“[W]hat did the British Empire look like?” This is the question historian David Cannadine poses in his preface to *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*. From here, he proceeds to a fascinating study of the manner in which the Raj presented and visualized itself. However, despite the strong presence of the animal in some of the photographs and examples that Cannadine uses to make his arguments, his focus—that of the historiographer of men—remains human-centered. He thereby elides some of the strongest markers of the Raj: the tigers, elephants, boars, furs, and feathers that sometimes all but obscure the human beneath and behind them, and that were so important a part of creating and maintaining the hierarchies that were the cornerstones of colonialism.

But it is not just *Ornamentalism* that bypasses the conspicuous animal presence in the stories and visuals of British India. While there has been a range of perceptive studies analyzing colonial policy in India from Marxist, feminist, deconstructive, and postcolonial perspectives, surprisingly few of these have concentrated on the virtually inescapable figure of the Indian animal rendered invisible in plain sight. A recent interest in environmental and animal studies has begun to remedy this lack, notably with the publication of works written or edited by Richard Grove, Dhriti Lahiri-Choudhury, J. A. Mangan, Jopi Nyman, M. S. S. Pandian, Mahesh Rangarajan, Harriet
Reading the Animal in the Literature of the British Raj endeavors to answer these questions—including Cannadine’s—by taking into consideration the animal presence in those discourses and texts that were so successfully deployed in the creation of the spectacle that supported the British Raj, and that controlled its ideological base. In the process, I hope to uncover the ways in which the animal not only reflects various colonial manipulations, but is often in fact foundational to such political and rhetorical manoeuvres. I will discuss the production and circulation of animal narratives in imperial England and colonial India as a means of attending to the practices of knowing how constructs of animals play into, and are in turn influenced by, a variety of forms of othering taking place in England during its imperial venture. I read some of the different ways in which a variety of colonial animals were imagined during the period of the Raj in an attempt to understand both the reasons for, as well as the results of, such constructs.

Drawing on a range of literary and other textual forms—hunting narratives, short stories, novels, poetry, photographs, journals, paintings, and cartoons—this book examines imperialism as manifested during the Raj through a posthumanist critique. Using postcolonial deconstruction in conjunction with animal studies and an ecocritical perspective, I argue that categories such as race, class, gender, age, and species do not exist in isolation, but emerge in intimate relation to one another, as part of an intricate pattern of power dictating the way the world is formulated. In other words, the triumvirate of race, class, and gender should no longer be read in isolation from the categories of species and age if we are to have a fuller understanding of the writing and believing of colonial narratives. The basic premise that underlies my argument and choice of theoretical frameworks is that a systematic—and systemic—acceptance of the hierarchization of living beings undergirds the mind-set and worldview that work in a symbiotic relationship with a phenomenon such as imperialism. An investigation of hierarchies centered on constructs such as human/animal,