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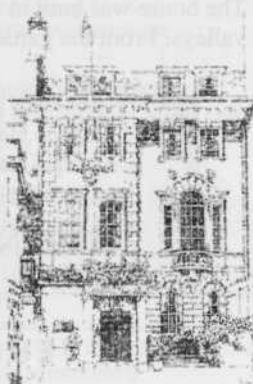
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SECRETARY'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

SOME FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday 5 May 2010, 12.30 for 1 p.m., in the Hall of India and Pakistan, Royal Over-Seas League, **The Society's Annual Luncheon. Guest Speaker: Lady Juliet Townsend:** "The Elephant in the Room". For details see December's flyer or contact Jane Keskar.

Saturday 19 June 2010, a Study Day at the **University of Bristol**, organised by Dr John Lee. Please see pages 58-59 of this issue.

Sunday 26 June 2010, the National Trust will hold its "Kipling Day" at Bateman's.

Wednesday 7 July 2010, 4.30 p.m. in the Mountbatten Room, Royal Over-Seas League, The Society's **A.G.M.** after which (5.30 for 6 p.m.), **Alex von Tunzelmann:** "Under the Deodars – inside Kipling's Simla". (Alex von Tunzelmann, author of *Indian Summer: The Secret History of the End of an Empire*, talks about how Kipling saw the society and politics of the Raj which ruled India, and introduces her new edition of *Under the Deodars*.) A complimentary tea will be served at 4.00 p.m. in the Wrench Room for members who inform the Secretary in advance.

Wednesday 8 September 2010, 5.30 for 6 p.m. in the Mountbatten Room, Royal Over-Seas League, Speaker to be announced.

Wednesday 10 November 2010, 5.30 for 6 p.m. in the Mountbatten Room, Royal Over-Seas League, Speaker to be announced.

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EDITORIAL

THE 2009 UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD STUDY DAY

As was reported in the September 2009 *Journal* (No.333, p.6), this most successful day was organised by Prof Daniel Karlin of the School of English, the University of Sheffield. It was held to mark the centenary of the publication of *Actions and Reactions* in 1909, the last collection of stories and poems that Kipling published before the outbreak of the First World War.

In this supplementary issue of the *Journal*, I am delighted to publish the three papers presented that day, and to thank their authors Élodie Raimbault, John Lee, and Daniel Karlin. Also to thank those who participated in a panel discussion on "Imperial Visions, Imperial Fears", namely Andrew Lycett (Kipling's biographer), Barbara Bush (Sheffield Hallam University) and Alasdair Menmuir (University of Sheffield) which was not recorded. We are most grateful to them all.

THE SOURCE OF THE POEMS

On this occasion, there is a little more space available in the *Journal* than the papers could fill, and so rather than diluting the impact of *Actions and Reactions*, I have drawn on that collection for additional material – some of the poems. For the same reason I have taken them from the 1909 Macmillan edition of *Actions and Reactions* rather than *The Definitive Edition of Rudyard Kipling's Verse*. There are variations in line indentation and in some punctuation between the two editions, and I have also noted some small changes in the text of "The Four Angels", "The Rabbi's Song", and "The Puzzler". However, in the *DV* the latter has also acquired an extra stanza in the penultimate position, which is:

Yes, sometimes in a smoking-room, through clouds of "Ers" an
"Urns,"

Obliquely and by inference, illumination comes,

On some step that they have taken, or some action they approve—
Embellished with the *argot* of the Upper Fourth Remove.

A 2010 STUDY DAY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

Following on from the Sheffield event, Dr John Lee is organising a Study Day in Bristol. This will be on 19 June 2010, and the details of the event can be found on pages 58-59 of this *Journal*.

AN HABITATION ENFORCED,
BETTER LATE THAN NEVER,

Upon these words,

"Sit down, *Robin*, and rest thee."

CHAP. XI.

My friend, if cause doth wrest thee,
Ere folly hath much oppressed thee,
Far from acquaintance kest thee,
Where country may digest thee,
Let wood and water request thee,
In good corn soil to nest thee,
Where pasture and mead may brest thee,
And healthsome air invest thee;
Though envy shall detest thee,
Let that no whit molest thee,
Thank God that so hath blessed thee,
And sit down, *Robin*, and rest thee.

Thomas Tusser (1524-1580)
Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry
(1812 Edition, London)

ACTIONS AND REACTIONS: KIPLING'S EDWARDIAN SUMMER

By DANIEL KARLIN
(University of Sheffield)

Rudyard Kipling's collection of stories and accompanying poems, *Actions and Reactions*, was published in October 1909. It consisted of eight stories, each followed by a poem; the stories had all previously appeared in magazines in both the United States and Britain, with the exception of the first and last, which appeared in American magazines only. The Addendum to this paper gives the sequence of stories and poems in the published volume, together with the dates of their magazine publication. Most of the stories were written in the period 1905-1909, though two of them are of earlier date, one considerably so. The doublet form of the title follows the pattern of Kipling's later career, starting with *Traffics and Discoveries* in 1904, *Debits and Credits* in 1926, *Limits and Renewals* in 1932; we might also mention *Rewards and Fairies* of 1910, though the doublet in that title is a quoted phrase. I must admit that I had intended to make great play with *Actions and Reactions* as a very suggestive title, until I discovered, from Andrew Lycett's biography as it happens, that until shortly before publication the working title was *Motions and Emotions*. So close may both an author and his critic come to making fools of themselves.

Since nothing in Kipling is single-minded, I think it is appropriate that my talk should have two beginnings, one fanciful and speculative, like a staircase that ends in mid-air, and the other orderly and signposted, like a museum guide. I begin, therefore, with an East Sussex landscape, in the first years of the 20th century:

They walked toward it through an all-abandoned land. Here they found the ghost of a patch of lucerne that had refused to die; there a harsh fallow surrendered to yard-high thistles; and here a breadth of rampant kelk feigning to be lawful crop. In the ungrazed pastures swaths of dead stuff caught their feet, and the ground beneath glistened with sweat. At the bottom of the valley a little brook had undermined its footbridge, and frothed in the wreckage. But there stood great woods on the slopes beyond—old, tall, and brilliant, like unfaded tapestries against the walls of a ruined house.

'All-abandoned' means 'completely, utterly abandoned', and 'abandoned by everyone'; in another sense it means 'abandoned to its own

devices, wanton', as we used to speak of an 'abandoned woman'. The land is riotous, filled with a perverse energy: 'rampant', 'glistening with sweat', 'frothing'; at the same time it is a place of exhaustion and entrapment, where even refusing to die means that you become no better than a ghost, and where 'swaths of dead stuff catch the pilgrims' feet. Crossing this wilderness is like an ordeal: there are echoes of Robert Browning's great poem " 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came' ", and our pilgrims, too, will discover at the end of their journey a building that will seal their fate, though this fate is held to be benign. The phrase 'There stood great woods on the slopes beyond' in particular recalls the climax of Browning's poem: 'There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met / To view the last of me, a living frame / For one more picture!'

Who are these pilgrims, and where are they headed? The 'it' they are walking 'toward' in the first sentence is the spire of a village church, but their goal is not salvation, or not of the religious kind. At the village is a post office, connected to the telegraph network, and therefore to the modern world, the world of business and money from which our pilgrims—one of them in particular—have been exiled. George Chapin, a ruthless and successful American financier, has had a stroke from overwork, and is threatened with death if he persists in the thing he truly loves. He is forced abroad with his second-choice love—his wife, Sophie—and they come in the course of their wanderings to this apparently desolate bit of southeast England. Its dilapidated and exhausted appearance puzzles them. 'I thought all England was a garden,' Sophie says; and to George it seems as though the land was suffering, like himself, from 'nervous prostration'. His principal anxiety is to be within reach of the network of communication that sustains his sense of himself, even if he is not allowed to make use of it. Kipling, however, has other plans for him. Moreover it turns out that the great woods are worth a lot of money.

I will be saying more about the story from which this passage comes, "An Habitation Enforced", later on in this talk. But I wanted to start with this passage because it is so charged with the tensions, the anxieties, the competing energies that went into Kipling's image of England at this point in her history and his own. England is both dead and alive in this symbolic vision, a place of disorder in both moral and social terms—the weeds 'feigning to be lawful crop', the brook that has 'undermined its footbridge'—yet capable of grandeur, of beauty, and of renewal. And yet, when you have said this much, there remains something incongruous about the image of the great woods as 'unfaded tapestries against the walls of a ruined house'. The ruined house must, according to the logic of the image, be the surrounding landscape,

which has been getting more and more 'abandoned' as the woods have grown; yet Kipling compares the woods to man-made objects that have somehow defied the process of time. Real tapestries would have faded, and indeed dropped to pieces, long before the house that contained them became a ruin. I don't believe that Kipling was being incompetent or inadvertent here. He was, to borrow Thomas Hardy's phrase, a man who noticed such things. Rather I take the image of the woods as unfaded tapestries to express a further paradox about England, or perhaps the idea of England: a product of ancient growth, but also a work of art that defies time, and indeed defies itself, standing *against* the ruin that it outlasts.

I now begin again, like the professional pedant I am, with two disclaimers and a definition. First the disclaimers. As a textual scholar I'm naturally interested in the genesis and textual history of literary works, and *Actions and Reactions* has some striking features in this regard. It would be fascinating, for example, to trace the evolution of the story now called "The Puzzler", whose colonial politics are bang up to date and whose setting is somewhere in Kipling's own adoptive county, Sussex, from its origins over a decade earlier, when it was called "For Men Only" and was, like "My Sunday at Home", the product of a visit Kipling made in 1894 to his parents' retirement home in Wiltshire. Another example concerns the clearly deliberate exclusion of "An Habitation Enforced" from the British magazine market, a decision all the more striking when you remember that in this period Kipling's commercial interests were in the hands of a very capable agent, A.P. Watt, who was kept up to the mark by the vigilance of Kipling's wife Carrie. But in this talk I shall not be engaging with the textual history of *Actions and Reactions*; I propose to consider the volume as it presents itself, as a completed structure. This purpose is linked to my second disclaimer, which relates to biography. I am not against biographical readings of literary works in general, or Kipling's in particular, and I'm not going to avoid them here; but my use of biography will be of a peculiar kind. The theme of *returning*, for example, is evidently central to this collection, and one of these returns is to the author's own earlier self and work. This form of return is explicitly addressed in two of the stories ("Garm—A Hostage", and "A Deal in Cotton") where the narrator draws attention to his early career. Biography is therefore built into the fabric of the volume, and does not need to be imported; and it is to these forms of self-scrutiny that I shall be paying attention. The contrast I have in mind would be with the kind of biographical reading that takes "An Habitation Enforced", the opening story of the volume, as a *reflection* of Kipling's own return, with his American wife Carrie, to an England he famously described as 'the

most wonderful foreign land [he had] ever been in'. I suppose I am making a distinction between biographical readings which begin from the work and lead elsewhere—however interesting 'elsewhere' may prove to be—and those which use biography as a way of lighting up the work from within.

Now for the definition. My title speaks of an 'Edwardian summer', and I ought to say what I mean by that phrase. It is intended in part ironically, because the notion of a halcyon period leading up to the First World War has become one of those historical clichés which refuses to die no matter how many historians drive a stake through its heart. It will be obvious from a reading of *Actions and Reactions* that Kipling, for one, did not imagine himself to be living in one of the two states of illusion commonly projected onto Edwardian society: on the one hand the suspended animation of an achieved social consensus, in which antagonisms of class and ideology were dissolved in a solution of English decency, tolerance, and good humour; on the other hand, the blind belief that material prosperity, built on economic and financial interdependence, had somehow made the prospect of catastrophic disruption as unlikely as it was unwelcome. We attribute such attitudes to 'conservatives', and Kipling was undoubtedly a conservative; yet we must acknowledge that his work embodies precisely the opposite views of Edwardian England: intense anxiety about the future, violent ideological conflict, a deep yearning for just that stability and ordered collective culture which he could *not* discern around him. In his fine book on *The Edwardians*, J.B. Priestley, who speaks with the irreverent authority of a 'junior Edwardian', as he calls himself, argues strongly and I think convincingly that the predominant social and political tone of the period was set by class antagonism, but that this antagonism was not between the upper class and those beneath them, nor between the middle class and the proletariat, but within the middle class itself. That helps to explain the acrid edge of much of Kipling's non-fiction writing of this period, especially his letters: it is the characteristic tone of a combatant in a civil war.

At the same time, the direction in which Kipling's probing intelligence took him was, simply and on the grand scale, erroneous. "With the Night Mail" is a kind of allegory of this mistakenness: it is both a magnificent tour-de-force and a dead end, as indeed is the re-founding of the House of Lashmar by the American couple in "An Habitation Enforced". The future does not belong to international trade regulated by a benign air-traffic control system, or to a version of British pastoral backed by American money—both of them, in different ways, fantasies floating on hot air. The apocalyptic intervention of the Bee Keeper which purges the intellectually corrupt, morally degenerate, racially

contaminated society of "The Mother Hive", leaving a purged and purified remnant 'prepared to go on', does not prophesy either the Great War or its aftermath. *Actions and Reactions* is filled with such intimations of a storm which never arrived, or which struck from a different quarter to the one expected.

Yet there is something more to the idea of an 'Edwardian summer' than either fake enchantment or dramatic irony. Kipling's sense of England, like his sense of himself, was made up of elements whose unstable combinations he was better able to record than to analyze. In the first years of the twentieth century, the years to which most of the stories in *Actions and Reactions* belong, his understanding of England and his own place in it as a writer became richer, more complex, more paradoxical than had been the case, say, in the 1890s, when he entered into what he mistakenly thought was his literary inheritance. The result is a kind of density of significance, in which images and allusions overlap and cross each other, yet without spoiling the effect of a fully achieved expression, like the spreading overarching foliage of a great tree on a perfect summer's day.

So much for my disclaimers and definitions. I want now to look in detail at two aspects of *Actions and Reactions*: first, the structure or pattern of the volume; and second, Kipling's re-visiting and re-imagining of earlier work. Finally—because no discussion of Kipling should avoid contradicting itself—I shall suggest that there is something more to be said about the art of Englishness, and that this something sees Kipling's plenitude of meaning as, to borrow his own phrase, an error in the fourth dimension.

STRUCTURE AND PATTERN

Actions and Reactions is a form of the 'structured collection'—I'm borrowing this term from John Woolford, who uses it in his book *Browning the Revisionary* to describe Robert Browning's later collections of shorter poems. In volumes such as *Dramatis Personae* or *Dramatic Idyls*, Woolford argues, the relations between individual poems are as important as the poems themselves, and the volume itself is a kind of long poem. In Browning's case the goal is to achieve, or at any rate gesture towards, the unity or integrity of a single work, without having to accept a monolithic subject or point of view. Truth in the modern world can no longer be singular, the product of a definitive insight and delivered by an authoritative voice; but it may be approached by plural and partial voices. Readers who are resistant to godlike proclamation may be open to human suggestion. I don't think

that Kipling shares Browning's philosophical aim, or not quite in the same way; he's unconcerned with the loss of a Romantic wholeness in which he seems never to have believed, and his collections don't postulate a deeper unity than their separate elements. But he was a pattern-maker from the beginning, and he was also interested in what I would call functional as opposed to organic unity: that is, the co-operation or co-ordination of parts in a system that enabled that system to work, to do its job. The breakdown of such a system horrified him, as it does in "The Mother Hive", in which the infiltration of the hive by the Wax-Moth leads to a disintegration which is traced with obsessive precision in the mechanics of the hive's operation and the fabric of its architecture. Accordingly there is a strong 'constructive' impulse both in individual stories and in their arrangement in collections; the trend is already marked in *The Jungle Book* and *The Second Jungle Book*, and it increases in the volumes that Kipling issued in the new century. Stories similar in theme are told using different narrative modes; the same motifs turn up in different contexts of time or place, and with different values attached to them; characters and relationships resemble but do not repeat each other. Such patterns are too strong and too visible to be wholly the product of critical ingenuity, though I acknowledge that the bias of interpretation is likely to exaggerate the element of authorial design.

Here are some brief examples of this pattern of likeness and difference in *Actions and Reactions*. The volume includes two 'non-realist' tales, side by side, "The Mother Hive" and "With the Night Mail". The first is an insect fable and the second a science-fiction fantasy; both are forecasts of the future, in one of which democracy brings about the end of civilization, and in the other of which civilization has brought about the end of democracy. The two stories in which Kipling revisits his earlier fiction are differentiated by class: "Garm—A Hostage" recalls the narrator's friendship with a private soldier, while "A Deal in Cotton" evokes friendships from the same period with men of his own or a higher social class. "Garm—A Hostage" forms part of another pairing, for it is one of two dog stories in the volume; it deals with the relationship of a single dog to its owner, and with that owner's individual fate as a small cog in the Indian Army's military machine, and it is told by an autobiographical narrator in a spirit of intimate recollection; the other, "Little Foxes", deals with a pack of fox-hounds, and with large issues of colonial governance, and its narrator is a practised raconteur, with inside knowledge of a scandalous and obscenely funny story. "Little Foxes", in turn, follows "A Deal in Cotton" and "The Puzzler", all three on colonial or imperial themes, and all hinging on a practical joke, though the jokes are of radically different kinds. The one that lies

at the heart of "A Deal in Cotton" is scarcely recognizable as a joke at all, and is at home in a story filled with the powers of darkness; the one in "The Puzzler" drives a surreal carnivalesque farce of male regression; in "Little Foxes" a merciless hoax exposes a pompous gullible do-gooder to shame and humiliation. "Little Foxes" is also, alas, one of those mortifying instances of Kipling's capacity for spiteful caricature, an art in which he tried to be Gillray but succeeded only in becoming a debased Beerbohm, without the wit; but right next door to it is "The House Surgeon", in which every assumption about the poisoned rootedness of Kipling's antisemitism is confounded.

These are a few of the many possible connections that can be made between the stories; I have not even mentioned the limitations and expansions offered by the accompanying poems, from the magnificent double-voiced elegy "The Power of the Dog", completely in tune with the story it follows, to the riddling myth of "The Four Angels", also a great poem, but so outside the ken of the story to which it is attached that it seems impossible to make one speak to the other. I must confine myself to one example that I can treat in detail. It is perhaps the most obvious, but also the richest and most suggestive.

Actions and Reactions is framed by two stories about houses, "An Habitation Enforced" and "The House Surgeon", though the houses, and indeed the stories, are of very different kinds. Indeed they are designed both to answer and, so to speak, defy each other across the intervening space of the volume, in which a number of other houses also play their part, including a beehive, a wealthy landowner's mansion, and a gloriously vulgar late Victorian villa. All of these might be drawn into the design; but I will concentrate on the two houses that stand at opposite ends of the volume.

The house in "An Habitation Enforced" is Friars Pardon, an ancestral dwelling, which we may presume dates from the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century, though the current manor house is Georgian. Friars Pardon is the centre of an estate that used to belong to one family, the Lashmars, who lost it around the end of the eighteenth century. Subsequent owners—the Elphicks and the Moones—have died out, and the estate is in the hands of solicitors in London. The five farms that still belong to the estate are on the edge of solvency, and the manor house itself has stood empty for seventeen years. Attempts have been made to sell it off, but no one will buy it: as the old caretaker, Iggulden, explains, it is 'too far away along from any place'. It is not yet a ruin, though well on the way to becoming one: the downstairs rooms are used for storing wool, the roof is open to the weather. On the other hand many of its original period features are intact, and are lovingly detailed: a 'slim-balustered staircase, wide and shallow and once

creamy-white'; 'delicately moulded doors'; 'sea-green mantelpieces . . . adorned with nymphs, scrolls, and Cupids in low relief. On the first floor is the drawing room, 'a long, green-panelled room lighted by three full-length windows, which overlooked the forlorn wreck of a terraced garden, and wooded slopes beyond'. There are 'bedrooms with dressing-rooms and powdering-closets, and steps leading up and down—boxes of rooms, round, square, and octagonal, with enriched ceilings and chased door-locks'. Even the pathos of decline is infused with elegance, with dignity, above all with authenticity. The Adam fireplaces have not been supplied by a modern firm that manufactures imitations of Georgian style: they are 'the originals'.

What of the house that stands at the other end of the volume? It is called 'Holmescroft', and it was built in 1863. It is located somewhere in the Home Counties, an hour and half's drive from London, in 'an exclusive residential district of dustless roads and elegantly designed country villas, each standing in from three to five acres of perfectly appointed land'. This land, we learn, is selling 'at eight hundred pounds the acre'; the 'new golf links', complete with a 'Queen Anne pavilion', 'had cost nearly twenty-four thousand pounds to create'. Holmescroft itself is 'a large, two-storied, low, creeper-covered residence. A verandah at the south side gave on to a garden and two tennis courts, separated by a tasteful iron fence from a most park-like meadow of five or six acres, where two Jersey cows grazed'. The word 'tasteful', which in English almost invariably means its opposite, alerts us to the inauthenticity of this scene, with its make-believe pastoral. Inside, this temple of wealthy Philistinism boasts 'a wide parquet-floored hall furnished in pale lemon, with huge cloisonne vases, an ebonized and gold grand piano, and banks of pot flowers in Benares brass bowls'. The 'pale oak staircase' leads to 'a spacious landing, where there was a green velvet settee trimmed with silver'. The vulgar opulence of the house contrasts pointedly with the exquisite decay of Friars Pardon. One represents a tradition whose integrity persists even in decline; the other a rootless modernity, whose pretensions are based on nothing more than money.

You will have noticed, I am sure, that so far I have carefully restricted myself to observations about the two houses, and have avoided saying anything about the characters who inhabit them. That's because these characters complicate the simple opposition between two kinds of social order that the houses in themselves apparently embody.

Friars Pardon is bought, in the course of the story, by an American couple, George and Sophie Chapin, who come across it by accident and then discover that they have unwittingly returned to the place from which Sophie's family, a branch of the Lashmars, emigrated to

America a century ago. The house is saved and restored, and the farms, we assume, will become productive and profitable; most important of all, the social fabric of the community, based on a neo-feudal structure of respect and mutual obligation, will be repaired and renewed for generations to come, and this outcome depends on the fact that dirty new American money is, so to speak, washed clean by the blood of an authentic ancestral claim. I will come to the ironies with which this fantasy is packed in a moment. What of *Holmescroft*? It too needs to be healed and restored (hence the title of the story). Years before, three sisters lived in the house, and the youngest died by falling from her bedroom window. The fall was a pure accident, but her older sister thought it was suicide, and that the sinner was therefore, according to her narrow morbid Calvinistic doctrine, eternally damned. Two occult forces converge on the house: the survivor's obsessive anguish at her sister's fate, and the dead woman's equally anguished spirit, desperate to communicate the truth about her death. Between them they blight the life of the new owners, and of everyone who comes to stay in the house, with an atmosphere of fathomless depression. These new owners are a rich Jewish family, who enlist the narrator's help in unlocking the secret of the house's affliction, so that the sisters can be at peace and they can actually enjoy the luxury they have paid for.

The name of these Jewish owners is 'M'Leod'—a patently inauthentic name, since they are Greeks, who are attempting to assimilate into English society—and in another context they might find themselves the targets of Kipling's prickly scorn. In fact this other context is present in "An Habitation Enforced", for in the neighbourhood of Friars Pardon is another estate, recently bought and renovated by a certain Mr Sangres, who is vaguely thought to be Brazilian, and is certainly dark-skinned, and has made his money in trade. Mr Sangres has done with his estate what the Chapins' tenants fear their new American owners will do with theirs—give up farming as a bad job, evict the tenants, and turn the land into a 'park', with a decorative herd of fallow deer—a version of the same kind of fake pastoral as the M'Leods have on their five acres, *nouveau-riche* vulgarity on the grand scale. Mr Sangres and his family want to be accepted into the local community, but they have no sense of obligation and think they can simply buy their way in. The community, from grandee to peasant, gives them the cold shoulder, and quite right too, we are asked to think; until, perhaps, we realize that Mr Sangres—'that nigger Sangres', as he is called by one of the locals—is only Mr M'Leod writ large, or indeed Mr Chapin without the saving grace of his wife's pedigree.

Kipling was a great artist and not a propagandist or a manipulator of received ideas. In his masterfully ironic hands the opposition between Friars Pardon and Holmescroft turns out to be a contest, not between authenticity and inauthenticity, but between two kinds of inauthenticity, one of which is if anything less honest than the other. In "The House Surgeon" a Jewish family is made happy by having a Christian curse lifted from the house they inhabit, and this happiness is signified by the daughter's approaching marriage with a young man 'who knew all about South American railways'; this young Jew is evidently a financial speculator, and we might see in him another avatar of Mr Sangres, another non-English interloper into the England whose real values are enshrined in the closed community of Friars Pardon. But the marriage is a cause of delight and celebration at the end of "The House Surgeon", whereas the ending of "An Habitation Enforced", as the title has all along intimated, is not free of ambiguity. The M'Leods are a blissfully united family, but the Chapins are divided by what happens to them, and not simply because Sophie is a Lashmar and George is not. His money—acquired, as the tremendous opening sentence of the story reminds us, in the savage arena of modern capitalist competition—does not so much buy him a place in England as enable his entrapment in a plot where his function is not to own but to breed. The culmination of the renewal of Friars Pardon is the birth of a male heir, who is given not his father's but his mother's name. Earlier in the story George observed that the history of the estate could be seen not in terms of possession but sacrifice. ' "People don't seem to matter in this country compared to the places they live in," ' he says, and he concludes that ' "Friars Pardon was a sort of Moloch" '. Well, he becomes its latest victim. The house devours him for its own ends: the final words of the story, spoken by George in the full consciousness of their symbolic import, are an expression of frustration and impotence: 'we can't get out of it'.

I would make one last point about the placing of these two stories at either end of the volume. The physical distance between them stands as an emblem of differences which are properly irreconcilable, that is, which it would be a violation of principle to imagine as somehow easily adjustable. Both Friars Pardon and Holmescroft are valued on a scale against which the other appears distorted or diminished. As readers we are invited to juxtapose them, but not to mix them up. I repeat, if Mr M'Leod were to move to Friars Pardon he would metamorphose into Mr Sangres. But it is part of what gives M'Leod his dignity that he has the tact to know just what kind of Englishman he can become.

LITERARY RETURNS

I spoke earlier of two stories in which Kipling consciously returns to the subject matter and characters of his early work. Again, I have time to treat only one of them in detail, and I have chosen to concentrate on "Garm—A Hostage".

The story's setting, and its main characters, would have looked familiar to readers who had followed Kipling since the glory days of his Anglo-Indian career, the period of *Plain Tales from the Hills*, *Soldiers Three*, *Life's Handicap*, and *Many Inventions*. To such readers the story might well have seemed, at least to begin with, a welcome return to a domain where Kipling's mastery was uncontested, that of Britain's imperial frontier in the North-West Province of India in the last years of the nineteenth century. The persona of the narrator belongs nominally to this time and place: he is Kipling as he used to be, the young man learning his trade as a journalist and writer on the staff of the *Civil and Military Gazette* in Lahore. His friendships embrace both the officers and private soldiers of the British regiments who are quartered in the city, notably the 'soldiers three'—Privates Mulvaney, Learoyd, and Ortheris—who represent the pockmarked heroism of the British Army's imperial countenance, its savagery, wit, and human fellowship.

In the plot of the story readers would have recognized Kipling's interest in the ordinary soldier's barrack-room life, his domestic as opposed to military existence. Boredom, drunkenness, heat-stroke, cholera, petty crime, adultery—these had not been the stuff of romance before Kipling came along. Private Stanley Ortheris gets drunk and narrowly escapes a serious disciplinary charge, thanks to the narrator's timely intervention. As a kind of penance, and as a 'hostage' for his good behaviour, he gives the narrator his dog, a bull-terrier whom the narrator calls 'Garm', the name of the dog who, in Norse mythology, guards the gates of hell. Ortheris stubbornly refuses to take the dog back, though both are broken-hearted. Eventually, on a visit to a hill-station in the Himalayas where Ortheris is recovering from fever, the narrator contrives to reunite them. That's all there is by way of plot: the story is more a mood-piece, an evocation of time and place, and a psychological study, if it's not too grand to put it this way, of guilt, self-punishment and redemption. Again, to describe it in these terms is to evoke comparisons with earlier stories, including one about Ortheris, "The Madness of Private Ortheris", from *Plain Tales from the Hills*. But such comparisons only take you so far.

The scenery and props of the story are deceptive. Kipling the writer is no longer close to the persona of his narrator; he is no longer an

ambitious provincial but a cosmopolitan celebrity, and he has left India, never to return. He has access to his earlier self only through memory. In earlier stories, where the narrator himself plays a part in the action, the time of the narration is close to that of the events related. So, for example, the story "With the Main Guard", published in 1888, begins with Mulvaney saying something to the narrator, who immediately comments: 'It was Mulvaney who was speaking. The time was one o'clock of a stifling June night, and the place was the main gate of Fort Amara, most desolate and least desirable of all fortresses in India.' We don't know when the narrator is writing this down, and in a sense that question is not important, but if we had to guess we would probably say 'shortly afterwards', or 'when he got home'. Here, by contrast, is the opening of 'Garm': 'One night, a very long time ago, I drove to an Indian military cantonment called Mian Mir to see amateur theatricals.' The phrase 'a very long time ago' reminds us that we are in 1909, and that the narrator is looking down a far longer perspective at his youthful self. The tone has distance in it: it is measurable even in very small differences of phrasing. When the narrator identifies Fort Amara as 'most desolate and least desirable of all fortresses in India', we feel it probable that the writer himself is *in* India; when he calls Mian Mir 'an Indian military cantonment', it is clear that he is not.

The same sense of distance affects the use of names in the story. The narrator addresses Ortheris by his first name, Stanley, something he almost never does in earlier tales, and refers to him using a variety of circumlocutions: 'my friend', 'his [i.e.the dog's] owner' or 'his master', 'my soldier friend', etc. The only time he actually puts down the name 'Ortheris' in black and white it acts as a kind of disclaimer, which may strike the reader as ironic, or disingenuous, or both: 'I never pretended to understand Private Ortheris; and so I did the next best thing—I left him alone.' When Ortheris comes back secretly to see his dog, the narrator keeps his incognito: he is 'a soldier in white uniform' glimpsed scrambling over the garden wall. These effects are small in themselves but very well judged; they mark the story as not fully belonging to the group where we might naturally think of placing it, and they also suggest that Kipling's 'return' to his earlier self and style has something odd about it.

I remember finding this oddness easy enough to detect in the 'tone' of the story, but much harder to identify at the level of theme or subject matter, where it ought after all to count most. I could sense a change of atmosphere in a familiar room, but could not quite see how the furniture had been rearranged. It wasn't the presence of a dog; Ortheris had always been associated with dogs, admittedly more as a master dog-thief than a devoted owner. Ortheris's characterization as moody, stubborn, quixotic, had not altered over twenty years; nor had

the basis of his friendship with the narrator, who helps him out of the occasional jam without preaching to him or patronizing him. Then it occurred to me to think about the curious lack of mechanism in the plot. There is no event, no moment of recognition or reversal, to motivate the undoing of Ortheris's self-imposed punishment. He gives the narrator his dog, and refuses to take it back, though he cannot resist visiting it on the sly; we are given the clear impression that this refusal is absolute and unalterable; indeed, another of the 'Soldiers Three', Mulvaney, is given a cameo appearance specifically to make this point: 'He won't take the dog, sorr. You can lay your month's pay on that. Ye know his fits.' Indeed we do, and it seems that Kipling will have to exercise considerable narrative ingenuity to get Ortheris out of this psychological impasse. As readers we are entitled to look forward to a spectacular plot-twist. *None is forthcoming*. Ortheris falls sick and is sent against his will to a hill-station. He and the dog are now, it seems, finally separated, and the implication is that they will both die; however, the narrator determines to pass through the same hill-station on his annual leave, and to bring the dog to Ortheris; he does so, they are reunited, and live happily ever after. That's it. What has become of Ortheris's sublime, absolute refusal? The story simply wishes it away, as though it were too hard a knot to untie. But Kipling had unravelled far more tangled plot-lines than this one. Twenty years earlier he would have come up with some corresponding action on the part of the narrator from which Ortheris might rescue him and thus repay his debt; or he would have brought Ortheris and the dog together in the context of some episode of liberating comedy or violence. What actually happens, the scene in which the narrator sees Ortheris, 'this one little man, crumpled up and thinking, on the great grey hillside', and then witnesses his joyful repossession of his dog and his self, is very beautiful, but it is completely unmotivated. And that's the point: it's so much more like life than like a story, it's so clear a repudiation of romance in favour of mere contingency. Ortheris was determined to die rather than go back on his word, and then Ortheris goes back on his word and lives.

The reversal of expectation at the level of plot is accompanied by another reversal, which is so obvious that it is easy to miss. I have said that Kipling returns in this story to an older autobiographical persona, that of the young journalist who has friends among both officers and common soldiers in Lahore. In the early stories which feature his dealings with Mulvaney, Learoyd, and Ortheris, the narrator's occupation, or personality, or domestic circumstances, are only ever part of the background; in "Garm—A Hostage" they are the centre of attention. Background has become foreground. Much of the story reads more like an episode from a memoir than a work of fiction, and it is done with

great plainness, with only occasional touches of the vivid concrete detail that Kipling had applied to the routines and textures of barrack life. The narrator tells us of morning rides before he goes to his newspaper office, of long dull days of sedentary work, of the exact route to the Hills that he took on his annual leave. Most of the colour in the story is given to the dogs, not just Garm but the narrator's own dog Vixen, who sleeps in his cot with 'her head on the pillow like a Christian'; we see Garm breaking the back of a pariah dog, and terrifying an ignorant Tommy who tries to steal him, but also sitting aloof in the narrator's carriage as it drives down the Mall, indifferent to the bustle of the scene and preoccupied with his lost master: 'His big eyes were on the horizon, and his terrible mouth was shut.' Gradually, as the story unfolds, we discover that we are learning much more about Garm than about Ortheris, whose character is static and who in any case appears in person only a couple of times; and Garm belongs with the narrator for the duration of the story, so that in exploring his predicament the narrator is bound to speak of himself and of his way of life, simply by way of explanation. It is seemingly artless, yet done with quiet art, this autobiographical sketch which Kipling pretends is merely the by-product of a fiction.

There is, of course, an element of nostalgia in Kipling's design, but even nostalgia serves an artistic purpose. By 1909 Kipling had accepted, and to some extent embraced, his identity as a polemical writer. The narrator who surges up from his personal and literary past comes from a simpler time, and is himself a simpler figure. We have only to compare him to the sardonic, politically engaged narrator of "The Puzzler" to measure the distance Kipling has travelled. I think that helps to explain the presence of this reflective and tender story in the embattled world of *Actions and Reactions*. It remains the case that the volume as a whole represents one of Kipling's most sustained efforts to understand and represent this world. "Garm—A Hostage" is all the more poignant for being the only story in *Actions and Reactions* which is not at any point located in England. The others are all stories of home or homecoming, even when they deal with colonial or imperial themes; these themes are 'brought home' to us in a double sense, by being linked to the great overarching structures that Kipling discerned in English history, in English nature, and in the English character (all of these related, of course, to each other). Again, 'Garm' is exceptional in having nothing to say about these grand frames of meaning.

I will conclude with a word of warning, and, as I promised, of contradiction. The temptation, in speaking of *Actions and Reactions*—it's a

temptation to which I have just been succumbing—is to take the great overarching structures I spoke of as definitive frames of meaning. But Kipling did not, in the end, think of 'England' as a 'master-word' of this kind. We must not mistake his vision of English history, which prizes duration, and which can accommodate cycles of growth and decay, for a vision of transcendent value. There is a power above duration, the power Kipling acknowledges in his story "The Bridge-Builders", and in one of the greatest of his poems, "Cities and Thrones and Powers":

Cities and Thrones and Powers
 Stand in Time's eye,
 Almost as long as flowers,
 Which daily die:
 But, as new buds put forth
 To glad new men,
 Out of the spent and unconsidered Earth,
 The Cities rise again.

This season's Daffodil,
 She never hears,
 What change, what chance, what chill,
 Cut down last year's;
 But with bold countenance,
 And knowledge small,
 Esteems her seven days' continuance
 To be perpetual.

So Time that is o'er-kind
 To all that be,
 Ordains us e'en as blind,
 As bold as she:
 That in our very death,
 And burial sure,
 Shadow to shadow, well persuaded, saith,
 "See how our works endure!"

This poem forms the preface to *Puck of Pook's Hill*, the volume which, along with its sequel *Rewards and Fairies*, brackets *Actions and Reactions* – *Puck* in 1906, and *Rewards* in 1910. I agree with Andrew Lycett that we should read *Actions and Reactions* in conjunction with these books, which make up a condition-of-England trilogy; I would only emphasize that the England of *Actions and Reactions* 'stand[s] in Time's eye' as much as that of the other two.

ADDENDUM TO ACTIONS AND REACTIONS (1909)

Title of story (followed by title of accompanying poem)	Date of first magazine publication
An Habitation Enforced <i>The Recall</i>	USA: <i>Century Magazine</i> , Aug 1905
Garm—A Hostage <i>The Power of the Dog</i>	USA: <i>Saturday Evening Post</i> , 23 Dec 1899 UK: <i>Pearson's Magazine</i> , Jan 1900
The Mother Hive <i>The Bees and the Flies</i>	USA: <i>Collier's Weekly</i> , 28 Nov 1908 UK: <i>Windsor Magazine</i> , Dec 1908 [as "Adventures of Melissa"]
With the Night Mail <i>The Four Angels</i>	USA: <i>McClure's Magazine</i> , Nov 1905 UK: <i>Windsor Magazine</i> , Dec 1905
A Deal in Cotton <i>The New Knighthood</i>	USA: <i>Colliers Weekly</i> , 14 Dec 1907 UK: <i>Cassell's Magazine</i> , Jan 1908
The Puzzler <i>The Puzzler</i>	USA: <i>North American</i> , Jan 1906 and <i>Colliers Weekly</i> , 17 Feb 1906 UK: <i>Tribune</i> , 15 and 16 January 1906
Little Foxes <i>Gallio's Song</i>	USA: <i>Colliers Weekly</i> , 27 March 1909 UK: <i>Nash's Magazine</i> , April 1909
The House Surgeon <i>The Rabbi's Song</i>	USA: <i>Harper's Magazine</i> , September and October 1909

THE RECALL

(To follow "An Habitation Enforced")

I am the land of their fathers,
In me the virtue stays;
I will bring back my children
After certain days.

Under their feet in the grasses
My clinging magic runs.
They shall return as strangers,
They shall remain as sons.

Over their heads in the branches
Of their new-bought, ancient trees,
I weave an incantation,
And draw them to my knees.

Scent of smoke in the evening,
Smell of rain in the night,
The hours, the days and the seasons,
Order their souls aright;

Till I make plain the meaning
Of all my thousand years—
Till I fill their hearts with knowledge,
While I fill their eyes with tears.

KIPLING'S FRAILTY AND "WITH THE NIGHT MAIL"¹

By JOHN LEE
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Kipling is often thought of as a man of certainties, and in certain ways, he is. Peter Havholm, to take a recent example, argues in *Politics and Awe in Rudyard Kipling's Fiction* (2008) that Kipling basically made up his mind on political and social matters early on during his 'seven years hard' as a journalist and newspaper editor in India, and that nothing that happened later caused him to revise those opinions. British Imperialism was a force for good, and other cultures and races, of which India provided numerous examples, generally needed to be protected from themselves; the British Empire could reasonably be seen as a series of continuing acts of paternalistic self-sacrifice. Moreover, it was these political and social beliefs that shaped Kipling's notions of who people were, and how they acted; as Havholm puts it, 'Kipling's ideas about humanity did not produce his politics; partisan political debate formed his ideas about humanity'. Kipling's world was one of them and us, and they were distant and apart – to be wondered at in awe, rather than to be understood or empathized with. Kipling's art grew out of his exploration of the ways in which he could put that awe, that distance between observer and the observed, to work in his fiction. It is a stimulating argument and, as such arguments do, offers many grounds for disagreement. In this paper, I do not want to engage or disagree directly with Havholm's argument, but I do want to propose a quite different account of Kipling's 'ideas about humanity', central to which is Kipling's own experience of human frailty, and his resulting scepticism about the grounds for, and possibilities of, knowledge. Kipling, I want to suggest, is something of a modern-day Montaigne, where that 'something' indicates that, while less philosophically sophisticated, Kipling and Montaigne are both men whose scepticism of our ability to know with certainty leads them into a radical, and rather certain, conservatism. A key part of Kipling's certainty, in other words, is his belief that there are many things one cannot be certain about; and that uncertainty makes him accepting of many traditional assumptions of the nature of society and of the nature of humankind; and central to that uncertainty is his experience of his own frailty.

Kipling's experience of bodily frailty might most obviously be dated from 1915, when he suffered the first symptoms of what would finally, in 1933, be correctly diagnosed as a duodenal ulcer. The long series of false diagnoses that led up to that final correct one have an appalling, comi-tragic variety, particularly when gathered together on a single sheet of foolscap, as they are in a document in the archives of the University of Sussex.³ The list in summary runs: 1915 – gastritis; 1917 – internal chill; 1918 – irritability of the stomach; 1919 – adhesion of the liver and colon; 1921 – septic foci in the teeth; 1922 – old ulcer, with inflamed colon and lower bowel; 1931 – adhesion to operation scar; 1931 – umbilical hernia; 1931 – disorderly stomach; 1932 – colic from overdosing with aperients [laxatives]. Some notion of the pain and discomfort Kipling suffered can be guessed from the consequences of the 1921 and 1922 diagnoses; Kipling had all his teeth removed for the first, and was operated on for a 'twisted bowel' for the second. His weight during these years dropped under 9 stone. The final, correct diagnosis in 1933 seems to have come too late to allow anything to be done; in 1936, after some twenty-years of fairly constant pain, Kipling would die from a haemorrhage related to the duodenal ulcer.

Kipling seems to have endured all this chronic and acute pain with a remarkable stoicism; and here there is another parallel with Montaigne. Montaigne suffered excruciating pain from kidney stones, the first bout of which came on when he was 45, just before the publication of the first edition of his *Essais*. Kipling's troubles with his ulcer began when he was 50, after he had published a great deal. While both are stoical in their suffering, their experience of suffering seems to lead them to turn away from a Stoic philosophy with its notions that the passions and suffering are to be ignored or overcome, and begin to emphasize the importance and centrality of the experience of passion and suffering to a full understanding and enjoyment of what it is to be human. For Montaigne, this can be seen in the revisions he makes to the 1580 edition of the *Essais*. In the opening chapter of the 1588 edition, 'By diverse means men come unto a like end', he adds these sentences:

I am much inclined to mercy, and affected to mildness. So it is, that in mine opinion, I should more naturally stoop unto compassion, than bend to estimation. Yet is pity held a vicious passion among the Stoics. They would have us aid the afflicted, but not to faint, and co-suffer with them.

Co-suffering becomes increasingly important to Montaigne, and a similar, if more imaginative and fictional, impact can be seen in the

stories of Kipling's last two collections, *Debits and Credits* (1926) and *Limits and Renewals* (1932). Those collections are full of the afflicted, whether that affliction comes by disease, physical or emotional loss, or mental trauma, and Kipling's stories enter brilliantly into, and co-suffer with, those worlds of afflictions.

What needs to be avoided here, though, is the suggestion that either man's suffering explains or improved their work. Many, perhaps in the end, most, people suffer terribly, and have nothing to show for it – philosophically, artistically, or morally. For many, suffering leads to bitterness and a sense of the injustice of the world, and perhaps that is the more obvious and logical response. What makes Kipling and Montaigne different is their ability to write and think distinctively, their 'genius' – a combination, perhaps, of their experience with their talent, luck, and privilege. Moreover, in neither's case does their suffering suddenly alert them to the nature of suffering humanity. Neither are Lear-like figures, suddenly reconnected to the poor and destitute of hope by their own night in the storm. Rather their suffering brings into prominence aspects of their work which were previously less visible. One might note, for example, how half the stories in *Actions and Reactions* (1909) take as their point of departure mental breakdown, mental instability, or sickness.⁴

* * * * *

Kipling's experience of frailty pre-dated the pain he suffered from his ulcer. Some 30 years or so before the onset of those symptoms, in June 1884, some two years after his return to India, Kipling wrote to one of his aunts, Edith Macdonald:

Just now I am 8st. 5 lbs and the Pater chaffs me about my slimness. He calls it "leanness" which is vulgar. I prefer to consider it hard condition.⁵

Kipling might joke about his father's vulgarity (or joke about the suggestion, perhaps, that his father has committed a vulgarity), but John Lockwood Kipling's worries that his twenty-year old son was thinner than was good for him were well founded. There had already been something akin to a nervous breakdown in the House of Desolation in Southsea, as well as periods of insomnia.⁶ Soon there would be other breakdowns, from a combination of overwork at the *Civil and Military Gazette*, heat, and, occasionally, when separated from his family, loneliness. More often there would be visions. The following April, 1885, would see Kipling recording in his diary a 'phantasm' of

'hundreds and thousands of legs all moving together' which had stopped sleep altogether.⁷

Such mental trials, though, seem also to have been important to Kipling, in part as they were literary trials. So, to take this example, Kipling neither forgot nor disregarded this phantasm, but rather used it as a way of giving life to his depiction of quite different worlds and characters. The 'hundreds and thousands of legs all moving together' may be traced to the daringly aural poem, "Boots", published some 18 years later in *The Five Nations*. Here an un-named soldier is tormented almost past bearing by the sight of 'Boots—boots—boots—boots, movin' up an' down again!' Men 'go mad with watchin' 'em', we are told, and the horror of the situation is caught in the brilliant refrain that closes, with slight variation, each of the eight stanzas: 'There's no discharge in the war!' The discharge that is primarily meant is a discharge from the army – this soldier wants to escape from the army life. Yet, another possible meaning registers; for there generally is discharge in a war – the discharge of guns. Indeed, the discharge of guns is usually what defines the experience of war. The line, then, offers itself to the reading that the soldier desires either form of discharge, either the release that comes from leaving the army or the release that comes from battle, gunfire and, potentially, death. Either are preferable to the 'six—weeks in 'Eil' he has already endured on route marches, and that either should be preferable marks the measure of that hell.

A similar tormenting 'phantasm' provides the heart of the great short story, "In the Presence", published a further nine years on, and collected later in *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917); there, four Gurkhas have the honour of providing one of the guards for the coffin of the dead King Edward VII at his lying in state, and so they share this equally, each taking one hour in every four. The British Grenadiers who provide the other guards are unable to manage a full hour, and so are allowed to change guard every half hour. The 'Colonel Sahib' asks the Gurkhas what about the experience is so terrible that the Grenadiers cannot endure an hour; the eldest Gurkha replies – 'the burden is the feet of the multitude that pass us on either side. Our eyes being lowered and fixed, we see those feet only from the knee down—a river of feet, Sahib, that never—never—never stops.'

Kipling's 'phantasm', then, while bringing on insomnia, and possibly presaging some form of breakdown, is also an experience of creative insight; Kipling 'shares' his frailty and suffering, universalizes his experience, and allows his phantasm to animate British and Nepalese soldiers. Such a creative loss of control, seen here on a small scale, can also be seen on a larger scale in Kipling's belief that, when

he wrote his best work, he wrote it under the control of a 'daemon', and so in some way wrote it while not in control of himself.¹⁰ Indeed, it may well be that that general belief arises from the many smaller moments of phantasm, insomnia, and mental breakdown. In a letter to Edmonia Hill in early February 1890, Kipling writes of being in the middle of the third of his breakdowns, and does so with a sense of acceptance: 'I can do nothing to save myself from breaking up now and again.' (A couple of sentences later he is less sanguine: 'You and the doctors always laughed but I knew that the smash would come some day.')

Another breakdown seems to be alluded to in a letter of 15 August 1890 to Margaret Clifford. "Creativity, for Kipling – as for many – seems closely allied to the loss of rational control. For Kipling, this seems also to have meant that there were areas of experience, or of the world, that were not to be rationally explained; and that this lesson was brought home to one most forcibly by one's own body and its frailties. One of the clearest conceptions of this relationship comes in an early story, "The Conversion of Aurelian McGoggin", first published in 1887, where a young man who has come out to India believing in the gods of rationality and the positivism of Comte, suffers an aphasic attack brought on by overwork and, while he regains his speech, never regains his certainties. ' "But I can't understand it!" [he said;] "I'm quite sane; but I can't be sure of my mind, it seems—my own memory—can I?" "¹¹ For McGoggin, this bodily frailty simply gives him 'a wholesome feeling of mistrust' of his own surety. For Kipling, the experience of frailty was stranger, for in his loss of any certain experience or knowledge of himself lay a part of the thing that he valued the most – creativity. In his frailty lay some of the best of his ability.

What makes this of particular interest is that this relationship between frailty, creativity, and uncertainty is of interest to Kipling himself, and is explored within Kipling's own writing. Kipling, as Noel Annan argued so well, is deeply interested in the ways in which society functions, and for Kipling the relationship between individual and society is essentially one of analogy.¹³ He is rather Elizabethan in that; the microcosm often looks set to be a perfect miniature of the macrocosm. Many of Kipling's stories themselves work by analogy; a large part of our interest in them rests on our recognizing the analogous relationships, and the arguments that are set in train by those relationships. Those relationships enrich and contextualize the individual actions and words, adding a literary depth that is often overlooked in favour of comments, quite fair and accurate in themselves, that stress the importance of Kipling's achievement to lie in the breadth of subjects he dealt with.

* * * * *

"With the Night Mail", the fourth story in *Actions and Reactions*, is a good example both of the relationship between frailty, creativity and uncertainty, and of the importance of analogy to Kipling's writing. That it is a good example is partly as it is rather surprising that it should be; this is, after all, a story that is often taken to be one of the first 'hard' science fiction stories, where 'hard' implies a story set in the future and predicated upon new technology. Kipling imagines a world that has been revolutionized primarily by a new form of transport, the dirigible or airship, able to sweep across the skies at previously unthinkable speeds. We glimpse this new society while being taken on a journey with an unnamed narrator who is taken aboard an airship, the G.P.O. (General Post Office) 'Postal Packet 162', as it takes the night mail from London to Quebec. We are shown the loading and unloading facilities, see the systems by which the air-planes are regulated, and are shown around '162' itself. Our narrator also sees '162' deal with a ship in distress, and navigate through a severe storm. While this happens we also are given little bits of information about how society has been changed under the impact of this new form of transport; how countries have more or less disappeared, and with countries, wars; how a supra-national regulative body has come into being which guarantees the free-passage of all transport (and so trade); and how people now spend their leisure time. Much more information comes in the 24 pages of made-up 'stuff', including adverts, a correspondence section, a book review, and notes from the Aerial Board of Control, all of which follow on from the 31 pages of the main story. "With the Night Mail", in fact, is not so much a story as a substantial part of an issue of an unnamed newspaper of the future.¹⁴ Kipling is attempting not only to put into our heads a part of the future, but also to put that future into our hands. We are being asked to build up our picture of this envisioned future from a whole range of its cultural traces, and, as Kipling seems to have realized, it is in the details of its adverts that that world becomes most real. As advert-readers we are able to compare ourselves with the advert-readers of the future much more directly than through the more literary, and generically inflected, medium of the short story.

"With the Night Mail", then, in large part asks to be seen as a 'realist' text – a story and a (very elaborate) fictional para-text (the 24 pages which follow the 31) that offers a reasoned proposition of how the future will be. Kipling's choice of transport as the transformative element that brings about his future is shrewd, even if he picks the

wrong form of transport in imagining that the airship would be more important than the airplane. In essence, he pictures the world uniting under the demands of an international trade of previously unseen fluidity and interconnectedness, and it may be here that the story emerges from out of the influence of the theory that the nature of global trade had made large-scale war between the great powers counter-productive. The most memorable statement of this theory was to come shortly; in 1909 Norman Angell (in actual fact Ralph Norman Angell Lane), the editor of the continental edition of the *Daily Mail*, would publish *Europe's Optical Illusion*, where the optical illusion was the belief that any one country could aggrandize itself or add to its prosperity through war.¹⁵ By 1913, it had been translated into 25 languages, and some forty organizations had been formed to spread its message.¹⁶ Economically, it may have been correct, but historically, it came to be seen as ill-judged – particularly as Angell, unfairly, was credited with arguing that war could not happen, rather than that it would be economically disastrous to all sides if it did happen. "With the Night Mail" is on the side of history; within the story we have references to a cataclysmic world war, after which the new society comes about.

Yet, while "With the Night Mail" is concerned to provide a realistic picture of the future, elaborated from the present in ways which are potentially practicable, and while it offers the reader many of the pleasures of 'hard' science fiction, it is the mysterious, timeless as opposed to prophetic, relationship between uncertainty, frailty and creativity that lies at its heart. The story uses its 'hard' science fiction setting to throw into better relief its central concerns. This happens in a variety of ways. Most obvious, perhaps, is the way in which our attention is drawn to the degree to which this society is the product of the unexpected consequences of inventions. Early on in the story, Captain Hodgson tells us how Castelli, the discoverer of the ' "gull-wing" curve', believed he had discovered the way to control aeroplanes when, in fact, he had found out how to steer airships; and how Magniac's rudder, which relied on Castelli's curve, was an invention aimed at producing military advantage, but which arrived as war 'went out of fashion', with the result that Magniac, already penniless and half-blind from his experiments, 'went out of his mind because he said he couldn't serve his country any more'. Captain Hodgson is led to conclude his short history lesson by wondering 'if any of us ever know what we're really doing!'.¹⁷

That is a promising quotation for a reading of the story that sees uncertainty at its core; yet it is not only what is done, but how it is done that is not certainly knowable. At the heart of the airships, and

so, effectively, at the heart of this future society, lies the source of its motive power, Fleury's Ray. It is this ray that provides the near-free energy that has brought this new society into being, and given it its motto – *Transportation is Civilization*; and yet no one understands how this source of power works, not even its inventor. Here is the moment at which the narrator is taken to see the 'engine' of the airship:

The turbines whistle reflectively. From the low-arched expansion-tanks on either side the valves descend pillarwise to the turbine-chests, and thence the obedient gas whirls through the spirals of blades with a force that would whip the teeth out of a power-saw. Behind, is its own pressure held in leash or spurred on by the lift-shunts; before it, the vacuum where Fleury's Ray dances in violet-green bands and whirled turbillions of flame. The jointed U-tubes of the vacuum-chamber are pressure-tempered colloid (no glass would endure the strain for an instant) and a junior engineer with tinted spectacles watches the Ray intently. It is the very heart of the machine—a mystery to this day. Even Fleury who begat it and, unlike Magniac, died a multi-millionaire, could not explain how the restless little imp shuddering in the U-tube can, in the fractional fraction of a second, strike the furious blast of gas into a chill greyish-green liquid that drains (you can hear it trickle) from the far end of the vacuum through the eduction-pipes and the mains back to the bilges. (120)

There is no need for the ray to be 'a mystery to this day'. Indeed, with that phrase omitted, and the next sentence truncated so that it begins with, 'This is the restless little imp, shuddering in the U-tube, which can . . .', one has a satisfactory description of how the ray works – and a good example of the standard, description rich, explanation poor, technique of much science fiction when postulating technologies of the future. Kipling, however, is clearly concerned to draw attention to the mysteriousness of the ray, and, in doing so, to insist that the motive power and foundation of this future society, whose effects are so clear and seemingly ordered and rational, is unknowable. The world has been reconfigured and rearranged around a mystery, 'the restless little imp shuddering'. What is more, this mysterious power is at the same time remarkably fragile: 'If a speck of oil, if even the natural grease of the human finger touch the hooded terminals Fleury's Ray will wink and disappear and must be laboriously built up again.' (121) In the ray we have a fragile yet powerful force which drives, and has reconfigured, human society.

This world, then, is not the usual world of 'hard' science fiction; it is a world in which it is hard to know what we are doing or, ultimately, how we are doing it; and so it is fitting that René Talland's review of *The Life of Xavier Lavalle* (a part of the additional matter after the story proper) finishes with a statement of the difficulty of understanding others: 'Truly, we have changed very little in the course of the ages! The secrets of earth and sky and the links that bind them, we felicitate ourselves we are on the road to discover; but our neighbours' heart and mind we misread, we misjudge, we condemn—now as ever.' (158) In fact, given the attention that is called to the unknowable nature of our actions, of those of others, and of the technologies around which the society is structured, it is tempting to see in Kipling's 'restless little imp' some allusion to Edgar Allen Poe's imp of the perverse.¹⁸ The narrator in Poe's tale of that name invokes the imp of the perverse in order to explain why people are drawn to perform acts against their own interest. Why, at first afraid at a cliff's edge, are we later drawn to the edge, and tempted to imagine what it would be like cast ourselves over the precipice? Poe's story, that is, insists that many of our 'impulses', a word he uses many times, are not to be explained rationally. Our impulses are imps, and the story asks us to imagine the one word derived from the other, whether by a shortening or a lengthening. Does "With the Night Mail" offer a naturalized account of Poe's imps? Kipling's restless imps literally provide the impulse of this world, as they provide the energy that moves the airships. Their mysteriousness reflects the mysteriousness of our own and others' hearts. Kipling's world is no more logically explainable than Poe's; indeed, it seems to be set up around the premise that the driving forces of life are to be respected and may be put to work in all sorts of brilliant and consequent ways, but they are, nevertheless, not to be understood.

While it is tempting to see Kipling's story in some playful relation to Poe's, Kipling's imps are not obviously imps of the perverse; as has been said, Kipling's imps may be made part of a progressive and ordered life – they have no innate desire for disaster. Yet, if not perverse, Kipling's imps are hardly benevolent, either. They seem hard task-masters. On board '162' the engineer is referred to repeatedly as 'the Slave of the Ray' (122 and 137). On the ship in distress, the engineer seems to have gone mad, and is either unable or unwilling to leave the falling craft; in the end he is forcibly pacified with a spanner, and leaves the ship 'with a ghastly scarlet head [. . .] shouting that he must go back and build up his Ray.' (126) And 'imp' itself is rather ambivalent as a word; is this the 'imp' that is the restless or mischievous youth (*O.E.D.* sense 5), or the 'imp' that is, more seriously, a small devil or evil spirit (*O.E.D.* senses 4a and b)?

Here, it is worth looking at the phrase as a whole again: 'the restless little imp shuddering'. 'Shuddering' darkens the tone, and does so particularly when it is compared to earlier versions of "With the Night Mail". For, when dealing with this story, we are in the unusual position, in respect of Kipling's work, of having typescripts of the work in progress. That this is so is the result of chance. Miss K.E. Parker, Kipling's private secretary from 1902 to 1904, left the Kiplings, as some of her surviving letters show, feeling very aggrieved; and it seems that when she left, she took with her – or forgot to return – various typescripts, including those for "With the Night Mail".¹⁹ These she put aside, perhaps in a drawer; it was, anyway, in a chest of drawers that came into a Chichester saleroom in 1996 that the typescripts were found in two brown paper bags.²⁰ In the case of "With the Night Mail", then, there are, basically, two early versions of the main story (the earliest seems nearly complete, and the next earliest gives us about two-thirds of the whole), though there are also additional pages which allow us to see, at times, four versions of the work.²¹ Kipling's revisions are meticulous, and they are good; the story works better for them. It is less that we have alternative versions of the story, and more that each version represents a truer form of the story – as if the story were successively finding its most proper shape.²² This may have been Kipling's sense of the revisions also, as it offers to make sense of the terms of his gift of the manuscript of *Rewards and Fairies* to the University Library, Cambridge. These are glimpsed in the letter of thanks written by A.F. Scholfield, the Librarian, where he agrees to the terms of the bequest: these are that 'no public announcement is made of the present; and that nobody except myself has any access to it, at least during your lifetime, and that no collating is ever to be permitted. (I might mention that it is on these terms that we hold a MS of the late Lord Tennyson's.)'²³ Why give a manuscript to a library, and also forbid collation? Surely the main interest of the manuscript lies in its recording of first thoughts and variant passages? What Kipling's (and Tennyson's) gifts seem to allow is for the individual reader to glimpse the process of composition while insisting that the primacy and adequacy of the final, printed version not be compromised.

To return to the question of the nature of Kipling's imp – whether it is mischievous youth or small devil – and the comparison to Poe's imp of the perverse: one of the things these earlier versions allow us to see is the 'restless little imp', which lies at the heart of the dirigibles and the future society, not 'shuddering' but 'pirouetting' in the U-tube. It is a small but decisive difference; the draft versions show Kipling moving from notions of lightness and the deft orders of dance,

and to heavier, darker and more emotional, less ordered notions, bound up, as the *O.E.D.* has it, with 'fear, abhorrence, or cold' (sense 1). This change itself seems to have arisen from another: in the earliest version of the typescript, the pirouetting imp could 'absolutely convert the furious blast of gas into a chill greyish-green liquid', but this was then changed to the more direct and violent 'strike down the furious blast of gas into', before finally becoming the tauter 'strike the furious blast of gas into'. The imp moves, then, from pirouetting and converting, to shuddering and striking; while not appearing perverse, Kipling seems to wish to strengthen the imp's ominous nature.

There are shadows elsewhere in the story. There is no doubting that this future society has many desirable features: as well as the absence of war, the average lifespan has extended by some 30 years (an almost perfect prediction, and a vindication of Kipling's decision to change this from 40 years in an earlier draft) as epidemics and overcrowding have become things of the past.²⁴ But what are we to make of the Aerial Board of Control, whose 'Mark Boats', undoubtedly helpful in their roles of observatories of the airways, life-boat stations, salvage tugs, are also the *black-hulled* courts of ultimate appeal – 'all that remains to the planet of that odd old word authority' (135)? What are we to make of the fact that it is this 'semi-elected, semi-nominated body of a few score persons of both sexes' which 'controls this planet'? Or of the fact that our 'tolerant, humorous, lazy little planet' is 'only too ready to shift the whole burden of public administration' onto this group's shoulders? Laziness (and perhaps tolerance?) is not an obvious virtue in Kipling's stories, and it is hard to imagine him being satisfied to be ruled by a semi-appointed coterie, or feeling that we can do without that 'odd old word authority'. This future world is essentially one that has been pacified by trade, and in which trade is the supreme good. 'Theoretically we do what we please so long as we do not interfere with the traffic *and all it implies.*' (136) That implication could easily be rather wide – and, indeed, Kipling would choose these lines to hang another, quite distinct, story of the future on, "As Easy As A.B.C.", where the A.B.C. are seen in action 'pacifying' a town which has threatened to interfere with the traffic with a terrifying show of airborne force.²⁵ 'Transportation is Civilization', runs the motto of this society; but that may sound a rather impoverished notion of civilization.

The uncertainty about the nature of the ray, then, underlies larger and more general uncertainties about the society built around it, until one is left wondering, at times, to what extent this future is a desirable one. This uncertainty also applies to our understanding of the actions and motivations of the story's individuals. Captain Purnall clearly does

a remarkable and admirable job in piloting the dirigible through the night storm but when, as the dawn breaks and the shadow of night recedes before them, he laments that they cannot keep pace with the sun's dawning – 'He's going twice as fast as us. Just you wait a few years, my shining friend and we'll take steps that will amaze you. *We'll* Joshua you!' – the biblical reference may be disconcerting. Joshua stopped the sun and the moon moving in the Bible so that the Jews would have more time in which to fight and defeat the Amorites (Joshua 10: 1-14). How appropriate is such a Biblical comparison? Is Purnall's wish to Joshua the sun an example of human arrogance, and the desire to replace or supplant God? That wish is made applicable to society in general in the published version of the story; the published version adds to the earliest draft the narrator's approving comment, 'Yes, that is our dream: to turn all earth into the Vale of Ajalon at our pleasure' (138).

A few moments later, however, Purnall joins Hodgson in taking his hat off as they hear the '*Benedicite*' sung by the staff and patients on a nearby Hospital boat.²⁶ This future society, then, is still recognizably religious, and seemingly Christian, even if that Christianity, as we learn, has dispensed with the notion of Hell, having found proof of the truth of reincarnation (127). The particular canticle being sung is the *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino*, as becomes clear from the phrases which are quoted by the narrator. The humility of these provides an interesting contrast with Purnall's desire to Joshua the sun: "*Oh, ye holy and humble men of heart, bless ye the Lord! Praise Him and magnify Him for ever.*" (139) What is more, the canticle, which has its source in Daniel, as a song of praise for the deliverance of three young men who were saved from Nebuchadnezzar's furnace by the angel of the lord, fits in quite nicely with the sense of 'Packet 162' surviving the dark night of the storm and coming through to the quiet dawn of a new world. Yet, as we have seen it, it is not the angel of the lord that has saved them, but Purnall's skill and the power of 'restless little imp'. The angels that are present within the narrator's description, in fact, seem more bent on destruction than protection: the winds that buffet the dirigible are spoken of as 'the pinions of angry angels', and that sense of anger elsewhere borders on the malevolent (130). The ship voyages through 'pits of gloom' where 'wreathing and uneasy shapes' gather and form, before leaping 'monstrously across the blackness' to alight on the ship's nose, causing the bow to sink 'as though that light were lead' (129). These shapes may be described as 'corposants', that is, heavenly spirits, but they sound more like fallen angels than angels of the Lord (130).

It is hard not to think, at moments, of Satan's voyage through chaos in *Paradise Lost*: there is the dangerous journey itself which seems to

the narrator a 'Hell's half-hour' (131), Purnall's admirable yet worryingly arrogant bravery, the way in which the ship plunges downwards for thousands of feet before being cushioned by an 'up-gust' (130), the cosmic views that are opened up when the North Banks Mark Boat and the ships seeking her help are described as 'bewildered planets about an unstable sun' (129) and, finally, the sense of a new world dawning at the end of the journey. Yet, equally, all of these have their un-Miltonic elements as well: Hell is not Chaos, Purnall has no selfish mission or burning revenge, without the 'up-gust' the ship would not be 'flutt'ring [. . .] pennons vain' and falling 'to this hour' (*Paradise Lost*, 2.933 and 935), the other struggling ships are not planets but only look like them, and there is no new and innocent world to exploit.

Kipling creates a scene which is suggestive of literary allusions and parallels, without ever actually offering up any particular allusion or parallel. This may be the result of Kipling remembering, at some level, great literary voyages through storms, out of which he builds one of his very own. (Melville, in *Moby Dick*, for example, also has 'corpusants' aboard ships in a storm, and a chapter devoted to explaining the whaling technique of 'pitchpoling'.²³) Or, or indeed also, it may be the retrospective effect of the poem – which concludes the story and the related adverts and notices – on the reader. In that poem, "The Four Angels", the four angels are the angels of the four elements – earth, water, air, and fire. As in the story proper, these angels seem more fallen than typically angelic: each in turn offers Adam, who lies dreaming 'beneath the Apple Tree' in paradise, ownership and mastery of one element – essentially the angels substitute for the serpent in the Biblical narrative of the Fall of Mankind. This Adam, however, can resist temptation: he is content to remain dreaming under the apple tree, needing nothing more than he has, and so he rejects the offers of the first three angels. Then the fourth, the Angel of Fire, without offering Adam a choice, places a fire in Adam's heart, singing as it does so: ' "Fire, Fire, burning Fire, / Stand up and reach your heart's desire!" ' The rhyme and link between 'fire' and human 'desire' is made more resonant by the final line of the stanza, which follows on from the couplet: '(The Apple Blossom's set.)' The previous three stanzas have moved us through the apple tree's budding, leafing, and blossoming. Adam, it seems, is to stand up and reach for and eat the apple; and the final, fifth, stanza sees Adam in the post-Edenic world of work, a world that began in 'black disaster', presumably the 'black disaster' of the Fall, but having risen to become the master of all four elements.

Kipling often ends his stories with poems, and, like the concluding couplet in a Shakespearean sonnet, these poems may have

various functions: they can surprise, summarize, contradict, question, or amplify. "The Four Angels" seems both to summarize and amplify. It places "With the Night Mail" as part of the Fall narrative, and at the same time adds resonance to the function of fire within the story. The final stanza makes it clear that Adam, for all his mastery of the four elements, has 'never reached his heart's desire' and never will, for '(The Apple Tree's cut down!)'. This Adam is caught in an endless and restless pursuit of certain, god-like knowledge, and is driven to that pursuit of mastery by a mysterious fire in his breast. This has led him to master the Earth, with ploughs, the Sea, with ships, and finally, as we have seen in this story, the Air, with dirigibles. To that extent, Adam's conquest of the air is on a par with his conquests of the sea and land; a consequence of the Fall and, while admirable, also to an extent a display of the weakness of nature that led him to Fall and be subject to desire in the first place – though, in Kipling's recasting of the Fall narrative, it is not at all clear whether Kipling sees the Fall in terms of moral failure. Kipling's rewriting of the Fall narrative naturalizes the eternal restlessness of men. The nature of that restlessness, and its effects, is amplified by the way in which the dirigibles, the particular tool in Adam's quest for mastery in this story, seem to stand in an analogous relationship to Adam himself; like Adam, they are driven by a mysterious fire – 'the restless little imp shuddering', 'the very heart of the machine—a mystery to this day.' When we look at the heart of these machines, then, the story asks us to look at the dirigibles on their incredible and god-challenging and god-worshipping journeys as models of our own journeys and motive forces, and the journeys and dynamics of our societies. Kipling's adventure story of the voyage through the storm also offers itself as an image of man's voyage through history, and the individual's through life; and so, as the narrator looks at the ray, he tends towards anthropomorphism: the Ray strikes down the gas that drives the turbines to a liquid, which returns to the bilges where 'it returns to its gaseous, one had almost written sagacious, state'. The engine momentarily resembles, in other words, the human brain; and so, when '162' has to destroy the crippled dirigible, there is a peculiar kind of horror felt, as they punch through the ships 'forehead' with their heavy 'pithing-iron' (127). 'Pithing' here seems here to have the *O.E.D.*'s sense 2: 'to pierce, sever, or destroy the upper spinal cord or brainstem of (an animal), so as to cause death or insensibility.' There is something involved here that is more than mechanical: to Captain Hodgson it is 'A filthy business' (127). The dirigible's journeying through the storm is, then, also an image of consciousness driving society forward and also, more singularly, an

image of the brain, mysterious and mysteriously creative, operating, if by laws, by laws known only to itself. And at its heart is the frail little imp, which can be put out by the touch of a finger, but which can force itself through the pits of gloom of hells in their half hours, and against the far greater monstrous shapes and forms that threaten to overwhelm it while it is there. As the originary spark and motivating power it is fitting that it is found at the heart of the longest sentence in the story.

The restless little imp is at the centre of a series of analogies which ask us to see it as an image of the nature of human creativity – unknowable, frail, but hugely consequent to human society. What has been forgotten, of course, in this account of history and society, is love; in rewriting the Biblical narrative of the Fall, Kipling has written Eve out of the story – she has, in effect, been replaced by the Angel of Fire. This was not always the case. As it was published, the story features the briefest of glances towards love in its closing paragraphs. The shift in emphasis comes first in the description of the arriving ship: the Receiving Tower at Quebec is described as throwing open its docking arms in welcome of '162' 'with passionate appeal', while dismissing the ships leaving as 'Tight and unworthy lovers'. The narrator then recognizes that the terms of his description may have been suggested by the parallel actions of a 'little hooded figure [on the upper staging who] also opened her arms wide towards her father' (142). This gesture of love, seen elsewhere in Kipling, is made by the daughter of Captain Purnall.²⁸ That familial love, it turns out, is on the brink of being transferred; in the final paragraph of the story proper we learn that Captain Purnall has invited a young captain, Williams (met earlier in charge of one of the Mark Boats), to tea. We close, then, with the briefest of gestures towards a couple coming together.

In the earlier versions of the story, by contrast, the relationship between daughter and young captain is far more of a given; in these, the daughter is seen to pretend not to know whom her father is referring to: 'Ah? Captain who?' she asked with an adorably feigned bewilderment.' Her father is bemused and this leads to a final paragraph of reflection from the narrator, which in the earliest version, runs thus:

Yes, we are Lords of the Earth, the Sea, and the Sky – within measurable distance some say of being Lords of ourselves – but there remains one irreclaimable barbarian in our midst whom neither the Empire of the Air nor the annihilation of Time can make other than Eve.

At the end of the earliest draft of "With the Night Mail" we possess, then, Kipling reached out to bring in Eve, and the workings of love, as the concluding and unchangeable mystery, as the barbarian to stand, perhaps, as a parallel to the restless little imp which drove the dirigibles, themselves turned, at the very end, into images of lovers. What seems to have happened in the revisions is that Kipling felt that reaching out to be too provisional or last minute, or perhaps too complicating in the light of "The Four Angels" – where would Eve fit into a narrative of the Fall in which Adam eats the apple alone, and without moral culpability? Or perhaps the poem was written later, as Kipling realized he was more interested in the restless little imps as the measure of that measurable distance by which we are still not quite Lords of ourselves, and that those imps worked better as images of the more adventuring and socially progressive fires in men's hearts?

* * * * *

"With the Night Mail" is a remarkably conservative prophecy of the future; our society may change, but who we are and how we understand ourselves do not – our intentions are concealed from ourselves and others, consequences are hard to divine, the gods save or damn, help or destroy, by chance. The forces that shape society are unknowable, though everywhere evident, and constantly put to work. Society is a complicated balance that is better not tampered with. And yet, one should perhaps not take all this too seriously. The crew on board one of the ships that leaves as '162' comes into dock begin singing the oldest of the 'aerial' chanteys, 'Elsinore'. Why Elsinore? It is most famous as the location of the palace of Shakespeare's Prince Hamlet, and is named in that play by the Prince as he welcomes Horatio, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and the players. In the second of these, he also mentions that his mother and father are mistaken as he is 'but mad north-north-west: when the wind is / southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.' The lines are famously riddling, and consensus has never been reached on what precisely they mean – which is perhaps their point. What we can say, though, is that the Prince is (in)famously mad, and that, in calling the chantey 'Elsinore', "With the Night Mail" might be alluding to this madness, particularly as the second of its two stanzas begins, 'Nor-Nor-Nor- / West from Sourabay to the Baltic' (141).

Is "With the Night Mail" a half-mad, if imaginative fantasy? It certainly seems to be aware that it might be – a knowledge that is also suggested in the rather too elementary acronym of the Aerial Board of Control (A.B.C.). That playfulness should not be discounted, but within it lies a seriousness in the insistence on an uncertainty about the

motive forces of people and their society, an uncertainty bound up with a mystery that is seen as being, above all, both powerful and frail.²⁹ This mystery, that drives men forward, is related to love, though in "With the Night Mail" that is a connection that is felt more in its omission than its presence. Kipling himself knew and valued that frail mystery as his demon, that inspiring fire that guaranteed his creativity, while also, at times, seeming to underlie aspects of his nervous breakdowns and insomnia. Recognizing its value to him, and his inability to rationally comprehend it, he generalized its powers outwards, seeing its effects everywhere he looked or imagined. Kipling's art, then, may not be an art of distance from others, as Havholm suggests, but rather an art born out of a distance from oneself.

What "With the Night Mail" is certainly not is what it has often been criticized for being. One of its first, and fiercest critics, was Percy Lubbock in the *Times Literary Supplement*, who took it as being representative of all that was wrong with *Actions and Reactions*:

Now, of all the gifted writers who have tried to evoke the future Mr. Kipling is surely the only one who has not been drawn to the attempt by the fascination of speculating how human beings will be affected by changed circumstances. Mr. Kipling is drawn simply by the desire to describe in minute detail the management of the perfected airship of a century hence. [. . .] It illustrates the inherent weakness which is steadily vitiating the work of the splendidly equipped writer—his inability to be enough interested in men and women to take the trouble to observe them.³⁰

This is both quite wrong, and perhaps quite right. Kipling is *not* drawn by the desire to describe in minute detail; one of the consistent traits of his revisions of "With the Night Mail" is to remove such descriptions of the working of the airship and its engines – with the result that ever more emphasis is put on the ray, and its mysterious nature. And yet, it is that same mystery which, if the comparison between dirigible, society and individual is allowed, keeps him from the kinds of observation that Lubbock desires. Lubbock wants Kipling to be a novelist, but to Kipling the mysteries of the human heart are just that – mysteries, or shuddering, if not perverse, imps of fire, which, if handled at all, are liable to fail.

NOTES

1. This essay was first given as a paper at the 2009 Kipling Study Day at the University of Sheffield to mark the centenary of the publication of *Actions and Reactions*.

2. Peter Havholm, *Politics and Awe in Rudyard Kipling's Fiction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p.138.
3. The University of Sussex holds the very well catalogued (and generously curated) Kipling Papers, as well as other Kipling collections. The record of Kipling's diagnoses can be found in File 25, Item 14.
4. I am thinking of "An Habitation Enforced", "Garm—A Hostage", "A Deal in Cotton", and "The House Surgeon". One could add to this that "The Mother Hive" deals with an exhausted and sick society; and "With the Night Mail", as I go on to argue, is concerned with the power and frailty of human consciousness.
5. Thomas Pinney, ed, *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, 6 vols (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1990), vol.1, p.65 ("To Edith Macdonald, 2-7 June [1884]").
6. Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself and other Autobiographical Writings*, ed. by Thomas Pinney (Cambridge: Canto, 1991), pp.12-13.
7. *ibid.*, p.208.
8. Rudyard Kipling, *The Five Nations* (London: Methuen, 1903), pp. 185-7.
9. Rudyard Kipling, *A Diversity of Creatures* (London: Macmillan, 1917), p.231.
10. Kipling, *Something of Myself* pp. 121-23 (Chapter 8).
11. Pinney, *Letters*, vol.2, p.9 and p.19 respectively.
12. Rudyard Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills* (London: Macmillan, 1890; repr 1904), p.113.
13. For Kipling as a sociologist, see Noel Annan, "Kipling's Place in the History of Ideas", *Victorian Studies*, 3 (1960), pp.323-48.
14. The 24 pages of additional material did not appear in the first British publication of the story, in the *Windsor Magazine*, 1905 (Dec), pp.52-66. I do not know whether it appeared in the American version, published a month earlier in *McClure's Magazine*.
15. See the entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.
16. For a discussion of Angell, see Liaquat Ahamed, *Lords of Finance: The Bankers who Broke the World* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009). My thanks to James Selfe of Mitsubishi U.F.J. for directing me to this.
17. Rudyard Kipling, "With the Night Mail", in *Actions and Reactions* (London: Macmillan, 1909; repr 1936), p.113.
18. The possibility was suggested by Professor Daniel Karlin at the Kipling Study Day.
19. Miss Parker's letters, describing at some length her complaints about her treatment at Bateman's, can be found in File 3 of the Kipling-Parker Letters in the University of Sussex Special Collections.
20. See Derek White, "Two Bags Full", in *The Ephemerist*, Dec. 1996 p.664-5.
21. File 7, Kipling-Parker Letters, University of Sussex Special Collections.
22. For a fine discussion of revision in these terms see John Jones, *Shakespeare at Work* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
23. File 23, Item 24, Kipling Archive, University of Sussex Special Collections.
24. See Joe Hicks and Grahame Allen, "A Century of Change: Trends in UK statistics since 1900", House of Commons Library Research Paper 99/111, 21 Dec 1999.
25. Rudyard Kipling, *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917), pp. 12-6.
26. It is interesting how, while imagining so fully some aspects of the future, Kipling cannot conceive of the advances of medical science in generally ridding society of its need to fear tuberculosis. I owe this observation to Professor Alexander Bird.

27. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (New York: Hendricks House, 1951; 1st pubd 1851), Chapters 119 and 84 respectively.
28. See, for example, Mary Postgate's response to her beloved Wynn when he flies overhead in "Mary Postgate". Kipling, *A Diversity of Creatures*, p. 425.
29. Kipling, like many authors, particularly enjoys playing with names. "With the Night Mail" names its narrator in the earliest typescript as 'George Stuart Tudor-Gweff, a name which seems to invoke the ruling houses of the English and British monarchies – though where that leaves 'Gweff I am not sure.
30. Percy Lubbock, 'Actions and Reactions', review in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 October 1909, p.363.

THE FOUR ANGELS

(To follow "With the Night Mail")

As Adam lay a-dreaming beneath the Apple Tree,
The Angel of the Earth came down, and offered Earth in fee.
 But Adam did not need it,
 Nor the plough he would not speed it,
Singing:—'Earth and Water, Air and Fire,
 What more can mortal man desire?'
 (The Apple Tree's in bud.)

As Adam lay a-dreaming beneath the Apple Tree,
The Angel of the Waters offered all the Seas in fee.
 But Adam would not take 'em,
 Nor the ships he wouldn't make 'em,
Singing:—'Water, Earth and Air and Fire,
 What more can mortal man desire?'
 (The Apple Tree's in leaf.)

As Adam lay a-dreaming beneath the Apple Tree,
The Angel of the Air he offered all the Air in fee.
 But Adam did not crave it,
 Nor the voyage he wouldn't brave it,
Singing:—'Air and Water, Earth and Fire,
 What more can mortal man desire?'
 (The Apple Tree's in bloom.)

As Adam lay a-dreaming beneath the Apple Tree,
The Angel of the Fire rose up and not a word said he.
 But he wished a fire and made it,
 And in Adam's heart he laid it,
Singing:—'Fire, Fire, burning Fire,
 Stand up and reach your heart's desire!'
 (The Apple Blossom's set.)

As Adam was a-working outside of Eden-Wall,
He used the Earth, he used the Seas, he used the Air and all;
 Till out of black disaster
 He arose to be the master
 Of Earth and Water, Air and Fire,
 But never reached his heart's desire!
 (The Apple Tree's cut down!)

ACTIONS AND REACTIONS, A FRAGMENTED COMPOSITION

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INTRODUCTION

In her article "Some Links between the Stories in Kipling's *Debts and Credits*", Lisa Lewis dealt with the composition of one of Kipling's collections, looking for a 'figure in the carpet' beyond the first appearance of discontinuity of the book. Her main analytical tools were the very title of the collection and the thematic echoes existing between the different short stories which are gathered together. Kipling indeed gave his collections titles which are different from those of the short stories they include, thus indicating that there is a thematic link between the texts he gathered and that it cannot be interpreted merely as a random juxtaposition of the best texts he had written recently.

It is very helpful to try and identify the figure in the carpet in the collection *Actions and Reactions*, which is formally remarkable in many ways. The alternation of prose and poetry is regular and systematic, and in "With the Night Mail", which is one of the most famous pieces, fictional adverts and anecdotes are added to the text itself. The nature of the elements gathered in this collection is very diverse, but the presence of a common thematic title points towards the possible unity of these elements. *Actions and Reactions* was the second collection published along those lines, after *Traffics and Discoveries*. *Actions and Reactions* is thus the book in which Kipling asserts his typical organisation for short-story collections, using it as a recurrent device for the first time. Studying this organisation helps to understand how the reader's experience is framed by the author, that is to say how Kipling creates a form which leads the reader in a particular direction, within which a plurality of possible interpretations open to the reader is defined. Since he will keep using this form until his very last collection, *Limits and Renewals*, it appears even more important to understand what reading experience Kipling meant to offer.

The duality presented by Kipling in the title refers to concepts used previously in certain fields of knowledge, which have been extensively analysed by Jean Starobinski in his 1999 book entitled *Action et Réaction. Vie et aventures d'un couple*.² The specificity of this pair of concepts resides in the fact that it does not necessarily represent a set

of oppositions. An action provokes a reaction, but no antagonistic relation between the two is directly implied. Starobinski sees these two notions as a pair (*'un couple'*) at once opposed and reconciled, evoking ideas of simple symmetry and even mirror-like reflection between two events relating to each other. Many fields of knowledge have been using these concepts for centuries, the main ones being philosophy, physics, chemistry, medicine, and more recently politics and psychology. In the ancient philosophies, the traditional opposite to the idea of action was that of passion, that is to say, passivity and inaction: whereas in the context of the action/reaction pair, the passive object becomes an agent in return. This pair characteristically describes a dynamic relation.

The terms action and reaction were used more and more in everyday speech in Kipling's time, and the very pair is used by Arthur Conan Doyle in one of his Sherlock Holmes stories: in "The Blue Carbuncle" the phrase is meant to describe the ways in which individuals run into one another in London:

Only one of those whimsical little incidents which will happen when you have four million human beings all jostling each other within the space of a few square miles. Amid the action and reaction of so dense a swarm of humanity, every possible combination of events may be expected to take place, and many a little problem will be presented which may be striking and bizarre without being criminal.³

The notions are derived from scientific discourse but the process of popularisation was already well under way in the early 20th century. Their meaning is not particularly technical nowadays and they can be applied to objects as diverse as the movements of a crowd, a personal feeling or an understandable impulse. However, a close examination of Kipling's eight stories shows that the fields of physics, medicine, psychology and politics remain the main thematic links between the stories and the title of the collection, proving that the concepts still retain the core of their original meaning.

1. PHYSICS AND MECHANICAL IMAGES IN THE COLLECTION

One of the most famous and useful definitions of the concepts of action and reaction in the field of physics was given by Newton as the Third Law of Motion, which states that 'To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.' Actions are not to be envisaged as separate instances, for reactions are their consequences but also their opposites.

This law highlights the idea of a chain of consequences linked to any event and of a linear deployment of the consequences of that event. It leads to a mechanistic interpretation of the universe and results in a materialistic vision of the world.

Machines and mechanical images are used extensively in the collection, as in most of Kipling's works. His narrators always appear very interested in the technical details of engineering or in the workings of the engine of their automobile. Even in the pastoral stories present in the collection, machines are prevalent: in "The Puzzler", cars and a truck are necessary to the plot and the whole farce hinges on the apparition of an organ grinder, the organ's music covering all other sounds. The instrument is almost purely mechanical; the action of turning the handle necessarily produces as a reaction the production of music.

"With the Night Mail", Kipling's first science-fiction story, presents a future in which a new political model appeared in reaction to the technological advances. The age of the dirigibles and of easy world travel gave birth to the Aerial Board of Control, so that all political considerations are subjected to the higher purpose of free traffic.⁴ Fleury's Ray is the mysterious source of energy used by all but understood by none, even its famous discoverer.

From the low-arched expansion-tanks on either side the valves descend pillarwise to the turbine-chests, and thence the obedient gas whirls through the spirals of blades with a force that would whip the teeth out of a power-saw. Behind, is its own pressure held in leash or spurred on by the lift-shunts; before it, the vacuum where Fleury's Ray dances in violet-green bands and whirled turbillions of flame. The jointed U-tubes of the vacuum-chamber are pressure-tempered colloid (no glass would endure the strain for an instant) and a junior engineer with tinted spectacles watches the Ray intently. It is the very heart of the machine—a mystery to this day. Even Fleury who begat it and, unlike Magniac, died a multi-millionaire, could not explain how the restless little imp shuddering in the U-tube can, in the fractional fraction of a second, strike the furious blast of gas into a chill greyish-green liquid that drains (you can hear it trickle) from the far end of the vacuum through the eduction-pipes and the mains back to the bilges. Here it returns to its gaseous, one had almost written sagacious, state and climbs to work afresh. Bilge-tank, upper tank, dorsal-tank, expansion-chamber, vacuum, main-return (as a liquid), and bilge-tank once more is the ordained cycle. Fleury's Ray sees to that; and the engineer with the tinted spectacles sees to Fleury's Ray. If a speck of oil, if even the natural grease of the human finger touch the hooded terminals, Fleury's Ray will

wink and disappear and must be laboriously built up again. This means half a day's work for all hands and an expense of one hundred and seventy-odd pounds to the G.P.O. for radium-salts and such trifles.⁵

The ray is described both scientifically and uncannily. This passage, and indeed the whole story, mixes technical vocabulary with fantasy images, depicting a new level of technological advance which goes beyond the limits set by the traditional vocabulary of physics. Technical descriptions are characterised by a great lexical precision but this is immediately balanced through the use of metaphors such as 'a force that would whip out the teeth of a power-saw' or the more conventional 'heart of the machine'. That the main source of energy should be unexplainable does not mean that it is magical, merely that its detailed processes are yet unknown to scientists. The scientists' lack of knowledge allows Kipling to picture a mechanical world in poetical terms; similarly, the same paradox appears in the form of the collection.

The question is whether the mechanical images are taken to a meta-narrative level by Kipling. In many of his short stories, metanarrative interpretations are hidden behind a veil of simple story-telling, instead of being explicit. In a literary application, the Third Law of Motion could express linearity, that is, the fact that each piece comes as a reaction to the preceding one and that they should necessarily be read in the order of the collection to be understood. Let's imagine a quite obedient reader who follows the order indicated in the table of contents. Even if the setting of the second story, "Garm—a Hostage", is extremely different from that of "An Habitation Enforced", the second story develops the theme of love between a man and a dog which is only alluded to before. Although the dog Rambler is less central than Garm and Vixen, he plays an important part in the critical scene of the first story, when Sophie Chapin first understands the specific Sussex mentality at the occasion of an old man's death.

The third story, "The Mother Hive", is followed by a science fiction story with which it apparently bears no connection, "With the Night Mail". Yet, between the anthropomorphic bees and the futuristic balloon trip over the Atlantic Ocean, the bridge is built thanks to a common theme and a structural similarity of the hive and the mail tower: both stories begin with the alighting of a flying object on a busy platform. The bees are bound to their hive as the dirigible balloons are to their mail tower. The hive is even accessed through an alighting-board, and the bees come and go just as the dirigibles do.

The first words of the next story, "A Deal in Cotton", indicate a remote time and place – 'Long and long ago, when Devadatta was King

of Benares . . .' (AR 173) – before finally reaching present day England where the narration takes place: 'lives now at a place in England called Weston-super-Mare' (*ibid.*). The detour via oriental antiquity must be interpreted as an enhancement of the discrepancy between the two stories. Highlighting the gap is a paradoxical but efficient means of bridging it.

Another type of relation can be identified between "A Deal in Cotton" and "The Puzzler". Both deal with a colonial official trying to develop the province he is in charge of. But while "The Puzzler" turns into a comic of situation type of story, "A Deal in Cotton" is told in a dark atmosphere, a melancholy gathering of old friends. The change of tone is very striking, all the more so as the world depicted in both stories is the same. "The Puzzler" comes as a comic relief after the gloomy atmosphere of the preceding story, and "Little Foxes" takes up the colonial question again, focusing more on administrative matters.

The last story begins on a homeward-bound steamer, coming straight from the colonial setting of the preceding text. "The House Surgeon" deals with the immaterial power that a house can have over its inhabitants, just like the very first story, presenting an exclusive rather than inclusive haunted house this time, in reaction to "An Habitation Enforced". When read in the order chosen by Kipling, each story reacts with the preceding one, either thematically or formally, and they lead the reader along an interpretable path. The collection is given its enclosed appearance by the echoes also existing between the last and first stories.

2. CONSERVATIVE POLITICS IN THE COLLECTION

In political terms, the notion of 'reaction' has been used in reference to conservative politics since the eighteenth century. It corresponds to the moment when the idea of progress became prevalent through Revolution and when any opposition to this form of progress became known as 'reactionary'. The Liberals had won the 1906 elections in Britain, which was according to Kipling extremely unfortunate. More generally, he was very wary of democracy. His main political model dates back to his days as a journalist in Lahore: he was very influenced by the peculiar form of government established by John Lawrence in the Punjab province, the so-called 'non-regulation' system which gave local governors a lot of power and relied on the fact that these governors were particularly gifted administrators. From 1849 onwards, Lawrence promoted his 'non-regulation' system, allowing for a free and dynamic government of the province, doing away with a slow administration and welcoming active local decision-makers.⁶ Kipling

admired the almost legendary figure of the former paternalistic governor John Lawrence. He was among those who still believed in this system in the 1880s. The lawrencian ideology implied values such as accountability, strength and practical knowledge. It opposed Liberal universalism, kept the Indians away from the political sphere and relied on individuals rather than on theoretical thought. Such pragmatism appears in many Kipling stories. In "Little Foxes", the Liberals are mocked through the character of Groombride, a Liberal MP. The paragraph describing the progressive politicians' actions is strongly ironical:

This same Modern Progress which brought dog-biscuit and brass water-taps to the kennels was at work all over the world. Forces, Activities, and Movements sprang into being, agitated themselves, coalesced, and, in one political avalanche, overwhelmed a bewildered, and not in the least intending it, England. The echoes of the New Era were borne into the Province on the wings of inexplicable cables. The Gihon Hunt read speeches and sentiments, and policies which amazed them, and they thanked God, prematurely, that their Province was too far off, too hot, and too hard worked to be reached by those speakers or their policies. But they, with others, underestimated the scope and purpose of the New Era.

One by one, the Provinces of the Empire were hauled up and baited, hit and held, lashed under the belly, and forced back on their haunches for the amusement of their new masters in the parish of Westminster. One by one they fell away, sore and angry, to compare stripes with each other at the ends of the uneasy earth. (*AR* 244-245)

In this passage, the avalanche of liberal reforms is represented as a simple chain of reactions: the 'echoes' represent the linear and necessary successivity of events, as does the anaphora 'one by one'. The voice of the narrator expresses a strong conservative feeling when deriding Liberal reforms by presenting them as amusements for the political personnel. The capital letters used for Modern Progress, Forces, Activities, Movements and New Era are not to be confused with those used for Empire or Province: the Empire and the Province are very concrete territories, geographically and politically defined, whereas the notions put forward by the Liberals are capitalized ironically by Kipling because they remain abstract. They are concepts without a core, form without matter. For Kipling, ideologies are always dangerous, whereas his conception of the Empire is based on a – certainly naïve – belief in pure pragmatism.

"The Mother Hive" is a social fable presenting the dangers of trade unionism. A wax-moth manages to hatch her eggs in the hive while talking the younger bees into forwarding egalitarian reforms. This will lead to the degeneration and destruction of the hive itself, because the bees no longer keep up the hierarchical organisation of work necessary to their survival. The heroine, Melissa, is disgusted by the wax-moth and refuses to listen to her progressive discourse and finally saves the day when she convinces a new queen to call the remaining sane bees to swarm into another hive. The hive is a traditional metaphor for human society, but Kipling's harsh criticism of trade unions prompted an equally strong reaction on the part of Jack London in his story "The Strength of the Strong". In this story, London answered Kipling both in the epigraph and the plot. The epigraph is a quotation signed by a derogatory anagram of Kipling, saying: "Parables don't lie, but liars will parable." – Lip-King." One of the characters, called the Bug, is officially responsible for creating a song which will prompt the people to obey the official authorities. The story ends with a very clear indictment of Kipling's fable: 'Bees are not men.'

This reaction to Kipling's text is indeed representative of the way many readers receive Kipling's works in general. To extend the pun, we could say that his reactionary stance provoked liberal answers in reaction to it. His political assertions are not always as vocal as in "The Mother Hive" and the poems are often used as modulations. The most striking instance of this appears between "The Mother Hive" and the accompanying poem "The Bees and the Flies". The story is told in earnest and has strong moral overtones. In the poem however, the tone is clearly mock-heroic. First referring to Virgil, it is about the stupidity of a farmer who thinks bees will swarm in the body of a dead bull – only to find worms and flies. The collection then ceases to be read linearly. The readers are surprised by the poem, so that they need to go back to the story, which has indeed changed from their first interpretation. This is another way to read the collection, leading to a more fragmented vision of the book.

3. MEDICINE AND PSYCHOLOGY IN THE COLLECTION

Jean Starobinski points out that the word 'reaction' has been used in medical vocabulary since the 18th century, and that physiological reactions were studied by many doctors in the 19th century through the phenomenon of reflexes in particular. A reaction was then taken to be a healthy response of the body to an illness or a dangerous situation. The terms action and reaction have more recently been used in pharmacology and neuropsychiatry in particular, in reference to the wanted and unwanted effects of certain medicines.

Kipling's stories often deal with healing and curing. It is striking to see the very mechanical quality of these processes as shown in *Actions and Reactions*: health and illness are treated from the Newtonian perspective and his Third Law of Motion. In "The House Surgeon", curing is the main theme. The narrator pretends to be a doctor when he meets the old Moultrie sisters in order to gain their confidence, but he also really cures both the house and the sisters of a curse. 'Cure' and 'curse' have paronomastic qualities which are relevant here in unveiling their essential proximity: curing not only is a medical treatment but also refers to the immaterial actions of magic. The whole Moultrie family suffers from respiratory problems, which, as shown by the narrator's investigation, provoked the accidental death of one of the sisters who fell off a window while trying to get some air. Kipling insists on the idea of a necessary and reciprocal link between the physical and psychological conditions of a patient. The inhabitants of the cursed house feel depression taking hold of them physically:

And it was just then that I was aware of a little grey shadow, as it might have been a snowflake seen against the light, floating at an immense distance in the background of my brain. It annoyed me, and I shook my head to get rid of it. Then my brain telegraphed that it was the forerunner of a swift-striding gloom which there was yet time to escape if I would force my thoughts away from it, as a man leaping for life forces his body forward and away from the fall of a wall. But the gloom overtook me before I could take in the meaning of the message. (. . .)

Despair upon despair, misery upon misery, fear after fear, each causing their distinct and separate woe, packed in upon me for an unrecorded length of time, until at last they blurred together, and I heard a click in my brain like the click in the ear when one descends in a diving bell, and I knew that the pressures were equalised within and without, and that, for the moment, the worst was at an end. But I knew also that at any moment the darkness might come down anew; and while I dwelt on this speculation precisely as a man tortments a raging tooth with his tongue, it ebbed away into the little grey shadow on the brain of its first coming, and once more I heard my brain, which knew what would recur, telegraph to every quarter for help, release or diversion. (AR 267-268)

Coming depression is explicitly compared to an imminent physical danger, and the click in the ear mentioned in the second paragraph is another, more obscure, interesting image. It relies on ideas of pressure and oppression, defining an interior and an exterior space so that

anguish can be explained in almost mechanical terms, through a comparison with the pressure physically felt by deep-sea divers.

What creates the narrator's depression is that the interior space is compressed. This interior space represents both the inside of the skull, 'in the background of my brain', 'in my brain', and a psychological space. The physical and the psychological spheres are voluntarily confused all along the story, which recalls the traditional gothic interplay between materiality and immateriality. The house itself does not correspond to the gothic model, but its curse tortures its inhabitants in a way comparable to what happens in the typical gothic stories. The Society for Psychical Research is mentioned at the end of the story, hinting once more at the existence of a concrete link between the mind and the material world. The nervous system, more precisely, is described as mechanical, through the metaphor of the telegraph. Another passage in the story refers to an electric transmission:

I am less calculated to make a Sherlock Holmes than any man I know, for I lack both method and patience, yet the idea of following up the trouble to its source fascinated me. I had no theory to go on, except a vague idea that I had come between two poles of a discharge, and had taken a shock meant for some one else. This was followed by a feeling of intense irritation. (*AR 274*)

Electricity and nerves are commonly brought together metaphorically, thanks to a common vocabulary ('shock', charge and 'discharge', 'release'). Kipling brings the metaphor further; he not only hints at a similarity in operating modes, but shows that electricity and nerves belong to the same system. This appears most clearly in "With the Night Mail", when the dirigible is caught in the thunderstorm:

Still the clear dark holds up unblemished. The only warning is the electric skin-tension (I feel as though I were a lace-maker's pillow) and an irritability which the gibbering of the General Communicator increases almost to hysteria. (. . .)

The pits of gloom about us begin to fill with very faintly luminous films—wreathing and uneasy shapes. One forms itself into a globe of pale flame that waits shivering with eagerness till we sweep by. It leaps monstrosly across the blackness, alights on the precise tip of our nose, pirouettes there an instant, and swings off. (. . .) The whole upper vault is charged with pale krypton vapours, which our skin friction may excite to unholy manifestations. Between the upper and lower levels—5000 and 7000, hints the Mark Boat—we may perhaps bolt through if . . . Our bow clothes

itself in blue flame and falls like a sword. No human skill can keep pace with the changing tensions. (AR 129-130)

This passage shows the bodies of the passengers being part of a complex electric and magnetic field. The bodies are able both to receive and produce shocks: they are made irritable by the storm, but may also induce a chain of electric reactions due to skin friction.

Another interesting connection is created here, between nervous tension and psychiatric illness, through the reference to hysteria. This is not the only reference made to it in the collection, the word 'hysterics' is also used in "The Mother Hive" by one of the deformed bees who refuses to acknowledge the coming danger, asking 'why hysterics?' (AR 101). Nicholas Daly explained how shock was perceived in the fin-de-siècle and afterwards, in relation to railway accidents for instance, as 'a peculiarly modern form of nervous after-effect'. The state of shock is also experienced by Sophie Chapin in "An Habitation Enforced" when she finds Old Iggulden dead:

He's dead,' she said, without preface.

'Old Iggulden? I was coming for a talk with him.' The vicar passed in uncovered. 'Ah!' she heard him say. 'Heart-failure! How long have you been here?'

'Since a quarter to eleven.' She looked at her watch earnestly and saw that her hand did not shake.

'I'll sit with him now till the doctor comes. D'you think you could tell him, and—yes, Mrs. Betts in the cottage with the wistaria next the blacksmith's? I'm afraid this has been rather a shock to you.'

Sophie nodded, and fled toward the village. Her body failed her for a moment; she dropped beneath a hedge, and looked back at the great house. In some fashion its silence and stolidity steadied her for her errand. (AR 19-20)

Her body is the only visible and material seat of her emotion. Being accustomed to new technologies, Sophie appears disconnected from other types of shock. She has got used to the anguish provoked by modernity and needs to adapt to a more traditional type of sensibility. However, even in this pastoral setting, psychological processes are described mechanically: her body fails her as an engine might stall. A few lines down, another expression confirms this: someone 'heard the news by farm-telegraphy, which is older but swifter than Marconi's' (AR 20), using once more a mechanical term to describe something which is supposed to be traditional, organic and natural.

CONCLUSION

The actions and reactions presented by Kipling are not mere anecdotes: they picture a world ruled by the laws of physics even in matters relating to the human body and the mind. The figure in this collection's carpet is apparent at the thematic level: the concepts presented in the title are tested by Kipling in the fields of physics, politics and medicine. The field of politics makes more apparent than the other two the inner fragmentation of the collection, and it explains the divisions that Kipling's texts create among his readers. *Actions and Reactions* is a fragmented work, both in itself and in the way it is received. The fields of physics and medicine, on the contrary, bind together dissimilar stories.

In the idea of a fragmented composition, the process of reconstitution (re-composition) must be more enhanced than that of fragmentation: out of fragmented elements and fragmenting ideas, Kipling manages to create a collection which is interpretable as a whole. The model for his composition seems to be mechanical: the description of the engine powered by Fleury's ray is a very graphic representation of how this type of collection works. His metanarrative tricks are always quite discreetly hidden, but the mechanical theme obviously pervades the whole collection, which does not run like clockwork but rather offers the reader several levers to pull, each inducing a chain of interpretations in reaction.

NOTES

1. Lisa A. F. Lewis, "Some Links between the Stories in Kipling's *Debits and Credits*" in *Critical Essays on Rudyard Kipling*, Harold Orel ed., Boston, Mass., G. K. Hall & Co.: 1989, pp.181-194.
2. Jean Starobinski, *Action et Réaction. Vie et aventures d'un couple*, Paris : Seuil La Librairie du XXe siècle, 1999. English translation : *Action and Reaction: The Life and Adventures of a Couple*, translation by Sophie Hawkes, New York : Zone Books, 2003.
3. Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Blue Carbuncle", *Sherlock Holmes. His Adventures, Memoirs, Return; His Last Bow & the Case-Book. The Complete Short Stories*. London: Murray, 1929, p.151.
4. The definition of the A.B.C. is given in "With the Night Mail": 'that semi-elected, semi-nominated body of a few score of persons of both sexes, controls this planet. "Transportation is Civilisation," our motto runs. Theoretically, we do what we please so long as we do not interfere with the traffic *and all it implies*. Practically, the A.B.C. confirms or annuls all international arrangements and, to judge from its last report, finds our tolerant, humorous, lazy little planet only too ready to shift the whole burden of public administration on its shoulders.' (AR 135-136)

5. Rudyard Kipling, *Actions and Reactions*, London: Macmillan, 1909, pp. 120—121. All page numbers refer to this edition, abbreviated as AR.
6. Andrew Hagioannu describes how this local political history influenced the young Kipling's writing. 'The Punjab was a politically conservative province, with veritable powers of excommunication over those who wavered from the common paternalist creed. (. . .) While Kipling's journalistic work certainly influenced his fiction in powerful and permanent ways, the characteristics of the Plain Tale, with its typical epigrammatic formulations and memorable epigraphs, can also be considered the literary counterpart of an ethos of government he absorbed in the colonial Punjab, where rhetorical directness was associated with administrative assurance, and succinct language considered the proper medium of British rule.' Andrew Hagioannu, *The Man Who Would Be Kipling. The Colonial Fiction and the Frontiers of Exile*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.7.
7. Jack London, "The Strength of the Strong", *The Call of the Wild and other stories*, Christopher Bigsby ed. London: Phoenix, 1998, p.228.
8. Nicholas Daly, *Literature, Technology, and Modernity, 1860-2000*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.35.

THE RABBI'S SONG

(To follow "The House Surgeon")

2 Samuel xiv, 14.

If thought can reach to Heaven,
On Heaven let it dwell,
For fear that Thought be given
Like power to reach to Hell.
For fear the desolation
And darkness of thy mind,
Perplex an habitation
Which thou hast left behind.

Let nothing linger after—
No whimpering ghost remain,
In wall, or beam, or rafter,
Of any hate or pain.
Cleanse and call home thy spirit,
Deny her leave to cast,
On aught thy heirs inherit,
The shadow of her past.

For think, in all thy sadness,
What road our grief may take;
Whose brain reflect our madness,
Or whom our terrors shake:
For think, lest any languish
By cause of thy distress—
The arrows of our anguish
Fly farther than we guess.

Our lives, our tears, as water,
Are spilled upon the ground;
God giveth no man quarter,
Yet God a means hath found;
Though faith and hope have vanished,
And even Love grows dim,
A means whereby His banished
Be not expelled from Him!

FOLLOWING "THE ABSENT-MINDED BEGGAR"

THE 2ND KIPLING STUDY DAY
19TH JUNE 2010, 11 A.M. – 6 P.M.
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

Organised by Dr JOHN LEE

This year, the Kipling Study Day will concentrate on a poem, "The Absent-Minded Beggar". Written to raise money for the families of soldiers fighting in the Boer War, it was an immediate success, and is credited with raising between £250,000 and £300,000 (£14 and £17 million in today's money). It has claims to have been the most practically effective poem in English.

What, though, does it mean when we say a poem raised £250,000? How does a poem raise money? How did this poem become so immediately famous, nationally and internationally? How long did that fame last, and what were its literary and cultural effects?

To discuss these and other questions, the Study Day brings together a panel of speakers from the disciplines of English Literature, History, and Theatre Studies. Following the poem's route to fame takes us to the Victorian Music Halls and Theatres and their stars. It takes us back to read again the new, campaigning mass-circulation newspapers and to understand how news flowed around the Imperial and international telegraphic system. It calls for an understanding of the kind of charitable giving that existed before the Welfare State, as well as for a sense of how the British public responded to the Boer War, and who made up the army that was fighting, and writing, in that war. It asks us to imagine and enter into the cultural life of 1899, as Victoria's reign came towards an end, and a new century, with new challenges, began. Above all, it is a journey which points up the sheer size of Kipling's literary and popular stature, and the global nature of his audience.

Confirmed speakers at the time of writing are:

Prof Peter Bailey – University of Manitoba

Prof Tim Kendall – University of Exeter

Dr John Lee – University of Bristol

Dr Simon Potter – National University of Ireland, Galway

Prof Edward M. Spiers – University of Leeds

A website has been set up which will carry update information as it becomes available. This also has links to the websites of the speakers, location details, and transport information.

web.me.com/postrestant/TAMB

All — researchers, students, and readers — are welcome to the Study Day, which will be held in the University of Bristol's School of Humanities, 3 Woodland Road, close to the centre of Bristol. Most of the day will be taken up with papers from the speakers. Questions will be welcome at the end of each paper, and there will be a general round-table discussion / Q&A session at the conclusion of the day.

All tickets include morning and afternoon tea and coffee. All tickets, apart from those marked 'without lunch', include lunch. There are plenty of small cafes within 10 minutes walk, and a map showing these will be available on the day. Those eligible for concessions are students, members of the Kipling Society, and the unwaged.

Before 1st June:

£15 full / £10 concessions

£10 full without lunch / £5 concessions without lunch

After 1st June:

£20 full / £15 concessions

£15 full without lunch / £7.50 concessions without lunch

The Study Day is being supported by:

BIRTHA – Bristol Institute for Research in the Humanities and Arts, University of Bristol.

The Kipling Society.

The Conflict and Culture Study Group, University of Bristol.

Registration and payment can be made online via the conference website given above, or by post if you prefer, in which case cheques should be made payable to: **University of Bristol**

and posted to: **Following 'The Absent-Minded Beggar'**
c/o Dr J. Lee, Department of English
3/5 Woodland Road
Bristol BS8 1TB

A BOOK REVIEW AND AN UPDATE

By THE EDITOR

KIPLING ABROAD: *Traffics and Discoveries from Burma to Brazil* edited by Andrew Lycett, published by I.B. Tauris, January 2010 (ISBN: 9781848850729, hardback, £19.95 less 30% until May 2010 to members using the flyer enclosed with the December 2009 *Journal*), xi + 254 pages including Maps, Bibliography and Index.

Kipling as a travel writer has been somewhat neglected despite his having collected several volumes of reports about his journeys throughout the world. Now Andrew Lycett, author of the 1999 biography *Rudyard Kipling* and our Hon. Meetings Secretary, has put together and edited a careful selection from the travel writings, interspersing them with appropriate extracts from some of the fiction, verse, speeches, and letters.

The book is organised by geographical area, usually in chronological order within each section. Not surprisingly, India holds pride of place drawing on *From Sea to Sea* and various reports from the *CMG*. One of the real pleasures is Kipling's article of 25 December 1891 in the *CMG* – "Home" – describing his journey by train up the length of the sub-continent from Tuticorin to Lahore.

There are sections for Asia, North America, Britain, Europe, North Africa, South Africa, Brazil and the Caribbean, the Sea, a potpourri of items on 'Travel' and the final Envoi of "The Song of the Cities". It is probably the section on Europe that will be least familiar to members, because it consists mainly of extracts from letters and from *The War in the Mountains*. Other less well-known sources are *Brazilian Sketches* and *Letters of Travel* (1892-1913).

Mr Lycett has written a delightful introduction to this collection summarising Kipling's travels and discussing his 'go-fever', together with short introductions to each section where he sets out some of Kipling's experiences. He has not annotated any of the articles, which helps to make the book look clean and uncluttered, but this might cause some problems for readers who are unfamiliar with Kipling and his use of Anglo-Indian words. A short glossary of these at the end of the book might be worth adding to future editions.

I found that the juxtaposition of poems and prose enhanced my pleasure. So many of the poems are only found in the books of poetry and when reading them, do not always immediately link to a place. This is a book that can be read straight through, dipped into as the mood takes, or when reading one of the collections, to look up what else Kipling might have written or said about a place. It can also be used when planning a 'follow in the footsteps' type of holiday. It is to be thoroughly recommended.

RUDYARD KIPLING: A Bibliography by David Alan Richards, published February 2010, hardback with CD-ROM, by Oak Knoll Press, 310 Delaware Street New Castle, DE 19720, U.S.A. (<http://www.oakknoll.com>, ISBN: 9781584562429 / Order No. 96675, \$195.00) and the British Library, London, U.K. (<http://publishing.bl.uk/book/rudyard-kipling>, ISBN: 9780712350730, £125.00). Available to members for £110 from Henry Sotheran Ltd. xliii + 457 pages of printed material including indexes and 55 pages of grayscale images in the book. The CD-ROM holds a further 400 pages of text and 46 pages of colour images.

I have no intention of repeating the material given in the Editorial to the March 2010 issue (no.335, pp.6 & 7), but now that I have had the book in my hand for a few days, I feel that there is a need for a short update to highlight at least some of the wonders that are now revealed.

A "General Index" might sound to be a dull and utilitarian object, but in this *Bibliography*, it is a cornucopia of delights. This Index is not a simple listing of entries in alphabetical order; it also lists the newspapers and periodicals by title in which Kipling's works first appeared in print. By looking up the entry for *The Times* for example, you are presented by year and month with the Kipling items which were first published therein, with a reference to the other entries in the *Bibliography*. You will find the same detail for the *Kipling Journal*, the *Strand Magazine*, the *New York Times*, the *Pioneer*, the *C&MG*, and so on; I had dreamt of listings like this but never expected to have the dreams fulfilled to such an extent.

The CD-ROM has two Adobe Acrobat® pdf files, one for the second half of the text and one for the colour illustrations. Although it is necessary to view them on a computer, usually with the hardback Index open alongside, it does mean that the whole package is transportable. The book weighs in at just over 3½ lbs, and without the use of the CD-ROM it would be difficult to use. Acrobat® Reader is available free from <http://get.adobe.com/uk/reader/>

Once an item has been identified in the Index, there are several ways of getting to the material on the CD-ROM. One can of course simply scroll down the file to reach the desired page; however groups of pages are linked by 'bookmarks' based on the "Contents", and this cuts down on the scrolling. Another and quicker method is to type the desired page from the Index into the 'page number box' on the toolbar and press return. This will jump directly to the correct point. The last method is to enter a word into the 'find box' on the toolbar which will allow you to find all occurrences of that word in the sections on the CD-ROM. The colour images are identified with the reference codes used in the main section.

One final benefit of the electronic publishing is that, not unexpectedly, additions and corrections are already beginning to appear. The publishers have made arrangements to handle this, the changes being found in a downloadable pdf file at <http://www.oakknoll.com/Kipling-additions-corrections.pdf>.

PROGRESS WITH THE NEW READERS' GUIDE

By JOHN RADCLIFFE and JOHN WALKER

As Members will know, we have been developing the On Line New Readers' Guide since 2002. It has been a considerable task, since there are over 350 short stories, four novels, two major memoirs, 30 articles on war and the military, over 80 travel letters, and over 500 published poems, leaving aside another 600 or so which were not collected in the *Definitive Edition* of the verse. This has been a major collective endeavour, by many industrious hands.

We have now annotated the novels, the memoirs, the military journalism, and all the short story collections, together with some forty stories which are only to be found in the *Sussex* and *Burwash* editions, for which we have also published Kipling's text. Many of these are extremely interesting, and one can see why Kipling chose to include them in the "*Sussex*." Of the prose there remain the speeches, which Leonee Ormond is annotating, and some fifty letters of travel, which David Page and Alastair Wilson are working on.

Progress with the verse has been slower, though perhaps we may console ourselves that the proposed volume of notes for the original Readers' Guide, produced in the 1960's and 70's, was never completed. On line, you can now access full notes for well over two hundred poems, with the text for more than three hundred (by kind permission of the National Trust), and links to the rest of the published work. There is also a searchable list of all of the verse, both published and unpublished, arranged by title and by first line, along with notes on the various collections.

Notes for many more of the poems are currently being produced by our existing editors, but we would like to offer members the opportunity to contribute to the Guide by preparing notes on a favourite piece of verse. The format for these presentations is well established, and provides for future extension and revision. We can provide publication details and other background facts to start you off, and though digital "copy" is simpler, we are happy to accept submissions in any format.

You are invited to "bid" for titles which have not yet been covered, by contacting our Verse Editor, John Walker. His email address is jwawalker@gmail.com, and his postal address is 72, Millbank, Headcorn, Ashford, Kent TN27 9RG.

We have also published a number of general articles on Kipling's work, an analysis of the musical settings of his poems, the *Kipling*

Journal archive, with software for searching it, and an analysis of themes in Kipling's stories. Our most recent additions to the site are special pages to the Guide for men and women on active service, with links to stories and poems on soldiers and soldiering, and sailors and the Royal Navy.

All of this is available on the World Wide Web at www.kipling.org.uk where you will find the New Readers' Guide as the centrepiece of the Society's web-site. If Members have any comments or suggestions on it we will be glad to have them.

THE PUZZLER

(To follow "The Puzzler")

The Celt in all his variants from Builth to Ballyhoo,
His mental processes are plain—one knows what he will do,
And can logically predicate his finish by his start:
But the English—ah, the English!—they are quite a race apart.

Their psychology is bovine, their outlook crude and raw;
They abandon vital matters to be tickled with a straw;
But the straw that they were tickled with—the chaff that they
were fed with—
They convert into a weaver's beam to break their foemen's head
with.

For undemocratic reasons and for motives not of State,
They arrive at their conclusions—largely inarticulate.
Being void of self-expression they confide their views to none,
But sometimes, in a smoking-room, one learns why things were
done.

In telegraphic sentences, half swallowed at the ends,
They hint a matter's inwardness—and there the matter ends.
And while the Celt is talking from Valencia to Kirkwall
The English—ah, the English!—don't say anything at all!

ABOUT THE KIPLING SOCIETY

The Kipling Society is for anyone interested in the prose and verse, and the life and times, of Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936). It is one of the most active and enduring literary societies in Britain and, as the only one which focuses on Kipling and his place in English Literature, attracts a world-wide membership. (Details from the Society's web-site and membership forms from the **Membership Secretary, Kipling Society, 31 Brookside, Billericay, Essex CM11 1DT**. The forms quote the minimum annual subscription rates. Some members contribute a little more.)

The Society is a Registered Charity and a voluntary, non-profit-making organisation. Its activities, which are controlled by a Council and run by the Secretary and honorary officials, include:

- maintaining a specialised Library in **City University, Northampton Square, London EC1V 0HB**,
- answering enquiries from the public (schools, publishers, writers and the media), and providing speakers on request,
- arranging a regular programme of lectures, and a formal Annual Luncheon with a Guest Speaker,
- running the web-site at **www.kipling.org.uk** for members of the Society and anyone else around the world with an interest in the life and work of Rudyard Kipling,
- and publishing the *Kipling Journal*, every quarter.

The *Journal* of the Society aims to entertain and inform. It is sent to subscribing paying members all over the world free of charge. This includes libraries, English Faculties, and 'Journal – only' members. Since 1927, the *Journal* has published important items by Kipling, not readily found elsewhere, valuable historical information, and literary comment by authorities in their field. By not being wholly academic, the *Journal* is representative of Kipling, whose own diverse interests and versatile talent covered a wide range of literary writing – letters, travel, prose and verse. For the serious scholar of Kipling, who cannot afford to overlook the *Journal*, a comprehensive index of the entire run since 1927 is available online to members or in our Library. Apply to: **The Librarian, Kipling Society, 72 Millbank, Headcorn, Ashford, Kent TN27 9RG, England or email to jwawalker@gmail.com**

The Editor of the *Kipling Journal* publishes membership news, Society events, and the texts of talks given by invited speakers. In addition, he is happy to receive letters and articles from readers. These may be edited and publication is not guaranteed. Letters of crisp comment, under 1000 words, and articles between 1000 – 4000 are especially welcome. Write to: **The Editor, Kipling Journal, 32 Merton Road, Harrow HA2 0AB, England or email to davpag@yahoo.co.uk**

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UK (payment by Standing Order)	£22	Joint £32
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(Joint – two members, same address, one <i>Journal</i> .)		
UK Young Members (under 23)	£12	
Surface mail, worldwide	£26	US\$52
Airmail Europe	£26	€37
Airmail worldwide	£30	US\$60

Universities and libraries are £2 more than the corresponding individual rate.

Cheques are accepted made out to the Kipling Society and drawn on British banks in pounds, on US banks in dollars or on European banks in Euros. For other currencies please use either a Bank Draft or a Bank Transfer in pounds sterling. Transfers should be made to the Kipling Society account at Lloyds TSB, Old Bond Street, London, using our International Bank Account Number (IBAN) **GB18LOYD30962400114978** and the Bank Identity Code (BIC) **LOYDGB21014**.

Members who pay their subscriptions from UK taxed income may increase the value of their subscription to the Society by completing a Gift Aid Declaration, available from the Membership Secretary. This enables the Society to reclaim from H.M. Revenue and Customs the tax paid on subscriptions.

John Lambert, Membership Secretary, can be contacted at **31 Brookside, Billericay, Essex, CM11 1DT, U.K.**

or by e-mail: john.lambert1@btinternet.com