

RUDYARD KIPLING'S KIM: PIONEER IN REALISM?

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FOREWORD

On the last page of the Definitive Edition of Rudyard Kipling's Verse is found the following appeal:

If I have given you delight
By aught that I have done,
Let me lie quiet in that night
Which shall be yours anon.

And for the little, little, span
The dead are borne in mind,
Seek not to question other than
The books I leave behind.

Probably every person who writes about Kipling is uneasily aware of violating that final request. I have "questioned" Kipling's life, as well as other factors, but I felt it was necessary to do so in order to adequately assess the lasting value of the books he left behind.

CHAPTER I

Kim and the Question of Realism

The assertion that a twentieth-century English writer, specifically Rudyard Kipling, was a pioneer realist is a statement likely to be challenged for several reasons. First, realism as a movement began in the middle of the nineteenth century, and second, England never has been noted as a major center of realistic literature. But all the same, this paper is intended to demonstrate that very assertion.

Of course, there are answers to the expected challenge. Kipling, despite all his emphasis on airplanes, biorhythms, modern machinery, and mechanized warfare, was in fact within a very few years of being an exact contemporary of Mark Twain; the several meetings between the two were recorded with delight and respect by both. Kipling's writing career began in 1881, when he was only sixteen, and over a third of it, including the writing of many of his most important works, took place before the turn of the century. Published in 1901 with a 1900 copyright date, Kim itself was largely, if not totally, written in the 1890's.

Obviously, Kipling could not have pioneered in the inception of a movement that began before he was born. But there are certain important changes from nineteenth-century realism to twentieth-century realism, from the convoluted sentences of Henry James and the at times almost incomprehensible slang of Bret Harte to Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck's simplistic vocabulary, ordinary syntax, and commonplace plots.

My choice of authors' names above is deliberate and important. For I intend to show that Kipling's realism, which of course does not encompass all his work, is realism not in the English style, but in the American style. He was most influenced not by English, French, and Russian realists, although he certainly read them, but by earlier American realists and naturalists; and his greatest influence has been on later American realists.

In order to support these assertions, I intend, first, to provide a working definition of realism and to examine Kipling's exposure to the idea of realism, as well as his apparent personal theory of writing as set forth in his autobiographical fragment Something of Myself, in speeches and papers he presented at various occasions, and in other known writings and letters.

In the next two chapters I intend to examine his major novel, Kim, for examples of realism. Because the most wildly fantastic tales often have realistic characters in an unreal plot, and because the most incomprehensibly Dadaistic works often have completely realistic plots peopled with unreal characters, I shall look first for realism of plot and theme and then for realism of character, examining all these elements in the light of conditions known to exist in the time and place described, in order to determine the realistic or non-realistic effect created.

Finally, I intend to re-examine those effects in terms of the previously formed definition of realism and of Kipling's apparent intention for his work, to determine whether those definitions and goals have been met. Also in the last chapter, I shall very briefly touch on Kipling's effect on recent American realistic writers in order to show that he did indeed serve as a transition writer.

Defining realism is extremely difficult, partly because to a very large extent realism, in the sense of verisimilitude, has been the goal of all story-telling throughout human experience. As Clarence Decker points out in The Victorian Conscience, "In fiction Realism is as old as the oldest legend and as new as the latest novel." This idea of realism he defines as the attempt

to "convey a vivid sense of the actuality of the objective world" He later quotes Havelock Ellis, but without citation, as saying there is "no absolute realism, merely various kinds of idealism."¹

J. P. Stern's very interesting Marxist criticism On Realism describes the "two kinds of realism: the one that has to do with the detailed description of fictional elements, the other that has to do with an evaluation of those elements."² Incidentally and astonishingly, Marxist critics have tended to be generally favorable toward Kipling, apparently because, despite his known and despised Imperialism, he was a major spokesman for the working man. Therefore, this paper will from time to time refer to Marxist and Socialist criticism, because such critics tend to prefer realism, and on the grounds that favorable criticism from a man's ideological enemy must be taken as valid.

Ioan Williams, in his attempt to define realism, at one point gave the effect of throwing up his hands in

¹Clarence Decker, The Victorian Conscience (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1952), pp. 16, 14, 109.

²J. P. Stern, The Realist Novel in England: A Study in Development (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), p. xii.

despair, with the explanation that "Nineteenth Century Realist fiction in England is a form of Romantic art."³

(This rather odd statement does indeed relate to Kipling, as I shall later demonstrate.) But Walter Myers had a more pragmatic approach, as he wrote in The Later Realism:

Realism is to be understood as a general tendency or purpose--the purpose of conveying to the reader, whatever else may be accomplished, a strong sense of things actual in experience and within the range of the average life. . . . it must imply strongly that the facts narrated may be paralleled, though perhaps on a smaller scale and with less intensity, in the lives of the reader and his associates.⁴

This definition of realism seems clear and acceptable until it is closely examined, at which point it dissolves in the light of reality. For one must ask whose average life, that of the writer, or of the reader, or of both? Who is the reader, and who are his associates? What is the life of the writer, and can it be the same as the average

³Ioan Williams, The Realist Novel in England: A Study in Development (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), p. xii.

⁴Walter L. Myers, The Later Realism: A Study of Characterization in the British Novel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), p. 2.

lives of the readers? Presumably, as long as Kipling wrote in India for Anglo-Indians, his life and the lives of his average readers were similar; but as his readership spread world-wide, the lives of his average readers no longer included the Assam hills, monkeys, punkahs, and sandstorms. By this particular definition he was no longer a realist, and yet his writing had not changed at all. It was merely his readership that had changed. Therefore, that apparently clear definition cannot work at all.

Donald Pizer derived from George J. Becker a workable definition. He listed Becker's

three criteria of the realistic mode. The first is verisimilitude of detail derived from observation and documentation. The second is an effort to approach the norm of experience--that is, a reliance upon the representative rather than the exceptional in plot, setting, and character. The last is an objectivity, so far as an artist can create objectivity, rather than a subjective or idealistic view of human nature and experience.⁵

It will be observed that this definition incorporates some of the previously discarded definition in its insistence

⁵Donald Pizer, Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966), pp. 3-4.

upon the "representative, rather than the exceptional," How will we be able to reconcile the exotic portrait of the world of India's Grand Trunk Road given in Kim with this insistence on the representative? Pizer continues with an extremely important statement which will solve this problem, as well as allow us to place Kipling accurately in the stream to which he belongs, as he observes that

late nineteenth-century American realism varies from Becker's definition in two important ways. First, it achieves a greater diversity in subject matter than is suggested by the criterion of the representative. Secondly, it is essentially subjective and idealistic in its view of human nature⁶ and experience--that is, it is ethically idealistic.

For the purposes of this paper I intend to define realism largely on the basis of Pizer's derived definition. "Verisimilitude of detail" must be present. A "norm of experience" must be presented, but if my assertion is correct that Kipling's writing is in the American tradition of realism, that "norm" may include considerable diversity if that diversity is in fact representative of the time and place described. Finally, the objectivity of the realist may be tempered by a subjectivity suggesting the

⁶Pizer, p. 4.

writer's optimism in regard to the person, place, or situation being described. It should be noted that a degree of apparent subjectivity may, in addition to suggesting attitude, heighten the reader's impression of realism by emotionally involving the reader more than would an absolute objectivity on the part of the writer.

At this point realism has been defined only for the purpose of this paper, with the full realization that no absolute definition of realism is possible or, probably, even desirable. It is important to bear in mind that this is a literary definition, and as such is far more inclusive than the non-literary definition of realism, which normally takes into account only the first of these three elements.

To what extent was Kipling exposed to the idea of realism? We have his account of the exact day that he first thought about it as a goal. It happened, he says, in 1886:

Late at night I picked up a book by Walter Besant . . . called All in a Garden Fair. It dealt with a young man who desired to write; who came to realise the possibilities of common things seen, and who eventually succeeded in his desire. What its merits may be from today's 'literary' standpoint I do not know. But I do know that the book was my salvation in sore personal need, and with the reading and rereading it became to me a revelation, a hope and a strength. I was certainly . . . as well equipped

as the hero and--and--after all, there was no need for me to stay here forever. I could go away and measure myself against the doorsills of London as soon as I had money.⁷

In fact Besant was chiefly a historical writer, and not one considered today to be in the mainstream of any literary movement, but he inspired the young journalist with a real goal.

But was that in fact Kipling's first exposure to the idea of the "possibilities of things seen"? Throughout life he generally refused to criticize or even comment publicly on anyone else's writing, and therefore a certain amount of deduction must be used. In examining his education, it is important to bear in mind that although Mr. Crofts, his literature teacher at Westward Ho, was a classicist more interested in the Greek and Latin writers than in any moderns, Kipling was greatly influenced by his headmaster, Cormell Price, who was immortalized as the formidable "Prooshan" Bates in Stalky and Co. Price, actually a very gentle man, was nicknamed "Russian" Price because, during a number of years spent living as a tutor with a wealthy family in Russia, he became extremely

⁷Rudyard Kipling, Something of Myself for my Friends Known and Unknown (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1937), p. 71. All future citations from Something of Myself will be from this edition, and will be placed in the text.

excited about the strongly realistic Russian literature of the period. He translated some of the Russian material, and on his return to England, due to his position as a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Circle, he was able to bring this literature to the attention of the British reading public. The result of his interest has been that many critics now consider Russian realism to have been more of an influence on English realism than was the more readily available French realism. We do not know that Kipling read the many translations that Price must surely have had in his possession, but as we do know that he was an omnivorous reader and had free access to Price's library, we have every reason to assume that his reading in Russian literature was extensive.

The majority of realistic literature available during Kipling's school days, however, was written in French. We do know that Kipling read French; here is his delightful account of how he learned:

I append here the method of instruction. Give an English boy the first half of Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea in his native tongue. When he is properly intoxicated, withdraw it and present to him the second half in the original.

⁸Rudyard Kipling, A Book of Words, Souvenirs of France, Something of Myself (1941; rpt., New York, AMS Press, 1970),

Although Jules Verne's Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, a well-loved book even today, is far from being realistic, the fact that Kipling was reading it in the original indicates that by that time he was quite competent in French.

In fact, Kipling's debt to French writers goes far deeper than his enjoyment of Verne. He himself admitted that The Light that Failed was largely a reworking of the Abbé Prévost's Manon Lescaut. Critic Walter Hart comments repeatedly on Kipling's obvious indebtedness to Maupassant; Cyril Falls, to Flaubert; and Angus Wilson, to Zola, although Wilson adds that Kipling was "alarmed by Zola, not . . . for the realism or the frankness, but for the elements of sensuality in his work,"⁹ That statement is difficult to believe when one remembers that an important part of Kipling's childhood was spent surrounded by the milieu of the Pre-Raphaelites in the home of his uncle Edward Burne-Jones, and that one of his uncle's friends whose writing he most admired was the poet Swinburne,

p. 313. Only the first two sections will be cited in this paper, as I used a different edition of Something of Myself.

⁹Walter Morris Hart, Kipling, the Story-Writer (1918; rpt. Folcroft; Folcroft Library Editions, 1973), p. 55; Cyril Falls, Rudyard Kipling: A Critical Study (New York: Mitchel Kennerley, 1915), p. 56; Angus Wilson, The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling (New York: Viking Press, 1977), p. 144.

Of course, Kipling also read English realists. His earliest schoolboy verses were imitations of Browning. His admiration for Jane Austen, surely in many important ways a realist, is well-known, and in Stalky and other writings he often alluded to his youthful admiration for Thomas Carlyle, especially Sartor Resartus, and John Ruskin. He was greatly fascinated by the earlier eighteenth-century classical realists who preceeded the early nineteenth-century romanticists, as well as by the mid-nineteenth century realists who succeeded them.

It is when we reach the field of American realists and their influence that we are on certain grounds, for Kipling himself discusses that influence. Mr. Crofts, who appears in Stalky as Mr. King, did not appreciate realism; he is reported to have once thrown at Kipling's head a book by Browning, which Kipling quietly kept and enjoyed. But Crofts reserved his greatest ire for Americans, and the tale has often been told of the day Crofts, probably rhetorically, asked his class to name the greatest living poet. The expected answer, Nella Braddy says in Son of Empire, was Tennyson. But Kipling's unexpected reply was Walt Whitman. In ensuing days Crofts read aloud, to the glee of the class, the most puerile thoughts to be found

in Leaves of Grass, while Kipling hotly protested that those few passages were not representative.¹⁰

Kipling's intense admiration for Twain already has been mentioned, and he was a life-long admirer of Joel Chandler Harris. Other American writers he particularly enjoyed include Artemus Ward, C. G. Leland, Joaquin Miller (although Kipling was as shocked as everyone else by Miller's flamboyance in London), William Dean Howells, and the now almost-forgotten local colorist George Washington Cable.¹¹

But perhaps his greatest admiration was reserved for one now considered a minor writer. In American Notes Kipling tells us San Francisco "was hallowed ground to me, because of Bret Harte."¹² Walter Hart refers to Bret Harte as "Kipling's master" but says Kipling "has achieved a higher and more varied development of his art."¹³ Elliot Gilbert suggests that Kipling's great indebtedness to Harris,

¹⁰Nella Braddy, Son of Empire: The Story of Rudyard Kipling (London: William Collins Sons and Co., Ltd., 1945), p. 64.

¹¹Louis L. Cornell, Kipling in India (London: St. Martin's Press, 1966), p. 72; Ann Matlack Weygandt, Kipling's Reading and its Influence on his Poetry (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), pp. 146, 148, 154.

¹²Rudyard Kipling, From Sea to Sea, American Notes, City of Dreadful Night (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1920), p. 249.

¹³Hart, p. 61.

Twain, and Hart lies in the fact that they were all local colorists and that Kipling's important early success lay in his successful use of local color.¹⁴ Hart, however, points out that there are important differences between Bret Harte's style of simple use of local color for its own sake and Kipling's style of complex realism based on local color. He comments: "Harte emphasized common human characteristics, and Kipling, the distinguishing characteristics . . . of the race or clan."¹⁵ By so doing, Kipling gave much more meaning to the use of local color.

At this point we have taken a look at Kipling's literary progenitors, those writers claimed by either Kipling or his critics as being those who most strongly influenced him. As we can see, although he was influenced from many directions, the major thrust was from the Americans, and specifically from the American local colorists.

The book by Besant, then, did not fall like a meteorite on an unprepared mind. The real situation was this:

¹⁴Elliot L. Gilbert, The Good Kipling: Studies in the Short Story (Oberlin: Ohio University Press, 1970), p. 92.

¹⁵Hart, p. 65.

Kipling was not interested in criticism; never, throughout his life, did he consider criticism as anything more than an annoyance. Furthermore, his scholastic grounding in literature tended toward the classical rather than the modern. The result was that although as an artist's son he had been made aware of various schools in painting and sculpture (it is no accident that Dicky Helder, in The Light that Failed, is a painter rather than a writer), he was woefully uninformed of current trends in his own field of writing. He had been reading, and delighting in, naturalistic and realistic literature, and his eager mind had soaked it up (Dicky, though a painter, is a realistic painter). But until 1886, Kipling had not realized what those writers he was reading were doing; still less had he realized that they were doing it deliberately.

He was twenty-one the year that he says he realized what work he was most suited to do. But already he had been doing that work for five years, and some of his all-time best stories were already in print. Surely he must have known what he was doing. What he may not have known was that what he was doing was the same thing those other writers were doing, or that it could be made a life's work rather than a sideline to a "real" job.

If writing could be a real job, what did Kipling consider to be the task of the writer? First, he clearly accepted the early Greek tradition that words in themselves were things of power apart from the power the writer himself might possess: " . . . the magic was in the words, not in the man." That magic, then, must be tested:

. . . the magic of every word shall be tried out to the uttermost by every means, fair or foul, that the mind of man can suggest. There is no room, and the world insists that there shall be no room, for pity, for mercy, for respect, for fear, or even for loyalty between men and his fellow-men, when the record of the Tribe comes to be written (Book of Words, pp. 5, 8)

Clearly, Kipling felt integrity in writing to be all-important. But how did he expect the "record of the tribe" to be conveyed by fiction? He continues:

Fiction is Truth's elder sister. Obviously. No one in the world knew what Truth was till some one had told a story. . . . Fiction began when some man invented a story about another man. It developed when another man told tales about a woman. This strenuous epoch begat the first school of destructive criticism, as well as the First Critic. . . . He died (Book of Words, p. 251)

In a puckish mood, Kipling once insisted to a university audience that when language was invented, the first use mankind made of it was to "tell a lie." The reason, he explained,

was that the "amount of Truth open to Mankind has always been limited" (Book of Words, pp. 207-08). But more seriously, speaking to a group of Canadian authors, Kipling maintained that in a real sense an author cannot lie: "The more subtly we attempt it, the more certainly do we betray some aspect of truth concerning the life of our age" (Book of Words, p. 293). Another time he explained that in his opinion the "true nature and intention of a writer's work does not lie in his own knowledge" (Book of Words, p. 253). That is, no matter what he intends to do, a writer will tell truths, even if they are truths he consciously means to conceal, even if they are truths he is not even aware that he knows.

The telling of the truth may be painful. As a young reporter Kipling met that fact head-on, and his telling of the story of such a case over fifty years later still reveals the pain. An important bill had been proposed by the government, a bill generally resented by the Anglo-Indians. His paper suddenly reversed its editorial stance in favor of the proposed law, and Kipling did not connect that reversal to the important government printing contracts the paper enjoyed. Failing to get from his editor any explanation of the reversal, he left to go to his club for dinner. He continues:

As I entered the long, shabby dining-room where we all sat at one table, everyone hissed. . . . It is not pleasant to sit still when one is twenty while all your universe hisses you. Then uprose a Captain . . . and said: 'Stop that! The boy's only doing what he's paid to do.' . . . The Adjutant was entirely correct. I was a hirling, paid to do what I was paid to do, and--I did not relish the idea. (Something, p. 18)

The paper, intending to change the minds of its readers, had instead told its readers that its editorial policies were dictated by financial considerations.

But Kipling's own stands were not always popular, and sometimes got him into far more trouble than being hissed at the dinner table for doing what he was paid to do. Once he even records being shot at, although he parenthetically explains that the incident was "without malice, by a rapparee who disapproved of his ruler's foreign policy" and for some reason saw Kipling as a representative of that foreign policy. (Something, p. 50)

Regardless of being hissed or shot at, Kipling's own feelings about literary honesty stayed the same. He once told a reporter, "Every effort of art is an effort to be sincere. There is no surer guide . . . than the determination to tell the truth" ¹⁶

¹⁶Anice Page Cooper, "Rudyard Kipling: A Biographical Sketch," in Around the World with Kipling (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1926), p. 25.

Critics have analyzed Kipling's work for evidence of his aesthetic theory. Elliot Gilbert succinctly sums up the theory as the "world of 'things as they are,' the danger and pain of contemplating such a world, and the miraculous nature of the skill that can transform this world into art." Surely this is a theory expressive of realism. Gilbert adds, "When Lurgan Sahib says of Kim . . . that 'from time to time God causes men to be born--and thou art one of them--who have a lust to go abroad at the risk of their lives and discover news,' his description may be taken as a metaphor for all creative men."¹⁷

Prepared with a definition of realism, some knowledge of the operative literary influences, and some idea of Kipling's intention in writing, let us look at Kim itself. Kim is in many ways a picaresque tale. Although its significance in a changing world was almost certainly the deciding issue in Kipling's receipt of the 1907 Nobel Prize, the author himself did not regard it as a real novel at all; in fact, in a letter giving advice to H. Rider Haggard when the latter was having trouble with a plot, Kipling

¹⁷Gilbert, pp. 164, 186. Gilbert's italics.

comments, "This comes well from a chap who could not write a novel to save himself."¹⁸

Whether or not Kim is a novel, it exists, and it is important. The question is whether it is realistic.

¹⁸Morton Cohen, ed., Rudyard Kipling to Rider Haggard: The Record of a Friendship (Rutherford: Fairleigh University Press, 1965), p. 125.

CHAPTER II

Examination of Theme and Plot

In Something of Myself Kipling wrote of his attitude towards his efforts at writing a novel:

In the come-and-go of family talk there was often discussion as to whether I could write a 'real novel.' The Father thought the setting of my work and life would be against it, and Time justified him.

.
Kim, of course, was nakedly picaresque and plotless--a thing imposed from without.

Yet I dreamed for many years of building a veritable three-decker out of chosen and long-stored timber (pp. 244-45)

The truth of the matter, which Kipling did not at that point discuss, was that he had spent years trying to write a long novel, rather in the style of Dickens. To be called Mother Maturin, it was intended to be such a pageant of India as no one else could ever produce. The projected "three-decker" had filled over four hundred pages of Kipling's small handwriting, before he had to admit to himself that the idea would not work. Out of the wreckage of Mother Maturin Kipling salvaged "The Ballad of Fisher's Boarding House" and Kim.

In evaluating Kim, therefore, it is useful to bear in mind that we do not know what the story was that Kipling originally intended to write. Figuring out what the book actually is about is not as easy as one would expect. According to Cyril Falls, "Kim is a tale of the Secret Service of India, which in itself probably is no way a thing of the author's imagination."¹ Of course, the Indian Secret Service, which would be much more similar to an internal CIA in the United States than to the American Secret Service, was in no way a thing of Kipling's imagination, but his competence to discuss it might be a different question. Although as a journalist he would have known of its existence, journalists rarely have access to official secrets of any kind, particularly if the secrets are important and the journalist is young. For this reason, the statement of Falls contributes little to the question of whether the book is realistic.

Nirad Chaudhuri disagrees with Falls that the spy story is the central idea of Kim, but he further points out that it is fortunate that it is not, because that portion of the book is in his opinion generally unrealistic:

¹Falls, p. 162.

. . . Kim would never have been a great book if it had to depend for its validity and appeal on the spy story, and we really are not called upon to judge it as an exposition in fiction of the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia. Kipling's attitude to war and diplomacy had a streak of naiveté and even claptrap in it.²

Shamsul Islam agrees with Chaudhuri on the unimportance of the spy story. According to him, the question of self and identity is in fact the "crucial question that is posed by this novel."³

Kanatur Rao disagrees with Chaudhuri and Islam in one way, as he insists that Kim reveals the "inner workings of the Secret Service in India during British rule." Basically he says that this element, although realistic in itself, is immaterial to the important realisms of the book. Conceding that the Russian threat to Afghanistan from 1850 to 1897 is the political background, Rao nevertheless says that "the political issue does not dominate the novel." To Rao, an appeal for moderation and tolerance, such as he considers Kipling himself had learned over the years, is

²Nirad C. Chaudhuri, "The Finest Story about India--in English," in The Age of Kipling, John J. Gross, comp. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), p. 29.

³Shamsul Islam, Kipling's Law: A Study of his Philosophy of Life (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), p. 116.

the dominant theme of Kim " The plot of the "great game," he says, "is realistic but not important; the search theme is predominant."⁴

The accuracy of these varied critical opinions can be determined only by a reasoned examination of the book itself. It is apparent from the disagreement among those closest to the book that the story is carried as much by theme as by plot. At this point it might help to discuss both plot and theme, delaying any analysis of the extent of realism contained therein until the discussion is completed. At a surface glance, it seems unbelievable that either plot or theme could in any way be considered realistic. Both, carried by a series of contrasts and juxtapositions, reach backward: the theme, to that most archetypal of all themes, the quest; and the plot, to the picaresque patterns of the earliest fiction.

Looking first at theme, we find multiple quests present. The first is introduced early, as the lama says in the first chapter, "My pilgrimage is well begun." Three pages on, he asks the museum curator, "Where, then, is the River?"⁵ But as the quest for the Grail in the Arthurian legend

⁴Kanatur Bhaskara Rao, Rudyard Kipling's India (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), pp. 23, 157, 136.

represents not so much the search for a tangible physical object as a goal of spiritual purity that will enable one to see the physical object, so the lama's search for the River of the Arrow is in fact a search for spiritual purity which will allow the lama to reach his goal of Nirvana, or perfect unity with the Godhead. Nothingness is the lama's ultimate quest, or so the lama believes at this point.

Shortly afterwards, Kim's surface quest is introduced as he repeats his dead father's misunderstood prophecy: "I go to look for--for a bull--a Red Bull on a green field who shall help me" (p. 21). This, his immediate quest, is one early to be fulfilled. But Kim's major--and real--quest is the core of the book. "Who is Kim?" (p. 141) he asks a third of the way through the book. It is a question that is repeated twice more, at major turning points. Who is Kim--What is Kim?

There are other quests. Colonel Creighton, the Englishman who is ostensibly head of the Indian Ethnological Survey and actually head of the Indian Secret Service, is bound **together** with the Afghan horse-trader Mahbub Ali in a quest for knowledge. They are part of the Great Game; they are spies. Although Mahbub says "I sell--and I buy" (p. 161) he is not a spy for the money, as he later emphasizes. C.25.1B, as he is registered on the "locked books of the Indian Survey Department" (p. 27), is involved in espionage

for the same reason as is his employer Colonel Creighton; he is in it for the love of the Game. He tells Kim that "the pay is the least part of the game" (p. 27).

Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, the minor civil servant Hurree Babu on the open books and R.17 on the locked books of the Ethnological Survey, loves the Game and plays it well. But on the surface Hurree Babu, "an M.A. of Calcutta University" (p. 195), has goals that are strictly earthly and preferably as immediate as possible. He wants to be a Fellow of the Royal Society, and he feelingly tells Kim how he looks forward to a pension at the end of his government service. But his real quest, as Kim realizes only at the end of the book, goes far deeper.

Strictly earthly are the goals of the Old Woman from Kulu, the Sahiba whom Kim meets on the Grand Trunk Road. On her way back from a pilgrimage of gratitude for the safe birth of her first grandson, she tries to persuade the lama to join her party and help her pray for a second grandson. Earthly, too, are the goals of the Woman of Shamlegh. Not content with the two husbands she already has, she tries to seduce the seventeen-year-old Kim, who is far too tired and worried to respond.

As I noted earlier, the quest theme is carried by contrasts and juxtapositions. J. M. S. Tomkins points out

several of these, including one extremely important juxtaposition which, if carried far enough, provides a key to the entire meaning of the book. For Tomkins, it is almost a throw-away line: "Kim, so exceptionally placed in relation to Hindu, Mohamedan, Sikh, and Englishman" ⁶ She fails to mention Buddhist. But that is a major key to the assorted quest themes of the book, and ultimately to the entire meaning of the book. Each major character, in the beginning, is held back from self-knowledge by his own religious and cultural system of belief, and these systems of belief stand in sharp contrast to one another.

The lama is a Buddhist, although in many ways he is a renegade Buddhist. His presence as a central character is significant, for Buddhism, although treated world-wide as a religion, is in many ways not a religion at all. It began as an offshoot of Hinduism, and although it conceives of a Supreme Being, the Buddha specifically is not that Supreme Being. The lama's quest, his goal, is for Nirvana, for that perfect state of Nothingness which simultaneously is a reunion with the Godhead from which the soul presumably emerged. Near the middle of the book he says, "Desire is illusion" (p. 147). Later he enlarges on that: "To abstain

⁶Joyce Marjorie Tompkins, The Art of Rudyard Kipling (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 30.

from action is well" (p. 254). But his love for Kim is an ineradicable stumbling-block to his drive for Nothingness, and his religious beliefs are capable of taking in the good in all religions.

Mahbub Ali is a Moslem and an Afghan. Islam is an active religion, in many ways a soldiers' religion, in sharp contrast to the passiveness that is Buddhism. Although it conceives of a heaven, the way to reach the Islamic paradise is by activity rather than by contemplation. The national temperament of the Afghan, too, is for action. No greater contrast could be conceived than that between Mahbub and the lama. Colonel Creighton, at least nominally Christian and presumably phlegmatically English, nevertheless fits in with Mahbub in mood and drive; he and Mahbub understand each other very well indeed.

Hurree Babu says he is agnostic, but Kipling says of him, "It is an awful thing to dread the magic that you contemptuously investigate--to collect folklore for the Royal Society with a lively belief in the Powers of Darkness" (p. 216). He is still basically Hindu, and the Sahiba--the Old Woman from Kulu--also is Hindu, although hers is a Hinduism loosely grafted onto a belief in a multiplicity of hill gods. Their religion sees life as an endless cycle of rebirth, and so they are most interested in life as it

is lived on this earth. Their belief contrasts with that of the lama more sharply than is at once discernable; he too believes in reincarnation, but he sees the cycle of lives as something that a soul, having acquired sufficient merit, may escape, whereas to Hurree Babu and the Sahiba, life is to live and not to leave until leaving is utterly unavoidable. The lama describes the Sahiba as "wholly given over to the shows of this life" (p. 272). It is not at all an inaccurate statement.

And Kim? Although he was baptized Catholic at birth, Kim is without caste, without religion. He is the "Little Friend of All the World." For one-third of the book his only real interests in life are to keep his belly full and to find new experiences. The son of a drunken Irish laborer who died of drink and opium and an Irish nursemaid who died in childbirth, raised by an old woman who sells opium, he has, Kipling tells us, "known all evil since he could speak" (p. 4). He is sent to Saint Xavier's school to learn to be a Sahib (and a Catholic), but his tuition, paid by a Buddhist, is sent to the school through the Hindu temple of the Tirthankers. As the lama is taught to abstain from action, so Kim is taught the opposite. He tells the lama, "At the Gates of Learning we were taught that to abstain from action was unbecoming a Sahib" (p. 254).

Thus, one-third of the way through the book, we have the quests laid out: the lama's spiritual quest for his River of Healing, the Sahiba's worldly quest for things to please and amuse her now, Hurree Babu's equally earthly quest for a pension and a Fellowship in the Royal Society, Mahbub Ali's emotional quest for excitement, and Kim's intellectual and emotional quest for new experience. But at this point the carefully parted strains run into one another and blend together, for how completely can we differentiate between spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and worldly goals? In many essential ways they are all internal drives, and in many other essential ways they are all external.

The first of the quests to be resolved, very early in the book, is Kim's quest for the Red Bull on a Green Field. It is not, as his vivid child imagination had pictured it, a mythical beast of power; it is no more nor less than his father's old regimental banner. Kim is caught, fairly caught, by two regimental chaplains. Identified by his baptismal certificate and his father's Masonic dimit paper and military discharge certificate, all of which he carries in a bag around his neck, he is in danger of being sent to the Masonic orphanage. This, we sense, would be a completely unbearable environment to him. But he is recognized by Colonel Creighton and Mahbub Ali as perfect spy material, and

they agree that to try to turn him into an ordinary trooper would be to turn a polo pony into a cart horse. When the lama produces the money for him to go to school, he enrolls at Saint Xavier's. At first he sees school, too, as stultifying; but Mahbub makes it clear to him he is being trained for something far more exciting than a soldier's life.

Now Kim embarks on his major quest, that of answering his own question as to the identity of Kim. Identity in this connection must be seen as internal, rather than external, especially in view of the manner that the question is repeated four years later, two thirds of the way through the book, when Kim has left school and is soon to embark on his life's work:

A very few white people, but many Asiatics, can throw themselves into a mazement [sic] as it were by repeating their own names over and over again to themselves, letting the mind go free upon speculation as to what is called personal identity. When one grows older, the power, usually, departs, but while it lasts it may descend upon a man at any moment.

"Who is Kim--Kim--Kim?" (p. 223)

That quest is still unfulfilled. And the lama's quest? "It was made plain to me in a hundred dreams . . . that without thee I should never find my River" (p. 231), he tells Kim after Kim leaves Saint Xavier's. But he is more eager than ever, as he says, "Surely old folk are as children.

They desire a matter--behold, it must be done at once, or they fret and weep!" (p. 232) Without realizing it, he has moved even farther away from his desired cessation of desire. But "if need be," he comforts himself, "the River will open at our feet" (p. 236). He feels secure. He considers that he was the instrument of fulfilling Kim's need for school; therefore "Thou shalt find me my River, being in turn the instrument. The Search is sure" (p. 274). For Kim and the lama, the quest has its fulfillment in the future.

But for Mahbub Ali, living for the excitement of the Game, and the Sahiba, living for the pleasures of the moment, the quest is being fulfilled as it is lived. The Sahiba, indeed, is happier than ever: "Age had not weakened her tongue or her memory" (p. 356). She has even more to wish for: "We have only two sons" (p. 257) and with a holy man in residence again, more sons are sure to come.

But now, without realizing it, Hurree Babu is about to move temporarily farther away from what he insists is his goal of safety and security. A new quest is entering the story, entering stealthily, to move the resolution of the real but unrecognized quest of all the main characters for self-knowledge closer to realization. This new quest is the not-to-be-fulfilled quest of the two Russian spies

who already, ninety years ago, are surveying in Afghanistan, hunting a foothold and, in the process, stirring up the Confederation of the Five Kings, which was the subject of the important first message carried by Kim from Mahbub Ali to Colonel Creighton.

With Kim out of school, he and the lama return to the Sahiba's house. Kim is on the government payroll now, but he has been promised a six-month leave before his first assignment. The promised leave is not to materialize. When the two arrive at the Sahiba's house, a quack doctor is present. Actually Hurree Babu in disguise, he brings news: there are Russian spies, disguised as hunters, surveying in the mountains and fomenting rebellion. Hurree Babu is to go and meet them, but he wants Kim to go with him. He explains, "And all-so I am Bengali--a fearful man" (p. 267). The "fearful" Bengali, who is to accomplish the work of a tiger in the next few months, actually has departmental permission to enlist Kim, as a sort of final test to see how Kim is going to work out as a spy.

The lama, Kim, and Hurree Babu go to the hills, which actually are the foothills of the Himalayan mountains. The mountain air refreshes the lama, but

Kim, plains-bred and plains-fed, sweated and panted astonished Kim kindly allowed a village of

hillmen to acquire merit by giving him a rough blanket-coat. The lama was mildly surprised that any one should object to the knife-edged breezes which had cut the years off his shoulders. (p. 226)

While Kim and the lama rest and shelter from a storm near a mountain village called Ziglair, Hurree Babu overtakes the Russians and introduces himself after some thought as "agent for His Royal Highness, the Rajah of Rampur" (p. 283). After the introduction,

He skipped nimbly from one kilta to the next, making pretense to adjust each conical basket. The Englishman is not, as a rule, familiar with the Asiatic, but he would not strike across the wrist a kindly Babu who had accidentally upset a kilta with a red oilskin top. (p. 283)

Hurree Babu has found the basket that contains the secret documents.

The Great Game is engaged in earnest now, and Hurree Babu, lover of good food and contributor to ethnological journals, is involved in the most perilous quest of his life. Kipling tells us, "He did not wish to steal anything. He only desired to know what to steal, and, incidentally, how to get away when he had stolen it" (p. 286). The Russians, with Hurree Babu, catch up to the lama and Kim, who are once more on the road. As they approach, the lama

has in his hand his holy picture of the Wheel of Life. One of the Russians wants the drawing. He asks to buy it, but the lama politely refuses, gently offering to make him another instead and explaining that he cannot part with this one because it was used in the initiation of a novice. Unable to understand the lama's refusal to sell, one of the Russians tries to snatch the drawing. In the scuffle, the drawing is torn.

In a key portion of the book, the lama, disciple of inaction, hits the Russian with his heavy iron pencase; the Babu, disciple of action, "danced in agony" (p. 289) at his inability to decide what to do. The Russian hits the lama in the face, Kim jumps the Russian, and the bearers, hillmen all and aghast at what they perceive as blasphemy, take off with all the baggage and guns, backing off just far enough to begin to throw rocks at the Russians.

The combatants finally separate, as the Russians realize what they have lost and Kim realizes the plight of the lama, who has been horrified into shock by his own behavior. Kim and the lama flee with the hillmen as the Russians empty their pistols after them, to no avail. As Hurree Babu richly earns his dreamed-of pension, by guilefully leading the Russians two hundred miles on foot over the hills to safety in exactly the direction they do

not want to go so that they are unable either to retrieve their papers or redo their work, Kim, acting on Hurree Babu's orders which were conveyed to him by a letter sealed inside a walnut shell and carried by the Woman of Shamlegh, persuades the people of Shamlegh to give him the one basket containing the proof of the Russians' activities. After jettisoning the rest of the basket's contents, he puts the treasonous letters from the Confederation of the Five Kings in a bag concealed under his clothing, and hides the heavier survey material at the bottom of the food sack. At this point Hurree Babu's apparent quest is accomplished; the information is in the hands of the English (in the person of Kim) and Hurree Babu's pension is assured.

But the lama, hurt and ill, must lean on Kim. Now Kim, unknowingly, is well on his way towards fulfilling his quest for self-knowledge. The Woman of Shamlegh, strong leader of a matriarchal society, has two husbands, and would like Kim for a bedfellow. But Kim is too tired to be interested. He must get the Russians' messages to Colonel Creighton. Furthermore the lama, having meditated on the Causes of Things and decided he is soon to die, is eager

to return to his quest. "The arrow fell in the Plains--not in the Hills" (p. 313), he tells Kim. Therefore he, too, must go to the plains, leaving his beloved hills for the last time, in order to find the River of the Arrow. This need dovetails with Kim's need to get the papers delivered to Colonel Creighton.

The Woman, although angry at what appears to be Kim's scorn of her, sends her husbands and other village men to carry the lama in a litter to the foot of the hills. There they depart, leaving Kim and the lama at the bottom of the mountain alone. But the lama, six feet tall and heavy even in his weakness, is a sore burden on an exhausted boy:

It was never more than a couple of miles a day now, and Kim's shoulders bore all the weight of it--the burden of an old man, the burden of the heavy food-bag with the locked books, the load of the writings on his heart, and the details of the daily routine. He begged in the dawn, set blankets for the lama's meditation, held the weary head in his lap through the noon-day heat, fanning away the flies till his wrist ached, begged again in the evenings and rubbed the lama's feet (p. 323)

Forgotten now is the Great Game and the excitement of new things; Kim feels he would gladly give it all up, just to stay with the lama, if someone would only come and get the papers he must guard with his life.

Finally, in desperation, Kim sends to the Old Woman of

Kulu for a palanquin, and the lama is taken to Kulu to rest and heal. But by now Kim is totally exhausted and ill.

"Thine is a sickness uncommon in youth these days: since young folk have given up tending their betters," the Sahiba tells him. (p. 329)

While Kim is ill, Hurree Babu leaves the Russians securely in the British Indian city of Simla and hastens back to Shamlegh, hunting Kim. There the Woman of Shamlegh tells him where they have gone; he hurries back down the mountain and, discovering Kim's illness, sends for Mahbub Ali. Meanwhile the lama, who has once more gone hunting his river, decides he has found it. Mahbub arrives just in time, as the Sahiba puts it, "to fish the Holy One out of the brook" (p. 232). Mahbub and Hurree see to it the lama is taken in on a litter and put to bed in dry clothes.

The Holy One's quest is accomplished; he has found his river. "For the merit that I have acquired," he says, "the River of the Arrow is here. It broke forth at our feet, as I have said" (p. 345). But Nirvana? Away from his body, floating in the heavens and assured that he was free from the Wheel of Life and that Teshoo Lama was no more, he thought of his beloved chela Kim, and chose to return to his body. Nirvana, he has decided, can wait.

Hurree Babu's quest is sure; the papers are in his

hand, to be delivered to Colonel Creighton. He is assured he will have his pension. "I shall stick to ethnological investigations henceforewards," he says. (p. 376)

Mahbub Ali has come to make sure the papers are safe, as well as to see Kim. He "came there open-minded to commit a dacoity" (p. 342)--that is, if there was some problem such as the Sahiba trying to keep the papers, he was prepared to commit robbery to get them. But no such violence was necessary. The papers are safe and Kim is safe; for now, the old horse-trader has all he really wants.

The Old Woman has had sick people to nurse--Kim, the lama, even normally fat Hurree Babu, now skinny from his trek across the mountains--and she finds that being needed is what she really needed.

And who is Kim? He is the Friend of All the World, says Mahbub Ali to Teshoo Lama. (p. 341) But he is now a man, no longer the self-centered child who had played on Zam-Zammah by pushing everyone else off. He knows now that the Great Game is not all a game. But as the lama's chela, forgetting Self, he has found Self. That discovery, after all, was the answer to his real quest.

A quest theme is easily defined, when a specific object is the goal of the quest. But in Kim the constantly-shifting goals are rarely concrete. In fact, the only goal

that could possibly be considered concrete, other than Hurree Babu's pension, is the lama's sought-for river; and in the end the fact that even it was not a real and concrete river is demonstrated by the lama's decision that the river will erupt at his feet. In the end, what he takes for the river is no more than an irrigation ditch.

Therefore, although only Kim realizes he is searching for self-knowledge, the fact is that all the main characters are searching for self-realization. Although each reaches a fulfillment of his quest in his own way, a vital element in the self-realization of each is the element of loving self-sacrifice. At this point the different approaches to life taken by Buddhist, Hindu, Moslem, or (nominal) Christian no longer matter; all the quests have merged into one quest; and that quest has been fulfilled.

But is the fulfillment realistic? Can a plot of the type normally used in romantic fiction and a theme that is probably the oldest theme in the world be considered realistic in any way?

Part of the answer to that is, obviously, that life itself is picaresque; it consists not of a sharply defined plot with an artful beginning and end, but of a series of episodes loosely strung together. And the reason the quest theme is so old and still so greatly loved is that all

people must have the same quest Kim did, the quest for self-fulfillment, the growth from childish attitudes to maturity.

It should be noted at this point that the novel with which Kim has most often been compared, Huckleberry Finn, also is highly picaresque. Although the story lines of the two works are completely dissimilar, numerous resemblances can be noted in the interrelationships of character; for example, the relationship between the runaway slave Jim and the boy Huck is very similar to the relationship between the lama and the boy Kim. In each case, the man is in certain ways protected by the boy, even as the boy learns from the man how to love unselfishly. The major differences between the two result from the fact that Kipling tends to be a more gentle, or perhaps we should say less brutal, writer than Twain, and the fact that Kipling lacks the ability (and probably, in this particular work, the inclination) to employ Twain's keen satire. But the important element of growth from selfish immaturity to selfless maturity is expressed similarly in both works.

For Kim, two important changes in attitude demonstrate this growth as well as move Kim from the realm of myth to that of apparent reality. The first is the difference in his attitude towards his intelligence mission at thirteen,

when he uses the information he gains for self-aggrandizement in the bazaar, and his second mission at seventeen, when, exhausted and ill, he risks not only his own life but even the life of his beloved lama to see to it his information is delivered, in silence and secrecy, to those authorized to receive it. We sense that the child Kim, at the least real difficulty, would have abandoned a mission he saw only as a game; the adult Kim realizes that work which may ultimately result in the life or death of others must be completed at any cost.

Perhaps more important is the change in Kim's attitude toward Hurree Babu, for it shows a most important change in his ability to comprehend and assess others. First meeting the Babu during his training at the house of Lurgan Sahib, he despises a man he sees as a fat, pretentious coward. Even Lurgan's assurance that Hurree Babu is one of the ten best spies in India does not impress the scornful boy. But in the end, having watched Hurree in action and gone to him for orders, Kim thinks, "What a beast of wonder is a Babu! And that man walked alone . . . with robbed and angry foreigners!" (p. 336).

Hurree replies, "Oah, thatt [sic] was nothing, after they had done beating me, but if I lost the papers it was pretty jolly serious" (p. 336).

At last Kim realizes the real manliness of the Babu, and the real nature of his quest and that of Mahbub's. "He makes them a mock at the risk of his life--I never would have gone down to them after the pistol-shots--and then he says he is a fearful man And he is a fearful man" (p. 336 [Ellipses in the original]).

This quotation demonstrates realism. The Babu is a man with the imagination both to enjoy his work and to fear it; he jokes about his fear in order to work though it. Mahbub Ali, whom Kim had always imagined to be utterly fearless, is seen at last as a brave man in constant awareness that his life is at stake, a man whose swagger and boastfulness are his way of dealing with his fear. Mahbub and Hurree are alike in their courage; only their methods of dealing with fear differ. Kim himself at last can see that fear is inherent in his work. Like Mahbub and the Babu, he will go on with the job.

He has grown up. The Great Game is still fun as it must always be, for the spy who no longer enjoys his work is not likely to survive his next mission. But the child Kim's game is the man Kimball O'Hara's enjoyable, but dangerous, work.

It is this particular element of realism that sets Kipling apart from most other writers of spy fiction, and

Kim apart from most other spy stories. In general writers who lack a background in intelligence imagine the fear vividly enough but fail to guess the genuine joy in the work; whereas writers who possess such a background express the joy but for some reason tend to be unable to allow their characters to express the equally genuine fear. With the inclusion of this particular element, the spy story that may in some ways be as naïve as Chaudhuri suggests takes on an important realism.

Neither plot nor theme alone could be considered realistic. But together they present a verisimilitude that is a major portion of a type of realism. Exactly what type of realism will be discussed after we examine some of the main characters.

CHAPTER III

Examination of Major Characters

Robert Sencourt, in his lengthy India in English Literature, gives less than a paragraph to Rudyard Kipling. Somewhat awkwardly, he says:

India is familiar to many . . . readers by the wonderful tours-de-force by which he was [sic] distilled the romance of the East from the impression India might make on the British Tommy and the Eurasian boy. His is an unreal India, except to those who have seen the country first through his imagination, or who have been constrained to the frank crude British point of view; to the Indians himself [sic] the work is meaningless.¹

One's first question might be, what Eurasian boy? If Sencourt means Kim, he has missed the fact that Kim, at least genetically, is pure Irish. But the next, more important, question is that of whether the work is in fact meaningless to the Indians. The only possible way

¹Robert Sencourt, India in English Literature (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1923), pp. 254-55.

to answer that was to do a survey of works about Kipling by Indian critics. Kanatur Bhaskara Rao, a Hindu, says Kipling has

an awareness of what was deep and fundamental in Indian life. . . . Kim expresses the Indian synthesis Kipling must be credited with understanding India, with Kim standing solidly as eloquent witness to this fact. . . . Kim can still be related to contemporary Indian life. . . . Prototypes of Kim, the Hindu street-boy, are a common feature of the Indian street. Holy men . . . still wander across the Indian subcontinent in search of peace²

Speaking for the Moslems, Shamsul Islam points out that "racial prejudice was and still is the root trouble in India." For this reason he considers that Kipling, not a member of any of the religious, social, or racial classes native to India, was better able to treat all of the classes fairly than would have been possible in a writer from any one of those groups.³ This type of treatment, Rao observes, Kipling produced in Kim, demonstrating great emotional growth and dropping most of the prejudices that had characterized his earlier work on India. Rao adds:

²Rao, pp. 155, 165.

³Islam, p. 56.

Kipling must be congratulated for showing an understanding of the native Indian mind. Three such cases can be cited: the northern Muslims, the tribal peoples, and the simple Indian women. In Kim Kipling sensed the fundamental unity of India amidst its diversity. . . . All classes and strata of Indian society are represented.⁴

In this chapter I intend to examine certain characters in *Kim* for examples of verisimilitude, again realizing as in the previous chapter that verisimilitude is only one facet of realism. The characters to be examined will be Kim himself, the lama, Mahbub Ali, and Hurree Babu.

Angus Wilson tells us a long, rambling story about one Sir Terence Rattigan's grandfather who might have been the prototype of Kim, adding that "now, if we could create a figure . . . so real, we should make him a Tota whose father . . . had deserted and whose mother . . . had died."⁵ But Rao and, astonishingly, T. S. Eliot hit on the probable truth of the origin of Kim. Rao approaches it obliquely, pointing out that judging by photographs and drawings Kipling as a child "looked like his later hero Kim."⁶ But Eliot plunges directly in:

⁴Rao, pp. 129, 98, 8, 54.

⁵Wilson, pp. 96, 67.

⁶Rao, p. 21.

Kipling is of India in a different way from any other Englishman who has written, and in a different way from that of any particular Indian, who has a race, a creed, a local habitation and, if a Hindu, a caste. He might almost be called the first citizen of India. . . . [with his] attitude of comprehensive tolerance he can accept any faiths.

Of course, that is the key. Kim is Kipling himself, Kipling as he fantasizes he might have been had he grown up wild and free in his beloved India instead of being sent at five to England.

We first see Kim sitting "in defiance of municipal orders, astride the gun Zam-Zammah on her brick platform opposite the old Ajaib-Gher--the Wonder House, as the natives call the Lahore Museum" (p. 3). The museum's curator, lovingly described but not named in the novel, was the author's father John Lockwood Kipling. Surely Kipling himself must have wished he could be a child playing on Zam-Zammah, even though he first came to Lahore as an adult.

Kim is an enchanting child, ready to drop everything that is his world to follow the lama because of nothing but

⁷Verse T. S. Eliot, Introduction to A Choice of Kipling's (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1943), p. 24.

curiosity. But is the Little Friend of All the World true to life? To Rao,

Kim typifies the true spirit of the Indian street boy, to whom the whole country is one, and all Indian roads the promise and fulfillment of a search of adventure and excitement. Kim was written in 1901, but even today one can find counterparts of Kim in any Indian city. This is the first and almost the last intimate picture of an Indian street boy.

Although Rao is wrong about the date of Kim, which was copyrighted in the United States in 1900 and must have been written prior to that time, his feeling about the authenticity of the portrait is likely to be valid.

However, the Indian street boy we first meet at thirteen proceeds unwillingly to school. The military chaplains, realizing he is the son of a former member of the regiment and the Lodge, want to send him to the Masonic orphanage, but the lama miraculously produces the three hundred rupees a year necessary to pay the boy's way to the best school in India, Saint Xavier's in Partibus at Lucknow. Perhaps the most important thing he is to learn is how to appear to be a sahib, as he already knows how to appear to be a Hindu or a Moslem.

Here, too, we have part of Kipling's own life. He went to school in England, quite as unwillingly as Kim in India, and the fact that his father, then still a poorly paid art teacher, managed to produce the money to pay his fees was not far short of the miracle by which a lama who begged for his food produced Kim's three hundred rupees a year. Kipling, too, had to learn to be a sahib, and he, too, found the learning painful. Unlike Kim, he could not spend his holidays running to the freedom of the Indian roads; we can only guess how much he must have longed for such an escape. But Stalky and Co., and the books written by his school friends, tell us that he made his own freedoms wherever he could.

But school days end. We see Kim at seventeen, doing not a man's work but two men's work. For he has his own work now; the pedigree of the white stallion that was the cover for the first message he carried is long past. He himself is formally enrolled in the Indian Ethnological Survey, the surveyor's job being used on paper to cover his real employment as a spy. But his working cover is his role as the lama's chela, and that he will remain for a while. At the end of the book they come down from the mountains together, the old man and the boy, with Kim carrying the precious documents taken from the Russians.

But as we saw in the previous chapter, he carries far more, and the burden is so great that when it is finally taken from his shoulders he collapses and sleeps for thirty-six hours.

If Kim is Kipling's fantasized self, how does this episode fit in with Kipling's real self? In Something of Myself, Kipling tells us:

So, at sixteen years and nine months . . . I found myself at Lanore the work was heavy. I represented fifty percent of the 'editorial staff' of the one daily paper of the Punjab. . . . And a daily paper comes out every day even though fifty percent of the staff have fever. . . . I never worked less than ten hours and seldom more than fifteen per diem; and as our paper came out in the evening did not see the midday sun except on Sunday. I had fever too, regular and persistent, to which I added for a while chronic dysentery. Yet I discovered that a man can work with a temperature of 104, even though next day he has to ask the office who wrote the article. . . . One cut-and-come-again affliction was an accursed Muscovite paper, the Novoye Vremya, written in French which, for weeks and weeks, published the war diaries of Alikhainoff, a Russian General (Something, pp. 45, 63)

Kipling had to translate the Muscovite paper and write summaries which his paper then printed.

There we have it all, the boy carrying the man's load (or two men's loads, when as often happened editor Stephen Wheeler was out with fever), the overwork and the sickness,

even the Russian papers. But how did Kipling manage to translate life as he really lived it into the different, but related and totally possible, life of Kim? Again it is T. S. Eliot who provides the answer, in commenting that Kipling possessed "an exceptional sensitiveness to environment . . . a remoteness as of an alarmingly intelligent visitor from another planet."⁹ He understands and appreciates because he is not personally involved. This stance, of course, is that very objectivity which goes to make the best realism, given a feeling of subjectivity because the story is presented by a man who has been, not in the same situation, but in the same type of situation.

Eliot further develops the idea: "There are two strata in Kipling's appreciation of India, the stratum of the child and that of the young man." The child who left India at five uncomprehendingly and strongly "loved the country and its people." At sixteen he came back, trained and ready to examine and study, but as Eliot further points out, "One is not very loving between seventeen and twenty-four."¹⁰ At thirty-two Kipling was able to synthesize the impressions of the loving child and those of the dispassionately observing young man, to produce Kim, a "self" who loves

⁹Eliot, p. 23.

and comprehends India in a way that Kipling was able to do only after he had left India forever.

Other than Kim, the most important character in the novel is the old lama. He enters the book as an unusual person even for India. He is

such a man as Kim, who thought he knew all castes, had never seen. He was nearly six feet high, dressed in fold upon fold of dingy stuff like horse-blanketing, and not one fold of it could Kim refer to any known trade or profession. At his belt hung a long open-work iron pencease and a wooden rosary such as holy men wear. On his head was a gigantic sort of tam-o'-shanter. His face was yellow and wrinkled, like that of Fook Shing, the Chinese bootmaker in the bazar. His eyes turned up at the corners and looked like little slits of onyx. (p. 7)

Teshoo Lama is a Buddhist from Suchzen Lamassery in Tibet. In some ways he is an elderly child, for he trusts the world, but his very trust makes the evil world trustworthy for him, and his love and wisdom transcend caste, creed, and race. The boy Kim follows him across India out of self-serving curiosity; the man Kim loves and serves him.

After they come down from the mountains, toward the end of the book, the lama asks, "Chela, hast thou never a wish to leave me?" Kipling tells us that

Kim thought of the oilskin packet and the books in the food-bag. If some one duly authorised would only take

delivery of them the Great Game might play itself for ought he then cared 'No,' he said almost sternly, 'I am not a dog or a snake to bite when I have learned to love.' (p. 324)

Of all the major characters in Kim, the lama is the only one whose origin in fact is almost completely unknown. Kipling is known to have had in his possession "an ironwork pencase of ancient Chinese design that recalls an incident in Kim,"¹¹ and of course the novel itself tells us that Kipling's father, as museum curator, possessed photographs of Suchzen Lamassery and a marvelous series of steles about the Buddha. But these facts alone could not have created Teshoo Lama.

In an article title Nirad Chaudhuri, a Bengali Hindu, calls Kim "The Finest Story about India--in English," pointing it out as "the product of Kipling's vision of a much bigger India, a vision whose profundity we Indians would be hard put to it to match even in an Indian language, not to speak of English." Chaudhuri considers the accuracy of the portrait of the lama to be one of the most important elements of the vision.¹² Shamsul Islam, also seeking the origins of

¹¹Cohen, p. 61.

¹²Chaudhuri, p. 30.

fictitious characters, points out that Kipling "acquainted himself with people from almost all walks of life . . . including 'Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and members of the Arya and Brahmo Smah.'" ¹³ But Islam could not locate any direct evidence of any meeting between Kipling and a Buddhist lama from Tibet.

Rao presents the most likely answer to the problem of the source of the lama. Noting that "[h]oly men . . . still wander across the Indian subcontinent . . . ," he explains that the use of a Buddhist was almost surely deliberate. As Buddhism began in India, it was logical that a devout Buddhist would make a religious pilgrimage to India. But as Buddhism is almost extinct in India, leaving Hinduism and Islam as the predominant religions, the use of a religious outsider as a key character could demonstrate the

truly religious spirit of brotherhood and charity [which] binds the people together and generates a spirit of tolerance, which shows the fundamental unity of India despite its apparent diversity. ¹⁴

In fact, Rao continues, "The imperishable quality of the

¹³Islam, p. 21.

¹⁴Rao, p. 183.

novel lies in exploration of the topic of religion and its abiding influence on the people of India."¹⁵ That topic was explored almost totally by the use of the lama and his interactions with those around him. Clearly, this portrait is accepted not only as valid but also as highly important by Indian critics.

If the lama's origin is obscure, that of Mahbub Ali is well known indeed. MacMunn says flatly that Mahbub was a real person whose real name was Mahbub Ali and whose descendants live in the area of Lahore to this day. His

father was an honourable Kabuli horsethief in a gentlemanly way, who had espoused the British fortunes in 1839 in the "great adventure" of those days, which was then called the "great game", [sic] no less an undertaking than the crossing of the foreign Punjab and the penetration of Afghanistan.

When the British left the land, then he left the land too, lest a halter be his guerdon and six feet of Afghan soil his patrimony. Mahbub Ali . . . and his sons were horse-dealers of Lahore pure and simple,¹⁶ and purveyed polo ponies to all and sundry

But how could Kipling have known the startling career of the father of the Lahore horse-dealer? Actually, he is

¹⁵Rao, p. 183.

¹⁶George Fletcher MacMunn, Rudyard Kipling: Craftsman (London: R. Hale, 1938), pp. 64-65.

likely to have known from two points of view. Angus Wilson points out that as a reporter Kipling came in frequent contact with "Mahbub Ali, the horse-dealer, a real live disreputable acquaintance."¹⁶ Given Kipling's curiosity and his delight in drawing people out, surely he would have asked questions; and given the Afghan tendency to brag, surely Mahbub would have been delighted to answer. But it is possible that he may have already known much of the tale. For he had spent his school holidays as a paying guest of three old ladies in England who possessed a most unlikely treasure. Braddy describes it: "During his holidays at the house of the three old ladies he had read the military dispatches sent from India by Arthur Wellesley" ¹⁷ The dispatches probably would not have singled out by name one Afghan spy, but with the perspective Kipling gained from reading the dispatches, it is probable that he understood the significance of the action far better than Mahbub did himself.

The portrait of Mahbub is a fascinating one: "the big burly Afghan, his beard died scarlet with lime" (p. 23) is a shrewd espionage agent, who after disposing of the

¹⁶Wilson, p. 105.

¹⁷Braddy, p. 70.

seriously incriminating document by giving it to Kim stuffed inside a piece of bread, proceeds to grow "wonderfully drunk" (p. 29) in order to allow himself to be searched by a whore in the service of those who suspect he is the spy he truly is:

When Mahbub woke, the Flower talked to him severely on the win of drunkenness. Asiatics do not wink when they have outmanoeuvred an enemy, but as Mahbub Ali cleared his throat, tightened his belt, and staggered forth under the early morning stars, he came very near to it. (p. 31)

Kipling is not so lost in his own admiration for the spy as to fail to realize how Mahbub would look to one who did not know him. That he tells us by letting him be seen through the eyes of an English drummer-boy who, after bullying Kim for days,

returned alone, weeping, with news that young O'Hara, to whom he had been doing nothing in particular, had hailed a scarlet-bearded nigger on horseback, that the nigger had then and there laid into him with a peculiarly adhesive quirt, picked up young O'Hara, and borne him off at full gallop. (p. 128)

¹⁷Braddy, p. 70.

Rao says Mahbub "has been drawn with a sureness of touch born out of Kipling's long admiration for those fighting men of the Indian frontier."¹⁸ But surely he was drawn, too, out of a real admiration for a wily and courageous spy, and out of a wry understanding of the fact that for a cover story to work the person who works under cover must not look like what he is. The cover stories change with the needs of the date and the place, but the minds that can do the work stay the same throughout the ages. Rao, Wilson, and MacMunn agree that Mahbub is a real Afghan horse-trader. It is clear that Mahbub knows how to work as a spy. Wherever and however Kipling gained such knowledge, he surely and definitely did possess at least the theory of how such work is done.

In one way Babu Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, Mahbub Ali's unlikely co-worker, is the most important person in the novel, not for his significance to the plot, although that is major, but for his significance to Rudyard Kipling. For the Babu (a term that means a minor civil servant) is a Bengali. Kipling was often accused of having a prejudice against Bengalis; and so obviously true was the accusation

¹⁸Rao, p. 153.

that he never denied it. Therefore, if this portrait is a fair and accurate one, not only does it speak strongly for the realism of the novel, but also it tells of a real effort on Kipling's part to overcome his prejudices to write this book.

Certainly the Babu's introduction is not prepossessing. There "entered a hulking, obese Babu whose stockinged legs shook with fat . . . " (p. 192). But moments later Lurgan Sahib tells Kim:

From time to time, God causes men to be born . . . who have a lust to go abroad at the risk of their lives and discover news. . . . These souls are very few; and of these few, not more than ten are of the best. Among these ten I count the Babu, and that is curious. How great therefore and desirable must be a business that brazens the heart of a Bengali! (p. 192)

The Babu, an M.A. of Calcutta University with a taste for Wordsworth, is carried on the records of the Ethnological Survey as a surveyor, but he is carried on other government records as R.17. He is "an intensely curious man who likes better to collect manners and customs information. . . . He wants to be made a member of the Royal Society by taking ethnological notes." But Colonel Creighton, his superior officer, shares that interest. Kipling tells us that Creighton "smiled, and thought the better of Hurree Babu,

Babu, moved by like desires" (pp. 209-10).

Hurree Babu thoroughly enjoys the role his cover story puts him in: "I am only Babu showing off my English to you. All we Babus talk English to show off." Aware of the Bengali reputation for cowardice, he laughs at it and at himself: "And all-so I am Bengali--a fearful man. . . . I remember once they wanted to cut off my head on the road to Lhasa. . . . I sat down and cried . . . anticipating Chinese torture." But after making an end of sitting down and crying, he then got up and proceeded to go about his business, just as he always does. Kim thinks: "Full-fleshed, heavy-haunched, bull-necked, and deep-voiced, he did not look like 'a fearful man'" (pp. 219, 267-68).

When someone must lure the Russians into indiscretion, Hurree accepts the task. The ensuing action is presented lightly, as the jest Hurree would later tell to Mahbub and Lurgan, and the reader must read into it the bone-chilling terror it would have been for Hurree as it happened, as for his life and his country he must remain sober and feign intoxication:

They gave him a glass of whitish fluid like to gin, and then more. . . . He became thickly treasonous, and spoke in terms of sweeping indecency of a Government which had forced upon him a white man's education and neglected to supply him with a white man's salary.

He babbled tales of oppression and wrong till the tears ran down his cheeks for the miseries of his land. Then he staggered off, singing love-songs of Lower Bengal, and collapsed upon a wet tree-trunk. Never was so unfortunate a product of English rule in India more unhappily thrust upon by aliens. . . .

When he presented himself again he was racked with a headache--penitent, and volubly afraid that in his drunkenness he might have been indiscreet. He loved the British Government--it was the source of all prosperity and honour. . . . Upon this the men began to deride him . . . till step by step . . . the poor Babu was beaten out of his defences and forced to speak--truth! When Lurgan was told the tale later, he mourned aloud that he could not have been in the place (pp. 284-85)

This description is an authentic portrait of a person working under cover. The simple fact, already mentioned in Chapter Two, is that intelligence work is fun; the most terrifying moments are remembered later with the most laughter. Those who do the work might have, usually do have, thoughts of service and patriotism, but they are able to do the work because it is fun. Like Mahbub Ali, Hurree Babu is a real spy. But is he a real Bengali?

Donald Pizer says that the Babu "is India in transition" ¹⁹ But Pizer is not a Bengali. Kanatur Rao, a Bengali, is perfectly aware of Kipling's prejudice against Bengalis, and he objects to its frequent inclusion

¹⁹Pizer, p. 189.

in other works. But of the portrait of Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, he says there is "realism, humor, and satire . . . but no venomous racial prejudice. . . . There is a delightful realism in Babu's speech The Babu is comical, but interesting and true to life."²⁰ The Bengali Babu, then, is accepted by a Bengali critic as an accurate portrait.

Each major character has been examined individually. Of the main characters, the lama alone is exactly what he says he is. The Indian critics say he is a realistic figure and I, having no first-hand knowledge of Buddhist lamas, must accept their opinions as valid. As for the other three main characters, they must be considered both as an Afghan horsetrader, an Indian street boy, and a Bengali civil servant, and as three persons working under cover. Those who know Afghan horsetraders, Indian street boys, and Bengali civil servants say those portraits are authentic. Their stratagems and behavior are clearly authentic for people working under cover. As for the minor characters in the book, critical opinions agree that, with the exception of the clumsy Russian spies (a real mistake; Kipling should have realized "their" spies have to be as shrewd as "our" spies), the portraits are realistic.

The theme and plot, as we have already said, also work together to create verisimilitude. But the factor of

verisimilitude, shown in plot, theme, and character, is only one part of literary realism. The other factors now need to be re-examined in the light of the total definition of realism synthesized in Chapter One.

CHAPTER IV

Kipling's American Style of Realism

Angus Wilson, writing in The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling, is not convinced that Kipling was a deliberate realist. Rather, he comments that Kipling "was one of those novelists who needed a mass of 'real' bricks before he could create his castles in the air."¹ Philip Mason agrees, quoting Bonamy Dobrée as saying that Kipling is "romantic by impulse" That comment scarcely needs to be made, as Kipling himself admitted the impulse many times, but the quotation continues, " . . . [t]hen he tries his romance seven times in the fire of actuality" ²

This statement brings us back full circle to Ioan Williams's definition of "Nineteenth Century Realist fiction in England" as a "form of Romantic art" ³ Elliot

¹Wilson, p. 103.

²Philip Mason, Kipling: The Glass, the Shadow, and the Fire (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 19.

³Williams, p. xii.

Gilbert flatly calls Kipling a Romanticist, but then he qualifies the term by referring to the "romance of the here and now."⁴ Kanatur Rao and Walter Hart, both of whom consider Kipling a realist, also refer to his constant use of the "here and now,"⁵ which of course is a phrase commonly used in defining realism. But part of the problem, Gilbert observes, is that Kipling was fully conscious of the fact that his "here and now" would be his readers' "long-ago and far away." He makes deliberate and conscious use of exoticism, Gilbert insists, even though that particular exoticism is familiar to him.⁶

Part of the confusion that causes some critics to call Kipling a realist, and others, a romanticist, on the basis of the same evidence, lies in the confusion of definitions of realism. Donald Pizer insists that "realism does not probe the inner reaches of life,"⁷ an insistence somewhat unexpected to readers of American realism, which does just

⁴Gilbert, p. 189.

⁵Hart, p. 6; Rao, p. 16.

⁶Gilbert, p. 191.

⁷Pizer, p. 33.

what Pizer says realism does not do. J. P. Stern, who considers Kipling a realist, does so hedgingly, commenting, "Realism designates a creative attention to the visible rather than the invisible" ⁸ Kipling, as Hart rightly points out, "shares the emotions of his characters: he grieves with them, laughs with them" ⁹ If realism must avoid emotion then Kipling cannot be considered a realist, for he deals heavily in emotion. But Pizer proceeds to differentiate between European realism and American realism, by clarifying his early questionable statement: "This faith in the life of action, instinct, and emotion continues as a central force in the modern American novel" ¹⁰

Kipling never, so far as I have been able to discover, commented directly on realism. What he did say is that

half of literature is placing fields that aren't there and the rest of it is recording how every conceivable kind of ball that can be bowled by the Fates or life or circumstances has, at one time or another, been bowled at some wretched or happy man, and how he has played it. (Book of Words, pp. 86-87)

⁸Stern, p. 171.

⁹Hart, p. 46.

¹⁰Pizer, p. 100.

Although that statement seems to relate to realism, it is important to remember that Kipling loved fantasy and romantic writing. This fact is demonstrated by his letters to H. Rider Haggard, which are extravagant in their praise of that writer's most bizarre fantasies; on at least two occasions Kipling sat down with Rider Haggard to plan a novel for the latter to write. But Kipling himself was totally incapable of writing fantasy. Even his angels and devils, when he writes about them, are prosaically weighed down with government-style red tape. He perceived this situation as a weakness; we sense that he dearly wanted to write fantasy. But to critics such as Angus Wilson, that self-perceived weakness is a strength that "comes . . . from the testing of the dream with greater or lesser injections of the real world" Wilson goes on to say that Kipling uses his dreams to "test his capacity to bear reality." The odd phrase "bear reality" was chosen with care. Gilbert points out that "for Kipling, life is always the consciousness of pain . . . reality is often brutal."¹¹

In Kim this aspect of brutality is often visible. But

¹¹Wilson, p. 31; Gilbert, pp. 162, 185.

as fantasy also can be brutal, the presence of this factor cannot be taken as conclusive proof that a work is realistic. Bearing in mind the working definition of realism derived from the assorted definitions examined, and also bearing in mind the examination of the novel from the aspects of character, theme, and plot, how does Kim relate to the definition of realism?

The working definition of realism includes verisimilitude of detail. This, of course, is a requirement for any definition of realism; indeed for the popular definition, as opposed to any literary definition, it is the only requirement.

The second criterion is that of a norm of experience, but if it is true that Kipling is working in the American mode of realism, that norm may include a local colorist picture of the characters and their ambiance as well as a universal one. Third, only if Kipling is working in the American mode will we find the objectivity of the European realist tempered by a degree of subjectivity.

The importance of verisimilitude of detail can easily be overemphasized. As Stern points out, literary realism is not total realism, and complete accuracy is more likely

to appear boring than realistic.¹² But nonetheless, verisimilitude must be present. We have examined character, plot, and theme for evidence of this factor and found it present in all. Of course, setting in Kipling's work is of major importance. Is the setting of Kim one of verisimilitude? Gilbert points out that Kipling, in working with exoticism, accurately realized that "the real exoticism of India" is "a thoroughly unromantic exoticism, product of crowded houses, cheap life, and hopelessly complex relationships . . . ,"¹³ Andrew Lang comments that "when we have lost India, . . . future generations will learn from Mr. Kipling's work what India was under English sway."¹⁴

Lang's opinion is borne out by Stanley Wolpert, who spent years in India on a Ford Foundation grant to do research for his history of India. Astonishingly, on page after page, he finds it necessary, in order to give a completely accurate picture of what he is describing, to quote from or refer to Kipling. In other areas, his own

¹² Stein, p. 98.

¹³ Gilbert, p. 70.

¹⁴ Andrew Lang, "Mr. Kipling's Stories," in Elliot L. Gilbert, Kipling and the Critics, (New York: New York University Press, 1965), pp. 1-2.

comments tend to support Kipling; for example, he cites a Russian attempt to foment rebellion on the Indian-Afghan border.¹⁵

Historians demonstrate Kipling's historical accuracy, but there are other types of accuracy. Of the emotional verisimilitude of Kipling's work, George Orwell, himself a realist and not at all an admirer of Kipling's political views, comments, "Like most people capable of writing battle poetry, Kipling had never been in battle,"¹⁶ but his vision of war is realistic. He knows that bullets hurt, that under fire everyone is terrified . . . ,"¹⁷ And he knows that spies love their play-acting even in the face of fear, and that pretending to be drunk often helps although actually being drunk is likely to be suicidal.

It is impossible to guess how Kipling understands experiences he had never experienced; we must postulate a tremendous empathy as well as a tremendous ability to get

¹⁵ Stanley Wolpert, A New History of India (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 270.

¹⁶ Orwell was not correct. Kipling did see action in the Boer War as a war correspondent and ex officio governmental spokesman. However, it is true that most of his battle poetry was written prior to that time.

¹⁷ George Orwell, "Rudyard Kipling," in his Dickens, Dali and Others (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1946), rpt. in Kipling and the Critics, Elliot L. Gilbert, ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 81.

people to talk about themselves and their works. But what is certain is that he does comprehend these experiences, and he makes his readers comprehend them. That comprehension creates verisimilitude by providing a picture of life that feels, as well as looks and sounds, authentic.

The second criterion for realism is that of "a norm of experience." To judge from the definitions of realism studied, it appears that this norm may be presented in one of three different ways. The European-style realist presents a universal norm with only that amount of local color necessary to make the story intelligible. The "local colorist" who is a minor realist rather than a major one may do a splendid job of presenting a story about life in his own locale,¹⁷ but he will miss, even as he tries to present, most of the universality that could exist in that same story. The American-style major realist uses local color strongly and capably, but he does so in such a manner as to capture and present the universal also.

Clearly, Kipling uses local color; Rao suggests that in some ways he is in fact a local colorist for only "one region in India, the northern part."¹⁸ This fact alone sets him apart from the mainstream of European realism, and

¹⁸Rao, p. 30.

particularly of English realism; as Walter Myers suggests, environment is not extremely important in English realism.¹⁹ This, of course, is not meant to imply that local color is never used in England, Thomas Hardy certainly being a case in point, but rather to observe that local color is not a part of the mainstream of English realism.

American realism, however, according to Halford Luccock, catches "the actual speech and thought of a people" ²⁰ The montage effect (Kipling would call it the panoramic view) is, according to Alan Spiegel, "an essentially American tradition, the tradition of Melville and Whitman" ²¹ Yet both of these techniques are particularly significant in Kipling's writing in general, and in Kim in particular. Critic after critic comments on his authentic dialogue, Falls observing, "There was a pleasant thrill in reading the work of a man who was not afraid to use the language such as real men used." ²² The Biblical-sounding thee's and thou's in Kim are simply a translation from another

¹⁹Myers, p. 7.

²⁰Halford E. Luccock, American Mirror: Social, Ethical and Religious Aspects of American Literature 1930-1940 (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1940), p. 131.

²¹Alan Spiegel, Fiction and the Camera Eye: Visual Consciousness in Film and the Modern Novel (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), p. 173.

²²Falls, p. 16.

comments that

native Indians and . . . Englishmen . . . approached life from very different directions and with very different sorts of preparation, but their responsibility to themselves was the same, and the failure of one would have been of exactly the same magnitude as the failure of the others. It is perhaps for this reason that there are no heroes or villains in Kipling's²⁵ best work . . . no moral aristocrats

Certainly the experience of most of Kipling's readers, whether they are Indian, English, or American, does not include espionage or the Grand Trunk Road. But any sane and normal life does include a necessity for work, self-discipline, and individuality. It does include responsibility; and it does include a necessity for re-evaluating experiences and people in the light of maturity. The universal norm expressed in Kim, then, is that of the growth from childhood to maturity with its concomitant changes in attitude. Kim is, in some important ways, a "rite of passage" novel without the dreary indulgence in autobiographical detail that generally mars such novels; that practice Kipling had already disposed of in The Light that

²⁵Gilbert, pp. 197-98.

language, and native speakers of that language call the translations accurate. Rao notes in the speech of Hurree Babu a "delightful realism."²³ And, of course, Kipling's panoramic view of the Grand Trunk Road is so vivid and so authentic that more than one critic has insisted that was what the whole book really was all about.

Clearly, then, the picture given in Kim is realistic of itself, in character, plot, theme, action, and ambience. It contains sufficient local color to indicate an indebtedness to the American school of realism. But is it sufficiently universal to fit the criterion of a "norm" of experience? C. S. Lewis refers to Kipling as the poet of work, . . . the poet of discipline." Bonamy Dobrée says it is individuality "which alone can play the Great Game of actuality."²⁴ Work, discipline, and individuality are some of the universals Kipling examines in Kim, and by showing individuals as individuals Kipling makes more apparent the universality of individual experience. Gilbert points out a major means by which Kim demonstrates the universal. Referring to Kim's having been taught the virtue of action, and the lama, the virtue of abstaining from action, he

²³Rao, p. 151.

²⁴C. S. Lewis, "Kipling's World," p. 102, and Bonamy Dobrée, "Rudyard Kipling," p. 41, both in Elliot L. Gilbert, Kipling and the Critics (New York: New York University Press, 1965).

Failed. Consequently, the second criterion, that of a "norm of experience," clearly is met, and the universality of the norm is strongly tinted with local color.

The third criterion, a "degree of subjectivity" tempering the objectivity that is usually considered the hallmark of realism, is present only if Kipling's realism is in fact in the American mode. Does Kim have this type of subjectivity? An early scene is helpful here. As the children play on Zam-Zammah in the first chapter, Kipling writes:

"Let me up!" shrilled little Chota Lal in his gilt-embroidered cap. His father was worth perhaps half a million sterling, but India is the only democratic land in the world. (p. 7)

The subjective opinion there given may be questioned on half a dozen grounds, but what cannot be questioned is the obvious fact that it is subjective. Again, the book ends with subjectivity, in this quotation from the last chapter:

The ground was good clean dust--no new herbage that, living, is half-way to death already, but the hopeful dust that holds the seeds of all life. . . . The many-rooted tree above him, and even the dead man-handled wood beside him knew what he sought, as he himself did not know. (p. 338)

These are only two examples which serve to support the contention that the third criterion does indeed apply to Kim. Other subjective elements appear throughout the book.

All three criteria for realism clearly are present in the novel, and Kipling's indebtedness to the nineteenth-century American realists and local colorists is clearly demonstrated. Moreover, the contention that Kipling served as a transition between the nineteenth-century realistic movement in America, which came to a close as the century closed, and the twentieth-century realists is evidenced by the fact that later American realists were indebted to him. Donald Pizer, writing not on Kipling but on realism, says:

The best novelist . . . was he who was primitivistic in content and theme, sophisticated in form. . . . This faith in the life of action, instinct, and emotion continues as a central force in the modern American novel, as in the work of Faulkner, Hemingway, and Steinbeck.²⁶

Not really a part of the realistic movement per se because of the time in which they worked, Hemingway, Faulkner,

²⁶Pizer, p. 106.

Wolfe, and Steinbeck are nonetheless considered major realists. Three of the four acknowledge a debt to Kipling.

Turnbull's massive two-volume biography of Thomas Wolfe quotes Wolfe as saying, in a letter to a friend, that he considered Kipling a genius and a writer to be studied because of "the colossal and unquenchable energy which generates his . . . work." He considered much of Kipling's work worth memorizing, for its strength and vitality.²⁷ Faulkner, like Wolfe, considered Kipling's verse important; his own early verse echoes Kipling, and his biographers note clear indications that he had not only read, but actually studied, Kipling's work. Eventually he became so conscious of his wholesale borrowing from Kipling that he quit writing a series of well-paid stories he was selling to the Post with the terse explanation that they came across as "[t]hird-rate Kipling."²⁸

Hemingway also wrote his first work in deliberate imitation of Kipling, at times going to the length of copying the meter and rhyme-scheme of verses. Later after

²⁷Andrew Turnbull, Thomas Wolfe (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), pp. 22, 64.

²⁸Joseph Blotner, Faulkner: A Biography (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 300, 323, 901.

his terse machine-gun style evolved widely away from the rounded sentences the earlier writer tended to use, some resemblances remained. As Baker quotes Edmond Wilson as saying, Hemingway and Kipling "shared certain assumptions about society."²⁹ Throughout his life, whenever Hemingway referred would-be writers seeking advice to a list of authors he considered required reading, he placed Kipling predominant on that list.³⁰

From the foregoing data, it appears that Kipling was a pioneer in realism, in that his work served as a transition between the nineteenth-century realists and the twentieth-century realists. That statement has been supported by providing a working definition of realism and examining Kipling's exposure to the idea of realism. With that definition provided and that examination completed, his major novel, Kim, was examined for its realistic or non-realistic effect. Finally, those effects were discussed in terms of the definitions provided, and Kipling's effect on more recent American realists was studied.

One factor remains to be discussed; that is the matter of whether Kipling's own goals for his work have been met.

²⁹Carlos Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 7.

³⁰Baker, pp. 12, 109, 175-76.

"There is no surer guide . . . " Kipling once told reporters, "than the determination to tell the truth."³¹ Presumably that determination, which is indicative of a strong desire to write realistically, served as Kipling's own guide in his writing. Did he indeed tell the truth?

One interesting reply to that question is provided by Randall Jarrell, who insisted Kipling was often misunderstood by people who had been where he had been but, due to their own lack of observation, had failed to see what Kipling saw. It was Kipling, according to Jarrell, who was most often correct in these confrontations.³²

Another answer was provided by Richard Le Gallienne, who commented, in 1919, "From first to last the god he has served, with a prayerful devotion . . . has been the God of Things as They Are."³³ Michael Edwards concurs almost word

³³Richard Le Gallienne, "Rudyard Kipling's Place in Literature," Munsey's Magazine, 1919; rpt. in Around the World with Kipling (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1926), p. 49.

³¹Cooper, p. 25.

³²Randall Jarrell, "On Preparing to Read Kipling," in Elliot L. Gilbert, Kipling and the Critics (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 141.

for word: "Kipling's intense sense of responsibility would not permit him to deform reality. His honesty compelled him to show Things As They Are."³⁴

Undeniably, Kipling had his own style of writing. It was derived in part from a love of romance coupled with a total inability to write without something real to start from, but it was derived also from a driving need to portray life as it really is lived. He succeeded in fulfilling that need, and by that success he created his own form of realism, one that was based on the past and anticipated the future.

³⁴Michael Edwards, "Oh to Meet an Army Man"; Kipling and the Soldiers," in The Age of Kipling, John J. Gross, comp. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 42.

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