THE INTRUSION OF THE OTHER

Nicoleta MARCU, Assistant Professor Ph.D.,
"Petru Maior" University of Tîrgu Mureş

Abstract: The paper analyzes the way the exclusive position assumed by the colonial discourse is challenged by some of R. Kipling's stories; the proximity of the British and Indian cultures results in inevitable instances of hybridity, alterity that dispute the colonizers' pretence as the only interpreters and holders of knowledge. Their exclusive position in the colonial binary is questioned by the emergence of the young men of modern India whose education and social status totally justify their claims of having access to what the British envisaged as their secluded 'caste' of rulers.

Keywords: colonial binary, British culture, Indian culture, identity, hybridity

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!
(Kipling, "We and They")

I begin with these verses because they suggest the key issue that motivated my choice of Kipling and his vision of the British India as the focus of this paper. "We and They" (Kipling, *The Complete Verse*, p. 629) proposes a cross-cultural encounter between two worlds, West and East, that multiplies into several other binary elements: Us and They, the Self and the Other, the colonizer and the colonized, the British and the Indian. This binary system is what constitutes the pattern of the colonial discourse that is sustained by the clear-cut distinction between the two elements. Yet, as these verses suggest, when the two elements engage in the process of identity formation they reveal their interdependence. To define ourselves we need 'them' and in the process of differentiation we may even 'end by looking on We as only a sort of They!'

Rudyard Kipling's experience of India witnessed the same cross-cultural encounter, one of the most important cultural confrontations in the history of the European empires, namely the confrontation between Britain and India. Kipling internalized both the perspective of the colonizing Self and that of the colonized Other and this enabled him to represent the two elements in a mutual mirroring process out of which he emerged as a divided Self. The confrontation between the two cultures and the inherent conflicts are the source of the ambivalent perspective assumed by Rudyard Kipling in his relation to the world of British India. This ambivalence permeates most of Kipling's writings and comes to question his representativeness as an imperial standard-bearer.

When in India Kipling found himself between two worlds: he was rapidly integrated into the British community because by birth he was the member of the ruling race, but at the

BDD-A23413 © 2013 Editura Universităţii „Petru Maior"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:47:43 UTC)

same time he was constantly attracted into the world of the natives, lured by "the voices of the night-winds through palm and banana leaves" that got so deeply in his mind in the first years of his childhood and were never to leave him. It is true that Kipling's texts incorporated the ideology of the empire and followed to a certain extent what E. Said called the colonial tradition of 'representations of representations', yet it is equally true that Kipling dismissed the excesses of the imperial project, revealed its flaws, and at the same time, the tensions, the ambivalences and the contradictions within his texts, the use of stereotypes, the moments of hybridity and liminality complicate the binary system of the colonial discourse that doesn't support the hegemonic power/knowledge structure any more.

The same ambivalence is present in his representations of the Other. The colonial discourse where the dominating Self represents itself as divorced from the subject Other betrays its artificiality by supporting the distance between the two worlds with projections of the Self's "dreams and desires onto an idealized object" (Inden, p. 409), such as the 'noble savages' leading a pastoral life, completely divorced from the life on the plains, guardians of the Edenic spaces of hill stations where the all-mighty 'heavenly-born' are ruling, and with representations of the Other as a childish, superstitious, unreliable subject who is made conscious of his inferiority, and who is allowed to move within the limits established by the all-knowing colonizers.

These representations betray their artificiality just because of their insistence, which was meant to inoculate the idea of the Other's inevitable dependence on the Self and at the same time to maintain the distance between them. This artificiality surfaces in the instances when the two elements of the colonial pattern, the Self and the Other, enter each other's space, an inevitable process that transgresses the gap between the two worlds. The Self is divided between his desire to know the Other (because knowledge of the Other gives the Self a sense of identity based on difference) and his fear of the Other, his awareness of the Other's proximity to his exclusive world that is perceived as a threat to his authority.

As the case of the hill stations indicated, the British transferred the pattern of the colonial discourse to the physical organization of their pinnacles of power; they were trying to impose the distance between them and the subject people and they succeeded to a certain extent but the irony was that to maintain the existence of hill stations they needed the support of the natives. Hill station censuses suggest that the living of each European required the support of ten Indians. Consequently, indigenous labor force was supplied not only from the surrounding hills but also from distant parts of the country. The migrant workers came in such large numbers and from so different origins that it was almost impossible to know and manage them. Now the British had a real problem, as the imperial gaze couldn't fully encompass so many people coming from so different social environments. Moreover these people clustered in crowded quarters along labyrinthine lanes that were often impenetrable to the Europeans.

If the British managed to enter those areas, like Trejago in "Beyond the Pale", they were deemed as stepping "beyond the safe limits of decent everyday society" (Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills*, p.171), which made them easy prey for that world beyond. The unaware Trejago "saw that the Gully ended in a trap" (Ibid, p.172), yet he didn't realize the dangers lurking in the world beyond the pale and he "paid for it heavily" (Ibid, p.171).

BDD-A23413 © 2013 Editura Universităţii „Petru Maior"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:47:43 UTC)

This sanctioning was derived from the fear of miscegenation, which would have endangered the position of the ruling race in front of the subject races.

In *Plain Tales from the Hills* it is only Strickland, the British policeman, who can penetrate those areas and can get out safe. His disguises assure him access to the world of the Other and gives him genuine knowledge of the natives: "He held the extraordinary theory that a Policeman in India should try to know as much about the natives as the natives themselves." (Ibid, p.27).

Knowledge means power and for this "natives hated Strickland; but they were afraid of him. He knew too much" (Ibid, p.29). Although after he (temporarily) has given up his habit of disguising and descending into the world of the Other, Strickland is still haunted and lured by the memories of the world that he has left behind partly discovered, he realizes that in order to be acknowledged by the society of the 'Heavenly-born' he has to return to his Department routine that is performed exclusively within the safe space of the colonizer.

The fear of mixing with the world of the Other was also supported by representations of the quarters inhabited by natives as *sources of disease*, cradles of *crime* and nests from where *subversive forces* emerged. In his masterpiece novel, *Kim*, Kipling describes Simla's bazaar as a "rabbit-warren" where a man could easily "defy" the police thus leaving the impression of a world of disorder, insecurity and danger. Faced with such great numbers of native population, the British were caught in the middle, between their need of the natives to support their lives in the stations and their constant wish to develop their closed society, segregated from any alien elements.

The presence of the natives in such great numbers was troublesome for the British. They felt that they had somehow to distance from them. Their reaction was to categorize the natives as unreliable and undisciplined. The coolies in "Lispeth" "must have stolen his (Englishman) baggage and fled" (R. Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills*, p.4).The bearer in "By Word of Mouth", "was idle and a thief" (Ibid, p. 321). Bhagwan Dass, the grocer in "In the House of Suddhoo", "only knew how to lie" (Ibid, p.145).

However, these people were part of the British everyday life despite the latter's attempts to ignore their presence. The illusion of the British that they were living in pristine towers safe from any alien forces was perpetuated by their *refusal to descend* into the world of those who were supporting their existence in the pinnacles of power. Thus we come to understand why Tods' mother is annoyed with the boy's frequent mixing with the natives, (which nonetheless "taught him some of the more bitter truths of life: the meanness and sordidness of it" (R. Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills*, p.198), or with the boy's morning rides in the Burra Simla Bazaar. This made her frequently "jump and vow that Tods *must* go Home next hot weather" (Ibid, p. 198).

Ignorance of these sites did nothing but complicated more the problem of the British. The fact that they were ignorant of the sanitarian conditions in the bazaars affected them directly. Typhoid fever, cholera and other contagious diseases broke out in the hill stations and their rate was increasing especially in the second part of the nineteenth century. As a result public latrines were built, sewer systems were dug and safe water supplies were established (Kanwar, p. 5). However, the British used these measures to justify their manipulation of the colonial space where they were the ones who were tracing the lines. They made sure that they kept a dividing line between their world and that of the natives.

BDD-A23413 © 2013 Editura Universităţii „Petru Maior"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:47:43 UTC)

If we take the *definition of segregation* given by John W. Cell, "the conscious manipulation of physical space on the part of the dominant group in order to achieve or maintain a psychological gap between itself and a group it intends to maintain in an inferior place" (Cell, p.330) we come to understand the mechanism which was at the basis of the British separation policy. In Simla, after the outbreak of cholera in 1875, the officials prohibited Indians to rebuild shops and homes lost in a fire on the Upper Mall (Kennedy, p. 193). The British evidently manipulated the organization of the colonial space. In 1886, in Darjeeling, a new road was constructed so that Europeans could visit the Lloyd Botanic Garden without having to pass through the bazaar. In 1891, in Simla, a bylaw was introduced to prohibit all porters, except those carrying the baggage of the Europeans, from appearing on the Mall from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. In 1905 they even went further by cutting a tunnel under the Mall to divert coolie traffic from the notice of Europeans (Kanwar, p. 63). Such practices were clearly intended to maintain a distance between the two worlds, that of the colonizer and that of the colonized and to prevent any blurring of the separating line that physically and socially had to set the two worlds apart.

The topographical distribution of the two worlds made the intentions of the British even clearer. In "Miss Youghal's Sais", Strickland "stepped down into the brown crowd" (Kipling, *Plain Tales from The Hills*, p. 29), in "Beyond the Pale" Trejago "went down to Amir Nath's Gully" (Ibid, 177).The movement that one had to make to reach the world of the natives, as Kipling so vividly presented it, was downwards. The higher elevations belonged to the British while the Indians were allowed in the lower parts of the highlands so that their presence would be less visible and less irritable to the British. As Pamela Kanwar notices, the distribution of the social layers followed that of the terrain layers: "In Simla, the government deliberately reinforced this association by providing senior officials with fine houses upon the ridge, English and Anglo-Indian clerks with cottages along the slopes, and Indian clerks with rooms in dormitories further below" (Kanwar, p.56).

However the secluded areas of the British soon came to be penetrated by Indian princes whose social status and wealth justified their claims of having access to the hill stations' exclusive sites. As Dane Kennedy points out "by 1885, thirteen princes had purchased thirty-four of the finest houses in Simla, and others had acquired properties in Darjeeling, Ootacamund, Naini Tal, and elsewhere" (Kennedy, p.198).

The British reactions were different. On one hand, they enjoyed the lavishness of the parties given by these princes who also became a considerable source of capital. On the other hand, the officials didn't quite welcome the presence of princes especially in Simla and the government closely monitored their presence. There were fears that by purchasing land they dinted the tightly fastened space of the British preserves and, as a result, they were often prevented from acquiring properties in the hill stations.

Actually, by law, the Indian princes could be restricted from purchasing properties in the hill stations as they were rulers of semi-autonomous states (Kipling ironically refers to them by saying that: "Native Princes never err officially, and their States are officially as well administered as Our territories"- Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills*, p. 102). Consequently, these Princes had no legal rights to enter the British-ruled territories or to acquire land there without the permission of the government of India. Nevertheless, this was not the case for the Indian commoners, be they servants, or "hybrid, University-trained mule(s)", (Ibid, p. 203), -

BDD-A23413 © 2013 Editura Universităţii „Petru Maior"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:47:43 UTC)

not timid like the real native who soon penetrated the British pinnacles of power. The fact that Kipling chose to focus on the very rich and the very poor classes of India indicates that his vision of this world was somehow partial. This also betrays the uneasiness that he and his contemporaries felt in the presence of the middle educated class of Indians, whose training justified their claims of having access to the exclusive areas of the ruling class.

This new rising class was held together by their superior education, but also, as Louis Cornell argues "by their common reliance on words as a mode of action" (Cornell, p.150). These people received, as Macaulay had expected, a Western education that taught them the British constitutional history with its Magna Carta and the liberties of man. They learnt principle after principle and they realized the power of words, which they later transformed into political facts. The British history made them see into the future of India. The British perceived the *rising middle class of educated Indians as threats* to their authority in British India. The reaction to their presence is also self-speaking in some of Kipling's writings. The educated Indian that Kipling found in Boondi during his 1888 journey through Rajputana is more like a comic figure who was treating his patients going by operation-book kept in English: "Sixteen years in Boondi does not increase knowledge of English;…There was something pathetic in the man's catching at news from the outside world of men he had known as Assistant and House Surgeons who are now Rai Bahadurs, and his parade of the few shreds of English that still clung to him" (Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, p. 152). The educated Bengali, "a slight, spare native in a flat-hat turban, and a black alpaca frock-coat" (Ibid, II, p.218) was not by far as organized as Kipling's men of action; he couldn't use his education practically and preferred to talk about "an elaborate piece of academic reform leading nowhere" (Ibid, II, p.219).

The visit to Calcutta, which was experimenting with local self-governing, gave Kipling the opportunity to attack again this class, which he found guilty of the stench, the "Big Calcutta Stink" that permeated every corner of the town whose "Municipal Board list (was) choked with the names of natives" (Kipling, "City of Dreadful Night", p. 159). This makes Kipling conclude: "They want shovels not sentiments, in this part of the world" (Kipling, "The Council of the Gods", p. 165). The talk about abstractions has no value unless it finds a practical application. This *idea of action* and practicability is what actually makes *Kipling appreciate the Babu*, who, as long as he fulfills his duty and keeps the imperial machinery working, is to be valued for his action: "The Babus make beautiful accountants, and if you could only see it, a merciful Providence has made the Babu for figures and details. Without him, the dividends of any company would be eaten up by the expenses of English or city-bred clerks. The Babu is a great man and to respect him, you must see five score or so of him in a room a hundred yards long, bending over ledgers, ledgers, and yet more ledgers-silent as the Sphinx and busy as a bee; he is the lubricant of the great machinery of the Company whose ways and works cannot be dealt with in a single scrawl" (Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, II, p. 281).

There are also other instances that indicate that when Kipling found merit he recognized it as it was the case of the Indian assistant teacher in the school at Boondi, "a self-taught man of Boondi young and delicate looking, who preferred reading to speaking English" (Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, I, p. 154) and whose reserve Kipling was not able to

BDD-A23413 © 2013 Editura Universităţii „Petru Maior"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:47:43 UTC)

break. Such instances indicate that Kipling could transcend the discriminating attitudes of his community and appreciate a person as an individual though he belonged to the 'subject' class.

The name of the new class of educated Indians, the babu, was also related to the nationalist movement and the nascent Indian National Congress founded in 1885. For the British, 'Bengali' or babu by the late nineteenth century came to mean educated, westernized, middle class Hindu and national agitator. Kipling, as a journalist, was writing for an Anglo-Indian reading public who didn't feel at ease with the presence of this new class of educated Indians and with their ideas of self-governing. The *Pioneer*, where Kipling worked as an assistant editor from 1887 to 1889, was, according to David Gilmour, "an abusive critic of the Indian National Congress", founded in 1885 (Gilmour, p.70). Thus we come to understand the position Kipling takes in his essay on the 1888 meeting of the Indian National Congress. The arguments he uses repeated the arguments that were current among Anglo-Indian circles and Kipling knew that this community enjoyed reading about itself: the Congress was depicted as not representing the interests of the large masses, that it had no clear purpose and was incapable of conducting an orderly meeting and that it was only discussion, not action (Cornell, p.152). Kipling rated the whole meeting as a putli nautch (puppet show) and referred derogatorily to a "brown Captain' among the 'half-castes' in the 1200 delegates" (Kipling, "A Study of the Congress by an Eye Witness", p.230). According to Andrew Lycett, this brown captain, Andrew Hearsey, the son of a general, who had joined the Congress, horsewhipped the editor of the *Pioneer*, an incident that led to a trial, but after some judicial gerrymandering the case was forgotten (Lycett, p. 231).

Another depiction of the educated babu, Hurree Chander Mookerjee, in Kipling's novel, *Kim*, brings us again to the colonial pattern with Hurree Babu placed in a subordinate position to the main character, Kim. Kipling creates unequal dichotomies in which Kim becomes the privileged signifier, the 'Self' and Hurree the signified 'Other'. Hurree Babu is depicted as the stereotyped Bengalis who, as a highly educated community, challenged British representations of Indians. Because of their defiance of colonial rulers, they were dismissed as comic imitations of westerners and were caricatured in the figure of the Bengali Babu: a small dark-skinned, effeminate intellectual who had an imperfect command on English.

Hurree Babu is of course an educated person, an anthropologist, well versed in English literature, and one who can read maps. It is because of this education that Hurree represents a threat to the colonizer's status because knowledge of the two worlds assures access to both. Consequently Kipling relegates the Babu to an inferior position through various situations, encounters and descriptions. This is how Kipling introduces the Hurree Babu in the novel: "At the end of that time entered a hulking, obese Babu whose stockinged legs shook with fat" (Kipling, *Kim*, p. 213). Following this description Kipling always describes the Babu's appearance as shabby, his voice "oily," and speaking a distorted English. Kipling ridicules his incorrect grammar and finds his accent abominable, which he emphasizes in the misspelled words that the Babu uses: *Onlee* instead of "only," *allso* instead of "also," *opeenion* instead of "opinion," *quiett* instead of "quiet" and so forth. The fact that the babu cannot master the English language, which was considered a symbol of authority, is supposed to suggest that he cannot attempt to occupy the same position as that of the colonizer. Kipling goes even further and equips the Babu with a consciousness that asserts his inferiority and makes the Babu believe in this low status: "I am only Babu showing off my English to you. All we Babus talk

BDD-A23413 © 2013 Editura Universităţii „Petru Maior"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:47:43 UTC)

English to show off" (Ibid, p.244). Such self-representation by Hurree Babu represents a negation of the Indian intellectual that cannot rise to the high standards required by the colonizer's language.

However Hurree Babu's actions in the novel complicate the pattern of the colonial discourse. It is Hurree Babu and not Kim who is able to prevent the Russian intruders from negotiating a diplomatic agreement with the Afghan kings; he is the one who obtains the maps from the Russian spies. Hurree trains Kim in reading maps and thus the Babu fulfills the image of that class of interpreters that Macaulay desired. However such a picture with the colonized teaching the colonizer about the geographical territory that the colonizers want to control represents a reversal of the colonial pattern where knowledge, equated to power, belongs to the subject class. The presence of Hurree Babu becomes even more problematic because it is the condition for asserting, by antithesis, Kim's authority. This position is refused to Hurree Babu because it is Kim who assumes it throughout the novel. When Hurree babu calls him 'Mister O'Hara', a name suggesting Kim's Irish origins, subject to the British, Kim assumes his superior position in his relation to the Babu: "Babuji," said Kim, looking up at the broad, grinning face, "I am a Sahib" (Kipling, *Kim*, p. 294). For, as Said argued, the babu is "almost always funny, or gauche, or somehow caricatural not because he is incompetent or inept in his work - on the contrary he is exactly the opposite - but because he is not white" (Said, "Kim, The Pleasures of Imperialism", p. 52). Thus the colonial binary regains its equilibrium, yet it is interesting that this happens only when arguments based on racial origin are invoked.

On the other hand, Kim needs this counterpart for asserting his authority, hence the antithetic representations of the Babu in his relation to Kim. The presence of the Babu becomes the condition for defining Kim's superiority as a representative of the ruling race. The antithetic instances when Hurree Babu is speaking a distorted English are intended to show Kim what he is not supposed to be and thus the babu becomes Kim's anti-self, a stereotype by means of which the "bad" self is projected onto the Other.

Yet the process of projecting the 'bad' self on the Other cannot fully cover the identity of the colonized. The Babu is not a mere object because he also goes through a process of identity construction: "I am only Babu showing off my English to you. All we Babus talk English to show off"(Kipling, *Kim*, p. 244). This statement is not only an artificial device by placing Hurree babu on a subordinate position but a means by which the anxiety of the Babu regarding his own identity, regarding his place in the colonial society is voiced. His imitation of the Western manners and habits is ridiculed and this indicates that he is not an exact copy of the model provided by the colonizer. Therefore the babu emerges as a liminal character incorporating in the process of his identity construction both Western and Indian discourses, an identity that complicates Edward Said's monolithic colonial discourse meant to assert "European superiority over Oriental backwardness" (Said, *Orientalism*, p.5) a superiority that is based on the clear separation between the Self and the Other, the colonizer and the colonized, the Western and Eastern worlds.

The colonizers' efforts to maintain the distance from the subject people were artificial as, in order to define themselves, the ruling people needed to relate to subject people. The proximity of the two cultures engaged them in a mutual defining process, which resulted in inevitable instances of hybridity, alterity that challenged the colonizers' pretence as the only

BDD-A23413 © 2013 Editura Universităţii „Petru Maior"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:47:43 UTC)

interpreters and holders of knowledge. Their exclusive position was soon challenged by the emergence of the young men of modern India whose education and social status totally justified their claims of having access to what the British had envisaged as their secluded 'caste' of rulers.

Bibliography

Cell, John W., "Anglo-Indian Medical Theory and the Origins of Segregation in West Africa", *American Historical Review* 91, no.2 (April 1986);
Cornell, Louis, *Kipling in India*, Macmillan, London, 1966;
Gilmour, David, *Long Recessional, The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling*, John Murray, London, 2002;
Inden, Ronald, "Orientalist Constructions of India", *Modern Asian Studies* 20, no.3 (July 1986);
Kanwar, Pamela, "The Changing Image of Simla", *Urban History Association* Occasional Papers Series 10, 1989;
Kennedy, Dane, *The Magic Mountains*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996;
Kipling, R., *The Complete Verse*, Kyle Cathie Ltd, London, 2002;
Kipling, R., *Plain Tales From The Hills*, Penguin Books, London, 1994;
Kipling, R.,"City of Dreadful Night", *Pioneer*, 18 February-9 April 1888 in Thomas Pinney, (ed.) *Kipling's India, Uncollected Sketches;*
Kipling, R., "The Council of the Gods", 18 February, 1888, in Thomas Pinney, (ed.) *Kipling's India, Uncollected Sketches;*
Kipling, R.,"A Study of the Congress by an Eye Witness", *Pioneer*, 1 January 1889, in Thomas Pinney, (ed.) *Kipling's India, Uncollected Sketches;*
Kipling, R. *From Sea to Sea, I, II, Letters of Travel*, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, Page&Company, 1913, Project Gutenberg EBook, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/32977/32977-h/32977-h.htm
Kipling, R., *Kim*, Penguin Books, London, 1994;
Said, Edward, "*Kim*, The Pleasures of Imperialism," *Raritan*, 7, 1987;
Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, Penguin Books, London, 2003.

BDD-A23413 © 2013 Editura Universităţii „Petru Maior"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:47:43 UTC)