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SOMETHING OF HIMSELF:
TEXTUAL AND HISTORICAL REVISION IN RUDYARD KIPLING'S *KIM*

A THESIS

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TEXTUAL AND HISTORICAL REVISION IN RUDYARD KIPLING'S *KIM*

A THESIS
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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The thesis asks whether *Kim*, as a *fin de siècle* novel, helped to bridge the Victorian and Modern periods in British literature, and whether the novel, published at the midpoint of Kipling's career, stands as a marker of his literary development. This thesis contends that *Kim* holds significance as both a personal and a national narrative. Each chapter explores a specific aspect of *Kim*: the text itself, its author, and the historical milieu in which it was composed. My theoretical roots, as detailed in the opening chapter, are in the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and his concept of "novelness," or the warring centrifugal and centripetal forces that constantly work against each other but ultimately hold the text together. My interpretation of *Kim* identifies the theme of childhood as the centripetal force and the theme of empire as the centrifugal force. These opposing currents move Kipling forward in his literary life. As he puts the demons of his childhood definitively behind him and offers his final word on India, he uncovers a new thematic source of conflict in his now-complicated belief in the infallibility of the British Empire, a result of his experience in South Africa during the Boer War. Examination of these three intertwined bodies highlights *Kim*'s importance in the life of its author and in the canon of British literature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"A genius, whatever it be, is like a fire in the flint, only to be produced by collision with a proper subject."

—Samuel Johnson, *Rambler*, no. 25

While I would never presume to claim the title of “genius,” I employ this quotation to explain my thesis experience. I have felt the fire of potential within me, being stoked over the course of my studies by the encouragement of my mentor, Dr. Gladys S. Lewis. Under her tutelage, I “collided” with my proper subject: Rudyard Kipling.

I would like to thank each of the professors who graciously gave of his or her time and knowledge: Dr. Matthew Hollrah, who generously gifted me with his copy of Kipling’s collected works, and the members of my committee, Dr. J. David Macey, Jr. and Dr. Susan Spencer, who provided thoughtful, detailed critiques of the thesis in its revision stage. As for my dear *Lama*, Dr. Lewis, I will always be her devoted *chela*. I am so grateful to have traveled this Grand Trunk Road under her direction.

I must also thank my family: Dallas, Cory, and Jeffrey.

Finally, I must acknowledge the man with the mustache, Mr. Kipling: not a perfect man nor a perfect writer, but a fascinating subject for literary study. I echo his request in his inscription of Mrs. Edmonia Hill’s copy of *Plain Tales from the Hills* in addressing the readers of my words: “Would they were worthier. That’s too late—Cracked pictures stand no further stippling. Forgive the faults.”

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INTRODUCTION

Take up the White Man's burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild—
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

—Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man's Burden”
1899

The genesis of this work occurred in Dr. Gladys Lewis' “Nineteenth-Century British Novel” graduate seminar in fall 2006, my first semester in the University of Central Oklahoma's English graduate program. Each student was required to select one from a list of six novels to present to the class and to examine in depth in his or her final research paper.

Fortuitously, I chose *Kim*.

In reading the novel for that course, I focused on the text and its relationship to the works of perhaps the quintessential Victorian author, Charles Dickens, whose classic coming-of-age novels share much thematic material with *Kim*. Dickens is concerned with documenting the maturation of the British boy in England, while Kipling focuses on the journey to adulthood of the British boy in the Empire, specifically in the imperial colony of India. As I spent more time with the text, I found myself increasingly absorbed by more than just its narrative of a boy coming of age in an outpost of the British Empire.

Rudyard Kipling was a complex author, as his fluctuating reputation with the critics both of his own time and ours demonstrates, and *Kim* began to reveal itself as a multilayered work steeped in and entangled with the psyche of its author and the tumultuous period of British history in which it was written. I had to discover more, know more, read more, and write more about *Kim*. The opportunity to continue a relationship with this text for the remaining three semesters of my graduate studies was impossible to reject.

After a semester and a summer session of reading and research, Dr. Lewis and I formulated a three-chapter structure built around a proposed research question as to whether *Kim*, as a *fin de siècle* novel, bridges the Victorian and the Modern periods in British literature, and whether, as a

novel published at the midpoint of Kipling's career, it stands as a marker of his literary development. From the outset, then, the thesis was focused on analyzing *Kim* as both a personal and a national narrative.

Once I had completed the draft and reread my work analyzing the novel, I recognized that, while *Kim* signals changes both in Kipling's style and in the direction of the British Empire, my study lacked a specific, focused, and satisfactory explanation for such transformations. The thesis needed to evolve. Revisiting Charles Carrington's biography, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, and Thomas Pinney's edition of Kipling's letters from the years in which *Kim* was being written, I discovered what I believe to be the dual catalyst for the novel: the years of Kipling's childhood and young adulthood spent in India and the later years of his travels in South Africa during the time of the Boer War.

This war in South Africa had significant repercussions for Kipling—it is the thread that runs through *Kim*, always implicit, but highly influential—as this analysis will show. This approach is especially important in the field of Kipling studies, since many investigations into Kipling's poetry suggest that those works were direct responses to the Boer War. His short stories of the same period also show the war's influence, as critics have

documented, though I found no scholarship tying *Kim* to his South African experience.

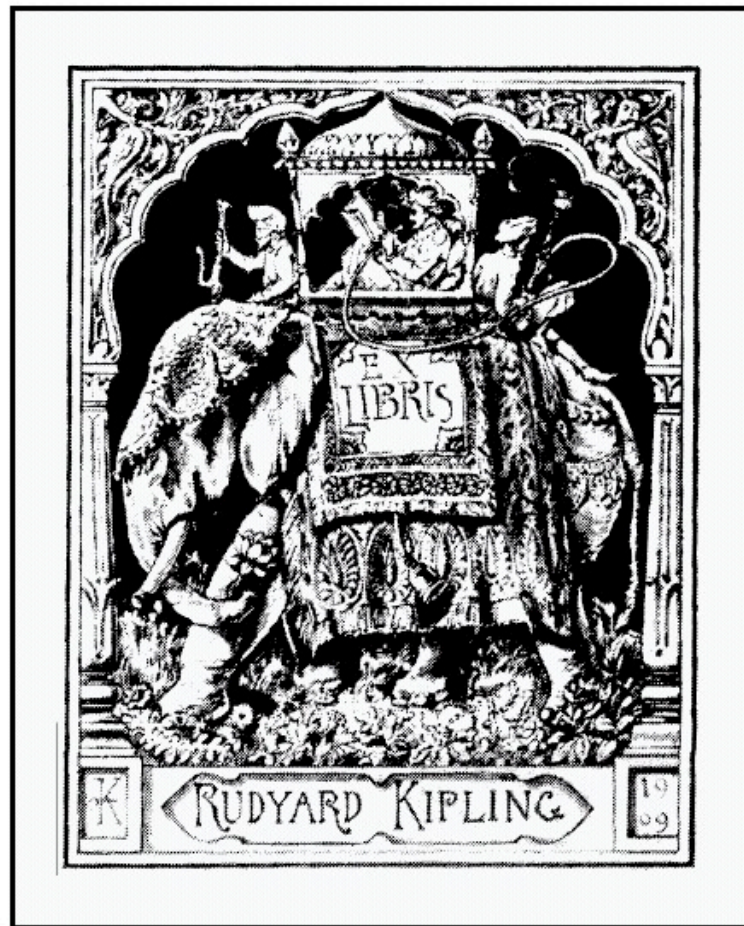
The thesis is composed of three chapters, each of which seeks to uncover critical nuances in *Kim* that affect our understanding of the text itself, its author, and the historical moment in which it was composed. My theoretical roots, as detailed in the opening chapter, are in the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and his concept of “novelness.” At the heart of this concept are duality and conflict, or as Bakhtin describes them, centrifugal and centripetal forces that constantly work against each other but ultimately hold the text together. My interpretation of *Kim* identifies the theme of childhood as the centripetal force and the theme of Empire as the centrifugal force; using these opposing forces, Kipling creates a powerful work infused with Bakhtin’s “novelness.”

The use of these forces means more for *Kim*, however, as they move Kipling forward in his literary life. He is able to put the demons of his childhood behind him, to complete “Mother Maturin,” a narrative that had troubled him creatively for years, and to offer his final word on India, the land that gave him so much personal pleasure and public success. Returning to the theme of duality, Kipling reveals a third conflict in *Kim*; his once rock-solid belief in the infallibility of the British Empire is now complicated.

Examination of these three intertwined subjects will highlight *Kim's* importance in the life of its author and in the canon of British literature.

Despite enduring the struggles typical of every thesis experience—amassing reams of research, finding and maintaining a critical direction, and producing lucid writing at a heretofore unthinkable length—I have found these fourteen months to be the most rewarding experience of my graduate career. After much more consultation and revision, I hope to shape this thesis into a document worthy of consideration for publication to a wider scholarly audience.

CHAPTER ONE



THE TEXT

“Kim O’ the ’Rishti”

The place to begin in any literary analysis is the text. In the case of Kipling’s *Kim*, however, the critic confronts multiple and contradictory texts. As Margaret Peller Feeley discovered in her study of *Kim*, “The *Kim* That Nobody Reads,” the manuscript version of *Kim*, entitled “Kim O’ the ’Rishti,” is a significantly different work from the published novel (266). Further complicating the textual history is the possibility that the “Kim O’ the ’Rishti” manuscript was itself but a revision of an even earlier Kipling work, “Mother Maturin,” which was never published and which Kipling ultimately destroyed. The critic must ask what the implications are of these revisions over the course of the novel’s composition. In this chapter, I will examine the most significant revisions in the creation of *Kim*, and I will

argue that the evolution of the novel can be analyzed using Bakhtin's theories of heteroglossia and intertextuality to reveal Kipling's desire to communicate a steadily shifting message.

Kipling was notoriously secretive about his writing process, a characteristic that emerges clearly in the pre-publication history of *Kim*. Some clarification may be in order; Kipling willingly shared his ideas about his works with colleagues, friends, and family, but he remained cryptic regarding his creative process. He identifies his inspiration in his autobiography, *Something of Myself*, only as his "Daemon" (122-23). Kipling takes almost no credit for the composition of *Kim*, describing himself as a vessel for the Daemon and the novel as "a thing imposed from without" rather than from within (132). This may very well have been Kipling's belief, but manuscript research by Feeley and Lisa Lewis shows that *Kim* was the result of sustained work over the course of many years, as well as of continued revision. Kipling did not compose *Kim* hurriedly or with great flashes of inspiration, and much of the novel is deeply personal and autobiographical, his declamatory statements to the contrary.

In addition to his habitual obscurity, scholars' studies of Kipling works have been confounded by the significant lack of drafts, which often were either destroyed as part of editing or were burned by his wife after his

death (Carrington v-vi). Kipling saved some of his manuscripts, however, and in the case of *Kim*, donated them to the British Library. The conditions he placed on the *Kim* manuscript, “Kim O’ the ’Rishti,” and others included a requirement that “no public announcement of the gift should be made until after his death” (Lewis). The manuscripts remained hidden, in a sense, until well after Kipling’s death in 1936; it was only after his daughter’s death in 1976 that Kipling’s copyrights were left to the National Trust, and two years more until the manuscripts were made available to scholars (Lewis).

Two scholars—Feely and Lewis—have attempted to trace *Kim* from its manuscript roots, believed to be in an 1892 short story, to its ultimate, serially published form in 1901. The first record of *Kim* appears in an 1892 letter from Kipling to Mrs. Dodge, the editor of *St. Nicholas Magazine*, for whom he was writing children’s stories:

Did you ever hear...of the small boy who got a blessing and a ghost-dagger from a Thibetan lama who came down from Thibet in search of a miraculous river that washed away all sin (The river that gushed out when the Bodhisat’s arrow struck the ground) and how these two went hunting for it together—the old old priest with his priestly tam o’shanter hat and the young English child... (qtd. in Feeley 267)

This is indeed Kim’s tale, but the story never materialized from this core idea. Instead, as Mrs. Kipling’s diary entries suggest, Kipling abandoned his rewriting *Kim* in mid-1893 to focus on *The Jungle Book*, *The Second Jungle*

Book, and *The Day's Work* stories; he subsequently took up and discarded the manuscript twice more, once for *Captains Courageous* and once for *Stalky & Co.* (Lewis).

In 1899, Kipling finally set to work in earnest on *Kim*, now that he was comfortably stationed at his Rottingdean home in Sussex and close to his father ("the Pater"), from whom he drew material and upon whom he relied for critical input (Lewis). Kipling brought with him to Sussex the manuscript for another aborted short story, "Mother Maturin" (Feeley 268). "Mother Maturin," drafted when Kipling was only in his twenties, contains some traces of the novel that would eventually become *Kim*. The manuscript is now lost, but the story, according to Kipling's friend Mrs. Edmonia Hill, centered around an Irish girl who was raised in India, sent to England for schooling, and returned to the subcontinent, mirroring Kipling's own childhood experience. Ultimately Kipling abandoned the manuscript, in part to finish *The Light that Failed* and in part because his father did not approve of its quality (Feeley 267). However, he did not destroy it immediately, as he did other manuscripts, and it arrived at Rottingdean with him fourteen years later.

Here Feeley makes "the following conjecture": that Kipling, eager finally to complete *Kim*, used passages from "Mother Maturin" to keep

forward momentum in the novel. The idiosyncratic, racist passages in the “Kim O’ the ’Rishti” manuscript that do not appear in *Kim*, Feeley argues, are from the much earlier work and not indicative of Kipling’s mature feelings about India and its people (Feeley 271).

Lewis, writing more than a decade after Feeley, takes issues with some of Feeley’s extrapolations. First, she challenges the “oversimplification” implicit in Feeley’s claim that the “Kim” manuscript was written in 1900 or 1899-1900, on the grounds that the bound materials in the manuscript are “six separate drafts of different sections of the novel, each paginated within itself, and a number of shorter or longer interpolated fragments” (Lewis). Lewis contends that the earliest draft section likely dates from 1896 and the latest from August 1900, when the manuscript was being finalized for serialization. She goes on to challenge Feeley’s belief that elements of “Mother Maturin” were incorporated into the manuscript, stating that the most racist material *does* appear on interpolated sheets outside the main manuscript draft sections but on paper dated 1897, which would make them far too late in the writing process to be borrowed from an original “Mother Maturin” draft.

Lewis also argues that there is no evidence of the existence of a “Mother Maturin” character named Kim. Taken together with the fact that

the interpolated sheets' content reflects work that Kipling did on the draft with his father, she asserts that these pages were likely written in 1898 and 1899 and were a part of the original "Kim O' the 'Rishti" story, not "Mother Maturin" (Lewis). Kipling himself suggested that *Kim* emerged in some degree from of "Mother Maturin": "I'm glad the book interested you. A good deal of Mother Maturin went into it but I am not sure if ever I continue his adventures that I shan't introduce the woman herself" (Kipling, *Letters* 3:87). Feeley and Lewis both mount convincing arguments, but scholars may never know for certain how the novel came together.

What is not in dispute, however, is the comprehensive revision Kipling undertook on *Kim*. Feeley's article, "The *Kim* That Nobody Reads," contains a detailed analysis of the hundreds of changes Kipling made in the drafting process. She argues that there are three main types of changes: "First, Kipling used many Indian words in the manuscript which he later pruned to suit his English and American readers. The second group of variants is stylistic...The third group of variants, the most significant, concerns characterization" (266). Feeley focuses on these characterization revisions and contends that they reveal a systematic effort on Kipling's part to "[transcend] his racism," and, ultimately, to advocate for the primacy of Eastern spiritual values over Western material ones (266). Several variants

in characterization that Feeley documents are essential to this chapter's Bakhtinian analysis.

Feeley uncovers an amazing amount of revision in the depiction of four characters: the British clergyman Bennett, the Irish priest Father Victor, the Lama, and Kim himself. The two British men of God fare poorly in the evolution from manuscript into the published novel. They are reduced, as Feeley explains, to a "functional core" of character. Kipling appears to have lost interest in fleshing them out as fully realized characters and instead crops their roles to an utter minimum, using them only to propel the story's forward movement (278-79). The most systematic revision focuses on the Lama, who develops from a patronizingly childlike figure frightened of the train, which he regards as a horrifying mechanical dragon, to a self-sufficient, more worldly man. As Feeley describes, "Some earlier sketches present Indian characters in their full humanity, but the Lama in the published *Kim* is an aesthetic and moral achievement: Kipling's first sustained portrait of a non-European as a dignified, capable, and highly learned person" (274). Kim, the titular character, also undergoes significant revision. In the manuscript, he is more explicitly British, struggling to maintain a native Indian appearance and clearly leaning towards the intrigue

of the “Great Game,” rather than the spirituality of the Lama’s quest (Feeley 272).

These revisions are of particular importance, not only as evidence of Kipling’s developing authorial style, but also as an example of how he cultivates what Bakhtin deems “novelness” and, correspondingly, how *Kim* evolves from an “epic” to a “novel.”

The “Novelness” of *Kim*

In these revisions of characterization, Kipling is engaged in a form of intertextuality, a phenomenon differently defined and employed by many theorists. Among these theorists is Bakhtin, whose interpretation of intertextuality will be used in this analysis. Bakhtin conceives of intertextuality as the set of relations among utterances, including literary texts, or the shaping of one text’s meaning by other texts. In his seminal essay, “Discourse and the Novel,” Bakhtin explains, “Every utterance participates in the ‘unitary language’ (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)” (272). Kipling does just this in *Kim*—integrating his text within the larger body, or dialogue, of nineteenth-century literature and allowing the literary dialogue of his time to influence

his text—but an intertextual dialogue also occurs between the “Kim O’ the ’Rishti” manuscript and the published version of *Kim*.

The reading of *Kim* as pro-India and pro-Indian may be challenging to readers who only conceive of Kipling as an arch-imperialist who urges England to shoulder the “white man’s burden” and to assimilate vast numbers of peoples into the system of Empire. *Kim* should not be compared solely to other works by Kipling that are more explicitly positive about imperial progress; a rewarding comparison is possible among the texts that represent stages of the novel’s development, and that comparison reveals Kipling as an author who attempts to overcome his ingrained prejudices and to create a literary work that transcends them. To understand this effort on Kipling’s part leads to a more representative and balanced portrait of him.

Kipling engages in intertextuality with *Kim* and his larger cultural moment, since, as Bakhtin theorized, texts are inextricably rooted in their social and historical moments (Holquist 69). As Bakhtin himself notes, however, “The dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of *any* discourse” (279). *Kim* is not unique in this way. *Kim* is significant, however, because it exceeds the dialogic bounds of intertextuality. *Kim* does not simply engage in an internal dialogue with itself or in a dialogue with its historical moment; it engages in a dialogization

that “penetrates from within the very way in which the word conceives its object and its means for expressing itself, reformulating the semantics and syntactical structure of discourse” (284). The object being reformulated in *Kim* is the concept of Empire, and both Kipling’s process of revision and his final text reveal a desire to communicate to readers a much more complex, nuanced commentary on the state of imperial relations.

Kim thus is concerned with balance. In the published version of the novel, Kipling is no longer firmly on the side of the British Empire; by conscientiously and systematically altering both British and Indian characters, he creates a novel of thematic dichotomies. Here Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia is helpful; within *Kim*, Kipling sets up a battle between pairs of ideas, which I identify as heteroglossia or a dialogue between voices within the work. Again, heteroglossia is not a feature unique to *Kim*; its importance arises because of the way heteroglossia moves the novel from a Bakhtinian “epic” to a more fully fleshed out and dialogically significant “novel.”

This principal thematic concern of *Kim* impacts all other themes, and it occurs in four distinct arguments. In each case, the character Kim stands as the focal point and either must choose between two options or build a bridge between them. First, Kim must decide whether to identify as British

or Indian and whether to serve the interests of the Empire or of his adopted homeland; second, he must select his spiritual affiliation by following either the Lama's "Wheel of Life" as a *chela* or the "Great Game" as Sahib; and third, he must move from the state of childhood to that of responsible, dutiful adulthood. Finally, Kipling himself must attempt to strike a balance between his memory of the India of his youth and the reality of the India, and the Empire at large, of his maturity.

The most obvious conflict arises between nationalities: British and Indian. It is true that at this point in the country's history, with the fall of the Mogul Empire, the rise of decentralized power in the Empire's provinces, and the rigid caste system, a coherent sense of Indian nationality did not exist. Kipling himself acknowledges as much in a letter dated from November 1885 to Margaret Burne-Jones:

When you write "native" who do you mean? The Mahommedan who hates the Hindu; the Hindu who hates the Mahommedan; the Sikh who loathes both; or the semi-anglicized product of our Indian colleges who is hated and despised by Sikh, Hindu, and Mahommedan. Do you mean the Punjabi who will have nothing to do with the Bengali; the Mahratta to whom the Punjabi's tongue is incomprehensible as Russian to me; the Parsee who controls the whole trade of Bombay and ranges himself on all questions as an Englishman; the Sindee who is an outsider; the Bhil or the Gond who is an aborigine; the Rajput who despises everything on God's earth but himself; the Delhi traders who control trade to the value of millions; the Afghan who is only kept from looting these same merchants by dread of English interference. Which one of all

the thousand conflicting tongues, races, nationalities and peoples between the Khaibar Pass and Ceylon do you mean? There is no such thing as the natives of India, any more than there is the “People of India” as our friends the Indian delegates would have you believe. (Kipling, *Letters* 1:97-98)

The collection of cultures, religions, and castes, however, were all subjects of the British Empire, and they were considered by many British to represent a united Other, which helped foster a burgeoning sense of shared identity, despite the complexities and contradictions that abounded in the actual composition and administration of imperial India. Postcolonial critic and Indian citizen Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak agrees, saying,

I don't write a great deal about “India,” but I am very happy that it's placed within quotation marks here. “India,” for people like me, is not really a place with which they can form a national identity because it has always been an artificial construct...it isn't a place that we Indians can think of as anything, unless we are trying to present a reactive front, against another kind of argument. (Spivak, *Post-Colonial* 38)

Her perception of India highlights how this association of necessity or “strategic essentialism,” the term made famous in Spivak's critical work, exists in some form still today.

Kim is representative of the struggle between British and Indian and must choose which “side” to be on. Rather than succumbing to this dichotomous state of mind, Kim chooses to cross the border between the two nationalities, creating a fluid identity that he shifts depending on the

circumstance. This is apparent from the beginning of the novel, where British-by-birth Kim adopts an Indian persona, sitting on the Zam-Zammah gun “in defiance of municipal orders,” speaking “the vernacular by preference,” and looking “burned black as any native.” Yet on the same page, Kim justifies his superior position on the gun to his native friends because “the English held the Punjab and [he] was English” (1).¹ Identifying Kim is difficult, because in every guise, he appears to be donning a persona rather than living a unified, real identity. Even his time at the regimental school is characterized as a performance, with his British uniform as costume. Because of this uncertainty, the entirety of the novel can be read as an acting out of Kim’s decision-making process; pulled between cultures, which will he ultimately choose as his dominant character?

The second dispute is interwoven with the British/Indian question and centers around the “Great Game.” During the nineteenth century, two dominant Empire builders—Britain and Russia—turned their eyes to Central Asia and the “crown jewel” of India, in particular. The British won in India, incorporating it into their ever-expanding Empire, but the Russians were not hesitant to encroach on India. The “Great Game” or “Tournament of Shadows” arose from this delicate power struggle, and a cadre of

¹ This and all other quotations from *Kim* refer to the Oxford World Classics edition, edited by Alan Sandison.

diplomats, spies, and double agents sprang up to protect the interests of each side. Peter Scupham notes the prominence of this adventuring element and the romanticizing of political maneuverings in the novel and argues that, “Kipling gave it a particular currency in *Kim*” (179). The novel is steeped in intrigue, but despite its obsession with politics and international maneuvering, intrigue is not as integral to the plot as some critics would have readers believe. Kim, from the outset, is taken with the spiritual world of the Lama. Even though he becomes caught up in the worldly life of the British secret service, Kim never forgets his place in the “Wheel of Life” as the Lama’s *chela*.

To emphasize Kim’s choice between the two options, Kipling revised the manuscript in an effort to muddy the original narrative path. “Kim O’ the ’Rishti” shows Kim clearly electing the path of the British and the Game, but Kipling’s reshaping leaves the Kim of the novel more palpably undecided as to his future. Whether this alteration can be read as Kipling’s dismissal of the “Great Game” or merely as a result of his desire for more ambiguity in the text is arguable. In the end, the rift is unresolved, with Kim still oscillating between options. I believe Kipling’s revision is an acknowledgement of doubt about the continuing viability of the Empire. Kim’s hesitance fully to embrace the British path set before him is a clear

signal that the policies of Empire may not be as attractive to Kipling as they once were.

Kipling ties Kim's choice of allies to his passage into manhood. The novel leads us from childhood to maturity, and throughout the tale, Kim is forced to learn hard lessons and is tested in order to become a solid, experienced member of society, whether in India or in England. The transition is not an easy one. Much as he battles between the Indian and British aspects of his identity, Kim must shift between an emotionally young and an emotionally mature persona. For example, Kim must take on an adult nature befitting his adult responsibility to carry out Mahbub Ali's covert operation (Kipling, *Kim* 18), but he quickly retreats to what I would characterize as a childlike nature, wailing and crying when trying to avoid being thrown off the train (30). Kim is feigning agitation in this scene, but he is clearly aware of the behavior expected of him in certain situations, of his potential to perform those roles, and of the circumstances appropriate to each persona.

Kim ends with little—perhaps no—resolution. Kim ages, but the reader's final picture of him is uncertain. He is at a precarious point between childhood and adulthood, and his choice of a direction in life is unclear. Which forces most influenced him in childhood, and which are most likely to

affect him in his adulthood? Kipling's continued emphasis on balance and choice may reflect the larger forces at play in Victorian culture, society, and history, forces that would encourage the British to look beyond their island borders toward the outposts of their Empire, where, at the end of the nineteenth century, the storied *Pax Britannia* was beginning to founder.

The final question concerns Kipling's memory of India, as distinct from the realities of life under the Empire. Kipling's experience of India in the short span of six years—between 1882 and 1889—occurred at the height of the Empire's power, when Britain's total occupied territory swelled to approximately four million square miles (Scupham 179). This is important to note, because, as David Seed explains, Kipling was “born of India but of the ruling elite,” and “we might expect [his] Indian fiction to register racial tensions acutely, but, in fact, *Kim* plays down such issues and presents an idyllic view of the subcontinent” (270-71). As he reveals in his autobiography, Kipling was more enamored with extolling the physical beauty of India than with probing its troubled social and political reality. He recalls that his “first impression [was] of daybreak, light and colour and golden and purple fruits at the level of my shoulder” (Kipling, *Something* 3), and he was enveloped by “the voices of night-winds through palm or banana leaves, and the singing of the tree-frogs” (3). *Kim*, in this respect, is a

projection of Kipling's nostalgia for India, and this results in a schizophrenic picture that attempts to mesh the idealized country of the author's youth and the discordant country of the author's adulthood, when the Indian National Congress was formed and began to agitate against British imperial rule and for Indian independence.

What is the significance of these teaming conflicts that occupy the text of *Kim*—conflicts between nationalities, between ages, and between the romanticized memory of India in the 1860s and the actuality of India in the 1890s? Turning again to Bakhtin, one may apply another of his theories of the novel: codependent centripetal and centrifugal forces that constitute “novelness.” Bakhtin proposes that novels employ centralizing and decentralizing energies that push the conventionally acceptable elements of the text away from each other, while those same conventionally acceptable elements hold the diverse elements together in a coherent whole (Holquist 70). Bakhtin's depiction of the novel as a delicate balance provides a fitting metaphor for *Kim*, which is preoccupied by thematic balance. The conventionally acceptable elements of *Kim* include the presentation of India as the lush, idyllic crown jewel of the Empire and the novel's portrayal of imperial servants such as Colonel Creighton as savvy, robust men carrying out their duty, while Kim's hesitation to continue as an agent in the “Great

Game” would represent an element of decentralization that pushes against convention. The centripetal and centrifugal forces, according to Bakhtin, promote the evolution of language, the novel, and culture. Centrifugal force in a novel allows newness of language and of ideas to emerge from the text, and in the case of *Kim*, that process reveals that the conventional elements of the novel ultimately break down under scrutiny and prove to be lacking. For this reason, the novel can have no resolution but an ambiguous one; for Kim to follow the Empire is no longer a viable choice, thanks to the development in Kipling’s thought brought forth by the centrifugal force.

Kipling’s stance on Empire is evolving; by emphasizing these centrifugal and centripetal forces, he leaves behind the calcified, dead genre of the “epic” and moves into the more flexible genre of the “novel.” Bakhtin outlines his conception of the two genres, explaining,

The world of the epic is the national heroic past: it is a world of “beginnings” and “peak times” in the national history, a world of fathers and of founders of families, a world of “firsts” and “bests.” The important point here is not that the past constitutes the content of the epic. The formally constitutive feature of the epic as a genre is rather the transferal of a represented world into the past, and the degree to which this world participates in the past...The novel, by contrast, is determined by experience, knowledge and practice (the future). (13, 15)

Michael Holquist adds to this by stating that “the protagonist [moves] regularly and predictably from an undifferentiated self to a highly

individualized, self-conscious self, a path from ‘epicness’ to ‘novelness’” (74). Holquist, a distinguished scholar and translator of Bakhtin’s works, continues, “Instead of a teleology whose course is a movement from one unitary state to another, Bakhtin’s historical masterplot opens with a deluded perception of unity and goes on to a growing knowledge of ever-increasing difference and variety that cannot be overcome any uniting synthesis” (76). This theoretical approach is particularly relevant in an analysis of *Kim*, considering that Kipling was preoccupied by Bakhtinian “epicness” in much of his earlier work.

In these works, Kipling perpetuated an idea that all imperial subjects, regardless of preexisting ethnic, political, or religious differences, could achieve unity by devoting themselves to the overarching Empire. The imperial system, however, was not capable of effacing such cultural gaps, and the idea that imperial identification alone could make all subjects become a part of a united whole proved untenable. In his move towards “novelness,” Kipling turns his focus away from glorifying the past and develops, through the revision of *Kim*, a series of layered characterizations and themes that embrace and perhaps even promote fluidity, ambiguity, and uncertainty. To turn again to Bakhtin, Kipling appears to be orienting *Kim* as a response

toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer’s direction.

Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. (280)

Kipling's extensive work on the story that would eventually become *Kim* raises new questions about the novel; after so many years of dormancy, why did he finally complete and publish *Kim* in 1901? Why, after his meteoric rise to literary celebrity, based in large part on works written about his experiences as a young journalist in India, would he return to portraying subjects living under imperial rule? Why, after happily accepting the role of a defender of Empire, would Kipling publish a novel that promotes the values of the East over those of the West? In the following two chapters, I hope to answer these questions.

CHAPTER TWO



THE MAN

Kipling as Kim

Having documented the textual revision of *Kim*, one may turn to Kipling, the author himself, in order to understand further the novel as both a revised text and a text that seeks to revise Kipling's stance on the issue of the Empire. The story of Kimball O'Hara may on the surface appear to be a traditional, simple fictional narrative, but *Kim* is actually a self-referential text, a hybrid form of autobiography for Kipling, in which he is able to revisit the India of his youth and redefine himself as an author.

Kim belongs to the genre of autobiography and is traditionally thought of as a *Bildungsroman*, or the story of a boy's coming-of-age; however, *Kim* does not fit as neatly into that genre as critics have claimed. Critics Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have written extensively on the

variety of autobiographical forms, in studies including, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, which serves as a comprehensive pedagogical and reference work in the field of life-writing study. They argue that the *Bildungsroman* presents a

plot of development [involving] escape from a repressive family, schooling, and a journey into the wide world of urban life where encounters with a series of mentors, romantic involvements, and entrepreneurial ventures lead the protagonist to reevaluate assumptions. (189)

Kim experiences each of these stages of development: his father's death releases him from any constraining familial bonds; his time in a British-run Indian school, which he decries as stifling, is minimal; and with the Lama he embarks on a journey, literal and figurative, into the larger world of India, where he meets a variety of people who help shape him into the man he will eventually become.

Smith and Watson continue by arguing: "The *Bildungsroman* culminates in the acceptance of one's constrained social role in the bourgeois social order, usually requiring the renunciation of some ideal or passion and the embrace of heteronormative social arrangements" (189). Kipling, however, edited the manuscript of *Kim* in order to make Kim's choice between the "Great Game" and the Lama's spirituality ambiguous, which suggests that he is not interested in integrating Kim into the Indian or

British social hierarchy. Kim chooses no definitive path, renounces no ideal or passion, and engages in no real relationships outside the mentor-student one, which is hardly an embrace of British heteronormality in the Victorian era, a period in which masculinity was characterized as powerful, active, chivalrous, and men were expected to defend the home, family, and the Christian faith.

In the most general sense, *Kim* can be categorized as an autobiography in the third person, where “the narrating ‘I’ refers to the narrated ‘I’ in the third person as he or she” (Smith and Watson 185). Smith and Watson provide a detailed description of this unusual autobiographical mode, with the help of the work of another critic, Phillipe Lejeune, and they delineate “a situation in which one narrator pretends to be two” or a ventriloquist of the protagonist (185). Kim serves, in this way, as a proxy for Kipling, allowing the author to experience in imagination the boyhood in India he was denied in reality. Many of Kipling’s works are devoted to the maturation of young men—*The Jungle Book*, *The Second Jungle Book*, *Puck of Pook’s Hill*, and *Stalky & Co.*, just to name a few of the best-known—and critics have long recognized the emphasis on childhood in his works. As Sandra Kemp notes, “his stories interrogate the ‘other self’ of his childhood” (1). Kim is one of those other selves, offering Kipling an

opportunity to act out his childhood as a boy “burned black as any native,” speaking “the vernacular by preference,” and consorting “on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazaar” (Kipling, *Kim* 1). Carrington, in recounting Kipling’s early years and years as a journalist in India, reveals how much of the man manifests itself in his work. As a child, Kipling was very attached to “Meeta, the Hindu bearer, with whom Rudyard talked so constantly in the vernacular that it was necessary to remind him to speak in English,” and as a budding reporter, Kipling befriended a Pathan named Mahbub Ali, who always brought news from the far north and who would later appear in *Kim* as a roguish Afghani horse trader and spy (12, 78). Kim is able to do what Kipling was not: he lives until maturity in the exotic land he loves, not subject to any parental authority that would ship him back to cold England for a “proper” education befitting a British boy.

This yoking of Kipling’s life experience to the character of Kim is especially evident when Kipling writes his father into the narrative as a peripheral but significant character. John Lockwood Kipling appears as the curator of the museum in the opening chapter; the man is not named in the novel, but there is little attempt on the part of Kipling to hide his father’s identity. The elder Kipling is the first to have an extended interaction with the Lama, and his understanding of and compassion for the Lama’s quest

proves a model for his son's embrace, in real life, of Indian culture. Another striking example, in which Kipling weaves his personal experience as an Anglo-Indian into the text, comes later in the book, in his use of two verses from "The Two-Sided Man":

Much I owe to the Lands that grew—
 More to the Lives that fed—
 But most to Allah Who gave me two
 Separate sides to my head.
 I would go without shirts or shoe,
 Friend, tobacco or bread
 Sooner than lose for a minute the two
 Separate sides of my head! (Kipling, "Two-Sided" line 1-4, 17-20)

Kipling wrote these lines as the epigraph for chapter eight of *Kim*, but after the novel's publication, he slightly revised and expanded them to stand on their own as a fully realized poem in his 1914 collection, *Songs from Books*. The lines above are from the 1914 final version. Kipling's choice not to use others' words, as he does for the majority of the other epigraphs, shows his desire to communicate a personal feeling that he alone can capture.

Elsewhere, Kipling expresses a similar awareness of his characters' divided natures. In another of the "Indian works," *The Jungle Book*, Mowgli sings:

These two things fight together in me as the snakes fight
 in the spring. The water comes out of my eyes, yet
 I laugh while it falls. Why?
 I am the two Mowglis. (Kipling, *Jungle Book* 66)

In these instances, Kipling no longer appears as the arch-advocate for Empire; instead, he is channeling, in the words of critic Zohreh T. Sullivan, “the Indian child whose fear of the abyss is turned into poetry” (451).

Kipling is drawing from personal experience to give voice to Mowgli as well as to the speaker of the poem; he may claim not to want to give up either side of his head, but he expresses sadness in *Kim* for the “costs of such programs of survival” (451), which include the instability Kim suffers because he attempts to maintain a single identity while being pulled between two separate and very different worlds. Spivak, who was born in India but has lived in America for decades, a reverse of Kim’s situation, echoes his and Mowgli’s words, saying, “I am bicultural, but my biculturality is that I’m not at home in either of the places” (Spivak, *Post-Colonial* 83). In each case, the character or individual is enriched by a knowledge of and love for two cultures, but that richness is balanced by a concomitant isolation and a lack of any sense of belonging.

Smith and Watson advise applying to the autobiographical text a series of questions (168-74) that function as investigative tools. How should Kipling’s narrating “I” and its models of competing identity be described? Kim finds himself cloven into two, endowed with British and Indian identities that he must reintegrate by the end of the novel if he is to attain

maturity. What story does Kipling seek to tell about himself in the novel?

Kim, Kipling's last Indian novel, can be read as his final word on the country that attracted and haunted him for the greater part of his life; Kim, the boy of two worlds, may be understood as Kipling, who at the midpoint of his life and career is attempting to redefine himself as a literary and public figure. He struggles with this task; Scupham contends, "Kipling's problem is to convince us that under the bewildering variety of masks, tests, and masquerades which make up Kim's progress, there is a true identity, not merely the chameleon capacities of a successful actor" (190). Kim is Kipling, the author who wrote in many voices, who shunned the publicity that accompanied his success, and who traveled easily within and among a variety of professional, personal, and cultural circles.

What dynamic tension holds together the competing visions of national identity? Necessity connects these two identities, as Kim needs his British identity to exert authority over and to maintain independence from his colonial counterparts, but he also requires his Indian identity—or identities—to navigate the land successfully and to move among its peoples. Kim holds his English and Indian identities in suspension, relying on one or the other as the situation requires. What is the significance of these identity contradictions and conflicts? In *Kim*, Kipling seeks to embody two different

parts of Empire, Western Britain and Eastern India. He attempts to show that they can live in harmony in a single body—that of Empire—but in the end Kim’s story undermines his argument. Kipling may want Kim to stand as a living symbol of national synthesis, but the novel’s irresolution problematizes this synthesis.

What methods does Kipling employ to communicate his memories both of India, the land of his youth, and of youth itself? Despite the autobiographical quality of the text, it is important to note that Kipling did not rely solely on his own recollections of India when composing *Kim*. Instead, Kipling turned to his father, John Lockwood Kipling, for *his* memories. This fact has critical implications, as Kipling himself credited his father in great part for *Kim*’s success and longevity, saying, “There was a good deal of beauty in it, and not a little wisdom; the best in both sorts being owed to my Father” (Kipling, *Something* 84). The elder Kipling’s memories factor heavily into Kipling’s perception and presentation of mid-century imperial India, considering Lockwood Kipling’s influence and Kipling’s own admission that so much of his identity is bound up in the past:

I reckon but we are all bondslaves to our childhood and mine was mixed up with the ’70s, which belong to a dead age, and I was under the care of people who drew from the ’40s and ’50s. Have you ever thought how all the people who talk about “the present” are every one of them at least thirty years behind it? (Kipling, *Letters* 3:358)

Kipling's claim supports a Bakhtinian interpretation of the text, in which *Kim* moves from "epic" status, in which the narrative is always directed backward into the past, to "novel" status, in which Kipling finally shapes the narrative according to a more forward-thinking trajectory.

What closure, if any, do the multiplicity of voices within the text achieve? Interestingly, Kipling does not provide clear closure; closure is obtained only on an individual basis, as each reader conjectures about which path Kim will choose after the author sets down his final words. Again, Bakhtin's insights are useful. *Kim* is part of his socio-historical dialogue, offering an answer that anticipates questions about the continuing viability of the British Empire.

The answers to these questions expose Kipling's underlying autobiographical issues: the loss of faith in Empire, which, as an Anglo-Indian, was so ingrained in him; the attraction of nostalgia, and the challenge Kipling faces in overcoming his past experience in India to achieve "novelness;" and the relationship between fatherhood and the motherland, through which Kipling attempts to form a resolution for Kim's crisis of identity. As part of this epic-to-novel evolution, an interesting mosaic of connections between the Victorian and Modernist periods takes shape; in *Kim*, Kipling bridges them. As Kemp explains:

The notion of a psyche assuming a repertoire of roles in order to confirm its own existence is a concern he shared with the Modernist writers to whom he is commonly opposed. When examined closely, the covert narrative sequences and self-reflexivity of his stories reveal strikingly Modernist tendencies.
(1)

In examining each of these personal issues, one can see how Kipling transforms his authorial identity and his novel from a sturdy Victorian to a conflicted Modernist style, altering in the process his literary trajectory by finally resolving the internal conflict of his ruptured childhood.

Loss of Faith

Kipling is typically portrayed as a rigid pillar of Victorian sensibility, and critics argue that the bulk of his work promotes belief in the infallibility of the British Empire, even at a time when imperial rule was being resisted by colonized peoples and, due to military setbacks such as the Indian Rebellion and first Boer War, was beginning to show the strain of maintaining authority over approximately four million square miles of land.

As critic Tirthankar Bose argues:

Kipling the writer and Kipling the subject of criticism were equally composed of certitudes: he seemed to be supremely confident in his views...and his critics seemed equally sure in labeling him. The absolutes that seem to prop his world straight and square reflect a forceful over-simplification of the world and inveigle readers into a comforting confidence and

alignment with what is declared to be the righteous and victorious side. (1)

Kipling, however, especially in *Kim*, does not deal in absolutes or provide comforting confidences. If one examines Kipling's works closely, contradictions and conflicts emerge, undercutting our sense of his purported faith in Empire.

Much of the criticism on the novel deals with Kim's duality: the interaction and incompatibility of his two natures and roles as British and Indian and spy and *chela*; the natures consist of the qualities that each culture imparts to Kim, while the roles grow out of those natures and are employed by Kim for practical or strategic purposes. In nearly every case, the critic attempts to determine which side of Kim wins out over the other. Two prominent postcolonial critics, Sullivan and Edward Said, have both judged Kim in such a way. Said states that Kim willingly engages in both roles and has no moral dilemma in sacrificing India to Empire "not because Kipling could not face it, but because for Kipling *there was no conflict*" (43). Sullivan proposes that Kim maneuvers between roles by splitting them into the "real" and the "imaginary." As a result, Kim is able to preserve British interests as a spy. In his imagination as the "Little Friend of All the World," however, Kim allows the two to coexist, and only he knows which is real and which is performance (Sullivan 166-68); he knows, that is, if he is

capable of such self-analysis. Having considered himself both British and Indian, even Kim may not be able to decipher what is performance and what is reality. Brigitte Wilds Craft claims that Kim feels no need to choose; he conflates the two roles, serving as an agent of Empire with the understanding that his ability to integrate with the Indian population is essential to his success (166).

These interpretations fail to take into account the fact that in being both British and Indian, spy and *chela*, Kim is neither wholly one nor the other. Teshoo Lama acknowledges this when he describes Kim appearing to him from beside the Zam-Zammah cannon “bearing two faces—and two garbs” (33). This description is curiously accusatory, evoking the adjective “two-faced” and subtly assigning it to Kim. This, in turn, suggests that Kipling is using Kim to promote the use of cultural knowledge as a means of keeping subject peoples under the sway of imperial rule. In fact, however, Kipling appears to be using Kim to denounce such practices. Kim’s road to maturity is harsh. Over the course of the novel he changes from a happy, savvy boy into a conflicted, suspicious man, drawn into the “Great Game” by British and Indian men who value him for his abilities rather than his inherent qualities. Kipling’s denial of a cathartic, decisive resolution for Kim signals the folly of reading the character of Kim as an imperial cipher and,

correspondingly, reinforces Kipling's growing disenchantment with institutions that exploit those who hold cultural knowledge and, consequently, political power.

Kipling confirms the simultaneous blessing and curse of Kim's gift. This occurs most notably when the Indian priest asks him, "what art thou?" (46). At the time the priest poses this question, early on during Kim's journey with the Lama, Kim takes little note of how the priest dehumanizes him in his query—not "who" but "what." The various names bestowed on Kim split him further into fragmented personalities, each with its own attached roles, behaviors, and expectations: "Kim," "Little Friend of All the World," "Friend of the Stars," "A Son of the Charm," "*chela*," "Kim O' the 'Rishti," and "Kimball O'Hara." He comes to realize, by splitting himself between British and various Indian identities, that he is beginning to lose a sense of a coherent self. He cannot hold together such a disparate collection of characters. Kipling hints at the troubling schism Kim will face when he has the boy ask himself, "Was he not the Friend of the Stars as well as of all the world, crammed to the teeth with dreadful secrets?" (83). Towards the end of the novel, when Kim fully breaks down and must confront his crisis of self, he asks, "Who is Kim—Kim—Kim?" (185). Tellingly, Kim never appears to arrive at an answer.

Kipling is similarly concerned with the actions of the novel's large cast of characters. One major theme in *Kim* is, of course, the quest. As Elliot L. Gilbert notes, "The book's central action is not the tracking down of spies, it is the more general questing of all the characters in the book, a questing of which the spy hunt is but one example" (10). Taking his argument to its logical conclusion, Kipling is acknowledging that only the Lama's quest, the spiritual quest, is successful. Gilbert goes on to argue that, if the text must be judged on nationalistic terms, India would certainly emerge victorious:

The book begins and ends with the lama; everything that happens does so within the framework of the lama's quest for the River of the Arrow...by the end of the book we have come to realize that all of the quests of this world are absurdly futile since the triumphant conclusion of each search is only the beginning of the next. The lama's quest alone is real, for it is a quest for the end of all questing. (11)

This conclusion may be troublesome on its face, considering that the Lama is a Tibetan Buddhist and not a member of a specifically Indian culture, but he is unquestionably situated within the narrative as a simply a member of another of the varied cultures of India, and the only distance between him and other Indian characters is the result of the Lama's higher status as a holy man. While Kipling's characters are unaware of the turmoil to follow with the late-century push towards Indian independence, the author *is* aware, and his text tacitly acknowledges, despite his personal efforts to fight against

losing the imperial colony, the impending failure of the colonial regime and acknowledges that failure by privileging Eastern spirituality over Western politics. Such an interpretation is problematic, considering that the Lama represents a distinct group of the Indian population, individualized both by his Tibetan ethnicity and his Buddhist faith. Kipling creates reductive binaries by cleaving Kim's world neatly into Britain and India, East and West, and the Lama should be read as the primary symbol of the East, and his successful quest is an affirmation of the values that the character espouses.

Taking these elements into account, one may reconsider *Kim*. Kipling appears as a writer not “composed of certitudes,” as Bose proposes (1). Instead, he is the arch-imperialist author who has mislaid his faith in the Empire, as evidenced in letter from October 1900 to the Duchess of Sutherland, in which Kipling bitterly notes, “Imperialism, as you say, is a rummy business” (Kipling, *Letters* 3:34). The Victorian texture of the narrative—consumed with clear-cut heroes and villains, a sense of right and wrong, and, above all, a certainty as to the unquestionable “correctness” of the British way of life—has been worn smooth by the conclusion of the novel. This was a troubling concept for the Victorians, who were already struggling with a loss of religious faith as a consequence of the rise of

scientific knowledge; in *Kim*, Kipling challenges another system in which faith has been placed. The reader is left with a more unstable and arguably Modern story infused with intense anxiety over the tenuous nature of personal identity and national purpose.

Attraction of Nostalgia

One aspect of *Kim* that is perhaps lost to most modern readers is its overpowering sense of nostalgia. Kipling wrote and published *Kim* at the end of the nineteenth century, when relations between the British colonial authority and India population were palpably strained. A significant portion of the Indian population was unhappy with imperial rule and desired self-government; that discontent manifested in increasingly vocal and better organized political movements that called for Indian independence. Interestingly, Kipling does not set his story of “the little friend of all the world” in this tumultuous period. Rather, he locates *Kim* in the recent past, just after the Indian Rebellion of 1857 but before any serious further attempts by the Indian people to mobilize to protest British colonial rule. In this setting, Kipling is free to play in an almost fantasy-like world of his own making. In creating this nostalgic fictional universe, Kipling is not necessarily unfaithful to his Indian context, but, he does situate *Kim* in a less

politically turbulent period, which supports the picaresque quality of the novel and allows him to avoid focusing on the troublesome issue of mounting British-Indian tension of the late 1800s.

More important, however, is Kipling's nostalgic presentation of the novel's protagonist, Kim. Kipling, more often than not, developed his stories around male child-heroes, and this focus on youth results in countless misunderstandings of the text itself. While elements of *Kim* may easily be interpreted as a story about a British boy who, owing to his superior status, is able to amass Indian cultural knowledge, to shift between an Indian persona and an Indian persona, and to assist in the continued British rule of the country. This interpretation brands Kim as a literary symbol of duplicitous British authority over India and Indians. In acknowledging such a reading, however, I argue for an alternative interpretation, one that ascribes far less insidious motive to Kim himself.

Instead of viewing Kim as a traitor to India because of his participation in the imperial espionage game, one may read *Kim* as an allegory of the journey from childhood to adulthood, and one may see Kim as a uniquely Kiplingesque version of the callow-boy-to-mature-man archetype. The text provides ample support for such an interpretation: from the beginning, Kim is described not as a budding British spy but as a typical

child at play. For example, notice the childlike vocabulary Kipling uses to shape Kim's worldview: "what he loved was the game for its own sake" (3), the feeling that he was "playing for larger things—the sheer excitement and the sense of power" (47), and characterizing "this adventure, though he did not know the English word, was a stupendous lark—a delightful continuation of his old flights across the housetops" (83). Kim is clearly no agent; if anything, he is a boy manipulated and exploited by a larger force made up of older men, including Colonel Creighton, Mahbub Ali, Father Victor, and Reverend Bennett, who know how to exploit to their advantage Kim's natural curiosity and desire for intrigue.

Once drawn into the shaping force of the British school system, Kim soon loses his boyish indulgences. No longer does the reader picture Kim taunting authority by "skipping out of arm's reach" (60) or drinking in the exotic sights of India with "bright eyes...open wide" (61). Instead, Kim is trained to *use* his skills rather than merely to *enjoy* them, which reflects the human trek from carefree childhood to responsible adulthood. What was play becomes work, and Kim is forced to choose *for whom* he will work: Britain or India. The novel is purposely ambiguous about the path Kim chooses, a distinct stylistic departure from the standard Victorian form in which the narrative is definitively resolved and closed. At the same time,

however, Kipling appears to be nudging his readers to accept a pro-Indian resolution instead of a pro-British one. The equivocal ending, coupled with Kipling's suggestion that Kim will choose a spiritual quest rather than a bureaucratic reality, privileges idealism over practicality, heightens the novel's nostalgia, and results in a narrative more Modern than Victorian in style, structure, and content.

Relationship Between Fatherhood and Motherland

Kim lacks the elements of a traditional *Bildungsroman*, because Kim does not engage in a traditional heteronormative relationship. Instead, he remains in a lower stage of emotional development, refusing to embrace any relationship but the mentor-student one expressed in his relationships to Teshoo Lama and to Colonel Creighton. At least, according to Western standards, this would be the hierarchy of development, since in the Eastern standard of Tibetan Buddhism, Kim's choice of celibacy and discipleship would be recognized as a higher calling. Kim, the orphan, finds not one but two father-son relationships, and he appears loath to give either up for a matrimonial bond. Yet there *is* a glimpse of a traditional love relationship in Kim's future: that of a marriage to the land. Craft identifies such a possibility in her study of *Kim*:

The (in)compatibility of these vocations [*chela* and spy] provides a key to the novel and Kim's emerging sense of self. He asks, "Who is Kim?" (166) early in the novel, but more importantly, near the end, he asks, "And *what* is Kim?" (331, writer's emphasis). The question that Kipling attempts to answer is exactly this: What is Kim? Is he disciple or spy? Can he be both? Can he, in essence, be true to the East as he betrays "her"? (22)

In Craft's analysis, India itself is personified as a female character, much as its counterpart, Britain, is personified as the feminine Britannia. Perhaps *Kim* does, in an idiosyncratic way, fulfill the generic requirements for a *Bildungsroman*.

The novel also demonstrates some qualities of a *Bildungsroman* when it examines Kim's father figures: the Lama and Colonel Creighton. David Lee Miller, in "The Father's Witness: Patriarchal Images of Boys," analyzes father-son relationships in Shakespeare, but his findings translate extremely well to this study of *Kim*, especially when he calls the relationship of the reflected son or elderly boy, "a thing of nothing" (121). A character that is "a thing of nothing" calls to mind the duality/nothingness of Kim's divided psyche as he tries to be both British and Indian, both mature adult and inexperienced child; Kim fails to commit wholly to one or the other option and is stranded in a no-man's-land of non-identity. The archetype of the "elderly boy" is a youth imbued by an older figure with wisdom beyond his years and is a construct which

telescope[s] age and youth. What they represent is not a man or boy but the desire of each to cross the gap between them, the boy's desire to be magnified and the man's to be reflected...[It points] to *the invisibility of the father as father* when they make the boy signify his identification with the adult male, [turning] the boy into a viable symbol of the invisible link between fathers and sons. (121)

Miller claims that the desire of fathers to envision their sons as little men stems from an underlying anxiety about their own fatherhood. Fathers, unlike mothers, who are the link between fathers and sons, are never completely sure of their children's paternity, and "since the father cannot see his fatherhood in her [his wife, the child's mother], he looks for it instead in his son" (121). Miller illustrates this paternal anxiety using *The Winter's Tale*, in which Leontes becomes suspicious of his wife, Hermione, and his friend, Polixenes, when Hermione's pregnancy neatly coincides with Polixenes' recent visit (122). With his paternity in doubt, Leontes becomes anxious and angry and is forced to face an utterly changed future in which "the queen's virtue, the prince's legitimacy, and the king's fatherhood are all one thing or they are all nothing" (123). Kipling articulates a similar fear on the part of the British colonial population through his depiction of Anglo-Indian paternal instability in *Kim*.

Kim's parentage, however, is examined in much more abstract terms. His biological mother and father are dispatched from the narrative almost

immediately—Kipling is working with different parental constructs. Instead of questions about Kim's literal paternity, the text is more concerned with exploring his cultural paternity. Two men, Colonel Creighton and Teshoo Lama, question whether they can claim Kim as their own. As Miller predicts, both men envision themselves in Kim, either as an Englishman or as a spiritual disciple, and they search for bodily proof of their existence in him. The reader is presented with two clear paternal claims on Kim. It is more complicated, however, to determine the identity of Kim's mother.

As countless critics have noted, both of *Kim* and of other Kipling works, there are few female characters. Occasionally in *Kim* an Indian woman will appear to offer assistance, but almost without fail Kim is wary of such help. He loses his biological mother at a very young age, and while he is raised, in the loosest sense of the word, by an old woman in a Lahore opium house, Kim has little experience with female authority. With no clearly defined mother-figure, where does Kim come from? Craft suggests that the land itself plays this role. Kim's cultural mother is India, which is always present within and around him. This relationship is evident throughout the novel as Kim displays an intimate knowledge of the land and is able to appropriate its elements for food, water, and shelter to ensure his

survival. Kipling makes this bond particularly evident when Kim falls ill late in the novel.

Kim and the Lama, exhausted from their travels and a violent encounter with the Russian agent, lodge with a hospitable woman from Kulu. Rather than regarding her with suspicion, “half menaced and half soothed” (275), as he has regarded other female interlopers, Kim wearily accepts her care. In doing so, he fully embraces the care and attention of a female figure, heretofore lacking in Kim’s life, and India, embodied in the character of the Sahiba, becomes his mother. He allows her to nurture him and to provide him with a maternal foundation. Bonds are quickly forged among the three; the Lama asks for the Sahiba’s help, and she willingly complies, stating, “I will take over the boy and dose him, and stuff him, and make him all whole” (274). She does indeed make him all whole, literally and figuratively. When well enough to speak, Kim acknowledges her power, saying, “Mother, I owe my life to thee,” explaining, “I had no mother, my mother” (277-78). She replies, “Then none can say I have robbed her of any right...” (278). With each piece now in place and with Kim willing to accept India’s parentage, a new family is thus formed. In the final analysis, then, there is no option but for Kim to reflect his adoptive father and mother, both of whom are unequivocally Indian. The man has reached

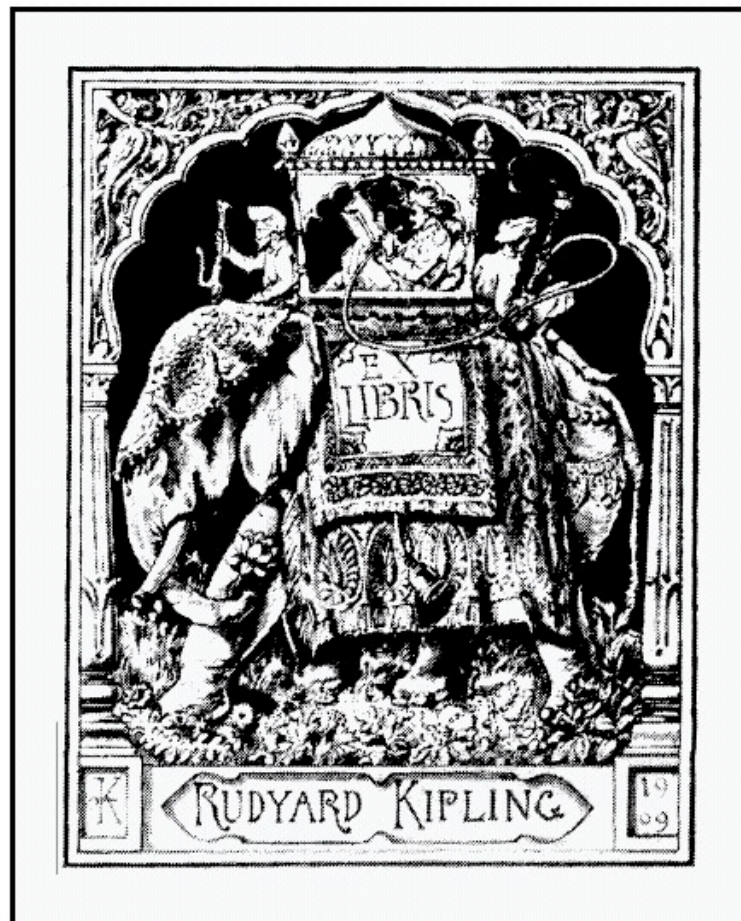
maturity, and his adulthood is girded by the Indian, not British, culture. By placing Kim into the camp of the Other, Kipling attempts to make him whole and to suggest that only his British actions should be interpreted as an opportunistic performance.

The novel is much more complicated than some of its critics give it credit for being. To label *Kim* as the propaganda of an arch-imperialist is an unjustifiable oversimplification. While there are nationalistic elements in the text, *Kim* successfully holds multiple ideas in tension, and Empire, while important, is not the text's sole concern.

Kipling reaches a point of transition with *Kim*. Rather than conforming to traditional narrative patterns, he breaks with established forms and allows the story to spin out at its own picaresque pace, refusing in the process to provide a clearly defined resolution to Kim's story. By doing so, he is able to tell his own story and to lay to rest his own troubled childhood experience, while still leaving the conclusion open-ended. "Mother Maturin," his Anglo-Indian tale that began in 1885—when Kipling was but twenty years old—as 237 pieces of foolscap that he deemed "grim," that his sister Trixie called "awfully horrid," and that his mother rejected as "nasty" (qtd. in Carrington 66), finally emerged fifteen years later as *Kim*, a much

richer and more balanced portrait of India, reflecting his understanding and appreciation of India, and is a more fitting legacy.

CHAPTER THREE



THE EMPIRE

The Allure of Empire

After considering the text and its author, one must consider the cultural and political factors that permeate nearly every late-nineteenth-century British work, especially the problem of Empire. Although Empire was not a specifically Victorian construction; the accumulation of territory for economic purposes had been occurring since the reign of Charles I, but the rapid expansion of Empire between 1870 and 1900 under Disraeli marked the emergence of imperial rule for a very different purpose. In the late nineteenth century, Britain attempted to mimic the Roman Empire, or at least its concept of the Roman Empire, and to become a paternalistic force of stability, ruling and enlightening what the British considered to be the

weaker or lesser-developed races that inhabited imperial colonies. As David Cody explains,

The implication, of course, was that the Empire existed not for the benefit—economic or strategic or otherwise—of Britain itself, but in order that primitive peoples, incapable of self-government, could, with British guidance, eventually become civilized (and Christianized).

It is easy to see how Kipling would have been attracted to such a model of Empire, considering his own tumultuous youth, spent shuttling between Britain, which he disliked, and India, which he romanticized. His lack of a fixed home may account, in part, for his adult focus on the theme of stability and for his consequent and misplaced desire to offer such stability to colonized peoples through the structures of the British Empire.

Perhaps to the detriment of his literary reputation, Kipling helped, in his 1899 poem, “The White Man’s Burden,” to conceptualize this interpretation of Empire as a means of “fixing” countries and peoples with British infrastructure, culture, and governmental oversight, which at best can be considered patronizing and paternalistic. The work is addressed to America, which, with the Treaty of Paris, had won Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico from Spain. This made America an imperial power alongside Britain. The poem’s famous opening stanza calls on Americans to

Take up the White Man's burden—
 Send forth the best ye breed—
 Go bind your sons to exile
 To serve your captives' need;
 To wait in heavy harness,
 On fluttered folk and wild—
 Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
 Half-devil and half-child. (line 1-8)

But, the poem also calls for “peace— / Fill full the mouth of Famine / And bid the sickness cease” (line 18-20), and while this does not excuse the racism explicit in the first eight lines, it does shed some light on Kipling's hopes for Empire. In “The White Man's Burden,” one can see how Kipling perceives the duty of imperial nations to their colonies and attempts to rouse pro-Empire sentiment overseas.

Kipling himself was advocating for continued British rule of India at the turn of the century, and biographer Carrington documents his increasingly conservative political stance from the late 1800s to the end of his life (404, 487). Kipling may, likewise, have harbored a latent bigotry towards non-white, non-British peoples, a flaw common in the men of his time, but the mentality of the “White Man's Burden” manifests itself only occasionally in *Kim*. Kipling does not glorify the British Empire, as might be expected; instead, in *Kim*, he presents an India only tangentially connected to or governed by Britain. While he may have hoped that British civilization would permeate the India he loved, he does not appear in *Kim*, to

advocate for significant cultural or religious change in the land he so lovingly describes. The India of the novel is both a country that never was—Kipling’s India is no more “real” than Dickens’ London, Balzac’s Paris, or Fitzgerald’s New York (Davis 85)—and a country that was not *yet*.

India as Fantasy

India in *Kim* is an India that never existed, as critic Phillip Wegner discusses in his article, “‘Life as He Would Have It’: The Invention of India in Kipling’s *Kim*,” although I disagree with Wegner’s conclusion that, by constructing India this way, Kipling “in no way questions the deeper ontology of empire” (132). Kipling creates an India that is more an exotic fantasy than a British colony, almost a country without any government. Kipling’s India exists in an idealized past that, while taking into account the Indian Rebellion of 1857, does not hint at the intra-imperial struggles that would be raging by the time the novel was being written. Instead, the land and the “Great Game” being played for control of it seem to exist independent of time and the real concerns of nineteenth-century politics, and it takes on almost fantastical, otherworldly characteristics. On numerous occasions, the narrative seems to slip away from Kipling, as he becomes diverted and consumed with describing the India of his memory, a place he

has not seen in more than ten years. The setting Kipling captures in his prose is nothing short of magnificent, and he paints India in tones of “golden, rose, saffron, and pink,” with “morning mists smok[ing] away across the flat green levels” (31). One can clearly envision the richness of the setting, with its “great dark-green mango-groves, the line of the snow-capped Himalayas faint to the eastward” (51), and appreciate Kipling’s gift for detail and ability to evoke the reader’s senses.

Heightening the fantasy-like sense of the novel is the lack of any consistent British presence in India. While the “Great Game” rages around them, Kim and his cohort inhabit a world relatively free from British influence. Rather than call attention to the disturbing events of the 1857 uprising, Kipling all but ignores the clash. Upon meeting an old soldier on the Grand Trunk Road and listening to stories about his service, the Lama is pressed to recall the rebellion and can only manage, “They called it the Black Year” (52). In this exchange, Kipling’s ambivalence about Empire comes forth. As the old soldier approaches, the Lama chastises him for carrying a sword with which to kill men, and as the soldier explains the revolt, the Lama expresses horror at his countrymen’s decision to attack women and children. Significantly, since the Lama is the voice of righteousness in the

novel, no one, either British or Indian, escapes the Lama's condemnation for actions of war and violence.

The soldier does win the Lama's approval on one account: he remained at his post when his regiment broke in the mutiny. This is a particularly interesting dialogue, as Kipling, typically held up as advocate of the distinctly British sense of duty, calls into question any such sense of duty. After the Lama praises him, the soldier answers:

Merit! We did not consider it merit in those days. My people, my friends, my brothers fell from me...There is no blessing in this work...Give me work...for I am an outcast among my own kin, and my cousin's blood is wet on my sabre. (53)

The soldier denies that his performance of his duty is worthy of praise. All he has as a result of taking nine wounds is a clutch of hollow honors: "a medal and four clasps and the medal of an Order" (53). His regimental friends are now old men, as he is, and they talk only of the battles of the past and of "one dead man's name leading to another" (53). There is no future in imperial duty.

The Agents of Empire

Besides the soldier and Colonel Creighton, few representatives of the British Empire command any significant place in the narrative, display any admirable qualities, or elicit any sympathy from readers. Officials come off

as foolish, especially the warring religious figures Father Victor and Reverend Bennett, who bear the brunt of Kipling's scorn; Bennett immediately judges Kim as a liar and regards the boy "with the triple-ringed uninterest of the creed that lumps nine-tenths of the world under the title of heathen" (88). Kim openly disparages Bennett as well, complaining to the Lama that Bennett did not believe he was a British boy: "I knew it since my birth, but *he* could only find it out by rending the amulet from my neck and reading all the papers" (88). Bennett may be dismissive of Kim, thinking him a liar and a thief, but Kim is not troubled; he is equally dismissive of Bennett, and for a much more legitimate reason. Bennett views life in superficial terms, and he cannot see past Kim's skin color to his humanity.

Not even Colonel Creighton, despite his prominence in the novel and his position as a British agent who understands and respects the nuances of Indian culture, escapes Kipling's piercing gaze. Late in the novel, Kipling reveals the mysterious Creighton's motivation: his desire to become a fellow of the Royal Society. Some of this motivation can be attributed to Creighton's admirable desire to do good work, reflecting the emphasis on duty that so imbues Kipling's writings. However, the picture of the Royal Society so appealing to Creighton is suspect:

his soul yearned for the crowded rooms in easy London where silver-haired, bald-headed gentlemen who know nothing of the

Army move among spectroscopic experiments, the lesser plants of the frozen tundras, electric flight-measuring machines, and apparatus for slicing into fractional millimeters the left eye of the female mosquito. (175)

The Society is made up of old men who are out of touch with the world at large, holed up in the comfortable claustrophobia of London. Their pursuits are so obscure and esoteric as to be laughable, yet these are the men to whom Creighton desperately wishes to ingratiate himself. The venerable Royal Society is flawed, obsessed with impractical minutiae rather than with the messier world at large that so entrances Kipling. With the machinations of Creighton's heart laid bare, another British character, and perhaps the only redeemable one in *Kim*, falls into folly.

Creighton's power as a Sahib is also consistently undermined by Mahbub Ali, who correctly recognizes Kim's "ripeness" for the "Great Game" and repeatedly chastises Creighton for keeping Kim cooped up at St. Xavier's. These exchanges between the two men, in which Mahbub Ali is eventually the victor, hint at Kipling's resentment of his own harsh experience in a British school and his deep-seated wariness of an education that seeks neatly to replicate the Sahibs who populate *Kim's* India: ignorant, intolerant, and impotent men who may rule the country in name but certainly not in practice, as evidenced by the constant, vibrant, pulsating native life that Kipling weaves into the narrative.

As an example of the educational efforts of the British Empire, Kipling introduces his readers to a nameless British drummer boy whom Kim meets during his brief stay with the Mavericks regiment in Umballa. The boy is described in the least flattering light, “fat and freckled,” with a “high voice” (99). His ugliness extends beyond the physical, as he insults the bazaar letter-writer with the epithet of “nigger” and subsequently brands Kim with the same slur (102). Kim’s only real interaction with a British youth in either school is with this drummer boy, a loathsome representative of the Anglo-Indian educational system and one who presents a vile prospect for the future of imperial emissaries.

The mere presence of the British in India seems to corrupt the Indians, in particular Hurree Babu, whose pathetic attempts to mimic his British superiors do nothing but make him appear foolish to Kim and, by extension, to the reader. As with the drummer boy, Kipling paints Hurree Babu in unfavorable terms. He smiles at Kim “ingratiatingly” (181), which seems immediately to signal untrustworthiness, especially in a land where the men, though spies and clever with wordplay and costume, are at their core blunt and do not dissemble in the least. Hurree Babu is also presented as a very unsuccessful agent for the Empire. In stark contrast to the skillful movements and dealings of such men as Colonel Creighton, Mahbub Ali, and

Lurgan Sahib, Hurree Babu is glaringly obvious and clumsy in his attempts to uncover information. Kim discovers Hurree Babu's lack of prowess when the Lama, who is consistently oblivious to the machinations of the "Great Game," mentions Hurree Babu's visit to his lamasery to make inquiries about the Lama's relationship with Kim, calling him "a man abounding in questions" (190). Hurree Babu, not fit for imperial service, feels obligated to perform the unfamiliar duties of a spy for British interests, which go against his nature, denying his Indian heritage to claim a British one, one that Kipling has already shown to be, in comparison, undesirable.

One must not overlook the enigmatic agent Kim encounters on the train, E.23. Bloodied, hunted, and panicked, E.23 throws himself on the mercy of Kim, a young man who admits to having been in the "Great Game" for only two days. While he eventually calms himself enough to maneuver into a position of safety, thanks to a massive dose of opium stolen from Kim's companion Kamboh, E.23 is by no means a dashing or stealthy figure worthy of emulation. If his predicament is not warning enough, E.23 flatly explains to Kim the very real and very dire consequences of their "game": "We of the Game are beyond protection. If we die, we die. Our names are blotted from the book. That is all" (199). The "Great Game" is no longer the admirable pursuit outlined in "The White Man's Burden," and

the testimony of E.23 signifies the nadir of Kipling's literary relationship with Empire.

It is significant to note the clear demarcation Kipling makes between Kim's two paths: the "Great Game" and the "Wheel of Life." The Wheel, as its name indicates, is a hard, life-long journey, fraught with suffering, but it holds the promise of advancement and redemption. On the other hand, there is the Game, played by men like the doomed E.23, whom Kim meets on his first journey after leaving St. Xavier's. Kim, as a player in both worlds, has been outfitted with tools for each of his roles: the nickel-plated revolver and the ghost dagger and the begging gourd and the rosary. The implements of imperial service are deadly, while the implements of spiritual service affirm charity and faith, two elements of man's better nature. The reader can see the judgment inherent in these objects, even if Kim does not or cannot.

Another problematic imperial symbol emerges in the form of the Grand Trunk Road—not a human character, but almost made so by Kipling's rich, anthropomorphic description—which divides the British and the Indian peoples. Here, Kipling creates what Lennard J. Davis terms, "the known unknown," by "claim[ing] space and turn[ing] it into a system of meaning" (85). No longer is the Grand Trunk Road merely a means of

transport; it becomes an ideological marker. The road is Kim's love, "the backbone of all Hind...a wonderful spectacle...a river of life as nowhere else exists in the world" (57), and he associates it with the world's physical pleasures:

the caress of soft mud squishing up between the toes, as his mouth watered for mutton stewed with butter and cabbages, for rice speckled with strong-scented cardamoms, for the saffron-tinted rice, garlic and onions, and the forbidden greasy sweetmeats of the bazaars. (125)

These delights are compounded of the excitement and variety the road offers as the universal path in India, the road on which all travel. The first time he introduces the reader to the Road, Kipling ensures that he or she will grasp its full, magnificent scope. The old British soldier explains, "All castes and kinds of men move here. Look! Brahmins and chummars, bankers and tinkers, barbers and bunnias, pilgrims and potters—all the world going and coming" (57). The Road stands in stark contrast to the mode of transportation preferred by the British, the train. Before the advent of the rail in India, as the soldier explains, "the Sahibs traveled up and down here in hundreds" (57), but now they prefer to ride in the comfort and with the speed of the train. The British have removed themselves from the Grand Trunk Road, the road upon which all travel; they forego the egalitarianism of the natural path and seclude themselves in railcars that require money to

board and that segregate the riding population into neat categories: first class, second class, third class.

At this point, Kipling's fantasy of India breaks down as a result of the agents of Empire and their imperial politics, which he cannot prevent from rearing their ugly heads in the middle of his nostalgic vision. Again and again, these characters, which are asked to act out the duties of Empire, reveal Kipling's ambivalence about the rightness of the imperial endeavor, and his perspective on the principles and practicalities of empire-making becomes increasingly pessimistic.

Again, the question arises, "Why?" This abrupt shift in tone may be due to the Kipling family's travels to South Africa, which began in 1898, a year in which Kipling did a significant amount of work on the "Kim" manuscript. He was never completely comfortable in Britain and was not eager to return to the stifling heat of India, especially with a wife and young children, so his eye turned to South Africa. Kipling was eager to visit this outpost of Imperial Britain and settled into a strong friendship with Cecil Rhodes, an idealistic architect of Empire who was stationed there. Kipling arrived with great hopes for the change and development of the country, much as he wished to believe the Empire had done for India:

So complex, so rich with humanity, so remote from western understanding, so lovable, so helpless, [India] was organized,

modernized, protected, and cautiously moved forward into the path of progress by a corps of young English officials who gave it their youth and health with no expectation of any reward beyond a bare livelihood. (Carrington 83)

What he arrived in South Africa to discover, instead, was war, the Boer War. Kipling immediately jumped to the aid of those young English officials whom he admired so much, publishing “The Old Issue” and “The Absent-Minded Beggar” to raise awareness for the war and the Soldiers’ Families’ Fund (302-4). The poems did not elicit critical acclaim but did serve their purpose as morale boosters and fundraisers, which the Empire desperately needed. The battles too often resulted in the decimation of British troops. At one of these, Karee Siding, 180 British soldiers were killed, and Kipling was in attendance. Carrington explains, “Rudyard had long been known as the soldier’s poet, the author of realistic battle-pieces, and it would have surprised many of his readers to know that this was the first time he had seen troops under fire” (308). The unpreparedness of the troops deeply disturbed Kipling, so much that in February 1901, in the middle of *Kim*’s serial run, he published “The Islanders,” a scathing attack on his homeland’s value system (318). A month later, in a letter to Mr. Brooks, the Rottingdean postman, who was then stationed at Kronstadt, Kipling included a Kodak camera with the message and asked him to “keep by [him] and use...to take clear front-view photoes [*sic*] of men’s graves...one grave to

each photo, with the number and name showing clearly... There is a society in Cape Town now formed to get photoes [*sic*] of graves to send home to relatives" (Kipling, *Letters* 3:46-47). As evidenced by the grim request of his letter, Kipling is forced to recognize the toll of maintaining Empire.

Kipling also wrote several short stories during the period of the Boer War to which critics have paid particular attention, noting in them a changed tone. Philip Holden, one such critic, notes these "fissures," saying, "English manhood in 'A Sahib's War' [seems] empty" and possesses the outdated quality of a concept that has passed into obscurity (97). Holden concludes that Kipling's Boer stories, particularly the Indian-influenced "A Sahib's War," advocate for an egalitarian militarized society, but within the texts, the vision "cannot be sustained: the story ends when the narrator recollects the war in South Africa" (106). This interpretation dovetails with this investigation into the themes of *Kim*, which shares the South African story's sense of hope and potential and its disillusioned conclusion.

The Boer War, which ended in 1902, took its toll on Kipling's faith in Empire, and its four years appear greatly to have shaken his most deeply held beliefs. This disillusionment is visible in two specific scenes in *Kim*: the conversation between the Lama and the old soldier, and the conversation between Kim and agent E.23, both of which are set in *Kim*'s 1860s India but

allude to rifts in Kipling's 1890s South Africa. In the conversation between the Lama and the old soldier, Kipling emphasizes the futility of war and the hazard of living in the past with no one but dead colleagues as company. Similar cynicism shines through in the dialogue with E.23. Nothing reflects the stark horror of battle better than the agent's blunt assessment, "If we die, we die. Our names are blotted from the book. That is all" (199). These examples reflect recognition of the toll of maintaining Empire, when portions of the population desire independence. Once Kipling had firsthand knowledge of war and its human cost, his writing in *Kim* began to reflect this awakening. In *Kim*, Kipling appears to acknowledge that the Indian Rebellion was not an isolated incident; his hope for South Africa to be the peaceful, happy imperial colony that India failed to be was shattered.

Carrington's biography also alludes to a change in Kipling around the time of *Kim*. His text attributes this change to the catastrophic events Kipling suffered in 1899: after traveling to America the Kipling family became very ill, and Rudyard seriously so. While he was recovering, his beloved eldest daughter Josephine, who was only six years old, died. While he grieved, he set aside his writing until August 1899. I would argue that Carrington's explanation that Kipling's "youthful exuberance was put behind him" (357) due to his loss is, in part, correct, but Carrington fails to

account for the other devastating blow to Kipling's faith: South Africa.

When taken with Lewis' timeline of *Kim*'s drafting, one can see that the initial narrative was composed around 1898 and into the early months of 1899, but Kipling's trips to America and South Africa intervened, and the remainder of the composition and revision of *Kim* took place from June to August 1900. Both experiences abroad, not just the American trip, factor into Kipling's evolution as a writer. From this perspective, that centrifugal force in *Kim*, the sense of the uncertainty, even the wrongness of the imperial values Kipling had prized, becomes clearer and more intelligible.

CONCLUSION

Much I owe to the Lands that grew—
More to the Lives that fed—
But most to Allah Who gave me two
Separate sides to my head.

I would go without shirt or shoe,
Friend, tobacco or bread,
Sooner than lose for a minute the two
Separate sides of my head!

—Rudyard Kipling, “The Two-Sided Man”
1901

Kim offers fulfillment to all of its major characters, but in particular the Lama, who finds the River of the Arrow; it is significant that Kipling’s India offers the promise of redemption. Not only do the characters achieve fulfillment—if not necessarily perfect resolution—but so does Kipling himself. In this novel, positioned exactly at the midpoint of his career, he is able to put to rest the issues that plagued him throughout his early life and to

close the door on the hateful “Mother Maturin,” which weighed heavily on his mind as a decade-long creative struggle. *Kim* is Kipling’s final literary statement on India, signaling the end of his preoccupation with his fractured youth, and it is, arguably, the zenith of his work. Its status in Kipling’s *oeuvre* is discernable from the significant work that immediately precedes and follows it: 1899’s “The White Man’s Burden” and 1901’s “The Two-Sided Man,” which serve as the epigraphs for this work’s introduction and conclusion. In “The White Man’s Burden,” Kipling promotes the values of Empire, celebrating its benefits on a global scale; however, two years later, after his personal and political difficulties, his tone changes to the much more inclusive “The Two-Sided Man,” which endorses mutual cultural assimilation by the Empire’s varied constituent groups, rather than encourages a one-sided subjugation.

In the novel, Kipling appears to undertake the task of “unlearning,” conceptualized by Spivak and encapsulated by Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean, in which the individual examines his or her personal history, prejudices, and “learned, but now seemingly instinctual, responses” (4). Landry and Maclean’s summation of the revelatory purpose and outcomes of “unlearning” dovetail with my critical analysis of *Kim*:

If we can learn racism, we can unlearn it, and unlearn it precisely because our assumptions about race represent a

closing down of creative possibility, a loss of other options, other knowledge...Unlearning one's privilege by considering it as one's loss constitutes a double recognition. Our privileges, whatever they may be in terms of race, class, nationality, gender, and the like, may have prevented us from gaining a certain kind of Other knowledge: not simply information that we have not yet received, but the knowledge that we are not equipped to understand by reason of our social positions. To unlearn our privileges means, on the one hand, to do our homework, to work hard at gaining some knowledge of the others who occupy those spaces most closed to our privileged view. On the other hand, it means attempting to speak to those others in such a way that they might take us seriously and, most important of all, be able to answer back. (4-5)

The message of cultural exchange and inclusion in “The Two-Sided Man” acknowledges this potential “loss of other options, other knowledge.” Both the poem and *Kim* present Kipling as an author who, by doing his “homework,” attempts to occupy the space of an Indian rather than simply of a Briton. By engaging in this activity, Kipling shows definite signs of overcoming his racism and speaking about Empire from multiple vantage points, not just the privileged one of a white, male, British colonizer.

His ability to create fully fleshed-out characters from the kaleidoscope of Indian society consequently invites comparison to yet another Spivak essay, “Echo,” in which the critic analyzes the Narcissus myth. The relationship between Narcissus and Echo is, naturally, narcissistic in nature. Narcissus speaks, and Echo retorts, parroting back his words. Spivak compares this bond to that of the colonizer and colonist, in that the colonizer,

by imposing his culture on the colonized, expects to have his identity soon mirrored by his subjects. Kipling resists the allure of Echo, however; he emphasizes difference—not only between British and Indian, but also between Indian and Indian. According to Landry and Maclean’s reading, this acceptance of “differences and distances [is] indispensable for any movement toward decolonization” (5). Reading *Kim* in this critical stance presents Kipling in an entirely new political light.

Kim also provides Kipling with an opportunity to pay homage to the land of India, which he loves, while expressing his evolving frustration with the inadequacies of Empire. His questions about the value of work, duty, war, and service, qualities that had been such hallmarks of his writing, are compromised due to his eye-opening experience on the front lines of the Boer War; rather than allow this experience to destroy him, however, Kipling held his disillusionment close. Like Kipling’s poetry, which has always been acclaimed by critics, *Kim* is a work of significant compression and condensation, its tightly interwoven layers of meaning pressing in and pushing out against one another to create a novel of exquisite balance, personal consequence, and historical relevance.

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