells Nathalia (4),
in an opening that resonates for her with fairy tales, such as “Beauty and the Beast.” In
retrospect, she sees that her “love of tigers comes directly” from her grandfather, who
offers “a fairy tale in which [she] can imagine herself—and will, for years and years” (4).
The tales of the tiger and the tiger’s wife emplot Nathalia’s life and what she resists,
discards, changes, accepts, or never fully understands of the is the core of her own
haunted journey.

Borrowing from the language of fairy and folklore to represent the tiger in the tale
of *The Tiger’s Wife*, Obreht extends the tradition of reworking the fairy tales, which
Cristina Bacchilega traces back into the nineteenth century (3). Like her grandfather, Nathalia recurrently associates the tiger with images from *The Jungle Book*, in which “Tiger was India, and lazy yellow afternoons; the sambar eyes wide, neck broken, twisting in the mangroves while Kipling’s jungle bent low to mark the killer’s back” (105). Nathalia notices as well a host of other tiger associations at the zoo, as she does in many other locations, such as at the taxidermy museum and in the pattern of her “grandmas knee-balm tin.” But mostly, the zoo tiger recalls “the tiger” that “was first sighted” locally “on the Galina ridge, above town, during a snowstorm at the end of December” (105). This tiger is married to the local butcher’s wife through village gossip as indicated by her nickname—the Tiger’s Wife.

Employing powerful references to mythmaking and legendmaking that are revealed in the course of the novel, the narrative is anchored by Nathalia’s journey, in the present as a young woman doctor, to transport vaccines to an orphanage in a remote village. This arduous journey recalls the history of places partitioned and plagued by

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69 Many contemporary works have “tiger” in their titles, such as Bharathi Mukherjee’s *The Tiger’s Daughter*, in which the tiger references the self-loathing South Asian diaspora protagonist’s father’s radical, anti-colonial, nationalist activities before he became an affluent business man in Calcutta, who sends his daughter to study at Radcliffe. In R.K. Narayan’s *A Tiger for Malgudi* an aging tiger “writes” his “memoir,” including early life in the jungle interrupted by hunters who capture and kill his mate and their litter, which triggers a rampage in the villages on the edge of the jungle. Poachers capture and send him to a zoo, where a vicious trainer forces him to perform in a circus act; the tiger escapes captivity by killing the trainer, goes on another rampage until he is again “captured,” and then serves as a companion to a monk with whom he spends the rest of his life in peace.

70 Taxidermy figures as a sign of preservation of glorious past moments or events through the figure in the novel of Darisa the bear hunter. Tiger Balm (my mother’s favorite headache remedy) is a product marketed widely across continents that was developed in the late nineteenth-century by a Chinese resident of Burma and is said to have contained tiger bone in the original recipe. It is still sold in a recognizable red tin with a picture of a tiger on the lid and has a distinctive scent.
communal strife and war, and the impact of such violence on the daily lives and the imaginations of those who live there. Humans and animals cross these artificial borders repeatedly, living what Homi Bhabha calls “border lives.” Like Paul Gilroy, Bhabha holds to “difficult” concepts in addressing the ambivalence and the uncanny of being out of home and out of place in the world, on the margins of different nations, in-between contending homelands. Such border dwelling, for Bhabha, requires a new “art of the present” (LOC 6). This process as John MacLeod notes, “depends upon embracing the contrary logic of the border and using it to rethink the dominant ways we represent history, identity and community. Borders are…thresholds, full of contradiction and ambivalence” that “both separate and join different places” and “are intermediate locations where one contemplates moving beyond a barrier” (217). The journey to transport vaccines thus represents the contradictions of Nathalia’s life and her memory, as her family’s history is not limited to the new borders of Croatia but extend to areas of the former Yugoslavia. Obreht/Nathalia/the tiger’s border crossings resemble processes Bhabha describes, in which “past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion no longer remain separated in binary opposites but commingle and conflict” (LOC 1). As much a consequence of physical migration and geopolitical borders, subjectivity here can be remade and remodeled through the processes of “articulation” and “elaboration.” The border, as an “in-between” space, suggests new possibilities for agency, and it “provides the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity” (1).

*The Tiger’s Wife* presents itself as a series of tales at various physical, historical, and psychic interstices, at once inspired, interconnected and inter-textually related to
European traditions of folk and fairy tales, Balkan and Slavic myth and legend, with echoes of Charles Perrault and the brothers Grimm, layered with and possibly filtered through their narrative treatment in postmodern fairy tales, such as Angela Carter’s “The Tiger’s Bride.” Carter’s revisionary fairy tale from *The Bloody Chamber* tells the story of a young girl exchanged as “payment” for her father’s gambling debt to a rich baron, who is in actuality a tiger. Carter inflects the story with feminist themes, as made clear in the bride’s status as property “bought and sold, passed from hand to hand” (Carter 63) and her rejection of it. Similarly, stories about the provenance of the “Tiger’s Wife” swirl around the village. In a passage that echoes Carter, Obreht writes: “She was the bastard child of a notorious gambler, some say, who was forced on Luka as payment for a tremendous debt, a shameful secret that followed him back from those years he spent in Turkey. According to others, he purchased her from a thief in Istanbul, a man who sold girls at the souk, where she had stood quietly among the spice sacks and pyramids of fruit until Luka found her” (212-213). These highly romanticized versions of how Luka “acquired” his “bride” are replaced with the villagers’ hostile suspicions, which have deadly consequences. Ultimately, however, all these stories are wisely commented upon by the village apothecary, who claims to have “learned...that when confounded by the extremes of life—whether good or bad—people would turn first to superstition to find meaning, to stitch together unconnected events in order to understand what was happening” (312).

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71 See the story of the “Deathless Man,” based on a Balkan myth of a man who cheats death but lives to regret it. The tiger’s invincibility is juxtaposed to the tale of the deathless man Gavran Gaile (179) who tried to jump off a cliff in Naples but found that “at the bottom there is no Death” (185). (Obreht, on an online interview at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkphCiGcr4).
Historically, European literature represents tigers as the antithesis of companion creatures, and we have seen this epitomized by the menacing figure of Shere Khan in *The Jungle Book*. *The Tiger’s Wife* references Kipling, whose masculinist views of tigers give “authority” to the narrative because it is set in India, the “homeland” of tigers. However, Obreht departs from Kipling strategically by introducing a parallel mythic tiger tale. Readers are led to “re-evaluate the present as another made-up story” (Bacchilega 20) through fairy tales that “speak” to present contexts and denaturalize patriarchal and other hegemonic regimes. Through the relationships of a deaf-mute thirteen year old Muslim girl (the Tiger’s Wife), Obreht draws attention to silencing social divisions, such as homophobia, misogyny, and anti-Islamism; she cautions that such events, once witnessed, cannot be “silenced” even by death.

Luka’s story also addresses the strains of being homosexual in a homophobic society. He is caught in a vicious cycle of domestic abuse that began with his “unlucky” birth order; he is forced into a brutal coming of age experience by his dominating and demented father, whose pathology is described as “a curse-inviting sin” (192). Luka escapes to the city temporarily to pursue dreams of being a musician. He is described as soft voiced, with a “mind too eased by quiet evenings playing his new gusla,” and as being “too eager to strip naked and bathe with other young men in the lake above the pasture” (194). Yet he remains closeted in a society that represses any discussion of homosexuality: “no one will accuse the other young men of his generation of being too eager to bathe with him” (194). There is no room to express homo-desire, and he ends up as “the man in the red apron who beat a deaf-mute bride” (195). Obreht thus troublingly
suggests that where homophobia is the norm, misogyny generally is as well, and further suggests that both exacerbate existing racial/religious tensions.  

Through courting Amina, Luka seems to disavow “his predilection for men” (213). Daughter of the rich merchant Hassan Effendi, Amina’s musical abilities inspire Luka, and her father’s wealth persuade him to propose marriage. However, Amina is more interested in a famed “physician” known to “cure” persistent and fatal diseases, so she feigns illness so her father will employ the physician, who “cures her.” Amina elopes with the physician, aided by her younger sister—a deaf-mute girl—the “Tiger’s Wife” (206). When Effendi realizes his daughter has eloped he insists that Luka marry the younger sister to save him from shame (206-207). Thereafter, we learn Effendi has lost his fortune to the physician. Luka’s dreams to pursue his musical ambition bankrolled by his father-in-law are thwarted, and he returns, broke and broken, to his village where he is greeted by his father, who says, “ Couldn’t you do better than some bitch of Mohammed?” Shortly thereafter, Luka catches Korcul fondling his wife, which enrages Luka who screams at his father, “She is a child! She’s a child, she’s a child!” To this Korcul callously says, “If you don’t start producing sons, I will” (209). Her first beating by Luka happens after he hears one of his compositions on the radio as the work of a monk he had sung with in the city (211). Thus, the story of Luka and his bride triangulate homosexuality, misogyny and anti-Islamism.

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72 It is troubling in the sense that, by linking these “behaviors” causally, Obreht feeds homophobic explanations that imply repressed sexuality produces aberrant and violent impulses, when in Luka’s case it is the cycle of abuse that he repeats. Such equations frequently trouble texts involving cannibalism, such as Silence of the Lambs, in which sexual confusion produces psychopathic behavior.
The historical connection with Islam through the Ottoman Empire is what the “tiger’s wife” is a constant reminder of to the villagers. Her presence reminds “them too much of the last war, their fathers’ fears, stories they’d heard of sons lost to the sultan” (213). Like the tiger, she is the Other in the village—earlier, Luka likens her “silent and begrudging” (211) demeanor to an animal—and soon becomes “associated” in the villagers’ minds with the tiger “[I]n the two days since the tiger was spotted in the village, there were whispers everywhere. *What had she been doing*, they were asking in doorways, *in the smokehouse with that tiger? And what did it mean*, they wanted to know, *that Luka couldn’t keep her in his bed?”* (213). Luka ties her up in the smokehouse and hopes that the tiger will “come in the night and rip her apart,” and thus “free” Luka from his marriage. But it is the ghost of Luka that we encounter next “wandering down the road in his nightgown, a white scarf tying his chin to the rest of his head so that the mouth will not fall open in death, his red butcher’s apron slung over his shoulder” (213). It would appear that the tiger’s wife is freed to hang Turkish silks on her walls (216) and Luka has “disappeared,” but that is explained by another historical fact that “the City” is under a “still new” German occupation (215-216).

As anxiety among the villagers builds, they use Luka’s “disappearance” to fuel their suspicion of the “foreigner” among them as evident in the following dialogue.

“The tiger’s wife?”

“I seen her coming down from that house again, alone as you please.”

“She’s driven him away, hasn’t she? Luka’s never coming back.”

“Driven him away, hasn’t she? Luka’s never coming back.”
“Driven him away! Imagine that. A man like Luka being driven away by a deaf-mute child. Our Luka? I seen Luka eat a ram’s head raw.”

“What then?”

“Well, that’s plain, isn’t it? That tiger’s got him. That tiger’s got him, and now she’s all alone, nobody bothering her, no one but the tiger.”

“I can’t say I’m all that sorry. Not all that sorry, not for Luka.”

“Well, I am. Don’t anyone deserve to be done that way.”

“What way?”

“Well, isn’t it obvious? Isn’t it plain? She’s made a pact with the tiger, hasn’t she? She probably done Luka herself, probably cut off his head in the night, left the body out for the tiger to eat.”

“That little thing? She’s barely bigger than a child.”

“I’m telling you, that’s what happened. That devil give her the strength to do it, and now she’s his wife.” (218)

The demonizing rhetoric of colonial/xenophobic/anti-Muslim thought evident in the conversation of the villagers is countered by Nathalia’s grandfather. He, even as a youth, has “a premonition that something inferior was going on in those conversations” (218). He also recognizes that “some part of the tiger was . . . Shere Khan . . . if Shere Khan was a butcher, this tiger had some butcher in him, too,” and that “he had always felt some compassion for Shere Khan to begin with, and this tiger—neither lame nor vengeful—did
not come into the village to kill men or cattle” (218). In the grandfather’s observation that “[T]he tiger saw the girl as she has seen him; without judgment, fear, foolishness, and somehow the two of them understood each other without exchanging a single sound” (220) lies the potential for anthropomorphizing that does not alienate or condemn.

The premonition and foreboding of what is to come are related to the repeated association of the tiger with “the devil” and once the Tiger’s Wife’s pregnancy is linked to an interspecies sexual encounter both she and the tiger are doomed. Violence is fueled by the villagers gossip that “[S]he’ll have a time with that baby and only a tiger for a husband. I tell you, it makes my skin crawl. They ought to run her out. She’ll be feeding our children to the tiger next” (221). In this novel the nineteenth and early twentieth-century discourse on tigers and tiger hunting is repeated and echoed, as in Satyajit Ray’s *Bengal Tiger Mystery* and Jim Corbett’s *Maneaters of Kumaon*, but, arguably, Obreht subverts the familiar narrative by using the story pedagogically to make the reader think about other options and “without fear and foolishness.” As Marina Warner in the introduction to *From Beast to Blonde* notes, “women—negotiate the strategies of gossip and silence within their specific historical and social contexts” (Warner xxiv), a specificity that in the case of this novel is embodied by the mute girl married to Luka and her alienation from the village women who gossip on the steps and inside the apothecary’s shop.

The gossiper’s tiger tale serves as a cover for brutality, molestation and abuse in “reality,” one in which the tiger, as a creature, has travelled textually into the imaginations of her grandfather and Nathalia as a hostile Shere Khan. Obreht has recast Shere Khan as a companion tiger to a victim of domestic abuse. Although the villagers
will not help the tiger’s wife, they are relieved when Luka disappears and acknowledge that “Luka was a batterer, and so he deserved what was coming to him” (191). This tiger changes from a companion creature (as narrated by the grandfather’s story) to grotesque and threatening (as told by the villagers) as a scapegoat for the villager’s complicity in denial of the battered girl’s victimization. The villagers remark on its shape-shifting qualities:

“That tiger. I seen him crossing the pasture by moonlight, big as a horse. Wild eyes in that tiger’s head, I’m telling you. Human eyes. Froze me right down to my feet.”

“What were you doing out so late?”

“That doesn’t matter. Point is, that tiger come all the way up to the door of Luka’s house, and then he get up and take off his skin. Leaves it out on the step and goes in to see his pregnant wife.” (225)

The last suggestion of shape-shifting from animal to human is the opposite of what happens in Carter’s story “The Tiger’s Bride,” where the tiger licks off the skin of the commodified human skin of the bride to reveal the beautiful fur that lies beneath. Part of the process of the bride morphing into the tiger (or the tiger morphing into human) is a growing awareness of the “animal” in humans. In Carter’s story the girl is erotically and magically transformed into a tiger at the end as the tiger licks her, and with “each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world” leaving “behind a nascent patina of shining hairs” (67). Shape shifting from human to tiger (in Carter’s story) and from tiger to human (in the classic tale of “Beauty and the
Beast”) is marvelously retold by Obreht through village gossip that has its roots in anti-Islamism about the Galina tiger shifting shape to human in cross species miscegenation.

In hunting tales the hunter figures as the tiger’s opponent; the presence of a tiger is accompanied by an anthropomorphizing rhetoric that represents the tiger as “devilish” and “evil,” and almost inevitably requires (and produces) a hunter. As if it were the colonial/modernizing “work of culture,” it appears that where tigers have been, hunters must be. Two hunters are mentioned in The Tiger’s Wife: one, a German commander in WWII, hunts (like a British colonial) the escaped zoo tiger reported to be roaming the city streets; the other, Darisa, is hired by the villagers to kill the Galina tiger. The first hunter spends three days unsuccessfully tracking and pursuing the tiger and then disappears from the novel. Darisa, the bearhunter, is a “lateral participant” to the story of the tiger, about whom many untrue stories are concocted (239). Tales of Darisa’s imagined hunting prowess also circulate; because he is not a villager, ambiguity surrounds his early life. In some versions “Darisa was raised by bears”; in others, “he only ate bears.” But the narrator’s favorite is one in which “Darisa’s tremendous success as a hunter was derived from his ability to actually turn into a bear—that he did not kill, as men killed, with gun or poison or knife, but with tooth and claw, with the savage tearing of flesh, great ursine teeth locked into the throat of his opponent, making a sound as loud as the breaking of a mountain” (239).

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73 Here I extend Paul Lyons’ rewriting of Freud’s famous maxim, “where id has been, ego will be; it is the work of culture,” as “where cannibalism has been, tourism will be” (24).

74 Linking to the fairy tale of Ursula who shapeshifts into a bear to escape her father’s incestuous proposal to marry her as a “replacement” for his dead wife.
In the postmodern re-telling of Darisa’s tale, Obreht underscores ongoing processes of conflict and colonialism, including its traumatic after-effects. Darisa becomes a taxidermist when his bankrupt architect father “hanged himself from one of the many bridges that spanned the Nile, far away in Egypt” that he had built (250). But this profession was short lived, as even the aristocracy could no longer afford this “frivolous pursuit” (253). He turns to hunting to procure the pelts of rare animals for “doctors and politicians . . . on market stands” for income that could be doubled “[i]f a rich idiot should happen to tag along” and “embellish in fireside stories” their “hunting” experience (253) like the yarns and tales of colonial hunting narratives discussed in Chapter II. Nevertheless, Darisa’s hunting prowess prompts the villagers to hire him to “rid” them of the tiger; in the eyes of the grandfather, Darisa is “a betrayer, a murderer, a killer of tigers, a knife-wielding, snare-setting instrument of death that would be directed at something sacred” (241). Darisa’s protectiveness for his sister (a fact from his childhood) is transferred to the Tiger’s Wife and he is said to have fallen in love with her (257), but that does not prevent rage at his impotent attempts at capturing the tiger; he attacks the Tiger’s Wife on a cold winter night, and only the grandfather prevents him from killing her. Later, when a man discovers Darisa’s body, a story develops that his heart has been eaten by the tiger (293), and the villagers come together to “drive her out” of the village (307) blaming the Tiger’s Wife for Darisa’s death. Obreht parallels the mythic folk tale of tiger and the bear hunter with a feminist realist narrative that moves beyond the work that Carter introduced and connects further with the critical writing on the function of cannibalism in fairy tales.
Obreht’s novel evokes Carter’s “The Tiger’s Bride” in its “gendered implications for women,” which are not necessarily or simply “liberatory” and may actually “reinforce norms” (Bacchilega 6-7). Even as the reader is made aware of issues of gender inequality and dependence on men, the characters adapted from “Beauty and the Beast” tales must transform into animals or be connected to the animal world in order to “escape” a patriarchal system where “women are commonly identified as being closer to nature than to culture, which … makes them [in that framework] symbolic of an inferior, intermediate order of being” (Bacchilega 9). However, Obreht uses the familiar patriarchal story-telling techniques strategically to disturb norms. To transpose Bacchilega’s reading of Carter, Obreht employs “storying” as an “essential component of our intellectual survival kit” and as a reminder that “we continually invent ourselves, because the stories we tell produce and find us in the past . . . enable us to live through the present’s uncertainties by projecting us in the future” (24). The layering of tales, then, has the capacity to recuperate more compelling narratives, producing an alternative, counter narrative. Thus, in Obreht’s novel, the tiger “appears” magically in unlikely locations and functions as a companion to humans caught in “unspeakable” situations—victims of abuse in the private sphere who are subjected to the horrors of war in the public sphere.

Like the Tiger in Baghdad, this tiger also wanders the streets of a city devastates by an earlier war, “where the remains of the merchants’ port and Jewish quarter spread in flattened piles of brick” and the “river was lit by fires” and “the smell rising off the bodies turned the tiger around . . . and into the ruined city” (94). War creates disruptions such that a tiger wandering the streets is not so much threatening as atavistic: “a joke, an
insanity, a religious hallucination” (94). He wanders landscapes in which fallen “lines of electric cable” comes to resemble “jungle creeper[s]” (94-95). This tiger assumes mythic proportions in its propensity to survive as “[H]e skirted human habitations” even if “the prospect of human noise terrified him” (96). Obreht presents a variety of tiger images from the vicious zoo encounter with the sweater to the weakened and damaged zoo escapee of this account. In *The Tiger’s Wife*, tigers thus come to symbolize both the personal and private, individual and collective trauma. They “appear” as surreal forms with the agency both to escape victimization and to “spring” critiques of war torn Croatia. They both “attack” and “escape,” emblazoning a world turned upside down by violence.

These dynamics are epitomized in a number of absurdist zoo scenes and in Chapter 4, “The Tiger,” in which Nathalia traces the story of the “tiger’s wife” to World War II (1941), and a time when the “German bombs falling on the city . . . did not stop for three days.” However, the tiger:

did not know that they were bombs. He did not know anything beyond the hiss and screech of the fighters passing overhead, missiles falling, the sound of bears bellowing in another part of the fortress, the sudden silence of birds. There was smoke and terrible warmth . . . and the tiger, frenzied, dry tongued, ran back and forth across the span of the rusted bars, lowing like an ox. He was alone and hungry, and that hunger, coupled with the thunderous noise of bombardment, had burned in him a kind of awareness of this own death, an imminent and innate knowledge he could neither dismiss nor succumb to. His water had dried up, and he rolled and rolled
in the stone bed of his trough, in the uneaten bones lying in the corner of the cage, making that long sad sound that tiger make. (93)

These conditions should have killed the tiger, but instead caused “some flickering of the blood” that “forced him to feet and through the gap in the wall.” In a parenthetical note we learn that the tiger was not alone in escaping the inhumane conditions of being trapped in a zoo of a war torn city and that “years later they would write about wolves running down the street, a polar bear standing in the river . . . flights of parrots” and a “zebra carcass” provided sustenance for “a prominent engineer and his family” for “an entire month” (94). Another war disrupts the grandfather’s weekly visits to the zoo where another tiger, son of the one that “attacked” the sweeper at the zoo (named Zbogom) is reported in the news as having “begun to eat his own legs” (278). Other conditions at the zoo not in the official story are reported by the narrator:

It said nothing about how the lioness aborted and the wolves turned and ate their cubs, one by one, while the cubs howled in agony and tried to run. It said nothing about the owls splitting open their unhatched eggs and pulling the runny red yolk, bird formed and nearly ready, out of the center; or about the prized Arctic fox, who disemboweled his mate and rolled around in her remains until his heart stopped under the lancing lights of the evening raids. (278)

We see the damage to so much of the social fabric—even the circus animals have escaped and elephants are running through the street. On the one hand, the wandering tiger bears witness to horrific and grotesque events. On the other, the still captive animals
in the zoo turn on each other or themselves. For Obreht, such “events” cannot be ignored or swept under a rug, as is often the case when national crises turn into private, painful, shameful matters.

Nor are the events of the war unconnected from a long history of interethnic strife. In a summarizing scene, the reader sees the apothecary’s life as, in a sense representative.75 He has lived through experiences with hajduk bands, Ottoman battalions, Mehmet Aga, Magyar bounty hunters. The narrator thus comments on the anxiety he would have “felt at the first appearance of Luka’s deaf-mute bride, a Mohammedan like him, or how the villages’ treatment of her must have reinforced his need to keep himself a secret, to keep them mesmerized and unsuspecting” (315). Religious affiliations and divisions have for ages had “deadly” consequences. The apothecary gets the grandfather to take a potion to the Tiger’s Wife claiming it’s for the baby, but she snarls at him with “her upper lip lifted and her teeth flashed out…she hissed at him with the ridge of her nose folded up against her eyes . . . mimicking a face that wasn’t human” (319-320). It becomes clear who was responsible for her pregnancy. The grandfather delivers the “clouded glass” from the apothecary to the tiger’s wife and holds her hand as she drinks from it; we are told “[I]t didn’t take very long after that” (321). The apothecary “had been the cause of her death” (324). For his “crime” the apothecary is executed publicly with the villagers brought “out to see the apothecary writhe on the rope like a gutted animal, the first of many pointless examples,” conducted by “youth . . . recruited by invading troops . . . and asked—not forced—to carry out the executions as they went from town to town” (322).

75 In an interview, Obreht claims to have modeled the apothecary on a Baltic and Slavic myth of a man who cheats death but then lives to regret the “endlessness” of life.
The “experience” of reading this novel represents what Homi Bhabha calls the “beyond,” which is an in-between site of transition that “is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past . . . we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (1). The space of the beyond is often described in terms that emphasize this transitory, in-between sense: such as “liminal,” (13) “interstitial” (9) or “hybrid.” The emphasis foregrounds crossing or shuttling between seemingly opposed states (geographically/physically/mentally). The grandfather loses his copy of *The Jungle Book* in a wager with the man who would not die leaving all those stories to be told and retold in an endless series of tales that are connected to each other as a way to understand ourselves, each other, and our environments—these are, after all, the stories in *The Tiger’s Wife*.

Bacchilega’s and Bhabha’s approaches enrich our reading of *The Tiger’s Wife*, by giving us tools to consider the cultural and political consequences of war and their relationship to displacement. The novel offers us ways to think of otherness in more complicated and nuanced ways where Nathalia’s relationship to her grandfather, her community, her profession, and her environment are constantly challenged and recreated in the process of survival. Part of this survival includes story-telling as a strategy that is “both affirmative and questioning” (Bacchilega 22) and imminently political by critiquing cultural biases of homophobia, misogyny and anti-Islamism.
VI. *The Hungry Tide* – A Novel in Conclusion

I conclude this last chapter with Ghosh’s text because it exemplifies the accrued, flexible, and durable meanings of the tiger that this dissertation has summoned up, as well as the ways in which the tiger’s materiality and iconic significances continue to haunt new, mobile, “post-colonial” images of South Asia and South Asians. Crucial scenes within a text-within-a text (a diary) in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* take place in “a part of the Sundarbans reserved for tiger conservation” (98), which had formerly been a site of a massacre of Bangladeshi refugees as well. In thus locating his text—within a traumatic and historically neglected site simultaneously related to conservation and human destruction—Ghosh connects tigers to movements within and outside “India,” and to complex interrogations of the dynamics of the term “conservation” itself. Ghosh invites the reader to draw comparisons among kinds of conservation, relating it to the survival of endangered beings, histories, cultures, traditions, and languages, especially in contexts where people move, and in a region seasonally flooded where the land itself might be seen as perpetually in flux. The background inundates the foreground and then recedes, like the hungry tides of history. In fact, the very “grounds” on which movements take place are explicitly at issue in the controlling metaphors of *Hungry Tide*. Divya Anand has succinctly described Ghosh as focusing on “water” as an “agent of change in the struggle between human and animals for survival,” that highlights “the plight of the dispossessed and threatened wildlife,” in the process functioning to “undermine the hegemonic social order” (23).
It is important to the work of this chapter to emphasize that Ghosh, in his genre-crossing project, writes self-consciously as an inheritor of a line of South Asian intellectuals, concerned with forms of survival, whose ability to draw on various narrative forms is part of the message. Educated as an anthropologist, Ghosh’s work runs the gamut from fictional novels, to historical accounts, travel writing, journalism, and essays, and to science fiction. Like Rabindranath Tagore and Satyajit Ray, he can be seen as at once engaged with some of the “same problems” as “Western writers” (modernity) and as deeply informed by indigenous perspectives and locations. All three writers work between the colonial and the traditional, appropriating western genres but focusing content on traditional practices—not so much comparatively, but as part of recognizing alternative ways of knowing, of adopting imaginative strategies of re-engaging history in emergent ways. These strategies are well-explored through Dipesh Chakrabarty’s postcolonial approaches and Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee’s environmental criticism.76

Like his precursors, Ghosh departs from western genres (uses them and creates an internal distance from them) to restore parity to native systems of knowledge, seen as themselves evolving. In an interview, Ghosh stresses that this is a fundamental quality of

76 Satyajit Ray’s fiction influences Ghosh in remarkable ways: both are concerned with questions of knowledge formation and strategies of control. At least a generation separates Tagore from Ray and Ray from Ghosh, but all three are Bengalis from India. Ray received his education, including a cosmopolitan outlook, primarily at Rabindranath Tagore’s educational institution, Shanti Niketan, whereas Ghosh is a contemporary cosmopolitan both in his education and experience: he travelled extensively as the child of diplomats, studied at Oxford, and now splits time between Goa in India and New York. Asked, "[W]hich Indian personality has impressed you the most and why?" Ghosh answered, "Satyajit Ray – he was an amazing man, not just as an artist but also as a human being" (Calcuttaweb.com). According to Ashis Nandy, although Ray is known outside India for his cinema, in India he is also popular for writing detective (Feluda stories, including the Bengal Tiger Mystery, discussed in Chapter II) and science (Professor Sanku) fiction (Nandy 249).
Bengali literature, which has deeply influenced him. In reading *The Hungry Tide*, the influence of Tagore on Ghosh is evident in the evocation of the folk narrative performance form of the *Jatra*, which has its origins in sixteenth century Bengal (Osnes, 164). Mukherjee describes *Jatra* as a “local, vernacular cultural” (121) form that includes a “huge communal gathering,” performed on an “open stage” and marked by “the anti-realist melodrama of the actors” (124) that always opens “with the climax of the story to grab the audience” (Osnes 164). This form has some dialogue but the focus is on song (Osnes 164). Tagore collected folk narratives, particularly songs, and was a strong advocate for indigenous knowledge. In his collection of essays *Religion of Man*, he speaks about the influence of Bauls on his own work, from which he freely appropriated, as follows: “I have expressed my love toward the Baul songs in many of my writings . . . I have fitted the tunes of the Bauls to many of my songs and in many other songs the tunes of the Bauls have consciously or unconsciously been mixed up with other musical modes and modifications . . . The tune as well as the message of the Bauls had at one time absorbed my mind as if they were its very element” (Tagore 110-111).

Like Ray, Ghosh adapts colloquialisms to create a humorous narrative style for his characters. The familiarity of casual language creates a space of writing in which western and traditional knowledge meet on different but equal grounds of reason, thought, and research. Writing in English, Ghosh introduces characters whose expressive styles rely on language knowledge, but do not necessarily require knowledge of the vernacular, while Ray wrote only in Bengali and his audience was Bengali readers. Ray’s

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77 A centuries-old syncretic (Hindu mysticism and Sufi) oral musical tradition of Bengal that in 2005 was registered with the UN Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.
stories were translated many years after they were first published and still circulate in smaller circles than Ghosh’s cosmopolitan readership. The Ghosh - Ray connection in particular opens up the possibilities of continuities within cultural communities that might otherwise be overlooked. Addressing such continuities among others supplements the strategy performed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak of reading Western writers next to non-Western contemporaries (a strategy discussed in Chapter II). Rather, reading affiliations among Tagore, Ray and Ghosh suggests the value of both juxtaposing colonial and colonized writers and reading South Asian writers next to each other in the process of turning their “departures” from “juxtaposition” to the creation of indigenous hybrid forms.

While Ghosh clearly draws from Ray, *The Hungry Tide* delves deeper into the complicated relationships of previously colonized places, such as South Asia, and the uncertain future of the environment, upon which all relationships are ultimately grounded. In thinking about this I find useful the work of Dipesh Chakrabarty, who claims that, “European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations, and provincializing Europe becomes the task of exploring this thought” (16). Chakrabarty's idea that "European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate," applies well to *The Hungry Tide*: Western thought is indispensable because postcolonial writers borrow literary forms and language from the colonizer and inadequate because it is too far removed from the vernacular of indigenous forms of knowledge that are central to their writing. To clarify the articulations with vernacular culture and history from the point of the view and perspective of the colonized as having agency involves what
Chakrabarty calls “provincialising Europe,” where the indigenous perspective is central in the narrative and Europe recedes out into the margins and where “other forms of knowledge and aesthetics, ones [colonial institutions] habitually dismissed as stunted, actually hold powerful counter-perspectives to their own” (Mukherjee 129). This shift away from Europe destabilizes the established order and centers the indigenous, vernacular culture, allowing expression of an agency that refuses to be silenced.

In this regard, the history of the Partition of India effects a separation of Europe and South Asia. The psychic trauma of division on sub-continental South Asians has been commented on by Ashis Nandy and Urvashi Batalia, who suggest that Partition figures pervasively in South Asian narratives, whether overtly (as in Partition narratives) or subliminally, in post-Partition narrative. The impact of Partition is evident in The Hungry Tide, particularly through the story of Nirmal. Ghosh intertwines characters in the novel with particular perspectives as influenced by different systems of knowledge. Nirmal is the idealistic would-be revolutionary builder of schools and hospitals for the needy, a refugee to India following the Partition of Bengal in 1947, who is dead and “lives” through his journal entries. Nilima (Nirmal’s wife) is the post-independent “sober realist” (Cottier, 130) whose views on tigers represent the “colonized mind.” Piya represents the much-assimilated diasporic, who is ecologically righteous. Kusum, Horen, and Fokir are the “native” non-Western educated people who live and work by and on the waters of the Sunderbans; finally, Kanai functions as the omniscient narrator of all that transpires between the characters, through his educated, upper-class, urban Kolkatta perspective.

The Hungry Tide is a novel in two parts, “The Ebb” and “The Flood,” and subtitled with the Romanized Bengali words for the English, Bhata and Jowar,
respectively. It starts with a map of the area in which the action takes place—the Ganges delta—that runs across Bengal in India and Bangladesh, although the action takes place mainly in Bengal. The protagonist Kanai (“Say it to rhyme with Hawaii” [11]) is at a “south Kolkata commuter train station, waiting for a train to Canning” (3) when he notices Piya, who “despite her silver ear stud and the tint of her skin . . . was not Indian, except by descent” (3)—a South Asian disaporic, who does not know Bengali (4). On the train journey to Canning, Piya manages to get a seat opposite Kanai, spills her chai on him and her apology from her leads to a conversation between them through which we learn that Kanai is a “translator” and “interpreter . . . by profession” (9), and Piya a cetologist from Seattle who is “hoping to wangle a permit to do a survey of the marine mammals of the Sunderbans” (10) to which Kanai responds with, “[R]eally? All we ever hear about is the tigers and the crocodiles” (10).

As soon as Kanai is comfortably seated he pulls out “a few sheets of paper in closely written Bengali script” and proceeds to “read” them—the translation it turns out is part of his uncle Nirmal’s writings. His aunt has asked him to read these writings, which describe the delta geographically first as “an immense archipelago...stretching for almost two hundred miles, from the Hooghly River in West Bengal to the shores of the Meghna in Bangladesh,” and then poetically as “[T]he islands are the trailing threads of India’s fabric, the ragged fringe of her sari, the achol that follows her, half wetted by the sea” (6). The novel is interspersed with these Bengali translations, of which there are

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78 Formerly Port Canning, after a Viceroy. The imperial government failed to understand the local environmental systems—in this case the periodic cyclones of Gangetic Bengal. Thus the city was destroyed in the great storms and floods of 1867. Henry Piddington, an amateur meteorologist, warned against the design of the Port. Mukherjee parallels the disastrous planning with the Marichjhapi massacre (123).
fifteen, that appear in italicized English. Kanai’s uncle, Nirmal’s writings began on “May 15, 1979. In a place called Morichjhapi” (98). As mentioned, this site was at once “reserved for tiger conservation” (98) and a place that thousands of refugees from Bangladesh occupied in 1978. “[M]ost of them were Dalits” (99), and the communist government of West Bengal, under the leadership of Jyoti Basu, claiming “Morichjhapi was a forest reserve,” forcibly evicted and relocated the refugees. In the process, the government massacred an untold number of people, including women and children; authorities later hid behind the fact that there were scant records on the pre-massacre numbers of residents of Morichjhapi, falsifying and suppressing the extent of “collateral damage” for decades. Twenty years later, in 1999, Ross Mallick’s research revealed details of the massacre, which Annu Jalais disseminated in an article in the Economic and Political Weekly (2005), which presented the victims of the massacre as pitted against “[T]igers, in whose name the massacre of Morichjhapi was committed” (Steinwand 111). Environmental critic, Ramachandra Guha, has called this false opposition of humans and animals “the paradox of global environmentalism” (qtd. Steinwand 194). Jonathan Steinwand reads this as an example of how “those who worry the most about the destruction of nature are those who are making the problem worse” (194). Global environmental concerns are often driven by broad general goals that ignore the local.

Thus, Ghosh draws on Mallick’s and Jalais’s research to re-represent the implications of the event fictionally. He shows how it pitted the existence of tigers in the

79 মরিচঝাঁপি, this is the Bengali text of the place, which is transliterated as Morichjhapi by Ghosh and as Marichjhapi by Mukherjee. I follow Ghosh’s transliteration, as it more closely represents the sound by a Bengali speaker, but use the other spelling when quoting directly from Mukherjee and/or others who may use the other form of transliteration.
wild against the rights of multiply disenfranchised tribal communities, who had been subjected to numerous acts of state sponsored violence before taking refuge in a formerly uninhabited place. In bringing these histories back into the public consciousness, Ghosh opposes the state’s initial and continued denial of culpability. He engages the complex relational hierarchy of human and non-human, best expressed by Annu Jalais’s report:

Many islanders explained to me that they and tigers had lived in a sort of idyllic relationship prior to the events of Morichjhapi. After Morichjhapi, they said, tigers had started preying on humans. This sudden development of their man-eating trait was believed to have been caused by two factors. One was the defiling of the Sunderban forest due to government violence, the second was because of the stress which had been put thereafter on the superiority of tigers in relation to the inhabitants of the Sunderbans. (Jalais 1758)

In the neocolonial and neoliberal climate of contemporary South Asia, particularly in the “Sunderbans . . . where decades of ‘conservation’ and ‘development’ work have produced a drastically impoverished environment where humans and non-humans must engage in deadly competition in order to survive” (Mukherjee 112), local people are stripped of rights, criminalized, or subject to arbitrary displacements as a bizarre outcome of global conservation efforts that do not understand or take into account those on the ground. As Graham Huggan argues, the “universalizing claims of environmentalism” tend to “neglect the specific historical, material, and political contexts of ecological concerns” (720). The refugees in Marichjhapi claim that they “had added to the island’s potential and value by building dams, establishing small-scale fisheries, carving out some
vegetable plots and farming land” (Mukherjee 110), a point which Nilima takes up in the novel, ironically echoing colonial hunters in her advocacy of the primacy of human rights over animal rights.

Ghosh juxtaposes the declining tiger and indo-gangetic dolphin populations for effect: Piya works to preservation the dolphin species, and by extension tigers, although the exigencies governing protective measures are markedly different. Through her research, Ghosh informs us of the rich scientific “laboratory” the colonies presented to nineteenth-century research. The Irrawady Dolphins, actually pilot whales or “orcaella brevirostris,” have become almost extinct in the estuary of the Ganges and Brahmaputra. In the Chapter “A Pilgrimage” (187), Ghosh surveys the Linnaen history of how the dolphin was classified in Calcutta by various British naturalists: William Roxburgh, who named the Gangetic dolphin as Platanista gangetica in 1801 (188); John Anderson, who “adopted an infant Gangetic dolphin” that he kept “in his bathtub” where “it lived for several weeks” (187); Edward Blythe, superintendent of the Botanical Gardens in Calcutta, whose timing in the field kept him from identifying the Irrawaddy dolphin. Finally, Henry Gray the “great British anatomist” (190) in London “examined several skeletons and handed down a definitive judgment: Orcaella was one species not two. It was true that there were coastal populations and riverine populations, and it was true also that the two did not mix. But anatomically there was no difference. In the Linnaean bestiary the animal’s name became Orcaella brevirostris (Gray, 1886)” (191).

Strangely, the obsessive imperial scientific research on Gangetic dolphins parallels the decimation of tigers in the same environment, which begins when Kanai decides to accompany Piya on her dolphin seeking voyage and asks:
What is this place we’re going to? Why is it called Garjontola?

Because of the garjon tree, which grows in great abundance there.

I’d thought that the name of the place came from the other meaning of the word garjon, “to roar.” So it’s not because of a tiger’s cry? (193)

This conversation is followed by a story told by Kusum to Kanai’s uncle about how her father was “saved” when caught in what is described as the eye of a storm (“he held on against the gale till suddenly the wind stopped and a silence fell. The waves were quieted, the tree stood straight again, but there was no moon and not a thing could be seen” by Bon Bibi “and her brother Shah Jongoli” (185). Bon Bibi appears to Nirmal in the form of a tiger (in the dark of the night he heard a garjon (roar); soon he caught the smell of the unnameable one) and advises him in a “dream” while unconscious not to be afraid. Nirmal is assured that “[T]his place you’ve come to, I value it as my own; if you’re good at heart, here you’ll never be alone.” Then she guides him out at low tide with her “messengers, my eyes and ears,” that appear accompanied by “a sound like a man blowing his nose . . . black skin disappearing into the water . . . a glimpse of a black triangular fin” (193-194). The triangular relationship—a goddess who is interchangeable with the form of a tiger, her messengers the river dolphins, and humans—is a strategic narrative move on Ghosh’s part to uncover precolonial stories that connect land, sea, and nature and that depicts an environmental indigenous epistemology in which humans are not always “at the top of the food chain.”

80 Bonbibi literally translates as sister (bon) wife (bibi) and Shah Jongli translates as Jungle King.
According to Sufia Uddin, the story of Bonbibi\textsuperscript{81} is an important part of the *Jaharnama*, which she explores in great detail in a chapter tellingly titled “Beyond National Borders and Religious Boundaries: Muslim and Hindu Veneration of Bonbibi,” and published in *Engaging South Asia Religions: Boundaries, Appropriations, and Resistances*. Uddin also notes that shrines to Bonbibi appear deep in the Sunderbans that represent her as “a beautiful woman, riding a tiger with a protective arm around a much smaller human male” (61), similar to the Hindu goddesses Durga and Lakshmi (65). She is venerated by both Hindus and Muslims, is said to “provide protection to honey collectors, wood cutters, and others whose livelihood is dependent on this forest” (61), and functions as a “protector” and “provides boons to those who recognize her power,” regardless of their particular religious affiliation. Her origins are in Mecca and she is of Arab origins (Uddin 69), but significantly, Uddin notes that “the *Jaharnama* is a uniquely Bengali story—more precisely a Sundarbans story” (70) and that “[T]he Bonbibi myth provides a story of the beginnings and establishment of community in the Sunderbans” (71).

Ghosh intertwines the lives of the characters with their beliefs and stories about tigers, beginning with this example from the *Jaharnama* and the myth of Bonbibi:

As he stood alone on the bank, trapped between river and forest, his eye caught a shimmer of black and gold—he was being stalked by a tiger, hidden in the greenery on the shore. The animal was none other than Dokkhin Rai in disguise, and the demon shook the earth with a roar as he

\textsuperscript{81} Uddin does not separate the name of Bonbibi into two words, unlike Ghosh who represents the name as two words Bon Bibi. I will use the form each writer uses when discussing their respective works.
started his charge. At the sight of that immense body and those vast jowls, flapping in the wind like sails, mortal terror seized Dukhey’s soul. Even as he was losing consciousness, he recalled his mother’s parting words and called out, “O Mother of Mercy, Bon Bibi, save me, come to my side!”

(87)

This character is spared by Bon Bibi, but another character is not so lucky: “[S]he heard the sounds of his bones cracking as the animal swiped a paw across his neck; she heard the rustle of the mangrove as the animal dragged the corpse into the forest” (91). Most importantly, Ghosh’s tiger references are informed by both indigenous perspectives and colonial ones. The relation between the perspectives is crucial for my analysis, which considers how and why they intersect or inform each other.

In the Chapter “Megha,” Ghosh juxtaposes the indigenous system with the more familiar one that duplicates the colonial hunting narratives, which is rife with anxiety, as emerges in a conversation between Kanai and his aunt, Nilima, when he tells her that he will accompany Piya on one of her longer research expeditions on the river and into the forest.

“So you’re heading into the jungle?”

“Kanai, I hope you’ve thought this over properly.”

“Yes, of course I have.”

“No, I don’t think you have, Kanai . . . And I don’t blame you. I know that for outsiders it’s hard to conceive of the dangers.”
“The tigers, you mean? Why would a tiger pick me when it could have a
tawny young morsel like Piya?”

“Kanai…this is not a joke. I know that in this day and age, in the twenty-
first century, it’s difficult for you to imagine yourself being attacked by a
tiger. The trouble is that over here it’s not in the least bit out of the
ordinary. It happens several times each week.”

“As often as that?”

“Yes. More . . . Look . . . I’ve been keeping unofficial records for years
based on word-of-mouth reports (my note – this is kind of how Corbett
and the professional big game hunters operated, too). My belief is that
over a hundred people are killed by tigers here each year . . . I’m talking
about the Indian part of the Sundarbans. If you include the Bangladesh
side, the figure is probably twice that. If you put the figures together, it
means that a human being is killed by a tiger every other day in the
Sundarbans – at the very least.”

“That’s the trouble . . . Nobody knows exactly how many killings there
are. None of the figures are reliable. None of the figures are reliable. But
of this I’m sure: there are many more deaths than the authorities admit.”

(198-199)

While the figure for the tiger “killings” are not “reliable,” they in a sense don’t matter, as
Nilima is pre-committed to the “threat” tigers pose. When Kanai proposes some reasons
to explain why tiger killings might be a “recent trend” caused by “overpopulation [of
humans], or encroachment of the habitat” (199), Nilima claims that tiger “attacks have been going on for centuries” (199), substantiating her statement by producing a colonial document with the figure “4,218 . . . the number of people who were killed by tigers in lower Bengal in a six-year period—between the years 1860 and 1866,” and taken from “figures compiled by J. Fayrer . . . the English naturalist who coined the phrase ‘Royal Bengal Tiger’” (199). Fayrer, not incidentally, published a book titled, The Royal Bengal Tiger, His Life and Death in 1875, and another on venomous snakes of India. Both books evince his predilection to see nature as hostile and in opposition to humans.

Nilima’s “research” describes “projects” (some hare-brained) designed to protect humans from tiger attacks, and she explains that “tide country tigers . . . were known to attack humans” for no apparent reason, other than that the animals were “crippled or . . . otherwise unable to hunt down any other kind of prey” (200). When a German naturalist connects a “shortage of fresh water in the Sundarbans” to the “the tigers’ preference for human flesh,” which prompts the Forest Department to build pools to “provide the tigers with fresh water,” an outraged Nilima exclaims, “They were providing water for tigers! In a place where nobody thinks twice about human beings going thirsty!”(200). Of all these methods of controlling tiger behavior, none has a long term impact—the tiger always outsmarts whatever the human rigs up. And so, even though Nilima has lived in tiger country, she concludes her conversation with Kanai with this fatalistic comment, “over fifty years and I’ve never seen a tiger . . . I’ve come to believe what people say in these parts: that if you see a tiger the chances are you won’t live to tell the tale” (201).

Followed by this gendered remark, “You are all the same, you men. Who can blame the
tigers when predators like you pass for human beings?” (202), that is intended to put him in his place and recognize his attraction to Piya.

In the chapter “Memory,” as a boat, steered by Horen, approaches Garjontola, he asks Kanai in transliterated Bengali “bhoi ta ter paisen?” Kanai asks back, “What do you mean, Horen? Why should I be afraid?” Horen advises him that “fear . . . protects you . . . it’s what keeps you alive. Without it the danger doubles.” Next Horen mumbles and gesticulates with his hands prompting Kanai to question Kusum for an explanation of Horen’s actions. She replies “[H]e is a bauley. He knows the mantras that shut the mouths of the big cats. He knows how to keep them from attacking us.” Kanai is not convinced that Horen can “shut the mouth of a tiger,” but the chanting “reassured” him (203). The purpose of the trip was to return to the shrine for Bon Bibi that Horen’s father had built after she “saved” him from “the tiger demon Dokkhin Rai” and to “place the images of Bon Bibi and Shah Jongoli” there, followed by a hybridized puja using “Arabic invocations” for Bon Bibi and Shah Jongoli that Horen says he had known “as long as I can remember. I heard my father reciting it, and I learned from him” (204). Thus, Ghosh’s extended reference to the legend of Bon Bibi, Samrat Laskar contends is in “direct contravention to the colonial practice of translating select Oriental texts that conform[ed] to their idea of the Orient.” By invoking this legend Ghosh “resuscitates the culture of the subaltern indigenes instead of exotizing it.”

The chapter “Killing” begins with a disturbance on land and in the village that breaks Kanai’s sleep on the boat and gets the attention of Horen and his grandson Fokir (with all three of them wondering “why so many people would bestir themselves so

82 Article is online at: http://www.museindia.com/regularcontent.asp?issid=35&id=2422
energetically at this time of night” [238] before Piya joins them). The commotion is caused by “prints . . . clearly marked as those of a kitten . . . only many times larger”—tiger pugmarks! Following the trail leads them to a “small mud-walled structure thatched roof” where “[M]ore than a hundred people,” mostly men had gathered “armed with sharpened bamboo poles,” which they used to plunge “into the hut again and again.” The crowd and their actions are horrifically rendered as: “Their faces contorted in such a way that they seemed to be in the grip of both extreme fear and uncontrollable rage. Many of the women and children in the crowd were shrieking, ‘Maar! Maar! Kill! Kill!’” (240).

The villagers response to the trapped tiger is explained this way, “[T]he tiger was not new to the village, it had killed two people there and had long been preying on its livestock.” Piya is mortified by the violent mob mentality of the villagers towards this magnificent and endangered animal and pleads, “We have to do something, Kanai. We can’t let this happen” (242), but Kanai refuses to intervene, resulting in this exchange:

Kanai spat into the dust. “Piya, you have to understand – that animal’s been preying on this village for years. It’s killed two people and any number of cows and goats.”

“This is an animal, Kanai,” Piya said. “You can’t take revenge on an animal.” (242)

Piya valiantly tries to intervene for the doomed tiger, but even Fokir picks up a bamboo pole and joins the attackers, whose spears are “stained with blood” with “black and gold fur stuck between the splinters” (242). The crowd’s hostility turns quickly towards her, requiring a quick exit and return to the boat, from where they “smelled the reek of
burning fur and flesh.” “Fokir says you shouldn’t be upset,” Kanai translates for Piya, who replies: “How can I not be upset? That’s the most horrifying thing I’ve ever seen – a tiger set on fire.” To which Fokir answers, “when a tiger comes into a human settlement, it’s because it wants to die” (244).

Arguments for the “killing” are reproduced in the following chapter, “Interrogations,” where Piya’s ecologically righteous viewpoint strangely separates her from Fokir, whose response is more complicated and informed by a mix of indigenous beliefs and practices tied to legends of Bon Bibi and Dokken Rai and alternating with colonial anxieties and fears that are not entirely unfounded or based on the real dangers and mutual hostilities and fears in the complex stories of encounters with tigers. As Kanai says, “[H]e’s a fisherman – he kills animals for a living,” but Kanai has absorbed Nilima’s argument and represents it this way:

It happens everyday that people are killed by tigers. How about that? If there were killings on that scale anywhere on earth it would be called a genocide, and yet here it goes unremarked: these killings are never reported, never written about in the papers. And the reason is just that these people are too poor to matter. We all know it, but we choose not to see it. Isn’t that a horror too – that we can feel the suffering of an animal, but not of human beings? (248)

Kanai’s argument sets up a false binary between disenfranchised populations and the environment. In fact, policies of aggression and violence towards people, as in the Morichjhapi massacre, or towards tigers, as reported in the news, require an awareness of
the stories that influence our ideas and strategies that support co-existence with respect for our natural differences—a healthy dose of fear to “shut the big cats mouth.”

Ghosh’s strategy to connect fiction to fact both in the political (uncle and the Morichjhapi massacre) and natural (dolphin and tigers) systems of knowledge breaks from the web of intertextuality, colonial and/or patriarchal, to open up possibilities for understanding and connecting to places and history in imaginative ways that widen and deepen our consciousness at many levels. The complex circularity of ideas in postcolonial places, particularly South Asia, has been the work of this dissertation. Here conflicts are often apparent and resolution seems always to be in the future and forthcoming. Evoking Derrida, such a state of deference is captured perfectly, poetically and optimistically in Ghosh’s comments on the geography of the location—the Sunderbans—and on the hopeful resilience of languages circulating across contemporary boundaries:

the mudbanks of the tide country are shaped not only by rivers of silt, but also by rivers of language: Bengali, English, Arabic, Hindi, Arakanese and who knows what else? Flowing into each other they create a proliferation of small worlds that hang suspended in the flow . . . a meeting not just of many rivers, but a circular roundabout people can use to pass in many directions—from country to country and even between faiths and religions. (Ghosh 247)

Such a list does not, of course, attempt to highlight the numerous dialects of all these major languages, which could add further dimensions to the subject, but it suggests the
possibility. And its implications of ebbs and flows and the movements of various aspects of “life” suggests the respect for organic processes written into the rhythms of land and history. As Mukherjee argues, “symbiotic continuities between the human and the non-human, the ‘natural’ and the ‘cultural’ . . . register of the historical process of the uneven development and penetration of capital” (133). Such historically produced inequality suggests the need for “explicitly environmental paradigm[s]” (114) predicated on “listening to the local values of relating to the extra-human world as expressed in the myths and songs may be the way (Steinwand 197). Fiction emerges as a space of recovery and restoration. In Ghosh’s eloquent words: “fiction . . . can help people inhabit a place—to inhabit it in the fullness of their minds, to inhabit it with their imaginations, to see the ways in which lives link together, the lives of animals, the lives of trees, the lives of human beings” (Author Talks interview with Amitav Ghosh).

Every text in this chapter shows that tiger tales are travel worthy and extend the discussion, brought up in the earlier chapters about the prevalence of anthropomorphic and anthropophagic views humans have of tigers. These views of tigers re-emerge and get expressed in songs, movies, novels, and plays to act as uncanny signs of disturbances or chaos in the “environment.” As the mutant Magneto asks Raven in the movie X-Men, “[H]ave you ever looked at a tiger and wanted to cover it up?” The impulse to uncover the links in tiger stories across time and place has driven this dissertation.
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