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J. Jeffery Franklin

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J. Jeffery Franklin : The Lotus and the Lion Buddhism and the British Empire before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Lotus and the Lion Buddhism and the British Empire:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. In-depth review: how Victorian writers reacted to the discovery of BuddhismBy John L MurphyHow did writers in Victorian Britain react to the discovery of Buddhism, and how did that impact cause a "cultural counter-invasion" as concepts of karma, nirvana, reincarnation, non-theism, and compassion entered into British depictions of all this, in novels, Theosophy, and lives of the Buddha?J. Jeffrey Franklin's "The Lotus and the Lion" (2008) examines these topics in a straightforward and accessible fashion. He navigates through what for me have been conventionally eye-glazing subjects when Theosophy is concerned, and he adroitly shows how this theme took up the appearance if not the substance of scholarship, and how it tried to adapt an "esoteric Buddhism" more amenable to British tastes, which had been schooled by Christianity into preferring the Buddha to be seen as preaching a more proto-Protestant reform of castes and cults as if to advance a humanistic, merciful, yet just recompense for human failings. Franklin shows various methods of "textual appropriation" with a Buddha life by Richard Phillips contrasted with "The Light of Asia" by Sir Edwin Arnold, two adventures of H. Rider Haggard and two bestsellers of Marie Corelli, and finally after Theosophy the natural case study of Kipling's "Kim" how Victorians understood Buddhism. Some coupled it with social Darwinism and feared its power; others feared it as nihilistic and negative, deploying it as a scapegoat on which to lay the sins of materialism and capital within an

Empire that ignored Christian critics of these same depredations. Franklin imagines a map drawn by Theosophists eager to bring Oriental wisdom into a milieu where Spiritualism found a ready audience among Britons uneasy about the modernist debunking of faith: there, India would loom large. He explains the gradual role Buddhism came to play as by about mid-century its teachings began to be appreciated apart from Hinduism, and how its holy places and historical traces had begun to be found. Crediting Charles Allan's "The Search for the Buddha: The Men Who Discovered India's Lost Religion" (reviewed by me in 2009), Franklin agrees that this part of colonialism, on behalf of European scholars, may have appropriated its relics and statues, but that at least a civilizing mission on Britain's behalf advanced textual and cultural understandings of the Buddhist origins on their own terms. He triangulates what Victorians knew with what modern scholars and practitioners do, and he uses this as a corrective in turn for the distortions in the texts he studies from the later nineteenth century. He applies this structure most appealingly to study "Kim" as an exemplar of the dharma. He urges critics to read Kipling's novel as neither the facile reduction to a celebration of imperialism's Great Game or a post-colonial condemnation of its protagonist's complicity to support the Empire. Instead, as a Buddhist interpretation, he avoids a dichotomy and shows Kim O'Hara as embodying the Middle Way. Despite Kipling's inevitable bias, within an author who appears to have fallen far from the esteem lauded him a century ago, Franklin argues that Kipling realized with more insight than he has been granted by harsh contemporary critics the predicament of his character, caught between his Anglo-Irish parentage and his Indian, and in turn Muslim-Buddhist-and so on (Franklin charts five or six intersections with other identities and belief systems in the novel which Kim takes on or considers) allegiances. This portrayal steps aside from an either-or decision, and Kim acts out in Buddhist terms the refusal to define himself by imperialist, conquest-and-conflict oriented standards. Rather, Kim conquers his self by evading these binary distinctions. As the Lama teaches him, he subtly models what Franklin's afterword considers as it looks at nirvana in later Victorian and early twentieth-century British literature. That is, Buddhism offers a model of eschewing dualistic thinking, and in an interdependent manner, it critiques the ecological and economically devastating capitalism that elevates the pursuit of individual freedom regardless of collective harm and moral sustainability. This could have sparked another book in turn, and I hope that Victorianist literary critic Professor Franklin returns to this subject to track it into more contemporary evocations in our culture. The consideration of nirvana opens up an inviting vantage point from which to look at nihilism and existentialism, as well as philosophical and political pursuits in recent times, and it deserves more space than provided as a closing section here. Despite a few typos, this book conveys his thesis clearly and it can enrich any reader curious about this fresh topic, one of increasing relevance today. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Enthralling and surprising. By Customer A surprising theme that explains so much about Victorian England. Extremely well-written, and surprisingly moving. Highly recommended.

This analyzes responses to and constructions of Buddhism by popular novelists and poets, early scholars of religion, inventors of new religions, social theorists and philosophers, and a host of social and religious commentators. Examining the work of figures ranging from Rudyard Kipling and D.H. Lawrence to H.P. Blavatsky, Thomas Henry Huxley, and F. Max Muller.

About the Author J. Jeffery Franklin is Associate Professor of English at the University of Colorado Denver.