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The *Kipling Journal* is the magazine, published three times yearly, of the Kipling Society, a charity whose object is the advancement of public education by the promotion of the study and appreciation of the life and works of Rudyard Kipling. The Journal is open to submissions, of any length between 500 and 5000 words, from students, scholars, professional academics, and Kipling enthusiasts. All articles are peer reviewed. Copyright of material published in the *Kipling Journal* remains with the author.

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FORTHCOMING MEETINGS OF THE KIPLING SOCIETY

Wednesday 4 February 2026 5.30 for 6 pm in the Army and Navy Club and 6 pm online

Nick Higham, author and journalist: ‘Mavericks: Lionel Dunsterville and the Caspian campaign of 1918’

Wednesday 22 April 2026 Online), 2 pm BST, 9 am EST Professor Tai-Chun Ho, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan: ‘The Returned Soldier in Kipling’s Poetry’.
NB: PLEASE NOTE THE EARLY START

Wednesday 1st July 2026 4.30 in the Army & Navy Club and online: Annual General Meeting 2026 5.30 pm Speaker tba

23 September 2026 Online meeting, 6pm: Speaker tba

25 November 2026 5.30 for 6 pm in the Army and Navy Club and 6 pm online Speaker tba

Please can members intending to attend meetings in person at the Army and Navy Club provide their names to the Secretary at least three days beforehand for security purposes. The Secretary’s contact details are given at the front of this journal.

January 2026

Alex Bubb
(*Meetings Secretary*)

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EDITORIAL

Kipling Journal 403 opens with Nick Higham's fascinating account of how in 1918 the British Government, fearing that after Bolshevik Russia's peace treaty with Germany at Brest-Litovsk, the German army might seize Baku and its oil reserves and proceed to central Asia, and even to India, secretly sent General Lionel Dunsterville, the original of Kipling's Stalky, to lead the small 'Dunsterforce' from Persia across the Caspian Sea to Baku. (Mr Higham will give us a talk on 'Stalky and the Caspian Campaign' in more detail on 4 February; don't miss it.) Aaron Ackerley relates how a 1915 recitation of his Boer War poem 'Boots' became a hugely popular trailer for Danny Boyle's recent horror film *28 Days Later*, demonstrating the enduring influence of Kipling on popular culture.

Two essays on *Kim* follow; our Vice-President Harish Trivedi compares the handling of interracial friendship in Kipling's masterpiece and in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, while Marcus Murphy examines, from another post-colonial angle, the ambivalence of Irishness in *Kim*, disussed alongside the early 'Namgay Doola' and 'The Mutiny of the Mavericks' (1891) and 'The Propagation of Knowledge' (1926).

Showing how nothing in *Dayspring Mishandled* can be taken on trust, George Simmers' concluding essay on lies, secrets and mysteries and mysteries reads this much-discussed story afresh, uncovering the unsavoury secret that drives the practical joke of the forged Chaucer Fragment. (A Letter to the Editor deals with another hoax, but this time a real-life one.) Andrew Scragg's thoughtful review of Daphne Sutton's study of the Hindu Temple offers yet another angle on 'Raj' India: the role played by the temple in the colonial British imagination, including that of Kipling's Indian fiction and travel-writing.

Erratum In Janice Lingley's article 'The Red Flower in *The Spring Running*,' *Kipling Journal* 402 29–33, the paragraph on p. 32 about Kipling meeting the astronomer Samuel Langley in 1895 ought to have appeared on page 31, preceding the letter from Dr Richard Miles explaining the timeline of Mowgli's run at the end of the story. I apologise for this error, both to the author, and to readers who were confused by this transposition. I am glad to say that the correct version can be found both in the online *Kipling Journal* 402, and as a 'General Essay' on the Kipling Society's website.

WHEN STALKY WENT TO WAR: THE DUNSTERFORCE EXPEDITION

BY NICK HIGHAM

[Nick Higham spent almost 30 years as a BBC correspondent. His first book, *The Mercenary River: A History of London's Water*, was published in 2022. His second, *Mavericks: Empire, Oil, Revolution and the Forgotten Battle of World War One*, was published last year by Bloomsbury.]

On the morning of 28 January 1918, Lionel Dunsterville woke on the floor of a ruined bakery and set off to cross the border from what is now Iraq into Persia. The bakery, he wrote in his diary, had been doorless and windowless but ‘very comfy – not many fleas’. Crossing the border he and his party travelled through ‘a beautiful land with broad valleys among barren hills and lovely clear trout streams’, but a landscape devastated by war and famine. ‘We passed one poor fellow who had just died by the roadside,’ he wrote. ‘The children take morsels of bread from your hand like pie dogs.’¹



Fig. 1 The Oil Fields of Binagardy, Baku 1918. The National Army Museum, NAM. 1983-12-71-154
(image out of copyright)

vans and cars, 41 drivers, two sergeant clerks and eleven other officers (one of whom had a Lewis light machine gun).

He was making, via a roundabout route, for Tblisi, the capital of Georgia in the Caucasus. The route was meant to take him across 600 miles of windswept plateau and snow-covered passes through neutral Persia, on ‘roads’ not built for wheeled traffic, to the port of Enzeli at the southern end of the Caspian Sea. From there he hoped to sail to Baku on the Caspian’s western shore. His venture was top secret – ‘hush-hush’ in the jargon of the day – and had been conceived in desperate haste in the dying days of 1917.

Following the second of two revolutions in nine months, Russia had crashed out of the First World War. Its soldiers refused to fight,

So began the exploits of what the military planners in London had designated Dunsterforce, surely one of the oddest military formations ever put into the field by imperial Britain. Dunsterville was its commanding officer, and a major-general in the Indian Army. But his command consisted of just 41 Ford

its armies spontaneously demobilized and its new Bolshevik administration, led by Lenin and Trotsky, reached an armistice with Russia's principal enemy, Germany. The Germans were free to transfer hundreds of thousands of men from the Eastern Front to the Western; and nothing now stood between the armies of Germany's ally, Ottoman Turkey, and the strategically important city of Baku, whose enormous oil reserves would be of vital help to the Turks and Germans. Furthermore, the British feared that if the Turks reached Baku they might go on to cross the Caspian into central Asia, and there foment unrest among the Muslim population of India, the jewel in Britain's empire.

A high priority was to find someone – anyone – prepared to resist the Turks. Dunsterville's convoy of Ford vans carried large sums of money, in Persian silver and British gold, with which to bribe the peoples of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan to go on fighting. He was not expected to go into combat himself.

Before setting out he had been promised reinforcements of a few hundred hand-picked men, mostly officers or NCOs from what Britain called its 'white dominions'; but their job was to train locally recruited fighters, not to go into battle themselves. Only later was his force augmented by the addition of around 1,200 regular infantry, some cavalry and a few aeroplanes.

DUNSTERVILLE AND KIPLING

Dunsterville was an inspired choice to lead a secret mission which was both politically sensitive and militarily hazardous. During his 30 years as a soldier, he had fought on India's North-West Frontier, learnt many languages, including Russian, French, German, Persian, Urdu, Punjabi, Pashtu and Chinese, and served in China during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. As a young man he had been unusually exuberant; his diary reveals that in later life he was a mercurial character. He was sincerely religious and profoundly uxorious but often impatient of convention. He was immensely fit – he loved nothing more than holidays spent with his wife in the hills of Kashmir, walking many miles and climbing thousands of feet in a day – yet he was also something of a hypochondriac. And he was prone to spells of despondency and misanthropy.

In 1914 he retired from the Indian Army, but like many retired officers began pestering the War Office for a job the moment war broke out in August. 'What a splendid war it is!' he wrote in high spirits on hearing news of the allied landings at Gallipoli.² In April 1915 he sailed back to India, with his wife and young daughter, to take command of a brigade in what is now Pakistan, fighting the frontier tribes. But by the summer of 1917 he was once more despondent. The tribes 'had been lulled to rest by the various ingenuities of frightfulness that accompany modern war, aeroplanes and armoured cars having quite taken



Fig. 2 Dunsterville with Captain Norris, 1918. Ministry of Information, First World War: The Imperial War Museum Q24907: Non-Commercial Image

the heart out of them.³ His brigade was back in barracks and life had become ‘an appalling turmoil just now of military engagements and social functions’.⁴ The heat was unbearable, he was worried about money, his daughter’s nanny had died after a botched operation for appendicitis and he had been hospitalised with intensely painful boils. Not until Christmas Eve did things look up, when the family celebrations were interrupted by the arrival of ‘orders to proceed overseas for duty with Russian troops – just exactly the job I am fitted for.’⁵

His knowledge of Russian was one reason for his selection, but there may well have been another. Dunsterville had been at school with Rudyard Kipling. Both had attended the United Services College at Westward Ho! in Devon. This was not a conventional public school but a recent foundation, and when Dunsterville was sent there at the age of ten in 1875 it was only a few years old and not too picky about who it let in. Many of the older boys had been thrown out of longer-established schools. They were a rough lot, and Dunsterville was by far the youngest pupil, so was badly bullied. In his memoirs he claimed he took to signing his letters home to his sisters in blood, though he doubted they were impressed and didn’t recommend the practice: ‘It was an unpleasant job getting the blood from my arm, and blood is most trying stuff to write with, it congeals very quickly and won’t run off the nib.’⁶

But the bullying had taught him a degree of cunning and guile, and by the time Kipling arrived ‘I was in the passive condition of a bundle of Chinese fire-crackers to which his fertile brain eagerly supplied the torch.’⁷ The pair became close friends and shared a study with a third boy, G. C. Beresford, who added ‘an extraordinarily mature judgement combined with a malicious ingenuity’ to an already combustible mix.⁸ Nearly 20 years later, Kipling published a series of school stories about the trio, lightly disguised, under the umbrella title of *Stalky & Co.* Like many of Kipling’s writings it was a bestseller; it was also surprisingly subversive, horrifying some contemporaries with its depiction of 16 year old schoolboys as cynical, amoral and unruly, more interested in skiving off for an illicit smoke or in undermining figures of authority than in Latin grammar or the performance of the first XV.

Kipling's Stalky was a charismatic young Lord of Misrule, an insurgent prankster and inveterate deviser of rascally schemes, but one with a strong underlying sense of morality. It was Stalky who deposited a dead cat under the floor of a rival boarding house, but only as retribution for accusing his own house of stinking; it was Stalky who manoeuvred an excessively sanctimonious prefect into being kissed by a young woman from the village, then ensured his fellow prefects found out; and it was Stalky who, after leaving school, served with bravery, cunning and distinction on the North West Frontier.

Dunsterville had been the model for Stalky. Though neither he nor Kipling ever stated as much explicitly, Kipling left hints. In his autobiography, *Something of Myself*, he speaks of Stalky in military terms, foreshadowing Dunsterville's later career. He was 'the boy who commanded us', our 'commander-in-chief', who organized 'raids, reprisals, and retreats.' And he added: 'I think it was his infernal impersonality that swayed us all in our wars and peace. He saw not only us but himself from the outside, and in later life, as we met in India and elsewhere, the gift persisted...'⁹

Dunsterville was not entirely comfortable with Kipling's fictionalized version of himself. He found it irksome when people expected him to be funny at dinner parties and to do or say unconventional things. And he was irritated by those who assumed the book was a record of actual events, not a work of fiction. 'I have been identified with "Stalky," and have to accept the praise or blame attached by the reader to that character,' he told the Kipling Society in 1932. 'I have met people who, assuming me to possess the astuteness and ability of Stalky, have placed me on a pedestal far above my merits. They have been bitterly disappointed at my not giving an immediate display of my supposed talents.'¹⁰ In particular, the exploits of the adult Stalky recounted in the last of the original Stalky stories, 'Slaves of the Lamp, Part II', apparently bore no relation to the real Dunsterville's experiences on the North West Frontier.

After Kipling's death he wrote in his diary: 'As to the book itself, I have always been astonished a) at Kipling having written it, b) at the public having appreciated it. As regards a) I think it very poor stuff and it seems to have been really inspired by a desire for revenge on various masters and prefects who had incurred his dislike. As regards b) I can see very little attraction in the book—if I had nothing to do with it and came across it by chance I doubt if I would read more than a few pages. It would bore me to tears.'¹¹

Nonetheless, Kipling's stories gave him a kind of parallel existence: there was Dunsterville, Indian Army officer and professional soldier, and then there was Dunsterville-Stalky, a character of unusual resource, able to think outside the box and act in ways that were constructively disruptive.

The brass hats in London, I like to think, had read their Kipling and concluded that Dunsterville-Stalky was the man for them. There's no mention of Kipling in the official records: Dunsterville's name was originally suggested on 19 December 1917 by General Vaughan Cox, military secretary to the India Office, as one of three senior officers in the Indian Army who were qualified as Russian interpreters and 'might otherwise be suitable'. Of the three, he was Cox's preferred choice.¹²

However Kipling, in a letter to Dunsterville in November 1918 looking back on the Dunsterforce episode ('I guessed it was you even before I was told and I knew it was absolutely the one job that you would love') wrote: 'The W[ar] O[ffice] – into which I stray occasionally – wanted to know what manner of man you were. I gave them a lurid but, on the whole, not untruthful, summary of your character and nature.' Kipling doesn't say when he was asked for this 'reference', but it could well have been in December 1917, before Dunsterville was appointed.¹³

STALKY'S RETREAT

The story of Dunsterforce is told in detail in my book, *Mavericks: Empire, Oil, Revolution and the Forgotten Battle of World War One*. After months held up in Persia, Dunsterville's little army finally reached Baku in August 1918 to find it besieged by a Turkish force some 12,000 strong, and defended by around 7,000 poorly trained and incompetently led Russian and Armenian volunteers. Dunsterville parcelled his troops out among the locals, hoping his disciplined soldiers' example would stiffen their resolve. But it seems they preferred going home to their families in the city to spending nights in what passed for the trenches, and ran away when attacked. Dunsterville's own memoir, those of his officers and the unit war diaries compiled at the time, all agree on the hopelessness of the local troops, which seemed astonishing then and still seems so today, given that if the Turks took the town the Christian Armenians were likely to be massacred. It is a testimony to the quality of the training of Dunsterville's troops that, with no skin in the game, they fought with a great deal more conviction than the locals – literally, in some cases, to the death. On 26 August a company of the North Staffordshire regiment and four accompanying machine guns were virtually wiped out defending one of the mud volcanoes on Baku's outskirts. They had fought off successive attacks by overwhelming numbers of enemy infantry for three hours, and continued to fight with bare fists even after they were disarmed. One Turkish officer reported after the war: 'We were obliged to kill them all,' he said.¹⁴

Meanwhile Dunsterville was denied the reinforcements he asked for and, after his troops were forced into a series of hasty retreats,

evacuated the city on the night of 14 September, successfully extricating almost all his surviving men, though their aircraft and vehicles had to be abandoned. It was a tactical defeat, but one which deprived the Turks and Germans of access to Baku's oil for six precious weeks at a critical moment in the war.

Afterwards, Dunsterville's reputation was enhanced by his association with this daring hush-hush venture. Several of those who served with him in Dunsterforce wrote books about it, most of them clearly beguiled by their charismatic commander. In 1920 he retired a second time and wrote a book of his own, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce*, to explain and excuse the failure of his mission. *The Boy's Own Paper* title gives a hint as to its breezy style, and he followed it up with several other books of memoirs (one titled *Stalky's Reminiscences*), as well as writing short stories and journalism and giving lectures. His retirement was a peripatetic one: he lived at various times in Devon, Somerset, the Isle of Man and (because he was perennially hard up) in cheap pensions in Italy, Belgium and France.

In 1927 he was asked by the founder of the Kipling Society, J C Brooking, to become its first president. He did not especially want the job, partly because his relationship with Kipling suffered as a result: Kipling was against the whole idea of the society and resented Dunsterville's readiness to lend his name to it. They eventually patched things up after a chance meeting at the Beefsteak Club in 1930; in 1934, two years before he died, Kipling was writing to Dunsterville as 'Dear Blots;' while Dunsterville's diary for 6 June 1935 records meeting Kipling at 'A very fine Old Boys' lunch and I was delighted to find Kipling there—he and I and Beresford sat together in the photo.'¹⁵

Dunsterville died in Torquay in 1946 at the age of 81. One of the last entries in his diary records his gratitude to the Kipling Society for a gift of £50 in view of his straitened circumstances. 'It is difficult to express one's gratitude for this kind of unstinted help,' he wrote. 'I never regarded that kind of Society as a source of income! If I could, I would gladly put money into it.'¹⁶ A tribute in the *Kipling Journal* a few months later by a fellow-general, George MacMunn, offered this verdict on Dunsterforce: 'His handling of an impossible situation, very ill-equipped for the purpose, with orders based on suppositions which did not really exist, was masterly if disappointing. There were many stories at the time of his original methods of handling everyone and everything, including a severe famine in North Persia... His verve and abilities were worthy of a better field than the "Hush Hush Push," which had no chance from the beginning by the force of circumstances.'¹⁷

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- British Library India Office: Archive IOR L/P&S/11/132/743.
- Imperial War Museum: IWM Documents.3518, Private papers of Brigadier General T A Andrus CMG

Online source

http://www.gwpda.org/Dunsterville/Dunsterville_main.html

NOTES

- 1 Lionel Dunsterville, *Diaries*, 28, 29 Jan 1918 at http://www.gwpda.org/Dunsterville/Dunsterville_main.html. 'Pie dog' is an Anglo-Indian term for a stray mongrel.
- 2 *Ibid*, 5 Mar 1915.
- 3 Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, Edward Arnold, London, 1920 p 11.
- 4 Dunsterville, *Diaries*, 15 May 1917.
- 5 *Ibid*, 24 Dec 1917.
- 6 Dunsterville, *Stalky's Reminiscences*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1928 p 32. The story appears to be true-ish, judging by a surviving letter held at Cambridge University Library, written probably in 1876 – not to his sister but to his guardian, who looked after him and his siblings while his father lived in Heidelberg. It is written and signed in ink, but the last page, badly faded, reads, 'This written in my Blood realy [*sic*], because I cut my finger with my Knife, AMEN.' It's unclear whether the cut was a schoolboy accident or a deliberate cry for help. The young Dunsterville was sometimes a reluctant letter writer; on this occasion he had obviously been told to write at least three pages on arrival at school and begins jauntily enough, 'Dear Mrs Spiller, I hope you are quite well I arrived here alright at about 5.45 We had a jolly journey it was quite fine.' But then he gets bored, and the rest of the paper is filled up with a single sentence, written out one word per line. Only while confined to bed in the school sickroom – a surprisingly common occurrence – does he seem to have had time to write properly. See CUL GBR/0012/MS Add 9498/7.
- 7 Dunsterville, *Stalky's Reminiscences*, p 21.
- 8 Dunsterville, *Stalky's Reminiscences*, p 22.

- 9 Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself*, 'Dominion Edition', Macmillan, London 1937 pp 26–8.
- 10 Dunsterville, *Kipling Journal* No 22 June 1932 p 47.
- 11 Dunsterville, *Diary* 12 March 1938, quoted in *Kipling Journal*, Vol 59, no 234, June 1985 pp 51–2.
- 12 See British Library India Office Archive IOR L/P&S/11/132/743.
- 13 Kipling to Dunsterville, 2 Nov 1918, *Letters of Rudyard Kipling Vol 4 1911–1919* edited by Thomas C. Pinney, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2004, pp 514–6.
- 14 IWM Documents.3518, Private papers of Brigadier General T A Andrus CMG, Letter to his wife dated 5 December 1918. See also Brian Pearce 'Dunsterforce and the Defence of Baku, August–September 1918', *Revolutionary Russia*, vol. 10, no. 1, June 1997, pp 55–71.
- 15 Thomas Pinney ed. *Letters of Rudyard Kipling Vol.6, 1931–36*, p. 238; 'Stalky: 55'
- 16 Dunsterville, *Diary* 9 Jan 1946, quoted in *Kipling Journal*, Vol 59, no 235, p 72: 'Stalky: 5: More extracts from the Dunsterville Diaries', transcribed by his daughter Susan van Doorninck, *Kipling Journal* no. 231, September 1984
- 17 Lieut-General Sir George MacMunn, 'Stalky', *Kipling Journal*, Vol 13, no 78, July 1946, p 4.

122 YEARS LATER: 'BOOTS' AND KIPLING'S STATUS IN POPULAR CULTURE

BY AARON ACKERLEY

[Aaron Ackerley is Senior Lecturer in British Studies at the University of Oslo. He is interested in the historical influence of Kipling on the media in Britain and its Empire, Kipling's relationship with the popular press, and Kipling's influence over popular culture during and after his lifetime. His article 'Rudyard Kipling, The Press and Empire' appeared in the *Kipling Journal* 390, ('Kipling in the News'), May 2022.]

June 2025 brought the release of the film *28 Years later*, a sequel not quite 28 years in the making. Featuring a recitation of Kipling's 1903 poem 'Boots', which has had an interesting legacy, it offers an illuminating perspective on both the enduring power of Kipling's work and his contested legacy in popular culture. Directed by Danny Boyle and written by Alex Garland, *28 Years Later* followed their original collaboration on 2002's *28 Days Later*. A second entry, *28 Weeks Later*, was released in 2007, with Boyle and Garland serving as Executive Producers.

28 Days Later is a post-apocalyptic horror movie, centred on the character Jim. The film opens with a group of animal rights activists breaking into a laboratory facility, where chimpanzees are being subjected to experiments which fill them with 'rage', manifested in the form of a biological virus which can be spread by bodily fluids such as blood and saliva. Upon releasing one of the chimps, the group are attacked and the 'rage virus' is set loose. Cutting to 28 days later, Jim awakes in hospital, having been placed into a coma following a traffic accident while working as a bicycle courier. The hospital is empty, and, disorientated, he stumbles outside into a seemingly deserted London, and it becomes clear that the virus has spread across Britain and brought complete societal collapse. The film then follows Jim's encounters with both those who have been infected with rage and fellow survivors.

As the title suggests, *28 Years Later* is set 28 years after the initial outbreak, on an island community off the northeast coast of England. We learn that the British Isles are now almost wholly depopulated, aside from a few survivors and the remaining rage-infected. After the original outbreak, the British Isles were quarantined by the international community, with naval forces from different nations patrolling offshore to serve as a blockade, and the surviving British population left to fend for itself. The plot centres on a 12-year old boy, Spike, born into a post-apocalyptic society, who undertakes a rite-of-passage journey onto the mainland with his father, where they pick through the detritus of the former civilization and survive encounters with the infected. We

experience the father and son's excursion, its aftermath, and the culture of the island community, which is drenched in nostalgic symbolism of an England which has been lost.

The new film was eagerly awaited. *28 Days Later* was a critical success when originally released, being credited (somewhat ironically) with breathing new life into the Zombie movie genre – even if “the infected” it featured were not actually the living dead, but rather mortal people infected with a rage virus. It was also praised for its guerilla filmmaking and innovative use of digital video-cameras, which allowed for striking shots of a deserted London – images which were later to have an eerie resonance with scenes of the capital city being in lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. The film has become a cult classic, and a regular favourite at horror movie screenings and festivals.

Boyle had already gained widespread acclaim before he directed *28 Days Later* due to films such as *Trainspotting* (1996). His star continued to rise afterwards, with *Slumdog Millionaire* (2009) winning Best Picture and Best Director at the Oscars, and his role as director of the opening ceremony of the London 2013 Olympics being widely praised. Alex Garland, who has written the scripts for various Boyle movies, has also become an acclaimed writer-director for movies such as *Ex Machina* (2014), *Annihilation* (2018), and *Civil War* (2024).

While there was therefore an air of expectation about what the two esteemed filmmakers would do with the new instalment in the *28 ... Later* series, there was also of course an official publicity campaign for the film which aimed at creating awareness and excitement among the general public.

A key element of this campaign was the use in the promotional trailers of a 1915 recording of Kipling's poem ‘Boots’ by the American actor Taylor Holmes.¹ The poem also features in the movie itself. ‘Boots’ was likely written in 1901 and was first published in 1903 as one of the “Service Songs” in Kipling's verse collection *The Five Nations*.² According to Charles Carrington, the recurring refrain of “Boots, boots, boots, boots, movin' up and down again” to the tune of ‘John Brown's Body’ had first taken shape in Kipling's mind while, as a journalist, he had witnessed British forces marching in machine-like fashion in Rawalpindi in 1885.³

The line was later expanded into a poem which aimed to capture the intensity of the long marches undertaken by British forces during the South African War of 1899 to 1902 – particularly the gruelling forced marches in 1900 of 60,000 men under the command of Lord Roberts:⁴

We're foot—slog—slog—slog—sloggin' over Africa
Foot—foot—foot—foot—sloggin' over Africa

(Boots—boots—boots—boots—movin' up and down again!)
There's no discharge in the war!⁵

The poem's rhythm was designed to mimic the pace of marching footsteps. It evoked the mental stress placed on the soldiers by the physical exertion and relentless monotony of stomping boots, and of the feeling that the march may never end, and if and when it did, it may be followed by something even worse:

Men—men—men—men—men go mad with watchin' 'em,
An' there's no discharge in the war! ...

Try—try—try—try—to think o' something different—
Oh—my—God—keep—me from goin' lunatic!
(Boots—boots—boots—boots—movin' up an' down again!)
There's no discharge in the war!⁶

The effectiveness of the poem's words and rhythm in evoking mental strain is attested by the fact that Taylor Holmes' 1915 recording, the haunting quality of which also added to its potency, later came to be used in the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) programmes of US military forces, which train their personnel in how to respond to being captured, and potentially tortured, by enemy forces. As one participant in the training recalled:

As I sat there wondering what was going to happen next a wide variety of psyops stuff blared through the speaker mounted high in one corner of the small cell. A mind-numbing cacophony of an out-of-control saxophone was followed by Rudyard Kipling reciting his poem 'Boots' over and over in a very haunting voice. (No one who ever attended Navy SERE will forget 'Boots.')

This account assumed that the recording was of Kipling himself, though it is the Taylor Holmes rendition which is included within the article and which is almost certainly the one used in the SERE programmes.

Given that this kind of training was originally developed by the British MI9 Evasion and Escape agency⁸ during World War II and then taught to US counterparts from 1941, it would be interesting to know if the 'Boots' recording was originally used by British instructors. According to Helen Fry, there is an unsubstantiated rumour that insignia featuring witches and a broomstick which was briefly used by MI9 may be derived from a poem by Rudyard Kipling, 'or is a

tribute to a British escapee in the First World War whose memoir is titled *The Road to Endor*, though *Macbeth* has been proposed as a more likely source of inspiration.⁹ There was undoubtedly a conflation between the 1919 Kipling poem 'En-Dor'¹⁰ and the book by Lieutenant E. H. Jones, since his chosen title *The Road to En-dor*, (correctly reproducing Kipling's hyphenated word) not only copied Kipling's phrase, but quotes his final, clinching stanza on the inside cover page:

Oh, the road to En-dor is the oldest road
And the craziest road of all!
Straight it runs to the Witch's abode,
As it did in the days of Saul,
And nothing has changed of the sorrow in store
For such as go down on the road to En-dor!¹¹

(Amusingly, Jones' account of the escape includes the detail that he and fellow escapee, the Australian Cedric Waters Hill, managed to convince the Turkish commandant of the prison that they were mediums who could divine messages via a Ouija board. Given that Kipling's poem En-dor was a warning against Spiritualism, which had undergone a revival due to the impact of the Great War, the irony of its title becomes apparent). Given that these lines contain a reference to a witch and that the book's subject matter would have been very relevant to those working at MI9, I think there is good reason to believe that the book could be the source of inspiration.¹²

Probably due to media coverage of the US SERE training methods, the Holmes recording would later feature in a cinematic trailer for a Zombie map in the incredibly popular computer game *Call of Duty: Black Ops 6* (2024).¹³ The response to the use of 'Boots' in the trailer for *28 Years Later* and the movie itself from both critics and audiences is interesting. The rhythmic power of the verse and the haunting quality of Holmes' recording and the way they complement the horrifying visuals and rapid edits of the trailers received positive feedback. Within the movie, the recording of 'Boots' and a subtle, sinister synthesiser soundscape repeatedly emerge, subside, and re-emerge over a visual montage which serves multiple purposes: as a means of plot exposition; a way to build up tension and a foreboding atmosphere; and to establish core themes.¹⁴ In the relevant scene, we see the father and son, Jamie and Spike, leaving their island home to travel across a causeway to the mainland of north-east England. The 12-year-old Spike is being taken on a rite of passage, to experience the mainland and kill an infected victim. Young children from the island community are taught to use a bow and arrow at a young age, and both characters take theirs. The

duo are warned that once they leave, they are on their own, and no rescue parties will be sent after them. 'Boots' starts as soon as the fortified gate swings shut behind them, creating a sense of tension. We then witness their travels while they discuss their mission and the situation of their island home, interspersed with images of the landscape, close-up shots of maps of the local area, black and white archival footage of men undertaking manual labour as the pair pass trees felled for use on the island, infra-red images of the infected brutally feasting upon a dismembered deer, an islander wearing a strange and disturbing mask, and a short clip of a group of young island boys practising their archery interspersed with scenes from Laurence Olivier's classic 1944 film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry V*. The use of editing, diverse imagery, and sound design has an art-house style, bringing to mind the famous short film *Night Mail* (1936), which exemplified the use of new rapid editing techniques and the use of contrasting yet complementary images which worked in unison with the pace of the audio. Directed by the innovative Documentary Film Movement pioneers Harry Watt and Basil Wright, this features a voice-over of the verse commentary by W.H. Auden, recited against a sound-track by Benjamin Britten which vividly evokes the panting sound of the steam train on its journey north.¹⁵ The fact that 'Boots' was penned by Kipling also became a talking point in itself, especially in relation to the montage of images it accompanied.

While Danny Boyle's filmography includes work which covers a wide range of subject matters, national settings and genres, he has become an influential chronicler of Britain and of British national identity. *Trainspotting* (1996), based on the Irvine Welsh novel, brought into focus the social problems in Scotland present under Thatcherism, and offered a prophetic hint of New Labour's electoral victory the following year – and perhaps of the political project's fate over the longer-term.¹⁶ Its sequel *T2: Trainspotting* (2017), itself 21 years in the making, shone a light on how Britain had changed during the 2000s and 2010s, and on issues such as continuing sectarian divides in Scotland, and the impact of EU funding on formerly impoverished and decrepit areas, at the very moment Britain was leaving the EU. In between the two *Trainspotting* movies, Boyle's opening ceremony for the 2012 London Olympics games had been, at the time, wildly successful, lauded for its positive, progressive and optimistic view of Britain, and British national identity and history.¹⁷ *28 Years Later*, despite its more fantastical subject matter, should be added to this list.

Indeed, many critics, commentators and audience members have argued that the film is – or at least contains elements of – a satirical view of post-Brexit Britain and of Little Englanders – and the use of a Kipling poem is often suggested to be reflective of this

intent.¹⁸ This subtext of the film being a critique or at least a reflection of contemporary Britain is affirmed by Boyle himself, explaining: ‘...horror is a wonderful genre because you can put transparencies against it, you can put COVID against it... you can put Brexit against it as well, and you read things into it like that and it’s deliciously flexible.’¹⁹ Boyle also explained the conception of the island community in the film, and how it was designed and portrayed:

‘We had all these archives that we wanted to use to suggest the culture that the island was teaching its children,’ he says. ‘It was very much a regressive thing — they were looking back to a time when England was great.

‘It’s very much linked to Shakespeare,’ he continues. ‘For those who know the ‘Henry the Fifth’ film, there’s a very famous speech, the Saint Crispin’s Day speech, which is about the noble, heroic English beating the French with their bows and arrows. We were searching for a song, for a hymn — for a speech, actually. We did think about using the Crispin’s Day speech at one point, but that felt too on the nose.’²⁰

The Battle of Agincourt is, of course, a key symbol of Englishness and national greatness, and *Henry V* was the work of Britain’s most famous author. The imagery of the island community in the film also strongly evokes the British experience of the Second World War and the Blitz spirit, another moment of triumph and glory in the national consciousness (at one point there is a lingering shot of a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, hung in pride of place in the town’s communal hall). Yet these symbols are subverted, to unnerve the viewer.

Boyle is famous for the soundtracks which accompany his films, and it therefore it could be presumed that the recording of ‘Boots’ was carefully selected for use in *28 Years Later*, both for its rhythmic power and thematic salience. However, in a response to a fan’s question posted on the social media website Reddit which asked if he had previously heard the poem (presumably before working on movie), Danny Boyle responded:

‘Boots – no. We were looking for an old song, a hymn or a carol, a poem or speech. Anything from English history to set the context of this archive. We hadn’t found anything, but when we saw the first trailer that Sony sent, it had this poem in it. Alex and I didn’t know it, but we immediately tried it on the archive and it fit. Sometimes you just know that the tune belongs in the film. It’s nothing to do with you, but it works by natural justice. We put it in the film unchanged.’²¹

According to David Fruchbom, Sony Executive Vice President of global creative advertising, it seems we have the then director of music at the Buddha Jones agency, Megan Barbour, to thank for the use 'Boots' in *28 Years Later*. She was apparently aware of its use in SERE training, and had sent the Holmes recording to the editor of the movie's trailer, Bill Neil. Once Boyle and Garland saw the trailer, they instantly agreed that it would work perfectly in the film itself, and would indeed help to crystallise some of the key themes: 'It's like a reverse osmosis,' [Boyle] says. 'It came into the film and seemed to make sense of so much of what we'd been trying to reach for.'²²

In *28 Years Later* and the reactions to it, we can see how Kipling's reputation remains contested. In recent decades, his works aimed at children have remained beloved classics and stories such as *The Jungle Book* are continually re-adapted for the screen, while individual works remain widely popular and influential. 'If—' (1895), for example, was voted the nation's favourite poem in a 1995 poll carried out for the BBC.²³ Yet Kipling himself is often portrayed as a symbol of an out-dated and regrettable imperialism. This became more apparent in scholarship after the rise of post-colonial studies, but has become evident in popular culture as well. See, for example, the reaction to Boris Johnson's ham-fisted attempt, while serving as Foreign Secretary to recite 'The Road to Mandalay' (1890) during a state visit to Myanmar.²⁴ Of course, critiques of Kipling for his political beliefs and the way he has been portrayed as representing a certain form of Englishness have an extremely long pedigree.²⁵ In 1899, Robert Buchanan criticized Kipling for focusing on the 'baser aspects of our civilization,' and asserted that he was the voice of 'Hooligan Imperialism.'²⁶ In 1942, George Orwell recognised the strengths of Kipling's verse and explored the flawed yet enduring popular appeal of his work. While stating, 'Kipling *is* a jingo imperialist, he *is* morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting,' Orwell also wrote that 'though for five generations every enlightened person has despised him, at the end of that time nine-tenths of those enlightened persons are forgotten and Kipling is in some sense still there.'²⁷ Now in 2026, *28 Years Later* showcases the enduring cultural impact of Kipling and the power of his poetry. That a poem such as 'Boots' could have such a long and varied afterlife – in military training, zombie horror movies and a computer game – is a testament to its power, bolstered by a particularly evocative recorded rendition. It seems fitting to finish with Boyle's thoughts:

'You have to hold your hand up and say, "How is it that something recorded over 100 years ago has that same visceral power that it was always intended to have?"' It still maintains it — in a TikTok world, it still has that impact. It's amazing.'²⁸

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FORSTER, KIPLING AND INDIA: FRIENDSHIP IN THE COLONY

BY HARISH TRIVEDI

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Traditionally, *Kim* and *A Passage to India* (henceforth *Passage*)¹ have been regarded as being worlds apart. Kipling is seen as an arch-imperialist, a forthright, jingoistic champion of the British dominance of India, Forster as the archetypal liberal, sensitive to the injustices of the Raj and keen to advocate measures for making it a more humane and civilized institution. *Kim*, published in 1901 but set apparently in the 1880s, represents the Raj at its zenith, while *Passage*, written between 1913 and 1923 encompassing the period of its long and fitful gestation, depicts a situation in which there is clearly friction and discord between the rulers and the ruled. *Kim* is an idyll, *Passage* a fraught contestation.

Clearly, the two novels belong to two very different eras. When *Passage* was published in 1924, the First World War had been fought, and in India, the liberal constitutional opposition to British rule offered for decades by highly anglicized Indians through polite petitions for relief and reform had been rendered obsolete with the arrival on the scene of M. K. Gandhi who had launched in 1920 his nation-wide movement of Non-cooperation with the British government. Mass support for this on an unheard-of scale had been triggered by the Amritsar massacre in which the British army had fired at a peaceful, unarmed crowd assembled in a park in the city of Amritsar called Jallianwala Bagh, killed 379 people and injured several hundred others in fifteen minutes.

Neither Kipling when he published *Kim*, nor Forster when he began writing *Passage* in 1913, could have imagined these events. Forster's novel bears the ambience of its initial conception and contains only one oblique allusion to later events, in Mrs Turton's demand that after the alleged assault on Adela Quested, Indians "ought to crawl from here to the Caves on their hands and knees" (211) – as Indians had in fact been made to crawl in a lane in Amritsar before the massacre. But there is no Gandhi, no mass movement, and no hint of a transformed political climate. On the last page of *Passage* (1924), Aziz says to Fielding that his sons will one day "drive" the British out of the country, whether it takes "fifty or five hundred years" (317). In fact, it took only twenty-three; the British left India, which became an independent nation in 1947. India has now been free for over three score years and ten. In their

own day, Kipling and Forster may have seemed to belong to different worlds, but in 2025 they both seem much of a muchness; one could indeed say that Kipling and Forster are now the same age, postcolonially speaking.

This comparative study of *Kim* and *Passage* aims to illuminate both and enhance our appreciation of each, in what Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* described as a “contrapuntal” perspective (Said, 18, 32 51, *et passim*), which requires that “we must be able to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formulation, its internal coherence and system of external relationships.” (Said, 32) Of *Kim*, he wrote: “its picture of India exists in a deeply antithetical relationship with the development of the movement for Indian independence,” and both must be taken on board to highlight “the crucial discrepancy between them.” (Said 1993, 32). Said’s reading of the novel did not really fulfil this agenda (Trivedi 2010, 120 ff), probably because his knowledge of the West was more sure-footed than his knowledge of India while the word “contrapuntal,” deriving as it does from Western music, presupposed a harmonious blending of whatever might be “discrepant” strands, and does not allow for forthright discordances. But the aperture for a contrapuntal reading is offered by the novels’ implied audiences, for both are intended for Western readers. Though Indian characters participate vitally in the action of both the novels, neither novelist countenances the prospect of an Indian reader actually picking up these novels to read, since the vast majority of India’s population was then illiterate even in its own languages. This presumed-to-be absent gaze of an Indian reader is offered here, opening both novels to the scrutiny of the external anglophone.

FRIENDSHIP IN THE COLONY: KIPLING

Underneath their utterly different locales, contexts, story-lines and range of characters, the question of friendship between different races lies at the heart of both the novels. To ask if the British and the Indians can be friends while Britain still rules India may sound a bit like asking whether a lion and a lamb can be friends while the lion remains the king of the forest. Each novel returns a different answer.

In *Kim*, the boy-hero is the orphaned son of Irish parents who has grown up in the “bazaar” and can pass effortlessly as a native. He is called “the Little Friend of all the World” and later “the Friend of all the World” about forty times in the novel, both by chance strangers and his close companions Mahbub Ali, Hurree Babu and the lama (5, 7, 16 and *passim*). This phrase sounds like a hallowed Indian term of praise – but it does not exist in Hindi or Urdu, the two ‘vernaculars’ spoken in the novel, and was evidently invented to glorify the footloose

and fancy-free hero, perhaps a wish-fulfilling projection of Kipling himself, in contrast to his childhood exile in the ‘House of Desolation’ in Southsea. (Montefiore 98–9).

On the opening page, we learn that Kim, sitting astride the legendary gun Zam-Zammah “consorted on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazaar” (3). But this is not quite borne out when he has “kicked” a Hindu boy off its trunnions, and then a Muslim boy as well, hurled abuses at them both, and slandered their parents too for good measure. (3, 6) The narrator comments: “There was some justification for this... since the English held the Punjab and Kim was English” (3) There is not much love lost between Kim and the nameless boy he meets in Simla called just the “Hindu child,” especially after he wins comprehensively against Kim at their game of close observation and memory, which leaves Kim “stamp[ing] in vexation.” (159)

Kipling was capable of portraying an Englishman and an Indian of the so-called martial races who are locked in rivalry or even combat but feel a mutual admiration for each other’s valour which transcends the barriers of race and rank, as in his “Ballad of East and West”:

*Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the
ends of the earth!* (Kipling ed. Pinney 2013, p. 225.)

Kim comes closest to such bonding in the bantering relationship between Mahbub Ali the adventurous Pathan horse-trader, and his spy master Colonel Creighton; but it is never in doubt who the boss is. Kim himself acquires more than one father-figure (the lama and Mahbub Ali, and his mentors Colonel Creighton and Hurree Babu), and roams India freely because he is assured of acceptance and indulgence from everyone he meets: perhaps representing the belief – or fantasy – entertained by many of the British in India, including Kipling, that the natives welcomed them and were happy with their presence; even though the British might behave as superiors whenever they fancied – as Kim does to his “peers” Chota Lal and Abdullah.

FRIENDSHIP IN THE COLONY: FORSTER

Deeply influenced by his membership as a Cambridge undergraduate of the ‘Apostles’, a society dedicated to “the pursuit of truth...by a group of intimate friends.” (Furbank 1979, I: 75), Forster placed the highest value on friendship as an equal, mutually enriching relationship: a belief he famously expressed in “What I Believe”, where he says “If I had to choose between betraying my country or betraying my

friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country.” (Forster 1938, 66) It was his passionate friendship with a younger Indian, Syed Ross Masood, which had led to his going to India and writing *Passage*.

Kipling, in contrast, seems to have had no Indian friend. No Indian correspondent is addressed in Thomas Pinney’s 6-volume edition of his letters. The Indian closest to him seems to have been his *khitmutgar* (man-servant or valet), Kadir Buksh, mentioned warmly in his memoir *Something of Myself*, which also mentions a few Indian servants and subordinates at the *Civil and Military Gazette* printing press. (Kipling 1937, 3–4, 26, 89, 174, 176)

Forster, however, had two Indian friends who were dear to him, and who inspired characters in *Passage*. Syed Ross Masood (1889–1937) is the major source in the novel for Aziz (it means “the dear one”), who is given Masood’s fondness (like many educated Muslims) for Urdu and Persian poetry (Forster drew directly in *Passage* on some of Masood’s favourite Urdu verses: Furbank II:113), and his nostalgia for vanished Mughal glory. But, unlike Aziz, Masood was educated at Oxford and served in high positions, initially in the Muslim princely state of Hyderabad, and from 1929 to 1934 as Vice-chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University. (<https://www.amu.ac.in/pdf/listofvcs.pdf>) Masood was emotional and demonstrative by British standards, but unlike Aziz, neither impulsive or maudlin. On the contrary, he had “a rather grand and princely manner” (Furbank I: 143) and never got into trouble with the British, who knighted him in 1933. And whereas Aziz is a widower, a 1935 photograph of Masood with his wife hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London.

Forster dedicated *Passage* to Masood, but there is no evidence for his friend taking pleasure in the book or the dedication. Forster had sent him the novel in manuscript, for Masood to rectify any errors of fact, especially in his depiction of the trial scene in the novel. Masood, a trained lawyer, responded laconically – and, according to Forster’s biographer “unhelpfully” (Furbank 1979, II: 119): “It is magnificent. Do not alter a word.” It seems that Masood was politely but firmly distancing himself from the work, feeling hard done by as the real-life model for Aziz, an identification that Forster’s dedication “TO/ Syed Ross Masood/ AND TO THE SEVENTEEN YEARS OF OUR FRIENDSHIP.” (6) did nothing to disguise. When fault was found with the legal procedures depicted in the published novel, Forster “cursed Masood for the errors of Indian detail.” (Furbank 1979, II: 130). Their personal friendship, however, seems to have recovered and resumed.

Forster’s other great friend in India, Maharaja Tukoji Rao III Puar (1888–1937), the ruler of Dewas State Senior from 1918 to 1934, who employed Forster on his second visit to the country. Forster thought him the most saintly man he had ever known, with the most “loveable

spirit.” (Furbank 1979, I: 185) He appears in the novel in the third and last section as the Raja of Mau, but does not speak a word or interact with anyone. He is shown singing and dancing like other devotees – and then, quite suddenly, we learn that he is dead. Worse, his death is shown as being kept secret from everyone lest it should interrupt the festivities. This sounds improbable, both because at that very public event, such a secret would have been practically impossible to keep, and because it would have been considered sacrilege to let the festivities carry on when the king was dead. Even when a common Hindu dies, all festivities for the whole of the ensuing year are routinely suspended by the family (though Forster may not have known this). After the novel was published, he wrote “It makes me so sad that I could not give the beloved [the Maharaja] a better show.” He also rued the fact that hardly anyone had found Aziz “charming” as he had intended. (Furbank 1979, II: 126) Yet given his fine artistic control, Forster’s comic or curtailed treatment of the characters he had based on his two dearest Indian friends could not have been wholly unintentional.

The central friendship in the novel is between Aziz and Fielding, who is generally assumed to share Forster’s own attitudes and values. The imbroglgio concerning Aziz and Adela Quested partially obscures this relationship but also provides its acid test. Fielding’s brave act of siding with Aziz in defiance of the aggressive attitude of the British community in Chandrapore anticipates Forster putting friend before country in 1938. When Fielding resigns from the patriotically perfervid Club, it is the equivalent in miniature of giving up his British citizenship, although Fielding regards it not as self-sacrifice on the altar of friendship, but as the only decent thing to do.

After Aziz is acquitted, Fielding proceeds, even-handedly, to do the decent thing by Adela Quested as well, sheltering her in his college, talking to her, and in the process warming to her in a way he has not before. When he asks Aziz to waive the punitive damages he wants Adela to pay, Aziz feels that Fielding has betrayed their friendship, which presupposes unquestioning loyalty. They break off and over the next two years Aziz imagines the worst he can of Fielding, while he finds a new friend, ally and well-wisher in Godbole: bridging the turbulent Hindu-Muslim divide, historically a far older chasm than the British-Indian divide which friendship with Fielding had for a short while spanned.

At the end of the novel, Fielding wishes to recapture his old relationship with Aziz and asks him why they can’t be friends again. Out of the reach of the prejudiced and vindictive machinery of the Raj, Aziz, now living in a princely state and turned an ardent nationalist, tells him that they can be friends only after the British rulers have been driven out of the country. Fielding responds: “But why can’t we be friends

now?... It's what I want. It's what you want." (317) He is asking Aziz to prioritize their personal relationship over nationalist loyalty – appealing to him, in effect, to betray *his* country for a friend. This may seem even-handed, even fair-minded, except that it is not, for one cannot compare the British Empire with a subject country. In any case, Aziz does not need to answer this extreme demand from the friend who, in his view, had come up short, for the whole universe seems to answer it: “the earth didn't want it”, any more than the sky (317). A novel that began by asking the question whether it is possible for the English and the Indians to be friends ends by comprehensively answering “No, not here”.

BEYOND FRIENDSHIP: POLITICS NATIONAL AND SEXUAL

A month before India became independent on 15 August 1947, Forster made a radio broadcast to India in which he said: “You must excuse me if I begin with my friends. They are so much on my mind on this momentous occasion.” (Fordonski, 4) - once again prioritizing friendship over country, as Fielding wished Aziz to do in the concluding episode of *Passage*. When Aziz shouts, “India shall be a nation!” Fielding (and/ or the narrator) mocks the aspiration: “India a nation! What an apotheosis! Last comer to the drab nineteenth-century sisterhood. She whose only peer was the Holy Roman empire...” (317) Nation-states have existed since the 17th century, and India was actually the first of the British colonies in Asia and Africa to become a free nation. Fielding (and the narrator) seem to be flailing around to find any argument or excuse to counter Aziz's nationalism.

In *Passage*, the ultimate solution to the problems of imperial rule, as suggested by Mrs Moore who is sympathetic to the Indians, is to be more pleasant to them, but even this is utterly unacceptable to her son Ronny: “India isn't a drawing-room” (49). The omniscient narrator, who seems not easy to distinguish from Forster himself, pronounces: “One touch of regret... would have made the British empire a different institution.” (50)

The most trenchant critic of what the British are doing is India is the naïve but honest Adela Quested. She says to Fielding that the haughty conduct of the British at the Bridge Party has made her “angry and miserable,” and adds: “I think my countrymen out here must be mad.” (46) But her scathing comment is allowed to fade away without a response as the plot moves on to embroil her in terrible troubles of her own. One of the paradoxes of the novel is that in the episode at the Caves involving Adela and Aziz, Forster brings about an explosive political situation involving both race and rape, but then lets it drift and diminish into one woman's heated delusion. He seems to shy away from anything political and indeed from the word “politics” itself. When Fielding is asked by Hamidullah how Britain is “justified

in holding India,” Fielding’s immediate reaction is that of exasperation: “There they were! Politics again.” And the best answer he can make to this vital question is the lame and limp “It’s a question I can’t get my mind on to.” (108)

If Forster the liberal could not countenance Indian nationhood and independence, the conservative Kipling who had worked in India as a journalist from 1882 to 1889, blamed the Liberals for encouraging the idea of independence in the first place. His memoir recalls how “a Liberal Government had come into power at Home”, and passed an act providing that “Native Judges should try white women”; this was the Ilbert Bill passed in 1883, which was vehemently opposed by the British in India and had to be amended in 1884. Kipling connected it with what he sarcastically called “the great and epoch-making India Bill” which had just been passed by Westminster in 1935. Officially called the “Government of India Act,” this laid the constitutional basis for the granting of independence to India (a development interrupted and retarded by World War II), so it did indeed prove “epoch-making.” He alleged that those who passed it were, like those behind the Ilbert Bill, “parting with their convictions” in relying on arguments such as ““There’s no sense running counter to the inevitable.”” and deploying “all the other Devil-provided camouflage for the sinner-who-faces-both ways.” (Kipling 1990, 31–32) He simply could not believe that the British could grant India independence except out of dubious and hypocritical motives or under duress, and he wasn’t the only one to hold that view.

If Forster, and his sympathetic characters Mrs Moore and Fielding, tried to make friendship between individuals and general goodwill a shield against the harsh realities of politics, Kipling’s evasion of colonial politics was even more thoroughgoing. He evacuated *Kim* of all traces of British authority in India so as to be able to show that there was no resistance to it! The mighty machinery of the Raj which we see move into grinding action in *Passage* is entirely absent in *Kim*: no Collector, no Superintendent of Police, no City Magistrate, no Civil Surgeon, no college Principal, no Memsahibs – and no educated Indians either except the eminently loyal Hurree Babu; while Colonel Creighton the spymaster is only rarely seen. There are no significant Indians, either. Of the two major native characters, Mahbub Ali is Afghan and the lama is Tibetan, both from territories outside British control and jurisdiction. (See Trivedi 2011, xxxvi-xxxvii).

Kipling’s knowledge of India was far wider than Forster’s, and in many respects deeper too, for he had seen what has been called the dark side of India, including relationships between white men and Indian women. There is no inter-racial love interest in *Kim* because the hero is too young (until he evades an overture from the Woman of Shamlegh

with “her silver necklaces clicking on her broad breast”: 257), but in several short stories he depicted transgressive inter-racial sexual relationships. In “Beyond the Pale” (1888), the Englishman Trejago has a secret affair with the native woman Bisesa, leading a “double life so wild” that he can later hardly believe it. When she finds herself betrayed by him and then is found out by her family, her hands are chopped off while he is stabbed in the groin to leave him with an enduring limp; as Kipling says ironically, he is afterwards “reckoned a very decent sort of man.” (Kipling 2011, 42) In “Without Benefit of Clergy” (1890), Holden too leads a double life and has a child with Ameera, which she hopes might help cement the inconstant “love of a man, and particularly a white man” (Kipling 2011, 227), but then the child and the mother both die and he is seen sorrowing for a short while before duty calls him away. And in “Lispeth” (1886), the sturdy young hill woman of seventeen whom a missionary couple have converted and given her Christian eponym (as she pronounces it), finds one day a sick Englishman lying on a hillside, carries him home in her arms, nurses and loves him for she believes he too loves her. He goes away, falsely promising to return. When she realizes his word was false from the start, she says to the missionary couple who have likewise deceived her to keep her with them: “I am going back to my own people. You have killed Lispeth.... You are all liars, you English.” (Kipling 2011, 36).

Politics, as we understand the term now, is never quite absent from human relationships and it takes on a stronger colouring when a relationship turns into physical intimacy, especially if the setting is imperial/colonial and relationships cross the racial divide. The distribution of authorial sympathy between the two sides in these stories by Kipling may come as a surprise to readers who think they already know his politics only too well, for he finds each of the three Englishmen clearly blameworthy.

The *frisson* is perhaps greater in *Passage*, which reverses the racial equation by staging a potential friendship between a man who is Indian and a woman who is white. But their relationship is not at all one of mutual attraction; the two of them just happen to be thrown together for a morning’s jaunt together with a group of other people. There is no love in the air; Adela is thinking and fretting in her mind about her engagement with Ronny while physically walking alongside Aziz. Their engagement is shortly broken, as engagements were broken in two previous Forster novels as well.

Forster’s only sexual experience in India was apparently with “Kanaya” (his mis-spelling for Kanhaiya); the ever considerate Maharaja of Dewas had served up this male servant with his royal compliments to Forster for his delectation. In contrast, when Kipling’s family were summering in the ‘Hills’, the teenaged Kipling had apparently led a

full-blooded, adventurous life in Lahore from 1882 onwards, walking in the native city through the night, smoking at opium dens, and frequenting brothels. Kipling's own slumming among Indian women is caught with a nicety in a biofiction by the late psychoanalyst-novelist Sudhir Kakar, showing Kipling going to a high class establishment where he sees a lovely bejewelled courtesan and is "enchanted...but not aroused," and on another occasion going into a narrow lane and encountering a "short, plump and ...very dark" woman, merry and forthright, whom he is unable to resist. (Kakar 2018, 189–90, 190–93). Forster and Kipling wrote so differently about India because they experienced the country in dramatically different ways.

POLITICS, THE CANON AND FRIENDSHIP

Forster and Kipling, knowing quite different Indias, had also come from very different Englands. When he was eight years old Forster was left by an aunt a sum of £8,000 (= about £1,000,000 today), his "financial salvation" (Furbank 1979, I: 24) which set him free for life from monetary worries. He had gone to King's College Cambridge, one of the most highly regarded academic institutions in the world, and was forever afterwards "a King's man," even before he was made a Fellow of the College in 1946. Rose Macaulay, reviewing *Passage*, alluded to this essential affiliation of Forster's, calling King's "perhaps the most civilized place in the world." (Furbank 1979, II: 124), prompting Forster to spell out what the place had meant to him in a letter to another King's man now serving in India:

I have wondered...whether I had moved at all since King's. King's stands for personal relationships, and they still seem to be the most real things on the surface of the earth, but I have acquired a feeling that people must go away from each other (spiritually) every now and then and improve themselves if the relationship is to develop or even to endure. *A Passage to India* describes such a going away – preparatory to the next advance, which I am not capable of describing (Furbank 1979, II: 124).

Responding to another reviewer who had served in India, and who charged him with being "always prejudiced" against the English characters, Forster explained that he meant to be so, "for this lack of balance is inherent in the Indian tangle," although someone else may well write "the perfect, the unaccented book some day, and all my theory of an Indian tangle [may] prove mere Cambridge." (Furbank 1979, II: 130)

Kipling on the other hand had not gone to university at all because his father on his low Indian salary could not afford it. Lockwood, a potter trained in Burslem in the Potteries, had worked on the terracotta decorations of what is now the Victoria and Albert Museum in London,

but as his salary there would not have supported a family, he had on marrying sailed out with his wife to India. When Rudyard finished school in England in 1882, Lockwood had called him back to live with the family in Lahore and fixed up a job for him as a journalist on a small English newspaper there. (Lycett 2015, 23–25, 107). Over his seven years in India, Rudyard viewed with amused contempt persons coming out of England just for a few months' tour and forming hasty liberal opinions on the Indian situation. His poem "Pagett M.P." (1886) and short story, "The Enlightenments of Pagett M.P." (1890) both mock such a visitor. The name Pagett M.P. became a byword for the ignorant but meddlesome visitor to India; Forster himself while visiting India in 1912 mused: "I am becoming quite a Padgett [sic] M.P., being full of good advice to everyone" (Furbank 1979, I: 230). After *Passage* was published, Forster again acknowledged that to his British critics who had lived for long periods in India, he probably seemed to be like "Padgett [sic] M.P." (in Furbank 1979, II:127).

Forster had in fact read Kipling extensively as he demonstrated in a lecture he gave titled "Kipling's Poetry" (1908). He divided Kipling's poems into several distinct categories, quoted several of them at length, and distributed both praise and blame, with just a bit more of the latter. The one trait of Kipling that he admired was his "spiritual standard" and his "mysticism," as displayed above all in *Kim*. (Forster 1908, 22). This may seem surprising, coming from the sceptical and atheistic Forster with his preferred comic-ironical mode, but it makes better sense in the light of his remark, cited above, that he had in *Passage* tried to indicate that for the development of personal relationships, "people must go away from each other (spiritually) every now and then." Yet the spirituality and even mysticism that Forster discerned in Kipling is not so apparent to many readers. Kipling himself would not have claimed any such thing for himself nor has any critic of his work.

Nevertheless, Forster in his lecture waxed eloquent about Kipling's mysticism, even sounding a little envious. "There is no explanation of the gift of mysticism ... only one thing is certain; it is the peculiar gift of India, and India has given it to Kipling, as he gave it to his boy hero, Kim." (Forster 1908, 22). This reverent formulation by Forster seems to be an instance of Orientalism at its fervent best, especially as it seems difficult to reconcile with what actually happens in Kipling's novel. The boy Kim, though a devoted "chela" of the lama – a disciple who would smooth his worldly path for him, begging for him, buying railway tickets and so on – seems singularly uninterested in the lama's religious wisdom. His own parallel quest is to find his own people, i.e., his deceased father's regiment; having done that quite early in the novel, he then spends three years in an elite school supported, somewhat improbably, by the lama's funds in Tibet, while the lama fends for himself,

begging and travelling all on his own. There is deep love between these completely opposite friends, yet in the end Kim rejects the ready-made salvation by proxy, that the lama offers him, choosing instead to go with Mahbub Ali and join the adventurous espionage network of the Great Game. As I have argued elsewhere, “there is not a single spiritual bone in Kim’s body.” (Trivedi 2011, xxx)

Just as spirituality may be seen to be allied with an exalted form of friendship, politics may be thought to be an awareness of the worldly factors that may complicate friendship. It is no surprise to find therefore that both Kipling and Forster downplay (if not deny) any political content in their great novels. Of course, the word “politics” had a much narrower meaning for them, whereas now there is hardly any aspect of life that cannot be interpreted as being political, in the sense of involving a play of power relationships. Forster had concluded his lecture on Kipling by stating that some of his poems “only deal with what is permanent and noble in our humanity. They speak to us of the past; they may speak of us to the future, in days when our politics are forgotten and our newspapers indecipherable.” (Forster 1908, 27)

One hundred years after they published their masterpieces depicting the British Raj, the two writers seem not only the same age but similarly stranded by history and the evolving literary canon, at least in India, where they are seldom set as required reading even for B.A. syllabi in Eng. Lit. (*Kim* never was a set book in the University of Delhi, and Forster was dropped a couple of decades ago.) The country has its own English-language writers with whom to pack its syllabi, as well as writers in English translation from the numerous Indian languages. The very meaning of “English Literature” has changed since British rule ended, and that perhaps is a sign of the true postcolonial. Nor does one hear friendship mentioned very often; it’s all about partnerships now, and the more strategic they are the better. The Age of Imperialism is well and truly over, and so is the age of Liberal Humanism which was once thought capable of redeeming the worst of Imperialism.

But to return to friendship: both Kipling and Forster necessarily looked on the term and the concept as they are normally used in England and among the English. But friendship in India is often not understood to be quite the same thing even amongst Indians as it is in the West, which makes it doubly problematic for friendship between the English and the Indians. The great majority of English characters in Indian fiction are depicted as “cunning and depraved” or as “representatives of brutal Western power and machinations,” who are capable of casual and murderous cruelty at any moment without plausible provocation; in contrast, the rare English character who is good and kind-hearted acquires the mythic aura of “a fairy-tale.” (Das 2001, 208, 214). Even the greatest of Indian writers including Sir Rabindranath

Tagore (1861–1941), who won the Nobel prize for literature in 1913, and Premchand (1880–1936), the greatest fiction-writer in both Hindi and Urdu, depict such terrible and terrifying English characters. The worst of the English characters painted by Kipling or Forster are like saints in comparison.

To try and bridge the vast gap of fact and perception that pervaded the colonial experience through an occasional instance of individual friendship was going to be a fragile and precarious enterprise in the best of circumstances, and most Indians would not have thought it even worth the attempt. At the beginning of *Passage*, Hamidullah, who has been a student in Victorian England when there were very few Indians in England and correspondingly less hostility towards them, says that it is possible to be friends with them but only in England and not in India, i.e., not on colonial ground. Mahmoud Ali, who has never been to England, says it is not possible at all, and “the very sad talk” they are having gets even sadder as they begin recounting the insults and slights they have to put up with every day from the English, to which Aziz contributes his own share. He goes further than the other two to say, “Why talk about the English? Brrr...!” Even before Aziz has met Mrs Moore, Fielding or Adela, and been disgraced, humiliated and traumatized by Adela’s false charge of assault, we see his friend dismissing the English: “Why be either friends with the fellows or not friends?” The narrator now sums up, “He too generalized from his disappointments – it is difficult for members of a subject race to do otherwise.” (*Passage* 12, 14, 15) Friendship with the rulers is thus not a felt need of any member of “the subject race” in either *Passage* or for that matter *Kim*. It is the two English authors who keep projecting friendship or even intimacy as a psychological need for their English characters; thus, *Kim* is the “Friend of all the world” – which may be thought somewhat to dilute the effect intended.

Forster’s Indian friends included two Hindu Rajahs, one of whom was his employer. Of the Muslim elite he met on his two brief sojourns in India, only Masood was his long-term friend. Beyond these personal circumstances, both Kipling and Forster as writers evidently believed, in their different ways, that if they and their fictional characters could have Indian friends, such interracial relationships would somehow take the sting out of the general inequities of colonial rule if not quite compensate for them. In a postcolonial retrospective view, this fond belief looks wishful to the extent of being fanciful. The best that can be said for it is that while it may seem historically facile and paternalistically patronizing, it was at least well-intentioned.

[This article is abridged from Harish Trivedi’s essay of the same title in *Language and Literature Studies of Warsaw*, no. 10: 2020 (Special Issue on Forster’s 50th Death-Anniversary). *Ed.*]

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NOTES

- 1 Quotations from both texts, from the editions specified under "Works Cited," are referenced simply by page numbers.

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

January 2026

NEW MEMBERS

It is my great pleasure to publicly welcome and introduce the following members who have joined the Kipling Society in recent months:

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HOW SIGNIFICANT IS KIM'S IRISHNESS?

BY MARCUS JAMES MURPHY

[Marcus James Murphy is writing a doctoral thesis at Birkbeck University on the American author, academic, and intelligence officer Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger, who wrote science fiction under the pseudonym Cordwainer Smith, and Linebarger's editor, Frederik Pohl, a seminal figure in the history of science fiction.]

The story of *Kim* (1901) could be characterised as a fond remembrance of a vanished land, the India of Kipling's youth at the height of the Raj. As Margaret Feeley observes, 'Kim was Kipling's final work on the country of his birth, early childhood and literary apprenticeship'.¹ She also notes that the textual history of the work encompasses Kipling's unpublished *Mother Maturin*, 'the story of an old Irish woman who kept an opium den in Lahore but sent her daughter to be educated in England'.² The motif of opium persists and is reused in *Kim*, albeit in a reduced form, as are themes connected with Ireland, and Hopkirk notes, 'Kipling was later able to salvage some of its less scandalous parts and incorporate these into Kim'.³

Kim may also be seen as a *Bildungsroman*. Here, though, it might be said that Kim's journey to manhood revolves around learning to adapt to the institutions and customs of British society. Kim is a street-savvy child, at home with the variegated local cultures surrounding him. He can adapt his personality, mode of speech, dress and behaviour to an extraordinary degree. Yet his name is after all a diminutive of Kimball O'Hara, a name at once stereotypically Irish and reflective of British heritage. Whilst Ireland was arguably a subordinate part of the British Empire, it was still part of the United Kingdom. Yet the status Ireland held within the family of nations that made up the UK tended to vary, and at times reflected what could be seen as a dysfunctional union although at other times it appeared apparently sound. In 1908, seven years after the publication of *Kim*, Kipling wrote: 'The present mellow condition of Ireland, Egypt, India, and South Africa is proof of their honesty and obedience.'⁴ That Ireland, despite being part of the United Kingdom, is included with the colonies in his remarks is telling, most especially the implicit comparison to India. Despite the Act of Union of 1801, concerns about political unrest in Ireland were a perennial concern for British politicians. These remarks from 1908 also show poor judgment; the Home Rule movement, which Kipling had assumed to be deceased, was instead dormant. Its revival and the passing of the Third Home Rule Bill in 1914 led to the Ulster Covenant, which half a million unionists who opposed Home Rule signed.⁵ Four years later, in 1912, the poem 'Ulster' presents a radically different view of Ireland:

What answer from the North?
One Law, one Land, one Throne
If England drive us forth
We shall not fall alone.⁶

Kipling's implied threat of insurrection echoes the position of the 1912 Ulster Volunteer Force,⁷ which itself might be regarded as both British and Irish.

This work will set out to explore tensions between Englishness and Irishness by examining both *Kim* and a range of other works by Kipling, and the attitudes evinced toward Ireland and Irish people. Kipling's work tends to render the Irish as exotic but also domestic, and *Kim* is among the more restrained and nuanced examples of this. Kipling's use of an Irish boy to play this role perhaps reflects the ambiguous position of the Irish within the British Empire.

The brief account of the final years of Kim's father is a cautionary tale of the perils awaiting the unwary in India: 'O'Hara fell to drink and loafing up and down the line with the keen-eyed three-year-old baby ... Societies and chaplains, anxious for the child, tried to catch him, but O'Hara drifted away, till he came across the woman who took opium and learned the taste from her, and died as poor whites die in India.'⁸ This evokes a Victorian moralist handing out pamphlets warning of the ruin of the feckless poor, and the stereotype of the lazy Irishman seems not far distant. Montefiore notes this theme, but also observes that Kim's father may ultimately be responsible for his own untimely end:

Yet Father Victor's remarks ' "It's very much what his father would have done – if he was drunk... The Regiment will take care of you and make you as good as man as your – as good as a man can be" ', (K, 124, 127), clearly indicate that the late Sgt O'Hara was already a drunken wastrel on the way down. Of course this makes the dead Irishman a daring, drunken rule-breaker according to colonial stereotype, but it doesn't follow that the Indian 'natives' are to blame for his self-destruction.⁹

When first introduced in the text, Kim is seen 'astride the gun Zam-Zammah' (*Kim*, p. 3), which had been utilised in a series of wars in the sub-continent and passed through the hands of multiple owners. That Kim is pictured sitting atop it may seem purely a symbol of imperial triumphalism; but other readings of this opening scene are possible. The narrator informs the reader that Kim, 'had kicked Lala Dinanath's boy off the trunnions' (*Kim*, p. 3) because 'the English held the Punjab and Kim was English.' (*Kim*, p. 3). If Kim is capable of mutability as a

skill or trait accorded to him then the narrator seems equally capable of changing his nationality at will; or at the very least, reminding us others that may view someone's national background in a distinctly different manner than they might. A few lines later Kim is noted as 'white – a poor white of the very poorest' (*Kim*, p. 3), and that his father was, 'a young colour-sergeant of the Mavericks, an Irish regiment' (*Kim*, p. 3). In the space of less than a page, Kim has passed through a series of remarkable transformations. He has been identified as a Sahib, albeit one from *déclassé* origins. Additionally, the narrator has managed to set the scene while presenting what has the appearance of a childhood squabble. Kim's defining trait of being a social chameleon is established in the first pages of the novel. If he sits astride a symbol of Empire, so do the Indian children. Yet though Kim may sit among them and interact with them, he remains always above them.

Kim is explicitly identified as the offspring of a poor Irish soldier and a nursemaid. At the time *Kim* is set, the British Army in India and throughout the Empire contained a high proportion of soldiers of Irish origin. Karsten records a teenage recruit to the Connaught Rangers in 1898 making the following declaration:

Full willing to leave my manson [sic] and to go into the interiors of Africa to fight voluntarilly [sic] for Queen Victoria and as far as there is life in my bones and breath in my body, I will not let any foreign invasions tramp on Queen's land.¹⁰

Yet the same recruit made the proviso that if the Crown in any way threatens "the Irish race, I will be the first that will raise my sword to fight".¹¹ As regards 'the Irish race' *Kim* suggests at points in the text that characteristics associated with a nation are heritable. Witness, 'he was Irish enough by birth to reckon silver the least part of any game. What he desired was the visible effect of action.' (*Kim*, p. 34). This view of the Irish as adventurers desirous of 'action' is of interest as Kim's closest relationship with a native, excluding his mentor the Lama, is with Mahbub Ali, a figure who is also presented as something of an adventurer. Kim, the 'Little Friend of all the World' (*Kim*, p. 5), works in concert with a figure identified as 'the bullying, red-bearded horse-dealer whose caravans ploughed through their fastnesses belly-deep in snow' (*Kim*, p. 22).¹² If Mahbub Ali himself here appears as a figure redolent of Arabian or Indian folklore, he may also bear a resemblance to the perennial figure of the Irish rogue.

Yet the political tensions between two cultures, the English and the Irish, are only rarely evident in the text. Perhaps this is understandable, given the work's focus and Kimball's ignorance of his own background. However, with regard to insurrection and war in India itself, even the

Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 appears only briefly in the text, via an old soldier reminiscing about it.¹³ The fact this particular character remained loyal and admonished his countrymen is stressed by his assertion that 'There is no blessing in this work' (*Kim*, p. 48) when talking of the rebellion. The Irish critic Declan Kiberd finds this ironic, commenting in *Inventing Ireland* (1996) that 'Though Kipling could see the potential of the Irish-Indian analogy in the promotion of empire, it did not seem to strike him that this was also being invoked by militant opponents of the idea in both countries.'¹⁴ Edward Said observes that when reading Kipling, and in particular *Kim*, 'By giving an account of this series of pressures and counter-pressures in Kipling's India, we understand the process of imperialism itself as the great work of art engages them'.¹⁵

When he talks to the elderly Indian soldier, Kim has not yet encountered the regiment where his true identity will be recognised, and which will lead to him being sent to school at St Xavier's to be imbued with the values of empire. Yet here is a scene where a boy who is identified as Irish encounters an elderly Indian who assures him of the wisdom of loyalty to the British Empire. Via *Kim*, Kipling made the image of the Great Game iconic. Yet other political or cultural struggles, such as Unionism versus Home Rule, intrude. Kipling was a master at summing up a group so as to catch its essence in a brief phrase or pithy remark, as the interactions and paradoxical quality of the relationship between the Roman Catholic priest Father Victor and the Church of England chaplain Bennett display. Father Victor is never explicitly described as Irish, but his chaplaincy of an Irish regiment and his speech patterns suggest it. To an extent, he might be regarded as a comical figure, for example in his constant repetition of the imprecation, 'Powers of Darkness,' (*Kim*, p. 75), but the comedy is undercut by the opinion attributed to the Anglican chaplain: 'Between himself and the Roman Catholic Chaplain of the Irish contingent lay, as Bennett believed, an unbridgeable gulf' (*Kim*, p. 74). It is a remarkable point to make in a book set in a land where the majority of the inhabitants were divided from the British in terms of faith. Yet the Irish Catholic was as much a part of the United Kingdom as any other subject of the Crown. An undercurrent reminiscent of the Glorious Revolution and earlier civil and religious struggles during the Reformation seems to be at play here. The Irishman may be less intrinsically foreign than the Indian, but not entirely free of alien customs. When the Lama is introduced to the two clergymen Bennett's reaction is dismissive: 'Bennett looked at him with the triple-ringed uninterest of the creed that lumps nine-tenths of the world under the title of "heathen"' (*Kim*, p. 77). Conversely, Father Victor may lack Kimball's fluency in the native languages of India but he does not reject them or Indian customs in their entirety. He expresses a certain interest

in the idea of a river that might offer enlightenment, “Tck! Tck!” said Father Victor sympathetically. ‘I’d give a good deal to be able to talk the vernacular. A river that washes away sin!’ (*Kim*, p. 78). The Catholic seems to be potentially less separated from the Buddhist by an ‘unbridgeable gulf’ than he is from the Anglican clergyman.

Kim’s meeting with the two clergymen, accompanied as he is by a third ‘churchman’ in the person of the Lama, occurs at a crucial juncture when the prophecy that “there will come for you a great Red Bull on a green field,’ (*Kim*, p. 4) appears to be becoming actualised from Kim’s point of view. The bull’s symbolic usage is resonant with layers of meaning. At its simplest level Kim, and by extension, the reader, are witnessing soldiers in an officer’s Mess, with a centrepiece comprised of ‘a golden bull fashioned from old-time loot of the Summer Palace at Pekin’ (*Kim*, p. 73). The bull, aside from being a motif for Kim’s quest, is imbued with religious symbolism which the text touches upon. In Hinduism of course it is a sacred animal, as indicated in the episode early in the book where Kim drives away a bull: ‘The huge, mouse-coloured Brahmini bull of the ward was shouldering his way through the many-coloured crowd, a stolen plantain hanging out of his mouth. He headed straight for the shop, well knowing his privileges as a sacred beast’ (*Kim*, p. 15).

The bull is at once the object of Kim’s quest, yet the “totem” of the Irish regiment to which it leads him is associated with not just India but Ireland also. If the bull is a sacred animal in Hinduism, it also has long-standing associations with Irish myth and legend. *Táin bó Cuailnge* (The Cattle Raid Of Cooley) features as a central theme a conflict between Ulster and Connaught over a bull.¹⁶ Symbols from the *Táin* were, and still are, repurposed by both Unionists and Nationalists. Its employment as the standard of an Irish regiment of predominantly Catholic soldiers led ultimately by the English or Anglo-Irish gentry, seems to suggest that Kim, even when part of the world of the ‘Sahibs,’ will always be a subordinate member. The symbolism of Irish myth was also utilised by both nationalists and unionists to advance their causes, something Kipling would have been keenly aware of. Father Victor, who represents the faith of the majority of the regiment’s soldiers, serves as a telling symbol of the ‘unbridgeable gulf’ between them and the dominant order represented by Bennett’s Anglicanism. The Mavericks may in India be a symbol of Imperial might and colonisation but in their ranks they include those who may be considered as colonised.

Kim’s adaptability, and the question whether he can retain it into adulthood is a subject of debate both within the novel and among its critics. This issue could be said to be compounded by Kim’s identity as both “English” and Irish. Kim sometimes assumes a role of authority over Hurree Babu: “‘Tell thy tale, Babu,’ he said authoritatively” (*Kim*,

p. 184). Yet Kim also defers to him at points as well and although as a character Hurree can appear apparently comical, his jovial exterior does not represent all of his character. Montefiore notes he can ‘easily be made to appear a comic, over-educated coward’, but that this would be unwise:

Despite Hurree’s girth and his professed cowardice, he proves both a tough mountaineer whose ‘marches...would astonish folk who mock at his race’ and a daring spy whose bold manipulation of the enemy impresses even Kim. ‘“He makes them a mock at the risk of his life – I never would have gone down to them after those pistol-shots – and then he says he is a fearful man.”’ (K 260, 383, 402).¹⁷

Just as Kim is more than an orphaned urchin, so is Hurree more than a comical Oriental aspiring to be a British academic.

Stalky & Co. (1899) offers a contrasting but not totally dissimilar view of Irishness. Its stories, set in a public school loosely based on the United Services College¹⁸ which Kipling himself attended, were for the most part published in the now long-defunct *Windsor Magazine*.¹⁹ Interestingly, they feature a rather different class of Irishman. One of the main characters, William M’Turk, comes from a landed estate in Ireland, and belongs to a very different sphere of life from Kim: ‘It’s an awful biznai, driving cattle—in open country,’ said M’Turk, who, as the son of an Irish baronet, knew something of these operations.²⁰ M’Turk’s Irishness is remarked upon at several points. ‘The Propagation of Knowledge’ (1926) is an oddity in the *Stalky* cycle, revolving around the long-debated question of the authorship of Shakespeare’s plays, with M’Turk attempting to put forward the theory that Bacon wrote them. It is far drier than the majority of the tales in the sequence (for *Lancelyn Green*, it is ‘the story which I found the dullest when I read it as a boy, and which now seems the best one in the whole cycle. The jape is a purely intellectual one’).²¹ What is particularly striking in respect of Irishness is the passage where M’Turk clashes with his tutor in a way that draws attention to national and ethnic origins:

Turkey inquired: ‘I’d be glad to know, sir, if it’s true that Shakespeare did not write his own plays at all?’ ‘Good God!’ said King most distinctly. Turkey coughed again piously. ‘They all say so in Ireland, sir.’

‘Ireland—Ireland—Ireland!’ King overran Ireland with one blast of flame that should have been written in letters of brass for instruction to-day. At the end, Turkey coughed once more, and the cough said: ‘It is Shakespeare, and not my country, that you are hired to interpret to me.’²²

For all that M'Turk is of a social class far higher than Kimball O'Hara or even Mr. King, a gulf opens up here. M'Turk is prone to tweaking teachers in the tales but it is noticeable his tutor's anger is directed in a particular fashion, the spirit of two cultures showing a degree of antipathy to each other. M'Turk as an Anglo-Irish boy is being groomed to rule the empire and preserve its unity, potentially commanding boys like Kim in battle; yet centuries of tension seem to confront each other in this short exchange. But M'Turk would appear to differ in one important respect from Kim. His story is also bound up with that of India, but he is demonstrated as having made a definite decision as to his future there. In 'Slaves of the Lamp, Part II', the final story of the original *Stalky & Co*, the former pupils have become grown men,²³ and M'Turk reappears as 'a lean Irishman, his face tanned blue-black with the suns of the Telegraph Department.'²⁴ A figure who is loyal to the empire but who is exotic seems to be his final fate. The Telegraph Service was vital for passing information in times of war and disorder and thus M'Turk is like Kim a person of Irish extraction who has shown a thirst for adventure.

Mine Own People (1891) is a collection of short stories by Kipling, first published in America with a preface by Henry James and appearing in Britain as *Life's Handicap: Being Stories of Mine Own People* (1891). Two of its stories are of particular interest in terms of how they deal with the Irish. 'The Mutiny of the Mavericks' features an earlier version of the regiment seen in *Kim*, in a plot that centres around an abortive conspiracy organised by figures that seem loosely based on members of subversive organisations such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood.²⁵ Opening with a meeting in San Francisco, where there were large numbers of Irish-American immigrants sympathetic to the cause of Irish independence, to conspire 'against the British Empire,' (p. 67) this story directly addresses the political issues then current in Ireland in a way *Kim* does not. Yet political agitators in India itself are not omitted; we learn that 'All that Dhulip Singh could do he has done, down to the distribution of his photographs among the peasantry.' (p. 66) A special scorn seems reserved for the Irish-American of the 'second generation' who is summed up in a pithy phrase as, 'despising his own race and hating the other.' (p. 70) The Irish of the regiment are summed up as 'that quaint, crooked, sweet, profoundly irresponsible and profoundly lovable race that fight like fiends, argue like children, reason like women, obey like men'. (p. 68) The infantilization of the Irish is striking, especially the last phrase 'obey like men'; the Irish are praised but also shown as needing firm discipline. The conspiracy to spread disaffection via the American Corporal Mulcahy "devoured with ... rancorous hatred of England," (p. 84) as a rabid hater of the English attracts little interest. Terrified of battle but forced into it by

two loyal troopers, Horse Egan and Dan, “the panic excess of his fear drove him into madness beyond all human courage” (p. 84) and an apparently heroic death, charging ahead of his fellows and straight on to an Afghan knife. Dan and Egan are aware of Mulcahy’s attempts to instigate mutiny but let him alone for the most part, ‘bekaze of the fun he gave us—let alone the beer.’ (p. 85)²⁶ A double irony is that the marching song chanted by the Mavericks as they go into battle is emphatically nationalist, prophesying death to the English. ‘The Saxon in Heaven’s just balance is weighed, / His doom like Belshazzar’s in death has been cast.’ (p. 82)²⁷ The absence of unconditional loyalty to Britain which Karsten noted in the quote from the young private cited seems tellingly relevant. A tale meant to showcase the loyal Irish as opposed to the disloyal instead potentially highlights the fractures evident in the body of the empire. A number of Irish guerrilla leaders historically gained valuable experience fighting in the British Army: notably Tom Barry, the most effective of the rebel leaders in the Irish War of Independence, who served the British Army from 1915 as a soldier in the Royal Field Artillery and later became leader of the West Cork IRA’s Flying Column.²⁸

It is perhaps in ‘Namgay Doola’ (1891) that a faint shadow of the future *Kim* can be most easily discerned. The narrator visits a remote small kingdom in the Himalayas; the paucity of wealth available to the ruler is apparent in the opening paragraphs: ‘His revenues were rather less than four hundred pounds yearly, and they were expended in the maintenance of one elephant and a standing army of five men.’²⁹ It is noteworthy given the focus of this work that this petty kingdom is described as ‘on the road to Thibet’,³⁰ and that the eponymous subject of the tale is an Indian who like Kim turns out to have an Irish father. The speech of the king to the narrator concerning the troublesome Namgay Doola is worth citing:

“Firstly, he is an outlander and no man of mine own people. Secondly, since of my favour I gave him land upon his first coming, he refuses to pay revenue. Am I not the lord of the earth, above and below, entitled by right and custom to one-eighth of the crop? Yet this devil, establishing himself, refuses to pay a single tax; and he brings a poisonous spawn of babes.” (p. 24)

This list of charges seems curious in the way it is structured. It could be arguably utilised against either the Indians or the Irish. The story is a slight piece in Kipling’s *oeuvre*, seeming akin to a thinly veiled commentary on the Land League of the 1880s and its campaign opposing rack-renting.³¹ In contrast, the ‘Eurasian ticket-collectors’ of *Kim* (p. 166) are given no back-story like half-Irish bandit Namgay

Doola, the son of the former soldier Tim Doolan and a 'native' woman. A bandit, not domesticated or easily controlled, Doola represents an image that is redolent with threat for a colonizer or an empire. The narrator recognizes Doola's half-Irish identity from his rendition of the patriotic Irish ballad, 'The Wearing of the Green,'³² sung by Doola and his family in transliterated form, 'Dir hané mard-i-yemen dir /To weeree ala gee' (p. 28) The Irish-American writer Dion Boucicault famously included ballad in his play *Arrah-Na-Pogue* (1864).³³ Kipling knew Boucicault's work; the epigraph for chapter nine of *Kim* which features a snippet of an invented legend Boucicault attributed to native tribes of America: "He was quicker and quicker to learn – Bolder and bolder to dare", (*Kim*, p. 125). Having recognized Doola's Irish heritage, Kipling's narrator advises the King that he has two choices open to him, either to execute the man and his family or to 'Give him honour as may befall, and full allowance of work, but look to it, O King, that neither he nor his hold a foot of earth from thee henceforward.' (p. 32) The theme of the Irish as trustworthy if utilized as soldiers or adventurers but prone to a desire for 'action' is again established, and the story closes with the words, 'I know that breed:' (p. 33) which seems to suggest traits of Irish unruliness are heritable in a Lamarckian manner and can only be quelled by good management.

Kipling's tone when dealing with the Irish develops from these works, in that the flippant and patronising tone of 'The Mutiny of the Mavericks' or 'Namgay Doola' gave way to a more measured approach. *Kim*, the protagonist, is an outsider, but the reader never feels he is a fool, whereas when Kipling satirises the Irish Republican Brotherhood ('the Third Three of the I.A.A – an institution for the propagation of pure light'), he says contemptuously of its meetings: 'What happens after that, a particular section of Scotland Yard knows too well and laughs at.'³⁴ It might be noted that the police department Kipling references, now the Special Branch, was originally set up as the Special Irish Branch, indicating that Scotland Yard may not have viewed the matter quite so humorously.³⁵ By contrast, *Kim* adopts a style that might be described as both complex and crude regarding ethnicity and race, as in the exchange between Colonel Creighton and Kim about the boys at St Xavier's:

'There is a good spirit in thee. Do not let it be blunted at St Xavier's. There are many boys there who despise the black men.' 'Their mothers were bazar-women,' said Kim. He knew well there is no hatred like that of the half-caste for his brother-in-law. (*Kim*, p. 102)

Kim is, as noted, Kipling's last major work set in India and offers a vision of the Raj which might serve as an elegy for that era. Yet its

protagonist is a character whose national origin and hybridity presage some of the themes and issues that would undo the British Empire. Piers Brendon in *Decline and Fall of the British Empire* refers to the implicit danger some in the British establishment saw in an educated Asian or Eurasian class. He observes that the *Times* ‘sneered at Gandhi’s “puppet-President” of Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru, a “quaint product of pre-war Harrow and post-war Moscow”’;³⁶ Yet of course Nehru would never have attended Harrow without the presence of Britain in India. Similarly, many of those foremost in the Irish struggle for independence were educated in British schools. Fordham, commenting on the usage of the Irish soldier as a recurring figure in the work of Joyce and Kipling, notes that ‘Kipling repeatedly provides Irish role models who are loyal to the Crown; Joyce repeatedly makes such figures highly ambivalent’.³⁷ Kipling is not blind to the existence of figures who lack regard for the British Empire; the fate of the conspirator in ‘The Mutiny of the Mavericks’ is viewed as well-deserved if gruesome. The loyal Irish in Kipling are consistently shown as brave, adventurous but impulsive, and in need of governance by others.

Kim’s ultimate destiny within the British Empire is never made available to the reader. The work famously ends in an unresolved state where the Lama, ‘crossed his hands on his lap and smiled, as a man may who has won salvation for himself and his beloved.’ (*Kim*, p. 240). What Kim’s salvation may consist of is less clear; whether it will be found in embracing the teachings of the Lama or in service the British Empire or elsewhere is left untold and therefore ambiguous. Kipling is often seen as the standard-bearer for imperialism in Victorian literature. But *Kim* illustrates how such judgements can be reductive. Irishness is significant in *Kim* in showcasing how the protagonist moves between identities; declaring to Mahbub Ali, ‘I am *not* a Sahib’ (*Kim*, p. 115), Kim both contradicts and supports this statement in his actions. As with Mowgli in ‘In The Rukh’ where it is noted, “for we who live with them forget that they are strangers at all”³⁸ Kim also remains ultimately enigmatic. His chameleon-like nature persists till the end. The Irish and the Indian remain unknowable; the gap, like that between The Revd. Bennet and Fr. Victor, remains.

If Irishness is significant in *Kim* then it lies in the insight the reader is offered into the labyrinthine complexity of class and ethnic and social distinctions that proliferated during the period of the Raj. Some of these distinctions were historical and were imported from Britain to India; others were specific to Indian conditions. Colonization begins at home and those colonized there serve as useful in the process of wider colonial enterprises. A view of the empire as a large family with numerous members was common in the period; the Irish, however, would seem like the Indians to require a paternalistic form of supervision to develop

their potential. Even those individuals from the upper classes like M'Turk who might seem to be the natural heirs to the rulership of the British Empire are subject to moments when their relationship to the dominant culture clashes with their cultural background. The long and complex *kulturkampf* between the Irish and British, and the debate as to where the divide between the two ends has a more muted presence in *Kim* than other works by Kipling. Yet it is a consistent presence, underlying the text and shaping our response to its complex negotiation of racial, national, and cultural identities.

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‘DAYSPRING MISHANDLED’: LIES, SECRETS AND MYSTERIES

BY GEORGE SIMMERS

[After a career as a schoolteacher, George Simmers researched a Ph.D. on the prose literature of the First World War. This intensified his interest in Kipling, and he has published letters and articles in the *Kipling Journal*, most recently ‘Mary Postgate and the People’s War’, *KJ* 396 September 2023. He also (intermittently these days) writes the blog Great War Fiction.]

About lies, Kipling’s attitude could be ambiguous. When in the respectable-minatory mode of ‘If’—, he would preach ‘Or, being lied about, don’t deal in lies’, and none of the ‘Epitaphs of the War’ is more crushing than his condemnation of the pre-war Liberal government:

If any question why we died,
Tell them, because our fathers lied.¹

Yet Kipling was also a man who could express pleasure in ‘a well-made lie’:

A watertight, fire-proof, angle-iron, sunk-hinge, time-lock,
steel-faced Lie!
Not a private hansom Lie,
But a pair-and-brougham Lie,
Not a little-place-at-Tooting, but a country-house-with-shooting
And a ring-fence-deer-park Lie.²

In *Something of Myself*, he recounts how when a child in ‘the House of Desolation’, his guardian’s bullying turned him into a liar:

If you cross-examine a child of seven or eight on his day’s doings (specially when he wants to go to sleep) he will contradict himself very satisfactorily. If each contradiction be set down as a lie and retailed at breakfast, life is not easy. I have known a certain amount of bullying, but this was calculated torture—religious as well as scientific. Yet it made me give attention to the lies I soon found it necessary to tell: and this, I presume, is the foundation of literary effort.³

Kipling’s first job was as a reporter, and he depicts himself as one of those who have ‘sold his heart to the old Black Art/ We call the daily Press’,⁴ and therefore has learned how to conjure a story out of almost

nothing, how to angle the story to change its meaning, and how write it to avoid offence – or create it. He learned how much you can do with a hint or an innuendo, and where necessary, he would lie.

Lies, deceptions, fakery and obfuscations abound in many of his stories, and especially in ‘Dayspring Mishandled’ (*Strand Magazine*, 1928, collected in *Limits and Renewals*, 1932). This is one of the very densest and most complex of Kipling’s later stories, and one which by no means reveals all its secrets on a first reading; Charles Carrington called it ‘a profound, obscure, and singularly unpleasant story about a vindictive feud between two expert bibliophiles’⁵. It owes something to the example of Henry James’s many-layered stories of literary people, which Kipling admired. (In ‘The Janeites’ he has Macklin declare that Jane Austen ‘did leave lawful issue in the shape o’ one son; an’ ’is name was ’Enery James.’)⁶

The first half of the story, set in the 1890s, introduces the main characters as members of Graydon’s community of magazine writers. Manallace is a Northerner with a poet’s soul and a genuine talent, who can only make money from routine generic historical fiction (all ‘gadzooking and vitalstapping’); Castorley is a careerist. Years later, during one of the air-raids of the Great War, Castorley tells Manallace something (clearly crucial, but not disclosed to the reader) about an unnamed woman who was ‘Vidal Bezaquen’s mother’ (4), a woman whom Manallace had loved and had cared for in her terminal illness. What Castorley says is apparently unforgivable, and Manallace begins a long and protracted revenge. Castorley has become a Chaucer scholar, and a self-satisfied one; Manallace’s revenge takes the form of forging a Chaucer fragment that fits so well with Castorley’s theories that he will stake his reputation on authenticating it. Obliging, Castorley does so in a bombastic ‘Statement’ to the press.’(14) Manallace has thrown himself into the project with extraordinary gusto, absorbed in just the sort of technical detail that fascinated Kipling: the mediaeval formula for ink, the preparation of parchment, and so on. The plan for revenge is deliberate, and obsessive. yet when Castorley falls seriously ill, Manallace finally lacks the heart to expose him.

One of the oddities of the story is that it is linked by a footnote (4) to an earlier story, ‘The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat’ (*A Diversity of Creatures*, 1917), also linking revenge with inventive fakery, in which a minor character is the enchanting singer ’Dal Bezaquen, who will turn out to have been the dead woman’s daughter. Kipling shows a group of men – three connected with the press, and one an M.P. – caught in one of the speed traps that were a hazard for early motorists (In 1905, the Automobile Association had been formed precisely to protect motorists from these annoyances.) These men are treated with sarcasm and disdain by an unpleasant local magistrate, and their desire

for revenge is encouraged by 'Bat' Masquerier, a theatrical impresario, and much more of a wild card. The revenge is a carefully mounted publicity campaign, making the village look ridiculous.

Kipling, an early enthusiast for motoring, lived in Sussex, whose local papers of the time regularly report magistrates imposing fines on drivers infringing the regulations, which were often very strict. For example, the *West Sussex County Times* for August 10th, 1912, lists seven offenders fined for going above the limit.⁸ The revenge of the motorists – three using their connections to the press, one using parliamentary means, and one employing the power of the popular theatre – is brutal, but Kipling's narrative presents the stages in the persecution of the magistrate and his village in a way that makes the reader share the enthusiasm of his clubbable heroes for the punishment of their enemy. Only occasionally, and in connection with the Mephistophelian Bat Masquerier, is there a hint of doubt that they may be taking things too far. Kipling's tone will be very different when he comes to describe Manallace's private and solitary project of revenge.

Manallace's Chaucer forgery is the main piece of fakery in 'Dayspring Mishandled', but the theme of deception and false news runs throughout it. Castorley's rise to fame is based on a false narrative of his life, and involves a rewriting of his story; Manallace's plan is to first boost and then embarrass Castorley through news articles; Gleeag's diagnoses of Castorley's complaints are obfuscations hiding embarrassing truths. Meanwhile, the story's narrator, while not especially unreliable, is definitely reticent; there are things he would rather leave unmentioned, or refers to only obliquely. At the heart of the tale, too, is Manallace's original poem, and a consideration of the ways that literary fictions are shaped by their audience, and by their means of production.

The first half of the story concerns a different aspect of the modern press from that explored in 'The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat': not newspapers but the popular fiction magazines, a literary market which had been growing massively through the 1890s (and from which Kipling earned a large part of his income). Most unusually, this story takes us to a part of the literary world that was rarely acknowledged in fiction – syndication, the arrangement for the sale of literary works in different markets. Kipling himself had profited greatly from this development, especially when a young writer far from conventional literary centres. His father wrote in a letter of 1890:

Owing to the recent developments and organising of journalism, syndicates and what not, each new boom is more portentous, more wide-spread and more voluminous in print than the last and it will be literally true that in one year this youngster will have had more said about his work, over a wider extent of the world's surface, than

some of the greatest of England's writers in their whole lives. Much of this of course is merely mechanical, the result of the wholesale spread of journalism and the centralising tendencies of it.⁹

By the time he came to London, Kipling's own affairs were handled by his agent, A.P. Watt, so he had no need of an organisation like Graydon's, but it was the practice of syndication that had helped him to become a well-known name across several continents.

It is clear from the start that Graydon's Fictional Supply Syndicate is a commercial rather than an artistic enterprise. The literary work must be tailored to the market; Manallace's 'poetry' won't do; successful work will be the sort inspired by 'the Sixpenny Dream Book, the Army and Navy Stores Catalogue [...] and *The Hearthstone Friend*, a weekly publication which specialised unrivalledly in the domestic emotions.'

(3) By these references, Kipling is allowing his reader in the *Strand* or *McCall's* a feeling of superiority to the reader of more downmarket publications, but he is also giving a reminder that all magazines are commercial operations. The more astute reader might be led to ponder the criteria for inclusion in the periodical in front of him, and how that periodical has been tailored to meet the expectations of its public. (Later in the story, the description of the meticulous creation of the Chaucer manuscript, with its revelation of how mediaeval writing could be unreliably transmitted, is another reminder that literature is never a direct contact between author and reader; there are always middlemen, who may influence the product in one way or another.)

Manallace's career is to some extent a condemnation of the London literary market. Kipling's own literary apprenticeship had been worked in India, where he had in many ways been lucky, since the *Civil and Military Gazette* encouraged his diverse talents, and he could experiment in sketch-writing, story-writing and verse as well as reportage, without a great deal of competition. He was able to explore various genres – social satire, gothic fantasy, imperial fables and soldier stories – to see what suited him. Manallace's life shows what his equivalent in London would have faced: a highly competitive market where standard genres prevailed, poetry was not wanted, and writers had to conform to the limitations of public taste. Syndication offers Manallace commercial opportunities but also limits his scope to acceptable genres. He remains confined to the saleable but second-rate: 'His line was the jocundly-sentimental Wardour Street brand of adventure, told in a style that exactly met, but never exceeded, every expectation.'⁽⁶⁾ (Wardour Street was at the time a place to buy second-hand furniture.) In a different literary environment – such as Chaucer's – he might have achieved more, since he is a man of depths unknown to the readers of his genre-bound work in the popular magazines.

There is more to Manallace than is apparent at face value – and indeed this story contains many warnings against taking anything at face value, as when Castorley is taken in by the Chaucerian fragment that fits exactly with his preconceptions, or when he happily accepts Dr Gleag’s flattering diagnosis of his illness as ‘the price exacted, in some shape or other, from all who served their country.’ (23) ¹⁰As Manallace sardonically reflects: ‘If you save people thinking, you can do anything with ’em.’ (6) This is a story that constantly reminds us that reading should be sharp and critical.

Yet it is also a gripping tale whose narrative carries the reader along powerfully, and perhaps it is only on a re-reading that one notices how full it is of unanswered questions: most obviously, What exactly did Castorley say to Manallace? Yet there are others just as crucial. Why is the woman pursued by both referred to only as ‘Vidal’s mother’, and who was she? Who was Vidal’s father, and what happened to him? What was the illness that killed her, and what was Castorley’s? Why did Manallace stop in his plan of revenge? Why does Mrs Castorley hate her husband enough to subtly encourage Manallace’s plan? And does Dr Gleag know much more about Castorley’s illness than he lets on? Not having answers to these questions is no bar to enjoying the story, and critics providing different answers to some or all of them have united in rating the story as one of Kipling’s best.

Something about Vidal’s mother is suggested in the footnote referring to ‘The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat’ (though Kipling has silently changed the spelling of her surname to ‘Benzaquen’), which offers the reader a useful shorthand for the character. In the earlier story, ‘Dal, an actress and singer, is beautiful, vivacious and talented, but also has a vulnerability that makes men protective of her. Kipling can expect us, if we follow his note and make the connection, to assume that some degree of those qualities might have been inherited; also he is telling us that both mother and daughter could inspire love. Yet clearly he wants to keep the mother a shadowy figure, not fully explained. Not naming her can be seen as a euphemism on the part of the reticent narrator; as a man of feeling, he is unwilling to directly name a woman who is in the centre of something scandalous. Possibly calling her by her married name is a way of avoiding calling attention to a maiden name that was better known.

The story’s most resounding silence is about the words spoken by Castorley to Manallace during the War. In a letter to the *Kipling Journal* a while ago, I suggested that these unforgivable words must have been more than a mere slighting of Vidal’s mother, more even than an insult to her morals.¹¹ Angus Wilson back in the seventies speculated about how this unspeakable sentence might indeed have been unsayable:

Yet if, as I suspect, Castorley declared that her paralysis was syphilis contracted by whoring it is hard to see how a man like Kipling could have written it out, even in 1928.¹²

Wilson might have added: especially in family magazines like the *Strand* or *McCall's*. (For the *Strand's* nervousness with sexual subjects, see how they bowdlerised D.H. Lawrence's story 'Tickets Please' when it appeared in the magazine in 1919, even changing the bus inspector's name John Thomas to 'John Joseph'.)¹³

But would Castorley's telling Manallace that 'Dal's mother was suffering from syphilis be quite enough for such thoroughgoing vengeance? The story repeatedly refers to her 'paralysis', which was a well-known euphemism for tertiary syphilis, often referred to as 'General Paralysis of the Insane'. Manallace, who was not naïve or a puritan, and who had been nursing her, would have known. That he belongs to a Bohemian society with free-and easy morals is suggested by his quotation from Dowson when exchanging banter with the prostitute Kentucky Kate outside the Empire, Leicester Square (which was, of course, only a few minutes' walk from Villiers Street, near Charing Cross station, where Kipling had lived in the early 1890s). Surely a more convincing explanation for the cause of his hatred is that Castorley in that wartime conversation, perhaps unthinkingly, revealed that it was he who gave her the disease. We had previously been told that 'He, too, for a time, had loved Vidal's mother, in his own way' (4) – with an implication that this way would not have been particularly honourable. So we can perhaps go further and deduce that Castorley had, wittingly or unwittingly, told Manallace that he had had sexual relations with her at a time when he could have infected her. Or, as Manallace would interpret it, that he had killed her. That, surely is a sufficient motive for a long, calculated and utterly destructive revenge, and one fit to be considered 'entirely' justified.

In our age of antibiotics, we forget what a scourge syphilis was before the widespread use of penicillin since the 1940s. It was a horrible disease. The first stage was chancres and sores. Then it went into remission, possibly for a long time – decades, even – but it returned as tertiary syphilis, a degenerative disease with awful symptoms: disfigurement, softening of bones, delirium, madness. And it could be passed on to children. Because of its sexual origins, syphilis was an unmentionable disease, seen as the direct punishment for sexual sin. The surgeon Sir D'Arcy Power was quoted in 1932 as saying that it in his younger days it had been never to be mentioned in respectable families, and not even spoken of very much among medical students.¹⁴ Sufferers too often kept it secret, even from their doctors. I would be surprised to learn that any mainstream British fiction magazine published any story explicitly mentioning syphilis at this time.

But venereal disease is a subject that had interested Kipling since his Indian days, and he had strong views on how official morality contributed to its spread. In *Something of Myself*, he angrily recalled:

I came to realise the bare horrors of the private's life, and the unnecessary torments he endured on account of the Christian doctrine which lays down that 'the wages of sin is death.' It was counted impious that bazaar prostitutes should be inspected; or that the men should be taught elementary precautions in their dealings with them. This official virtue cost our Army in India nine thousand expensive white men a year always laid up from venereal disease. Visits to Lock Hospitals made me desire, as earnestly as I do to-day, that I might have six hundred priests—Bishops of the Establishment for choice—to handle for six months precisely as the soldiers of my youth were handled.¹⁵

In contrast with the bishops, Kipling sympathised with human frailty, and understood the temptations for young men in India. As a youth, he had himself been an intrepid explorer of Lahore's shadowy and exotic night-life, and Charles Allen, in his *Kipling Sahib*, follows Thomas Pinney in interpreting cryptic comments in Kipling's diary for 1885 as indicating that

It is a fair assumption that Ruddy's philandering in the Shahdera Gardens had led him to fear that he might have caught a venereal disease, that he avoided going to the family doctor, Dr Lawrie, and instead sought professional advice from Civil Surgeon Young – and was subsequently relieved to learn that he was uninfected.¹⁶

Kipling's attitude to the disease was always practical rather than moralistic. In later life, he was Vice-President of the Society for the Prevention of Venereal Disease, and he put his name to a letter from the Society printed in the *Times* of November 22, 1919, arguing that 'this terrible scourge' should be combated by making prophylactics easily available. He had also published an earlier story dealing with venereal disease – 'Love o' Women', collected in *Many Inventions* (1893), in which the disease is not quite named but strongly hinted at, the symptoms are shown clearly, and the victim treated with sympathy.¹⁷

Kipling was aware that this was a highly sensitive and controversial subject. When *Many Inventions* was about to be published, he wrote to his and Carrie's friends the Hunts, whose guests they had been on their honeymoon in Japan, that he had meant to dedicate the book to them, but wouldn't do so because it contained the problematic story 'Love O'Women', which made it unsuitable for dedication to a respectable

family couple. 'It's not a nice tale,' he explained. 'Anyway I shouldn't like Mrs. Hunt or the girls [to?] come across it and feel that they've lent it the sanction of dedication. We must try again – something cleaner rather [sic] I trust.'¹⁸

It may be significant that 'Love o' Women' was one of the few stories in that collection that had not been previously published in a magazine. Magazines were Kipling's most profitable market; *McCall's* and the *Strand* were superior ones, decidedly above the 'mudrush of standardised reading-matter' (3) for which Graydon's syndicate produced material. But they expected conformity to certain social and artistic norms, and some things could only be hinted at very obliquely. In earlier centuries, syphilis had been dealt with far more frankly; in Restoration comedy, and in the novels of Smollett and Sterne, the disease is a subject for both serious discussion and for boisterous comedy.¹⁹ In Victorian literature it is far less openly treated, and is mostly dealt with by euphemistic tropes of family curses and inherited madness. Elaine Showalter has argued that anxiety about the disease underlies late Victorian Gothic stories like *Dracula* and *Jekyll and Hyde*, and that what happens to the portrait of Dorian Gray is the disfigurement caused by syphilis. Her argument is convincing, but these works are coded so that only those looking for that meaning are likely to find it there.²⁰ By the mid-twenties, Ibsen's *Ghosts* (and also more sensational treatments of the subject, carefully presented as educational) could finally appear on the London stage, but syphilis would not be mentioned explicitly in magazines designed for family reading.

Kipling must therefore proceed by hints and suggestions; as Castorley complains, 'Life had always been one long innuendo!' (30) As an admirer of Jane Austen, Kipling might have picked up the hints in *Sense and Sensibility* about Brandon's 'poor disgraced relation' Eliza, who had been seduced and abandoned, 'only to sink deeper in a life of sin', until reduced to being 'to all appearance, in the last stage of a consumption.' That 'to all appearance' masks a euphemism that as keen an Austen reader as Kipling would have seen through.²¹ Kipling's novelist contemporaries, including those intending to be shocking, also avoided direct naming of the disease. In Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, when the medical student hero tells Mildred the prostitute what disease she is suffering from, the name of it is not shared with the reader, who must guess it from her reaction: 'When he told her she grew deathly pale, and her lips even turned yellow: she began to cry, hopelessly, quietly at first and then with choking sobs.'²² Even a deliberate shocker like *The Yoke* (1907) by Herbert Wales avoids actually naming what is clearly meant when an infected character says 'I've been caught.'²³ James Joyce was a deliberate taboo-breaker, but in 'The Sisters' (1914) he hides the ailment of the ruined priest under the euphemism of 'paralysis.'²⁴

In 'Dayspring Mishandled', there are several hints, of which the word 'paralysis' is the most obvious. It had other connotations, but in the 1920s many readers would have picked it up as a euphemism for tertiary syphilis – General Paralysis of the Insane. In addition, there is the odd fact that Castorley's trouble is variously diagnosed: 'tummy attacks', gallstones, kidney trouble, colic, bronchitis. That variety is a clue, since tertiary syphilis was often called 'the great imitator', as it causes symptoms similar to those of many other diseases. Tactful doctors could always find something less shameful to put on a death certificate.²⁵

Manallace had watched the excruciating symptoms develop during the years during which he had tended Vidal Bezaquen's mother after her husband had deserted her. (Because of her illness? Probably; it is another of the story's uncertainties.) During those years he had formulated his plan of revenge, and over time – about twelve years – he carries it out. The contrast with 'The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat' is interesting. In the earlier story, the revenge had been carried out by a group of clubbable men, in a spirit of larkiness with only occasional misgivings about whether Masquerier is going too far. They share their delight in the ongoing results. Manallace carries out his project alone, and his pleasure is secret and furtive. It will crumble in the face of reality, when he sees Castorley suffering the same horrible symptoms that had afflicted Vidal Bezaquen's mother.

But of course, in 'Dayspring Mishandled', the true master of fake news is Doctor Gleag. When addressing medical students, Kipling had told them that the job of a doctor was to be a truth teller:

You remain now perhaps the only class that dares to tell the world that we can get no more out of a machine than we put into it; that if the fathers have eaten forbidden fruit the children's teeth are very liable to be affected.²⁶

(Playing on the biblical proverb 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,' Kipling is referring to Sir Joseph Hutchinson's discovery that babies who have inherited the disease have teeth that are smaller and more widely spaced than normal and have notches on their biting surfaces.) But Gleag, though a doctor, is no truth-teller, and certainly not about Castorley's disease. His concerned but bland updates on Castorley's health are (surely deliberately) unrevealing and enigmatic. How sincere are his diagnoses of gallstones or kidney trouble? Is he simply doing what society expects, disguising the illness by offering less shameful substitutes? Or is he, by avoiding the correct diagnosis, committing murder by euphemism? The story hints, but does not tell us outright.

In the 1890's, when the first part of the story is set, a diagnosis of tertiary syphilis had been a death sentence, but by the time that Kipling was writing this story, it was, even before the blessing of penicillin, not totally incurable. In 1926, George Robertson, President of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh surveyed recent developments in treatments of the disease: 'We were now in possession of two promising forms of treatment, and if it could not yet be affirmed of them conclusively that they cured the disease, they at least often stayed its course and produced a remission of the symptoms.'²⁷

The most promising of these treatments was that pioneered in 1917, by Julius Wagner-Jauregg in Austria. He developed a treatment for neurosyphilis that involved infecting the patient with malaria, which caused high fevers that destroyed the syphilitic infection. It was a high-risk and unpleasant treatment, but one that an up-to-date practitioner like Dr Gleeag would have known of by the mid-twenties when the second half of this story happens. In 1927 Wagner-Jauregg was awarded the Nobel prize for medicine. The widely-reported prize announcement must have come at about the time that Kipling was writing this story.

Gleeag and Lady Castorley are a remarkable couple. The urbane Dr Gleeag is the more enigmatic; we remain unsure how much he believes of the bland diagnoses he delivers. Lady Castorley, on the other hand, becomes increasingly transparent. She too wants revenge on Castorley. For the fact that he married her purely for money and status? Because she sees through his egotism? Because she realises he married her while potentially infectious with a horrible and degrading disease? For all of these? Kipling leaves us guessing.

Manallace's desire for revenge declines. The reason for this is never stated explicitly, but he had seen Castorley in an agony reminiscent of that of Vidal Bezaquen's mother. Lady Castorley has no such memories to regulate her passion, and her longing for revenge grows, so that the story ends with her anticipating the pleasure of the posthumous humiliation of the man she had grown to despise. She has changed over the course of the story, blossoming from an 'unappetising ash-coloured woman' into one who is confident and assertive, and who knows what she wants. And what she wants is a news story that will ruin her husband's reputation; not actually fake news this time, but for her, no less fun for that – and rejuvenating, too; by the end she is as blooming as Mary Postgate was when she too had indulged in the pleasure of vengeance.

Lady Castorley's revenge on her dead husband will be complete when the story of his deception is printed in the same newspapers that had fawned on him and elevated his reputation. As in 'The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat', the disgrace is quite disconnected from

the original offence. Neither Manallace's private grievance nor Lady Castorley's will be made public, only the fact that Castorley has been made a fool of.

The story shows the corrosive effect of secrets and lies, but like 'The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat' it also conveys the pleasures of fakery. Manallace's enterprise of forgery is not only revenge but an act of absorbing creation, far more satisfying than his production of routine fiction. We sense Kipling's own enthusiastic imagining of the enterprise of ink-grinding, parchment preparation and historical research. On the other hand, we are also made rather horribly aware of the deep pleasure Lady Gleeag takes in her complicity with the doctor's evasions and lies. But for all his disapproval, we cannot help but be aware that Kipling feels the fascination and satisfaction of a 'ring-fence-deer-park Lie.'

WORKS CONSULTED

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- 1 Rudyard Kipling ed. Thomas Pinney 'Epitaphs of the War: Common Form'; *The Cambridge Edition of the Poems of Rudyard Kipling*, 1144.
- 2 Kipling *The Naulakha*, heading to Chapter VII; *Cambridge Edition of the Poems of Rudyard Kipling*, 969.
- 3 Kipling *Something of Myself*, 6.
- 4 Kipling 'The Press', published together with 'The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat' in *A Diversity of Creatures* (London: 1917), 214.
- 5 Charles Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work* (London, 1955), 475.
- 6 Kipling 'The Janeites', *Debits and Credits*, (London, 1926) 153-4.
- 7 Kipling 'Dayspring Mishandled', *Limits and Renewals* (London: 1932), 8. Subsequent page references in text.

- 8 'Ifield Speed Limit', *West Sussex County Times*, 10 August, 1912, 3. There are many similar reports in Sussex newspapers of the time.
- 9 Lockwood Kipling, to Edith Plowden, Autumn, 1890, quoted in Harry Ricketts, *The Unforgiving Minute*, 164–5
- 10 Kipling, 'Dayspring Mishandled', 23.
- 11 George Simmers 'Dayspring Mishandled, some questions' (letter), *Kipling Journal* KJ 368 (June 2017).
- 12 Angus Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Works* (London, 1979), 443.
- 13 D.H. Lawrence 'Tickets, Please,' *Strand* magazine, April 1919, Vol. LVII, 287–292. For the changes made in the story. see Bruce Steele ed. *England, my England and other Stories: Cambridge Edition of the Works of D.H.Lawrence*: Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 237n. The *Strand* could also be politically nervous, refusing to serialise Arnold Bennett's *The Lion's Share* in 1915, because its not unsympathetic view of the suffragettes might have offended some readers.
- 14 Quoted in J.D. Rolleston, 'Venereal Disease in Literature', *British Journal of Venereal Diseases*, (1934; vol. 10: 175–182).
- 15 Kipling *Something of Myself*, 56.
- 16 Charles Allen, *Kipling Sahib: India and the making of Rudyard Kipling* (London, 2007), 194.
- 17 Kipling's Irish narrator mishears the diagnosis as 'Locomotus attacks us', rather than 'Locomotor Ataxia' – a way of describing the symptom of unsteadiness that was in itself a euphemism for syphilis.
- 18 Kipling, letter to Henry Hunt (24 April, 1893) in 'The Cadell Hoard: Letters from Mr and Mrs Kipling to Mr and Mrs Hunt 1892–1907; Part II 29 January to 28 October, 1893', transcribed and edited by Alastair Wilson, *Kipling Journal* 363, March 2016.
- 19 See Noelle Gallagher, *Itch, Clap, Pox: Venereal Disease in the Eighteenth-century Imagination*, (New Haven and London, 2018).
- 20 See Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London, 1991).
- 21 Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), Chapter XXXI. For a full discussion of the subject, see Marie E. McAllister, 'Only to sink deeper: Venereal Disease in *Sense and Sensibility*' (*Eighteenth Century Fiction*, Volume 17, Number 1, October 2004)
- 22 Maugham, W. Somerset. *Of Human Bondage*, 575.
- 23 Herbert Wales, *The Yoke*, (London, 1907), 185. This steamy novel, whose 1908 cheap edition was the subject of a prosecution by the National Vigilance Society in 1908, is based on the sensational premise of a young stepmother wanting to keep her stepson away from the temptations of immoral women and therefore inviting him into her own bed. He is thereby kept disease-free, while his friend succumbs to the un-nameable.
- 24 James Joyce 'The Sisters', *Dubliners* (1914) (Penguin: Harmondworth, 1958), 9..
- 25 When the author first mooted this idea in the *Kipling Journal*, a reader responded that since syphilis was an essentially degenerative disease, it would not have produced the very painful symptoms that Castorley suffers. That is true of many forms of syphilis, but when it attacks the nervous system and becomes neurosyphilis it causes just the agony and the variety of symptoms that Castorley suffers. There is

a striking record of the pains of neurosyphilis in Alphonse Daudet's posthumously published memoir of his illness, *La Douleur*, (written 1895–1897, published Paris, 1930) translated by Julian Barnes as *In the Land of Pain*. (London, 2002).

- 26 Kipling, 'Address to medical students, Middlesex Hospital: October 1908,' collected in *A Book of Words*, 50–51. See also Jeremiah 31.25
- 27 'Insanity Problems: The Crises of Life: Professor Robertson's Views': a report of the Maudsley lecture on the Prevention of Insanity by Professor George Robertson, President of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh. *The Scotsman* Friday 16 July 1926, 4. [Robertson's other 'promising form of treatment' was presumably the arsenical compound marketed from 1910 as 'salvarsan'. *Ed.*]

BOOK REVIEW

BY ANDREW SCRAGG

Ruling Devotion: The Hindu Temple in the British Imperialist Imagination by Deborah Sutton, SUNY Press, 2024 (ISBN 9781438499215) £30.99

Temples loom large in Kipling's Indian works, both fiction and non-fiction, and Deborah Sutton, Professor of South Asian History at Lancaster University has written an intriguing study of 'the histories of the Hindu temple as an idea, a form, an architecture and place – across 150 years of colonial governance' (2). ('Temple' itself is hard to define; it can range from a handheld object or a wayside shrine to a large religious complex, can be dedicated to a range of divinities, including Vishnu and Shiva as well as local deities, and can be called many things: Mandir, Devalaya or Pagoda.) Her book is not a history of the religion or of the temples, but an exploration of how the colonial imagination created the idea of the Hindu temple as 'a site of enviable wealth, compelling depravity, architectural wonder, political sensitivity and aesthetic appeal' (2).

The East India Company's initial interest in Hindu temples was financial: absorbing the temples and the lands under their control, taking their revenues and paying a grant to each temple. The Company and its Protestant operatives had little understanding or sympathy either of the organisation of temples or of the Hindu religion; which led to arguments over accounts, claims of corruption and distrust on both sides. The rise of the Evangelical movement in Britain also led to complaints that the Company was supporting 'pagan' religious sites rather than encouraging missionary work.

A second area of interest was in architectural scholarship, as a way of better understanding the colonised peoples of India. This was led by a retired financier, James Fergusson, who viewed the temple as a kind of 'stone book' wherein he could read the history and development of its architecture – though without reference to the Sanskrit histories of the religion and temples, sharing the Victorian attitude that texts illegible to the Anglophone scholar were of no analytical purpose. Fergusson set about creating an acceptable history for western audiences, in which Indian architecture was secondary in quality to that of Europe, whose architecture had developed in cycles of achievement and degeneration, arriving at mastery; whereas Indian architecture existed as a matter of mechanistic rote and repetition (88).

If architectural scholarship showed that temples had some importance (if only as tourist sites), they needed to be conserved; hence the

'imperial state's ambition to set aside the material remains of India's past from, and on behalf of, its present' (126). However, rigid codes of conservation methodology and the restricted cultural understanding of the Department of Public Works as regards what might be a temple and modes of worship, together with the issues of undertaking conservation work while temples were in use, caused inevitable conflicts. Sutton demonstrates some of these difficulties when discussing the religious tensions that arose during the redevelopment of Delhi in 1938. In order to create a new, open and dramatic capital city, certain religious buildings had to be demolished or relocated. The tensions between people of different religious faiths and the cultural insensitivity and/ or ignorance of those in power caused temples to become politically charged focal points in the struggle for Indian independence.

In her final chapter, Sutton discusses how the West approached Hindu temples and their artworks, focussing on the work of Czech art historian Stella Kramrisch and her important exhibition at the Warburg Institute in 1940, which made great use of detailed photography. This brought the beauty of the artworks to the attention of a wider audience, but distanced them from the temple by removing their religious aspect, rendering them merely as items for research and desire.

The most striking aspect of Sutton's book for *Kipling Journal* readers is her discussion of how the Hindu temple found its way into the English literary imagination, and what it came to represent. She traces this development through early Victorian representations as scenes of adventure in Maturin's Gothic *Melmoth the Wanderer* and Collins' *The Moonstone*, to Kipling and Forster's more realistic representations. She claims that the Hindu temple became 'a creature of the Western imagination, an imperial place-marker of cultural, moral and aesthetic difference,' (181) reflecting the Protestant sensibilities of the colonial elite: 'a space of aesthetic and sensory alienation: the smells, textures and noises of the temple in chants, libations and crowds' (11). Most of all it was the eroticism that offended – the 'association of the sacred and the sensual ... signified the cultural distance between the moral order presumed to accompany colonization and its subjects' (11).

The writer suggests that Kipling did not see the temple as a place of adventure but as a 'zone of distinction between the European and the native' (170). Temples were not isolated places; they existed everywhere that the colonizers or tourists went. Kipling uses the temple to confront the stupidity of ignorant globetrotters in 'The Bride's Progress' and to extract comedy from cultural differences in 'The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney'. 'The Mark of the Beast' shows Kipling's understanding of the complexity of the relationship between the colonizers and the temples – Fleete's drunken defilement is a disgrace and abhorrent to his companions, but they can only save him by themselves becoming

disgraced by the kidnapping and torture of the Silver Man. For Sutton, Kipling has his characters act out of character to protect one of their own. Their violence is un-English and hence un-Imperial.

Sutton explores Kipling's response to his visit to the cave of Gau-Mukh in Chitor which he describes in *Letters of Marque*. The descent is physically repulsive to him; the temple is an 'embodiment of a repellent native corporality' (169). For Kipling the temple represents 'a site of adversarial authority, the abode of priests in a remote but potent dominion' (169 – 170), this is an authority resistant to colonial rule, but to Kipling's eyes based on 'superstition, sacrifice and ... perverse worship' (170). It was the authority represented by the temple that Kipling recognised: 'The temple's boundaries were barriers that the British crossed at their peril' (175). Sutton's book shows that in their many engagements with the Hindu temple the colonial government ignored or misjudged that peril.

Ruling Devotion is a valuable and readable contribution to our understanding of indigenous religious sites under colonial governance and the failure of the Raj to engage and understand the native communities it governed. The book is well researched, drawing on a huge range of materials, and is readable and accessible; the glossary at the beginning is most useful. Sutton's discussion of Kipling is convincing and challenging, placing him within the context of colonial governance of India and ably demonstrating how his work contributes to the creation of the idea of the temple in the Victorian-era western mind. Although Kipling only plays a small part in the book, *Ruling Devotion* offers a great deal of context and understanding which will increase the reader's understanding and appreciation of Kipling's Indian writings.

Andrew Scragg

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

WHO WROTE 'THE OLD VOLUNTEER'?

From Elisabeth Blumenberg

In his memoir *Something of Myself* (1937), Kipling relates how on 27 May 1918 *The Times* published under his name a poem 'The Old Volunteer'. This had arrived as a handwritten MS signed 'Rudyard Kipling' but without a covering letter, although the 'faked postmark ... should not have deceived a messenger-boy.' Kipling alerted *The Times* to this hoax, and considerable effort was devoted, vainly, to discovering the culprit. According to Thomas Pinney's notes in his Cambridge edition of *Something of Myself* (1990), the first suspect was the journalist Ian Colvin (1877–1938), who had earlier hoaxed the paper into printing 'some fragments of Keats' but who swore angrily to Kipling that 'if he could not do a better parody of my "stuff" with his left hand he would retire from business.' Kipling says he then suspected a 'non-Aryan', named in Pinney's notes as the writer Israel Zangwill (1864–1928). The culprit is not named in Pinney's notes.

In fact, the writer of 'The Old Volunteer' was identified over 50 years ago, although the discovery has somehow not reached the public. John Felstiner stated in *The Lies of Art: Max Beerbohm's Parody and Caricature* (Gollancz, 1973), p. 160, that the forgery was the work of the caricaturist and parodist Max Beerbohm. In one way this is not surprising, since 'Max' was Kipling's lifelong enemy who, as Charles Carrington wrote, 'hated Kipling and set himself to destroy Kipling's reputation'. Yet in another way it is strange, because 'The Old Volunteer' is, as Colvin said, so weak. Whereas Max's cruelly witty parody of Kipling's early soldier stories 'P.C. X. 75' stings because its caricatured relish for violence is so recognisable, 'The Old Volunteer' reads less like a Kipling poem than a weak imitation of one. Written in a stanza vaguely resembling those of *Barrack Room Ballads*, this complaint by an elderly man of the Army rejecting him as past military age is quite unlike any of Kipling's Great War poems (which presumably Max had by 1918 stopped bothering to read). If the parodist's intention was simply to annoy Kipling, then he certainly succeeded. Yet how the elegant Max Beerbohm came to compose such tosh, even to spite a man he hated, remains mysterious.

Elisabeth Blumenberg
Whitstable

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