The Psychology of Victorian Buddhism and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*

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$\mathcal{I}$T would be difficult to overstate British Victorians' fascination with Buddhism. Edwin Arnold's 1879 poem of the life of Buddha, "The Light of Asia," sold hundreds of thousands of copies in the last decades of the century;[1] H. P. Blavatsky, the founder of Theosophy, claimed to have been initiated into "esoteric Buddhism" by a cadre of Tibetan lamas; and the nineteenth century witnessed the birth of comparative religion as a discipline largely in response to the recent "discovery" of Buddhism by British scholars and archaeologists.

Yet despite the fact that literally thousands of articles on Buddhism appeared in the popular press during the reign of Queen Victoria, the fascination with Buddhism as a literary cultural phenomenon has only recently begun to attract the attention of Victorianist scholars. Philip Almond's 1988 study

[1] See Christopher Clausen, "Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* and Its Reception," *Literature East and West*, 17 (1973), 174.

The British Discovery of Buddhism remains the standard historical text, and J. Jeffrey Franklin's *The Lotus and the Lion* has broadened the scope of inquiry to include literary representations of Buddhism.[2] Together with a recent important essay by Sebastian Lecourt in *PMLA* and a handful of articles by literary scholars treating representations of Buddhism in the Victorian novel, these works constitute the small (if burgeoning) body of scholarly literature on the topic.[3]

Yet several themes occur repeatedly in Victorian commentaries on Buddhism that are, potentially, of great interest to literary critics. Later Victorian writers consistently characterized Indian religions as containing "scientific" insights into the nature of the Ego or self; drew analogies between the doctrines of karma and metempsychosis and Darwinian evolution or degeneration; puzzled over the influence of Buddhism on Christianity and/or vice-versa; and speculated about the nature of a primitive ur-religion, of which they could see glimpses in Buddhism and Hinduism, which supposedly generated all world religious systems. (We can see an echo of this last endeavor in Casaubon's quest for the Key to All Mythologies in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* ([1871–72].)

In this essay I focus on the first of these three categories: the psychological. My aim is to elucidate some connections among the commentaries of the comparative religionists who were busily translating, codifying, and retextualizing the religions of Asia; several important concepts central to the emergent discipline of psychology; and the most sustained literary treatment of Buddhism in the Victorian period, Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, published in 1901.[4] *Kim* engages deeply with several aspects of Buddhist thought that were also of central concern to nineteenth-century psychology: the nature of consciousness, the problem of free will, and the formation of

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[2] See Philip C. Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988); and J. Jeffrey Franklin, *The Lotus and the Lion: Buddhism and the British Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2008).

[3] See Sebastian Lecourt, "Idylls of the Buddh': Buddhist Modernism and Victorian Poetics in Colonial Ceylon," *PMLA*, 131 (2016), 668–85.

[4] Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*, ed. Edward W. Said (New York: Penguin, 1987). Further references are to this edition and appear in the text.

identity. The novel's treatment of these themes is subtle and nuanced, reflecting the complexity of these topics in the Victorian discourses of psychology and comparative religion (and, indeed, in the discourses of Buddhism itself).

Sustained attention to the ways in which *Kim* engages Asian religious practice, particularly meditation and trance, complicates an entrenched reading of the novel as championing British triumphalism, as a testament to Kim's (and Kipling's) "collusion with imperialist propaganda."[5] This is not to deny that Kipling was an apologist for empire—for he most certainly was. It is instead to assert that the treatment of Buddhism in *Kim*, in particular its insistence on the role of discipline and will in the practice of that religion, complicates Kipling's apologist project in important (and perhaps unintentional) ways.

In the discussion that follows I proceed along two complementary tracks. First, I describe and elucidate several central tenets of Buddhism as understood by Victorian exegetes, particularly the ways in which that exegesis, over the course of the century (and by the time of the publication of *Kim*), had become surprisingly approbatory and admiring. Second, I perform close readings of three key passages in the novel dealing with identity, will, and self-discipline that illuminate Kipling's understanding of the subtleties of Buddhist thought and his investment in challenging certain stereotypes of that religious practice. My aim is to enrich both our knowledge of an important area of Victorian religious scholarship and our ways of reading this most brilliant, vexing, and, in Edward Said's immortal term, "embarrassing" novel.[6] A deeper understanding of late-Victorian Buddhism must force us to reject any simplistic reading of the religious elements in *Kim* as straightforward evidence for the novel's endorsement of the imperial project—even while we acknowledge the palpable force of that endorsement on other narrative and textual registers.

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[5] Brigitte Hervoche-Bertho, "The Wheel and the Way: Kipling's Symbolic Imagination in *Kim*," *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens*, 47 (1998), 368.

[6] Edward W. Said, "Introduction" to *Kim*, ed. Said, p. 45.

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The potential connections between the study of Buddhist "psychology" (this was the term that Victorian commentators themselves used) and "scientific" British theories of mind and consciousness were clear to contemporary exegetes. This recognition was a feature primarily of the later decades of the century, when the British study of Buddhism had matured to the point where many scholars were openly admiring of the religion, as opposed to studying it merely to facilitate the missionary conversion of Asian peoples;[7] psychology also had become more firmly ensconced as a scientific discipline differentiated from philosophy or medicine. As A. Bastian exhorts as early as 1882, "I . . . call the attention of Buddhist scholars to some points which appear to me not to have received due attention, though in some respects they may be regarded as turning-points of the whole system. . . . I cannot get rid of the personal impression that Buddhism, as rooted in its psychology, must be understood psychologically in order to reach its genuine character."[8] One of the greatest British apologists for Buddhism, Paul Carus, put an even more approbative spin on the psychological aspects of the religion in 1897:

> if rightly understood, [Buddhism] will be seen to be the very negation of all mystification in both religion and metaphysics. Buddha is, so far as we know, the first positivist, the first humanitarian, the first radical free thinker[,] the first iconoclast, and the first prophet of the Religion of Science. The more we study the original writings of Buddhism, the more we are impressed with the greatness of Buddha's far-seeing comprehension of both religious and psychological problems.[9]

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[7] A couple of decades later it was possible for a writer to admire Buddhism so much as to declare, "Compared with the Buddha, Jesus was a puling, sickly infant in contrast with a virile, healthy giant. The Buddha was a strong, daring and original thinker" (Upasaka [pseud.], *Buddha the Atheist* [London: Pioneer Press, 1928], p. 3).

[8] A. Bastian, "The Psychology of Buddhism," *Academy*, 22 (1882), 264–65.

[9] Paul Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha, According to Old Records* (Chicago: Open Court, 1895), Appendix (n.p.).

Writing in a self-consciously retrospective way just three years after Carus, Dawsonne Strong argues that the attraction of Buddhist psychological thought is not just a narrow intradisciplinary affair: "The psychologist, too, was not slow to recognise that the philosophy of Buddhism contained speculative matter of considerable value, which lent itself to assimilation in the task of formulating theories of a positive science in his own field of special research."[10] In fact, many of these fin-de-siècle Buddhism apologists emphasized the benefits to Western psychology that would accrue from a serious study of the religion. As R. Ernest writes in 1903, "Buddhism . . . has laid the basis of an incomparable metaphysical system, and has worked out this complicated puzzle of mental action, in a manner so detailed and novel to western ideas, as to open up entirely new spheres of thought."[11] A decade later, G.R.S. Mead claims that "the subtlety of Buddhist psychological analysis . . . is well worth the serious attention of Western psychology."[12]

This insistence on the greater insights, knowledge, and wisdom of Buddhist thought represents a dramatic shift from the openly racist and frankly extirpative rhetoric of the first decades of missionary encounter. Indeed, one of the most remarkable features of much fin-de-siècle Western writing on Buddhism is its *volte-face* from the discourse of just a few decades earlier, which had been full of stock Orientalist tropes charging Buddhists with irrationality, jugglery, infantile credulity, and even imbecility. By the time J. E. Ellam writes *Nāvayāna: Buddhism and Modern Thought* in 1930, he is able to triumphantly exclaim that the doctrines of Buddhism "are found to have anticipated in remarkable ways many of the conclusions of modern science, and the method of that rationalist school of thought which is gaining ground in the Western world to-day. For these reasons, and because of its essential naturalism, as opposed to supernaturalism, and its humanism, Buddhism, although one of the oldest religions in the world,

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[10] D. M. Strong, "The Revival of Buddhism in India," *Westminster Review*, 153 (1900), 272.

[11] R. Ernest, *Buddhism and Science* (Rangoon: Buddhasasana Samagama, 1903), p. 4.

[12] G.R.S. Mead, *Quests Old and New* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1913), p. 112.

has a real and vital message for our times."[13] Not only does Buddhism have great insight into the workings of the mind, but it was rationalist even before Western rationalism—this kind of proclamation would have been unthinkable a hundred years earlier.

It is important to note, however, that later commentators did not attempt to deny Buddhism's emphasis on unusual states of consciousness such as trance, visions, etc.; instead, they rationalized these phenomena by insisting that their causes were not supernatural but rather strictly psychological (in the Western sense of that term). For example, as Ellam claims in an earlier treatise (1908), Buddhism treats as familiar "'visions,' trances and mystical experiences," and "has them all carefully analysed and classified."[14] Other commentators emphasize that, in fact, only Buddhism can rationally explain not only unusual mental phenomena, but most states of consciousness: "Science has not yet penetrated into the mind, and our language at the present time is insufficient to express or even classify the functions manifesting in our highest thoughts. At the time of the Buddha, these higher thoughts were expressed by men in a terminology which had been built up to suit the greater metaphysical knowledge of the day" (Ernest, *Buddhism and Science*, p. 3).

The Victorian study of Buddhism—and the elaboration of that study in treatises on comparative religion, popular literature on Eastern mysticism, and the late-century novel—thus constituted a rich source of psychological "limit cases": such phenomena as double consciousness, automatism, telepathy and trance states, and mesmerism and hypnotism, which were a crucial heuristic for psychological theorists.[15] Several recent

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[13] J. E. Ellam, *Nāvayāna: Buddhism and Modern Thought* (London: Rider and Co., 1930), p. 9.

[14] J. E. Ellam, *The Message of Buddhism to the West* (London: Buddhist Society, 1908), p. 9.

[15] See, for example: Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1995); Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy: 1870–1901* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002); Jill L. Matus, *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009); Nicholas Royle, *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991); Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking,*

commentators have identified the strong connection between images of Orientalism and altered psychological states; as Roger Luckhurst notes, for example, mediums were often controlled by Oriental spirits or ghosts (*The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 156). Altered states of consciousness in general, and telepathy in particular, are associated with the Orient and Asian characters in H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887) and *Ayesha* (1905), Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), *Kim* (1901), and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), to name a few literary examples. As Luckhurst claims, "Forgotten 'supernatural' powers of a now degenerate Egypt or Indian subcontinent hinted at lost plenitude with a nostalgic allure that was precisely constituted by the erasures effected by Western imperialism" (*The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 156).

Patrick Brantlinger analyzes this linkage at length in his now-classic study *Rule of Darkness* (1988): he isolates a subgenre he has dubbed "imperial Gothic," which "combines the seemingly scientific, progressive, often Darwinian ideology of imperialism with an antithetical interest in the occult"; in doing so it "expresses anxieties about the waning of religious orthodoxy, but even more clearly it expresses anxieties about the ease with which civilization can revert to barbarism or savagery and thus about the weakening of Britain's imperial hegemony."[16] According to Brantlinger, this atavism is experienced as a threat of broader cultural degeneration, and is consistently brought about through occult and "spiritualist" experience such as telepathy, spirit-trance, automatic writing, etc.

Yet what these critics have not emphasized is the fact that in many of these cases, the association between Orientalism and altered states of consciousness is *mediated* through representations of Eastern religions. In other words, Victorian authors were not (for the most part) drawing simple equivalencies between, for example, Indian mysticism *qua* sheer

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1880–1920 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001); and Athena Vrettos, "Displaced Memories in Victorian Fiction and Psychology," *Victorian Studies*, 49 (2007), 199–207.

[16] Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 227, 229.

Orientalness and telepathy or mesmeric states, but rather were imaginatively drawing upon the East as a font of mysterious religious *practices*, including but not limited to Buddhism and Hinduism, that seemed to enable and propagate altered states of consciousness and extraordinary mental powers as an explicit part of their religious praxis.

For example, according to the commentator G.R.S. Mead, among the capacities of Buddhist adepts are the "power of resisting pain, death, etc.; [the] power of creating phenomena outside one's body; of transforming one's body into different personalities; [the] power of creating one's own double. Some of these 'powers' are evidently similar to those exercised unconsciously by spiritistic mediums" (*Quests Old and New*, pp. 117–18). Another commentator, in an article comparing Buddhism and Christianity, asseverates that, in contrast to Jesus's, Buddha's "miracles were more like tricks of jugglery. . . . he showed himself suddenly sitting cross-legged in mid-air, divided his body into many portions, each shedding forth luminous rays, or he transported himself through the air hither and thither, to show that purely spiritual meditation can break through all the chains of material laws, that the spirit is independent of matter."[17] Another Victorian exegete draws an analogy between the annihilation of the Ego stipulated by both Buddhist and Hindu practice and "sound dreamless sleep . . . epileptic and other fits, and . . . certain diseases believed to originate in the mind."[18] As we can see from these examples, Orientalist depictions of altered states of consciousness in the Victorian period were just as likely to be associated with religious ritual as with explicitly racialized "tendencies" of mind.

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Written shortly after the later-century "apologist" shift in British commentaries got under way, *Kim* dwells almost obsessively on such altered states of consciousness,

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[17] Ernest J. Eitel, *Three Lectures on Buddhism* (Hong Kong: London Mission House, 1871), p. 4.

[18] William Brockie, *Indian Thought: A Popular Essay* (Sunderland: T. F. Brockie, 1876), p. 62.

and how they are brought about (at least indirectly) as a result of religious practice. One of the insistent themes of Kipling's *bildungsroman* is the oft-asked question of the true nature, or *identity*, of Kim himself. Indeed, the question of Kim's identity is so persistent that it has also become an enduring topic of inquiry for modern critics.[19] This question, superficially a psychological one, is repeatedly modulated in the novel by the tropes and images of Indian mysticism. To quote the first of the three key scenes I will examine:

> "Now am I alone—all alone," he thought. "In all India is no one so alone as I! If I die today, who shall bring the news—and to whom? If I live and God is good, there will be a price upon my head, for I am a Son of the Charm—I, Kim."
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> A very few white people, but many Asiatics, can throw themselves into a mazement as it were by repeating their own names over and over again to themselves, letting the mind go free upon speculation as to what is called personal identity. When one grows older, the power, usually, departs, but while it lasts it may descend upon a man at any moment.
>
> "Who is Kim—Kim—Kim?"
>
> He squatted in a corner of the clanging waiting-room, rapt from all other thoughts; hands folded in lap, and pupils contracted to pin-points. In a minute—in another half-second—he felt he would arrive at the solution of the tremendous puzzle; but here, as always happens, his mind dropped away from those heights with a rush of a wounded bird, and passing his hand before his eyes, he shook his head. (*Kim*, pp. 233–34)

Later in the novel, Kim returns to the question in a superficially different form: "'I am Kim. I am Kim. And *what* is Kim?' His soul repeated it again and again" (p. 331, emphasis added).

I say that these questions are "superficially different" because in Sanskrit—the language of the Hindu *vedas*; the root

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[19] See, in particular, Ian Adam, "Oral/Literate/Transcendent: The Politics of Language Modes in *Kim*," *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 27 (1997), 73; Franklin, *The Lotus and the Lion*, p. 169; Arnold Kettle, "What Is Kim?," in *The Morality of Art: Essays Presented to G. Wilson Knight by His Colleagues and Friends*, ed. D. W. Jefferson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 220; and Sandra Kemp, *Kipling's Hidden Narratives* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 2.

of Hindi, Kim's and Kipling's first and most deeply internalized tongue; and a language about and through which Kipling consistently makes linguistic puns and in-jokes—the word *kim* is a general interrogative particle that means "what? how? whence? wherefore? why?"[20] or in other words, a kind of generalized "what is the nature of?" So the questions "What is Kim?" and "Who is Kim—Kim—Kim?" are essentially the same, and would be rendered in Sanskrit (since the verb "to be" is implied) as a perfect iteration: "Kim kim?" or "Kim kim kim kim?" Furthermore, the rules of external *sandhi*, or coalescence, in Sanskrit dictate that in this sentence, the final "m" in *kim* become an *anusvāra*, or nasalized vowel, and that the string thus be pronounced essentially as one word: *kiṃkiṃkiṃkim*, forming a kind of nasal chant, or mantra.

For Victorian commentators on Buddhism and Hinduism, the mantra is a particularly potent emblem of the mysteriousness of tantric practices in general. For example, an 1892 article in *All the Year Round* entitled "Through the Land of the Lamas" has this to say about Tibetan chanting: "That prayer is the mysterious and invariable 'Om mané padmé hum,' which night and day for thousands of years had been uttered from millions of human throats. . . . Literally interpreted, it means, 'O the Jewel in the Lotus! Amen.' But what that means, and why it has to be said incessantly by the believer, no one seems to know."[21] Writing a decade later, in 1902, the Blavatsky votary C. Pfoundes does claim to know: "AUM is explained as the exhaling and the inhaling of the breath of life. . . . The sects that use these forms . . . includes the Yoga, Tantra, etc., doctrines, the efforts to acquire Riddhi, and other esoteric knowledge—and consequently superhuman (or extraordinary) powers usually considered supernatural."[22]

At first blush, the confused sense of identity that Kim experiences in the "mazement" scene is, however, presented as a weakened or attenuated sense of identity. This seemingly

[20] Translation from the online version of Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskṛit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1899), available at <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MWScan/2014/web/webtc/indexcaller.php>.

[21] [Anon.], "Through the Land of the Lamas," *All the Year Round*, 7 (1892), 302.

[22] C. Pfoundes, "The Syllable 'Aum' and the Mantra Cult," *Open Court*, 16 (1902), 318.

paradoxical weakness is trebly determined: first, by the narratorial commentary ("*letting the mind go free* upon speculation as to what is called personal identity"); second, by the popularly understood effect of tantric repetition; and third, by yet another pun buried in the first iteration of the "meditative" question. In Sanskrit, the particle *kim* at the beginning of a compound expresses "inferiority, deficiency, &c." The particle expresses this inferiority through a kind of default implication by questioning. For example, the compound *kiṃ-rājan*, which would be translated literally as "what-sort-of-king?" actually means, simply by implication, a deficient or bad king (in other words, "If you have to ask . . ."). To return to our original Sanskrit question "*Kim kim*?"—"What is the nature of Kim?" or "What sort of Kim?": just as with the compound *kiṃ-rājan*, the inferior king, the accidentally formed compound *kiṃ-kim* thus means "the inferior Kim."[23] It is a question ("what sort of?") that contains its own answer ("deficient"). It is thus implied that Kim is "belittled," his unitary identity called into question through the sheer linguistic operations of the question itself.

Yet Kim's seeming confusion in this scene turns out to be something of a red herring, for this sense of "belittlement" is decidedly *not* depicted as negative in the broader logic of the novel. Kim's ability to enter into a state of trance is ultimately depicted as a source of strength—of discipline, focus, and flexibility—not weakness. The undermining of unitary identity in esoteric practice does not contradict the exercise of will; in fact, the two necessarily go hand-in-hand. The association of "mazement" with willed discipline becomes more clear in the second important occult scene in the novel, where the connection between (seemingly) attenuated identity and psychological vigor is made explicit.

Here Kim, who has been tapped to take part in the "Great Game" of British espionage in India, is being tested by Lurgan Sahib, a mysterious foreign trader who is living, like Kim, more or less as an Indian, and who is an adept in the art of mesmeric

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[23] See Monier-Williams, *Sanskṛit-English Dictionary*, entry for "kim."

suggestion.[24] Lurgan is trying here to hypnotize Kim into see-
ing a broken water pitcher come together again as a whole. The
passage is worth quoting at length:

> Lurgan Sahib laid one hand gently on the nape of [Kim's] neck,
> stroked it twice or thrice, and whispered: "Look! It shall come to
> life again, piece by piece. . . . "
>
>   To save his life, Kim could not have turned his head. The
> light touch held him as in a vice, and his blood tingled pleasantly
> through him. There was one large piece of the jar where there
> had been three, and above them the shadowy outline of the
> entire vessel. He could see the veranda through it, but it was
> thickening and darkening with each beat of his pulse. Yet the
> jar—how slowly the thoughts came!—the jar had been smashed
> before his eyes. Another wave of prickling fire raced down his
> neck, as Lurgan Sahib moved his hand. . . .
>
>   So far Kim had been thinking in Hindi, but a tremor came
> on him, and with an effort like that of a swimmer before sharks,
> who hurls himself half out of the water, his mind leaped up from
> a darkness that was swallowing it and took refuge in—the
> multiplication-table in English! . . .
>
>   "But it *is* smashed—smashed," he gasped—Lurgan Sahib
> had been muttering softly for the last half-minute. . . .
>
>   "It is there as it was there," said Lurgan, watching Kim
> closely while the boy rubbed his neck. "But you are the first of
> many who has ever seen it so." (*Kim*, pp. 201–2)

The standard reading of this scene is that Kim asserts a kind of
robust English rationalism in the face of the (literally) seduc-
tive Oriental suggestion of mystical vision.[25] For example, as

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[24] Although Lurgan is called "Sahib," the question of his racial identity is never settled
by the text: "He was a Sahib in that he wore Sahib's clothes; the accent of his Urdu, the
intonation of his English, showed that he was anything but a Sahib" (*Kim*, p. 199).

[25] There is an inescapable suggestion that Lurgan indulges a somewhat unsavory
interest in young boys. Later, Lurgan comments to Kim's other mentors, "*I* should have
used him long ago. . . . The younger the better. That is why I always have my really
valuable jewels watched by a child. You sent him to me to try. I tried him in every way"
(*Kim*, p. 220). Lurgan also maintains a disturbingly eroticized relationship with a young
Hindu servant-boy who tries to poison Lurgan out of jealousy when Kim arrives on the
scene; Lurgan takes the attempted murder in stride as he explains to Kim: "[it is]
because he is so fond of me. Suppose you were fond of someone, and you saw someone
come, and the man you were fond of was more pleased with him than he was with you,
what would you do?" (p. 203). As Luckhurst notes about the operations of trance in

Margaret Feeley writes, "Lurgan tries to hypnotize Kim, who, only with an enormous effort of will, is able to resist his teacher"; the struggle between the two functions "as a metaphor of the power struggle between India and England."[26] On the surface, the logic of racialized psychology here seems perfectly consonant with the earlier scene: mesmerism/tantrism/esoteric knowledges sap identity, will, and the capacity for rational apprehension, while good old English stiff-upper-lip starchiness (and arithmetic) reasserts them.

Yet this standard reading is undermined by several crucial complications that many critics have overlooked. First, it is the powers of Lurgan Sahib, however Oriental they may be, that threaten to overwhelm English rationality to begin with. The *will* of the magician, imposed upon the impressionable mind of the boy, is the source of the tantalizing illusion. (Kim's introduction to Lurgan underscores this point: "[Lurgan] slid off the green shade and looked fixedly at Kim for a full half-minute. The pupils of the eye dilated and closed to pin-pricks, as if at will" [*Kim*, p. 197].) Asian esoteric practice is associated with intensively focused disciplined will every bit as much as English "rationality" is.

Second, it is not at all clear that the source of Kim's ability to fend off Lurgan's spell is his Britishness, or even his whiteness. The crux of the water-pitcher scene is the question of Kim's susceptibility: the episode has been arranged by Kim's handlers in the British Secret Service as a deliberate test, to ascertain if Kim can resist the seductions of the mesmerist and thus has the psychological stuff necessary to be a good spy. The test is figured, in the logic of the novel, as a kind of sounding of the depths of Kim's strength of will—which does not necessarily spring from his whiteness. As Lurgan Sahib says immediately after the test, "You are the first that ever saved himself" (*Kim*, p. 203), and later to Colonel Creighton and Mabhbub Ali, "he is the only boy I could not make to see things" (p. 220). Yet there is no indication that Lurgan had tried only native Indian

general, "Susceptibility is rendered as an occult, Orientalized channel for sexual terror" (*The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 206).

[26] Margaret Peller Feeley, "The *Kim* That Nobody Reads," *Studies in the Novel*, 13 (1981), 280.

boys up until this point, which implies that some British boys had already failed the test. Furthermore, Lurgan not only does not explicitly ascribe Kim's strength of will to his whiteness, but he also declares himself mystified as to the nature of Kim's ability to resist the mesmeric trance: "I wish I knew what it was that[.] . . . But you are right. You should not tell that—not even to me" (p. 203). There is little reason, aside from the fact that Kim had learned his multiplication tables in a British school, to assume that Kim's assertion of rational will in the face of Lurgan Sahib's wandering hands means, as it is nearly always read, that Kipling attributed this capacity to Kim's Britishness rather than to his adroitness with esoteric practice, refined during his study with the lama.

This reading makes sense of the otherwise puzzling scene later in the novel where Kipling seems to undermine the supposed supremacy of Western rationality by depicting a protection spell, complete with whispering devils. The novel is pointedly agnostic on the question of whether the devils "really" did or did not appear: as James Thrall asks, "Is the spirit-possession merely an explicable cultural phenomenon, or a true consorting with devils? Neither Babu nor the reader knows for sure."[27] In fact, as Margaret Feeley has demonstrated in her careful textual analysis of the novel's early manuscript, Kipling revised the scene so as to include a more deliberately esoteric and supernatural element—thus, I would argue, undermining any interpretation of the novel as an unalloyed endorsement of the superiority of Western "rationality" over Eastern spiritual practice: "In the manuscript, Mahbub's sole purpose is to make Kim a more efficient spy, to change his color so that he will appear to be a true Indian when he plays the Game. But in the published version, Mahbub's primary purpose is to procure *dawut* (invocation) in order to protect Kim" (Feeley, "The *Kim* That Nobody Reads," p. 277).[28] More important, perhaps, is

[27] James H. Thrall, "Immersing the *Chela*: Religion and Empire in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*," *Religion and Literature*, 36 (2004), 57.

[28] As Luckhurst notes, in some of Kipling's early tales "native superstition is demystified by the narrator, reasserting a divide between Eastern magic and Western rationalism. But magic continually invests colonial perceptions of the margin and other stories are less secure" (*The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 175).

the fact that Kim's repetition of the multiplication tables during the Lurgan hypnosis scene also constitutes a kind of mantra ("He clung desperately to the repetition" [*Kim*, p. 202]), and thus hardly can be said to constitute a straightforward "Anglo-rational" response to the seductions of Lurgan Sahib.[29] It seems clear that the novel complicates in very deliberate ways the simplistic "West = Rationality" formula upon which many later readers have nonetheless insisted.

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Kim's resistance to mesmerism, and the questions of will, self-control, and racialized "susceptibility" this episode engages, should be read within the broader context of popular Victorian writings on trance. The non-supernatural status of trance was ostensibly established by the time Kipling was writing *Kim*. As Alison Winter demonstrates, the view of mesmeric trance states as subject to rational explanation gradually solidified throughout the course of the century: "In the second half of the century mesmerism was absorbed into a variety of different disciplines and projects" such as physics, medicine, and psychoanalysis, all of which posited natural explanations for the phenomenon (*Mesmerized*, p. 348). Just a couple of years after *Kim*, Cora Linn Daniels declares in the *Encyclopædia of Superstitions, Folklore, and the Occult Sciences of the World* (1903), "Hypnotism having become as indisputable and established fact in experience and knowledge, its phenomena

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[29] Ian Adam further complicates the reading of this scene: "I have mentioned how Kim recites the multiplication tables during his initiation with Lurgan Sahib, and how this Western rational mode preserves him from delusion by way of archaic deceptions. But the *recitation* of the tables is talismanic, oral, just as, conversely, 'oral' hypnotism is a non-archaic product, through Charcot and Freud, of modernity's medical interventions" ("Oral/Literate/Transcendent," p. 74). As Alison Winter notes, the use of mesmeric trance by medical practitioners in India was prey to similar bidirectional confusions: mesmerism had "strong affiliations with precolonial Indian culture. It had to be exported to Britain and brought back to India in order to become knowledge" (Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000], p. 211). See also Luckhurst: "The discovery of supernatural or supernormal communications in dispersed theatres of Empire suggested to some evidence of pre-modern powers lost to the Enlightenment but that could be recovered with sufficient study" (*The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 158).

are no longer properly considered occult, and many believe that it will ultimately afford an explanation of the many mysterious forces and strange possessions or obsessions that have heretofore been classified under the terms superstition and occult."[30] In an even earlier important commentary, "A New Theory of Trance" (1877), James Beard offers a definitively scientific explanation of the phenomena of trance states as "a functional disease of the nervous system, in which the cerebral activity is concentrated in some limited region of the brain, with suspension of the activity of the rest of the brain, and consequent loss of volition."[31]

This rationalist view was complicated, however, by the fact that trance states continued to be associated with "mysterious" Eastern religious practices. In her discussion of the introduction of surgical mesmerism into British colonial India, Winter notes that "the strongest associations Victorians made with India involved trances (opium poppies, superstitious peasants, ecstatic religious states); it was easy to think of this territory as fertile ground for the cultivation of altered states of mind" (*Mesmerized*, p. 210). As Roger Luckhurst explains, the supposed prevalence of trance and similar phenomena within the spaces of Empire "suggested to some evidence of pre-modern powers lost to the Enlightenment but that could be recovered with sufficient study" (*The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 158).

Thus, in the late-Victorian period, trance states were "treated to multiple, contradictory theorizations. They were cited as evidence by those emphasizing physiological determinism, or different forms of psycho-physiological inter-action and parallelism, or by schools of dynamic psychology which gave psychical action a larger degree of autonomy" (Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 94). At the time that Kipling was writing *Kim*, the status of trance had thus shifted definitively toward naturalist, "scientific" explanations (in other words, hypnosis had replaced mesmerism as the locus of interest), yet the exotic

[30] Cora Linn Daniels and C. M Stevans, *Encyclopædia of Superstitions, Folklore, and the Occult Sciences of the World . . .* , 3 vols. (Chicago and Milwaukee: J. H. Yewdale and Sons, 1903), III, 1721.

[31] George M. Beard, "A New Theory of Trance, and Its Bearings on Human Testimony," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 4 (1877), 5.

and mysterious Orientalist associations of trance states still stubbornly clung. We can see this ambivalence clearly enough in the novel, where several "jadoo" episodes (the Hindu term for magic that Kim employs) are never definitively explained away as naturalistic phenomena; Kipling seems content to rest in this ambivalence, if not actively to exploit it.

Victorian discussions of trance states tended to depict some subjects as more susceptible than others. As Winter observes, "It was common for mesmerists to argue that their power to create the trance was a sign of their superiority over the person who succumbed to them" (*Mesmerized*, p. 200). While Beard claimed that everyone is capable of being entranced, he also noted that those people are predisposed to trance who have "acquired a nervous system generally sensitive and impressible.... The best subjects are those who are predisposed, both physically and psychically, who have sensitive organizations, and unbalanced, ill-trained minds" ("A New Theory of Trance," pp. 23–24).

The question of sensitivity seems to be a rather vexed one; Winter notes that the surgical mesmerist James Esdaile believed that "lower" members of society were actually the least susceptible subjects: "They were the least attuned to others, the least nervous, the least delicate—and therefore the least responsive to nervous influence" (*Mesmerized*, p. 201). However, this hierarchical relation was complicated in the Anglo-Indian context, since Indians were supposedly one of the more susceptible "races": "The main reason for this was that . . . they were more culturally primitive. A determining factor in a people's responsiveness to the trance was their 'closeness to' or 'distance from' the natural order" (*Mesmerized*, p. 201). As Luckhurst observes more generally, narratives of psychic phenomena in colonial locations "show a marked interest in transgression across other categories of identity, as in the mediation of race and colonial power in mesmeric rapport across the colour-line. Occult relation oscillates between distance and touch, restoring and dissolving boundaries in the same moment" (*The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 150).

The issue of racialization in the context of trance is thus an extremely complex one; on the one hand, Indian subjects are aligned with the "higher" classes of society in being more

susceptible to trance; on the other hand, there is a strong sug-
gestion that the source of this very sensitivity (in the case of
Indian subjects) is their supposed closeness to the natural
order, and thus their primitiveness and animalism. Kim's resis-
tance to trance is thus impossibly overdetermined within the
context of this unstable significatory landscape; again, an inter-
pretation of the scene that ascribes his resiliency only to his
whiteness, or even his Englishness, threatens to flatten out the
rich ambiguity of the episode.

Perhaps the only point on which Victorian writers on
trance seem to be in agreement is the association of trance with
the evacuation of the will of the subject. As Beard definitively
declares, "The fully entranced person has no will; what he
wishes to do he cannot do; what he wishes not to do he does;
he is at the mercy of any external or internal suggestions" ("A
New Theory of Trance," p. 12). While commentators agreed
that the entranced subject loses his or her will, opinion was
divided as to whether the will of the mesmerist simply takes
over and the subject becomes a kind of puppet. Beard did
not believe that "willessness" posed a particular moral threat
to the entranced subject: "Subjects in the mesmeric trance are
under the control of the external suggestions of the operator,
as expressed by voice or manner (not of his silent, unexpressed
will, as some imagine), because they go into the state with that
expectation; otherwise the operator has no power over him"
("A New Theory of Trance," p. 10). Yet other writers were less
sanguine. In his story "John Barrington Cowles" (1884), for
example, Arthur Conan Doyle worries: "A strong will can, sim-
ply by virtue of its strength, take possession of a weaker one,
even at a distance, and can regulate the impulses and the
actions of the owner of it. If there was one man in the world
who had a very much more highly-developed will than any of
the rest of the human family, there is no reason why he should
not be able to rule over them all, and reduce his fellow-
creatures to the condition of automatons."[32]

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[32] Arthur Conan Doyle, "John Barrington Cowles," rpt. in his *The Captain of the
Polestar, and Other Tales*, 6th ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1893), p. 251;
quoted in Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 205.

For perhaps obvious reasons, mesmeric trance was thus a threatening and anxiety-provoking state for many commentators. As Winter notes, naturalistic, scientific explanations of trance states did not assuage these anxieties: "One could not make mesmeric phenomena innocuous simply by making them the product of the will. For the will itself was one of the most controversial focuses of religious discussions of mesmerism" (*Mesmerized*, p. 266). As Luckhurst explains, "any practice which appeared to surrender the will (other than to God) was tantamount to inviting non-being. The mesmeric 'crisis' was both a danger to public morals and an insult to conceptions of self-control" (*The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 96). Yet as we shall see, the question of the role of will in those altered states of consciousness—including trance—found in esoteric religious practice was becoming increasingly complicated by the end of the century. By the time that Kipling wrote *Kim*, it was not at all clear to religious commentators that mesmeric states necessarily entailed the evacuation of will—in fact, quite the contrary.

⤳

The association of trance states with Buddhism, such as we see in *Kim*, reinforced—and was reinforced by—the longstanding interest among late-Victorian commentators with that religion's treatment of will, intention, and discipline. As Philip Almond stresses, "there were numerous features of Buddhism that could be positively esteemed, that were unequivocally in harmony with various and varied Victorian ideals" (*The British Discovery of Buddhism*, p. 41); examples could include "moral earnestness, self control, responsibility for one's actions, reward according to merit, improvement through the exercise of will and choice, and discipline in achieving spiritual growth" (Franklin, *The Lotus and the Lion*, p. 48). While comparisons of Christianity and Buddhism/Hinduism were an extraordinarily popular topic for Victorian exegetes, such juxtapositions tended to project qualities of one system of thought onto another, to read the Eastern religions through the lens—and according to the goals—of Victorian

British Protestantism.[33] As William Brockie writes in an 1876 study modestly entitled *Indian Thought*: "What, then, is the grand ultimate purpose subserved by this life? The moral victory and triumph of Mind over Matter, through spontaneous effort, trial, suffering, action, self-denial, and devotion" (*Indian Thought*, pp. 29–30).

The victory of mind over matter—the exercise of will—was of paramount interest to Victorian Christian exegetes. While the complicated question of the doctrinal role of free will in Christianity—even simply in Victorian Anglicanism—is well beyond the scope of this essay, it is merely necessary to note here that many contemporary commentators felt that a challenge to human free will was a challenge to the underpinnings of Christian morality.[34] One significant contributor to this anxiety was Herbert Spencer, who was adamant that the concept of radical human free will was simply a logical impossibility:

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[33] See also Franklin's discussion of what he terms "hybrid religions": "I propose that late-Victorian hybrid religions. . . . carried Protestant individualism to its logical extreme, centering heavily on individual vocation and will" (*The Lotus and the Lion*, p. 62). David L. McMahan emphasizes that this imbrication was a particular feature of the later discourse of "scientific Buddhism": "It is hard to overestimate the extent to which the early discourse of scientific Buddhism was inextricably intertwined with Christianity" (McMahan, "Modernity and the Early Discourse of Scientific Buddhism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 72 [2004], 924).

[34] This tension was felt primarily in the later decades of the nineteenth century. As one recent commentator has explained, the natural theology of such earlier writers as Thomas Chalmers, William Whewell, and John Herschel posited an "anthropomorphic philosophy" that "argued that the mind, rather than physical science, applied intelligible experiences of causation. This argument placed the idea of free will at the centre of nature and interpreted free will as a source of natural events." Roger Smith, "Physiological Psychology and the Philosophy of Nature in Mid-Nineteenth Century Britain," Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge Univ., 1970, p. 216; quoted in Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795–1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 187. This conviction united many earlier Christian apologists and scientists. It was only in the second half of the century, as Hilton notes, that the realization that "mind and matter . . . might be subject to the *same* laws" was to throw this relationship into question (*The Age of Atonement*, p. 188). Rick Rylance, quoting a Victorian summary of the state of the discipline in the 1850s, writes: "After the advance in knowledge of the nervous system, the reflex mechanism 'has begun to claim for itself the origination of many phenomena which were before attributed to the direct effort of the mind, or the will'" (Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture 1850–1880* [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000], p. 196). Rylance quotes from J. D. Morell, "Modern English Psychology," *British and Foreign Medico-Chirurgical Review*, 17 (1856), 352.

"Psychical changes either conform to law or they do not. If they do not conform to law, this work, in common with all works on the subject, is sheer nonsense: no science of Psychology is possible. If they do conform to law, there cannot be any such thing as free will."[35] Spencer's model of evolutionary determinism was seen, rightly or wrongly, as threatening to a Christianity that seemed to place great emphasis on the role of redemption through the free acceptance of the word of God. For example, an anonymous reviewer of Spencer's *Principles of Psychology* (1855) had this to say about that work:

> It is sketchy, highly abstract, audaciously speculative, subversive of ordinary morality, and anti-Christian. We intend these latter epithets as descriptive. Morality depends on man's power to regulate his own conduct in accordance with a law either inward or outward, to control his desires, to educate his moral sense—in a word, to exert 'free will.' If the will is not free, man is not responsible; and Mr. Spencer denies in the plainest terms that man's will is free.[36]

The author goes on to explain quite clearly that it is specifically this particular doctrine that renders Spencer's work "anti-Christian": "Christianity implies that man has a soul as well as a body, and that the soul survives the dissolution of the body. Mr. Spencer denies that man has a soul—that he is anything but highly-organized tissue. . . . If the doctrines are true, morality is impossible, and Christianity is untrue" ("Spencer's Principles of Psychology," p. 28). As Archbishop Manning somewhat tautologically insists in an 1871 entrée in an ongoing discussion with William B. Carpenter, "If there be a fact of human consciousness, it is that we possess a will"; further, "life, intelligence, and will are all properties or faculties of a personal agent, who is in contact with matter, but is not material. And this personal agent . . . we call 'soul.'"[37]

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[35] Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1870–72), I, 485; quoted in Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003) p. 149.

[36] [Anon.], "Spencer's Principles of Psychology," review of *The Principles of Psychology*, by Herbert Spencer, *The Spectator*, 8 December 1855 p. 28.

[37] [Archbishop Manning], "The Relation of the Will to Thought," *Contemporary Review*, 16 (1871), 478, 479.

The Victorian characterization of the role of the will in Buddhism was complex and contradictory—perhaps reflecting and articulating tensions present in scientific discourse—and shifted markedly over the course of the century.[38] One major strain of thought held that Buddhists (and Asian people in general), were passive, indolent, lazy, and lacked the resolution and tenacity of the British. As Franklin puts it, "Buddhists, even more than other Orientals, were too passive, too 'languid,' to

[38] Challenges to human free will were such a threat that it seems as though it was difficult for most theorists to remain perfectly consistent on the question and to embrace fully the implications of evolutionary determinism. This determinism-vs.-morality conundrum was one that, according to Rylance, Spencer himself was prey to: "A resolutely environmental determinist, who would not countenance the idea of a free-acting will in psychology, Spencer none the less insisted, as a political economist, a pacifist, an anti-colonialist, and a believer in altruism and the effects of human sympathy, that people were able to exert moral agency to make a difference to things" (*Victorian Psychology*, p. 222). Writing somewhat later than Spencer, George Henry Lewes, in his magnum opus *Problems of Life and Mind* (1874–79), "emphasizes consciousness, will, and agency, and yet continues to work with a determinist model" (Rylance, *Victorian Psychology*, p. 305). The theory of evolutionary determinism was, during the middle and later decades of the nineteenth century, clearly an emergent discourse that coexisted uncomfortably—even within the writings of a single theorist, or within a single scientific work—with the dominant Christian discourse of human free will. See George Henry Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind*, 5 vols. (London: Trübner and Co., 1874–79). There is, of course, another (voluminous) nineteenth-century literature on free will from the point of view of mental science, which clustered around the questions of the nature of consciousness and the "human-automatism" debate. William B. Carpenter is the key figure here; he himself provides a clear overview of the discussion up until the 1870s in his essay "On the Doctrine of Human Automatism" (1875), and outlines his own theory in "The Physiology of the Will" (1871). See William B. Carpenter, "On the Doctrine of Human Automatism," *Contemporary Review*, 25 (1875), 397–416; and W[illiam] B. Carpenter, "The Physiology of the Will," *Contemporary Review*, 17 (1871), 192–217. Essentially, the physiological/psychological view accorded with the evolutionary perspective in emphasizing the great scope of "automatic" (and thus unconscious, will-less) actions in human behavior, although Carpenter himself was critical of the hard-line automatism position taken by writers like Huxley: "the physiologist sees quite as clearly as the metaphysician that there is a power beyond and above all such mechanism—a *will* which, alike in the Mind and in the Body, can utilize the Automatic agencies to work out its own purpose" ("Physiology of the Will," p. 192). Yet Carpenter's free-will protestations are checked by an insistence on the great power and range of automatic actions that runs throughout his work; in the same essay he also writes, "it may now be regarded as a well-established Physiological fact, that even in the most purely volitional movements—those which are prompted by *a distinct purposive effort*,—the Will does not directly produce the result, but plays, as it were, upon the Automatic apparatus, by which the requisite nervo-muscular combination is brought into action" ("Physiology of the Will," p. 196).

actively seek their ambitions and desires. They lacked will.... They were indolent when they should have worked, and they sought surrender—in the spiritual as well as military sense— when 'we' would have fought" (*The Lotus and the Lion*, p. 116). Victorian commentator C. Pfoundes expounds the enervating effects of the acquisition of esoteric knowledges: "The hold which Buddhism has upon the majority of Asiatics is deeply rooted in the inner life of its devotees and appears prominently in the obsequies, memorial services, and ancestral rites, which form an integral part of their monotonous existence."[39] As another writer puts it, rather more baldly, "to judge of its effects on the priests, the practice of Buddhism seems to have the most debasing influences, as they have nearly all of them an expression approaching idiocy."[40]

Of course this is, to a certain extent, simply stock racist rhetoric: "Orientals" are more indolent, passive, lazy, etc.— a perdurable characterization that has received sustained critical attention particularly since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978.[41] It is important to note, however, that these topoi are refracted through quite specifically described religious practice. As Almond writes, "In all respects, the Oriental mind was [seen as] inferior, a fact the blame for which was often laid at the door of Buddhism" (*The British Discovery of Buddhism*, p. 41). The racist rhetoric is thus consonant with a broader discourse on will that seemed to many early Victorians to challenge the foundations of their own Christian doctrine: projecting willessness onto the Asian/Buddhist other becomes a cultural anxiety-management technique.

As Almond also argues, however, "during the second half of the century, Buddhism was often cited as a *counter* to the generally accepted belief in the stagnation of Oriental societies" (*The British Discovery of Buddhism*, p. 51, emphasis added).

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[39] C. Pfoundes, "Why Buddhism?," *Open Court*, 9 (1895), 4594.

[40] J. F. Davis, quoted in George R. Mathews, "Notes on Buddhism at Home," *Literary Digest*, 3 (1891), 603.

[41] See, for example, Almond: "there were however certain, so to say, childlike qualities among certain Oriental people that were admired.... Like children, Orientals are also simple, credulous, and lacking in originality" (*The British Discovery of Buddhism*, p. 48). See also Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

Almond's interpretation of this phenomenon suggests that in the latter decades of the century (perhaps as evolutionary determinism was becoming entrenched and respectable), more practical concerns might have begun trumping what I have argued was a cultural reaction-formation: "Buddhism provided a useful device to overcome the language of unchangeability, fixity, or immutability that was no longer congenial to the colonialist philanthropist, whether religiously inspired or otherwise motivated. A benevolent colonial policy demanded at least the possibility of innovation and change" (*The British Discovery of Buddhism*, p. 52).

The growing tolerance—and even popularity—of Buddhism among British Victorians could also be ascribed to the growing utility of the religion on another front: as Christian orthodoxy was challenged by evolutionary determinism, what McMahan terms "scientific Buddhism" "offered the hope of a religion that did not conflict with the dominant discourse of science" to "spiritually unmoored Victorians" ("Modernity and the Early Discourse of Scientific Buddhism," p. 925). Brantlinger's conclusion is similar, although he reaches it through a slightly different route: "Impelled by scientific materialism, the search for new sources of faith led many late Victorians to telepathy, séances, and psychic research. It also led to the far reaches of the Empire. . . . the stunning success of Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* (1879) suggests the strength of the desire for alternatives to both religious orthodoxy and scientific skepticism" (*Rule of Darkness*, p. 228).

Ironically (or perhaps not), the discourse of will also shifted during this period so that the very concept that had enacted such a challenge to Christianity to begin with was now enlisted to burnish the reputation of the previously reviled locus of "Oriental" indolence. We can see this shift throughout later-century British commentaries on Buddhism. Even advanced Buddhists' purported supernatural powers, which so fascinated British Victorians, were often ascribed to sheer mental effort: "Buddhist adepts can fly through the air, go through earth, on water, turn themselves into other shapes, enter another's body, and so forth. Yet these powers are attainable in their highest form only by Buddhistic training in will,

effort, thought, and investigation"; more explicitly, "There are no physical limitations that the adept cannot ignore at will."[42]

One important later-Victorian scholar of Buddhism, Caroline Rhys Davids, authored an essay on the topic entitled "On the Will in Buddhism" (1898), in which she specifically sets out to correct the "hasty generalizations and one-sided conclusions concerning the nature of Buddhist ideals and discipline" on the part of both the general public and her fellow scholars.[43] Rhys Davids begins by claiming that "it seems to have been characteristic of the man [Buddha] to have rated nothing higher in conduct than a supreme effort of will in which 'the whole energies of being consent'" ("On the Will in Buddhism," p. 50). She goes on directly to attack the pervasive racist characterizations of Buddhists we have seen in other writers:

> The stony, stultified, self-centred apathy we often hear ascribed to the Buddhist ideal is supposed to be the result—in so far as the Indian climate is not held responsible—of a Schopenhauerian pessimism as to the worth and promise of life and the springs of life. If, however, the critic would dwell more on the positive tendencies in Buddhist ethics, he might discern under the outward calm of mien of the Buddhist sage in literature and art, a passion of emotion and will not paralyzed or expurgated, but rendered subservient to and diffused around deep faith and high hope. ("On the Will in Buddhism," p. 55)[44]

Other commentators writing around the same time (and the same time as *Kim*) shared Rhys Davids's assessment of the role of will in Buddhism: "In place of dependence on intermediaries, each man was raised to the position of individual responsibility. Henceforward he was to stand alone. No God, no priest, no mediator could save him. Herein lies the superb optimism of the Buddhist, who believes that man can be his own saviour. . . . Each individual has to work out his own

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[42] E. Washburn Hopkins, "Buddhistic Mysticism," in *Indian Studies in Honor of Charles Rockwell Lanman* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1929), pp. 116, 120–21.

[43] [C. A. F.] Rhys Davids, "On the Will in Buddhism," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 30 (1898), 47.

[44] Almond discusses the prevalence of the idea of the Indian climate's influence on Buddhist thought (see *The British Discovery of Buddhism*, pp. 43–51).

salvation with diligence" (Strong, "The Revival of Buddhism in India," p. 273). Or, as a slightly earlier (slightly less encomiastic) commentator put it, "The hardness of attainment and apparent impossibility of Buddhist holiness lies in this doctrine of free will."[45]

In fact, a marked admiration for Indian religious adepts' force of will and powers of concentration is found even in the work of authors largely unsympathetic to the tenets of ancient Buddhism and Hinduism in general. The scholar of Tibet Graham Sandberg, writing in 1890, vilifies practitioners of Indian religions as "most unwashen and most unpoetical idler[s]," "plagiarist[s]," and vacuous idiots, who like nothing better than to "lie as a log and sleep";[46] yet even he grudgingly acknowledges that within Buddhist doctrine, "attainment to the grades of perfection, and thence to saintship, is only to be acquired by the most complete abstraction from external objections and the profoundest internal contemplation," and that when a practitioner "has really made up his mind to reach Nirvana, he must attain by perseverance in the prescribed ascetic exercises to the various settled grades of perfection. He has, it must be noted, set himself apart from the ordinary mass of mankind" ("Philosophical Buddhism in Tibet," pp. 266, 265). This marked shift in the rhetoric of "Oriental" will by the last years of the nineteenth century means that whatever stereotypes about Buddhism/Hinduism later commentators may have held, they no longer clustered around the depiction of adepts as lazy, enervated, or undisciplined.

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With these discussions in mind, we can further elaborate the role of will in Kipling's novel. The third passage I would like to examine at length is the continuation of the quotation discussed above—"'I am Kim. I am Kim. And

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[45] Helen Graham McKerlie, "Western Buddhism," *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, 9 (1890), 213.

[46] Graham Sandberg, "Philosophical Buddhism in Tibet," *Contemporary Review*, 57 (1890), 256, 262, 266, 263.

what is Kim?' His soul repeated it again and again." It runs as follows:

> He did not want to cry—had never felt less like crying in his life—but of a sudden easy, stupid tears trickled down his nose, and with an almost audible click he felt the wheels of his being lock up anew on the world without. Things that rode meaningless on the eyeball an instant before slid into proper proportion. Roads were meant to be walked upon, houses to be lived in, cattle to be driven, fields to be tilled, and men and women to be talked to. They were all real and true—solidly planted upon the feet— perfectly comprehensible—clay of his clay, neither more nor less. (*Kim*, p. 331)

As Edward Said notes, "The whole of the passage . . . has in it a kind of moral triumphalism which is carried by the accentuated inflections in it of purpose, will, voluntarism" ("Introduction," p. 20). Perhaps following Said's highly influential essay, most critics have tended to read this passage in the same way: as an affirmation on Kipling's part of a solidly British, pragmatic, and sedulous worldview that is at the very least perfectly consonant with—if not openly laudatory of—the Victorian colonial project. Christine Bucher, for example, writes: "The 'click' signals the sudden correspondence of Kim's soul with the world around him"; "His 'job' and his training as a surveyor for the British imperial bureaucracy make this integration likewise the achievement of the nation-creating function of ideology."[47] Brigitte Hervoche-Bertho observes: "In this equation of spirituality and railway technology Kipling's symbolic imagination reveals its true nature, its collusion with imperialist propaganda. . . . The mechanical metaphor somehow implies that Kim has incorporated or internalized faith in the coloniser's technological superiority and understood that he was part of the complex network of the British Secret Service, a link in the chain of British Rule" ("The Wheel and the Way," p. 368); while Jeffrey Meyer notes: "When the Lama offers salvation and freedom from the Wheel of Things, Kim prefers to mesh his soul with the reality of the world and

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[47] Christine Bucher, "Envisioning the Imperial Nation in Kipling's *Kim*," *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies*, 5, no. 2 (1998), 13–15.

become a cog-wheel connected with the machinery of the Game";[48] and Ian Duncan explains: "In the last pages the accession of a totalizing perspective dislocates Kim's subjectivity...to replace it with an instrumental and colonizing relation to a world grasped anew as natural, familiar, everyday."[49] An early and influential essay on *Kim* by Mark Kinkead-Weekes goes so far as to insist that in this scene Kipling considered, only to reject, Buddhist teachings outright: "As the 'gear' imagery makes clear, this is commitment...to the Wheel of earthly and human life, against the view which holds that all these things are illusion, and one must keep oneself apart from them."[50]

While other critics suggest that the ambiguity of the "click" scene signals Kipling's ambivalence between, inability to reconcile, or even principled negotiating of the "Buddhist half" and the "British half" of the novel,[51] all of these readings still undervalue the extent to which *Kim* is informed by contemporary English discourses of "Oriental" spirituality, as well as the extent to which discourses of will are consonant with the Buddhist half. Jeffrey Franklin's reading is unique, as far as I know, in emphasizing Kipling's direct engagement with Buddhist doctrine in the crucial scene: "when Kim sees that the elements of the material world around him 'were all real

[48] Jeffrey Meyers, "The Quest for Identity in *Kim*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 12 (1970), 107.

[49] Ian Duncan, "*The Moonstone*, the Victorian Novel, and Imperialist Panic," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 55 (1994), 304.

[50] Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "Vision in Kipling's Novels," in *Kipling's Mind and Art: Selected Critical Essays*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1964), p. 231.

[51] See, for example, Feeley, "The *Kim* That Nobody Reads"; Matthew Fellion, "Knowing Kim, Knowing in *Kim*," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*, 53 (2013), 897–912; Feroza Jussawalla, "(Re)Reading *Kim*: Defining Kipling's Masterpiece as Postcolonial," *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies*, 5, no. 2 (1998), 112–30; Kettle, "What Is Kim?"; Corinne McCutchan, "Who Is Kim?," in *Transforming Genres: New Approaches to British Fiction of the 1890s*, ed. Nikki Lee Manos and Meri-Jane Rochelson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp. 131–54; Brunda Moka-Dias, "Migrancy and Intimacy in Kipling's Cultural Hybrid," *Exit 9: The Rutgers Journal of Comparative Literature*, 1 (1993), 61–74; and Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

and true—solidly planted upon the feet—perfectly compre-
hensible—clay of his clay, neither more nor less,' he is not
disclaiming Buddhist spirituality, as some critics have argued,
but rather recognizing the givenness of each material moment
and expressing a gratitude that is consistent with a Buddhist
understanding of being fully in the present" (*The Lotus and the
Lion*, p. 175).[52]

Kim's repeated questionings of his identity eventually allow
him to "click" back into a perception of reality—a reality that
happens to include a conveniently instrumental Indian land-
scape—that I would argue is perfectly consonant with the Victo-
rian understanding of the aims of tantric and esoteric practice.
For example, in his 1876 treatise William Brockie explicates the
Hindu/Buddhist understanding of *maya*, or the illusory nature
of the external world: "The visible universe is the product of
illusion. . . . Material substances, as the ignorant call them, are
no more than gay or grim pictures, presented continually to our
minds by the Sempiternal Artist, God" (*Indian Thought*, p. 32).
Another Victorian commentator explains *maya* in terms that are
strikingly similar to those found in *Kim*:

> In what we call, for distinction, the waking life a similar idea
> sometimes arises, especially in times of great trouble, and the
> question is occasionally actually formulated: Am I really awake?
> If this question could only be fixed and made a subject of reflec-
> tion in calmer moments the reply would not be long in com-
> ing,—"No, it is not so, I am not really awake." Such person would
> then begin to fall into the Buddhist habit of mind, and one day
> he would actually awaken out of this, apparently, waking life to
> a vivid perception of another and a much more "awake" state of
> consciousness beyond. (Ellam, *The Message of Buddhism to the
> West*, p. 9)

[52] One recent critic, Young Hee Kwon, does acknowledge the Buddhist "sub-text" of
the novel—the "deep impact of Buddhism in Britain at the turn-of-the-century is indis-
pensable in reading *Kim*. In terms of readership, it signals that Kipling's target audi-
ence was eager to consume narratives of Buddhist terminologies, mantra, exotic priests
and so on"—yet still argues that the "click" scene "signals a closure of the master
narrative of imperial romance" (Young Hee Kwon, "The Buddhist *Sub*-Text and the
Imperial Soul-Making in *Kim*," *Victorian Newsletter*, 111 [2007], 21, 25).

A somewhat later commentator insists, in terms similar to those we have already seen, on the effort of will involved in overcoming the illusion of *maya*: "if one confines the use of mysticism to the meaning of oneness with reality and the power (or desire) to effect it, then it is obvious that these Abhiññās [higher states of knowledge] are not powers belonging to mysticism but rather to a simple faith on the one hand and to a groping experimentation with scientific facts on the other. All these powers are developed through a severe course of mental training. They are not mystical gifts but 'accomplishments' painfully gained" (Hopkins, "Buddhistic Mysticism," p. 119).

In other words, it is *through* esoteric practice—itself an act of intense *will* and of *reason*—that the adherent comes to understand the external world as illusory, and then, paradoxically, as real. Young Hee Kwon writes about the parallel enlightenment scenes at the end of the novel: "As if Kim were an automaton or a mere part of the governing machinery, we saw Kim's restless soul automatically and mechanically locked onto the Wheel by the invisible force of the empire. In contrast, the lama's enthusiastic determination to return to his *chela* 'lest he miss the Way' indicates a mighty performance of will and action" ("The Buddhist *Sub*-Text and the Imperial Soul-Making in *Kim*," p. 27). I clearly agree with the second part of this reading, while disagreeing with the first. Kim's "click" moment is also the result of an arduous exercise of will on his part—*in the service of dispelling* maya—that we have seen throughout the novel, including in the infamous Lurgan Sahib seduction scene. In all of these key moments, Kipling's novel unsurprisingly depicts the great strength of will and discipline exercised by its young protagonist. More surprisingly, it also strongly suggests, and in some cases outright insists, that the source of that strength is not racial superiority *qua* whiteness. While Kipling clearly did believe in that superiority (as Said, among other theorists, has eloquently and powerfully argued), his depiction of Buddhist practice, consonant with that of other late-Victorian exegetes, forms an important contrapuntal tension to that prevailing ideology.

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It is not necessary to believe (or prove) that Kipling consciously and deliberately larded *Kim* with laudatory depictions of Buddhism, or that he was an astute scholar of the religion, in order to acknowledge the extensive influence of Eastern religious thought on his novel. As many critics have discussed, Kipling's scholarly understanding of Buddhism would certainly have outstripped that of the average Victorian, given that his father, John Lockwood Kipling, was curator of the Lahore Museum and the model for the keeper of the Wonder House depicted in the early pages of the novel. (Of course, Kipling was also writing during the "Buddhism craze" in England, when any assiduous reader of popular journals would have been familiar with the basic tenets of the religion.) Kwon, for example, argues that "the Buddhist subtext in *Kim*, with its potential of a radically different *Weltanschauung* subtly but surely invades the pleasurable discursive field of the imperial adventure narrative" ("The Buddhist *Sub*-Text and the Imperial Soul-Making in *Kim*," p. 28). As I have argued, however, the Buddhist elements in *Kim* constitute more than just an ideologically disruptive subtext, but an active and sustained engagement with questions of will and identity-formation as refracted through perceived ideas of Eastern religious and esoteric practice.

Similarly, we do not need to concede that Kipling was any less imperialist, or even less racist, than he undoubtedly was in order to feel the complexity and subtlety of his engagement with late-Victorian Buddhism in *Kim*, and to acknowledge how that engagement must complicate our ways of reading the novel. It also must inform our understanding of British literary representations of Indian nationalism in the early decades of the twentieth century. While *Kim* may include a nuanced and sympathetic depiction of Buddhism, it is still an Orientalist one. Said argues persuasively that Kipling does not ignore or repress a dawning awareness of the contradictions of the imperial project, which must surely have been growing importunate; Kipling genuinely does not apprehend them: "There is no

resolution to the conflict between Kim's colonial service and loyalty to his Indian companions not because Kipling could not face it, but because for Kipling *there was no conflict* and, one should add immediately, one of the purposes of the novel was, in fact, to show the absence of conflict" ("Introduction," p. 23, emphasis in original).

And yet Kipling's representation of Buddhism, in its undeniably celebratory key, must be read as an early-modernist harbinger of the uptake of Buddhism in modern and contemporary art and popular culture. As R. John Williams argues in his recent study *The Buddha in the Machine* (2014), there has been a prevalent belief among modern artists that "at the core of Western culture since at least the Enlightenment there lies an originary and all-encompassing philosophical error, manifested most immediately in the perils of modern technology—and that Asian art offers a way out of that awful matrix."[53] Williams explores the modern trope of Asia as the site of pre-industrial *technê*, which functions as a potential solution to the depredations of industrial society: "a compelling fantasy that would posit Eastern aesthetics as both the antidote to and the perfection of machine culture" (*The Buddha in the Machine*, p. 1). As we have seen, late-Victorian commentators on Buddhism, including Kipling, prefigure this belief, and its contradictory character, in their ambivalent embrace of Buddhist practice as a technology of self-improvement and discipline of the will.

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ABSTRACT

Deanna K. Kreisel, "The Psychology of Victorian Buddhism and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*" (pp. 227–259)

This essay demonstrates that Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) engages deeply with several aspects of Buddhist thought that were also of central concern to nineteenth-century British psychology. It describes several central tenets of Buddhism as understood by Victorian exegetes, paying particular attention to the ways this discourse became

[53] R. John Williams, *The Buddha in the Machine: Art, Technology, and the Meeting of East and West* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2014), p. 1.

surprisingly approbatory over the course of the century. It also performs close readings of three key passages in Kipling's novel dealing with identity, will, and self-discipline that illuminate the author's understanding of the subtleties of Buddhist thought. Its attention to the ways in which Kipling's novel engages Asian religious practice, particularly the "esoteric" practices of meditation and trance, complicates an entrenched reading of the novel as championing British triumphalism; it does so by challenging earlier interpretations of the religious elements in *Kim* as constituting straightforward evidence for the novel's endorsement of the imperial project.