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## Home and who: A rhetorical analysis of Rudyard Kipling's "Tiger! tiger!" and "Letting in the jungle"

Steven Clark Estus

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HOME AND WHO: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF RUDYARD KIPLING'S  
"TIGER! TIGER!" AND "LETTING IN THE JUNGLE"

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
English Composition

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by  
Steven Clark Estus

June 2003

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Date

## ABSTRACT

It has often been expressed that British writer Rudyard Kipling was a pitiless, xenophobic imperialist, the nineteenth century's chief apologist for imperialism. In the flesh, guilty: at one time or another, he was all of these things. In his fiction, however, he seems to stretch in ways that his public persona never could. Though he admired strength, his characters are often indeterminate beings; weak in personality even if strong in body, they are often highly malleable—and just as often lost. In many of his Indian stories it is the problem of maintaining identity that is central, not the problem of, say, retaining Victoria's outposts.

This study focuses primarily on two of Kipling's stories from his Second Jungle Book: "Tiger! Tiger!" and "Letting in the Jungle." In the first story, Kipling introduces his readers to the boy Mowgli, a stranger living among jungle beasts, and grounds us in the peculiar difficulties that beset one not raised among his own kind. In the second story, Kipling removes the boy to his natural (read: civilized) environment, where we witness a second,

greater difficulty: when one is raised out of one's natural place, that unnatural place follows wherever one goes.

I consider these stories to be representative of a two-part larger idea that is repeatedly expressed both in the concrete details of Kipling's stories and in the ways he uses language: first, the imperial project asks citizens of one place to live in another while, of course, maintaining the sort of life and demeanor required back home, and a result of this divided existence may be a citizen of no place at all; second, the requirements of empire place citizens at risk of being taken over by the very cultures they are expected to modify and control. In this it is possible to see that Kipling, the archetypal man of empire, may not always have been the empire's man in his work; and causes for that may be found in the alluring, very non-English place he lived in for several years of his youth: India.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### IF KIPLING WAS WHAT KIPLING

#### SEEMS

When I was in my father's house, I was in a better place.

-Rudyard Kipling, "Baa Baa Black Sheep" (143)

Joseph Rudyard Kipling: racist, xenophobic enemy of freedom? Ask that question of critics, and the ayes would likely be deafening, for his politics have often been described with regret—and sometimes appreciable heat. After he wrote the famous—or infamous—imperialist poem, "Recessional,"<sup>1</sup> the anti-imperialist Jack Mackail, mistakenly believing some of the poem's lines to have pacifistic intent, wrote a thank-you letter to Kipling. Kipling replied, "Thank you very much but all the same seeing what manner of armed barbarians we are surrounded with, we're about the only power with a glimmer of civilisation in us" (qtd. in Derbyshire). In his introduction to Kipling and the Critics, Elliot L. Gilbert describes Kipling, by then dead some thirty years, as still "cordially hated" (v) and having had "old-fashioned, if not actually dangerous" political views (vi). In that same collection, the poet Robert Buchanan's 1900 essay<sup>2</sup> refers

to Kipling as the "spoiled child of an utterly brutalized public" (29) and a model of the "uninstructed Hooliganism of the time" (20). Even Joseph Conrad, a Kipling admirer, felt politically compelled to temper his admiration, writing that "Some of his work is of impeccable form and because of that little thing he shall sojourn in Hell only a very short while"<sup>3</sup> (qtd. in Raskin 27). As a rule, today's critics are hardly more generous; as Judith A. Plotz notes, critics "have often treated Kipling as if he were the Rhinoceros of his own fable [ . . . ] no manners then, and [ . . . ] no manners now" (vii).<sup>4</sup> It is not difficult to see why. An 1889 letter to Edmonia Hill sums up neatly his general, public view of imperialism:

Dined with George Macmillan [ . . . ] Mrs. Macmillan told me that India was fit to govern itself and that "we in England" (the ultra liberal idiots always speak of 'we') "are very much in earnest about putting things right there."

Hereto I with my engaging frankness. "Oh, that's not earnestness that you're suffering from. That's hysteria. You haven't got enough to divert your mind." (Letters of Rudyard Kipling 372)

Admirers of Kipling's work (of which I am one) could wish that accusing liberals of hysteria were the worst of his crimes. But there are worse things, at least one of which

suggests that no manners is hardly a strong enough charge. In April 1919, partially as a response to new anti-sedition legislation, mob violence began sweeping through the city of Amritsar (Singh n. pag.). There, on April 13th, Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer ordered his soldiers to fire on thousands of Indians who were in breach of a proclamation prohibiting meetings. The numbers vary, but one source estimates that there were approximately 1516 casualties, including 379 dead (Fischer 203). The Amritsar Massacre was the My Lai of its day, and caused a great deal of soul searching on the part of many Englishmen and Englishwomen. General Dyer, however, was mystified by this response to his actions. "I thought I would be doing a jolly lot of good" (Fischer 204), he said, before being forced to resign, without pension, from service (Fischer 205). To save Dyer from penury, the conservative London Morning Post newspaper established a fund on his behalf. Among the contributors to his fund was one Rudyard Kipling (Gilmour 276; Draper 238).

Such episodes do lend credence to the conclusion that Kipling was, as Elie Halevy puts it, the "literary mouthpiece of the [Victorian] period" (20), "the prophet[.]" as George Orwell writes, "of British

Imperialism in its expansionist phase" (72). Still, although he often adhered to the Tory line, he never belonged to a political party (Shanks 10), and in general found it difficult to dismiss the power (and thus, to his mind, value) of other places and cultures. A scrupulous reading of Kipling's work, especially his fiction, reveals conflicts and subtle contradictions that in some ways remove him from both nineteenth-century British nationalist politics and a more modern, more diffuse politics that favors national independence and self-governance.

During the Second World War, Vera Lynn sang "[t]hough worlds may change and go awry/While there is still one voice to cry/There'll always be an England" (Parker and Charles), as if England were singular, unchangeable. Yet England is a diverse land and idea,<sup>5</sup> a non-monolithic thing. And as long as Kipling's work remains, there will be evidence that his heart and art were sometimes at odds, that his pronouncements about English (and white<sup>6</sup>) superiority and his judgments about the inferiority of other cultures and peoples were often balanced by questions about the nature of that burden "[c]old-edged with dear-bought wisdom" ("The White Man's Burden" 323) white men had taken upon themselves and the (especially proxemic) dangers

of Otherness. True, his treatment of certain issues proceeds, in part, from fear; but fear implies respect, however grudging. Further, his brand of imperialism, despite its superior swagger, was not without its softer side; Kipling's imperialism, as Vasant Shahane writes, "is suffused with his love for the primordial in man" (40). In short, like England, he was not a singular thing; his subjectivity was conflicted and multiple.

In the postmodern vein, one might say that Kipling was not himself, that he is they and thus ultimately impossible to pin down—but I will do my best in these pages to find some portion of him. For the most part, the focus here is on a single work and a few relatively brief periods in Kipling's life. When I stray outside the frame, readers should bear in mind my acknowledgement that time (literal and cultural) is an enemy of resolution and may render especially tenuous my conclusions—and thus I do occasionally find it necessary to digress.

In 1858, while occupied with suppressing what it called the Indian Mutiny (what the Mutineers called the Revolt<sup>7</sup>)—a brief, bloody uprising of the natives<sup>8</sup> against their nominal masters—the British Crown took it upon itself to assume full administrative power over the government of

India<sup>9</sup> (Brown Modern 96), a move driven by British nationalism and monetary interests in the region, and also, in some measure, by the Empire's patriarchal interest in controlling its subject peoples' supposed dissolute tendencies. Thus, in the 1860s, there began the roughly ninety-year period of true Imperial India,<sup>10</sup> the time of the British Raj, into which Joseph Rudyard Kipling was born in 1865.

If young Rudyard's parents were not quite well off, the Kipling household in Bombay certainly was of upper-middle-class aspirations [it was possible for Anglo-Indians<sup>11</sup> of even fairly modest means to live quite well in India (Brown Modern 98-100)], and patterned itself, as was common to the time and place, after British life in England (Brown Modern 98). There was a Roman Catholic ayah, or nursemaid [who sometimes took Rudyard to chapel (Orel 3; Carrington 8)]; a Hindu bearer [who sometimes took Rudyard to the temple of Shiva (Something 3-4; Carrington 8)]; and broad indulgence; and by all accounts the young Rudyard was, as Kingsley Amis writes, "thoroughly spoilt" (18) and accustomed to giving orders.<sup>12</sup> Harold Orel reports that, in a personal letter from England, Rudyard's uncle Fred Macdonald pronounces the boy, then only slightly more than

two years of age, a "power and a problem with strange gifts of upsetting any household" (2). Except for his being taken on a brief trip to England while a toddler (Carrington 8), Rudyard spent his first five years in Bombay and was thereupon taken by his parents to England, where the Kiplings spent the better part of 1871. In December of that year, Rudyard and his young sister, Alice ("Trix"), were left in England, at Southsea, under the care of two hired foster parents, Pryse Agar Holloway, a retired captain in the merchant marine, and his wife, Sarah (Pinney, Notes, Something 222), a woman of strict religious devotion, while Kiplings père and mère returned to India (Wilson 17). This in itself was not unusual—as Amis notes, boarding out one's children was a common enough practice at the time (21)—but Kipling's reaction to his abandonment to what he later calls "the House of Desolation" (Something 11) was apparently a strong one, and served as the catalyst for his several fictional and non-fictional treatments of this period in his life,<sup>13</sup> most famously the short story "Baa Baa Black Sheep." This interval provided stimuli for more than those efforts, however, for although he was eventually retrieved [by his mother, in 1871—a little over five years later (Wilson 18; Carrington 10)], the trauma

was significant enough to suffuse much of what he later wrote.<sup>14</sup> In the context of this study, Kipling's childhood is, as it were, played out in the early Mowgli stories, and his emerging adulthood in "Letting in the Jungle"; and the twin homes of the final jungle books—the orphanage of the jungle, the asylum of the village (or perhaps it is the reverse)—may offer some explanation for his long restiveness. To sum up his early travels: In 1882, after some years at school (and a total of eleven years' absence from India), Kipling, then sixteen years old, returned to India, where he spent, as he puts it, "seven years' hard" (Something 43) as a correspondent for the Civil and Military Gazette and, later, the Allahabad Pioneer (Something 37-44). In February of 1889, at the age of 23, he left India and traveled broadly for some years; in 1892, he married an American woman, Caroline Starr Balestier (Seymour-Smith 199), and the couple sailed from England for America. The Kiplings spent the next four and a half years semi-settled in New England (Wilson 190), at their home, "Naulakha," in Vermont (Orel 34), where Kipling wrote the stories that are of primary concern to this study, the jungle books. He appears to have written the Jungle Book (published in 1893) in relative seclusion (Orel 33-35), and

the Second Jungle Book (published in 1895) between visits to Bermuda and England (Orel 35-35).<sup>15</sup> The conditions under which he produced the second text more aptly capture certain of the man's inclinations than do the former, for physically, intellectually, and politically, Kipling was a wanderer. His fiction, with its recurring themes of abandonment, displacement, situational fitness, and disorder, conveys well his interest in, and concern about, the effects of cultural corruption on personal and cultural identity.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HOME

Sing a song of six pence  
Purchased by our lives  
Decent English gentlemen  
Roasting with their wives,  
In the plains of India  
Where like flies they die.  
Isn't that a wholesome risk  
To get our living by?  
—Rudyard Kipling (qtd. in Shahane 16-17)

It is certainly arguable whether in his jungle stories Kipling makes consciously admonitory points about, say, the hazards of dual citizenship or the perils of Empire, but it seems clear enough that, during his bid to entertain and delight his readers, he nonetheless makes such points. In eight stories over two texts, the Mowgli stories of Kipling's jungle books tell of the adventures of an Indian boy raised by wolves in the Seonee jungle of British-occupied India during the late nineteenth century. In that they are deliberately didactic [having a "palpable design upon us[,]"] as Keats writes of Wordsworth's poetry<sup>16</sup> (224)] and simply structured, they read like children's stories,<sup>17</sup> and indeed, though they are more than that, they have most often been marketed as juvenile texts, as a perusal of many libraries' Kipling collections will attest. It is fitting

that Kipling's most appropriate audience is usually adjudged to be young people: his affinity to them has often been remarked, and his romantic view of the world<sup>18</sup> revealingly colors his texts. Amis reports Kipling's "special tenderness" toward children, and notes that telling stories to children was a favorite Kipling activity (25; 9). The man writing from a boyish perspective is Other, a position Kipling certainly, with rare exceptions, occupied as a child; the man as British subject is something else again. Although obviously when he became a writer he was no longer a child, he was often said to be childlike—Angus Wilson writes that the adult Kipling "never saw a child with an outsider's vision" (6)—and it is this quality of his vision that allows him to—however inadvertently—indict his own behavior and that of his nation. The self, and current national policies, may not change overnight, but the potential for change broods in the more impressionable, younger generation, the ones who will one day run the Empire. To get to the young, one must get inside them, speak their language, see with their eyes; and Kipling did. This is not to say that Kipling meant to warn off, or even temper the ambitions of, future imperialists—there is entirely too much flag waving in his

texts to allow me to comfortably assert such a thing. Nevertheless, what he communicated about the risks of empire, and how, could not help but affect his readers' view of the undertaking. As he writes in "The Exiles' Line," those the Empire sends out are not merely "Linked in the chain of Empire" but "Bound in the wheel of Empire, one by one,"/The chain-gangs of the East from sire to son" (n. pag.). While such servitude may, at times, have noble ends, the means come dear; reading Kipling, it is impossible to forget that England, as he puts it in a letter to his cousin Margaret Burne-Jones, spends its "best men on the country [India, in this case] like water[,] and for "small thanks" (qtd in Gilmour 78).

While Kipling's jungle books were most pointedly (or best) aimed at youngsters, it is important to note that there is often another audience present when children's books are read: parents. Many children are introduced to reading by listening to their parents read to them, and children often improve their reading skills through recitation<sup>19</sup>—rather in the manner of the drills prescribed in the American McGuffey Readers of Kipling's day<sup>20</sup>—and young readers have a ready-made audience in their parents. In short, in one way or another, children's stories—

particularly those as subtle and sophisticated (thus unforgettable) as those of the jungle books—often find their way into adult minds. It seems reasonable to assume that Kipling's secondary audience were adults.

It is conceivable that there was a third audience as well, one highly personal to Kipling: what Kipling, borrowing the expression from his mother, called the "Family Square" (Carrington 42), that closely-knit unit consisting of father, mother, sister, and himself that, after his return to India in late 1882 (Wilson 58), stood foursquare against the wilder world of India.<sup>21</sup> Not only were we happy," Kipling writes, "but we knew it" (Something 46), and many critics and Kiplingians [to borrow Amis' term (5)] accept this as simple fact: as Harry Ricketts flatly begins his Rudyard Kipling: A Life, "Kipling adored his parents" (1). And indeed, Kipling understood that there were pleasures to be found in a clannish insularity; as his poem "We and They" reads, "Father, Mother, and me,/Sister and Auntie say/All the people like us are We,/And every one else is They" (n. pag.) But as Kipling's mother herself reported in early 1883, Rudyard was apparently also aware of the discomforts of the too-insular. He was, she claimed, singularly disinclined to remain at the family

home in Lahore, and wrote to her friend, Edith Plowden, that he was "at times very trying in his moods—being subject to sudden fits of the blues" (qtd. in Ricketts 56). It is true that Rudyard appears to have been remarkably devoted to his parents, but it was those same parents who took him from home and ayah and left him in the care of (he claimed) abusive strangers for several years. C.E.

Carrington writes of Kipling's earlier work, "[t]he family square made the only audience he cared to please" (42), and Kipling's own account is even more focused. Writing of his parents, he claims that "those two made for me the only public for whom then I had any regard whatever till their deaths, in my forty-fifth year" (Something 94). Still, his work does not seem designed wholly to please the mother and father, as he called them: while he carefully avoids assigning blame to the deserting parents of "Baa Baa Black Sheep," still a reminder of neglect is forever inherent in that work, and his parents could not have missed their role as first movers of that work's, and some of their son's, darkest moments. Presenting a result as dreadful cannot help but reflect on the cause that led to it, and Wilson speculates that the story's publication "must have been very painful to his [Kipling's] parents" (18). If that is

correct, surely Kipling did not overlook that fact, but simply disregarded it. This seems far less a mark of boundless devotion than a scold. Having once abandoned him to foreign influences and abuses, at times Kipling's parents may have seemed to him, in the manner conveyed by the above verse excerpt, more They than We—more Other than family. In a sense, it is at that point of abandonment that Kipling's colonial politics may be said to begin—as do the jungle books. The mother and father drop their charges in a strange place and leave them to their fate; the Empire does the same. And, while there are perfectly good reasons for such actions, they are attended by great risks.

The second Mowgli story of the Second Jungle Book, "Letting in the Jungle,"<sup>22</sup> recounts what unfolds after Mowgli returns from the village of Men<sup>23</sup> and attempts, with the kind of single-minded (or blinkered) commitment foolish detours can inspire, to begin anew his old life in the jungle. He had found village life difficult—not least because his ease with jungle beasts had led the villagers to believe he was a "Devil-child" (Jungle Books 177)—and is determined to put his experiment with village life behind him. He soon discovers that this is harder than he had expected. Buldeo, the chief hunter of the village, trails

him with murderous intent, and Messua and her husband,<sup>24</sup> the couple who had taken Mowgli into their home, are about to be killed by their fellow villagers for having harbored him.

Mowgli launches a rescue mission and, with the aid of his animal companions, frees Messua and her husband. But this is not enough for Mowgli: although he does not want blood, he does want vengeance, so he enlists the aid of scores of jungle beasts to wipe the jungle clean of the village. The "People of the Jungle" (Jungle Books 48) obligingly trample in-hunting, cropping, ruining food stores, and killing service animals—and the villagers, afraid, and unable to maintain their fields, finally depart. The last to leave hear the sounds of the final invaders, the elephants, as they tear down the walls. In a little time, what is left of the man-made structures is overrun, and, as Kipling concludes the tale, "by the end of the Rains there was the roaring Jungle in full blast on the spot that had been under plough not six months before" (Jungle Books 195). That roaring—suggesting the cry of an animal—well suits this description of the jungle's retaking of cultivated land: it has known the sound of human conversation, but will no longer. And I note briefly E.

Cobham Brewer's treatment of in full blast from his 1898 Dictionary of Phrase and Fable: "A metaphor from the blast furnace in full operation." Blast furnaces not only destroy but transform, and the boy, once the jungle has transformed him, will never be able to claim his birthright, that which the furnace may symbolize: civilization. Born to human parents but raised by beasts, Mowgli has missed his chance to become cultivated. A final point: if, with the advent of Mowgli, the village may be considered the point of potential union between the wild and civilization—between, say, India and England—the story's ending makes it clear enough that such a union augurs unhappy consequences.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the jungle books appear events, tropes, and words that create a deep sense of disorder and conflict. When Mowgli returns from the village, his arrival and subsequent tale-telling disrupt the beasts' natural patterns. The opening verses of "Night-Song in the Jungle," the poem which precedes "Mowgli's Brothers," the first jungle book, place the beasts' time squarely after sunset:

Now Rann, the Kite, brings home the night  
That Mang, the Bat, sets free—  
The herds are shut in byre and hut,  
For loosed till dawn are we. (Jungle Books 3)

The boy's arrival changes this. Kipling has Mowgli bring home the day, and his new patterns, behaviors, and demands ill suit his old dwelling place and the diurnal habits of his companions. We read that "[i]t was long after sunrise, but no one dreamed of going to sleep" (Jungle Books 172), and hear of a "midnight call in the afternoon, which was quite awful" (Jungle Books 178), and we discover that Mowgli is suddenly capable of imposing his will, even upon Bagheera, the black panther. Upon being drafted to "sing [ . . . ] home" (Jungle Books 178) (that is, terrorize) Buldeo and his party of men, Bagheera complains, "[I]t is no light hunting to work for a Man-cub. When shall I sleep?" (Jungle Books 178).

And indeed, the hunting is not light, for Mowgli's impending manhood brings serious weight and consequences and hints at darker times to come, in large part because he has ventured outside the jungle and truly discovered—to his apparent dismay, as follows below—that he is a man, at least in form. The village's intrusion into the jungle does not stop at Mowgli's newfound knowledge of his heritage, but extends to manufactured weaponry as well. When he returns, he bears a knife:

Then he told Mother Wolf and Father Wolf as much as they could understand of his adventures among men; and when he made the morning sun flicker up and down the blade of his skinning-knife—the same he had skinned Shere Khan with—they said he had learned something. (Jungle Books 172)

He has learned the following: he has greater intelligence than do the animals, for "as much as they could understand" indicates that, in recognition of Mother and Father Wolf's natural limitations, Mowgli stops explaining where he has to, but before he could have; he may be, in a sense, more sophisticated than they, for, though to make the sun flicker on the blade of a knife is a simple trick for a man, Mother and Father Wolf are impressed (learned is not enclosed by ironizing quotation marks, but surely would be were the subjects men rather than wolves). He is learning that he is out of place in the jungle, for these reasons: he must carefully explain too many things to his (adoptive) parents, who should, customarily and naturally, know more than he; and he must use technology to compete with the natural weaponry of the People of the Jungle. Early in the story, the wolf Akela (who once led the pack, and so the boy), having offended Mowgli, finds himself dodging punishment: "'Phff! That is a sharp tooth,' said Akela, snuffing at the blade's cut in the earth, 'but living with the Man-Pack has spoiled thine aim, Little Brother. I

could have killed buck while thou wast striking'" (Jungle Books 174). Akela's metaphoric-hyperbolic gibe points up Mowgli's human slowness (and relative, literal dullness; that is no tooth he stabs with), just as, later, Mowgli's clumsiness marks his essential manhood, something for which no appurtenances, no matter how sharp, can quite compensate: "No one[,] Kipling writes, "can be so silent as a wolf when he does not care to be heard; and Mowgli, though the wolves thought he moved very clumsily, could come and go like a shadow" (Jungle Books 176). It is worth noting that Mowgli has lashed out because Akela has called him a man rather than a wolf: "'Another time,' Mowgli said quietly, returning the knife to its sheath, 'speak of the Man-Pack and of Mowgli in two breaths—not one'" (Jungle Books 174); nonetheless, he seems to be a man—his laggardly hand speed and relative clumsiness prove this. And yet he is not quite a man, for he can, we read, come and go like a shadow. Shadow seems a suitable term for a creature occupying a non-place between beast and man. Such coming and going also suits, for Mowgli is restive, and shambles uncertainly between places and states of being—where he may belong and may not, should be and should not. From the day of his return, Mowgli, increasingly fractious and contrary,

seems more than ever an aberration, a disruptive force in the Jungle.

But so, too, in the village. Mowgli had not left it by choice, but had been driven out by his fellow men (59-60). In "Tiger! Tiger!," the prelude to "Letting in the Jungle," Mowgli's troubles in the village begin with his appearance, manner(s), and ignorance of human customs and speech [the wild look of him; the tooth-scars on his limbs; his mysterious powers; his inability to, as he says, "understand man's talk" (Jungle Books 50)], but it is his pride—especially in evidence when he refuses to pay respect to priests who scold him for his ignorance of caste (Jungle Books 51), and to ingenuous village elders who believe jungle tales consisting of what he calls "cobwebs and moon-talk" (Jungle Books 51-52), and to the village's master hunter, Buldeo (Jungle Books 52, 58-59), who spins those highly vertical stories—that finishes him there and makes him an outcast(e). After enduring many tall tales at the village club [a "masonry platform under a great fig-tree" (Jungle Books 52)],

Mowgli rose to go. "All the evening I have lain here listening," he called back over his shoulder, "and, except once or twice, Buldeo has not said one word of truth concerning the jungle, which is at his very doors. How, then, shall I believe the tales of

ghosts and gods and goblins which he says he has seen?"

"It is full time that boy went to herding," said the head-man, while Buldeo puffed and snorted at Mowgli's impertinence. (Jungle Books 52)

Interestingly, Kipling has the boy herd again in "Letting in the Jungle," but then it is not cattle but Buldeo himself that Mowgli (with the help of the singing Bagheera and Mowgli's brother-wolves, the Four) herds; and surely it is natural to herd (or, for that matter, hunt) a thing that puffs and snorts, as Buldeo does in the passage cited above. And the jungle being at Buldeo's very doors prefigures the long, slow march to come, a different herding effort that ends, finally, with the wild world's stepping over the village threshold.

Not, that is, that the wild world has not already entered. Threshold, the architectural term I use above, suggests buildings, and so establishes a division between a feline existence and some measure of civilization; and yet the villagers begin to fall into bestial behavior immediately upon Mowgli's arrival:

The priest came to the gate, and with him at least a hundred people who stared and talked and shouted and pointed at Mowgli. 'They have no manners, these Men Folk,' said Mowgli to himself. 'Only the gray ape would behave as they do.'  
(Jungle Books 48-9)

Mowgli's refusal to honor Buldeo—who, though clownish, is, "the bravest hunter in [the] Seeonee [jungle]"<sup>26</sup> (Jungle Books 177)—and other human elders, and finally even his formerly superior companion beasts, establishes conflicts that at once seem natural to the tale of a maturing male carving out a place for himself in the world and unnatural in the following respects. In both worlds, elders hold much power and traditionally command the respect of youth, yet Mowgli finds ways to assert his will over them and is often disrespectful of them. Mowgli is, it seems, neither a man nor a beast ["Well, if I am a man, a man I must become" (Jungle Books 49)—his possibly nonsensical anadiplosis from "Tiger!"—hardly settles the matter<sup>27</sup>], but does in both worlds effectively challenge rough peers and superiors alike, in their tongues and in foreign tongues (about which more later). I note that, by the close of "Letting," Mowgli has been ousted from both Jungle and Village. The Man-cub exists in both worlds, yet belongs to, and functions perfectly in, neither.

Mowgli's impertinent resistance to norms is not, however, always in evidence: as Kipling tells us, "so far as he [knows] anything about love" (Jungle Books 188), he loves his surrogate mother, Messua. But this is the single

exception to Mowgli's emerging solipsistic rule. As he becomes a man, by degrees he shakes off virtually all obligations to honor others and absolutely all inclinations to obey them. Yet respect and deference cover vital ground on the path to maturity and are useful, normative behaviors in all cultures; sweeping them aside jeopardizes stability, even in the animal kingdom. Indeed, one wonders if, without much knowledge of love and its natural forms, Mowgli is even a complete individual. In the matter of Messua, it should be noted that, while Mowgli does honor her, she returns that honor far too much, speaking to him "timidly" (Jungle Books 181), and even, at one point in "Letting in the Jungle," "throwing herself at his feet" (Jungle Books 184), a gesture unsuitable to mother-matriarchs and one that upends the convention his esteem for her validates. (Such curious obeisance occurs several times in "Letting in the Jungle," and, as will be seen, occurs not only within but between groups.) Nations, of course, rely upon ties that supercede personal pride and encourage conformity and obedience, but so do colonies, human families, and wolf packs. It is all the more striking that Mowgli would flout convention in light of the

text's emphasis on Law. The end poem of "Letting in the Jungle" concludes with these words:

Lair-Right is the right of the Mother. From all  
of her year<sup>28</sup> she may claim  
One haunch of each kill for her litter, and none  
may deny her the same.  
Cave-Right is the right of the Father—to hunt by  
himself for his own:  
He is freed of all calls to the Pack; he is  
judged by the Council alone.  
Because of his age and his cunning, because of  
his gripe<sup>29</sup> and his paw,  
In all that the Law leaveth open, the word of  
your Head Wolf is Law.  
Now these are the Law of the Jungle, and many and  
mighty are they;  
But the head and the hoof of the Law and the  
haunch and the hump is—Obey! ("The Law of the  
Jungle," Jungle Books 156-57)

But the willingness to obey—which Mowgli had learned at the foot of the beasts, and particularly from Baloo, the great brown bear<sup>30</sup>—is what he learns, in the village, to put aside: he ridicules<sup>31</sup> and assaults Buldeo (Jungle Books 52; 59); mocks the village elders (Jungle Books 52); and by turns ignores (181), interrupts (181), and scorns Messua's husband (Jungle Books 184). In "Letting," Messua's husband, freed by Mowgli and about to flee with Messua into the night, says, "If we reach Kanhiwara, and I get the ear of the English, I will bring such a lawsuit against the Brahmin and old Buldeo and the others as shall eat this village to the bone. [ . . . ] I will have a great justice"

(Jungle Books 184). In reply, Mowgli laughs, "I do not know what justice is, but—come thou back next Rains and see what is left" (Jungle Books 184). In short, Mowgli remains unaffected by, or learns to mock and upend, many human conventions, but what he does adopt of these he carries back to the jungle only to cause disruptions there. These are events that are, in a way, anticipated by the text and through the above poem's oxymoronic coupling of the words law and jungle—a rhetorical figure conjoining deeply contradictory terms (perhaps no more contradictory than Messua's husband's equating justice to eating to the bone, but still, the word jungle suggests a lawless place). To add insult to unreason, Mowgli initially learns to obey (some) beasts, not men, and in the village learns to obey (some) men, not beasts; and yet in the end he obeys neither, conforming to neither group's expectations and laws.

Mowgli's campaign against the village, a plan whose level of physical and psychic violence shocks even the usually ferocious black panther, Bagheera, reveals something of this new learning and of Mowgli's changing persona. Bagheera does not comprehend the changes he sees in the boy, and is, in fact, afraid of them:

He could understand, if the worst came to the worst, a quick rush down the village street, and a right and left blow into a crowd, or a crafty killing of men as they ploughed in the twilight, but this scheme for deliberately blotting out an entire village from the eyes of man and beast frightened him. (Jungle Books 190)

If Mowgli is not quite of the village, neither is he quite of the jungle. His treatment of men seems, even to the brutal Bagheera, brutal. The phrase, "Worst came to the worst," from the quotation immediately above, is a curious error, if such it is. The expression (ordinarily worse to worst, describing a deteriorating condition ending at the absolute lowest point) appears this way in the 1899 Century Company/De Vinne Press edition (101), in the International Collectors Library edition (190) (the principal edition I have used for this study), and again in the Project Gutenberg online edition, so it does seem likely that Kipling writes the expression this way deliberately ([and oddly, if not incorrectly; he renders it in the traditional way in "Tiger!" (Jungle Books 57)]). Such usage has interesting effects and implications: if conditions cannot worsen—that is, if things are already as bad as they can be, from beginning to end—then the expression elides that division the mind anticipates from standard usage. Written this way, Bagheera's rush into the midst of men would

constitute an engagement of equals—equals that are, perhaps, equally degenerate. This differs from Jonah Raskin's view, that Kipling figures contact between representatives of opposing cultures as defining moments that strengthen each (39). He writes, "They watch the moves of their adversaries [ . . . ] and adjust their own selves accordingly" (39). They do watch, and adjustments are made, but the expression above suggests that contact between the two Others either illuminates their base parity or, I think more likely, helps produce it. There is more: after Messua and her husband are freed from their hut and safely on their way, Bagheera opts to serve as a replacement captive. He leaps through a window, deposits himself upon the bed, and waits. The villagers soon come charging toward the hut, torches in hand, their minds on torture and murder:

Here was some little difficulty with the catch of the door. It had been very firmly fastened, but the crowd tore it away bodily, and the light of the torches streamed into the room where, stretched at full length on the bed, his paws crossed and lightly hung down over one end, black as the Pit, and terrible as a demon, was Bagheera. There was one half-minute of desperate silence, as the front ranks of the crowd clawed and tore their way back from the threshold, and in that minute Bagheera raised his head and yawned—elaborately, carefully, and ostentatiously—as he would yawn when he wished to insult an equal. The fringed lips drew back and

up; the red tongue curled; the lower jaw dropped and dropped till you could see half-way down the hot gullet; and the gigantic dog-teeth stood clear to the pit of the gums till they rang together, upper and under, with the snick of steel-faced wards shooting home round the edges of a safe. (Jungle Books 186-7)

Bagheera has spent part of his life confined against his will: he has been a monarch's possession and has experienced "the cages of the King's Palace at Oodeypore" (Jungle Books 13-14).<sup>32</sup> Here, by entering a cage anew, he transforms it to a free place where he may demonstrate his power. The crossed paws that hang lightly and the ostentatious yawn signal contempt; the snap of the jaws, the similes-black as the Pit; terrible as a demon-the threat of the trap and death. Here is the Other of "The White Man's Burden," the "new-caught sullen peoples, /Half devil and half child" that "bind your sons to exile/To serve your captives' need"<sup>33</sup> (Complete Verse 321). As the phrase as he would yawn makes clear, Bagheera is at least equal to his putative captors. When he is not walking on his captive's throat, the jailer may sometimes be made to walk down it. The other may be outflanked, outgunned, and even, at times, outnumbered-but he is still dangerous and threatens engulfment. The project of Empire subtly emerges here, I suggest, with all its attendant problems of subject

colonies and peoples. Raskin's view notwithstanding, close contact between colonizers and colonized may create a kind of bond that threatens the authenticity and naturalness of subject and object, that weakens, rather than strengthens, each. If, when East meets West, the two are not good for each other, there is an argument to be made for staying home.

If there is parity here—that is, if Kipling places beasts and men, the colonized and the colonizers, on the same plane—why does he do so? My answer is tentative and far more oblique than Kipling's text, if not his subtext, and involves a psychology of place—or displacement: there may be a leveling here because supposedly natural divisions are washed away by the business of empire building. And it is not only that beasts and men, Indians and British subjects, are leveled; place is as well. Kipling knew about such things; he lived a dual life, and all his days possessed, in a sense, dual citizenship. He was born in India, but did not remain there; he was a British subject, but seemed not to belong to England. In his middle years, he writes of England as "the most marvellous of all foreign countries I have ever been in" (qtd. in Stewart 2), and, upon his return to Lahore after several years in England,

the young Kipling felt, as he recounts later in life, that "my English years fell away, nor ever, I think, came back in full strength" (Something 45). Nonetheless he lived as an adult but a few years in India, so that place, too, was no more his home than the England he eventually settled in—or for.

Ultimately, his inclination to wander forces us to consider the problematics of Kipling's self. If a person lacks an investment in place, he or she has, arguably, mislaid a portion of traditional identity. [It is true that, as Kipling grew older, he became increasingly disinclined to leave home, but this was an enforced reclusiveness necessitated by his fame and fragile health (Bok n. pag.): his wife took upon herself the job of keeping the public at bay, and Kipling—though he had some interest in society—acquiesced (Ricketts 216).] The isolation of Kipling's later years was matched by his unwillingness to speak about himself. As Thomas Pinney relates it, upon the publication of Kipling's final, posthumously published book, the autobiography Something of Myself, one critic dubbed it "Hardly Anything of Myself" [author's emphasis (Introduction, Something vii)], and one must wonder if behind that reticence was a lingering

indeterminacy that made disclosure so difficult for Kipling. Who am I? does not seem a question the perhaps deliberately self-unexamined Kipling would have pondered much<sup>34</sup>—aloud—but the result of his unacknowledged self-tanglement is a book that, for all we learn of its writer, might just as well have been left unwritten.<sup>35</sup> But still, frustratingly short on disclosures as it is, his autobiography is useful for what it seems not to maintain consistently: honesty. Kipling's restraint and use of humor here to mask the dark mood driving his descriptions of Southsea in "Baa Baa Black Sheep" reveal a man at odds not only with his past but with himself. As Amis reports, Kipling is said to have written that story in "a towering rage" (25)—but there is no indication of that in Something. The young man writing a fictional treatment of Southsea, where there were numerous beatings (Something 200; 204; 211), and threats of hellfire (Something 205), does tell something of himself, but the aging man who looks back in humor betrays his own memories:

Myself I was regularly beaten. The Woman had an only son of twelve or thirteen as religious as she. I was a real joy to him, for when his mother had finished with me for the day he (we slept in the same room) took me on and roasted the other side. [ . . . ]

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.  
(Something 6)

A shifting sense about the meaning of the past and the location of home, a loyalty split along Oriental and Occidental lines: these indicate doubleness. They tie the author to, as many British of his time would have it, the beast/man—Indian/English parity (the leveling about which I speculate above) as well as create in him lingering concerns about the removal of what he would consider natural divisions between cultures—whether of religion, class, or nation—a consequence of the proximity required by the business of empire. In Kipling's short story "The Mark of the Beast," a triad of "right-minded" (80) Englishmen find themselves diminished—made little more than animals, and "disgraced [ . . . ] as Englishmen forever" (80)—by their contact with heathens. Fleete, the first of the men to lose his way, develops a Bagheera-like (see below) green light (75) behind his eyes as the corruption sets in.<sup>36</sup> Kipling was born in the year that Darwin published his Origin of Species, the beginning of an inauspicious time indeed to be traveling about, making contact with darker

skins and—as Kipling's contemporary Joseph Conrad might have it—hearts. Putting it incompletely, evolutionary theory posits that differences in related organisms began to develop when barriers emerged within populations of a single type of organism; reunite those organisms, and their differences will eventually disappear. For a man convinced of the superiority of his kind, this is a chilling prospect. One would not wish one's superior characteristics to be weakened by mixing, and Darwin's ideas add a touch of terror to the act of colonizing. Indeed, Halevy may be right in thinking the jungle books "a species of Darwinian philosophy expressed in a mythical form" (21)—but that form cannot predict who shall prevail. Conrad would likely agree, at least in terms of the psychological changes colonizing journeys can induce—even if such travels be only in the mind. As Albert J. Guerard writes, Joseph Conrad—né Josef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski—was "more British than the British" (7).

If contact between and among different groups may be thought to render niches tentative and overlapping, confusion—both personal and cultural—might be a result of a policy that necessitates continual cultural admixing. Neither Mowgli nor Kipling seem to quite fit into their

worlds, primary or subsidiary. Mowgli and Kipling alike were, at times, raised by strangers, and each found that time difficult. Mowgli, taken in by Messua and her husband, soon becomes known as the Devil-child of the Jungle (Jungle Books 177), and Kipling, received into the Holloway home, becomes the model for Punch, the Black Sheep of Southsea, in "Baa Baa."

Although Mowgli has always been a thorn in various beasts' paws, and manages to make a mortal enemy of Shere Khan, the tiger, posthaste,<sup>37</sup> he is by the end of the jungle tales generally well-regarded by the beasts, and is fast friends with several of them [having pulled a few thorns as well (Jungle Books 13)]. Nonetheless Mowgli is never quite all there: having been determined to be a man and thus unfit for the jungle, he does find himself cast out by the end of the first story (a theme that repeats, though less violently, at the stories' close). His troubles begin at the Wolves' Council Rock, where some beasts dote on him while others seem inclined to devour him (Jungle Books 9-10) (which, for a time, they do—metaphorically speaking), and recur in the village—where, one might think, he truly belongs, but as he fails to share

the villagers' enthusiasm for rules of class and caste or local myths, that is not the case.

As for Kipling, although he was a troublesome child, it is clear that his parents—particularly his mother—doted on him, and, despite those few desperate years at Southsea, his deepest attachments were to his family. But Kipling's fit to the household at Southsea was quite a poor one, for he neither shared his mistress' pietistic religious enthusiasm nor lived up to her idea of a Good Boy. If "Baa Baa" is fairly representative of Rudyard's time at Southsea, the somewhat troublesome but bookish boy who arrived there had, by the time the mother had arrived to reclaim him, changed considerably, and not for the better. He has by then dismissed the value of truth-telling (185), and, far worse, has threatened arson (181) and murder (176; 181).

In Kipling's life and in Mowgli's, there are circles within circles—the inner being a reasonably hospitable place at times, the outer tracing hostile territory—but such things may easily be turned on their heads, just as jungle and village alike may alternatively be figured as England or colony. When he is a small child, Kipling's fit to India is better than the average Anglo-Indian's, perhaps

because of certain bicultural influences (even of religion, as noted above) and the lucky accident of his "'satiabile curiosity" [the signal phrase of his children's fable, "The Elephant's Child" (66)]. But the fit does not last, for his parents banish him from family (and India) for a time. And when Mowgli is very young, he, too, finds a place among strangeness (after some initial skirmishing), and he, too, is eventually cast out by his pack. But neither Kipling nor Mowgli accommodate well their second worlds, the ones that open to them in young adulthood. Mowgli's village experience is catastrophic for all concerned, Kipling's second effort to fit never quite takes, and the latter spends years moving about until he finally settles, with some misgivings, in England, that strange foreign land of his citizenship.

## CHAPTER THREE

### WHO

Something I owe to the soil that grew--  
More to the life that fed--  
But most to Allah Who gave me two  
Separate sides to my head.

(Kipling, Kim 139)

In the context of this study, the central facts about Kipling's life are those that contributed to his lack of fixity--his physical and psychological homelessness. As noted above, home was something he found hard to come by. Consider such a life: born here, a citizen there, with loyalties divided heart and head. While India could not claim Kipling's citizenship, England could not lay claim to his art: again, he wrote in many places, but his finest work was produced under the influence, or spell, of a burdensome yet artistically beneficent India. As Marghanita Laski writes,

Of all our great English writers, Rudyard Kipling came to have the widest geographical range. He visited every continent, traversed almost every sea, and wrote stories, verses, essays, about almost every place he had visited and some he had not. (8)

Kipling seemed congenitally unsuited to sitting still, and rootlessness, David Gilmour writes, "is in the essence of

Kipling's work" (3); yet a longing for home forever inheres in that work.

Mowgli, in some ways Kipling's literary counterpart, feels this longing too. Kipling makes him a full-blooded Indian, but upon introducing him summarily expels him from human culture and places the boy in the company, and under the care, of beasts (Jungle Books 3-20). As the boy approaches maturity—beginning with "Tiger! Tiger!"—Kipling places him athwart the two cultures and shifts him back and forth. As Kipling renders them, village and jungle alike have advantages and disadvantages, but Kipling ensures that neither place truly seems like home—to Mowgli or the reader. The village, we learn, lies in "a country that he [Mowgli] did not know" (Jungle Books 48), and it is worth noting that Kipling places it on a plain: "At one end stood a little village, and at the other the thick jungle came down in a sweep to the grazing grounds, and stopped there as though it had been cut off with a hoe" (Jungle Books 48). The significance of how the juxtaposition is managed hinges on the abrupt change from jungle to civilization; the simile "as though [ . . . ] cut off with a hoe" (Jungle Books 48) points up the artificiality of the division imposed by men, while the physical nearness of the wild

suggests, perhaps, the psychological proximity of the wild in men, those qualities that allow Mowgli to claim that "men are blood-brothers of the Bander-log"<sup>38</sup> (Jungle Books 182), beasts that have, Baloo teaches him, "no speech of their own [ . . . ] [and] no remembrance" (Jungle Books 26). As for the jungle's significance to Mowgli, it may, perhaps, be distilled to the following exchange. It is significant that Mowgli, a human child, manages to become a citizen (honorary) of such a strikingly alien culture; equally significant is the lack of regard Mowgli shows for jungle culture after he has spent some time among men. His early learning is not, however, entirely supplanted by his later; instead, what emerges is conflict between the two ways, played out within what one might call Mowgli's interior territory. In short, Mowgli learns one way, then a second way, and forms a synthesis consisting of many of the worst aspects of both. He learns to shift easily among languages,<sup>39</sup> depending on their situational utility, and, as shown below, discovers how easily he may dispatch Bagheera with a carefully-considered delivery in the appropriate tongue (abashed, the great cat's response is to use his own tongue, but not in so prideful a manner). While Mowgli guards the hut of his adoptive parents,

Bagheera appears out of the darkness, "trembling with delight of the night that drives the Jungle People wild"

(Jungle Books 184), and declares his readiness to kill:

"Who is Man that we should care for him—the naked brown digger, the hairless and toothless, the eater of earth? I have followed him all day—at noon—in the white sunlight. I herded him as the wolves herd buck. I am Bagheera! Bagheera! Bagheera! As I dance with my shadow, so danced I with those men. Look!" The great panther leaped as a kitten leaps at a dead leaf whirling overhead, struck left and right into the empty air, that sang under the strokes, landed noiselessly, and leaped again and again, while the half purr, half growl gathered head as steam rumbles in a boiler. "I am Bagheera—in the jungle—in the night, and my strength is in me. Who shall stay my stroke? Man-cub, with one blow of my paw I could beat thy head flat as a dead frog in the summer!"

"Strike, then!" said Mowgli, in the dialect of the village, not the talk of the Jungle, and the human words brought Bagheera to a full stop, flung back on haunches that quivered under him, his head just at the level of Mowgli's. Once more Mowgli stared, as he had stared at the rebellious cubs, full into the beryl-green eyes, till the red glare behind their green went out like the light of a lighthouse shut off twenty miles across the sea; till the eyes dropped, and the big head with them—dropped lower and lower, and the red rasp of a tongue grated on Mowgli's instep. (Jungle Books 185)

Twenty miles across the sea: the implication of other kinds of distance is there. Bagheera is a long way from Mowgli, for Mowgli is now more master than rebellious cub.

Further, and more important, the distance between the ways

of beasts and men, and between the jungle and the village, is far greater than twenty miles—it is perhaps roughly the distance between London and New Delhi. And yet there is a link provided by that likening of animal sounds to the sounds of technology (as steam rumbles in a boiler), and another link provided by the panther's ability to disfigure (or transfigure) the boy from human to animal likeness (a dead frog): the price of taming a wild thing is an intimate connection with the (seemingly) conquered. No matter the method of delivery, that red rasp is as much a mark of affiliation—indeed, ownership—as is the saddle, collar, or brand. Bagheera's foot-licking is not so very different from Messua's throwing herself at Mowgli's feet—another attempt to both honor and own—nor substantially dissimilar to Mother Wolf's placing her tongue on Mowgli's foot, as she does one night outside Messua's hut (Jungle Books 182). Within certain relationships, standing and kneeling are in many ways the same. To borrow a favorite line of Kipling's, "[t]hat is all one"<sup>40</sup> (Jungle Books 188).

Only a brief span of time separates the villagers' first encounter with Mowgli from their final brush with him, after which "they fled, houseless and foodless, down the valley, as their village, shredded and tossed and

trampled, melted behind them" (Jungle Books 195). It melts because its walls are made of mud, and because it is raining hard; but Kipling's rendering those walls in mud may serve not simply to remark the villagers' building techniques but also to illuminate the tenuousness of any stand humankind may make against the wild (even, perhaps, the wildness inside). It is possible to read here that the farther (and further) apart civilization and wilderness are, the better for (especially the former's) survival.

"From "Letting":

They [the villagers] wished to know whether his Gods—the Old Gods—were angry with them, and what sacrifices should be offered. The Gond<sup>41</sup> said nothing, but picked up a trail of the Karela, the vine that bears the bitter wild gourd, and laced it to and fro across the temple door in the face of the staring red Hindu image. Then he pushed with his hand in the open air along the road to Kanhiwara, and went back to his Jungle[.]  
[ . . . ]

There was no need to ask his meaning. The wild gourd would grow where they had worshipped their God, and the sooner they saved themselves the better. (Jungle Books 193)

When the creepers are at one's door, they will be inside it soon enough—and that is a bitter thing. Of course, Kipling places "[t]here was no need" (Jungle Books 193) precisely where there is need, and ends with a hint at what may happen when a polytheistic culture<sup>42</sup> meets a monotheistic

one. This hint is for readers, not characters; here, characters understand more than readers do. But readers should understand what the threat of violence suggests: that civilization is not so very removed from wilderness, and that it is important to try to keep the two apart—though it may be futile to try.

The village has its allure—where else can Mowgli find a mate? The jungle has its charms—where else may Mowgli claim a friend? Often, Mowgli seems far more comfortable with the immanent sensibleness of jungle laws—there are Lair-Rights and Cave-Rights, carefully-circumscribed territories—than he is with the village's apparently arbitrary, foolish rules [such as the caste system, which he defies ("Tiger!" Jungle Books 51)], and yet he does find himself drawn to the village: "Angry as he was at the whole breed and community of Man, something jumped up in his throat and made him catch his breath when he looked at the village roofs" (Jungle Books 180). So where does Mowgli belong? The Upper Jungle is not his; it belongs to the Bander-log, the Monkey People ("Kaa's Hunting" Jungle Books 26-27). And although Baloo, who taught Mowgli the Law, reminds him in "The Spring Running," the last of the Mowgli stories, that "the Jungle is thine at call"—a sentiment

Kaa, the gigantic Rock Python, echoes: "the Middle Jungle is thine also" (Jungle Books 296; 296)—Mowgli does not quite belong in the Jungle;<sup>43</sup> it is, in fact, his imminent departure that spurs these testaments. There are lack and longing here. Without fullness there can neither be absolutes nor unshaded commitment, and, suitably, half (as part of a compound or alone) appears several times in "Letting in the Jungle": Akela is "half-crouching" (Jungle Books 174); Messua is "half wild with pain and fear" (Jungle Books 181) while her husband is "half minded to run" (Jungle Books 184); Bagheera gives off a "half purr, half growl" (Jungle Books 185), his "eyes half shut" (Jungle Books 186); after "one half-minute of desperate silence" (Jungle Books 186), the villagers claw their way back from a waiting Bagheera, lest they find themselves "half-way down the hot gullet" (Jungle Books 187); to help let in the jungle, Baloo is to "half frighten, half romp" (Jungle Books 192) the "straggling droves" (Jungle Books 191) to keep them pointed in the proper direction. And finally, when he is called to the ailing village for a consultation, the Gond looks "half afraid and half contemptuously at the anxious villagers and their ruined fields" (Jungle Books 193).

Throughout the story, feelings and actions are repeatedly expressed in terms that suggest division. This strategy becomes Kipling, for, while he was, evidently, all white,<sup>44</sup> his politics have (as noted above) often been considered suspect,<sup>45</sup> and in keeping with this, George Orwell suggests that "Kipling [ . . . ] was only half civilised" (79)—philosophically speaking, a kind of half-caste. Such a state may be a necessity if one is to live in, learn from, and write convincingly about, places outside what Orwell calls "the centres of civilisation" (79). At least, a writer may require the sense that he is half-civilized, for to get inside Other places requires native ears, and to talk usefully (to educate? to warn?<sup>46</sup>) about what one has seen there requires Western speech; and as for those eyes, they are perhaps as Bagheera's are: half shut, half open.

But where does Kipling belong? He moved from India to Southsea to parts north, south, east, and west, and aimed his mind's eye and moved his pen in all those directions, but remained no more fixed in sight or space than he does in his readers' imagination. There may be something more to this than mere writerly necessity.

"Letting in the Jungle" is a Bildungsroman nested within a larger one. It is an Anglo-Indian box of sorts; at its core is the writer. Reading all the jungle books that precede that tale, one learns the importance of customary jungle practices and rule of law—for the brotherhood that arises from, and is maintained by, following those conventions, and for the languages that, with great formality, communicate them. From "Mowgli's Brothers" (which introduces the title character as an infant) to "The Spring Running" (which shows Mowgli fully grown yet confusedly sitting out the mating time), tradition figures importantly in the beasts' lives. As a boy, Mowgli's inclination is to resist and ridicule tradition: he is often mischievous and disobedient. But in the second book, "Kaa's Hunting," he is punished severely for certain of his infractions, and does learn some regard for the ways of the jungle. On balance, though, Mowgli is far more Other than brother; his essential strangeness affects everything he comes near. By turns, he upends convention in both Jungle and Village by refusing to yield to authority, ignoring tradition, taking command, and, in general, spreading trouble by operating outside of social conventions.

There is something about just Being There. Proximity alone seems to lend a hand to disruption—helping, for example, to effect Buldeo's own apparent (and transient?) descent into bestiality. After Buldeo has come to know Mowgli, and, later, has entered the jungle on Mowgli's track, we find him "muttering savagely" (Jungle Books 176) and "running up the [ . . . ] trail at a dog-trot" (Jungle Books 176) as he hunts the wolf-child, descriptors suited to the very thing Buldeo believes Mowgli to be: a beast. Kipling's word choices here, coupled with the earlier account of Buldeo's puffing and snorting, make it seem that the jungle is no place for men—that is, that men cannot long remain men there. And truly, there are no men in Mowgli's cosmos; there is only Mowgli, who in his turn makes his own, morphological accommodations to the jungle. When he finds he cannot immediately detect the scent the beasts catch, he compensates: "he dampened his finger, rubbed it on his nose, and stood erect to catch the upper scent, which, though it is the faintest, is the truest" (Jungle Books 174). A strange sight, this: an erect posture is the normal one for a human being, yet it is apparently one that Mowgli adopts only upon necessity. It is perhaps significant that here the most upright of

postures gives one access to the highest truth—a remark that may compass more than smells (or, over tall grasses, sight). It would scarcely surprise that such a man as Kipling, with his fascination with—and sympathy for—the soldier’s grinding life, with all its parade rests, tents! and curiously prideful self-effacement,<sup>47</sup> might yoke upright posture with highest qualities, timeless verities, and profound humanness. [In his “Epitaphs of the War” he records, “Body and Spirit I surrendered whole/To harsh Instructors—and received a soul” (Complete Verse 385).] Such assumptions cling to the language still when we refer to someone’s standing tall, being an upright person, or possessing rectitude; such terms, as they couple moral virtue with posture, with physical straightness, offer a universe of high meaningfulness unto themselves. Quadrupeds, on the other hand, seem under-evolved, morally challenged outside their natural sphere of influence—and, in Kipling’s cosmology, may model India and her peoples. But it doesn’t really matter whether it is the Jungle or the Village that models India or England, for when writing of savagery, Kipling was flexible. The same man whose work regularly celebrates the good fight of the imperialist could also declare of England, “there is no light in this

place, and the people are savages living in black houses and ignorant of everything beyond the Channel" (qtd. in Raskin 24). It does not much matter which place is considered less civilized; what matters are the way the two places fit (or do not) and the effect each has on the other.

In Kim, widely considered Kipling's masterpiece, a problematic identity lends structure to that wandering tale: "All that while he felt, though he could not put it into words, that his soul was out of gear with its surroundings—a cog-wheel unconnected with any machinery, just like the idle cog-wheel of a cheap Beheea sugar-crusher laid by in a corner" (300). And herein lies what seems to be the difficulty: Kim, as a sweeper in the tale relates it, is "a white boy [ . . . ] who is not a white boy" (107). If such discursions on unfixity are not deliberate but an accident of Kipling's unconscious, then perhaps one may agree with Sandra Kemp that, in Kipling's work, "the task of interpreting India authoritatively is undermined by the fluidity of the self which interprets and commands" (11). That may well be, but an unconscious writerly flux (given his staunchly conservative public persona, it seems to me that Kipling's fluidity is produced

unconsciously) is outside the scope of this study—indeed, outside that of virtually any inquiry. Still, this much is clear: writers' texts do not always match their intentions, and if Kipling's ethos is, at times, shaky, certain of his effects are not enfeebled by that fact. I am inclined to trust in what Kipling is saying, especially when his voice changes, for that phenomenon seems just as much a point as a possible accident. In Kim, the title character reflects, "This is the great world, and I am only Kim. Who is Kim? (125) [ . . . ] And what is Kim?" (300). In stanza twenty of "Mowgli's Song," Mowgli asks, "As Mang flies between the beasts and the birds so fly I between the village and the Jungle. Why?" (Jungle Books 64; 63-64), and it is in this swerving, restless duality that one may witness Kipling's most important, however inadvertent, contribution to the literature of freedom, however easily supported those charges of racism and xenophobia, however tempting it is to figure Kipling only as the Third World's would-be jailer. If Otherness is hazardous to that self one would maintain, "Letting in the Jungle"—as well as many other of Kipling's India texts—may be read as a whispered caution to imperialists, present and future: Live where you don't belong long enough, and you may no longer belong where you

ought to live—indeed, you may no longer belong anywhere, under any creed. Thus, while Kipling's childhood and emerging adulthood do appear in his Mowgli stories, imperial England, too, finds its place. As Mowgli declares late in his song, in answer to his own question: "I am two Mowglis" (Jungle Books 64). In its casually racist way, Kipling's most reliable voice—an amalgam of India and England, parts east and west, met-utters a cautionary refrain that, though here in the language of Kaa, the Rock Python, needs no translation:

Gauge thy gape with buck or goat,  
Lest thine eyes should choke thy throat.  
After gorging, wouldst thou sleep?  
Look thy den is hid and deep,  
Lest a wrong, by thee forgot,  
Draw thy killer to the spot.  
East and West and North and South,  
Wash thy skin and close thy mouth.  
(Pit and rift and blue pool-brim  
Middle-Jungle follow him!) ("The Outsong," Jungle Books 299)

And neither the boy, nor several other of Kipling's characters, nor even, perhaps, Kipling's readers or even himself, know where to go, or how far; or know what to do, and what is proper. John A. McClure writes that Kipling's 1880s texts, with their persistent, often damning inquiries into the merits of the imperial experience, were by the 1890s supplanted by tales driven by "his plan for

perfecting the imperial mold" (56). Perhaps without ever having quite grown up, Kipling did indeed change; people do. But the jungle books, which were written in the 1890s, hardly seem indicative of some deep philosophical change on Kipling's part but rather a grander, more artistically mature elucidation of his earlier themes. And if continued questioning, even censure, of empire is not quite deliberate on Kipling's part—for his politics do appear to have grown increasingly conservative as he aged—the facts are these: Mowgli was not reared entirely in his natural place, nor, like many of his contemporary British subjects, was Kipling—and thus some feeling of displacement and conflict would be natural to both character and creator. This is a hazard of empire.

If I must order things, I would note first that Kipling wrote to make a living; his fiction's primary purpose is to entertain. But I would note further, in the matter of his treatment as a child, his fiction sometimes serves as a lesson to his parents and other parents, and, in the matter of imperial(ist) politics, his fiction very often plays Gladstone to his public Disraeli and in many ways remonstrates against the means—if not the ends—of Victoria's conquest-fueled empire [whose eyes, as Mohandas

Gandhi's satyagraha<sup>48</sup> began to confirm not long after Victoria's death in 1901 (Strachey 423), had indeed choked its throat]. It does the latter, it seems to me, for two overarching reasons: the author's concern for the preservation of a childlike innocence he sees in those conquered, new-caught peoples of India, however sullen they may be (recall his love of children and the primordial); and his concern for the corrupting influence—and this is crucial—that prolonged contact with Otherness may have on the English (and, a far distant second, on the Indian<sup>49</sup>).

Such concern was not unfounded. In the early 1930s, as Kipling was publicly urging a halt to concessions to Indian nationalists (Rao xi) [India, he believed, was not ready to govern itself (Gilmour 298)], the Empire was busy granting those concessions—due, in large part, to the shrewd political tactics of an Indian trained in English law. Kipling's subtext whispers of the dangers of admixing cultures, and the London-educated attorney Mohandas K. Gandhi (Fischer 41) provided proof of them: in part, the Empire lost India because the Empire's emphasis on education helped show the colonized the means by which to force it out.<sup>50</sup> As K. Bhaskara Rao writes,

Education made the Indian aware of the backwardness of his country, particularly in science and technology. This awareness gave rise to political consciousness, which crystallized into organization of the Indian National Congress [INC].<sup>51</sup> (86)

As Anthony Day describes it, "As Britain's colonies sought independence [ . . . ] they asserted, as they sometimes put it, the English rights they inherited from the mother country" (n. pag.).

Kipling, ever concerned about the unbecoming, amalgamating effects of Western education on natives,<sup>52</sup> expresses in "The Enlightenments of Pagett, M.P." his contempt for the educated (thus false) Indian via lines from Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France; INC members are like grasshoppers, "shrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome insects of the hour" (qtd. in Enlightenments). But the INC (and, of course, Gandhi himself) was far more than that, and far less ephemeral. Civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance—not, as a rule, terrorism [though that occurred as well (Brown Gandhi 123)]: with these weapons Indian nationalists, with Gandhi in the vanguard, targeted the British Imperial heart and found their mark, for the British prided themselves (though sometimes without foundation) on their essential decency. Losing India—the

crown jewel of the Empire—signaled the end of British Imperial power; it was a triumph for Indian nationalists and in part a triumph, ironically, for English schooling (formally through study, informally by example), but it was a defeat for the Empire. And what is England without her vast holdings? Orwell speculates that the British Empire's decline was the cause of Kipling's having "spent the later part of his life in sulking [ . . . ] [for] Somehow history had not gone according to plan" (72), but Kipling's own work anticipates the disruptions that colonialism inflicted on England. The white man's burden was, of course, to alter other places, and this burden was often taken up; but such alteration led to the Empire's being altered as well—weakened, diminished, changed forever. Further, the very act of civilizing contains the seeds of the civilizer's own destruction in yet another way. If, in their zeal to civilize, the civilized brutalize those they think brutish, they become the very thing they seek to eradicate and may, as Mowgli did before a horrified jungle folk, wipe out entire populations. In this way, that fearsome, bloodthirsty otherness gets inside even the best-intentioned of colonizers, and Kipling's beloved India and colonial England vanish as one by becoming, in some ways,

one. In the manner of the young Rudyard in his two worlds, and of Mowgli in his, a synthesis forms from the worst aspects of both, and in time one cannot tell one from the other. As Kipling's "We and They" ends,

All good people agree,  
And all good people say,  
All nice people, like Us, are We  
And every one else is They  
But if you cross over the sea,  
Instead of over the way,  
You may end by (think of it!) looking on We  
As only a sort of They! (n. pag.)

Go where you should not, be reared as something you are not, live long enough where you belong not, and there'll not always be an England.

## ENDNOTES

### Chapter One

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1 Here are the opening lines to the poem:

God of our fathers, known of old, / Lord of our far-flung  
battle line, / Beneath whose awful Hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine –  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

2 According to Harry Ricketts, the essay was first published in 1899 in the December Contemporary Review (259).

3 This remark occurs in a letter Conrad wrote to his socialist friend R. B. Cunningham Graham (Raskin 27).

4 Plotz adds that "the Rhinoceros-Kipling has been portrayed from the 1890s to the present as a thick-skinned truculent hooligan and imperialist" (vii). [I should note here, though, that since the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, Kipling has experienced a microrevival of sorts in certain quarters: "[E]ndlessly quoted" (39), reads David Remnick's hyperbolic claim, in the November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2001 New Yorker.]

5 From Kipling's 1903 poem, "The Return": If England was what England seems, / An' not the England of our dreams, / But only putty, brass, an' paint, / 'Ow quick we'd chuck 'er! But she ain't!" (Complete Verse 484).

6 Kipling was primarily concerned to affirm English superiority; in his poem "Recessional," he wastes no time in laying waste the humanity of those "lesser breeds without the law" (Complete Verse 327), whom George Orwell identifies as the Germans (71).

7 The Revolt was against, Hubel writes, the "absolute power of the British East Indian Company" (13). Shahane notes that recent Indian historians have described the Mutiny as the "first Great War of Independence" (32).

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8 The uprising began among the sepoys (in colonial India, an Indian soldier in British service) of the Bengal army and spread outward (Gopal 1).

9 As further evidence of the economic vagaries of imperial rule, suppressing the Mutiny cost £36 million, a very large sum at the time (Brown Modern 96).

10 This occurred from 1858 to 1947, when imperialism became sociocultural-political as opposed to merely—or primarily—economic [as it was under the East India Company, which effectively ruled the subcontinent before 1858 (Brown Modern 96)].

11 The meaning of the term has shifted over time, but in this study I shall use "Anglo-Indian" to mean British citizens living in India.

12 In the semi-autobiographical "Baa Baa, Black Sheep," Kipling describes his literary doppelgänger, Punch, as "the unquestioned despot of the house at Bombay" (156).

13 He wrote about this period in Something of Myself, The Light That Failed, and "Baa Baa Black Sheep."

14 Interestingly, his autobiography begins with the motto, "Give me the first six years of a child's life and you can have the rest" (Something 3); considering the effects of his five-plus years in foster care, a suitable enough number to choose, but also, in context, a curiosity: if what matters most is the first six, then Bombay, not Southsea, has primacy.

15 His travels before this time were much broader, though they were continued after he and his wife left New England and well into their old age (Ricketts 367). Before he met his future wife, and immediately after he departed India, Kipling traveled to Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, the United States, England, France, Italy, England (again), the United States (again), the Isle of Wight, Madeira, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Ceylon, India, and England (yet again)—and this partial list includes only his travels from March 1889 to January 1892 (Orel 23-31).

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## Chapter Two

16 Keats made this remark in a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds.

17 Kipling himself traces their origins to his early childhood readings: "[S]omehow or other I came across a tale about a lion-hunter in South Africa who fell among lions who were all Freemasons, and with them entered into a confederacy against some wicked baboons. I think that [ . . . ] lay dormant until the Jungle Books began to be born" (Something 10). It is not entirely clear whether he is joking; at minimum, an unusual plot.

18 This world view includes the world of childhood itself: his recollections of his time in the House of Desolation and at boarding school—which he calls "brutal enough" (Something 27)—show him as a man who strongly believes childhood should be a joyful time.

19 Training in elocution was popular during the Victorian period and was found at all levels of schooling (Westerhoff 45).

20 The Readers were used beyond Kipling's day. They were a remarkably durable publishing phenomenon (Westerhoff 15).

21 This stand was maintained within a Lahore household that carefully emulated a genteel English society a world away, a fact which illustrates well the duality of the Anglo-Indian's life. Judith Brown writes that, "even to the extent of dressing for dinner in the jungle" (Modern 98), later-nineteenth-century Anglo-Indians maintained a "culture and life-style fashioned in upper middle-class Britain" (Modern 98).

22 This was the fifth in a total of eight stories.

23 The story of Mowgli's return, "Tiger! Tiger!" appears in the first Jungle Book (Jungle Books 48-62).

24 Messua's husband is never identified by name.

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25 This is not the first time Kipling has treated of this theme. In his short story "Without Benefit of Clergy," the son of an Englishman and his Indian lover dies in infancy, and the bungalow the lovers had occupied is scheduled for destruction: "It shall be pulled down, and the municipality shall make a road across, as they desire, from the burning-ghat to the city wall. So that no man may say where this house stood" (256-7).

26 Though Kipling presents this information with ironic disclaimers, he later partially affirms this claim by telling us that even a group of charcoal-burners, who hail from another village, have heard of Buldeo, for his "fame as a hunter reached for at least twenty miles round" (176).

27 It should be noted, however, that the two uses of the word "man" here may carry different meanings: man as human, man as adult male.

28 Here, year means yearlings, young offspring in their second year.

29 Here, gripe means grip.

30 Mowgli's schooling is covered at some length in "Kaa's Hunting" (Jungle Books 22-46).

31 Significantly, at one point Mowgli calls Buldeo an "old ape" (Jungle Books 59).

32 Interestingly, because he has "learned the ways of men" (14), Bagheera tells Mowgli, "I became more terrible in the jungle than [the tiger] Shere Khan" (14).

33 This lines were formulated in the context of, but are not restricted to, the American involvement in the Philippines (Complete Verse 321).

34 Nor, apparently, did Kipling wish others to ponder his identity, and endeavored to discourage such activity. As the "Appeal" concluding the definitive edition of his verse reads, "Seek not to question other than/The books I leave

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behind" (Complete Verse 836). He was, T.S. Eliot maintained, "the most inscrutable of authors" (281).

35 Far more useful is Charles Carrington's Life, the only authorized biography of Kipling; but it, too, has its limitations, for it was written under the fiercely protective eye of Elsie Bambridge, Kipling's last surviving child (Palm 6).

36 Such ideas have not entirely disappeared from English society, and have in recent years been notably expressed by that model of sensitivity, England's Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. During a state visit to China in 1986, he warned a group of British students, "If you stay here much longer, you'll all be slitty-eyed."

37 Their mutual antagonism is established, and their final battle foretold, in the first story, "Mowgli's Brothers" (Jungle Books 3-21).

38 Alternatively, in "Kaa's Hunting" Bagheera calls them "the Monkey People—the gray apes" (Jungle Books 25).

### Chapter Three

39 Similarly, Kipling learned to shift between languages; as Shahane reports, Kipling learned to speak in Hindi before he learned to speak in English (9).

40 I have chosen a line from "Letting," and it is Mowgli who speaks it, but the line appears twice in another Jungle Book, "Kaa's Hunting." In that book, the line is spoken once by Baloo, the brown bear (Jungle Books 24), and once (in truncated form) by Kaa, the Rock Python (Jungle Books 34).

41 The Gond are an aboriginal Indian people (Jungle Books 193).

42 I refer here to Hindus, a distinct religious majority in India, not the monotheistic Muslims [(12.1 percent of the population in 1991 (United States n. pag.), whose company Kipling preferred (Gilmour 57)].

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43 For a neat figurative fit, however, the Middle Jungle seems Mowgli's best bet.

44 Interestingly, Orwell notes that Kipling's "dark complexion" caused some to wrongly suspect him of "having a streak of Asiatic blood" (74).

45 Martin Seymour-Smith, while clearly a Kipling admirer, writes that Kipling's ideology was "confused, egoistic [ . . . ] bloodthirsty, and ungenerous" (xii).

46 Of course, Kipling also wished to entertain.

47 Kipling's rather celestial dedication from Barrack-Room Ballads figures common soldiers as nomadic spirits drifting beyond the outermost planets. They are simple, fearless, godly, and entirely worthy beings—yet they are far from the center of things (Complete Verse 83-4).

48 Satyagraha is Gandhi's term for his policy of civil disobedience (Bondurant 8).

49 The east/west conflicts of Kipling's short story "The Mark of the Beast," cited above, resolve to assert India's greater elemental potency.

50 Gandhi himself noted the importance of the rural peasant in the struggle against colonialism (Harris 122), but his early training was of incalculable importance in the fight for Indian independence.

51 The INC, which was most responsible for the rise in political awareness among the Indian people (Rao 30), was organized by British subject Allan Octavian Hume (Gilmour 26).

52 In the Civil and Military Gazette of 16 April 1887, he refers to a "hybrid" people as a "lower people" (in this case, he refers to Hindu men who attempt to simultaneously claim "all the advantages of Western civilization" and deny them to Hindu women) (qtd. in Gilmour 62).

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