

Of which author is the following a description?

One of the greatest of modern British writers was an Englishman who was born in India. He was privately educated in England, did not go to university, and returned to the East to work after leaving school. Empire, and the relation between those in authority and those under authority, became one of the principal themes of his writing, both in journalism and in fiction. He lived by his pen, and made a name as an author of strong political convictions. Many of his stories and phrases have embedded themselves in the English language and the consciousness of its users, even of those who have never actually read his work. Both admired and hated in his own lifetime, his genius made him a spokesman and a symbol in the great ideological contentions of modern times, and after his death he was considered not only an important writer, but also a particular embodiment of the character of his country. (Kerr, “Orwell, Kipling, and Empire”)

The fact that both Rudyard Kipling and George Orwell fit this bill helps to draw attention to one of the oddest and most interesting relationships in the history of modern English literature. For if Orwell and Kipling figured in any collocation in twentieth-century literary-historical writing, it was likely to be in the form of an antagonism, a meeting of opposites in ideology, temperament, and career. In the 1930s, the decade when Orwell was beginning his writing career while Kipling’s was drawing to a close, the sort of people who admired Kipling were unlikely to warm to Orwell (if they had heard of him), while Orwell’s constituency of readers, such as it was – let us say, subscribers to the Left

Book Club – for the most part looked on Kipling as a sort of superannuated monster. The old imperialist and the young socialist seemed natural enemies, poles apart. It is an attitude that was perpetuated, though in jocular spirit, in April 2011 when the Oxford Literary Festival staged a debate, sponsored by the Orwell Prize, between advocates of George Orwell and of Rudyard Kipling (“Oxford 2011”). A harmless enough game, perhaps, but the oratorical champions putting the case for the merit of their man, and – from time to time – against their antagonist, were entrenching the given dichotomy, “Orwell vs Kipling”, as the occasion was advertised. And the audience were interpellated in the same mindset when they were invited to vote for one writer or the other at the beginning and end of the proceedings, in a zero-sum game, in which a vote for Orwell was a vote against Kipling. However lighthearted, the protocols of the debate did not allow for the much more interesting and somewhat counterintuitive option, “Orwell *and* Kipling”, which is reflected in the title of my paper.

“Orwell *and* Kipling”, then, not only in the general sense that, fortunately, in real life we do not have to vote for one writer at the expense of another, but also in the sense – which the Oxford Festival debate may have recognized, a recognition maybe also registered in the title of the previous year’s debate, “Orwell vs Dickens” – that there is indeed a special relationship between these two. Everyone remembers Orwell’s little history of his views on Kipling: “I worshipped [him] at thirteen, loathed him at seventeen, enjoyed him at twenty, despised him at twenty-five and now again rather admire him.”¹ Like many thousands of his generation – but with the extra motivation of his family’s association with the East and the British Empire – Orwell grew up with Kipling’s stories for children,

and graduated to his adult verse and fiction. He opined in 1936 that “The Road to Mandalay” was “something worse than a jingle” (X: 409), but later confessed – if Malcolm Muggeridge is to be believed – that it was his favourite poem (Muggeridge xi). His own work is saturated, in an often bad-tempered way, with Kipling’s. I would argue that Kipling was from start to finish the most important writer for Orwell, and a sort of dialogic partner throughout his life, as much of a presence in *Nineteen Eighty Four* as he was in *Burmese Days*.

Both are writers shaped by difficult childhood ordeals (by their own account), tempered in the discipline of journalism, patriotic, thoroughly English yet imperfectly at home in England, politically partisan and principled, uneasy with women, relating strongly to animals, and so on – and both acquired, in their lifetime and posthumously, a reputation that made them in some ways mythic, representative of some truths about the political and aesthetic culture that formed them, that they did so much to form. Above all they are both writers of empire. They came from English families for whom residence and service in overseas territories was a tradition across generations. Kipling’s family and Orwell’s belonged to what Orwell called “the ‘service’ middle class, the people who read *Blackwood’s*” (XIII: 154). Most English bourgeois families, in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, had some relative at work in the British Empire, in the armed forces or administration, trade and commerce or missionary work. In a wider sense, for a century and a half the protection of the Empire dictated Britain’s foreign policy and trade with the Empire shaped its economic life. Every household contained material objects testifying to the British possession of an empire,

and empire was one of the chief pillars of the nation's sense of itself. It is one of the main arguments of Edward W. Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) that, though empire lurks in the background and under the surface of all cultural production in this period, mainstream English literary writing did a poor job of confronting the theme of empire directly. A case can be made for the importance of Kipling and Orwell, as well as for the kinship between them, in that they both address themselves foursquare to the most important issue of what the historian Eric Hobsbawm entitled *The Age of Empire*.² Their intimate and lifelong involvement in this theme is a commonality more significant, in my opinion, than the political differences that undoubtedly divide them.

Both Kipling and Orwell are global writers. I mean several things by this.

Kipling in his own lifetime, and Orwell by the end of his life, had an international reputation and following (and international enemies). But more to the point of the title of this collection of essays, they both had a global perspective. I would not describe either of them as cosmopolitan, but they thought globally. They had a global vision which was the opposite of the provinciality that often marks English literature. "And what should they know of England, who only England know?" (*Verse 221*) was Kipling's exasperated question, in his poem "The English Flag" (1891), to his fellow countrymen who paid too little attention to the rest of the world, and their obligations to it. Orwell entirely agreed. He pointed out that most ordinary people at home had no idea or understanding of the fact that their whole economic way of life depended on Britain's "coolie empire" overseas (XIII: 510). His words, though brutally phrased, have a resonance for those of us who enjoy the amenities of a more modern form of globalization. "We all live by

robbing Asiatic coolies,” Orwell writes in his 1942 essay on Kipling, “and those of us who are ‘enlightened’ all maintain that those coolies ought to be set free; but our standard of living, and hence our ‘enlightenment’, demands that the robbery shall continue” (XIII: 153).³ What the globe looked like to these two global writers is the topic of this essay.

There are different forms or motives of a global vision. The form of globalism that was available to both Kipling and Orwell was empire. Kipling’s empire was a world network of power, security and welfare, and hierarchical relationships based on race: a global institution of paternalism, efficiency and modernity. Orwell came to see empire as a despotism (though when he came to see it like this is a good question), a sleazy crime unredeemed by its local benefits, an institution of exploitation and injustice left over from a world that had passed away. Kipling’s empire was a moral force and necessity. Orwell saw it as morally unjustifiable. This was a judgement he was obliged to apply also to the author whose work meant more to him than any other: “It is no use pretending that Kipling’s view of life, as a whole, can be accepted or even forgiven by any civilized person” (XIII: 151). This is, to my mind, one of the most electrifying relationships in modern literature.

The rest of this essay will pursue this idea of the global vision of these two writers, formed in both cases by their experience of empire. My argument will be that if empire is the optic through which you see the globe, this is a vision that comes at some human cost, though it is not necessarily a higher cost than that exacted by viewing it through the optic of corporatism, for example, or consumerism. Rather than looking in the more obvious

places where empire is the issue, like Orwell's novel *Burmese Days* or Kipling's poems like "Recessional" or "The White Man's Burden", this essay will examine chiefly two lesser-known texts, belonging to the non-fictional genres of journalism or "travel writing", in which we get a glimpse of these writers reporting not from within the confines of the Raj, but from someone else's empire. We will follow Kipling's traces into the Celestial Empire of the Qing on the Chinese mainland in 1889, and then follow Orwell fifty years later to Morocco, at that time a protectorate of France, where he spent seven months in 1938 and 1939.

Kipling's book *From Sea to Sea and Other Sketches: Letters of Travel* was published in New York in 1899 and in London in 1900, and contains a series of letters written during his journey from India to England in 1899, originally published as dispatches in *The Pioneer* and the *Pioneer Mail* in Allahabad in India, newspapers for which Kipling had worked for several years as a journalist. Kipling went east from India, visiting Rangoon and Moulmein and Colombo and Penang and Singapore and Hong Kong and Japan, before crossing the Pacific and heading home across the North American continent. While in the British colony of Hong Kong, like many other tourists he availed himself of the opportunity to travel upriver into the Empire of China, to visit the city of Canton (Guangzhou). It is his account of this visit that I will focus on.

On this upriver journey, on an American river steamer, he is accompanied by his travelling companion the Professor, who has been with him since Calcutta, and a local Chinese guide called Ah Cum. For a number of reasons but chiefly to avoid confusion, I

will refer to the tourist-narrator as K, and will maintain a distinction between K, whose travels and opinions are recounted in *From Sea to Sea*, and Kipling, the author who wrote the book. Already at this stage of his career, Kipling was a highly sophisticated storyteller and one of the modern masters of the rhetoric of ironic narration, including the deployment of thoroughly unreliable first-person narrators. Just as the narrator's interlocutor the Professor, in the letters gathered in *From Sea to Sea*, cannot be supposed an accurate portrait of the actual Professor Alec Hill, an Anglo-Indian who taught at Muir College in Allahabad and with his wife Edmonia accompanied Kipling on this voyage, so we should be cautious about identifying the narrator K as a self-portrait of Rudyard Kipling. The genre of the traveller's report, of which *From Sea to Sea* and Orwell's "Marrakech" are examples, is a non-fictional one. Nonetheless, both K and the Professor are narrative tropes, and the account of their adventures and opinions is not answerable to any obligation of historical accuracy. K's views therefore cannot automatically be attributed to Kipling himself, though to be sure, as we shall see, they expressed a mindset familiar both to Kipling and to the readers of the *Pioneer*, a readership which, in a sense, elicits them. They are a part of Kipling's lifelong portrait of empire. The whole book cultivates and flatters a strong sense of us and them, "us" standing at different times for the British, the Anglo-Indians, and the readership of the *Pioneer*, while "them" includes foreigners outside the pale of British possessions, but may also indicate those like the "globetrotter" – K's word for whistle-stop travellers speeding round foreign parts and understanding nothing about them – who are outside the community of knowledge formed by K and his readers.

K had been favourably impressed by the bustling crown colony of Hong Kong. His first impression of the city included “a few thousand Chinese all carrying something” (*From Sea to Sea* 1: 270). The teeming streets were busy, and all around were signs of Chinese industry and diligence. K notices everything, and pays particular attention to artefacts and goods for sale. Here the tourist cruising the shops was deploying the professionally sharp eye of the reporter, but it was more than this. Kipling’s English childhood had been brightened by his visits to his maternal relatives the Burne-Jones family, at the heart of an aesthetic-political enterprise – the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood – with one wing in ceremonial high art and the other in artisanry and the design of everyday objects. In India for the past seven years he had been in every sense close to a father whose job was the creation and encouragement of arts, crafts, industry and design. It is no wonder that, wherever he went on his journeys, his eye was drawn to made things, the designed objects by which he was inclined to base his opinions of a culture and people (his views on the Japanese present a yet more extreme example of this).

And so the description of Hong Kong in *From Sea to Sea* is tight with objects, not only the local curios on sale in the shops, but the carving and gilded tracery decorating the fronts of shops offering all manner of quaint and striking merchandise. “A fragment of twisted roots helped by a few strokes into the likeness of huddled devils, a running knop and flower cornice, a split bamboo screen – they were all good, and their joinings and splicings and mortisings were accurate” (1: 272). There may be a relativity in aesthetic judgements, but carpentry is a universal language, and here it was testifying to the Chinese capacity for producing good work, the principal yardstick of Kipling’s

approbation. Hong Kong presents itself to the tourist's eyes as a workplace teeming with industry, and the travellers' routine comparison of the places they visited with "home" in India, a constant theme of the letters, was now a bit worrying – "This beats Calcutta into a hamlet" (1: 270) – though it was still jocular. Thus at the end of his first dispatch from Hong Kong, K turns cheekily on his Anglo-Indian readers, and tells them they would have done better to conquer and occupy a different country. "Let us annex China" (1: 277).

This may have seemed not a bad joke. Kipling was in a crown colony, writing for an Anglo-Indian readership; though well-travelled, and apart from a schoolboy trip to Paris with his father, he had in fact never set foot outside British possessions; and he was now reporting from the contact point between the two largest Asian empires, the British and the Chinese.⁴ He was also sending a dispatch to the second most populous country in the world, from the edge of the only nation that outnumbered it. The Chinese impressed him, but in Hong Kong those "few thousand Chinese all carrying something" busy in the streets and workshops were an orderly and manageable sample of the huge numbers of their kind. There were fewer than two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants of Hong Kong in 1889 (Sanderson 337), and they had been under British jurisdiction for close on fifty years.

The tourist trip upriver to Canton is a different matter, however. The cheeriness of the first dispatch from Hong Kong is quite gone now, and the moment K sets foot on Chinese soil he sounds peevish and hostile. "I had taken one fair look at the city from the steamer,

and threw up my cards. ‘I can’t describe this place, and besides, I hate Chinamen’” (1: 304). Canton seems to him beyond representation, indescribable, sublimely horrifying. Further, not only is it beyond the scope of European authority, it seems beyond the human world entirely. “Every other shop was a restaurant, and the space between them crammed with humanity. Do you know those horrible sponges full of worms that grow in warm seas? You break off a piece of it and the worms break too. Canton was that sponge” (1: 304). The abundance of people convinces him, paradoxically enough, that he has come to an inhuman place, for it seems the Chinese set no value on human life. “I hated the Chinaman before; I hated him doubly as I choked for breath in his seething streets where nothing short of the pestilence could clear a way” (1: 305). It is ominous that the oppression of the crowd immediately triggers the thought of how to get rid of them. Yet he admits there was “no sign of incivility” from the people, “but the mere mob was terrifying” (1: 305).

Their obliging guide, Ah Cum, takes them into a curio shop, drawing them inside the big door and bolting it, but this is not enough. K cannot shut the Eastern crowd out of his mind. “I thought more of the crowd than of the jewellery. The city was so dark and the people were so very many and so unhuman” (1: 305). The tourist is provoked into an ethnic panic, the curio shop becomes an unlikely stockade, and the shoppers in the streets, without themselves doing anything other than being there, are transformed in his eyes into a fearsome crowd – what Elias Canetti called a reversal crowd.⁵ The metamorphic turn is double, dramatic, producing the passers-by as a threatening mob and producing the tourist as embattled and nightmare-ridden.

The March of the Mongol is a pretty thing to write about in magazines. Hear it once in the gloom of an ancient curio shop, where nameless devils of the Chinese creed make mouths at you from back-shelves, where brazen dragons, revelations of uncleanness, all catch your feet as you stumble across the floor – hear the tramp of the feet on the granite blocks of the road and the breaking wave of human speech, that is not human! Watch the yellow faces that glare at you between the bars, and you will be afraid, as I was afraid! (1: 305-06).⁶

K's travelling companion the Professor does not seem in the least to share in this burst of fear and loathing, and certainly a part of this strange and repulsive performance is comedy, and a playing-up to the Anglo-Indian readers of the *Pioneer*. (A generation later in *Burmese Days*, Orwell would give his own account of the knee-jerk racism of characters like Ellis in the "Kipling-haunted little Clubs" of British Burma (II: 69).⁷) Now K changes his tune from the earlier mischievous suggestion that Britain should absorb China into its Empire. No such comfortable colonial *modus vivendi* can be anticipated with the Chinese. "Look at their faces," K tells the Professor. "They despise us. You can see it, and they aren't a bit afraid of us either" (1: 306). The whole city is now described in this intensely phobic light.

The point is that things that arouse K's horror in Canton existed and were reported by him in Hong Kong too, including the crowded and busy streets, but in Hong Kong the work rate of the Chinese earned K's respect, whereas in Canton it seems part of a conspiracy to overwhelm the white races. Even Chinese craftsmanship, so admired in the

colony, expresses itself in the Canton curio shop in the form of the sinister furniture of a Gothic tale, including the malevolent brazen dragons that “catch your feet as you stumble across the floor” (1: 306), spitefully intent on bringing about a European fall. The things that K had relished in the colony – the bustle of the streets, the ceaseless industry of the people, their remarkable artefacts – all now return demonized: the bustle and industry are signs of hostility, the quaint and ingenious curios are now revealed to be diabolical. Yet the closeness of colonial Hong Kong and imperial Canton should be emphasized. Both are Cantonese cities in the Pearl River delta. The colony had an open border, and there was a busy economic traffic between the two cities, so it not just that the people in the streets of Canton were similar to the people in the streets of Hong Kong: many of them actually *were* the same people. Yet the amused admiration with which K described the Chinese in the colony has now turned thoroughly hostile and explicitly genocidal. Though the Professor demurs mildly, K repeatedly asserts that he hates the Chinese and expresses the wish that they be killed off. “It would be quite right to wipe the city of Canton off the face of the earth, and to exterminate all the people who ran away from the shelling” (1: 306).

Before we leave this disagreeable scene, it is important to observe that the hostility of the Chinese in Canton is entirely ventriloquised. That is to say, K’s narrative is quite deaf to anything the Chinese (apart from the tour guide) may actually be saying, to each other or to him or about him, in this “wave of human speech, that is not human” (1: 306) – meaning, in effect, this human speech which to his Anglophone ears is so much unintelligible noise. Their hostility is produced out of his own feverish supposition.

“There was of course no incivility from the people, but the mere mob was terrifying” (1: 305). But if he encountered no incivility, why was he terrified? Just as he can look at the faces of the Chinese and read hatred in them, K thinks he can hear in the noise of their incomprehensible speech a discourse of bloodthirsty hostility towards him. It seems unlikely that K would have had reason to respond so violently to the Chinese in Canton if he did not think of himself as a representative of a rival imperial people. His imperial identity now has the effect of filling him not with confidence but with something like paranoia, a delusion of the hostility of others and an exaggerated sense of the importance of the self.⁸

I want to pass on now to another traveller, George Orwell, a kind of medical tourist who spent seven months in 1938 and 1939 in French Morocco, whose dry climate had been recommended as beneficial to his lungs. Like Kipling, Orwell might be described as a child and a veteran of empire, and in Morocco he had an opportunity to view empire as practiced by another European people. Most of the country, including Marrakesh where Orwell stayed, had been a French protectorate since 1912.⁹

Orwell’s essay “Marrakech” was written for John Lehmann’s *New Writing*, and published in the Christmas 1939 number (XI: 416-421). Just as it was convenient to call the traveller-narrator of *From Sea to Sea* by the name of K, I will designate the narrator of “Marrakech” as O. If the keynote of K’s Canton is a swarming busyness, everything O sees in Marrakesh seems characterized by meagreness and emiseration, from the starved features of the inhabitants to their shallow graves in the dried-up earth. K in Canton

observed the Chinese, though he was unable to hear them speak. O in Morocco says he had to school himself to see the local people at all.¹⁰ “In a hot country, anywhere south of Gibraltar or east of Suez,” the people have a strange invisibility to the visitor. “In a tropical landscape one’s eye takes in everything except the human-beings” (XI: 418). The reason for this, he concludes, is that it is actually difficult to acknowledge the humanity of the extremely poor, such as he found in Marrakesh.

When you walk through a town like this – two hundred thousand inhabitants, of whom at least twenty thousand own literally nothing except the rags they stand up in – when you see how the people live, and still more how easily they die, it is always difficult to believe that you are walking among human beings. All colonial empires are in reality founded upon that fact. The people have brown faces – besides, there are so many of them! Are they really the same flesh as yourself? Do they even have names? Or are they merely a kind of undifferentiated brown stuff, about as individual as coral or insects? They rise out of the earth, they sweat and starve for a few years, and then they sink back into the nameless mounds of the graveyard and nobody notices that they are gone (XI: 417).

This is a profoundly disturbing insight, though like the insights of K in Canton it needs to be glossed. Not for nothing had Orwell been reading Kipling for decades. His narrators in, for example, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (vol. I) or “Shooting an Elephant” (X: 501-6) show him quite capable of using narrative voice as a literary trope, and the idea of people of other ethnicity as “undifferentiated brown stuff” is given here as an example of a way of thinking, a literary representation, like the thoughts attributed to a

fictional character, rather than an unmediated opinion of George Orwell or Eric Blair. Hence the need to differentiate the voice of O from the person of Orwell, to acknowledge a fictionality which may very well extend (we shall see) not only to the opinions he expresses but also to the things he reports.

Furthermore, like K's description of the Chinese in Canton, O's discourse on the invisibility of the people of Marrakesh is more a reflection on the subject than on the object of observation. It tells us little, as a matter of fact, about Moroccans, but much about the human cost that empire exacts from its beneficiaries, in terms of alienation from others. K had imagined the liquidation of the Cantonese. In the European view of Morocco, according to O, it is as if the extermination of the local people has already happened, for they have disappeared from sight. "What does Morocco mean to a Frenchman? An orange-grove or a job in Government service. Or to an Englishman? Camels, castles, palm-trees, Foreign Legionnaires, brass trays and bandits" (XI: 418-419). Where human beings are poor and have brown skins, they are not seen as human, in fact not seen at all. If indeed no man is an island, then every dehumanization of the other is a dehumanization of the self. There is a structure of feeling here, I would argue, which is related to the way the Kipling narrator fantasized about exterminating the Chinese because he was sure that they hated him. (It is unlikely Kipling really wanted to exterminate the Chinese, or that Orwell really could not see Moroccans in Marrakesh. But it seems futile to try to decide if O is closer to the real Orwell than K is to the real Kipling. I do argue, however, that these adopted positions can tell us something important about the real discourse of empire.)

This dehumanizing and therefore dehumanized structure of feeling is reinforced when O goes to the *jardin publique*, and is feeding the gazelles like a dutiful tourist when an Arab labourer approaches him and politely asks for some of the bread he is giving to the animals. O narrates this shocking little scene with no comment at all, but it clearly acts as a gloss on the preceding insight, and just to make it clear, he then does it again, when he records that for several weeks he had paid no attention to the file of old women passing his house every day, loaded down with firewood – “Firewood was passing – that was how I saw it” (XI: 419) – but was immediately infuriated by the widespread ill-treatment of donkeys in Morocco, a sentiment we are used to describing as humane. Not for the first or last time, his relation to animals brings the Orwellian protagonist’s relation to his fellow human beings into visibility to himself (the dog in “A Hanging” (X: 207-10) is an earlier example).¹¹ Incidentally, we can assume no reader really believes that George Orwell *actually* watched loads of firewood passing his house every day for weeks, without realizing that they were being carried by human beings. Again, Orwell sets up his narrator O as a helpless example of the partial vision, the dehumanized perspective on the globe which is afforded him because he is looking at the world through the optic of empire, predicated on a theory of the natural inequality of races – for how can all humans be equal, when some of them are less human than others?

At the end of the essay comes another point that reinforces the way that empire can enable a global vision but at the same time make it a paranoid one. A dusty column of

infantry is marching past on its way to the south; these are Senegalese soldiers in the service of the French. O catches the eye of a young African in the ranks, and is appalled to see in his returned gaze not indifference or hostility (attitudes Eric Blair was used to encountering during his service in the Burmese police), but a look of profound respect. “This wretched boy, who is a French citizen and has therefore been dragged from the forest to scrub floors and catch syphilis in garrison towns, actually has feelings of reverence before a white skin. He has been taught that the white race are his masters, and he still believes it” (XI: 420).

Once again, it would be as well to note that the attribution of this feeling to the young African is entirely unverifiable, and is the equivalent of Kipling’s ventriloquising a hatred of foreigners in the peaceful-seeming Chinese in the streets of Canton. A postcolonial critique might well complain that the European occupation of this part of Africa was now being reinforced by an invasion of the young soldier’s subjectivity and a plantation there of thoughts attributed to him by the knowledge-power of the European discourse. But Orwell needed to see respect for O in the eyes of the black colonial soldier, to prepare for his concluding point, which was that “every white man” is aware of the precariousness with which his authority rests on this frankly undeserved deference. He may have speculated on what was going on in the mind of the African soldier, but O says he *knows* what every white man thinks when he sees large numbers of the people he has colonized. “How much longer can we go on kidding these people? How long before they turn their guns in the other direction?” (XI: 420). However securely this racial hegemony may be guaranteed by the consent of the ruled, it rests on shaky foundations, and knowledge of

this fact is O's version of the white man's burden. "It was a kind of secret which we all knew and were too clever to tell; only the negroes didn't know it" (XI:420).

K evoked "the March of the Mongol", and O describes this shambling parade of a ragtag colonial army: both of them conjured from the prospect the apocalypse of race war. To K, stepping over for virtually the first time beyond the realm of British authority, it seemed obvious that the British Empire must be an object of hatred to the teeming millions of Chinese on its eastern border. O, fifty years later, supposes the imperial peoples constantly aware of the illegitimacy and vulnerability of their power over their colonised peoples. Both these journalistic dispatches have a global vision but see the globe as a polarised place, potentially embattled on a grand scale. Kipling, perhaps, was content with this picture. Orwell, I am sure, felt that he had been conscripted into this potential race war, just as he had come to see how he had been conscripted into a class war. For him the question remained the one he struggles with in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (vol. V): was it necessary first to change the world in order to see it differently, or to see it differently in order to change it?

From Sea to Sea and "Marrakech" are profoundly important texts in which we can read a *dramatization* of the imperial vision, the implications of seeing the globe as an arena of imperial struggle, and the cost of that vision in terms of the humanity of people of other races, and of the man who observes them. These effects are produced, it seems important to say again, by rhetorical means, and to appreciate these we need to lay aside any naïve theory of representation that sees such discourse as necessarily the accurate transcription

of an actual traveller's experience and impressions. To encourage a critical reading that takes care to separate the discursive from the authorial subject, K from Kipling and O from Orwell (or Blair), two biographical footnotes may help.

“Shooting an Elephant” is one of Orwell's most justly famous narratives. It has a first-person narrator, and starts with a description of the miseries of being a white sub-divisional police officer in Burma and an obvious target for anti-European feeling, before going on to narrate the anecdote about the killing of a rogue elephant. This incident was reported in the *Rangoon Gazette* for 22nd March 1926, with many details that reappear in Orwell's story: the killing of a villager, the elephant found eating in a plantation grove, its shooting by a European sub-divisional officer, the delight of the onlooking villagers. Peter Davison quotes the report in the Supplementary Volume to his edition of Orwell's *Complete Works* (39). But the name of the officer who shot the elephant is E. C. Kenny, not Eric Blair. The first-personal modality of “Shooting an Elephant” appears to be a fiction. Its narrator too should be named not Orwell but O.

And what of Kipling and K, and the visit to Canton? Towards the end of that dispatch, K had recounted how he and the Professor wandered into the Potter's Field or execution ground there, and conversed with the Chinese executioner. “The Chinese slay by the hundred,” K remarks, “and far be it from me to say that such generosity of bloodshed is cruel” (1: 307-308). Years later, in 1903 Kipling's friend the classical scholar Gilbert Murray was translating Euripides' *Electra* and seems to have consulted Kipling on the death by decapitation of Aegisthus, described in the play. Kipling was happy to oblige.

“When a man’s head is cut off as a rule he belches a little as it were; making a sticky clammy sound (this can best be seen by visit to Canton execution ground – fee to executioner, and visitors must bring own Phthian chopper as local instrument is Chinese.)” (*Letters*, 3: 136) Thomas Pinney, editor of the Kipling *Letters*, adds the following note.

RK wrote about the Canton execution ground (Letter 10, *From Sea to Sea*) but according to Mrs Hill he did not see it. “R.K. had a bad attack of Indian fever when we reached Canton and had to stay in his berth.” The substance of his description “was all told him by the Prof. and me.”¹²

Kipling, it seems, never set foot in the Celestial Empire. But K did.

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¹ Orwell *Complete Works* X: 409. Subsequent citation in the text will be give thus: Volume: Page.

² Hobsbawm’s volume *The Age of Empire* (1987) is subtitled *1875-1914*. However the age of empire did not halt with the First World War, but continued throughout Orwell’s lifetime, and beyond.

³ The essay was written in 1942, when Orwell was working for the Eastern Service of the BBC whose political task was to foster the loyalty of Britain’s Indian subjects to the British Empire threatened in Asia by the Japanese.

⁴ See Kerr *Eastern Figures* 60-64.

⁵ A “reversal crowd” is one intent on overturning a prevailing hierarchy of authority and obedience, “a revolutionary situation can be defined as this state of reversal, and a crowd whose discharge consists mainly in its deliverance from the stings of command should be called a *reversal crowd*” (Canetti 67).

⁶ “The March of the Mongol” was a journalistic phrase coined in the title of an article by William B. Dunlop, in the *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, earlier in 1889. In spite of its alarming title, the article notes the economic, diplomatic and military resurgence of China and urges British statesmen to consider “how they may best strengthen the existing friendship between the two mighty Empires” (41).

⁷ *Burmese Days* is Volume II of the *Collected Works*. Ellis is the most virulent racist in the novel. But to emphasise that such racial sentiments are a prejudice or pre-judgement, Orwell puts some of the most derogatory remarks about Burmese people into the mouth of the young Elizabeth Lackersteen, newly arrived from England.

⁸ K’s animosity against the Chinese is carried over to the New World, when in a later letter he reports a visit to a sinister gambling den in the Chinese quarter of San Francisco, where, he says, he witnessed a fatal shooting (1: 487-491).

⁹ Morocco was still nominally a sovereign state. There was a Spanish protectorate in the north of the country, from which troops under Francisco Franco had launched their uprising against the Spanish republic in 1936. France controlled the rest. This situation prevailed from 1912 to 1956.

¹⁰ This observation seems to be belied later in the essay by a close, even Kiplingesque, attention to locals at work, particularly in the Jewish quarter – “Fruitsellers, potters, silversmiths, blacksmiths, butchers, leatherworkers, tailors, water-carriers, beggars, porters” (XI: 418).

¹¹ See Kerr, “Orwell, Animals, and the East.”

¹² Kipling, *Letters* 3: 137, n.2. The note refers to W. M. Carpenter, “RK’s Allahabad Home”, MS, Cornell, p. 24. I am grateful to Professor Thomas Pinney for bringing this to my attention.

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