

## THE CONTENT AND DISCONTENTS OF KIPLING'S IMPERIALISM

In 1939 when Auden wrote his wry lines, Time that 'Worships language and forgives / Everyone by whom it lives' had not yet 'Pardoned Kipling and his views',<sup>1</sup> nor was exoneration imminent. Despite the patriotic fervour of the ensuing war years, liberals continued to regret colonialism's excesses, the anti-colonialist struggle was a left-wing cause, and intellectuals were sceptical about the British Empire. T. S. Eliot's praise for Kipling's vision of imperial responsibility in a 1941 essay met with opposition from prominent writers and critics who considered Kipling's view of life to be incompatible with the principles of civility and were repelled by the bullying self-righteousness and racial vanity of his imperialism.<sup>2</sup> The reactions to Eliot's apologia secured Kipling's reputation as 'the prophet of British imperialism in its expansionist phase' (Orwell). During the following decades those who argued for his recognition as a major artist - although he had long since achieved popular acclaim as a 'classic', he had not been admitted to the canon - did so by pronouncing his social and political ideas irrelevant to evaluating his complex techniques and explorations of 'permanent human and moral themes'.<sup>3</sup>

By the mid-1960s, Western scholars whose discomfort at European aggression and conceit was receding in the aftermath of statutory decolonization, had compiled a balance-sheet of colonialism which provided critics with a permit for expressing sober satisfaction at empire's achievements. Contributors to the concerted reappraisal around Kipling's centenary year freely infused their 'disinterested literary assessments' with esteem for his idealistic commitment to empire and firm grasp of political realities.<sup>4</sup> Now that the ideological right is on the offensive in the West, an even more favourable climate exists for Kipling's rehabilitation, and the ending of copyright on his works in 1987 produced a plethora of paperback editions with new introductions and appreciations which are frequently buttressed with exculpations of his imperialist vision. Such readings draw on and abet the anti-anti-imperialism fostered by Western ideologues eager to impugn post-colonial regimes, honour the colonialist legacy bequeathed by Europe, and justify the continuing asymmetry between the hemispheres.<sup>5</sup> At a time when politicians, journalists, and entertainers have joined in the 'refurbishment of the empire's tarnished image',<sup>6</sup> the vindication of Kipling's textual affirmations and denigrations has been completed. When the British Prime Minister announces that she is 'a faithful student of Kipling', she is not deferring to his literary virtuosity. When critics proffer a

gloss which underwrites Kipling's views on a patriotism enjoining obedience to an hierarchical status quo at home and bellicosity abroad, on the conservation of England's ancestral culture, and on Europe's title to global leadership, they are giving comfort to a domestic politics of social conformity and class deference, re-evoking an identity of race with nation, and sustaining the values of a white mythology.

Whether a revisionist criticism erases, commends, or reconstrues Kipling's imperialism, its various practices circumvent a critique of the texts' deliberated ideological enunciations and inadvertent registering of contradictory meanings. One devotee has summarily disposed of a body of historical utterances and their subsequent reinscriptions in critical discussion: 'Kipling the imperialist is dead and gone; it is Kipling the verbal prophet who commands attention now.'<sup>7</sup> From an opposite position, another champion embraces Kipling as the poet of empire, praising him for expressing that sense of imperial destiny which had formed a whole phase of national existence:

That age is one about which many Britons - and to a lesser extent Americans and Europeans - now feel an exaggerated sense of guilt. . . . Whereas if we approach him more historically, less hysterically, we shall find in this very relation to his age a cultural phenomenon of absorbing interest.

Andrew Rutherford directs this commentary to a British audience perceived as an undifferentiated communality: for Britons 'of all social classes and cultural groups', the writings afford the gratifications of identifying with 'our shared inheritance', the natives being rewarded with 'sensitive, sympathetic vignettes of Indian life and character'.<sup>8</sup> As a defence which so egregiously concurs with the writings' overt stance, this exposition lacks the ingenuity of that much-favoured reconstruction where an alternative set of meanings is substituted for Kipling's narratives of empire.

In this interpretation, Kipling is rediscovered as 'a student of alienation and the moral and spiritual predicament of industrial man'. To an historian of the British Empire who is comfortable with designating the colonial world as the raw and Europe as the cooked, Kipling's imperialism appears a means of curing modern anomie and restoring a balance to over-urbanized society 'by linking it in service with the underdeveloped world and renewing it spiritually by fresh contact there with Nature and "otherness"'.<sup>9</sup> For Western critics and the literary journalists who communicate their opinions, a reading which amplifies Kipling's address to the crisis of contemporary Western civilization, while muting the strident colonialist register of his thematic and rhetorical predications, has the advantage of allowing a renegotiation of his status as a serious thinker/artist. The foremost exponent of this view is Alan Sandison who argues that empire for Kipling was simply a 'Place des Signes', his real concern being with 'man's essential estrangement, illumined with such clarity in the imperial alien's relationship to his hostile environment'.<sup>10</sup> Because for Sandison, as for Kipling, India is 'a very powerful symbol of a nature intrinsically hostile to man', the figure of 'a world inimical to his physical and moral survival', a potent image 'of the forces of persecution ranged against the individual in his struggle to sustain his identity',<sup>11</sup> his commentary colludes with Kipling's specification

of India as the negative pole in that ubiquitous structure of oppositions - mind/body, reason/passion, order/chaos, intelligibility/incoherence - deployed by dominant orders to legitimate relationships of power. On this basis, Sandison's exposition proceeds to reproduce the textual inscription of an imperialist discursive practice - the construction of an identity that is dependent on the conquest of another's self- as a description of 'the human condition'. Since, within this discourse, the places of subject and object are allotted to Europe and its others, and these others are denied agency, the colonized are by definition excluded from it. A gloss which recuperates Kipling's intended meanings in ontological terms could appear calculated to drain the writings of historical specificity; yet it also attests to the authenticity of his 'portraits', and it does so through extrapolating the 'historical realities' from the do-it-yourself hagiography of the Raj, among which Kipling's fabrications were pre-eminent. The outcome is a criticism which, by reiterating Kipling's ideological assumptions, naturalizes the principles of the master culture as universal forms of thought and projects its authorized representations as truths.

The terms of Kipling's rehabilitation have been virtually uncontested, with only a few of the new studies situating the writings within a discursive field and reading the texts as ambivalent enunciations of an imperialist world-outlook.<sup>12</sup> What has not yet emerged is a left critique of Kipling. It may be common knowledge on the left that, as Tom Nairn has written, Britain is the 'most profoundly and unalterably imperialist of societies', its state forms 'inwardly modelled and conditioned by prolonged external depredations', its national consciousness and culture subjectively marked by imperialist myths.<sup>13</sup> Yet this generalized awareness has not produced studies on the making and components of imperialism's discourses or on the imperialist determinants of the metropolitan culture, and the indifference to Kipling repeats the larger neglect of a project to which his work is indispensable. For in writings where the discursive aggression of the referential project is interrupted by utterances of uncertainty, desire, and fear, the precepts of imperialist ideology are reassembled and its deceptively unitary structure broken open. The recognition of such tensions and contradictions does not, however, remove the inherent restraints on reading fictions which are indelibly etched by thematic assertions and rhetorical coercions that make known and consolidate an imperialist triumphalism. Neither the influence of Kipling's demotic verse on Brecht nor his popularity in the Soviet Union, which are routinely cited as evidence of his universal appeal and ecumenical sympathies, can obliterate these inscriptions. What criticism can recover, through dismantling the plural discourses and reconstructing the displacements and erasures, is the effaced historical contest and unrehearsed enunciations of the anxieties in the conquering imagination, both necessarily repressed by the exigencies of ideological representation. Kipling did set out to be the bard of empire, and although the ambition was abundantly realized, this is not all that he became.

#### IMPERIALISM'S SCRIBE

Kipling's writings moved empire from the margins of English fiction to its centre without interrogating the official metropolitan culture. In cataloguing a

lifelong devotion to dominant beliefs and values in *Something of Myself*, an autobiography written in old age, he had no occasion to repent youthful indiscretions of opinion. The Club, the Mess and the Freemasons Lodge are prized, while the 'perversions' and 'unclean microbes' infecting male communities are deplored; there is hostility to liberals, socialists, and the labour movement, xenophobia towards Jews and contempt for blacks. Such predilections would be a matter for biography, were it not that they are written into the authoritative discourses of the texts, put there by a writer who conceived his function as teacher, prophet, and public voice. Pointing out that both his grandfathers had been Wesleyan ministers, Kipling recalls an early ambition to tell the English 'something of the whole sweep and meaning of things and effort and origins throughout the Empire'. Later, when an established author and a pillar of the establishment, political conviction inspired him to write his Boer War verses and tributes to Joseph Chamberlain, Cecil John Rhodes, and Lord Milner. It was passion for the expansion of empire which moved him to offer his gift with language to Rhodes, the architect of a plan for territorial aggrandizement whose imagination of conquest encompassed annexing the planets to England: 'he said to me apropos of nothing in particular: "What's your dream?" I answered that he was part of it. . . . My use to him was mainly as a purveyor of words; for he was largely inarticulate.'<sup>14</sup> In the story 'On the city wall', Kipling has the narrator, himself a word-*zvallah*, decry the uselessness of books and scorn the lying proverb which says that the pen is mightier than the sword.<sup>15</sup> This is the stratagem of a dissembling writer who, having committed his own books and pen to political causes, feigns disbelief in the power of writing and directs attention instead to 'the line of guns that could pound the City to powder'.

Kipling's writings were not confined to fictions 'about empire', but it was his fiction of empire which, aided by the enthusiasm of the popular periodical press, made him the uncrowned laureate.<sup>16</sup> To gauge his role in the invention of an imperialist English identity requires the study of how reader responses were catalysed over many decades as forms of consciousness, social conduct, and political behaviour. What is immediately available to critical attention is the address of instructional and inspirational writing delivered from the heartland of an imperialist culture. Directed at a readership positioned as a racially homogeneous and masculine community, unfissured by class allegiances, Kipling's imperialist writings articulate a new patriotism purged of the radicalism in its earlier forms, and fabricate a linear narrative of England's 'undefiled heritage' beginning with the inheritance of the imperial flame as it passed from their conquerors into English hands, and consummated in the British Empire. Through blandishment and prophecy the cautionary verses urge the English to curb the unruly in themselves (as in 'The children's song' and 'If') if they are to realize their natural aptitude for ruling others. In 'A song of the English' (1893), he wrote:

Fair is our lot - o goodly is our heritage!  
 (Humble ye, my people, and be fearful in your mirth!)  
 For the Lord our God Most High

He hath made the deep as dry,  
He hath smote for us a pathway to the ends of all the Earth!

Hold ye the Faith - the Faith our Fathers sealed us;  
Whoring not with visions - otherwise and overstate.

Keep ye the Law - be swift in all obedience -  
Clear the land of evil, drive the road and bridge the ford.

Here the syntax of the sermon and the metre of the hymn regenerate the terms of imperialist propaganda into the notion of empire as a divinely appointed duty devolving on the English. Even as the mode shifts from the declamatory to the lyrical, and the stern call to imperial expansion and recall to ancestral belief is replaced by an indulgent longing to voyage beyond the constraints of metropolitan existence, Utopia is made instantly manifest in the colonial venture:

We were dreamers, dreaming greatly, in the man-stifled town;  
We yearned beyond the sky-line where the strange roads go down.  
Came the Whisper, came the Vision, came the Power with the Need,  
Till the Soul that is not man's soul was lent us to lead.

Although Kipling has been hailed as a visionary, his mystique of empire more properly belongs to that worldly imperialist aspiration which imbued a predatory project with a revelational quality. In *Nostramo*, Conrad identified this compound as 'the misty idealism of the Northerners who at the smallest encouragement dream of nothing less than the conquest of the earth'.

Where the address of the imperialist verse is solemn and portentous, that of the stories idolizing the British as colonial rulers joins the briskly exegetical with the gallantly sentimental. Since the language of European ascendancy and Anglo-Indian conceit remains uncontradicted, the narrative structure of such tales is sealed against any interrogation of the Raj's self-presentation. On those occasions when the Indians do appear to speak, they are the mouthpieces of a ventriloquist who, using a facile idiom that alternates between the artless and the ornate, projects his own account of grateful native dependency. The monologism of these fictions is not Kipling's only mode, however. In those texts which call attention to their own fictional nature and stage the multivalencies of language, the pretence to authentic representation and the imparting of truths is caricatured. The playful posture towards words and writing of the narrator in 'On the city wall', who even as he presents himself in the process of composing his chronicle, distinguishes between 'living the story' and 'writing it', produces uncertainties in the proffered report of events. This ambiguity is sustained when the regulation reiteration of British discipline, fortitude, and devotion to duty, delivered in a diction which values social order and the exercise of stern political control, is undercut by the flamboyance of metaphor and the banter of puns:

Lalun has not yet been described. She would need, so Wali Daa says, a thousand pens of gold and ink scented with musk. She has been variously compared to the Moon, the Dil Sagar Lake, a spotted quail, a gazelle, the Sun

on the Desert of Kutch, the Dawn, the Stars, and the young bamboo. . . . One song . . . says the beauty of Lalun was so great that it troubled the hearts of the British Government and caused them to lose their peace of mind. That is the way the song is sung in the streets; but, if you examine it carefully and know the key to the explanation, you will find that there are three puns in it - on 'beauty', 'heart', and 'peace of mind' - so that it runs 'By the subtlety of Lalun the administration was troubled and it lost such and such a man.' (326, 323)

When Kipling sports with the referential mode which he so ably used to prescribe codes of conduct and instil ways of seeing, he puts in question the very predications which elsewhere he so aggressively articulated. The absent subject of 'To be filed for reference' (*Plain Tales from the Hills*, 1890) is 'The Book' compiled by an educated English drunkard gone native, and reputed to contain the truths about the people of the country concealed from the British. Allusions to its substance suggest the sensational ethnography of an excited Western imagination - it is coyly referred to by the Anglo-Indian narrator as in need of expurgation, an opinion proudly shared by its author - and not the text of an alternative system of meanings. Nevertheless, 'The Book' does function to contest the colonialist claim of 'knowing the Real India', a boast made sometimes archly and sometimes not, in other stories. Here the reader is invited to believe that the official British version is indeed faulty, even though the potential counter-knowledge is strategically suppressed. In these self-reflexive tales, the univocal pronouncements of the polemical writings are undermined or countermanded, and these departures from the dominant mode are a reminder of just how firmly such doubts are elsewhere quelled. If 'To be filed for reference' both intimates and averts a challenge to British knowledge, then *Kim* (1901) confidently reaffirms its validity. It is the English curator of a museum, 'with his mound of books - French, and German, with photographs and reproductions' and his acquaintance with 'the labours of European scholars', who communicates new learning about his own heritage to the amazed lama. It is through collecting and collating information about India's roads, rivers, plants, stones, and customs that the Ethnological Survey makes available to the government that intelligence which is essential to the proper exercise of British power. And it is Kim, the sahib who can pass as any one of India's many peoples, who has access to the secrets of all India and puts these at the disposal of a benevolent Raj.

#### COERCION, DESIRE AND FEAR IN KIPLING'S INDIA

Kipling's India raises the problem posed by Edward Said in *Orientalism* as to 'how one can study other cultures and peoples from a libertarian, or a non-repressive and non-manipulative perspective'.<sup>17</sup> More specific questions are: can a writer immersed in and owing allegiance to a master culture, construe the radical difference of another and subordinated culture as yet another conceptual order within a multiverse of diverse meanings? Are Kipling's fabrications of India, as has been claimed, testimony to the possibility of such ideologically

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unfettered constructions? It is *Kim* which critics call upon to argue that in his representation of India's uniquely multiple being, Kipling did indeed transcend the boundaries of his own ethnocentric vision.<sup>18</sup> While this is not the position taken by Edward Said, who criticizes Kipling's fiction of an immutable and immobile India, he does in his generous essay on *Kim* credit Kipling with giving India a positive identity: 'We can watch a great artist blinded in a sense by his own insights about India, confusing the reality before him, which he saw with such colour and ingenuity, with the notion that these realities were permanent and essential.'<sup>19</sup> The implication is that despite a crucial flaw in its composition, this India is the product of a non-coercive perspective. It could be argued, however, that because Kipling's India is reified under Western eyes as a frieze or a pageant, and romanticized as an object of sensuous and voluptuous pleasure to be enjoyed by Europe, it is an invention which colonizes the space of India's own significations with Western fantasies. Moreover, this 'Orientalized India of the imagination . . . an ideal India, unchanging and attractive, full of bustle and activity, but also restful. . . even idyllic' is not Kipling's only India<sup>20</sup> and within this larger, heterogeneous configuration, India can signify nullity as well as plenty, and its difference can be variously constituted as deviant, menacing, or magnetic.

Kipling's journalism made a major contribution to the text of the Raj, working within and extending existing representations by vilifying the customs and manners of contemporary India and ridiculing its ancient literary heritages.<sup>21</sup> A glorious past was reconstructed by nineteenth-century European Indologists, who like their predecessors saw their role as making India's traditional learning known to the West and returning a noble legacy to peoples whose religious life had fallen into debased practices. This project was anathema to the architects of an absolute government in the metropolis and their agents in India. Their scorn was eagerly reiterated by an Anglo-Indian community outraged at Max Muller's postulate of an Indo-European family of languages and cultures - this was the source of the witticisms about 'our Aryan brothers', who so clearly were not. In 1886, Kipling wrote an article for the *Civil and Military Gazette* on *The Mahabharata*, then being translated into English by Pratap Chandra Roy, where his disparagement of the epic echoed the contempt for the Sanskrit classics earlier and famously expressed by Macaulay in his 1839 Minute on Education:

section after section - with its monstrous array of nightmare-like incidents, where armies are slain, and worlds swallowed with monotonous frequency, its records of impossible combats, its lengthy catalogues of female charms, and its nebulous digressions on points of morality - gives but the scantiest return for the labour expended on its production. . . . The fantastic creations of the Hindu mythology have as much reality in their composition and coherence in their action, as the wind-driven clouds of sunset. They are monstrous, painted in all the crude colours that a barbaric hand can apply; moved by machinery that would be colossal were it not absurd, and placed in all their doings beyond the remotest pale of human sympathy. The demi-god who is slain and disembowelled at dusk rises again whole and unharmed at dawn. As

with the *Mahabharata*-, so with the *Ramayana*. . . . Boars like purple mountains, maidens with lotus feet and the gait of she-elephants, giants with removable and renewable heads . . . are scattered broadcast through its pages. . . . The working world of today has no place for these ponderous records of nothingness.<sup>22</sup>

The utilitarian rage of a relentless literalism that uses the vocabulary of commerce to castigate the extravagance of tropes could appear an aberration in one whose own trade was in literary language. Certainly in his capacity as licensed scribe of Anglo-India, Kipling is here reiterating an accredited means of insulting India's difference. But the derision that places articulations of the Indian imagination beyond human comprehension was not merely the expediency of a hack deferring to his readers' prejudices - this is clear in a letter he wrote at the same time mocking William Morris's high regard for 'that monstrous midden'.<sup>23</sup> Yet the fictions can tell another story: in 'The bridge-builders' (*The Day's Work*, 1898) a cosmology of becoming, dissolution, and re-emergence is juxtaposed to the Western notion of linear time.

Enunciations of India's otherness are never absent, but in those writings which project India as the incarnation of what a European self is constrained to exclude, alienation is intercepted by identification. A regret at the necessary ending of intimacy is registered in 'The native born' where India is characterized as the lost object of desire that must be relinquished for entry into the patriarchal law:

To our dear dark foster mothers,  
To the heathen songs they sung -  
To the heathen speech we babbled,  
Ere we came to the white man's tongue.

A different specification of lack is inscribed in those fictions which, reproducing colonialist fantasy, transfigure India as the provider of libidinal excitation. The embrace of that which the European self denies becomes enmeshed with the colonialist appetite for possession and control. Such multiple exigencies are dramatized in the love stories 'Beyond the pale' (*Plain Tales*) and 'Without benefit of clergy' (*Life's Handicap*, 1891), where native subordination and Oriental passion, those staples of colonial discourse, come together in the ecstatic and ceremonial yielding of the native as female to the dominating presence of a masculine West. In the battle between creative man and castrating woman fought on English ground in *The Light That Failed* (1890), the figure of a hybrid alien is invoked to represent a notion of woman's Manichaeic nature: 'she was a sort of Negroid-Jewess-Cuban - with morals to match [serving] as a model for the devils and the angels both' (155). In the tales of the white man's sexual encounters with the native woman, however, the Indian female, who must enact a double subjugation, is all innocence and ardent acquiescence. Ameera's obeisance to her English lover in 'Without benefit of clergy' stages the total abjection of India as colonized and female, the abasement of her address to the white man, 'My king, for all thy sweet words, well I know that I am thy servant and thy slave and the dust under thy feet' (163) culminating in a



deathbed blasphemy of her Islamic faith: 'I bear witness - I bear witness . . . that there is no God - but - thee - beloved' (178).

Michael O'Pray has argued in *New Formations* for recovering Kipling as a key figure in a marginalized English tradition 'where romanticism merges with nostalgia . . . and an exoticism and quasi-mysticism that have a complex relationship to the British Empire'.<sup>24</sup> But because, as O'Pray recognizes, the fantastical is condensed with the colonizing spirit, the effect is to invest domination with libidinal intensities - Conrad's 'insatiable imagination of conquest'. A central trope of Kipling's other Indian novel, *The Naulahka* (1892), is an erotically charged urge for colonialist acquisition. The necklace of the title joins a sign of the East's fabled wealth with a symbol of woman's body, and the narration of the quest for the priceless and sacred jewel mimicks a bellicose act that is both an imperialist invasion and a sexual assault. A desolate landscape is transformed into a meaningless social space, giving the West a moral right to usurp its wasted resources: 'miles of profitless, rolling ground . . . studded with unthrifty trees . . . this abyss of oblivion. . . . The silence of the place and the insolent nakedness of its empty ways . . . the vast, sleeping land' (59, 78, 164). But an overweening white confidence enunciated in disdain for India - 'Standing there, he recognized . . . how entirely the life, habits and traditions of this strange people alienated them from all that seemed good and right to him' (212) - is undermined by articulations of the panic afflicting the conquering imagination. The holy well where the jewel is secreted has an intolerable smell of musk and is 'fringed to the lips with rank vegetation'; the surrounding rock is 'rotten with moisture'; from the stagnant waters rears 'the head of a sunken stone pillar, carved with monstrous and obscene gods'; the pool, overhung by a fig tree buttressing the rock 'with snake-like roots', is inhabited by an alligator, 'a long welt of filth and slime' (155-6, 165-6). From these signs of a rank and corrupting sexuality and of original sin, the white assailant flees in horror.

Sometimes a source of guilty lust, India elsewhere is constructed as the negation of reason, order, and coherence so that the anxiety induced by difference is dispelled by moral censure. At its crudest, as in 'The enlightenments of Pagett M.P.',<sup>25</sup> this is articulated as an uninterrupted calumny of Indian social existence: 'the foundations of their life are rotten - utterly and bestially rotten. . . . In effect, native habits and beliefs are an organized conspiracy against the laws of healthy and happy life.' Contempt for custom can be conflated with anger at India's climate, both standing in the way of implementing British purpose: 'storm, sudden freshets, death in every manner and shape . . . drought, sanitation . . . birth, wedding, burial, and riot in the village of twenty warring castes' ('The bridge-builders', 5). Where disquiet at India's otherness is not allayed by reproof, its particularities are perceived as a hostile presence threatening to overwhelm the white community:

There was neither sky, sun, nor horizon - nothing but a brown purple haze of heat. It was as though the earth was dying of apoplexy. . . . The atmosphere within was only 104 ° . . . and heavy with the foul smell of badly-t.-immed kerosene lamps; and this stench, combined with that of native tobacco baked

brick, and dried earth, sends the heart of many a strong man down 10 his boots, for it is the smell of the Great Indian Empire when it turns itself for six months into a house of torment . . . a tom-tom in the coolie-lines began to beat with the steady throb of a swollen artery inside some brain-fevered skull. ('At the end of the passage', *Life's Handicap*, 183, 198)

India's incomprehensible menace serves also to displace the colonialist nightmare of native vengeance, itself the verso of that fantasy where the country and its people are willingly held in the Raj's embrace. 'The mark of the beast' (*Life's Handicap*) uses the conventions of the horror story to narrate an act of native retribution that is 'beyond any human and rational experience' (251): the lurid circumstances effectively screening the import of colonial resentment. 'The strange ride of Morrowbie Jukes' (*The Phantom Rickshaw*, 1892), Kipling's most potent tale of European dread, veils this secular fright in the incertitude of hallucination. In detailing the ride of a delirious engineer with a head for plans but without imagination, 'over what seemed a limitless expanse of moonlit sands', the narration transforms the physical terrain into a metaphysical landscape. Accidentally plunged by his horse into a crater, Jukes finds himself trapped in a grotesque community of pariah Indians who, having recovered from trance or catalepsy after being presumed dead, have been confined to conditions of appalling deprivation and degradation. Here Jukes, who no longer commands the deference due to a sahib, suffers the 'nervous terror' of being immured amongst hostile Indians. His rescue by a loyal servant both mimicks the relief of awakening from a bad dream, and acts therapeutically to restore British confidence in the invulnerability of a position undermined by the central narrative event.

#### STRATEGIC BOUNDARIES, NATIVE MARGINALIZATION

Within the specification of India as other, the figures of the alluring exotic and the minatory alien stand out, on the one hand, as the signs of the sensual temptations impeding the exercise of British rule and, on the other, of an unintelligible danger to its hegemony. Notably absent is India incarnate as political opponent to the Raj. Edward Said has proposed that Kipling studiously avoided giving us two worlds in conflict because for him '*there was no conflict*. . . it was India's best destiny to be ruled by England'. This confidence Said attributes to the defining context in which he wrote: 'There *were* no appreciable deterrents to the imperialist world-view held by Kipling. Hence he remained untroubled.'<sup>26</sup> But potent counters *did* exist both in India's traditional system of knowledge and in emergent nationalist discourses and if Kipling was serenely unaware that these transgressed imperialist principles, then his writings were not, as attention to those strategies which silence voices able to interrogate the British Empire as cultural text and political concept will show.

Parataxis is a favoured procedure for organizing incommensurable discourses in ways that conceal an antagonism of ideas. The road, the river, and the wheel in *Kim* serve dual and opposing functions within the narrative. While Kim 'flung himself whole-heartedly upon the next turn of the wheel', the lama strives

to free himself 'from the Wheel of Things' (210; 13). Whereas for Kim the Grand Trunk Road is a river of life, to the lama it is a hard path to be trodden in his search for a mythic river that will cleanse him from the sin of material being. Between Kim's pursuit of action, the life of the senses, and personal identity, and the lama's quest for quietism, ascetism, and the annihilation of self, there is no dialogue. Hence disjunctive goals, the one valued and the other denounced by imperialism's tenets, easily cohere as the mutual venture defined by the lama who in his studied indifference to the temporal, accepts Kim's recruitment into the Secret Service as yet another insignificant action: 'he aided me in my Search. I aided him in his. . . . Let him be a teacher, let him be a scribe - what matter? He will have attained Freedom at the end. The rest is illusion' (407). This happy end, which allows Kim to have his nirvana and eat it, prompts another agent, the pragmatic Mahbub Ali, to say, 'Now I understand that the boy, sure of Paradise, can yet enter Government Service, my mind is easier' (407). There is a reprise of this expedient ending in the ceremonial healing of the crisis precipitated by the irreconcilable roles Kim must play as apprentice spy and *chela* to a holy man; his recovery is effected without any engagement with the competing commitments and it acts to abolish conflict.

The contradictory ideological imperatives of etching the division between imperialist self and native other at the same time as re-presenting colonialist/colonized hostility as British/Indian collaboration, engenders the invention of boundary situations inscribing both exigencies. In a territory signalled in the titles - 'Beyond the pale', 'Without benefit of clergy', 'On the city wall' - and which is literally out of bounds to the English in colonial conditions, the frontiers drawn up by the imperial power can be crossed without endangering the relationship dependent on the policing of borders. This liminal space thus neither constitutes a zone liberated from the Raj, nor is the positioning of master/native displaced. Instead it is construed as a peripheral district licensed by the centre for the episodic transgression of colonialist interdicts. The movement between the languages of Law and Desire, the one enunciating the light of Anglo-India, the other the dark of India, reinstalls the chasm even as the protagonists from across the divide meet in intimacy. 'By day Holden did his work. . . . At nightfall he returned to Ameera' ('Without benefit of clergy', 165). 'In the daytime Trejago drove through his routine of office work. . . . At night when all the City was still came the . . . walk [to] Bisesa' ('Beyond the pale', 175). When Holden has performed 'the birth-sacrifice' to protect the son born to Ameera, by slaughtering goats and 'muttering the Mahomedan prayer', he is 'eager to get to the light of the company of his fellows' (157); and if Trejago's passion is an endless delight, it is also a folly and a madness.

The exclusions of the colonialist code are thus ambivalently displayed as necessary deprivation. The ecstasy which Englishmen find in Bisesa's room and Ameera's house, or the pleasures afforded by Lalun's salon on the city wall, none of which is available in the bungalow or the Club, are articulated in rhapsodic vein. But if the lucid world of Anglo-India inhibits sensual gratification, it also preserves reason and order. This demands that the poesy of the illicit crossings is disrupted by the prose of censure: in one case disobedience is punished by disease and death, in another by mutilation. After Ameera and

her son have died, the house which Holden had taken for her is torn down 'so that no man may say where [it] stood', presaging her mother's prophecy that 'He will go back to his own people in time' (182; 137). 'Beyond the pale' opens with an ironic admonition:

A man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race and breed. Let the White go to the White, and the Black to the Black. Then, whatever trouble falls is in the ordinary course of things - neither sudden, alien, nor unexpected. (171)

Although this is contradicted by the 'Hindu Proverb' which serves as the story's epigram ('Love heeds not caste nor sleep a broken bed. I went in search of love and lost myself [171]), its wisdom is confirmed by the ending. If the love stories are both eulogistic and censorious about the transgression of frontiers, the allegorical 'The bridge-builders' whole-heartedly applauds that passage through which the British donate and the Indians receive technological progress, for there is no encroachment on colonialist divisions. The gulf between the British doctrine on the conquest of nature and a deferential Indian stance towards the integrity of the physical environment is momentarily traversed by the British engineer's opium-induced vision of the gods in conclave. On awakening, however, he banishes all memory of what he has seen: 'in that clear light there was no room for a man to think dreams of the dark' (41). An alien perspective on the universe and time is made known and dispelled; once again the status quo is entrenched.

Representations which neutralize or elide the challenge to the British world-view, and which ensure that the positioning of master and native is not disturbed, close the space for a counter-discourse authored by the colonized as historical subject and agent. Yet in the act of muting these utterances, the texts reveal a knowledge of their existence and their danger. If we follow Fredric Jameson's proposition that the hegemonic discourse implies a dialogue with a dissenting voice even when this is disarticulated,<sup>27</sup> then Kipling's imperialist writings can be read as a pre-emptive reply to Indian opposition. What is heard instead is the idiom of grateful dependence from villagers and servants, of proud compliance from sepoys and war-like tribesmen, and of insolent malcontent from Western-educated 'babus'. When the language of legend or religion is spoken, this is not permitted to contest imperialist teaching; nor does it confront European ascendancy on the political ground staked out by the text of the British Empire.

It is such suppressions which make the interlocution of voices in 'On the city wall' noteworthy, for in this fiction the Indians *are* autonomous and oppositional speaking subjects. Characteristically, the story moves between disjunctive modes. The Indian scene is represented in a vocabulary of parodic romanticism, its ironic effusions alternating with the pompous diction of British rule:

Year by year England sends out fresh drafts for the first fighting-line, which is officially called the Indian Civil Service. These die, or kill themselves by overwork, or are worried to death, or broken in health and hope in order that the land may be protected from death and sickness, famine and war, and may

eventually become capable of standing alone. It will never stand alone, but the idea is a pretty one, and men are willing to die for it, and yearly the work of pushing and coaxing and scolding and petting the country into good living goes forward. (324)

But there is another and uncharacteristic arrangement of discourses. As always the might of the Raj is proclaimed loud and clear:

Hugonin, the Assistant District Superintendent of Police, a boy of twenty, had got together thirty constables and was forcing the crowd through the streets. . . . The dog-whip cracked across the writhing backs, and the constables smote afresh with baton and gun-butt. (343-4)

Now, however, Britain's right to rule, whether projected as benevolent tutelage or brute force, is contested. Indian refusal is here spoken both in English, which was commonly used in the emergent nationalist writings and speeches, and also in the vernaculars, for once transcribed without coy and cloying archaisms. Opposition to colonialist claims thus joins Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh in a chorus of dissident voices. The Western-educated Wali Dad, exceptionally speaking an impeccable 'standard' English, recounts the consistent anti-British record of the unrepentant old Sikh warrior, Khem Singh, and also spurns on his own account the rewards offered by the Raj to the subaltern Indian:

I might wear an English coat and trouser. I might be a leading Muhammadan pleader. I might be received even at the Commissioner's tennis parties where the English stand on one side and the natives on the other, in order to promote social intercourse throughout the Empire. (338)

In a quite different style, Lalun, the courtesan from whose house a rebellion is being planned, voices her disaffection in a song which joins the memory of war against the Moghul invaders with the hope of a present struggle against the British. This is intended for, and heard by, the imprisoned Khem Singh; he in turn speaks of his old hatred against the government and his wish to engage in further battle. Such utterances of enmity against the Raj are ironically compounded by the reversion of the agnostic Wali Dad to his ancestral religion during the Mohurran festival. Represented by the English narrator as proof of Indian fanaticism, communalism, and traditionalism, his action can also be read as a gesture of cultural resistance. This story imposes no formal rapprochement of opposites. The seditious plot is of course foiled, but without the instigators becoming reconciled to their subjugated condition - at the end Khem Singh is to be heard suggesting plans for the escape of other fighters jailed by the British administration. Still inchoate as an insurgent discourse, the speech of Indians confronting and rejecting British authority points up what Kipling's writings elsewhere effaced.

Kipling is an exemplary artist of imperialism. The fabrications of England's mysterious imperialist identity and destiny, reiterated in the Indian writings and carried over into the later English fictions; homilies on the development of character in the metropolitan population, hymned in one of the verses as adherence to a code of Law, Order, Duty and Restraint, Obedience, Discipline;

the celebrations of a triumphalism extending from the conquest of the physical environment to autocratic relationships within the domestic society and between Britain and the colonies; the projection of the white race as the natural rulers of a global space created and divided by imperialism; the positioning of the other hemisphere as peripheral to a Western centre - these inscriptions of an outlook constructed in an historical moment continue to offer rich pickings to a militant conservatism seeking sanctions for authoritarianism, social conformity, patriotism, and Britain's commanding world role by references back to a splendid imperial past. To a criticism concerned with mapping the exclusions and affirmations of an imperialist culture whose legacy has still not been spent, these same texts can be made to reveal both imperialism's grandiloquent self-presentation and those inadmissible desires, misgivings, and perceptions concealed in its discourses.

#### NOTES

- 1 'In memory of W. B. Yeats', *The English Auden*, ed. Edward Mendelson, (London: Faber, 1977), 241-3. The verses on Kipling are omitted from the revised version in *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (London: Faber, 1976), 197-8.
- 2 T. S. Eliot, 'Introduction' to *A Choice of Kipling's Verse* (London: Faber, 1941). Among the responses were George Orwell, 'Rudyard Kipling' (1942) and Lionel Trilling, 'Kipling' (1943), both reprinted in Andrew Rutherford (ed.), *Kipling's Mind and Art* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1964). Boris Ford's essay, 'A case for Kipling?', first appeared in *Scrutiny* (1942); see Elliot L. Gilbert (ed.), *Kipling and the Critics* (New York: New York University Press, 1965). See also E. M. Forster's earlier recoil from Kipling's outlook in 'The boy who never grew up', *Daily Herald* (9 June 1921), 7, and 'That job's done', *The Listener*, Supplement m (March 1937).
- 3 See Gilbert, op. cit., and Roger Lancelyn Green (ed.), *Kipling: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971).
- 4 Among the studies which appeared in the mid-1960s were Andrew Rutherford (ed.), *Kipling's Mind and Art* (1964), J. I. M. Stewart, *Rudyard Kipling* (London: Gollancz, 1966), C. A. Bodelsen, *Aspects of Kipling's Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), Alan Sandison, *The Wheel of Empire* (London: Macmillan, 1967), Louis L. Cornell, *Kipling in India* (London: Macmillan, 1966), Bonamy Dobree, *Rudyard Kipling: realist and fabulist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), T. R. Henn, *Kipling* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1967). J. M. S. Tompkins's *The Art of Rudyard Kipling* (London: Methuen, 1959) was reissued in 1965, and a few years later Elliot L. Gilbert's *The Good Kipling* was published (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1970). Between 1960 and 1965 *English Literature in Transition* produced *An Annotated Bibliography of Writings about Kipling*, III, 3, 4, 5 (1960) and VIII, 3, 4 (1965).
- 5 For citations of this tendency see 'Scrapbook: post-anti-imperialism?', *Inscriptions* 2 (1986), 45-51 (Occasional Bulletin published by the Group for the Critical Study of Colonial Discourse, University of California, Santa Cruz).
- 6 The phrase is Salman Rushdie's; see 'Outside the whale', *Granta*, 11 (1984), 125-38.
- 7 Paul Driver, Introduction to *A Diversity of Creatures* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 23.
- 8 Andrew Rutherford, general preface to the World's Classics new edition of Kipling (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), vii, viii.
- 9 Eric Stokes, 'Kipling's imperialism' in John Gross (ed.), *Rudyard Kipling: the man, his work and his world* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972), 90.

- 10 *The Wheel of Empire*, 112. For a variation of this thesis, see Gilbert, *The Good Kipling*.
- 11 Introduction to *Kim*, World's Classics, xii, xv; *Wheel of Empire*, 78.
- 12 See David Trotter, introduction to *Plain Tales from the Hills* and Edward Said, introduction to *Kim* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987). See also Robert MacDonald, 'Discourse and ideology in Kipling's "Beyond the pale"', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 23, 4(1986), 413-18.
- 13 Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain* (London: Verso, 1981 [1977]), 69, 267. The absence of a left critique of imperialist culture has been discussed by Edward Said, 'Reflections on American "left" literary criticism', *The World, the Text and the Critic* (London: Faber, 1984) and by Prebon Kaarsholm in a review article, 'British and European imperialism', *History Workshop*, 16 (Autumn 1983).
- 14 Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself*(London: Macmillan, 1937), 90-1, 173-4.
- 15 'In black and white', from a volume including *Soldiers Three, The Story of the Gadsbys and In Black and White* (London: Macmillan, 1895). Page references to the uniform Macmillan edition are given in the text.
- 16 See Ann Parry, 'Reading formations in the Victorian press: the reception of Kipling 1888-1891', *Literature and History*, 11, 2 (Autumn 1985), 254-63.
- 17 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 24.
- 18 See, for example, Mark Kinkead-Weekes, 'Vision in Kipling's novels', in Rutherford, *Kipling's Mind and Art*, and Nirad Chaudhuri, 'The finest story about India - in English', in Gross, *Rudyard Kipling: The Man, His Work and His World*.
- 19 Said, introduction to *Kim*, 45.
- 20 *ibid.*, 28, 24, 40-1.
- 21 See *From Sea to Sea*, vols I and II (London: Macmillan, 1899).
- 22 Thomas Pinney (ed.), *Kipling's India: Uncollected Sketches 1884-88* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 177-8.
- 23 *ibid.*, 175.
- 24 Michael O'Pray, 'Radical visionaries: Powell and Pressberger' (a review of Ian Christie's *Arrows of Desire*), *New Formations*, 1 (Spring 1987), 155-9.
- 25 *Contemporary Review*, LVIII (September 1890).
- 26 Said, introduction to *Kim*, 24.
- 27 *The Political Unconscious* (London: Methuen, 1981), 85.

Imperialism is a policy or ideology of extending a country's rule over foreign nations, often by military force or by gaining political and economic control of other areas. Imperialism has been common throughout recorded history, the earliest examples dating from the mid-third millennium BC. In recent times (since at least the 1870s), it has often been considered morally reprehensible and prohibited by international law. As a result, propagandists operating internationally may use the term to denounce



Consider: • What are the differences, if any, between IMPERIALISM and COLONIALISM? • What were the overarching motivations for Americans and Europeans to pursue policies of Empire? Motivations for Imperialism • Economic • Nationalistic (Chauvinistic) • Religious • Political • Reasons of exploration. Areas of Africa controlled by European colonial powers in 1913, shown along with current national boundaries. Different types of Imperialism: • Colony (India) • Direct/Indirect • Direct: King Leopold II of Belgium in Congo (nearly 10,000,000 Congolese killed during