

UNSETTLING WHITENESS: KIPLING'S BOERS AND THE CASE FOR A
WHITE SUBALTERNITY

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ABSTRACT

The 'Bard of Empire' Rudyard Kipling's Boer War (or South African War) writing has largely been dismissed as jingoism. Yet these texts may well have something to contribute both to existing discourses around colonialism, as well as to our understanding of South Africa's deeply intertwined racial and political history. While his Indian writing is also informed by an imperial ideology, Kipling's South African writing is more overtly dogged by imperial contradictions and a lack of thematic and narrative clarity. As such, his Indian writing provides a useful touch-point throughout this thesis. Of particular interest here is the seeming tension between Kipling's representations of the Boers as both 'degenerate' and as 'white'. Broadly, in the course of this thesis this tension is approached in two ways. This first of these considers the motivating forces behind Kipling's racialization of the Boers, specifically in terms of the anxieties provoked by the colonisation of another 'white' race. As such, this anxiety is read as stemming largely from a perceived cultural transgression on the part of the Boers - an inversion of the dynamic that typifies many of Kipling's Indian texts. Following this, some of the rhetorical devices by which Kipling (re)enforces notions of 'white loyalty' and, more broadly, a strict visually marked racial hierarchy, are considered. In so doing, some of Kipling's Boers are read as, somewhat surprisingly, representing a silenced subaltern voice who are made to speak exclusively in support of the empire. Through the commingling of these representations Kipling seems to participate in a discursive conflict over the conception of whiteness both within the empire and South Africa.

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INTRODUCTION

... there is no need to talk of 'loyalty' among white men. That is one of the things we all take for granted – because the Empire is Us – We ourselves; and for the White Man to explain that he is loyal is about as unnecessary as for a respectable woman to volunteer the fact that she is chaste... I was born in Bombay but it has never occurred to me to say that I am 'loyal,' because, like you, I am a white man and – one can't step out of one's skin.¹

This extract is taken from a letter Rudyard Kipling wrote some two years before the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War (or South African War: 1899-1902). What is most immediately striking about it is Kipling's desire to essentialise whiteness: his candid conjunction of 'whiteness' and 'loyalty'. Yet Kipling's excessive confidence seems to belie an anxiety about his claim. "Fixity," Homi Bhabha argues,

as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation [...] Likewise the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that is anxiously

¹ *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling, Vol II: 1890-1899*, ed. Thomas Pinney (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1990), 309.

repeated... as if [it] can never really, in discourse, be proved.²

There is certainly something of this rhetorical movement in Kipling's phrasing: the circularity between the assertion that, as a white man, it is unnecessary for him to *say* that he is loyal, while of course simultaneously stating that he *is* loyal; the vacillation between what is 'in place' and what must be 'anxiously repeated'. As Bhabha points out, this dynamic is one of the key features of colonial discourse: the pronouncement that prescribes whilst purporting to describe. Equally interesting is Kipling's "chaste" image of whiteness as unadulterated and pure, and by inversion, of 'rebelliousness' as tainted and other. Yet, as Bhabha goes on to point out, race, "as a signifier of discrimination, must be processed as visible."³ It is this contingency that leaves Kipling's stereotyping of white 'loyalty' and 'superiority' 'unanchored', as it were, and therefore opens it up to the possibility of rupture simply through the presence of non-normative whites.

The events and discourses of the war would present just such a challenge to Kipling's (and imperialism's) conceptions of both white 'loyalty' and 'purity'. As in other colonial contexts, race was again invoked as a justification for British antagonism towards the white Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, with the Boers being characterised as both ethically and ethnically degenerate.⁴ Yet set against

² Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question", in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge Classics, 2010), 94-95. 'Race' here can also be understood to be determined by factors beyond the visual, such as cultural or national identity. However, given the context of the war and Kipling's impulse to include other nations within the 'white race' (including the Boers), I use it here in its limited sense, which implies an invisibility of difference between Boer and Briton.

³ Bhabha, *Other Question*, 113.

⁴ In the course of this thesis I refer variously to the Boer, Dutch, Republican and Afrikaner. By "Boer" I mean to denote the broad cultural group – that is, all people in South Africa of Dutch descent at the time of the South African War. "Dutch" and "Republican" refer respectively to Boers from the Cape Colony and the Boer Republics. The term "Afrikaner" came into popular use only after the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and I use it in this

this was the impulse evidenced in Kipling's letter: to reinforce a visually based racial hierarchy through the representation of white 'rebel' voices as treacherous and inauthentic. As such, Kipling's South African writing can be read as participating in a discursive contestation over what it means to be white, both within the empire and South Africa. It is this tension in Kipling's Boer War writing which I take up in this thesis: the need to characterise the Boers as degenerate being repeatedly set against the desire to read race as an essentialism; the 'anxious repetition' of white 'loyalty' and 'superiority'.

In doing so I have in mind something of the problematic that Richard Dyer (1988) outlines in reference to what was then the newly emerging field of Whiteness Studies. As Dyer argues,

Looking with such passion and single-mindedness at non-dominant groups has had the effect of reproducing the sense of oddness, differentness, exceptionality of these groups, the feeling that they are departures from the norm. Meanwhile the norm has carried on as if it is the natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being human.⁵

As such what I propose here is to return to a position at which (albeit in a limited sense) a meaning of whiteness is contested in such a way that it problematises its representation, reflection, or perpetuation: to a context that seems to unsettle the appearance of white 'superiority' as "natural" or fixed. Similarly, Melissa Steyn argues that, "Taking whiteness as an object of study is seen as a critical move in race studies" because it

contemporary sense. The variation of terms is also an indication of the degree of uncertainty surrounding the cultural identity of the Boers at the time of the South African War.

⁵ Cited in Melissa Steyn, "White Talk': White South Africans and the Management of Diasporic Whiteness", in *Postcolonial Whiteness: a Critical Reader on Race and Empire*, ed. Alfred J. López (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 120-121.

“redirect[s] the academic gaze [away from] the way in which the centre constructs the margins, to the way in which the centre constructs itself.”⁶ What I proposed here then essentially incorporates both of these movements: to examine the ways in which whiteness was constituted by imperialism’s construction of the white margins. Given this there are two aspects I focus on: the first has to do with the anxieties which motivated the management of white subjectivity, and the second with the ways in which this management played out.

As Steyn and Dyer rightly point out, a shifting of focus to whiteness itself is particularly important because it functions to denaturalise implicit white ‘superiority’: because it unsettles whiteness itself as a stable, homogenous and silently privileged space. Some of the more recent critical debates on the position of whites in South Africa have similarly gestured towards the importance of de-essentializing whiteness. Leon De Kock for example suggests that it seems that “over the past thirty or so years in progressive scholarship in and about South Africa, whiteness ha[s] become so deligitimised by virtue of its complicity with apartheid that it ha[s] often been rendered ‘blank’”, with the result that it has been treated as “a site of unredeemed racism and assumed uniformity.”⁷ Whiteness has been, and continues to be, a far more fraught, contested and nuanced space than such assumptions suggest, but these contestations, as well as their elision from history, have also ensured its perpetuation as a site of privilege. Drawing out the modes and contexts of these contestations, I think, will therefore contribute to the process of rendering whiteness visible.⁸ Given South Africa’s history, not to mention the position of whites in post-apartheid South Africa, a more specific

⁶ Ibid., 120.

⁷ Leon De Kock, “Blanc de blanc: Whiteness studies – a South African connection?”, *Journal of Literary Studies* 22.1-2 (2006), 175-176.

⁸ Steyn rightly points out that, “The particular historical and political configuration in South Africa has meant that whites have never experienced their whiteness and the advantage it afforded them as invisible”, but goes on to suggest that, “What *was* taken for granted, however, was the “naturalness” of being thus privileged” (“White Talk”, 122). Rendering whiteness visible in South Africa thus has more to do with denaturalization of whiteness in this broader ‘privileged’ sense.

consideration of the origins of South African whiteness is therefore I think especially prescient.

More specifically, the treatment of race as an essentialism implies an obvious temporal dimension which has been the focus of a great deal of recent South African literature. Authors like J.M Coetzee, Rian Malan, Nadine Gordimer and Antjie Krog, to name a few of the most prominent, have all in various ways entered into this discourse through narratives which interrogate what it means for white South Africans to take responsibility for their past. In a well-known anecdote about his encounter with a white child, Frantz Fanon speaks to the abjection of being reduced to a racial essentialism. In the boy's exclamation - "*Maman*, look, a Negro; I'm scared!" - the black man, Fanon explains, is reduced to little more than a pigmented surface and thereby made responsible for a stereotyped racial history: "I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors... I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave ships..."⁹ It is this self-same construction of whiteness as an essentialism which I am interested in here, not of course in the same ways as Fanon but rather, and more simply, in terms of how the meaning of South African whiteness was managed and naturalised (perhaps in both the senses of the word).

To speak of race in South Africa is always a tenuous and fraught undertaking and I have no interest in entering into an apologetics of whiteness. The historical experiences of white and black South Africans are incomparable and there is no refuting the vastly imbalanced material realities of these groups. As De Kock wryly puts it,

The reverse homogenisation of whites – if that is what it is – consequent upon white historical domination may

⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 91-92.

justifiably be regarded as a kind poetic justice of an inevitable, necessary consequence after centuries in which white people crudely essentialised black people within Manichaen dichotomies, strictures which developed into segregation and later into full-blown apartheid.¹⁰

But despite this, De Kock continues, in the after-light of forums such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which have sought to deal with “issues of blame and fault, shame, forgiveness and reconciliation”, it seems there is a space and opportunity “to rediscover whiteness as a site of difference and as a site of interest to scholarship, both in terms of its contemporary as well as its historical manifestations.”¹¹ De Kock here seems to have in mind a ‘rediscovery’ of a particular kind of subversive whiteness, which is not the same as the contestation represented by the discourse surrounding the Boers. But as a space in which whiteness was clearly and overtly contested, I think Kipling’s Boer War writing merits consideration, especially if it contributes towards the dismantling of the originary myth which for so long underpinned white South African subjectivity.¹²

In this sense to read race as an essentialism always risks committing a violence, either against all its designates or against its margins, simply through the reduction of the individual to the symbol. As Steyn appositely suggests,

¹⁰ De Kock, “Blanc”, 178.

¹¹ Ibid., 178.

¹² Alfred Lopez suggests that “Whiteness [...] represents not only the contents of the colonial unconscious, but the very agent of its own repression: it is that which would simultaneously recast everything else in its own image and banish the scene of recasting into an originary myth.” See Alfred J. Lopez, introduction to *Postcolonial Whiteness: a Critical Reader on Race and Empire*, ed. Alfred J. López (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 5.

the pressure within [post-apartheid South African] society is towards dismantling, and indeed deconstructing, old social relations. In such circumstances, being 'white' is replete with dissonance. Whites need to find new narratives to explain who they are, what they are doing in Africa, and what their relationship is to the indigenous people and to the continent.¹³

Reflecting upon the ways in which whiteness has been historically contested as well as the processes by which it has been constructed in South Africa may, I think, contribute to the shaping and re-discovery of such narratives.

The context of the Boer War is also not as removed from later discourses and practices as it might appear. Malvern Van Wyk Smith, for example, has argued that British discourse about the Boer's racial ambiguity at the time of the war acted to establish a view of Boer ethnic identity in the global imaginary, suggesting that the "ethnic dimension of the war [...] provided much of the ethical impulse" behind the pro-Boer sympathies of the time.¹⁴ Throughout the course of the twentieth century, this view of ethnic independence and sovereignty would be sharply problematised by the racist policies of successive South Africa governments. As Van Wyk Smith goes on to point out, "It is not difficult to see that this contradiction [between ethnic sovereignty and racist practice] vitiated the world's moral response to white – and more specifically Afrikaner – South Africa throughout the twentieth century, the impulse to condemn being constantly compromised by the appeal to identity."¹⁵ It is also fair I think to suggest that there is great deal of continuity between the ideological

¹³ Steyn, "White Talk", 122.

¹⁴ Malvern Van Wyk Smith, "The Boers and the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) in the Twentieth-Century Moral Imaginary", *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 31.2 (2003), 431.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

underpinnings of imperialism and the apartheid regime. In many ways the institutionalised racism of successive South African governments, both before and after the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in 1948, may be read as imperial ideology taken to its extreme, except perhaps without the window dressing or pretense towards a 'civilizing mission.'

As a study of imperialism and the colonial encounter, Kipling's Indian writing has proven especially productive, not least because of the contextual range and volume of these texts.¹⁶ Yet, his South African texts have been largely overlooked. It is my sense therefore that they have something more to tell us about the ways in which colonial ideology functioned to establish South Africa's racial and ideological discourses. More specifically, I think that the framing of the conflict as a 'white man's war' surfaced imperial ideology in unusual, profound and persisting ways. As an author deeply involved with the imperial project in both India and South Africa, Kipling's texts therefore offer a unique opportunity to examine these discourses comparatively.

Except for 1899, when he lay fighting for his life in a hotel bed in New York, Kipling and his family visited South Africa for several months every year between 1898 and 1908. He had been drawn to the country to escape the European winter, but also in part by the impending outbreak of the war, taking a personal interest in its unfolding events and dynamics and staying for many of these years in Cape Town as a guest of the former Governor of the Cape and mining magnate Cecil John Rhodes. Although there was considerable enthusiasm about the possibility that Kipling would compose a significant piece of fiction about his South African experience, no such writing emerged. The handful of short-stories, poems and articles which do deal with South Africa and the war – many of which appeared in newspapers throughout the empire at the time – are now

¹⁶ See, for example, Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994); and Gail Ching-Liang Low, *White Skins/Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1996).

largely dismissed as evidence of a rampant 'jingoism' which in no way enhance his reputation as a writer.

This is an unfortunate label I think, not perhaps because it is inaccurate, but because it has led many to prejudge these texts as a sterile space of inquiry. Certainly I have no intension of reclaiming Kipling's South African writing for its artistic merit: here Kipling is often at his most ideologically ruthless and we see very little of the subtle, sympathetic or ambiguous representations which characterise his Indian writing. Over the course of the war William Thomas Stead (also the author of 'Methods of Barbarism') was particularly critical about Kipling's output, commenting variously that, "As a serious storyteller, Mr. Kipling is proving every day in the columns of the *Express* that he no longer exists"; "as a whole [his war poetry] is the most halting doggerel that has ever been penned"; and, perhaps as a final word on his thoughts, that "[Kipling] has not written a single verse, that will live, on the war from beginning to end, unless his jingle about 'the muddied oafs' and 'flannelled fools' may save one of his lines from oblivion."¹⁷ There were, however, many others to whom the 'patriotic spirit' of Kipling's writing appealed. More recently Angus Wilson has similarly suggested that, "In general, the Boer War stories are very disappointing, save for the light they throw on the shaping of Kipling's social and imperial thinking."¹⁸

Perhaps then, these texts present an opportunity to explore the dynamics of imperial ideology at its most rampant and unencumbered. The circumstances of the Boer War also seem to suggest a transitional

¹⁷ John Scot Ivan McGregor, Scrapbook of press cuttings, vol. 18 [manuscript], *Review of Reviews* (University of Cape Town Libraries, Rare Books and Special Collections), 55; 60; 71. The phrases "muddied oafs" and "flannelled fools" are a reference to Kipling's poem 'The Islanders', which elicited controversy from many corners for its criticism of the British. A correspondent in *The Times* commented, somewhat diplomatically, that, "I cannot but think that not a few of his genuine admirers, like myself, will feel sadly that [the poem] cannot, in a healthy state of opinion, add to his reputation" (Cited in Paula Krebs, *Gender, Race, and Writing of Empire: Public Discourse of the Boer War* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 162).

¹⁸ Angus Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling: His Life and his Works* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 291.

moment in British colonial discourse; the moment in which imperial ideology is turned inwards on itself and forced to confront its own metaphors of difference. Themes of rebellion abound in Kipling's South African texts and are echoed in Britain's growing anxiety about racial degeneracy and the wane of the imperial project, pointing to a profound cultural anxiety about 'white' subjectivity and the stability of imperial subjective categories.

Some critics seem eager to distance Kipling's South African imperialism from that expressed in his Indian writing, suggesting that, while in South Africa, he acted as a political mouthpiece for Rhodes. As Kipling recalled in his autobiography, *Something of Myself* (1937): "My use to him [Rhodes] was mainly as a purveyor of words; for he was largely inarticulate. After the idea had been presented – and one had to know his code for it – he would say: 'What am I trying to express? Say it, say it.' So I would say it."¹⁹ However, such readings seem to me neither useful nor accurate precisely because they function to deemphasise the ways in which Kipling is caught up within imperial culture. In my view Kipling should not be distanced from his role within this hegemony because both he and Rhodes are caught up within the same system. I therefore read Kipling's South African writing as a continuation of his Indian imperialism: that is, as characterised by a surfacing of the ideology which underlies his Indian writing.

In these pieces it is often Kipling's Imperialist agendas that seem to obscure the greater effect. Most often their purpose is not subtle: to degrade the enemies of the Empire and justify the war; to comment on the strategies of the war itself; and to make political points about the role and shortcomings of the Empire both at home and abroad. In comparison, it has been suggested by many that his Indian writing, especially *Kim* (1901), seems to contain a deeper sympathy and understanding of the people and place because, for the most part, his ideology does not interfere with his writing in the same way that it does in South Africa.

¹⁹ Cited in Van Wyk Smith, "The Boers", 351.

Most criticism of Kipling's South African writing has focused on its recurrent themes, his political preoccupations, his inability to translate the South African landscape to an Imperial audience, and the complex and layered narrative style of these short stories.²⁰ Surprisingly little has been written about the colonial aspects of this writing though, especially in terms of the complex attitudes these texts express towards Dutch speaking South Africans. These come out most strongly in his non-fiction of the time, especially in two articles that appeared in *The Times*, 'The Sin of Witchcraft' and 'The Science of Rebellion'; though Boer characters do appear in his other texts.²¹ Often these representations return to a stereotypical depiction of the time, suggesting that they are lazy, deceptive, and "the most ignorant breed of whites and semi-whites in the world."²²

Despite the colonisation of Ireland, imperialism had, until the South African War, been widely understood to be premised upon the dominion of the "lesser races" - racial others - and the subjugation of fellow whites did not sit well with many. As the editor of the *Commonwealth*, Henry Scott Holland, expressed in 1901:

Why is it that the war in South Africa offers no real standard of what constitutes true imperialism? Because no normal development of the Empire ought to include the conquest of a white race.... The Empire, as moral ideal, has never contemplated so harsh a possibility as that of having

²⁰ See Van Wyk Smith, "The Boers"; Paula Krebs, *Public Discourse*; and Philip Holden, "Hall of Mirrors: Mimicry and Ambivalence in Kipling's Boer War Short Stories", *ARIEL*, 28.4 (1997).

²¹ The phrase "The Sin of Witchcraft" is a reference to 1 Sam., 15. 23: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft".

²² Rudyard Kipling, "The Science of Rebellion" (London: The Imperial South African Association, 1901), 2.

to break up a white nationality, and then to rule it by compulsion.²³

What the context necessitated, therefore, was for imperialism to sever the fraternal racial bonds between Boer and British by recasting the Boer as an inferior.

One of the canards used to characterise the war at the time was that it was a 'white man's war'. This had the dual purpose of both (erroneously) suggesting that blacks South Africans were not involved in the war, as well as attempting to address the Boers' seemingly tenuous racial position.²⁴ Kipling's short story 'A Sahib's War', which was first published in *Windsor Magazine* in December of 1901, is in many ways a direct rebuttal of this claim. Through his ventriloquism of the Indian narrator, Umr Singh, Kipling is able to take up these issues directly by suggesting both that 'native' troops should be deployed in the war – "Kurban Sahib said we should have loosed the Sikhs and the Gurkhas on these people till they came with their foreheads in the dust" - and that Boers are not white.²⁵ Singh's justification of the war is thus expressed largely in terms of an imperial hierarchy of race: "Ye cannot in one place rule and in another bear service. Either ye must everywhere rule or everywhere obey. God does not make the nations ringstraked."²⁶ Similarly, the Anglo-Indian officer Kurban Sahib expresses a more candid view, suggesting that the reason for Britain's military losses is because "they foolishly show mercy to these Boer-log because it is believed that they are white."²⁷ In the context of the story, Singh's repetition of the phrase "a Sahib's War" thus becomes increasingly ironic because the Boers, it seems, are not white.

²³ Cited in Van Wyk Smith, "The Boers", 441.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 441.

²⁵ Rudyard Kipling, "A Sahib's War", in *Traffics and Discoveries* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1904), 89.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 81. "Ringstraked" i.e. 'half-caste.'

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

Such characterisations were repeated elsewhere in Kipling's writing, especially during the middle stages of the war. Allen, the Scottish Free Stater protagonist of 'A Burgher of the Free State' (1900), for example, invokes miscegenation to explain the anti-British nationalism of a Boer girl, suggesting that she is "tainted with native blood" and "not three removes from a Bastard of the Kalahari", before concluding that, "I've never hoped the English 'ud win, but I hope it now – I hope it now! The damned, ungrateful half-breeds."²⁸ Kipling made similar suggestions privately too, as in a letter to James M. Conland in February of 1901: "A lot of [the Boers are] half breeds."²⁹ The prevalence of such characterizations, especially those received by a wider audience, largely acted to justify the war in terms of a purely Darwinist ideology.

Yet despite (or because of) this polemic, Kipling's South African narratives are far less successful than his Indian texts at representing a functioning and consistent image of imperialism, as many critics have noted. Philip Holden, for example, in his discussion of 'A Sahib's War' and 'The Comprehension of Private Copper', argues that "Kipling's stories generate a series of unanswerable questions", and that "readers find it progressively more difficult to comprehend what Kipling's construction of imperial, middle-class masculinity is all about,"³⁰ while Van Wyk Smith suggests that, "the obliquity of narrative strategy" in many of these stories "complicates and thematises a difficulty of interpretation."³¹ Likewise, Paula Krebs argues that,

²⁸ Rudyard Kipling, "A Burgher of the Free State", *Daily Express* (London), June 26, 1900: 87.

²⁹ *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling, Vol III: 1890-1899*, ed. Thomas Pinney (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1990), 41. Kipling makes such references elsewhere as well: "If you are ever led into leaders on Sir F. De Villiers chief justice of the Cape please remember [...] that he is what we call in India four annas in the rupee"; "[The Dutch Parliamentary leadership] is quarreling now among itself as only half breeds can quarrel" (Pinney, *Vol. III*, 56; 148).

³⁰ Philip Holden, "Hall of Mirrors", 107.

³¹ Malvern Van Wyk Smith, "Telling the Boer War: Narrative Indeterminacy in Kipling's Stories of the South African War", *South African Historical Journal*, 41.Nov (1999), 352.

The model of empire Kipling found in South Africa was quite different to that in India – ill-suited to a narrative of loyalty and service to a benevolent power. [...] The net result – short stories that contain no moral ambiguity and no South Africanness, polemic that rants, and poetry that angered a good percentage of its readers – pleased few.³²

I will return to Krebs' assessment at a later stage but for now it is enough to note the general trend outlined by these scholars, namely, that Kipling's South African texts, while polemic, seem fraught with contradictions and a general lack of narrative clarity. These deficiencies, I believe, are essentially the result of the texts' embeddedness within a framework of imperial restrictions, which leads to a negatively defined subjectivity. As such they seem to point out the shortcomings and limitations of the imperial players, but are unable to provide a positive and productive alternative: a working image of imperialism. My underlying assumption is thus that Kipling's South African writing is essentially a record of imperialism's inability to manage its own unraveling complexities and constitutive contradictions.

The tension between the Boers' position as either 'white' or 'non-white' is also not specific to Kipling, but rather can be read as indicative of imperial discourse at the time. Similar racial epithets and stereotypes about the Boers, for example, had been perpetuated ever since the arrival of the British in 1820.³³ At the time of the war however discourse about Boer degeneracy emerged with new fervour, primarily, as I have said, because it helped to justify the colonisation of a 'subordinate' race.

³² Paula Krebs, *Public Discourse*, 169.

³³ Apart from Malvern Van Wyk Smith's "The Boers and the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) in the Twentieth-Century Moral Imaginary", J.M. Coetzee's *White Writing* (1988) also addresses this issue. See John Maxwell Coetzee, *White Writing: on the culture of letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

However, while questions of 'whiteness' were largely manageable within white spaces, such as metropolitan London or Ireland for example, their deployment was more complex in colonial contexts, specifically that is because of the presence of 'very real racial others'. Unlike in white centers, creating a context in which whiteness was a matter of suspicion in South Africa would have unsettled relations between whites and black Africans. That imperial officials shared this view is borne out by the fact that, following the Boers' surrender, they were almost immediately given political status as white citizens.

As such, the central question which I take up in considering Kipling's Boer War writing is, in what ways and for what purpose was whiteness discursively managed at the time of the war? It is my sense that it was imperialism which gave currency to both of the Boers' seemingly conflicting subjective positions, resulting in a commingling of cultural and racial identity which would make South Africa a global political concern throughout the 20th century. Beyond this however, the management of whiteness at the time of the war also seems to have broader structural resonance with the racialised politics of apartheid South Africa.

The Colonial Space

There are good grounds I think for a comparison of Kipling's Indian and South African writing, most immediately because both deal with colonial contexts. Abdul R. JanMohamed points out that, "Colonial literature is an exploration and a representation of a world at the boundaries of 'civilization', a world that has not (yet) been domesticated by European signification or codified in detail by its ideology."³⁴ Although the South African space is in some senses a departure from what JanMohamed may have had in mind, it is nonetheless, like India, a site of cultural contact, liminality, overlap and contestation. This space is essentially

³⁴ Abdul R. JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonial Literature", *Critical Inquiry*, 12.1 (1985), 18.

characterised by a tension inherent in all colonial contexts: between an impulse towards expansion, change and appropriation on the one hand, and on the other, separation, retention and continuity.³⁵ Given this, the existence of liminal or transgressive characters in Kipling's texts is no coincidence, nor is it unusual that his work should exhibit an anxiety about their presence. As the 'Bard of the Empire', depicting spaces of cultural intersection at the 'periphery of civilisation', it is often precisely these forces and subjectivities Kipling's writing attempts to navigate.

In most colonial contexts, including India, race was invoked as a means of shoring up the cultural periphery, yet in South Africa such mechanisms were far more complex. It is now widely accepted that the Indian 'Mutiny' of 1857 played a significant role in shaping imperial attitudes towards race: as Satya P. Mohanty puts it, "the Empire and colonial rule of India suddenly became an issue for the cultural imagination precisely because they were threatened."³⁶ It was against the background that race, through its supposed connection with theories of ethnic Darwinism, increasingly came to be the articulating principle of subjective difference, because, as John Marriot puts it, "race provided an historically secure and inviolable sense of community at a time of rapid change and fragmentation."³⁷ Yet if the 'Mutiny' marked a pivotal moment in imperial race history, the Boer War seems to have had similar potential, not least because it was, at least in racial terms, an *internal* 'rebellion'.

Kipling's Indian writing contains some of his best-known transgressive characters, such as Kim, Mowgli and Strickland. In line with Mohanty and Marriot's comments, for these characters race functions to shore up the contours of subjectivity. As such, Kipling's Indian texts offer a

³⁵ It is worth pointing out that this dynamic is reflected in Homi Bhabha's characterization of colonialism as an encounter structured by an *ambivalence*: dependant upon an invocation of both pleasure and anxiety, transgression and defense ("The Other Question").

³⁶ Satya P. Mohanty, "Drawing the Color Line: Kipling and the Culture of Colonial Rule", in *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*, ed. Dominick LaCapra (USA: Cornell University Press, 1991), 322.

³⁷ John Marriot, *The other empire: Metropolis, India and progress in the colonial imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 113.

prescription for a retention of imperial subjectivity in the face of cultural difference: a means of defending against assimilation or 'going native'. Leonard Woolf's recollection of his visit to Ceylon epitomises this play of subjective inscription: "The white people [were] in many ways astonishingly like characters in a Kipling story. I could later never make up my mind whether Kipling had moulded his characters accurately in the image of Anglo-Indian society or whether we were moulding our characters accurately in the image of a Kipling story"³⁸. Yet, as Woolf's comments imply, as much as racial difference acts as a means of defense, in the presence of the racial other it also acts in essentialist and prescriptive ways. The context of the South African War (1899-1902) therefore represented a somewhat more complex challenge, both because the Boers were also white and because of the presence of black Africans. Plotting the (dis)continuities between Kipling's invocation of race in India and South Africa I think provides a productive means of exposing the mechanisms of this management of the cultural peripheries.

Cultural Transgression

Kipling's Indian fiction contains numerous examples of white men who are able to 'cross the colour line': characters in 'native' disguise or whose knowledge of the other allows them seemingly unmitigated access to their cultural world. At the time of the war however, where racial difference is invoked but remains unmarked, transgression seems to take a more threatening form.

Addressing 'cultural transvestism' in Kipling's Indian writing, Gail Ching-Liang Low suggests that this "fantasy of disguise" is the result of a "desire for psychological reassurance", a product of the coloniser's proximity to the other. As Low explains,

³⁸ Cited in Holden, "Hall of Mirrors", 91.

If there were a figure who truly knew all about the native world it is possible to know, then such a person would be a source of comfort in troubled times. Indian culture in its different guises and shapes would not seem the bewildering and unreadable text that it can sometimes be. There would always be someone to interpret, someone who would be one step ahead of trouble.³⁹

Yet in Kipling's South African writing, because of the perception of the Boer as a racial other, we see a radical inversion of this dynamic whereby the colonial fantasy of omniscience and control is seemingly displaced. Here, Kipling's writing suggests, the 'native' other intrudes upon the cultural and subjective space of the white imperial subject. If, as Satya P. Mohanty argues, Kipling's Indian writing allows the reader "to be invisible, to belong, to contain the threat of any real encounter, to observe without being observed" then, Kipling's transcription of this reverse transgression in South Africa points to a profound sense of paranoia and anxiety.⁴⁰ This inversion provides a nodal point for my analysis of Kipling's South African writing.

Theorists such as Franz Fanon have suggested that an inverse of this dynamic is a structural impossibility because the 'native' can never successfully infiltrate the 'white man's' cultural or subjective world; in Fanon's famous phrasing, they have 'black skins but wear white masks'.⁴¹ As such, in colonial discourse the black native is precluded from fully assuming a 'master' subjectivity: the colonial other can never ascend beyond a subordinate position – can never become fully 'white' - both because his race marks his alterity and thereby prohibits it, and because

³⁹ Gail Ching-Liang Low, *White Skins/Black Masks*, 223.

⁴⁰ Mohanty, "Color Line", 331.

⁴¹ Fanon, *Black Skins*.

the other is constructed as possessing an inescapable and prohibitive subjective 'lack'.

The Indian characters in *Kim* seem similarly limited, as they are repeatedly represented as being either incapable or inferior at disguising themselves. As such, although I do not offer an analysis of *Kim*, the reading implied throughout this thesis is premised largely on that provided by Low, who suggests that, "the novel's empathetic vision [of India] is produced alongside its anxious reinforcement of the racial divide."⁴²

In this sense the cultural and subjective transgression of the other is strictly prohibited. The colonial other is ineluctably bound, it seems, by his very construction and 'marking' as 'lesser'; confined as it were by an imperial glass ceiling. Imperialism, and more specifically colonial discourse, is therefore characterised by a need to continuously adjust the epistemological parameters of the 'native' other, such that he remains both separate (distinctly other) and, thereby, subordinate.

As such, colonial discourse is structured so as to subvert the force of the colonised from acting upon the parameters of the coloniser's subjectivity. Such an understanding of colonial discourse is at the heart of Edward Said's reading of Orientalism, in which the Oriental expert (and colonial authors such as Kipling) is positioned as the 'gatekeeper' of 'Oriental' subjectivity:

The Orientals he studied in fact became *his* Orientals, for he saw them not only as actual people but as monumentalised objects in his account of them. This double perspective encouraged a sort of structured irony. On the one hand, there was a collection of people living in the present; on the other hand, these people – as the subject of the study – became "the

⁴² Low, *White Skins*, 201.

Egyptians,” or “the Orientals.” Only the scholar could see, and manipulate, the discrepancy between the two levels. The tendency of the former was always towards greater variety, yet this variety was always being restrained, compressed downwards and backwards to the *radical* terminal of the generality. Ever modern, native instances of behaviour became an effusion sent back to the original terminal, which was strengthened in the process. This kind of “dispatching” was precisely the *discipline* of Orientalism.⁴³

The result of this is that the parameters of imperial subjectivity, and by extension ‘whiteness’, are never threatened or forced into an adjustment or change, thus preserving the hierarchy inherent in colonial discourse. This is because the construction of the other within a Western epistemology prohibits the native from in any sense amending or altering this framework; like the process by which the West sought to dissect, mark and map foreign lands, those who reside within these colonised spaces, the ‘natives’, are bound by their inscriptive parameters; ‘free’ to move and change *within* them, but unable to adjust these borders by their own volition, much less what lies beyond.

Given this, it is my view that Kipling’s South African writing stands out as a rarity because of his construction of the Boer as essentially constituted in terms of a subjective duality, as being both racially other and yet symbolically ‘white’: “[The Boers] are not Sahib’s, only a kind of white coolie.”⁴⁴ To use Said’s terminology, it thus becomes impossible to ‘dispatch’ the identity of the ‘native’ other (the ‘white’ Boer) to its ‘original terminal’, because, within a racially structured colonial discourse, this ‘original terminal’ is symbolically identical to the

⁴³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 6th ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), 233-234.

⁴⁴ Rudyard Kipling, “Opinions of Jemadar Ali – II: A Letter from the Transvaal”, in John Scott Ivan McGregor, *Scrapbook of press cuttings*, vol. 3 [manuscript] (Kipling Collection, University of Cape Town Libraries), 20.

coloniser's. This action, I suggest, leads to a self-promulgated remapping of 'whiteness', an othering of the Self, and perhaps more broadly, of imperialism. What I mean to suggest here is that the South African context represents one of the rare (but by no means singular) examples in which white subjectivity, and by extension imperialism, is acted *upon* by the colonial other (the 'white' South African Boer). In this instance this process of subjective recalibration is perhaps best understood in terms of what Slavoj Žižek calls a disciplinary "Ptolemization". As Žižek explains:

When a discipline is in crisis, attempts are made to change or supplement its theses *within* the terms of its basic framework – a procedure one might call 'Ptolemization' (since when data poured in which clashed with Ptolemy's earth-centred astronomy, his partisans introduced additional complications to account for the anomalies). But the true 'Copernican' revolution takes place when, instead of just adding complications and changing minor premises, the basic framework itself undergoes a transformation.⁴⁵

What we see in Kipling's South African writing then is an *imperial Ptolemization*, a forced adjustment to the basic framework of imperialism which attempts to frustrate the decentring of hegemonic power.

What I propose here is to read Kipling's representation of the South African other, the Boer, as a process of a racially inflected 'Orientalising' similar to that which characterised his Indian writing. While such an analysis might seem to expose dynamics which today we consider self-evident, I think there is a tendency to underestimate the role which racial

⁴⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2008), vii.

difference played not only in justifying imperial ideology but, more importantly, in the cultural regulation of white imperial subjectivity.

White Subalterns

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) has been instrumental in awakening us to the ways in which, through the construction of a Foucauldian discourse, colonial identities were regulated and imperial reality managed by cultural hegemony and the dominant identities aligned with it. As the most immediate focus of imperial and cultural domination, much scholarly attention has been paid to the 'subject races', especially those whose alterity was inscribed in terms of a marked racial difference – the 'natives'. That such readings should be prioritised is surely understandable, but by the same token it is important to acknowledge both the experiences of white subjects, especially those who existed at the margins of colonial society, as well as the ways in which such subjectivities were managed by imperialism and its associated cultural forms.

This view is not dissimilar to the field of Subaltern Studies, which has recently undertaken re-readings of colonial texts in an attempt to expose the realities of those colonial subjects 'written out of history'. In the same way that 'Western' and 'Oriental' subjectivities were mutually dependant – defined in terms of a Self/Other relationship – 'white' imperial identity came to be co-constructed in relation to an 'other whiteness', whose reality was rarely fully acknowledged. As Harald Fiscer-Tiné, whose *Low and Licentious Europeans* (2009) is a study of the ways in which marginal white groups were managed in British India, appositely explains,

the Subalternist approach is based on a type of a dichotomy that can be reduced to the binary opposition of

those in power versus the so-called 'subalterns', the articulate versus the voiceless, the active dominators versus the passive victims. In analogy to the cruder varieties of imperialist historiography, the boundary between the antagonistic groups is drawn on the basis of colour or 'race'. This reductionist model not only fails to recognize the complex levels of interaction and mutual influence involved in the colonial encounter it also contributes to the perpetuation of a stubborn colonial myth: the one claiming the existence of homogenous racial groups with fixed characteristics.⁴⁶

To dismiss Kipling's South African writing therefore as jingoism, as many critics have, is to overlook the subtleties of its inscriptive force. Just as Kipling's crude racial othering of Indian 'natives' has been considered in terms of its inscriptive power, so too Kipling's 'jingoism' attempts to control and regulate white imperial subjectivity through an omission or (mis)representation of white subaltern voices. In terms of the British empire, these groups include whites of low economic or social status, those with seemingly questionable cultural or moral values, and those with ambiguous or oppositional loyalties. The presence of such individuals within the empire threatened to disrupt the broader imperial order and it was for this reason that their voices were largely unacknowledged or misrepresented. Importantly however, the obviousness of their existence at the time of the war demanded a response.

Many of these groups or individuals are characterised as much by the spaces they occupy as by their representation. Most often they existed only in the margins, either along the peripheries of 'civilised' society or in enclaves of alterity, such as the metropolitan 'slums', pointing to their

⁴⁶ Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Low and Licentious Europeans: Race, Class and 'White Subalternity' in Colonial India*, (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2009), 6.

liminal subjective status. As such it was easier for their presence and existence to go un-noted, and yet they form a distinct social subset in Rudyard Kipling's writing, which seems to have evaded rigorous scholarly investigation. This is not to suggest that such investigations have not taken place, but the situation of white subalterns as a distinct category of analysis in Kipling's writing does not, as yet, seem to have been widely applied, especially by postcolonial critics.

Kaori Nagai's *Empire of Analogies* (2006), however, in which she traces the interconnectivity in Kipling's writing between Irish and Indian nationalist voices, represents one such example. Nagai argues that, in his representation of the Irish, Kipling participates in a "discursive war of analogies being fought between imperialist and nationalist modes of representing Indo-Irish connections", by which he "[rejects] the rebellious connections between the two colonies as treacherous and inauthentic."⁴⁷ As part of her analysis, Nagai treats Kipling's depictions of British soldiers and Irishmen serving in India as representing a suppressed subaltern voice. As Nagai argues,

If the voice of the 'subaltern' [...] and the impossibility of their speaking for themselves is at stake in recent criticism, we may be made to feel a little uneasy by the fact that Rudyard Kipling, regarded by many as a racist, seems to pay special attention to such voices too. If we are not to push 'the subaltern' too much into the margin, making of it a repressed and almost esoteric sign which only a chosen elite can decode, we may argue that the British soldiers serving outside the 'British Isles' in the nineteenth century can be called, in more ways than one, the subaltern... They were not supposed to complain – no matter what their circumstances were – after all they had

⁴⁷ Kaori Nagai, *Empire of Analogies: Kipling, India and Ireland*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2006), 3.

agreed to take the royal shilling and fight for the British Empire; therefore, they should keep whatever grudge they might have against Great Britain to themselves, for it might endanger the order of the army and that of the Empire.⁴⁸

That Kipling should willingly give voice to these potentially subversive individuals might seem surprising, yet, within the imperial narrative, such depictions might be seen to have a stabilizing effect. Nagai therefore goes on to suggest that, if the Irish soldier abroad is indeed a subaltern, “it is as though their voices were discovered only to justify the very cause of their distress.”⁴⁹ Kipling’s racialization of the Boers, I would argue, similarly acts to justify the project of imperialism through a process of (mis)representation, which functions to maintain a colonial discourse that enshrines both white ‘loyalty’ and ‘superiority’.

Nagai’s approach is to trace the Irish-Indian connections in Kipling’s writing, and perhaps more specifically to consider Kipling’s representation of the Irish ‘out in the Empire’. Yet in Kipling’s Boer War texts the Irish are conspicuously absent. Nagai suggests that in these texts they are absorbed into an internationalised generic rebel ‘type’. While she does suggest a connection between degeneration and this ‘type’, her focus on the Irish appears to deemphasise the importance of race in the shaping of Kipling’s Boer War imperialism. Given this, although my approach is similar to Nagai’s in some respects, my analysis is intended to foreground Kipling’s representation of the Boers, particularly in terms of his seemingly ambiguous management of whiteness.

Discussing the racialization of the Metropolitan poor in the 19th century, Marriot explains that, “The poor presented a radical disruption to order by forcing the conjunction of a culturally constituted whiteness with its

⁴⁸ Ibid., 52-53.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 55.

own metaphors of difference; they could be embraced within a symbolic dualism and hence resolved only by being constructed as black.”⁵⁰ Kipling’s racialization of the Boers can be read in precisely this way, that is, as resulting from a form of ‘imperial feedback’; a centripetal echo of colonial ideology which results in the transference of colonial discourse onto other imperial spaces. As Fischer-Tiné explains:

Recent studies have increasingly criticized the ‘received notions’ of imperial history as an exercise in tracing the ‘expansion of Europe’ and analysing ‘European impact’ in various colonies. Such oversimplifying centrifugal approach to imperialism has rightly been exposed to criticism in the last two decades. ... [I]mperialism and colonialism were by no means one way affairs and hence centripetal influences originating in the colonial ‘periphery’ significantly shaped the metropole in multifarious ways.⁵¹

Having arisen out of a particular context, Kipling’s management of white subjectivity was thus also mirrored in other settings. Motivated by fears of racial degeneration, the ‘discovery’ of urban slums in the metropolitan, and an uncertainty about the effects of industrialisation, late 19th century literature expressed an increasing awareness of these marginal whites. Patrick Bratlinger, for example, points to the emergence of imperial gothic narratives as expressing a fear of degeneration and cultural decline.⁵² This ‘discovery of the poor’ reflected a broader social interest and anxiety and various efforts were made to ‘re-civilise’ such individuals and reintegrate them into metropolitan society.

⁵⁰ Marriot, *other empire*, 165.

⁵¹ Fischer-Tiné, *Low and Licentious*, 75-76.

⁵² Cited in Low, *White Skins*, 114.

Similar re-civilizing projects took place in the colonies, including India and South Africa. Fischer-Tiné's study of white subalterns in India specifically considers the ways in which colonial administration policies sought to either 'reclaim' or 'hide' them. The textual repression of subaltern voices is thus mirrored in the vast administrative policies which targeted groups thought to bring white culture into disrepute, such as sailors, criminals, prostitutes and vagrants. These interventions attempted to police white subjectivity through the use of orphanages and workhouses, as well as wide-ranging legislations and prohibitions.

In South Africa there were also several such interventions. Sarah Emily Duff, for example, suggests that from the 1870s the Cape Colony government began to emphasise child education as a means of reducing the number of 'poor whites'. As Duff points out, it was not only their being children which motivated such initiatives, "but also their problematic class position in a colonial racial order that sought their reform, direction and education into acceptable and productive citizens."⁵³ Startlingly, Duff goes on to suggest that these anxieties were accompanied by a feeling that African and coloured children were receiving too much education, despite the fact that there was little evidence to support such sentiments.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to give a full background to these various policies, but it is worth noting that the maintenance of the image of white superiority was an increasingly essential function of late 19th century imperialism, and that much of the impetus for this 'internal civilizing mission' can be read as originating in the peripheries of the empire, especially in India.⁵⁴

As such, there is an increasing interest and recognition of the ways in which imperialism shaped the experiences of white subjects, both at home and abroad. As a colonial war between two white races, the Second

⁵³ Sarah Emily Duff, "Saving the Child to Save the Nation: Poverty, Whiteness and Childhood in the Cape Colony, c. 1870-1895", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37.2, 231.

⁵⁴ Marriot, *other empire*, 2.

Anglo-Boer War represents such an example. Though the Boer War may have begun as an opposition between two differentiated forces, the realities of the war were far more complex than this, especially in terms of the various factions, parties, allegiances and subjectivities involved. Whatever the precipitant causes of the war, the war itself seems to play out in Kipling's texts as a process of internal civilizing, directed towards a marginal and loosely formed white group whose identity threatened the security of the Empire.

Kipling's racialization of the Boer was made easier by the fact that it played into existing stereotypes about the Boers and was therefore by no means unique. J.M. Coetzee in *White Writing* (1988) suggests that, with the first arrival of white settlers at Cape Town there emerged a "Discourse of the Cape", characterised by a preoccupation with productivity and labour. As Coetzee explains, New World European colonies were associated with a return to a state of innocence in an Eden-like garden, yet in South Africa such a mythology failed to take hold. Coetzee suggests that the reason for this was that "in the European imagination", "African was not a new world."⁵⁵ As such, the Cape, "belonged not to the New World but to the farthest extremity of the Old: it was a Lapland of the south, peopled by natives whose way of life occasioned curiosity or disgust but never admiration." This characterization was deeply associated with the persistent representation by early travelers of the Hottentots and Boers as being idyll: the Hottentot because he was undeveloped, and the Boer because of his regression into sloth.

The Cape thus came to be pictured not as a space of Biblical innocence or regeneration, but as its inverse, "the degeneration of man into brute": "Like Joseph Conrad after them, [Europeans] were apprehensive that Africa might turn out to be not a Garden but an anti-Garden, a garden ruled over by the serpent, where the wilderness takes root once again in men's hearts. The remedy they prescribed against Africa's insidious

⁵⁵ Coetzee, *White Writing*, 2.

corruptions was cheerful toil”⁵⁶. Kipling invokes similar comparisons in ‘The Science of Rebellion’, comparing the Boers unfavourably with America and other New World settler colonies: “Why, where under the canopy would folk have been in Kansas to-day if they’d laid down and died just because locusts ate up a crop or two? Van DJones says there’s a curse on the land. He’s dead right. He’s it! There’s nothing the matter with South Africa but laziness – common Creator-condemned idleness... *They’ve killed the country.*”⁵⁷

We therefore find a curious mixing of discourses in Kipling’s texts, like reflected ripples from an imperial centre which overlap in the course of the Boer War. What these discourses have in common however is their conception of racial degeneration, which attempted to explain white subalterns in terms of environmental factors. Just as Darwinism had been invoked to scientifically justify an imperial conception of white superiority, an inverse view came to exist about the possibility of devolution. As the zoologist Edwin Ray Lancaster argued in *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (1867), new evidence at the time seemed to suggest that the possibility existed for species to devolve if their environments did not adequately challenge them. The ship’s barnacle (nauplius), Lancaster believed, was such an example; a degenerate crustacean whose sense of touch and sight had become defunct because of a lack of use. In such cases, he argued, in which an organism’s “food and safety (are) very easily obtained” one may witness “a gradual change in which the organism becomes adapted to *less* varied and *less* complex conditions of life.”⁵⁸ This process of *degeneration*, Lancaster called it, could also affect the human species and may come to “disfigure our modern civilization.”⁵⁹ “Possibly we are all drifting”, he warned, “tending to the condition of the intellectual Barnacles or Ascidians.” While Darwinism had been appropriated by imperial culture as a means of

⁵⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁷ Kipling, “Science of Rebellion”, 9.

⁵⁸ Cited in William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880-1940* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1994), 1.

⁵⁹ Cited in *ibid.*, 2.

stratifying the 'races of man' - of scientifically ensuring the superiority of the white race - degeneration not only became a means of explaining white subalterns, but also encouraged doubts about the inevitability of white superiority.

In "A Sahib's War", the Boer family are described in these diseased and degenerative terms: "There was an old man in the verandah – an old man with a white beard and a wart upon the left side of his neck; and a fat woman with eyes of a swine and the jowl of a swine; and a tall deprived of understanding. His head was hairless, no larger than an orange, and the pits of his nostrils were eaten away by a disease" (Kipling, "Sahib's War", 92). Yet just as the Boers' atavism was linked with environmental factors, so too concerns emerged that the urban living conditions of the Metropolitan were to blame for the degeneration of the British population. At the time of the war this was often cited as a reason for the seemingly poor performance of British soldiers. Lord Rosebery expressed similar concerns when he asked: "What is an Empire unless it is pillared on an Imperial race, and what are you doing to allow this Imperial race to be vitiated and poisoned in the dens of crime and horror in which too many of them are reared at this moment?"⁶⁰ This emerges as an interesting juxtaposition in Kipling's representation of South Africa because, while for the Boer South Africa is associated with degeneracy, for the metropolitan citizen it is represented as regenerative - as a rediscovery of a 'primal masculinity' through labour.

Chapter Breakdown

Broadly, I deal with the tension in Kipling's representation of the Boers in two ways. In chapter 1 I examine the underlying anxieties inherent in Kipling's racialization of the Boers. Through a brief consideration of some of his Indian writing, I suggest that race functioned to allay colonial

⁶⁰ Cited in Marriot, *other empire*, 178.

anxieties of otherness because of its conjunction with Foucauldian structures of *discipline*. As will be seen however, the racialization of the Boers proved distinctly problematic because the resulting racial duality leads to a breakdown in these disciplinary structures. What characterises these texts is a process of exclusion, brought about by a sense of anxiety and paranoia about the presence of seemingly 'unmarked' racial others – a reverse transgression. One of Kipling's stories, "The Comprehension of Private Copper" is particularly noteworthy for this sense of 'uncanniness'. In the character of Private Copper however, it also seems to suggest a means of bringing 'hidden' alterity to light.

On the other hand however, Kipling's writing is also marked by a seemingly inclusive (re)enforcement of racial categories and white 'loyalty'. Kaori Nagai has argued that Kipling's representation of Irish soldiers in the empire functions to constrain or repress 'rebellious' or anti-imperial white voices, thereby perpetuating a homogenous view of white loyalty and superiority. In chapter 2 I argue that there is a similar dynamic at work in Kipling's South African writing, by which potentially rebellious characters are often made to speak unequivocally *for* the empire, rather than against it as one might expect. The characters in two stories in particular, 'The Captive' and 'The Way That He Took', are, I argue, characterised by this form of 'white subalternity', the effect of which is an impulse to return the Boers to a visually marked structure of race.

It is a matter of historical record that following the war this move would be politically sanctioned by the British, with the Boers being granted status as white citizens. Yet, before this there are also moments at which Kipling seems to acknowledge Boer difference in seemingly productive ways. Kipling's depiction of Sister Margaret in 'The Way That He Took' seems especially to bear this out. Written at the same time as *Kim*, there is a remarkable similarity between these two texts, specifically because of their framing of cultural transgression and assimilation. Unlike in *Kim* however, the vision offered by 'The Way That He Took' is not restricted

by racial difference, which in turn gestures towards a possibility of a unified Anglo-Boer South Africa. Significantly, this vision is only made possible through the presence of the Boer, whose representation as an 'authentic' feature of the South African space is of central importance. Within such a framing it is not unreasonable to suggest that Boer ethnic identity served to validate the presence of English speaking South Africans within this space, specifically that is under the auspices of a shared white identity.

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CHAPTER 1

Spies and Plagues

They are present – omnipresent.⁶¹

In this chapter I investigate some of the anxieties and dynamics associated with Kipling's depictions of the Boer's as degenerate or racially other. If, as I have said, race functions in Kipling's Indian writing to shore up the subjective periphery as a means of defending against 'contamination' by the native other, then it is ostensibly invoked in much the same way in South Africa. Yet, as I will argue here, because of the lack of a marked racial difference between British and Boer, we also see a form of subjective ambiguity and collapsing which unsettles notions of whiteness.

Low has suggested that Kipling's Indian gothic texts point to a fear of "decline and regression."⁶² These texts are characterised by a preoccupation with "invasion fantasies" and "narratives of atavism", which Low calls the 'colonial uncanny'.⁶³ Kipling's South African writing I think seems to be marked with a similar anxiety, in as much as he often expresses a fear and a sense of uncertainty, both in his fiction and non-fiction, about the racial status of fellow 'whites'. As in Low's 'colonial uncanny', what I hope to capture here is the sense of unease brought about by the perceived disconnect between the seen and the unseen (from the inside and the outside): the perception of a white other that

⁶¹ Rudyard Kipling, "The Sin of Witchcraft" (London: The Imperial South African Association, 1900), 5.

⁶² Low, *White Skins*, 114.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

unsettles the conception of the Self. In this circular play of Freud's *heimlich/unheimlich*, the uncanny is both "what is familiar and agreeable" as well as "what is concealed and kept out of sight"; an expression of a white subjectivity which is caught between stability and change, control and anxiety.⁶⁴

The uncanny is thus indicative of Kipling's profoundly unsettling experience of rebels and loyalists who share the same symbolic makeup, an expression of what Marjorie Garber has called "the twin anxieties of *visibility* and *difference*."⁶⁵ Garber's comments are made in the context of mainstream culture's conflation of cross-dressing and homosexuality, but are apt here in illustrating the hegemonic compulsion to mark a perceived difference in subjectivity. As Garber explains:

It is as though the hegemonic cultural imaginary is saying to itself: if there is a difference (between gay and straight), we want to be able to *see* it, and if we see a difference (a man in women's clothes), we want to be able to *interpret* it. In both cases, the conflation is fuelled by a desire to *tell the difference*, to guard against a difference that might otherwise put the identity of one's own position in question. (If people who dress like me might be gay, then someone might think I'm gay, or I might get too close to someone I don't recognize as gay; if someone who is heterosexual like me dresses in women's clothes, what is heterosexuality? etc.).⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny'", in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch et al (London & New York: Norton, 2010), 827.

⁶⁵ Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interest: cross-dressing and cultural anxiety* (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993), 130.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

As Garber's comments imply, the confusion of subjectivity brought about by the Boer's racial duality, represented by the uncanniness of Kipling's South African writing - therefore points to a broader concern about white subjectivity, which threatens both collective and individual conceptions of Self. Before proceeding there are two interlinked aspects of this uncanniness which I take up here, namely *discipline* and *contagion*.

As regards discipline, it is important to note that in India the colonial context was of course marked by a strict racial separation. In Kipling's Indian writing therefore, whites who fail to maintain the integrity of imperial identity are inevitably presented as problematic. 'Beyond the Pale' (1888) is such story, in which the white protagonist Trejago (as well as his Indian lover, Bisesa) is punished and left scarred because of his contact with the other. As the opening lines of the story warn, "A man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race, and breed. Let the White go to the White and the Black to the Black... This is the story of a man who willfully stepped beyond the safe limits of decent everyday society, and paid for it heavily."⁶⁷ Trejago's downfall, the moral economy of the story suggests, is that he has wandered too far from an idealised white imperial subjectivity, specifically through his contact with the racial other. Thus, through their appeals to the supernatural or fictive, many of these Indian tales contain moralizing warnings about the dangers of crossing the colour line, pointing to a constructivist fantasy of racial purity. In this sense, Kipling seems to frame these 'unsanctioned' transgressive acts (as opposed to Kim or Strickland's transgressions which might be considered 'sanctioned' because they act in service to the Empire) not only as a racial betrayal but beyond this, also as acts which transgress the laws of the natural world.

Kipling's South African writing on the other hand points to an unsettling breakdown in this racial structuring, which becomes especially evident in his continuous references to the 'traitorous' Cape Dutch. In these

⁶⁷ Rudyard Kipling, "Beyond the Pale", in *Plain Tales from the Hills* (Penguin Group, 1994), 171.

passages Kipling's sense of outrage and paranoia emerges as vitriolic characterizations of the Boers as subversive and "omnipresent": as a columnist for *The Times* commented on 'The Science of Rebellion' at the time of its publication, "It is, in short with rebellion that Mr. Kipling deals, the rebellion that has been smouldering in the Cape Colony all through this war, rebellion prepared long years before the war began, rebellion to some extent overt and active, but to a far larger extent secret, timorous, cautious, and anxious to hedge to the last moment."⁶⁸ Kipling's frustration however seems to stem largely from the 'unmarked' Boers' ability to circulate unchecked: "They maintain intimate relations with all sides, with the front, and the far more important 'back-front' which begins at Pretoria. First news of all our movements comes to their hands, and also first news of all our reverses."⁶⁹ In 'A Sahib's War', Umr Singh similarly objects to this lack of identifiability, stating that, "when a Sahib goes to war, he puts on the cloth of war, and only those who wear that cloth may take part in the war."⁷⁰

This fear I think can be understood in terms of Michel Foucault's account, in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), of the context out of which the modern disciplinary regime emerged. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, Foucault suggests, this new regime manifested as a response to a fear of the unseen: a desire to "unmask" which occurs through a process of analysis similar to that instituted during outbreaks of the plague in the 17th century. Given the suggestion that imperialism's preoccupation with race emerged in response to the Indian Mutiny of 1857, as well as the broader fear of colonial rebellion, it does not seem unreasonable to read Kipling's South African writing as an attempt to manage 'white' rebels in an almost identical way. As Foucault explains:

⁶⁸ McGregor, Scrapbook, 40.

⁶⁹ Kipling, "Sin of Witchcraft", 5. Brian Cheyette similarly argues that, "The ambivalence or unknowability of the Jewish 'race' meant that it [...] could not be completely confined within the borders of a racialized Englishness" (Bryan Cheyette, *Construction of 'the Jews' in English literature and society* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 92-93).

⁷⁰ Kipling, "Sahib's War", 88.

The plague is met by order; its function is to sort out every possible confusion: that of disease, which is transmitted when bodies are mixed together; that of evil, which is increased when fear and death overcome prohibitions... [The plague is] not collective festival, but strict division; not laws transgressed, but the penetration of regulation in to even the smallest details of everyday life through the mediation of the complete hierarchy that assumed the capillary functioning of power; not masks that were put on and taken off, but the assignment to each individual of his 'true' name, his 'true' place', his 'true' body, his 'true' disease. The plague as a form, at once real and imaginary, of disorder had its medical and political correlative discipline. Behind the disciplinary mechanisms can be read the haunting memory of 'contagions', of the plague, of rebellions, crimes, vagabondage, desertions, people who appear and disappear, live and die in disorder.⁷¹

This, I think, is one of the intersections at which Kipling's South Africa writing operates. Against a fear of mixing and contamination (degeneration, rebellion and so on), he advocates an unmasking; a laying bare of the truth behind the façade; expressing a desire to restore all colonial subjects to the realm of the visible and to enforce a racially structured imperial hierarchy. While disguise, surveillance and cultural transgression play an important role in Kipling's Indian writing, in South Africa we see this structure inverted by the perceived racial transgression of 'degenerate rebels'. Kipling's fear about the prospect of rebellion is thus to a great extent contingent upon the collapse of symbolic racial difference. This is also the central question whose unanswerability seems

⁷¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, Vintage Books, 1979), 197-198.

to constrain his South African writing and which emerges subtly but persistently in his texts: 'How are we to know the loyal subject from the rebel?'; 'How are we to bring 'hidden' racial alterity and rebellion into the realm of the visible?'

Kipling's closing comments in 'The Sin of Witchcraft' also point to a desire to 'unmask' the rebels: "There is one way out of the horror, and one only. The men who have befouled the Colony *are known*."⁷² Echoing Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) – "The horror! The horror!" – Kipling seems to foresee the White Man's fall into darkness, but here the disease of degeneration is no longer external, no longer the result of a proximity to a recognizable 'native', but is located firmly *within* the white race, beyond sight and, possibly, beyond control.

Foucault makes a further comparison between disciplinary practices and regimes of disease containment, this time in terms of the treatment of the leper. As Foucault explains, "The [leper] is marked; the [plagued] analyzed and distributed. The exile of the leper and the arrest of the plague do not bring with them the same political dream. The first is that of a pure community, the second that of a disciplined society."⁷³ We might put this distinction somewhat differently by suggesting that the disciplined society is an attempt to return to an antecedent pure community. The difference between these two after all is that the leper is visually marked while the plagued can only be marked by disciplinary analysis, a "binary division" into normative and unacceptable behaviors: "mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal."⁷⁴

In a postscript to 'The Science of Rebellion' Kipling framed the South African situation in very similar terms to Foucault:

⁷² Kipling, "Sin of Witchcraft", 8. Italics added.

⁷³ Foucault, *Discipline*, 198.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 199.

We have here a disease called the Plague – a new visitor – the outcome of filth and hidden dirt. It is caused by rats that creep into men’s houses and run about under the floors and presently die; one rat infecting the other. When you take up the floor you find the dead rats, and, in due time are yourself shot full of the poison and end miserably at Uitvlugt our plague-camp... Logically, of course, the rat should only be disenfranchised for Plague does not more than kill the body; and after all, the present Municipality’s notions of cleanliness are precisely on a par with the late Ministry’s notions of loyalty. It is an interesting allegory.⁷⁵

Kipling’s conflation of racial degeneration (“hidden dirt”), rebellion and the threat of contagion is I think a clear indication of his anxiety about the potential contamination of whiteness and the breakdown of racial categories.⁷⁶

This fear of contagion was also not limited to the Cape or indeed to the Boers. Kaori Nagai has argued that, “unlike in his earlier pieces, where Kipling acknowledged the nationality or ethnicity of rebellion (often as

⁷⁵ Kipling, “Science of Rebellion”, 10.

⁷⁶ This “allegory” was one Kipling would repeatedly return to in his characterization of the Germans during the course of the First World War: “As to what you say about spies, the one thing we *must* get into our thick heads is that wherever the German – man or woman – gets suitable culture to thrive in, he or she means death and loss to civilized people, precisely as germs of any disease suffered to multiply mean death or loss to mankind. [...] As far as we are concerned, the German is typhoid or plague – *Pestis teutonicus*, if you like. But until we realize this elementary fact in peace, we shall always be liable to outbreaks of anti-civilization” (Pinney, *Vol. III*, 355-356). The Boer-German connection is also an interesting one given Kipling’s outspoken criticism of Germany at the time of the Boer War, as in his reference to “the shameless Hun.” A. Michael Maturin’s “The Hun is at the gate!” gives a further insight into some of these representations (A. Michael Maturin, “The Hun is at the gate!”, *Historicizing Kipling’s Militaristic Rhetoric, from the Imperial Periphery to the National Centre: Part Two: The French, Russian, and German threats to Great Britain*, *Studies in the Novel*, 31.4 [Winter, 1999], 432-470).

Irish), the colonial rebels of the Boer War seem to be collectively forming a new 'breed' – a 'lesser [breed] without the Law' if you like – corrupted and degenerate, full of hatred and often easily bribed."⁷⁷ What this suggests is that, despite the lack of substantive Boer characters in Kipling's writing, the Boers themselves are synecdochical to a broader rebel 'type'. This 'internationalisation' of rebellion, which seems to characterise Kipling's South African writing, is mirrored in his representation of the Empire as a united body and, more broadly, his attempt to unify the 'White Race'. Kipling's collection of poems, many of which were published during the war, *The Five Nations* (1903), is the embodiment of this reframing of inter-empire relations - between Britain and the white settler colonies of South Africa, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The essential intent of this reframing is to draw these nations into a unitary body, no longer with Britain at its head, but as a fraternal structure of equals.⁷⁸ Beyond this several other texts, such as 'The White Man's Burden' (1899) and 'A Song of the White Men' (1900), also make appeals for all whites, including America importantly, to 'take up the burden of the white race'.⁷⁹

It is within this context that the white 'rebel' emerged as a new 'breed', no longer confined or restricted to a specific ethnicity or nationality, no longer the Irish or Boer rebels, but rather as faceless and omnipresent, circulating within the body of the Empire: no longer an external, known and marked enemy, but an internal one.⁸⁰ I believe this 'internationalisation' of rebellion indicates a rupture in Kipling's conception of white imperial subjectivity, resulting in a collective pathologizing of white counter-voices. This is not so much a moment in

⁷⁷ Nagai, *Analogies*, 86.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Bryan Cheyette suggests that 'the Jews' were similarly framed within this dichotomy, suggesting that Kipling "divide[d] 'the Jew' radically in [his] fiction into loyal imperialists, who were conforming to their racial 'bias', and dangerous subversives who represented an alternative universalism to that of Empire", and later that, "When Jews complied with their allotted colonial role, they confirmed the unquestionable superiority of the newly 'chosen' Imperial Race" (*the Jews*, 56; 92).

imperial history as it is indicative of a process, which, at the time of the war, presented itself in a specific historical context. In the same way that Kipling's anxieties about the state of imperialism and the 'white race' are articulated in terms of a racial degeneration, such as was thought to occur in urban living environments, it is similarly structured by a fear of racial contagion. These are the same terms in which the Empire came to view the problem of low class whites, according to which non-normative behaviors such as vagrancy were "seen as a sort of inheritable weakness of character which [were], to make matters worse, highly 'contagious'."⁸¹

Interestingly, one of Kipling's earlier Indian texts, *The Man Who Would Be King* (1888) represents a context very similar to that in South Africa. As members of the 'loafer class', the white protagonists, Daniel Dravot and Peachy Carnehan, like the Boers, occupy a liminal space, straddling the divide between 'civilized' and 'native' culture. The story deals with Dravot and Carnehan's exploitation of the 'natives' of Kafiristan (present-day Afghanistan), whom they deceive into believing they are Gods, installing themselves as quasi-imperial Monarchs. Yet despite their exploitation of the Kafiristan natives, it is only at the point of Dravot's 'going native', following his decision to marry a Kafiristani, that their masquerade is exposed. More specifically, it is through contact with the other that they are reduced to equals - "Neither God nor Devil but a man!" -, which results in "Ruin and Mutiny" as well as their deaths.⁸²

One aspect of the text which almost no scholars have commented on is that the Kafiristan natives are, like Dravot and Carnehan, white: "These men aren't niggers; they're English! Look at their eyes - look at their mouths. Look at the way they stand up. They sit on chairs in their own houses. They're the Lost Tribes, or something like it, and they've grown to be English"⁸³. Bidisha Banerjee however has suggested that the story points to a "reverse of the process suggested by Bhabha", whereby both

⁸¹ Fischer-Tiné, *Licentious*, 80.

⁸² Rudyard Kipling, "The Man Who Would Be King", in *The Phantom Rickshaw & Other Eerie Tales* (Allahabad: A.H. Wheeler and Co., 1988), 55;56.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 93.

coloniser and colonised increasingly mimic one another until the point where, “The identities of difference that the coloniser chooses to distance himself from the colonized and establish him as the evil Other, have collapsed and come upon the colonizer himself”.⁸⁴ Unlike characters such as Kim and Stickland for whom, despite their cultural transgressions, the boundaries of racial difference remain in place, the subjective collapsing which we see in *The Man Who Would Be King* ultimately exposes the lie of colonialism. As Banerjee concludes, “The figure of the crazed and battered Peachey suggests to the reader that for the colonial to become the Other is not contamination but rather a horrifying self-reflection.”⁸⁵

Private Copper

One of Kipling’s stories ‘The Comprehension of Private Copper’ seems similarly to point towards a collapsing of difference, although, it must be said, not to the degree of “horrifying self-reflection”. None the less, unlike Kipling’s other South African writing, ‘Private Copper’ does seem to reflect an anxiety about racial contagion and degeneration. Interestingly, it also seems to be marked by a response to this perceived ‘rebellious alterity’, in the character of Private Copper.

Published a year after ‘A Sahib’s War’, ‘The Comprehension of Private Copper’ is again ostensibly intended to make a number of political points, specifically here about British leniency towards the Boers, both during and after the war. The story deals with an English soldier, Copper, who, whilst stalking a group of Boers – “three farmers” – is himself taken captive by a “stranger.”⁸⁶ The stranger, who both the reader and Copper assume is a Boer, reveals himself to be the son of “an English gentleman”,

⁸⁴ Bidisha Banerjee, “The Native as ‘(an)other’ Self: Colonial Anxiety in Rudyard Kipling’s ‘The Man Who Would Be King’”, *The Kipling Journal*, 85.344 (2011), 7; 18.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Rudyard Kipling, “The Comprehension of Private Copper”, in *Traffics and Discoveries* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1904), 159;160.

who had settled in the Transvaal in 1878, following its annexation by Britain.⁸⁷ The man was thus betrayed, the stranger tells us, when the Transvaal was restored in 1881. Copper, however, is able to turn the tables on his captor, knocking him out and marching him back to his picket.

This encounter between Copper and his captive is the most clear example of the uncanny in Kipling's South African writing, not only because of the stranger's ambivalent status as both Boer and Englishman – "Why, you aint Dutch. You're English, same as me" –, but also because of the suspicion surrounding his race. Initially he is described as being "dark-skinned, dark-haired, and dark-eyed"⁸⁸, a description which, immediately signals his mysteriousness and hints at a racial ambiguity. Later the narrator also euphemistically describes him as having a face, "dusky with rage."⁸⁹

Nagai has argued that, because of the lack of racial difference between the English and the Irish, Kipling sometimes "resorts to the ears" to signal racial difference.⁹⁰ In the same way, Copper's suspicion about the stranger's race is based largely on his apprehension of the captive's speech. We are told for example that the stranger speaks with a "clipped cadence that recalled to Copper vague memories of Umballa" and later even more candidly: "for no conceivable reason, Private Copper found his inward eye turned upon Umballa cantonments of a dry dusty afternoon, when the saddle-coloured son of a local hotel-keeper came to the barracks to complain of a theft of fowls. He saw the dark face, the plover's-egg-tinted eyeballs, and the thin excited hands."⁹¹ The reference to "plover's-egg-tinted-eyeballs" here is a reference to the belief that half-caste origins could be detected in eye colour. Similarly, after knocking the man out, the first thing Copper does is to examine his fingernails, again

⁸⁷ Ibid., 163.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 161; 160.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 166. 'Dusky' i.e. dark skinned.

⁹⁰ Nagai, *Analogies*, 54.

⁹¹ Kipling, "Private Copper", 160; 166.

because of the belief that nails could indicate one's 'true' racial make-up. Confused, Copper can find no sign to confirm his suspicions: " 'Is Nails are as clean as mine – but he talks just like 'em though.'"⁹² Finally, Copper has his prisoner repeat the phrase "pore Tommy", before concluding, "*That's* what's been puzzling me since I 'ad the pleasure of meetin' you... You ain't 'alf-caste, but you talk *chee-chee-pukka* bazaar chee-chee."⁹³

We should, I think, read the stranger's perceived racial degeneration at face value: that is, that the stranger is not half-caste but it indeed presented as being degenerate. Copper however is presented as being a 'superior' white man, the product, it seems, of his pastoral upbringing - "Copper's father was a Southdown shepherd" -, his "Five years army service", and his experience in India.⁹⁴ It is this it seems which allows him to 'comprehend' the stranger's true race. In 'The Science of Rebellion', Kipling acknowledges the challenge of identifying the racially degenerate 'rebel' from the Dutch 'loyalist', but suggests, "Colonials... have a horrible gift, denied to purely British forces, of distinguishing a loyalist from a rebel."⁹⁵ This is the same "gift" which Copper seems to possess. Moreover, the threat that is perceived to confront English culture and imperialism is precisely this process of racial contagion, which seems to have affected the stranger. In this sense the narrative economy of the text points to a fear of racial and imperial decline, and the hope and responsibility which men such as Copper hold.

While Van Wyk Smith infers some doubt on Kipling's part about the project of imperialism or the motivations for the war, I think there is little evidence of this.⁹⁶ Kipling does indeed seem to have grave concerns about imperialism's continued survival, but the blame for this seems to be placed squarely on the 'degenerate rebels' who continue to 'contaminate' the white race. Thus, although Copper is invested with a 'superiority', the

⁹² Ibid., 168.

⁹³ Ibid., 168.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 159.

⁹⁵ Kipling, "Science of Rebellion", 4.

⁹⁶ Van Wyk Smith, "Narrative Indeterminacy", 359.

narrative does little to dispel the doubts he raises about the story's other soldiers:

“They are only po-ah Tommies,” said Copper, apologetically, to the prisoner. “Po-ah uneducated khakis. *They* don't know what they're fightin' for. They're lookin' for what the diseased, lying, drinkin' white stuff they come from is sayin' about 'em!”⁹⁷

Philip Holden's comments support such a reading: as he points out, “the Tommies are shown to be drinking and lying, if not diseased; they scarcely seem unproblematic representatives of a new masculine national order” (103). Copper confirms the perceived similarity between the captive and these soldiers later when he refers to him (the captive) in mirrored terms: “Pore beggar – oh, pore, *pore* beggar!”⁹⁸ As a white colonial, the Canadian Sergeant's suggestion that he doesn't “understand them” is similarly an indictment of McBride and the other British soldiers.⁹⁹ Kipling also seems to point here to form of cultural contagion, in as much as his indictment of his fellow soldiers is a more serious indictment of those oppositional voices which have ‘misinformed’ them: the “English Weekly” and the “accredited leaders of His Majesty's Opposition” – to a form of ‘going native’ at home.¹⁰⁰

In these passages Kipling's views are both uncompromising and also ironic, given his position as the ‘Bard of Empire’. As such, Kipling seems to finger the degenerate rebels’ - “the diseased lying, drinkin' white stuff” - anti-imperial propoganda for further misinforming the “po-ah

⁹⁷ Kipling, “Private Copper”, 170.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 172.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 170.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 171.

uneducated khakis". The story's epigraphic poem, 'The King's Task', emphasises the slow deliberate progress of British culture:

Rudely but greatly they begat the body of state and of shire.

Rudely but greatly they laboured, and their labour stands till now.¹⁰¹

But in doing so it also foreshadows the potential for the collapse of British 'civility'. This, it seems, is what Copper 'comprehends': the danger posed by the degenerate white rebels. In light of this, the earlier suggestion that the stranger is Copper's "first intimate enemy" prefigures just how 'intimate' this enemy is.¹⁰² However, although the story seems to hint at the potential threat posed by imperial 'rebels', the character of Private Copper also points towards the possibility of imperial triumph. His response to the stranger's threats certainly suggests as much:

'Yes, after eight years, my father, cheated by your bitch of a country, he found out who was the upper dog in South Africa.'

'That's me,' said Copper valiantly. 'If it takes another 'alf-century, it's me an' the likes of me.'¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 158.

¹⁰² Ibid., 160.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 165.

CHAPTER 2

Set against Kipling's anxiety about white degeneration and 'rebellion' – characterised by a desire to 'see beyond the visible' – seems to be a recurrent attempt to affirm a homogenous sense of white loyalty. As such many of the characters we might expect to express a resistance to imperialism seem rather to affirm it and, in so doing, also affirm Kipling's notions of 'whiteness'. Nagai points out that in 'The Sin of Witchcraft', Kipling "does not specify the rebels as Dutch, preferring to call them 'disloyalists', who believe that it no longer pays to be loyal. In this way Kipling downplays the possibility of the Cape rebellion as an ethnic and nationalist struggle."¹⁰⁴ Two further stories, 'The Way That He Took' and 'The Captive', and one of Kipling's poems, 'The Settler', also seem to bear this out. Much like Nagai's reading of Irish soldiers as representing a silenced 'white subaltern' voice, I read the characters in these stories as representing a silenced anti-imperial voice.

The Captive

Much like 'Private Copper', 'The Captive' again stages an encounter with a prisoner who turns out not to be a Boer but another white man, in this case an American, who has 'gone native'. It tells the story of Laughton O. Zigler, an entrepreneur who has fought on the side of the Boers testing his "Laughton-Zigler automatic two-inch field-gun."¹⁰⁵ Once again the narrative takes on a candid racial inflection, with a fellow American accusing Zigler of "[going] back on the White Man in six places at once – two hemispheres and four continents – America, England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa", and concluding that he will

¹⁰⁴ Nagai, *Analogies*, 87.

¹⁰⁵ Rudyard Kipling, "The Captive", in *Traffics and Discoveries* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1904), 6.

“end up fighting for niggers.”¹⁰⁶ Zigler’s actions are thus clearly framed as a racial betrayal, presenting him as part of a broader self-serving and contaminated rebel type: “I know this breed.”¹⁰⁷ Yet, as I argue here, this overt image of ‘rebellion’ seems somewhat out of sync with the rest of the text.

The story takes place at a prison camp in Simonstown where a Kiplingesque “visitor” arrives hoping to speak to some of the captives. After offering the prisoner some newspapers, “dangled as bait”, the narrator recedes entirely from the text, allowing Zigler to tell his story undisturbed.¹⁰⁸ The authority of the story thus stems from the seeming lack of narrative interference, which frames Zigler’s monologue as a testimony. The epigraph too is designed to create an impression of narrative passivity:

So I submitted myself to the limits of rapture –

Bound by this man we had bound – amid captives his capture.¹⁰⁹

In his autobiography *Something of Myself* (1937), Kipling recalled that ‘The Captive’ was a story with which he had particular difficulties, implicitly alluding to the narrative structure in particular:

Again, in a South African post-Boer War tale called, ‘The Captive’ which was built up around the phrase ‘a first-class dress rehearsal for Armageddon’, I could not get my lighting into key with the tone of the monologue. The background insisted too much. My Daemon said at last:

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 32-33;33.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 32.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 2.

‘Paint the background first once for all, as hard as a public-house sign, and leave it alone.’ This done, the rest fell into place with the American accent and outlook of the teller.¹¹⁰

Keeping this in mind, Nagai suggests that in Kipling’s Indian texts, the voices of Irish and British soldier are not treated in the same way.¹¹¹ This, Nagai argues, indicates an anxiety about the rebelliousness of Irish voices and the need for a strict narrative management, which makes them speak exclusively for the Empire. In ‘The Captive’ however this process appears reversed because the story is presented without interjection from the frame-narrator.

However, despite its framing, Zigler’s narrative remains largely dialogical, with the effect that it functions more as a confession than a defense. Zigler’s “American accent and outlook”, which Kipling alludes to, thus act to express a confusion, naivety and tension within Zigler, which undermines his own justifications for his actions. We are told for example that Zigler has “that air of Oriental spaciousness which distinguishes the native-born American”, which, as van Wyk Smith puts it, is “no doubt meant to confirm the gullibility [of] all Americans.”¹¹² What follows then is a story of repentance by one whom, it seems, both thinks with the mind of the rebel, and yet is able to observe himself objectively. This is also the essential struggle in Zigler’s character, represented by the conflict between his personal (rebel) voice and his collective (white) voice. Zigler’s justifications for his actions thus all occur in terms of the personal, while his sense of guilt occurs in terms of the collective: “I didn’t take the field as an offensive partisan, but as an inventor”; “It was a condition and not a theory that confronted me.”¹¹³ As such, the narrative

¹¹⁰ Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself* (London: Macmillan, 1951), 210.

¹¹¹ Nagai, *Analogies*, 56.

¹¹² Kipling, “Captive”, 5; Van Wyk Smith, “Narrative Indeterminacy”, 361

¹¹³ Kipling, “Captive”, 9.

seems to frame 'rebellious' white voices as anomalous and, thereby, without legitimate cause.

Later, Zigler again attempts to defend his actions from the perspective of the individual:

'How do you regard the proposition – as a Brother? If you'd invented your own gun, and spent fifty-seven thousand dollars on her – and had paid your own expenses from the word 'go'? An American citizen has a right to choose his own side in an unpleasantness, and Van Zyl wasn't any Krugerrite... and I'd risked my hide at my own expense. I got that man's [a fellow American] address from Van Zyl; he was a mining man at Kimberley, and I wrote him the facts. But he never answered.'¹¹⁴

Again, what is striking about this plea is the confused terms of reference. On the one hand Zigler appeals for an understanding of the personal and individual, as in his rhetorical question, "[How would you feel] if you'd invented your own gun?" Yet this very appeal is made on the basis of a collective/social context: his appeal to the narrator's sense of fraternity ("as a Brother") and the American loyalist's shared nationality. Tellingly, in the course of this thought Zigler addresses questions at both the narrator and the American. The silence of both leaves Zigler to provide his own answer: "Guess he thought I lied.... Damned Southern rebel!"¹¹⁵ Zigler's American interlocutor's views thus become a surrogate for those of the conspicuously silent narrator. "[T]he facts", it seems, do little to convince either American or narrator that Zigler's actions can be excused.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 33.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Given this I would argue that, although Zigler seemingly speaks with two voices - the collective voice of the white man, who speaks for the Empire, and the individual voice of the rebel – the story seems to function only to delegitimise the ‘rebel’ voice, whilst also deny any claim to an anti-imperialism or an alternate whiteness.

The Way That He Took

Take this formidable people and train them for seven generations in constant warfare against savage men and ferocious beasts, in circumstances under which no weakling could survive, place them so that they acquire exceptional skill with weapons and in horsemanship, give them a country which is eminently suited to the tactics of the huntsman, the marksman, and the rider. [...] Combine all these qualities and all these impulses in one individual, and you have the modern Boer – the most formidable antagonist who ever crossed the path of Imperial Britain.¹¹⁶

The passage above is taken from another jingo, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Great Boer War* (1902). Doyle goes on to write that, “No one can know or appreciate the Boer who does not know his past, for he is what his past has made him.”¹¹⁷ Yet several critics have suggested that Kipling’s South African writing seems to contain no sense of South African, let alone Boer, history. Paula Krebs for example argues that “Kipling does not make the Boers into the kind of romantic, worthy

¹¹⁶ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1902), 1-2.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

opponents that Arthur Conan Doyle had constructed”, and later goes so far as to argue that, “Kipling’s fiction about the Boer War is not about South Africa or South Africans; it is about war, and, even then, not about battles but about soldiers”.¹¹⁸ Broadly, Krebs’ characterization seems apt, but for ‘The Way That He Took’, which, I would argue, seems to represent the singular examples (outside of his poetry perhaps) in which Kipling attempts to acknowledge or engage with this history. Yet even this story seems caught-up with the kind of management of potential ‘rebelliousness’ that characterises his other Boer War texts, though in this case in a way more characteristic of his Indian writing. As I argue here, it seems that even when Kipling was able to acknowledge Boer identity as distinct from imperial ‘whiteness’, the result is a subjective ‘coalescing’ and a denial of white difference. It is the first part of the text which, for my purposes, is of most interest, particularly because it features the only loyal Dutch character in Kipling’s South Africa writing.

The story is set in the arid Karoo region, a landscape which features in other of Kipling’s texts - notably ‘A Sahib’s War’ and the poem ‘Bridge-Guard in the Karroo’ -, where the protagonist, a Captain of a Mounted Infantry unit, is stationed. On an afternoon he meets a ‘loyal’ Dutch nurse, Sister Margaret, after the ambulance train she is working on is stopped. The two spend the evening in discussion until after nightfall when she leaves, during which time she relates to him her experience of growing up in the Karoo. In the course of their conversation Sister Margaret mentions to him that in the Karoo people learn from an early age never to return home by the same route, because, as she explains: “If any one – suppose you had dismissed a Kaffir, or got him sjamboked, and he saw you go out? He would wait for you to come back on a tired horse, and then... You see?”¹¹⁹ Some time later a Boer commando lures the Captain and the men under his command into an ambush. By remembering the advice of Sister Margaret never to “return home by the same path”, the Captain and his

¹¹⁸ Krebs, *Public Discourse*, 160; 168.

¹¹⁹ Rudyard Kipling, “The Way That He Took”, *People’s Friend* [South Africa], 18 June, 1900, in McGregor, *Scrapbook*, 58.

men are able to escape with their lives. As the story ends, the British Colonel remains doubtful about the Captain's version of events and appears agitated that he did not return directly.

As with much of Kipling's other Boer War writing, the ostensible purpose of the story appears to be to criticise the unthinking and unprepared British officer-class, "who suggest and advise, and want to make their blasted reputations in twenty minutes", which manifests in their unwillingness to adjust to the circumstances of the war.¹²⁰ As is clear from the story's ending, the Colonel, "newly appointed from England by reason of seniority" is the particular focus of this criticism here, specifically because of his inability to understand the Captain's actions: " 'As you please, sir,' said the Captain, hopelessly. 'My responsibility ends with my report' "¹²¹.

This story, along with three other 'Stories of the War', was first published in the *Daily Express* in June of 1900, although other versions were published elsewhere later that month.¹²² These were the earliest of Kipling's South African stories, appearing only some eight months after the declaration of war in early October of 1899. Although 'The Way That He Took' seems to have almost entirely evaded scholarly attention it was the only one of these stories to be subsequently republished.¹²³ It was also first published in the same year as the first installment of *Kim*, which appeared serially in *McClure's Magazine* from December 1900 to October of 1901, and this probably explains the degree of similarity between some elements of the two stories.

Much like the British soldiers' experience of the Boer fighters, Dutch characters appear in Kipling's writing only at a distance, as shadowy figures on the horizon: always present but seldom seen up-close. Yet in

¹²⁰ Ibid., 60.

¹²¹ Ibid., 59; 61.

¹²² The other stories were "Folly Bridge", "The Outsider", and "A Burgher of the Free State" (Renee Durbach, *Kipling's South Africa* [Diep River: Chameleon Press, 1988], 89). The *Sydney Morning Herald*, for example published an amended version on June 27.

¹²³ In *Land and Sea Tales* (1923).

his journalism Kipling often addresses the 'problem of the Dutch', alluding especially to the manipulation of the Bond in the Cape Colony or the degeneracy of the up-country 'Hollanders'. The Boers feature also in his stories, yet, then again, only at a distance: the prisoner of 'The Captive' and the Boer in 'The Comprehension of Private Copper' turn out to be an American and a disaffected Englishman respectively, fighting on the side of the Boers, while the Boers in 'A Sahib's War' are crudely drawn stereotypes who serve only as props in another polemic about the war.

Interestingly, the story has a great deal in common with *Kim*, especially inasmuch as both stories contain white characters who enact a fantasy of cultural transgression in service of the Empire. In 'The Way That He Took' however, the position of the other is filled by a white character, Sister Margaret, who initiates the British Captain into Dutch 'ways of seeing'. Renee Durbach, in his study of Kipling's time in South Africa, suggests that "in India, [Kipling] recognised and respected an ancient tradition without needing to understand it", while, "he failed to see South Africa as a country with a history."¹²⁴ Sister Margaret therefore stands out as something of an anomaly in Kipling's South African writing because she is the only Dutch character imbued with a sense of South African history. Although in her development as a character she is perhaps comparable to other Boers in Kipling's writing, such as General Van Zyl of 'The Captive' and the Boer prisoner (who turns out to be British) in 'The Comprehension of Private Copper', there is little which connects these characters with the South African space. The *Land and Sea Tales* (1923) edition of the story carries the introductory note that "Almost every word of this story is based on fact."¹²⁵ The events of the story make it doubtful whether this is true, but, in the context of the story, Sister Margaret's value does derive specifically from her perceived authenticity as a Dutch South African. Like the adolescent Kim, Margaret's knowledge is also directly associated with her childhood – "Now, when I was little..."; "How

¹²⁴ Durbach, *Kipling's South Africa*, 89.

¹²⁵ Rudyard Kipling, *Land and Sea Tales for Scouts and Guides* (London: Macmillan, 1930), 25.

old were you?' Snake-hunting did not strike the Captain as a safe amusement for the young."¹²⁶ Thus, although the appearance of Sister Margaret covers only the first part of the story, the plot hinges upon her presence and perceived authenticity.

As in *Kim*, what Kipling advocates in 'The Way That He Took' is a flexibility of character and the necessity of 'native' knowledge, but these texts are also indicative of Kipling's apprehension of the relationship between knowledge and power. As such, the Captain's unfamiliarity with South Africa and his willingness to move beyond the confines of 'British culture' positions him as a Kim-like character. Importantly, this process is not only a matter of knowledge, but rather is dependant upon a willingness to see the landscape through unfamiliar eyes, a willingness to transgress his own cultural restrictions.

Despite its seemingly sparse beauty, the foreignness of this landscape is chaotic and unintelligible to the British characters, focalised initially through the British Major:

Southward the level *lost itself* in a tangle of scrub-furred hillocks, upheaved *without purpose or order*, seared and blackened by the strokes of the careless lightning, seamed down their sides with *spent water-courses*, and peppered from base to summit with stones – *riven, piled, scattered stones*. Far away, to the eastward, a line of blue-grey mountains, peaked and horned, lifted itself over the huddle of the tortured earth. *It was the only thing that held steady through the liquid mirage. The nearer hills detached themselves from the plain, and swam forward like islands in a milky ocean. While the Major stared through puckered*

¹²⁶ Kipling, "Way He Took", 58.

eyelids, Leviathan himself waded through the far shallows of it – a black and *formless beast*".¹²⁷

The parallels to *Kim* here are, I think, fairly straightforward, and also remarkably visual. Just as the Orient was often presented in Western Discourse as an indecipherable mass of creeds and colours, the Karoo landscape appears equally unintelligible to English eyes. Kipling's attention to the visual in the 'The Way That He Took' is also unique amongst his South African texts. Here he indulges his sense for the visual and the atmospheric in a way much like his depiction of the Grand Trunk Road in *Kim*. Unlike the Major however, Kim relishes the apprehension and interpretation of these 'foreign' landscapes:

The diamond-bright dawn woke men and crows and bullocks together. Kim sat up and yawned, shook himself, and thrilled with delight. This was seeing the world in real truth; this was life as he would have it – bustling and shouting, the buckling of belts, the beating of bullocks and creaking of wheels, lighting of fires and cooking of food, and new sights at every turn of the approving eye. The morning mist swept off in a whorl of silver, and parrots shot away to some distant river in a shrieking hosts: all the well wheels within earshot went to work. India was awake, and Kim was in the middle of it, more awake and more excited than anyone.¹²⁸

While the Major perceives the Karoo landscape as eerie and portentous – "peaked and horned", "the huddle of the tortured earth", "Leviathan... a

¹²⁷ Ibid., 57. Italics added.

¹²⁸ Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (London: Vinage Books, 2010), 79.

black and formless beast” -, Kim revels in the spontaneous joys of visual and cultural difference: “Kim dived into the happy Asiatic disorder which, if you only allow time, will bring you everything that a simple man needs”; “Kim was in the seventh heaven of joy”¹²⁹. This indulgence forms part of Kim’s training because, as Satya P. Mohanty points out, later Kim will “effortlessly become what the lama – and for that matter most of the Indian characters in the novel – cannot quite become: a competent and reliable reader of texts, ultimately, in fact, of society as text.”¹³⁰

Discussing the above passage from ‘The Way That He Took’, Michael Rice comments that, “The haze and mirage are emblematic of the main theme: nothing is as it seems. This is no despoiled Eden but a grim and uncompromising land where death lurks in the shadows. The twisted, distorted landscape, at once beautiful and deadly, is a constant reminder to those who pass through it to take nothing for granted and be ever on their guard.”¹³¹ But there seems to be more at play than this, particularly because Kipling goes on to offer another description of the landscape, this time through the eyes of Sister Margaret:

With the sinking of the sun the dry-dugged hilled had taken life, and glowed against the green of the horizon. Red, cinnamon, opal, amber, dun, and pure cobalt, they rose up like jewels in the utterly clear sky, while the valleys between flooded with purple shadow. A mile away, stark-clear, withered rocks showed as though one could touch them with the hand, and the voice of a native herdboycame in charge of a flock of sheep came in clear and hard over twice that distance.¹³²

¹²⁹ Ibid., 69-70; 70.

¹³⁰ Mohanty, “Color Line”, 318.

¹³¹ Michael Rice, *From Dolly Gray to Sarie Marais: the Boer War in Popular Memory* (Cape Town: Fiscer press, 2004), 49.

¹³² Kipling, “Way He Took”, 57.

In doing so of course Kipling rehearses many of the qualities that characterise his Indian writing, specifically in terms of his construction of the other. As Low comments, much of this has to do with the ways in which he speaks, “not only [...] on behalf of the Other, but also from the place of the Other.”¹³³ In offering two differing descriptions of the Karoo landscape – from the perspectives of the British Major and Sister Margaret –, it seems then that, despite his implicit acknowledgement of the problematic situation of Englishmen within this African space, Kipling overlooks the irony of his own position as an English writer by offering a description on behalf of and from the place of the cultural other. Not surprisingly then the portrait offered by Sister Margaret contrasts significantly with that of the Major. Rather than his dark, sterile, gothic vision, Sister Margaret’s landscape is vibrant and evocative: “the dry-dugged hilled had taken life”; “Red, cinnamon, opal, amber, dun, and pure cobalt, they rose up like jewels in the utterly clear sky, while the valleys between flooded with purple shadow”. This then is not an “uncompromising land where death lurks in the shadows”, but a space of life and colour, at least to those acquainted with it.

In *White Writing*, J.M. Coetzee traces the historical engagement of Western culture with the South African landscape. The premise of Coetzee’s approach is to question why it is that, unlike in America, no distinct codification or aesthetic tradition emerged towards this space. Rather, Coetzee suggests, what we see is “a concern with the hermeneutics of landscape.”¹³⁴ As Coetzee concludes,

The dominating questions [in South African landscape art], particularly in poetry, and most of all in English-language poetry, become: How are we to read the African

¹³³ Low, *White Skins*, 6.

¹³⁴ Coetzee, *White Writing*, 62.

landscape? Is it readable at all? Is it readable only in an African language? Is the very enterprise of reading the African landscape doomed, in that it prescribes the quintessentially European posture of reader vis-à-vis environment? Behind these questions, in turn, lies a historical insecurity regarding the place of the artist of European heritage in the African landscape such as we do not encounter in America – an insecurity not without cause.¹³⁵

The ‘readability’ of the landscape with which Kipling is concerned in the ‘The Way That He Took’ is not identical to that outlined by Coetzee, but they nonetheless share some commonalities. Kipling’s landscape is allegorical, in as much as it is synonymous with its cultural counterpart. Coetzee, on the other hand, is concerned with the representation of the South African landscape within the European cultural imaginary. Both of these ‘readabilities’ then are essentially concerned with the interaction between culture and space, in terms of the cultural vocabulary that informs and emerges out of its perception and representation. Caught up within both of their approaches is the essential question of what the South African space means to European eyes, and behind this question, to paraphrase Coetzee, lurks an insecurity about the European’s place in Africa; a question of belonging.

In terms of Coetzee’s analysis, the effect of this contrast between the two descriptions Kipling provides is that, despite his acknowledgement of the potential “insecurity” or ambivalence associated with a European reading of the African landscape, in purporting to offer a true account he subverts this very insecurity. There are two aspects that are noteworthy about this. The first is that, from the perspective of the Englishman, the vision Kipling offers is a distinctly affirmative one, specifically because it

¹³⁵ Ibid.

imagines an African landscape in which the 'white man' can belong. And secondly: in presenting this vision, Kipling positions the Boer as an authentic feature of the South African landscape and perhaps even, by extension, as the South African 'native'.

Krebs has argued that, "despite Kipling's professed love for the landscape of South Africa, many of his South African stories could have been set anywhere."¹³⁶ Yet, the reading I provide here points at the very least to Kipling's acknowledgement of the relation between the South African landscape and South African, specifically Boer, cultural identity. What is more, while there seems to be a general sense that these South African texts address issues of the Empire at large, specifically by framing the conflict as an 'international war', the vision offered by this story is one which speaks to more specific concerns to do with the position of the Englishman in Africa.

As with *Kim*, the actuating principle that separates Kim and the Captain from the Major, is a transgressive desire. As Said outlines in *Orientalism*, *Kim's* boyhood fascination with cultural alterity is precisely what leads to colonial control. Therefore, if *Kim* is a synthesis of boyhood pleasure and the imperial cause, then 'The Way That He Took' should be read as a curter and mature version of this thesis. This is underscored by the story's republication in *Land and Sea Tales* (1923), a collection compiled for Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. There was a great deal of commonality between the Scouts movement and Imperialism, specifically because of the role that cultural transgression and pleasure played in creating an authoritative imperial masculinity. As Said argues about *Kim*:

We should not be mistaken about these boyish pleasures. They do not contradict the overall political purpose of British control over India and Britain's other dominions: on the contrary, *pleasure*, whose steady presence in many

¹³⁶ Krebs, *Public Discourse*, 167.

forms of imperial colonial writing as well as figurative and musical art is often left undiscussed, is an undeniable component of *Kim*. An almost exact contemporary of Kipling, BP [Baden-Powell], as he was called, was greatly influenced by Kipling's boys generally and Mowgli in particular; BP's idea about 'boyology' fed those images directly into a grand scheme of imperial authority culminating in the great Boy Scout structure 'fortifying the wall of empire', which confirmed this inventive conjunction of fun and service in row after row of bright-eyed eager, and resourceful little middle-class servant of empire.¹³⁷

In 'The Way That He Took' it is again a form of pleasure and desire which actuates this fantasy of cultural transgression and imperial control. Yet unlike the adolescent *Kim*, for the Captain it is Sister Margaret who actuates this pleasure: " 'I'm glad I pleased you,' said the Captain, looking into Sister Margaret's black-lashed, grey eyes, under the heavy brown hair, shot with grey where it rolled back from the tanned forehead. This kind of nurse was new to his experience." As the primary focaliser of the story, the Captain's desire and curiosity therefore functions as a refrain throughout their meeting: "The Captain wished to know something more about her", "[She was] an extraordinary woman."¹³⁸ It is this desire, the story suggests, which sets the Captain apart from the other officers and positions him as an ideal imperial subject: as he attests, unlike his fellow Englishmen, he is "rather singular."¹³⁹

As in *Kim*, in 'The Way That He Took' it is only the trained eyes of the native, Sister Margaret, to whom this foreign landscape is decipherable: "Sister Margaret devoured the huge spaces with eyes unused to shorter

¹³⁷ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 166.

¹³⁸ Kipling, "Way He Took", 58; 60.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

ranges”; “[She looked] with eyes that burned.”¹⁴⁰ It is this ability which becomes the vehicle for the Captains’ initiation, as, through a series of exchanges, Sister Margaret teaches him to ‘see through new eyes’ and interpret both the physical and the cultural landscapes. In so doing of course, like Kim, the Captain’s knowledge of native culture and loyalty to the Empire positions him as Kipling’s ideal White Man.

The first of their exchanges revolves around the shared belief that the recalcitrance and rigidity of most Englishmen causes them to believe there is nothing to ‘see’ in the Karoo. As the Captain explains, “Most of us hate the Karroo [sic]. I used to, but it grows on one somehow.” The Captain thus signals his powers of perception and transgressive desire – his ‘singularity’ – through his sense that there is more to the landscape than meets the eye. Sister Margaret’s response also affirms the Captain’s uniqueness:

‘You’re quite right,’ she said, with an emphatic stamp of her foot. ‘People come to Matjiesfontein – ugh! – with their lungs, and they live opposite the railway station and that new hotel of Logan’s and they think that’s the Karroo. They say there isn’t anything in it. It’s full of life when you get really into it. *You see that?* I’m so glad. D’you know, you’re the first English officer I’ve heard who has spoken a good word for my country?’¹⁴¹

Interestingly, what appeals to the Captain about this country is the “lack of fences and roads”: the freedom and openness of this permeable and unregulated geographical (and social) space. In contrast to this, as Margaret later points out, most Englishmen are used to a world, “where

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 58.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 57. Italics added.

the road is all walled.”¹⁴² Similarly, Margaret’s rhetorical question “You see that?” becomes an almost neurotic refrain throughout this initiation, but it also points to a conflation of the physical and cultural landscapes; a reading of both physical and social signs.

As Margaret explains, the English’s failure to govern in South Africa stems from their inability to “be nice to people”, by which she implies a cultural introversion and bureaucratic blindness. The next subject of conversation Margaret elaborates to the Captain thus hinges upon the lack of social knowledge of an “aide-de-camp at Govern House.”¹⁴³ In this anecdote, the Englishman manages to offend a Boer, Piet Van der Hooven, when he invites Van der Hooven and his wife to a dinner, not knowing that “she had been dead eight years”. “He was a little angry – not much,” Margaret explains,

... but he went to Cape Town, and that aide-de-camp – had made a joke about it – about the dead woman – in the Civil Service Club. *You see?* So, of course, the Bond men there told Van der Hooven that the aide-de-camp had said he could not remember all the old Dutch vrous that died, and Van der Hooven went away, and now he is more hot Bond than ever. If you stay with us you must not be like that. *You see?*¹⁴⁴

In this way ‘native’ knowledge is directly linked with the ability to govern, an approach implicit in Orientalism and imperial administration in British India. As Viswanathan explains: “Underlying Orientalism was a tacit policy of what one may call reverse acculturation, whose goal was to

¹⁴² Ibid., 58.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Italics added.

train British administrators and civil servants to fit into the culture of the ruled and to assimilate them thoroughly into the native way of life.”¹⁴⁵

The Captain’s response to Margaret’s suggestion is also telling: “ ‘I won’t,’ said the Captain, seriously. ‘What a God’s own night it is, Sister!’ He dwelt lovingly on the last word, as men do in South Africa.’ ” This response is obviously intended as an affirmation of the Captain’s affection for both South Africa and its people, represented here by Sister Margaret, but it also signals a change in the Captain himself. It is especially striking that the Captain should now be speaking as a ‘man in South Africa’, and not as an Englishman, and we can only assume that in the course of their conversation the Captain has transitioned into becoming a ‘South African.’

There are further clues which also signal this change. It is mirrored for example in the change in their surroundings and a withdrawal of the physical landscape: “The soft darkness had shut upon them unaware, and the earth had vanished. There was not so much breeze as a slow motion of the whole dry air under the vault of the immeasurably deep heavens.” The retreat of the (previously unintelligible) landscape thus also signals a retreat of the cultural landscape, and more specifically of cultural difference, whereby the Captain finds himself in a transient space of cultural liminality. Looking into the night sky, Sister Margaret remarks to the Captain, “those are *our* stars”. Although this “our” no doubt refers to Sister Margaret’s ‘people’, the Dutch, it also seems here to include the Captain himself.

The narrative structure of the text is also noteworthy because of its movement between various focalizing positions. While we are given access to the thoughts and histories of the English characters – “A few months ago the doctor had retired from practice to a country house in rainy England” - Sister Margaret is most often represented from the

¹⁴⁵ Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 28.

perspective of the external observer.¹⁴⁶ For the majority of the story therefore Sister Margaret herself stands as part of this physical and cultural landscape: an external sign to be interpreted. The narrator and protagonist thus indulge in a relativistic game of interpretation, an attempt to evaluate her actions as external observers: “She flung her hands outward with a curious un-English gesture.”¹⁴⁷

Tellingly however, there are two distinct points at which we are given narrative access to Sister Margaret’s consciousness. This first occurs through her description of the Karoo landscape, which I have already dealt with. The second however coincides with the Captain’s seeming assumption of a transgressive cultural identity. It also follows the only point at which the Captain issues a directive, now able to lead this game of ‘looking’ and ‘seeing’ because of his new cultural understanding - able to anticipate Sister Margaret’s attitudes:

‘Look up,’ said the Captain; ‘doesn’t it make you feel as if you were tumbling down into the stars – all upside down?’

‘Yes,’ said sister Margaret, tilting her head back on the camp-chair. ‘It is always like that. I know. And those are our stars.’

They burned with great glory, large as the eyes of cattle by lamplight; planet after planet of the mild southern sky. *As the Captain said, one seemed to be falling from the hidden earth sheer through space between them.*¹⁴⁸

In this way, the narrative economy of the story suggests, for the Captain, Sister Margaret moves from being ‘observable’ to being ‘knowable’. As I

¹⁴⁶ Kipling, “Way He Took”, 57.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 58.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. Italics added.

have already mentioned, Low suggests that in India the dynamic of cultural transgression stems from a “desire for psychological reassurance.” Such an individual, Low explains, would be able to interpret the colonial landscape and thereby stay “one step ahead of trouble.”¹⁴⁹ This form of knowledge is thus both real and projected, the product of real information – “*Even when we were children we learned not to go back the way we come*” -, as well as a vicarious transgressive imagining.¹⁵⁰ ‘The way that the Captain takes’ is therefore not a simple matter of knowledge or instruction, but rather rests upon an ability to think with the mind of the Boer. At the story’s climactic moment it is in remembering Margaret and ‘seeing through native eyes’ that the Captain is able to anticipate the Boers’ movements. In the following passage, his cultural transgression momentarily actuates a vicarious omniscience, which is only made possible through his remembering of Sister Margaret:

The Captain, thinking furiously, found his mind suddenly turn to a camp in the Karroo [sic] months ago – an engine that halted in that waste, and a woman with brown hair, early grizzled – an extraordinary woman. (Yes, but as soon as they had dropped the flat-topped kopje behind its neighbour he must hurry back and report.) A woman with grey eyes and black eye lashes. (The Boers would probably be massed at those two kopjes. How soon dare he break into a canter?) A woman with a queer cadence in her speech. (It was not more than five miles home by the straight road.)¹⁵¹

‘Native knowledge’ thus becomes a form of military power, representing a structure with the ability to exert a panopticon-like gaze over an entire

¹⁴⁹ Low, *White Masks*, 223.

¹⁵⁰ Kipling, “Way He Took”, 4.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

'category' of people. This structure is identical to the one we find in *Kim*, varying only in degree. As Thomas Richards argues, "In *Kim*, [...] social knowledge has become coextensive with military intelligence, and though it may not be possible to place that knowledge in one state archive and classify it methodologically, it yet remains possible for one state archivist, one archival superman, provisionally to comprehend all of it."¹⁵²

The importance of being able to 'see through the eyes of the native' is also illustrated by Margaret herself, who is invested with a sage-like ability to see into the mind of both the Boer Republicans and the Cape Dutch 'rebels':

They entered the Major's tent a little behind the others, who were discussing the scanty news. 'Oh no,' said Sister Margaret, coolly bending over the spirit-lamp, 'the Transvaalers will stay round Kimberley and try to put Rhodes in a cage. But, of course, if a commando gets down to De Aar they will all rise --' 'You think so, Sister?' said the medical Major, deferentially. 'I know so. They will rise anywhere if a commando comes actually to them. Presently they will rise in Prieska - if it is only to steal the forage at Van Wyk's Vlei. Why not?' 'We got most of our opinions on the war from Sister Margaret,' said the civilian doctor of the train. 'It's all new to me, but, *so far, all her prophecies have come true.*'¹⁵³

However, Sister Margaret's seemingly unquestioning loyalty evokes many of the same questions which critics have noted of *Kim*. Although in *Kim* Kipling had managed to make imperialism appear workable, this image of

¹⁵² Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and Fantasy of Empire* (New York: Verso, 1993), 30.

¹⁵³ Kipling, "Way He Took", 57. Italics added.

unity and loyalty is achieved only at the expense of an unacknowledged conflict, namely, the seemingly repressed discord between Kim's affection for India and its people, and his duty towards the Empire that colonises them. That this conflict is never adequately resolved is largely a function of Kim's suspension in adolescence, which, Nagai suggests, means that he remains in a position of subjective liminality; never forced to choose between India and Empire.¹⁵⁴ It was felt by many contemporary readers that this left the story unresolved. G.F Monkshood and George Gamble, for example, wrote that, "*Kim* is a work that requires a sequel", adding that, "[Kim] should be allowed by his author to stand by the side of Strickland. He is a child of romance; one would wish to see him shown as a man of mastery."¹⁵⁵ *The Times* expressed a similar view:

We may hope that another volume may speedily show us how he fares in the years that follow? 'I must have him with me Balkh in six months,' says Mahbub. Take him there, O scarlet-bearded horse-dealer; and let the chronicler go with you, invisible, but jotting down on those wonderful tablets of his the feats of the northern horsemen and the secrets of the Confederate Kings! Then will Creighton Sahib and Lurgan Sahib gain the greater honour, and there will be joy in the hearts of the watchers of the Game!¹⁵⁶

While it may be tempting therefore to read the Captain's actions in the final part of 'The Way That He Took' as in some sense the fulfillment of Kim's adolescent potential, the repressed conflict in the story is more accurately located in the character of Sister Margaret, who, the story suggests, has no sense of cultural loyalty

¹⁵⁴ Nagai, *Analogies*, 100.

¹⁵⁵ Cited in *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁵⁶ Cited in *Ibid.*

to the Boers. Edward Said anticipates as much when he suggests that the seeming conflict of Kim's allegiance is in fact moot. In Said's reasoning,

The conflict between Kim's colonial service and loyalty to his companions is unresolved not because Kipling could not face it, but because for Kipling *there was no conflict*; one purpose of the novel is in fact to show the absence of conflict once Kim is cured of his doubts... That there *might have been* a conflict had Kipling considered India as unhappily subservient to imperialism, we can have no doubt, but he did not: for him it was India's best destiny to be ruled by England.¹⁵⁷

Similarly, the story suggests, Sister Margaret believes that it is the Boer Republics "best destiny" to fall under British control. Krebs suggests that, unlike in *Kim*, the contextual differences between South Africa and India made a workable colonial fiction impossible because it was "ill-suited to a narrative of loyalty and service to a benevolent power."¹⁵⁸ Yet, according to the reading I have provided here, it is precisely such a "narrative of loyalty and service" which Kipling transcribes in "The Way That He Took". What is more, as "ill-suited" as the South African context might have been to such a narrative, Kipling tackles the seeming absence of Dutch 'loyalty' directly through his ventriloquism of Sister Margaret:

Of course, you don't see any others ['loyal' Dutch] where you are... . They are all at the war. I have two brothers, and a nephew, my sister's son and – oh, I can't count my

¹⁵⁷ Said, *Culture*, 176.

¹⁵⁸ Krebs, *Public Discourse*, 169.

cousins.’ She flung her hands outward with a curious un-English gesture. ‘And, then, too, you have never been off the rail. You have only seen Cape Town? All the schel – all the useless people are there. You should see our country beyond the ranges out Oudtshorn way.’¹⁵⁹

In this deft piece of subterfuge, Kipling manages to invert the absence of ‘loyal’ Dutch by essentially suggesting that they are ‘too loyal’ to be seen: “They are all at the war.” Neither the Captain nor Sister Margaret thus show any signs of ambiguous loyalty towards the Empire.

More importantly however, Kipling’s transcription of this dynamic returns an other who is a subject of both desire and difference. Sister Margaret’s perceived authority as a South African is also essential to the text, suggesting that the lack of South Africanness in Kipling’s other texts is not so much a function of his “[failure] to see South Africa as a country with a history”, but rather is the result of the imperial contradictions which the war exposed and his attempted denial of difference.¹⁶⁰ It is worth noting that what is also glaringly omitted from the vision offered by ‘The Way That He Took’ is the place of black Africans within this landscape. Although India was in reality made up of an array of cultures and creeds, the vision offered by *Kim* seems to be one which is fluid enough to make space for all of these. In this sense, as much as an ideal of imperial control might underlie *Kim*, it does not seem to authorise the same degree of cultural disenfranchisement as Kipling’s South African vision seems to bear out: in India the ‘natives’ may be subordinate, but in South Africa they are entirely omitted. In India, we might suppose, there is not the same need to ‘make space’ for the white man.

In other ways however we might in fact read the story as offering an even more successful image of Empire than *Kim*, specifically because here

¹⁵⁹ Kipling, “Way He Took”, 2. “Skelms”: Afrikaans for ‘thief’ or ‘crook’.

¹⁶⁰ Durbach, *Kipling’s SA*, 89.

cultural assimilation is never forestalled by racial difference. Yet by the same token the text does present Sister Margaret as a subject of cultural difference, which seems particularly to stem from her connection to the South African landscape. In so doing, I would argue, the text holds up the possibility of a complete identification with the other. Writing specifically on the position of white settlers in South Africa, Elleke Boehmer argues that, “The settler can be made to belong, but in a conditional sense only – only, that is, if the indigene claims the settler as belonging, and is willing to suspend his or her own claims to ancestral priority.”¹⁶¹ This is a similar dynamic to the one which seems to play out in the ‘The Way That He Took’, in that it at once frames the Boer as imbued with a sense of history – as the indigene (at the expense of black South Africans) – but then goes on to ventriloquise a suspension of this “claim to ancestral priority”.

Kipling’s later poem ‘The Settler’ can similarly be read as the culmination of this vision, particularly in its attempt to deny difference and suspend the conflictual realities of colonialism. Written in 1903, it paints a post-war scene of Boer and Englishman working together under a united banner: “That we may repair the wrong that was done/ To the living and the dead!”¹⁶²

Though references to “cattle-kraal” and the war – “Earth, where we rode to slay or be slain” - make its context clear, the poem is a remarkably ahistorical one given its message. There is no mention of places or events, nor of specific nationalities or identities, only “neighbors”, “foes”, “my kind” and “kin”. No doubt the intention here is to remove any sense of difference and in so doing open up a space for a new subjectivity, which is defined by a common space and purpose: “That we may feed with our land’s food/The folk of all our lands!”¹⁶³ But this is a post-war world, in which the unity of South Africa has arrived through the erasure of the

¹⁶¹ Elleke Boehmer, “Where We Belong: South Africa as a Settler Colony and the Calibration of African and Afrikaner Indigeneity”, in *Studies in Settler Colonialism: Politics, Identity and Culture*, eds. Fiona Bateman and Lionel Pilkington (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 259.

¹⁶² Rudyard Kipling, *The Five Nations* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1903), 155.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 155.

Republics' borders and their assimilation into the greater organism. In this context, the gesture is a hollow one. While the British might have been content after the war to dismiss it as "senseless", for the Boers the "black waste of it all" must surely have lay largely in the fact that the English had come out the victors.¹⁶⁴ Having defeated the Boers, Kipling's vision seems only want to assimilate the Boers into the 'white race' by making them loyal subjects.

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¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 153.

CONCLUSION

I began this thesis by suggesting that within Kipling's South African writing there is a tension between his racialization of the Boers and an essentializing of whiteness. In focusing on these two movements what I have tried to gesture towards is the interconnection between their impulses, located within a cultural expediency of imperialism. As such, the perceived anomalies in the Boers – degeneracy, rebellion, impurity, and so on – were ultimately only reconcilable in South Africa through the (re)enforcement of a visually based racial essentialism and a repression of 'white' difference. In much the same way that race was invoked to alleviate anxieties about racial others in India and deny the nationalist nature of the Indian Mutiny, racial essentialisms at the time of the war functioned to allay anxieties about white alterity, while also denying Boer ambitions of ethnic sovereignty. To return to Marriot's suggestion that, in the wake of the Indian Mutiny, "race provided an historically secure and inviolable sense of community at a time of rapid change and fragmentation,"¹⁶⁵ Kipling's representation of the Boer War seems similarly invested with a sense of subjective insecurity.

These Boer War texts are marked by a narrative excess - an 'anxious repetition' of stereotyped representations of whiteness - which highlights this as a space of significant internal racial contestation and heterogeneity. This anxiety is not restricted to the Boers, but is also evident in representations of white subjects throughout the empire. The stages before the restoration of Boers to the 'white race' in particular are plagued by an unsettling of subjectivity, in which the difference between Self and Other breaks down. Much like the identification experienced by Daniel and Peachey in *The Man Who Would be King*, Kipling's South African writing is characterised by an anxiety that colonialism will

¹⁶⁵ John Marriot, *The other empire: Metropolis, India and progress in the colonial imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 113.

disintegrate “when the tenuous othering they attempt to establish collapses.”¹⁶⁶

The counter-movement to this othering is a racial inclusion. In ‘The Way That He Took’ and ‘The Settler’ this process acts to picture the Boer as an ‘authentic’ South African inhabitant, while also suggesting that the British Settler can be made to belong because of a shared racial identity. As such, unlike in *Kim*, the South African scene is not subject to an *ambivalence*, which, in the absence (or repression) of ‘rebellion’, allows a productive identification with the colonial other. In all of this however what is repeatedly elided is the authentic voice of the white other; the ‘personal’ white voice. This denial plays out in terms of a carefully management of whiteness, which is motivated by a desire to see a unified, loyal, and racially hierarchised Empire.

As discussed earlier, Said suggests that Orientalism was structured so that “variety was always being restrained, compressed downwards and backwards to the *radical* terminal of the generality.”¹⁶⁷ I have argued through the course of this thesis that the imperial construction of whiteness operated along similar lines. It is also fair I think to suggest that a comparable tendency existed within apartheid South Africa, where an extensive ideological and cultural apparatus functioned to shape white South African identity, with a tendency always towards a repression of subversive or oppositional voices, and a homogenizing of racial groups.¹⁶⁸ De Kock however has suggested that whiteness may be “a condition which has historically found its (moving) focus in a dialectic with wildness”, and therefore that, “if one were to reopen the category of whiteness and begin to de-essentialise it, in all likelihood what one might call ‘the difference within’ would both contradict assumptions of

¹⁶⁶ Banerjee, “Colonial Anxiety”, 8.

¹⁶⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, 234.

¹⁶⁸ Peter McDonald’s *The Literature Police* (2009), for example traces the effects of apartheid era censorship upon South African culture.

uniformity and prove interesting.”¹⁶⁹ In focusing on the twin forces of Boer difference and white homogeneity at the time of the Boer War, I have attempted to make a similar claim here.

Gayatri Spivak has said on several occasions that the role of the humanities is to perform an “epistemological and ethical health care for the society at large.”¹⁷⁰ Yet it was my sense that, because of the (justifiable) focus on the colonial other, there has been a tendency to overlook the effects of racial discourse upon whites themselves. Writing about the interplay of racial subjectivity in colonial India, Satya P. Mohanty has similarly suggested that,

If racialization is a process of historical coimplication of the colonizer and the colonized, our contemporary projects of decolonization cannot be based on a denial of racial relations. We have no ‘cultural’ holes to crawl in to, to escape from this history. It is in some ways a little too soon to begin dreaming of many spaces, of plural identities. It is a little too soon, that is, until we begin to take seriously one another’s histories, and the ways we have been shaped by them.¹⁷¹

Recognising the reciprocal effect of identification, specifically through a focus on whiteness and white alerity, is therefore I think a necessary and, to quote De Kock, “non-judgemental” step in understanding our own

¹⁶⁹ Leon De Kock, “The Call of the Wild: Speculations on a Wild Counterlife in South Africa”, *Journal of Literary Studies*, 37.1 (2010), 15; De Kock, “Blanc”, 176.

¹⁷⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Gender in the global utopia”, *Translation Research Projects*, 4.15 (2012), 15- 16.

¹⁷¹ Mohanty, “Color Line”, 434.

context, one which will “teach us more about who we are as South Africans and where we come from.”¹⁷²

The white subaltern I have gestured towards in the course of this thesis is not formally the same as that which scholars like Spivak have in mind. It is not wholly ingenuous to suggest that whites, either the Boers or De Kock’s ‘wild’ whites, form part of the “the paperless”, “those outside the system of equivalences”, or “with no social mobility.”¹⁷³ Yet to the extent that, like Kipling’s Irish soldiers, their voices were repressed, misrepresented, silenced or simply unacknowledged, all of these are also applicable.¹⁷⁴

I suggested earlier that within imperialism the Boer War represents a Ptolemization. Given this it seems apt to infer that the contemporary South African moment holds the potential to be characterised by a Copernicanization, in which, to take up the celestial metaphor, whiteness finds itself no longer necessarily holding the centre, but rather may be constituted as one of many orbiting satellites; in which the position of whites is more profoundly dependant upon externally located exigencies. Steyn argues that, “through the shift in power in the immediate context, “White Talk” has to deal with enormous emotional dissonance. It carries the emotional load of whiteness evicted from paradise, whiteness on the edge, of being off-centre in a manner that runs counter to the entire premise on which whiteness is based.”¹⁷⁵ While this is certainly the case, what I have attempted to gesture towards here is that, in other ways, there have historically been forms of ‘whiteness’ which have always been

¹⁷² De Kock, “Blanc”, 176.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 22.

¹⁷⁴ Spivak notes that, “As Frank Rosengarten, [Antonio] Gramsci’s translator, pointed out in conversation, in the army, the definition of subaltern is ‘those who take orders’” (“Gender”, 22). This broader definition certainly seems applicable not only to Nagai’s soldiers but also to many other whites.

¹⁷⁵ Steyn, “White Talk”, 127. Steyn argues that white South African’s deploy several discursive strategies – ‘White Talk’ - which are “concerned with preserving privilege, with maintaining, as far as possible, the status quo inherited from the era of institutionalized unequal power distribution, and with slowing down the rate of change toward a more substantively democratic, multicultural society with the country”

'off-centre'. Given this, de-essentializing past forms of whiteness, even if only as a gesture, may help to recontextualise what it means to be white in post-apartheid South Africa, as well as potentially opening up unacknowledged, seemingly subversive and productive strains of whiteness, which run counter to the strategies of 'White Talk' which Steyn has identified.

In this sense the 'crisis of whiteness' is also marked by a liberation, a moment which, as Sarah Nuttall has recently pointed out, "was finally able to make space for a personal rather than a collective voice."¹⁷⁶ I would suggest, it is a 'personal' which may find not only dissonances with historic forms of whiteness, but also resonances. Nuttall argues that this "takes place through encounters with blackness, including involvement in the struggle for black liberation, and through confronting complicity with an apartheid order and imaginary."¹⁷⁷ This, she suggests, is a process of both a subjective "entanglement" with other South Africans subjectivities and histories, and also of "disentanglement", "from whiteness in its official fictions and material trajectories, its privileges and access to power, now in an emerging context of black political power in South Africa – in order to become something, someone different." Rediscovering the white voices that have historically been situated outside of the locus of white hegemony, the voices of white subalterns, I think represents a means of discovering what this 'something different' might *still* mean. This seems to me a worthwhile project if we are to find ways of existing both within and without race.

¹⁷⁶ Sarah Nuttall, *Entanglement: literary and cultural reflections on post apartheid* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009), 59. Nuttall points to the writing of Ruth First, Antjie Krog and J.M. Coetzee as examples of these forms of narratives.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

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