The Aesthetics of Authenticity
in the Illustrated World of Warwick Goble, c. 1912-1916

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ABSTRACT:

The imperial practice of collecting stories from the east and transforming them into illustrated books, primarily for circulation in western book markets, can be traced back to orientalist endeavours of the long nineteenth century. While M. Frere's *Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends current in Southern India* (1870), contained only two, small, black and white illustrations by an anonymous artist, eventually books started including several full-page colour illustrations. This publishing pattern favouring the inclusion and involvement of illustrations in the circulation of collected stories often brought contesting notions of authenticity in dialogue. The transformative individualism of *the artist as the illustrator*, at the turn of the twentieth century, expanded and problematized the premises of circulated narratives in intriguingly complex ways. My article critically examines the nature and consequences of such aesthetic reworking by attempting to unpack the semiotics of Warwick Goble's illustrations for collected Indian narratives.

RESUMO:

A prática imperial de recolher histórias do Oriente e transformá-las em livros ilustrados, principalmente para circulação nos mercados de livros ocidentais, remonta aos esforços orientalistas do "longo século XIX". Enquanto *Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends current in Southern India* (1870), de M. Frere, continha apenas duas ilustrações pequenas, a preto e branco, de um artista anónimo, a determinada altura os livros começaram a incluir várias ilustrações a cores de página

inteira. Este padrão editorial, favorecendo a inclusão e o envolvimento de ilustrações na circulação de histórias recolhidas, pôs frequentemente em diálogo noções de autenticidade contrastantes. O individualismo transformador do *artista enquanto ilustrador*, na viragem do século XX, expandiu e problematizou de formas intrigantemente complexas as premissas das narrativas em circulação. O meu artigo descreve criticamente a natureza e as consequências de tal reformulação estética, tentanto compreender a semiótica das ilustrações de Warwick Goble para recolhas de narrativas indianas.

When Walter Benjamin mourns the loss of artwork's aura following repeated reproduction in printed forms in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", he views art as an independent, unified whole. However, printed forms like special editions of books were artefacts which not only enabled the circulation of art, but also brought them in contact with texts and contexts. The coexistence of image and text can be fraught with complexities which affect the meaning-making process of the book as a visual material object. Several changes pertaining to the way books, particularly gift books and special editions were illustrated and generally perceived can be located at the turn of the twentieth century. However, as John Lewis points out, "it is fair comment to suggest that the twentieth century began in 1901, but the forces governing the design of the twentieth century book do not fit the calendar so conveniently" (1984, Preface). In the early twentieth century there was a perceptible desire for illustrations to be more than mere illustrations and for illustrators to be artists. Lewis draws our attention to the reintroduction of painters as illustrators in England. It is interesting to note the emergence of a group of trained artists with exclusive art school links around this time. In Britain, Warwick Goble, Heath Robinson, John Dickson Batten, John Lockwood Kipling all belong to this group. The idea of guilds of block makers without art school training was replaced by the individuality of the cosmopolitan illustrator who was identified primarily as an artist.

As illustrated books evolved and became more popular, so did the identity of the illustrator. For instance, this flyer accompanying the 1915 edition of *Stories from the Arabian Nights* published by Hodder and Stoughton (Fig. 1), advertises an exhibition of Edmund Dulac's "original water-colour drawings".[1]
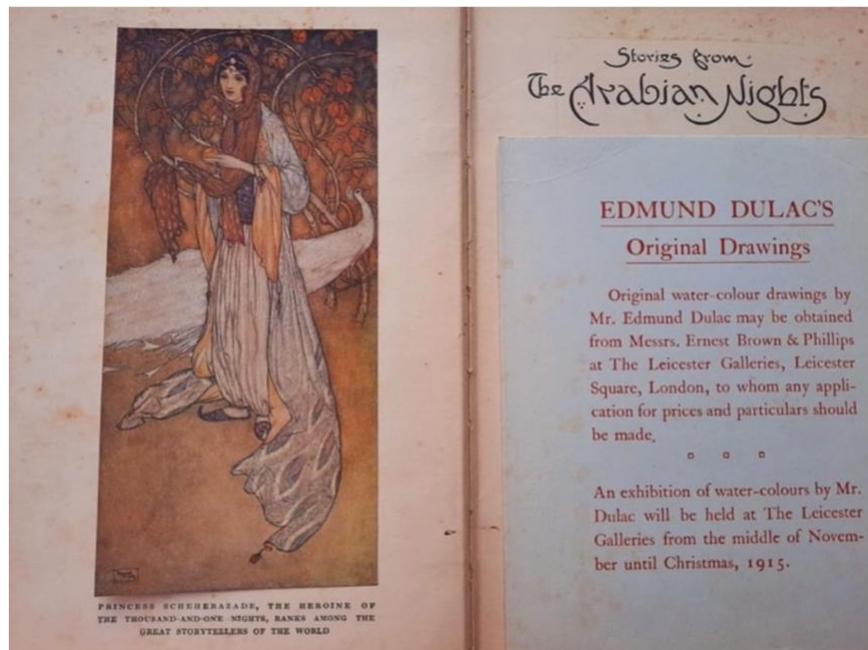

Fig. 1.

[1] From personal collection.

An exhibition of illustrations frees the image from text in a very direct way as the two are no longer bound, sown and stitched together. It reinstates the kind of autonomy sought by artist-illustrators even while struggling to provide an authoritative visualisation of the text. I contend that this newfound artistic individualism transformed the narratives that were in circulation, by expanding and problematising their content in multiple ways, within the confines of the book.

In the backdrop of imperial story collection and illustration, Warwick Goble emerges as an understudied but important name. Born on 22nd November 1862, in London, Warwick Goble was an illustrator and a contemporary of the more famous children's book illustrators Arthur Rackham and Edmund Dulac. In fact, Goble went to The City of London School, five years ahead of Rackham. In the early 1890s, he started his career by preparing half-tone illustrations for local monthlies and later, he was Macmillan's resident gift book illustrator. One source further points out that "Goble had become the designated artist for Asian story books" ("Warwick Goble"). Indeed, between 1912 and 1916, Warwick Goble produced illustrations for at least three collections of Indian stories: Macmillan's 1912 edition of Lal Behari Day's *Folk-Tales of Bengal*, Donald A. Mackenzie's *Indian Myth and Legend* (1913), published by the Gresham Publishing Company and Cornelia Sorabji's *Indian Tales of the Great Ones Among Men, Women, and Bird-people* (1916) published by Blackie and Son. My article will primarily engage with the visual semiotics of these three books, in an attempt to expose the complicated dialogue between image and text in illustrated collections of oriental tales. I will explore how these images-text interactions brought contesting ideas of authenticities or multiple authenticities together and the consequences of their encounter.

The word 'authenticity' despite being in popular usage, is deeply ambiguous and it is not my aim to exhaustively define it. Through my case study in this article, I intend to explore its application and functionality within the confines of selected texts. In existing scholarship, authenticity almost always denotes a larger field of associations — a schema, a language. In the work of Theodor Adorno (1973), it is referred to as "jargon", while more recently, Charles Taylor (2003) respectfully calls it a "culture". Adorno states the "fact that the words of the jargon [of authenticity] sound as if they said something higher than what they mean suggests the term 'aura'. It is hardly an accident that Benjamin introduced the term at the same moment when, according to his own theory, what he understood by "aura" became impossible to experience" (1973: 9).

By drawing this comparison with Benjamin's "aura" Adorno foreshadows how authenticity always points at something that cannot be adequately defined but has nonetheless come to signify a certain metaphorical value. Most scholars agree that authenticity is linked to the notion of identity or more correctly the system of recovery of an identity. In his incisive exploration of authenticity and culture, Charles Guignon points out that the notion of selfhood became deeply connected with authenticity in the nineteenth century (see Guignon, 2004: 65). The quest for recovering a unique individualism and being recognized for that transcended all social involvements. This system of identity recovery of the self as well as the other is deeply ingrained in orientalist endeavors popular at the time as well. Guignon further adds that "the modern idea of art and the concern with becoming authentic

grew up around the same time and are very intimately connected" (71). In illustrated books of oriental tales, two identities come in contact — the authentic representation of the artistic self and the authentic representation of the content.

The act of story collection, publication and consequent circulation was an essential consequence of colonial contact and imperial rule. Particularly, folklore collection is identified by Charles Morison as one of the three systems of imperial ethnography (quoted in Naithani, 2001: 184). James Clifford highlights that, "[i]n the West, however, collecting has long been a strategy for the deployment of a possessive self, culture, and authenticity. […] the self that must possess but cannot have it all learns to select, order, classify in hierarchies — to make 'good' collections" (1999: 60). Interestingly, Clifford links the idea of authenticity and possession which hints at the role of consumerism and market forces in the process of identity recovery. We may argue that producing illustrated editions of oriental stories became synonymous to producing 'good collections' and beyond simple collecting, the process of publishing came to represent a conscious act of curation and a subconscious act of creation. Creation, because often these collections with their illustrations visually signified a specific world which was separate from the world from which the stories were collected and the world to which it was delivered.

Susan Stewart writes:

> […] the collection represents the total aestheticization of use value. The collection is a form of art as play, a form involving the reframing of objects within a world of attention and manipulation of context. Like other forms of art, its function is not the restoration of context of origin but rather the creation of a new context, a context standing in a metaphorical, rather than a contiguous, relation to the world of everyday life […] While the earth and its redundancies are destroyed, the collection maintains its integrity and boundary. (1993: 152)

"Manipulation of context" and "aestheticization of use value" denotes what Foucault might have called subjugation of knowledge resulting from formal systemization which may implicitly or explicitly be viewed as demonstration of power (see Foucault, 1980: 81). To put it simply, person(s) responsible for curating and creating the identities signified in the illustrated book of collected tales wielded a certain kind of power. Against the background of colonization, story collection undeniably had overt and covert political intentions which contributed to the growing market for folktales from around the world in Europe in the nineteenth century. Beyond the stories themselves, it is the art accompanying them which can be in equal parts intriguing and problematic. Goble's illustrations by themselves are visually captivating, it is their incongruity with the text and ultimately the embedded element of world-building, which I find profoundly interesting. The creation of a new aesthetic context sustains the collection, but also comes into direct conflict with the narratives as they were expected to have existed within and beyond their place of origin. Although adaptation studies and dialogical approaches do not put much impetus on the idea of fidelity, it is somewhat unavoidable in the context of a postcolonial discourse. However, it is not my aim to emphasise a need for fidelity. I intend to study the images in their immediate textual context in the book, in an attempt to understand and decode the landscape of incongruity which highlights

contesting authenticities. Meyer Schapiro writes, "[i]f some illustrations of a text are extreme reductions of a complex narrative — a mere emblem of the story — others enlarge the text, adding details, figures, and a setting not given in the written source" (1983: 11). Goble's illustrations indeed "enlarge the text", but they also do so in a way which problematizes claims of authenticity that collected stories make.

Folktales are expected to be authoritative snippets of information which reflect cultural essence. According to Adorno, essence is a set of attributes necessary for the identification of an object and is deeply related to the idea of authenticity. Much like "aura" and "authenticity", "essence" is easier to identify than describe. For instance, Raghunath Goswami, while talking about Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar's classic 1907 Bengali book *Thakumar Jhuli*,[2] highlights the exceptional Bengaliness of its illustrations without explaining the parameters of said Bengaliness (see Goswami, 1989: 336). Authentic representation is linked to authoritative retelling by Stith Thompson. He writes,

> In contrast to the modern story writer's striving after originality of plot and treatment, the teller of a folktale is proud of his ability to hand on that which he had received. He usually desires to impress his readers or hearers with the fact that he is bringing to them something that has the stamp of good authority, that the tale was heard from some great storyteller or from some aged person who remembered it from old days. (Thompson, 1977: 4)

This kind of retelling echoes the idea of recovery of the old rather than creation of the new. The preface to *Folk-Tales of Bengal* emphasizes this. The collector claims, "I have reason to believe that the stories given in this book are a genuine sample of the old old stories told by old Bengali women from age to age through a hundred generations." The stories in *Folk-Tales of Bengal* were collected by Lal Behari Day, a Bengali journalist and Christian missionary, in compliance with his patron Richard Carnac Temple, British chief commissioner and author, to whom the book is also dedicated. It was first published in 1883. Day had toiled hard to collect the stories from different sources in an attempt to be authoritative. In the preface, he writes that as a child he used to listen to the stories told by a woman, whom he identifies as "Sambhu's mother", but having forgotten or mixed up most of the stories the project of producing a collection of stories meant finding a new source for such stories, as Sambhu's mother had passed away. This led him to look for new storytellers and his efforts eventually proved fruitful. The collection includes several variations of stories (for example "Shonar Kathi Rupor Kathi"[3] is alternately named "The Story of Rakshasas"[4] in Day's book) which would later be featured in Mitra Majumdar's book (mentioned earlier). It is important to note that the illustrated edition of *Folk-Tales of Bengal,* with art by Warwick Goble appeared much later, in 1912, almost twenty years after Day's demise.

The 1912 gift book edition of *Folk-Tales of Bengal* published by Macmillan had a gorgeous cover with gold embossed decorations, title and credits. It read: "Folk-Tales of Bengal illustrated by Warwick Goble". The omission of the name of the

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[2] Translates to *Granny's Sack of Stories.*
[3] Translates to "Golden Stick and Silver Stick".
[4] Plural of "Rakshas", a particular type of demon in Indian folklore.

collector on the cover exposes Macmillan's strategy of promoting the work of their resident gift book illustrator and alerts us further to the changing status of the illustrator in early twentieth century. A characteristic of the books produced during this time was the nature of their covers. Unlike contemporary publications, books from early twentieth century had no illustrated book covers. Structures like gilded lettering or ornamental designs or hard binding were unique signifiers of value. So if a book was a special edition or represented high value it was expected to have these markers. If the first edition of Lal Behari Day's book was born out of academic interest or ethnographic curiosity, the 1912 rendition most certainly foreshadowed a more complex purpose. It was no longer recovering a cultural identity, it was circulating a revisualized identity through print. Warwick Goble produced thirty-two colour plates for the book. The frontispiece (Fig. 2) is an illustration for the story "Phakir Chand"[5] which is the second story in the collection. The semi-nude, white-skinned figure in the foreground is *almost Indian but not quite*.[6] The armlet, the bejewelled waistband, the saree-like drape contributes to the Indianness of the figure while the colour does not.

Fig. 2.

The semi-nudity noted in the frontispiece eventually transforms to a state of complete undress in an illustration for the final story "The Bald Wife", making it somewhat unsuitable for its original audience (children), as mentioned in the preface. The other illustrations are similarly made using vibrant hues and great skill but the figures are not quite Indian. Similar white-skinned subjects decked in Indian clothing continue to appear throughout the course of the book. In an illustration for

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[5] A proper name.

[6] This is inspired by an expression that famously appears in an essay by Homi Bhabha. The original expression is "almost the same, but not quite". Here it has been somewhat modified to suit the need of my critique. For reference see Homi K. Bhabha (1994: 86).

the story "The Origin of Rubies" again, the setting is bursting with eastern tropes like an embroidered carpet, heavily embroidered drapes, ornate bowls and a tall hookah and has a similar white-skinned figure covered in jewels from head to toe. The long-tailed parrot perched on the left corner however is not enough to convince one of the Indianness of the scene because the central subject herself breaks the illusion by betraying her foreignness (Fig. 3). What Goble creates is essentially a new world inhabited by *Indianised* individuals. The bodies of Goble's subjects draw our attention through colour, attire (and the lack thereof), accessories, and betray the first hint of another world, a world different from the one that Day had promised to depict in the preface and we witness the collector's authority coming in contact with the illustrator's autonomous individualism. However, it would be wrong to assume that such individualism existed in isolation and was free from contemporary artistic and cultural influences. Strange mutations are stirred up with colour and ink. One can easily end the discussion by shoving this under the metaphorical oriental carpet and concluding that Goble let his imagination run wild and ended up creating a new race, mixing and splicing tropes from different cultures which resulted in these strange mutations on paper. Orientalist art has often been criticised for stereotypical depictions of the East, which are also reflected in Goble's illustrations, yet their complex and often incongruous relationship to the text opens up a world of enquiries. Not only is Goble creating a new race of individuals but he is creating them for a very specific visual world, or to put it simply, beyond manipulating the figures on the foreground, the illustrator crafts an unique world in the background. To understand this part of the equation we have to look closely at Goble's style.

Fig. 3.

Apart from a boom in the production of illustrated books in the late nineteenth century, the other event of considerable importance which affected Goble's career, along with that of several other British illustrators, was the growing popularity in Europe of Japanese woodcuts. For instance, Walter Crane's 1914 book on the study of art, *Line and Form*, takes up the topic of Japanese brushwork in the very first

chapter. Japanese art and artistic methods became fashionable in France and England in the 1870s and 1890s after drawing considerable attention at the International Exhibition of 1867 in Paris. Many of the Impressionists were strongly influenced by some aspects of Japanese art. The fact that Goble had embraced Japonisme becomes immediately clear through his artwork. The tradition of the 'floating world' (which refers to the composition of pictures where the subjects seem to be floating due to the lack of solid background), is strong in Goble's colour illustrations. Partial or complete omission of background was also a particular characteristic of scientific illustrations from around this time and embodied the central principle of objective exhibition in the scientific aesthetic of classification and the Linnean system. In the illustrations of *Folk-Tales of Bengal*, the backgrounds of all the images have been left in a diffusion of colour with only a few elements painted with great detail. This selective attention to detail in the background is also present in his illustrations for folktales from other parts of the world. A look at three other books of fairy/folk tales from different parts of the world strengthens my contention that Goble was indeed creating a new world. *Green Willow and Other Japanese Stories* (1910), *Stories from the Pentamerone* (1911), and *The Fairy Book* (1913) — all books illustrated by Goble in and around the time when he was illustrating stories from India exhibit similar treatment of background. The same diffused colour with no solid ground or walls (or selectively solid) giving the impression that the subjects are somewhat floating or suspended. Indeed, this subtly plays into the metaphor of "suspension of disbelief" which becomes somewhat necessary to completely appreciate Goble's in-between, liminal world, which is never fully situated in the east or the west.

Goble's illustrations build temporal and geographical connections in interesting ways. Different stories from different parts of the world exhibit shared strains of continuity. Firstly, all the illustrations seem to reflect the same time of the day, a twilight hour that does not cast a shadow. It was especially useful in removing unnecessary distractions caused by shadows in the foreground where the inhabitants of Goble's liminal world reign supreme. Secondly, elements of fashion, furniture and other material in the background seem to reflect a strange unity of time and space. The king and queen from *Folk-Tales of Bengal* (1912) and the princess from *The Fairy Book* (1913) sleep in similar canopied beds (a clear European influence), while the princes in both the scenarios are regally turbaned and wear similar attires (an Eastern influence [Fig. 4]).

Fig. 4.

In a startling moment, one stops to wonder — could it perhaps be the same prince, hopping from one adventure to another, from one illustration to another, across books, across boundaries? Further, the same kind of trees and plants appears in all the stories irrespective of geographical location. The same, bright, decorative low-growing flowers which bloom in the woods through which Little Red Riding Hood passes also bloom in the forests of distant Bengal (Fig. 5).[7] It is a landscape that continues uninterrupted from one book to the next, and onto the next, thus ironically bestowing visual continuity to the literature of different parts of the world. An intertextual reading of all these illustrated books makes it clear that Goble intended to create a unique world through the act of symbolic mutation.

Fig. 5.

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[7] Frontispiece from *The Fairy Book* and illustration for the story "The Boy with the Moon on his Forehead" from *Folk-Tales of Bengal.*

Thus the Bengal which Day chose to represent transforms radically when twenty years after his death an ambitious illustrator and artist takes up the paintbrush to build the vision of a different kind of world where eastern and western influences communicate with each other.

Indian Myth and Legend written by Donald A. Mackenzie was published in 1913 and comes second in the line of Goble's works on India. It is of course an ambitious project in itself because here the author claims to retell stories about the gods and goddesses of the Hindus from the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. It starts with the story of Indra and ends with the mission of Rama. This book however does not exclusively include the artwork of Warwick Goble but involves other artists. The illustrations in *Indian Myth and Legend* can be broadly divided in four groups viz., photographic images, art by Nanda Lal Bose, art by Surendra Nath Ganguly and art by Warwick Goble. The inclusion of two other Indian artists gives rise to the scope for comparison with the work of Warwick Goble and also results in a fractured fantasy conjured by multiple illustrations in multiple different styles. Goble's illustrations appear halfway through the book, in the story "Prelude to the Great War". The painting illustrating Shantanu's meeting with Ganga is the first of the many paintings of Hindu gods and goddesses which follow. Mackenzie sees the meeting of king Shantanu and goddess Ganga as the starting point of Mahabharata and in many senses it is. Ganga bears Shantanu a child who comes to be known as Bhishma and plays a crucial role in the final battle of Kurukshetra. The androgynous depiction of King Shantanu cannot escape one's attention. We only need to observe Raja Ravi Varma's famous painting of Shantanu and Ganga beside the one by Goble to notice how curiously unfamiliar Goble's Shantanu looks. Androgynous Hindu deities keep appearing through the rest of the book.

In "The Triumph of the Panadavas", the Arjuna that meets the river nymph is white-skinned, beardless and distinctively androgynous. He stands precariously balancing his weight on one hip as the nymph emerges out of water. A similar depiction of Rama appears later in the book where after several years of exile, he still manages to look like a young blue boy. Among all the representations, the one that intrigues me the most is that of Draupadi. In the *Mahabharata*, Draupadi, the daughter of King Drupad is depicted as essentially dark-skinned. One of her many names is 'Krishnaa' which refers to one who is dark skinned. In the illustration for "The ordeal of Queen Draupadi" (Fig. 6), we encounter a Draupadi that is not dark but white-skinned. At this point, one inevitably pauses to wonder if disbelief can be suspended when the facts of an established canon are challenged? In the preface, Donald E. Mackenzie states that the book is expected to provide "comparative evidence" of certain Aryan influences and the development of Hinduism. The comparative evidence is presented not only through text but expected to be supported by photographs and original art thereby highlighting the illustrative purpose of art over its creative aspect. However, the artist's individual style of representation yet again manipulates authenticity as it is promised by the text. Beyond identifying the illustrated book as a locus of interaction between multiple contesting authenticities,

I am deeply interested in unpacking what art really does, when it does not express a true depiction of text.
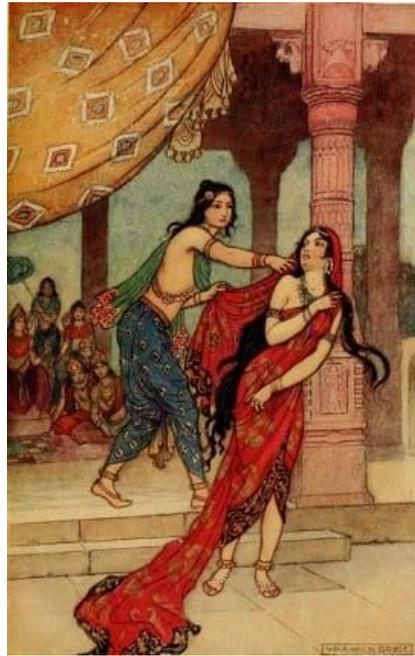

Fig. 6.

Moving on, finally we arrive at the tragic tale of Damayanti. Her story appears in the *Mahabharata*. She was the princess of the Vidarbha kingdom who married Prince Nala. She fell in love with Nala after hearing about his virtues from a swan. A different but equally interesting swan appears in Greek mythology. Zeus disguised as a swan seduces Leda who was the wife of Tyndareus, the King of Sparta. At first glance the two stories sound strikingly different. Yet, Warwick Goble's paintbrush manages to create an unheard of and unimaginable kinship between the two (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7.

Starting from the tone of the skin to the design and structure of the jewellery to the attire itself and even the surrounding vegetation, the paintings literally mirror each other. However, while one swan comes as a saviour, the other comes portending doom. The curious kinship between Leda and Damayanti further highlights Goble's aim to create a unique visual world with its own sense of aesthetics which does not always necessarily describe the text but expands and problematizes it.[8]

Indian Tales of the Great Ones among Men, Women and Bird-People is a compilation of stories by Cornelia Sorabji which was published in 1916 by Blackie and Son Ltd. The stories do not only concentrate on mythological themes or folktales, but also include stories of Indian heroes from real life like Razia Sultan and Babar. This book does not directly proclaim to be authentic (unlike the others which specifically mention it in the paratext). Further, it is dissimilar to the others in the sense that the artistic techniques used to render the illustrations here vary from those used in the previous books. In this volume of stories, colour makes a grand exit. Most of the illustrations are rendered in black and white. The only illustration that does appear in colour is the frontispiece depicting Naila, "the most beautiful of Rana Mal's daughters". The omission of colour in this book modifies the vision of another world created and sustained by Goble in other texts.

Interestingly, *Indian Tales of the Great Ones among Men, Women, and Bird-People* includes a story of Draupadi too, like *Indian Myth and Legend*. Here, the story is called "Draupadi and the Great Game" and it is supplemented by an illustration by Goble which is strikingly different from the one which we encountered before. There are two main differences from the previous representation. Primarily that without colour the depiction of Draupadi becomes more neutral and less west-influenced. This Draupadi, like the surrounding in which she stands, is not imbued with colour and therefore less affected by its problematic connotations (Fig. 8).

herself; so, "Ask again" he said.

"Ask", he said, "a boon, and it shall be granted"

" And for the freedom of his brothers with their weapons and chariots of war."

Fig. 8.

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[8] I have come across Goble's illustration of Leda in several websites but am yet to determine its bibliographical origin. This image has been accessed via the source under "Leda and the Swan" in Works Cited.

Further, her revised attire exempts her from the visual continuity expressed in the previous illustrations. The second figure (possibly that of Duryodhan) present in the illustration adheres to a more popular, and overused trope of masculinity with his broad shoulders and facial hair. I have previously examined how Goble's stylistic choices creates a new visual world in the background against which he places his characters, a backdrop constructed with diffused colour and selective details. The illusion of an aesthetic continuity is broken in this book and one is tempted to ask what is responsible for this visual fracture — inconsistency of style or the exemption of colour's expressive agency? Or perhaps, we can say that the exclusion of colour is a stylistic choice expressive of the artist's changeable self-expression. The inclusion and exclusion of colour truly changes the game. White Indians lose their pallor and get back their feet on a solid ground made less ambiguous by exclusion of diffused colouring. All the strange mutations created on paper are cancelled out. Therefore, colour plays a crucial role in changing our perception of Goble's art.

The importance of colour can hardly be understated even outside the confines of the book and in the discourse of colonial politics itself. For instance, the colour of skin or hair, colours in a national flag all immediately signify personal and political identities. In the context of these collected oriental narratives, it is important to acknowledge how colour functions as an active agent that ruptures text and enables the creation of a new visual premise. In several ways it becomes intimately associated with the illustrator's identity. The involvement of colour in these books signals a certain hierarchy which is much more complex than what is immediately apparent. For instance, every single colour plate by Warwick Goble in all the three books, bears the full signature of the illustrator whilst none of the black and white illustrations does (Fig. 9). They only record the initials.
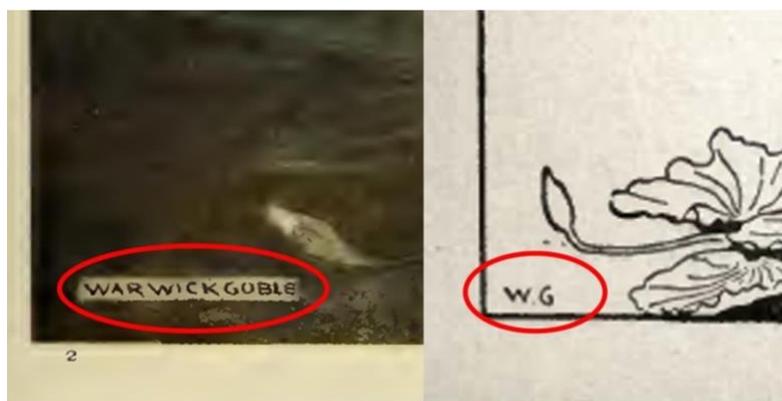

Fig. 9.

Additionally, colour plates are often recorded as "paintings" even when they are reproduced in black and white. In Indian Myth and Legend "Plates in colour" are listed before "Plates in monochrome". Interestingly, the latter include both photographs in grayscale as well as black and white reproductions of original colour paintings. Nandalal Bose's painting used as an illustration with permission from the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta, is one such example. On the other hand,

none of the photographs from real life mention the names of the photographers. For instance, one photograph is described as "From the Indra Temple, Ellora", rather than "From the photograph of [so and so] of the Indra Temple, Ellora". It would seem that all members of the network through which the book passed, including author, illustrator, publisher, reader et al had a shared knowledge about the greater hierarchical value of colour illustration. Colour demanded special treatment. In these books, for instance, the colour plates printed on special art paper and covered by protective sheaths, clearly demarcate themselves from the text in a very symbolic way. These physical boundaries both highlight and separate art from the text and often foreshadow an inevitable disruption in the meaning making process of the book as a visual whole.

In her book *Colour, Art and Empire: Visual Culture and the Nomadism of Representation*, Natasha Eaton, whilst talking about the "nomadism" of colour, describes it as something that is constantly in "flux", especially in the context of imperialistic representation, thereby assigning to it the status of an active agent (see Eaton, 2013: Introduction). Any artist or art historian will vouch for the moody disposition of colour or paint in general. The way colour appears, always has and will continue to look different depending on its environment of creation and display. Colour illustrations were possibly some of the most high-maintenance forms of illustrations in these books, and this explains why publishers almost always took the additional pain to print them on special art paper. In *Indian Myth and Legend*, the colour plates appear in the second half of the book, almost as some sort of symbolic reward for patiently glossing through the first half punctuated with colourless illustrations.[9]

Expectedly, the list of colour plates precedes the list of monochromatic plates at the start of the book. To extend my analysis of colour illustrations, I will examine a quote by John Berger. He writes, "oil paintings often depict things. Things which in reality are buyable. To have a thing painted and put on a canvas is not unlike buying it and putting it in your house. If you buy a painting, you buy also the look of the thing it represents" (Berger, 1972). Although Berger specifically speaks about oil colour, the metaphor may be extended to other media. If we say that when we buy a painting, we also buy the look of the thing that it represents, then what do these colour plates by Goble represent? What is being circulated here? If it is not the reality, what is it – this other world? The opacity of oil colour hints at something which can be touched, something which symbolises a sense of solidity. Alternately, transparency is an inherent quality of water colour which creates an illusion of fantastic liminality in Goble's work. The gap between the molecules of the watercolour pigment easily allows light to pass. It is interesting to note that the word illustration is derived from the Latin root "illustrare" which means "light up". How can we make sense of this world Goble is metaphorically illuminating?

Goble's individual style and treatment of subject revises and revisualizes circulating texts in complex ways. Speaking about artistic style, Susan Sontag writes that "artists with a style that is intricate, hermetic, demanding – not to speak of 'beautiful' – get their ration of unstinting praise. Still, it is clear that such style is

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[9] Hinted at by my supervisor, Professor Kiera Vaclavik, during one of our many riveting discussions.

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often felt to be a form of insincerity: evidence of the artist's intrusion upon his materials, which should be allowed to deliver themselves in a pure state" (2009: 16). The description of style as artistic intrusion reinstates how illustration can and often does modify text. Further, the framework of an illustrated book allows the illustrator to not only visualise a world of his own, but to build continuity and sustain that vision through a series of sequential images which are then repeatedly printed and circulated in conjunction with the text. Despite not being reliable visual aids to circulated narratives (as illustrations are sometimes expected to be), Gobles's creative output reflects his personal responses to a previously inaccessible eastern literature. Harnessing the elusive quality of water colour and joining it to his individual interpretation of different worlds and different people, he creates a liminal space that is neither fully occidental, nor fully oriental — a nation imagined by an illustrator who was also an artist.

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[10] I have read and accessed the primary sources listed below at various institutions in Calcutta and London including the National Library of India, the Central Library of Jadavpur University and the British Library. The images that have been included here have been taken from digital editions downloaded from the Internet Archive, unless otherwise specified.

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