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*“The Bride of His Country”:
Love, Marriage, and the Imperialist
Paradox in the Indian Fiction of Sara
Jeannette Duncan and Rudyard Kipling*

TERESA HUBEL

FOR MANY LITERARY SCHOLARS and general readers, the expression ‘Kipling’s India’ neatly delineates the imperialist society that existed on the Indian subcontinent in the late nineteenth century. The phrase, however, is deceptive in its simplicity. It does not reveal, or even imply, the internal workings behind what is certainly a vast imaginative construct, a construct that involves a specific political ideology, various cultural myths, and an extraordinary emotional investment. In the words of one critic, Kipling was “a mythmaker for a culture under protracted stress” (Wurgaft xx). He voiced the bewilderment and memorialized the tragic — and sometimes pathetic — grandeur of the British people in India. But Kipling was not Anglo-India’s only mythmaker.

As a woman in a staunchly masculine society, Sara Jeannette Duncan was able to incorporate into her fiction a feminine perspective on Anglo-India’s political, social, and emotional ambitions. In many ways her work serves as a foil to ‘Kipling’s India,’ for it exposes, both explicitly and implicitly, some of the patriarchal assumptions that lie at the core of his vision. Yet Duncan was also a product of her age and, like Kipling, a child of the Empire. Although a Canadian and hence an outsider in this predominantly British community, she too adopts the role of the mythmaker on occasion, becoming an advocate of the imperialist doctrine that so preoccupied the Anglo-Indian people.

One of the most interesting facets of the Anglo-Indian myth involves the notion that India had, at some point during its his-

torical association with the West, loved and married Britain. Both Kipling and Duncan use this metaphor (Kipling much more frequently than Duncan), apparently regarding it as an accurate depiction of the colonial relationship between these two countries. Indeed, this metaphor of love and marriage is of extreme importance in their work, since it serves as their explanation *and* justification of a political belief that, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, was becoming increasingly difficult to defend — namely, the belief in the necessary continuance of British imperialism in India.

Traditional criticism tends to associate Anglo-Indian writers with a univocal and inflexible imperialist ideology; but this approach overlooks the philosophical complexities that accompanied the British presence in India, complexities which these authors often acknowledge in their fiction. Although the colonial mentality expressed in the works of Kipling and Duncan is indeed, as critics have observed, dominated by the conviction that the British had a right to maintain control over India, neither of these writers can properly be labelled apologists of the Empire, at least not without qualifications. Kipling, for example, did not become a full-blown imperialist until around the turn of the century when he attempted to incite public enthusiasm in Britain for the cause of the Boer War.¹ Prior to this period, during and shortly after his second residency in India, he was much more equivocal in his stance on imperialism, frequently questioning the British administration of India and commiserating with the plight of the Indians under alien rule.

In discussing one of Kipling's most talked-about stories, "His Chance in Life," John A. McClure identifies the essential dissonance that characterizes his early Indian fiction:

Kipling seems to be trying . . . to have it both ways — to enter sympathetically into the consciousness of a colonized person, and to maintain his allegiance to the racial suppositions of imperialism. But the first endeavor draws him inexorably towards subversion.

(53)

For Kipling, colonial life constituted a huge moral enigma. While accepting and even admiring Indian culture and tradition, often privileging Eastern lifestyles and belief systems over those of the West, he nevertheless would not grant India the capacity for self-

government. Nowhere in his writing do we see him affirming the legitimacy of the Indian nationalist aspirations. Instead, we are more likely to find sardonic declarations of Indian incompetence, such as the following from "On the City Wall":

It [India] will never stand alone, but the idea is a pretty one, and men are willing to die for it, and yearly the work of pushing and coaxing and scolding and petting the country into good living goes forward. (*Soldiers Three* 305)

It is significant that this passage occurs in a story that also celebrates the charms of India — in the character of Lalun, an enchanting and seductive native prostitute.

Duncan's Indian fiction shares with Kipling's this problematic dissonance. It is evident even in her first novel about India, *The Simple Adventures of a Mem sahib*, in which she charts the stages of one woman's initiation into the role of the Anglo-Indian lady. The narrator, Mrs. Macintyre, occupies a precarious position within the novel — she is alternately the defender of the British in India and their judge. Commenting ironically on the Anglo-Indian use of the vernacular, she discloses the arrogance implicit in the imperialist posture, a posture which the British were quick to adopt as soon as they arrived on the subcontinent:

The same delicate autocracy pervades the sahib's Hindustani as characterises most of his relations with his Indian fellow-subjects. He has subdued their language, as it were, to such uses as he thinks fit to put it, and if they do not choose to acquire it in this form, so much the more inconvenient for them. (230)

But when the narrator is not condemning Anglo-Indian society, she is its loyal supporter. With the appearance of the globe-trotting Mr. Batcham in Calcutta, Mrs. Macintyre suddenly becomes a patron of imperialism, and at this point in the novel Duncan lapses into the common Anglo-Indian complaints about the unjust attitudes of the visiting public, the traitorous and conniving manner of the educated Bengali, and the discomforts of life in India.

Thus, although she often disparages government administration and the type of Englishman who is likely to be found there, Duncan seldom, and never explicitly, calls into question the fundamental fact of 'British' India. Here we see the quintessential dilemma in her work. As a member of the Anglo-Indian community and hence

a participant in its imperialist program, and, at the same time, one of its most outspoken critics, she, like Kipling, must have felt the competitive forces of morality and politics.

B. J. Moore-Gilbert, in *Kipling and "Orientalism,"* places Kipling and Duncan firmly in the tradition of Anglo-Indian 'Orientalism.' He distinguishes this branch of imperialist political thought from its better-known counterpart, which was based in England and which he calls "metropolitan Orientalism" (35), by its apparent contradictory standpoint. Although it showed much more tolerance, acceptance, and understanding of the Indian culture than the metropolitan school, Moore-Gilbert asserts that Anglo-Indian 'Orientalism,' nevertheless, refused to entertain the idea of India's eventual independence, even at the insistence of liberal politicians at home. Considering themselves authorities on the subject of India's problems, Anglo-Indian orientalists declared that social and not political reform was necessary if India were to make any genuine progress. Hence the nationalist movement, which had emerged in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, was dismissed as — to use Kipling's words — "the work of a limited class, a microscopic minority" (*Under the Deodars* 184). According to Kipling, the 'real' people of India, the peasants and the princes, had no desire whatsoever for self-government.²

By the last decade or so of the century, when Kipling and Duncan were writing their Indian fiction, indigenous agitation for self-representation had reached the ears of the British public, which provoked the British citizens of India to an even louder defence of their credo. At this point, Moore-Gilbert states, Anglo-Indian 'Orientalism' found itself "increasingly trapped in paradox":

On the one hand it sought to protect India against programmes of reformation shaped by metropolitan ideologies; the virtues of tradition and cultural integrity were defended against insensitive westernisation. On the other hand, it rarely questioned the legitimacy of its own political control. (135)

As exponents of this type of 'Orientalism,' Kipling and Duncan were caught in a decidedly uneasy situation. Confronted with the paradoxical nature of their convictions about India and the Indian people, they had somehow to reconcile in their writing the polarities inherent in the Anglo-Indian orientalist tradition.

Kipling sought to resolve the matter with a metaphor. In the fiction and journalism of his early career, he attempts to articulate the relationship between the British and India in terms of a marriage or a love affair, with Britain assigned to the role of the husband or lover and India to that of the wife or beloved. We can regard this metaphor, I think, as Kipling's effort to smooth over the intellectual and emotional contradictions in his orientalist ideology, since it accounts for both Kipling's, and by extension Britain's, love for India and her culture and, in accordance with the prevailing Victorian ideas about the status of women in marriage, his right to assume the dominant position in the relationship, his right to keep India in a state of subjugation.

Duncan makes use of this metaphor in her last Indian novel, *The Burnt Offering*, but for her, it is fraught with complications. Since she is unable to accept the conception of womanhood as it is delineated by Kipling and other men writers of her day or to concur with nineteenth-century notions about the subordinate position of women in marriage, she endeavours in her novel both to subvert this metaphor, and, because of her imperialist leanings, to support it. Although the novel struggles against itself, it does finally evolve into a chilling exploration of marriage in an imperialist society.

I

In *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa*, Abdul R. JanMohamed observes that "the colonial mentality is dominated by a manichean allegory of white and black, good and evil, salvation and damnation, civilization and savagery, superiority and inferiority, intelligence and emotion, self and other, subject and object" (4). The "allegory" that JanMohamed neglects to mention, but which is certainly applicable to Kipling's colonial writing, is the masculine and feminine. The imaging of India as female, Britain as male, and the two cultures as lovers is common enough in Kipling's work, but perhaps his most resonant rendition of it occurs in a burlesque he wrote for the Indian newspaper *The Pioneer* in 1888. Titled "An Interesting Condition," the piece pokes fun at the self-importance of the British in India and at their policies of westernization. Its narrator is a Frenchman,

who, like Kipling himself, finds the notion of "the Rehabilitation of the East" a ludicrous one:

The East intrigued with Alexander. It was a *liaison* passenger.
 With the Toorkh. It was an *affaire militaire* only. . . .
 With the Rajput; with the Hindu. It was to pass the time.
 With the Portuguese. It was an aberration erratic.
 With the Frenchman. It was an affair of the heart.
 But she was a woman. The Englishman came. With him the gold
 of Perfidie Albion.
Encore — she was a woman. . . .
 The Englishman believes that he has married her. By the high mass
 of the rope and the low mass of the sabre.
 The others also believed.
 And she? Ask her. Her eyes are upon the Vague Profound where
 dwell the shadows of her dead lovers.
 The Englishman has taken her by the arm. He promenades with
 her upon the Sundays. He laughs. He exhibits his teeth.
 He slaps his leg. He also pats her upon the back.
 These things are the marks of the husband English. But . . . ask her.
 She has *seen* many lovers.
 A woman who has seen many lovers will see more.
 This woman will exist for ever, and she will always be beautiful.
 An eternity of beauty and an eternity of liaisons! The liaisons of a
 Nation! Pyramidal? Immense. (*Reader's Guide* 2136-137)

"An Interesting Condition" reveals Kipling's fundamentally misogynist attitude concerning the British possession of India. It is an attitude grounded in the assumption that India, being feminine *and* unchaste, not only requires masculine control but endlessly courts it, as is suggested in the long list of "lovers" or foreign conquerors with whom she has dallied. Moreover, Kipling clearly regards the promiscuity of the East as a permanent and even irredeemable condition. The female India will, over the centuries, take any number of different nations as lovers, but they have little or no effect on her character. The lovers change; the East does not. Her "husband English" may deceive himself into believing that he is reforming her, but the French narrator assures us that such is not

quently found in late nineteenth-century British writing about India, and it undoubtedly has its roots in the garrison mentality of the Anglo-Indian people. But in Kipling's work this idea has a distinctly patriarchal expression. Again and again in both his journalism and his fiction, he proclaims that India's 'sexual' inconstancy simply makes political reformations impossible. "You cannot reform a lady of many lovers . . .," he states in one of his short stories (*Life's Handicap* 98), and the man who tries is consistently satirized. Furthermore, although he will allow that the West is capable of historical progress, in India, he insists, "nothing changes in spite of the shiny, top-scum stuff that people call 'civilization'" (*Plain Tales* 225). When Kipling objects to the imposition of Western education or any other social reform on the peoples of India, as he does in "An Interesting Condition," he is, therefore, invariably affirming the Anglo-Indian belief in the moral depravity of India, a depravity that is not amenable to Western ideas of modernization.

Despite Kipling's metaphor of the sexual relationship between Britain and India, an unassailable distance exists between the white and the Indian races in his short stories, and this distance arises as a result of what he insists is the mysterious and alien nature of native India. In Kipling's fiction the English hero might understand the native mind well enough to impose his will on it, but it remains essentially unfathomable. One of Kipling's favoured characters is Strickland of the Police, "who knows as much of natives of India as is good for any man" (*Life's Handicap* 195). Although Strickland's knowledge of Indian religions, customs, and costumes allows him to disguise himself as an Indian to obtain secret information, even he, in "The Mark of the Beast," is ultimately baffled by the alien East, which prompts the narrator to remark:

Strickland hates being mystified by natives, because his business in life is to overmatch them with their own weapons. He has not yet succeeded in doing this, but in fifteen or twenty years he will have made some small progress. (198)

Again, Kipling's vision of the unknowable India can be traced to his imperialist philosophy. Knowledge of the other subverts the ideology of imperialism, for it produces a blurring of the boun-

daries between the dichotomies that JanMohamed outlines above. The conflation of self and other, white and black, subject and object would cause the collapse of the most fundamental dichotomy of imperialism — superior and inferior. Since the entire power structure requires for its continued existence the maintenance of this dichotomy, any cross-cultural exchange of knowledge threatens the status quo. Kipling's narrators and some of his male characters are often tempted to acquire more knowledge of the East than is good for them, but invariably they are deterred — by cholera in "Without Benefit of Clergy," by mutilation and attempted castration in "Beyond the Pale," and by common sense in "The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney." His notorious warning in "Beyond the Pale" — "A man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race and breed" (*Plain Tales* 162) — although it is partially undermined during the narrative, proves to be sound advice in his early Indian fiction, since the consequences of taking "too deep an interest in native life" (162) are almost always disastrous.

If the East is already unfathomable to the English mind, it becomes doubly so when Kipling metaphorically transforms it into a woman. His metaphor of the female India combines the mystery of the East with the secretiveness of feminine sexuality, making it a particularly potent image, especially for the intensely patriarchal society of Anglo-India. In Kipling's early fiction, women in general — that is, both English and Indian — are usually invested with an inordinate amount of power, to such a degree that they are often a danger to the men around them.³ But though the narrator describes other men who are swayed by the power that he ascribes to certain white women, such as Mrs. Hauksbee, Mrs. Reiver, and an "Anglo-Indian deity" called Venus Annodomini (*Plain Tales* 220), he himself remains aloof and, consequently, is saved from being swept into their wake.

For the narrator, it is the Indian woman who is virtually irresistible. The distance that he places between himself and the white women of Anglo-India disintegrates in those short stories that feature Indian women as characters. In "On the City Wall," the narrator confesses that he is attracted to the beautiful prostitute Lalun: ". . . to my extreme gratification, she threw her arms round

my neck, and murmured pretty things. I was in no haste to stop her . . ." (*Soldiers Three* 325). It is certainly not because Lalun is powerless that the narrator allows himself to be enticed by her, for Lalun, more so than her feminine counterparts in Anglo-Indian society, represents a danger to the narrator and to the British imperial control which he feels must be sustained in India. She actually succeeds in securing his involvement in a plan to free a political prisoner who intends to overthrow the government. It is rather Lalun's innate desirability that leaves the narrator vulnerable to her sexual manipulations. Her beauty, we are told, "was so great that it troubled the hearts of the British Government and caused them to lose their peace of mind" (304-05). Moreover, she is possessed of a certain, strange knowledge of men — and in this respect there seems to be no difference between white and Indian masculinity — that grants her the capacity to enslave them.

Lalun is one of many Indian women characters in Kipling's fiction whose attractiveness is extreme and mysterious. Bisesa of "Beyond the Pale" is another. Bisesa is childlike, devoted, and obviously skilled enough in the arts of seduction to win the protagonist Trejago, and as the story progresses, she comes to epitomize the immense sexuality of the East, about which the narrator remarks: "Much that is written about Oriental passion and impulsiveness is exaggerated and compiled at second hand; but a little of it is true, and when an Englishman finds that little, it is quite as startling as any passion in his own proper life" (*Plain Tales* 166). Trejago is initially drawn to Bisesa because she is a mystery to him, an Indian widow who lives in *purdah*, screened from the gaze of any man outside her immediate family. She is, therefore, emblematic of that part of native life that he is not permitted to see. Lewis D. Wurgaft writes:

More than any other element in native culture, the Indian woman embodied what was unknown and inscrutable in Indian life. And for the Englishman in India, himself trained and educated in a male culture, this mystery was charged with the emotional appeal of power, and the threat of a destructive sexuality. (52)

By the end of the story, Trejago is made to feel the effects of that "destructive sexuality." When their relationship is discovered by Bisesa's uncle, her hands are cut off and Trejago is almost cas-

trated. But he does finally learn the moral lesson contained within the first paragraph of the tale: "Let the White go to the White and the Black to the Black" (162). He learns not to step beyond the pale, not to surrender to the enticements of feminine India.

Because Kipling consistently associates the idea of India with the idea of the women of India, the entire native quarter in which Bisesa lives is indistinguishable from Bisesa herself. Both are alluring, ultimately unknowable, and both constitute a threat to the masculinity of the white Trejago. Similarly, Lalun becomes analogous to "this great Sphinx of the Plains," the narrator's epithet for India in "On the City Wall" (*Soldiers Three* 305). While almost all female characters are powerful in Kipling's short stories, only the Indian women are repeatedly depicted in mythic proportions. They — and the country with which they are conflated — are somewhat akin to the Sirens of ancient Greek myth. "If you've 'eard the East a-callin', you won't never 'eed naught else," says the narrator in the poem "Mandalay" (*Kipling's Verse* 189). India, like the Sirens, traps unwary men and emasculates them.

For this reason, more so than because he shares their values and attitudes, Kipling encourages the Englishman in India to "keep to his own caste, race and breed." He recognizes that the lure of native life, especially of native women, is strong and might easily overcome an Englishman. His story "To Be Filed for Reference" is an account of just such an occurrence. McIntosh Jellaludin has surrendered to the temptations of the East, and, as a result, the narrator asserts, "he is past redemption" (*Plain Tales* 271). He dies, a hopeless alcoholic in the native section of the city after what he describes as a "seven years' damnation" (277).

In the end, Kipling's metaphor of the marriage between the East and West, between India and Britain, must be regarded not as a marriage at all, but as a love affair, a darkly romantic love affair that cannot last. For while India is fascinating, alluring, and lovely, she is also dangerous to the British sensibility. Moreover, the Englishman who thinks he is married to India is only deceiving himself, as Kipling suggests in "An Interesting Condition," since a "woman who has seen many lovers will see more." Love affairs between the races are inevitably doomed to tragic failure in Kipling's Indian fiction, and there is always a slight hint in his early

prose, which becomes stronger in his later story "The Bridge Builders" and even in his greatest work *Kim*, that the relationship between India and Britain is impermanent. The reality of India is, for Kipling, bigger than the reality of the West; it is older and more profound, and we are left with the distinct impression that, in Kipling's eyes, India will remain long after the British are gone, long after the "shiny, top-scum stuff that people call 'civilization'" has worn off. Thus Kipling's prose celebrates, above all, not the permanence of imperialism but the permanence of India.

II

In Duncan's fiction, the question of Britain's relationship to India never takes on the extremes of Kipling's mythological vision. As a novelist whose work tended towards social realism, she was much more interested in presenting a detailed record of Anglo-Indian society in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries than in constructing new myths of patriarchy and imperialism. While Kipling traffics in the unusual, Duncan pursues the mundane, and, consequently, she goes at least part of the way towards the demystification of 'Kipling's India.'

In place of the myth of the eternally enchanting India, Duncan sought to create an alternative portrait, one that was a great deal less romantic than Kipling's. Indeed, Mrs. Macintyre of *The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib* repeatedly expresses a deep scepticism towards the Kiplingesque conception of India, a conception which, by the time Duncan wrote her first novel, had become firmly entrenched in the British imagination: "... if only the glamour of India left people with eyes to see" (129). British India, she asserts, is not the land of courageous lives and glorious deaths; it does not mould men into mythic heroes and women into Anglo-Indian deities. Instead, it reproduces, year after year, the "old, old ambitions, the stereotyped political aims, the worn competitions . . . the great British average" (129). Nowhere does Duncan deflate Kipling's mythic vision of India with quite so much vehemence as in her depiction of the 'daily-ness,' the everyday monotony, of British life on the subcontinent. It is this ordinary life of household servants, of social visits, of English gardens in alien soil, of drives down a Calcutta Maidan to escape the oppressive

weather of the hot season, this life of distractions or "ameliorations," as Mrs. Macintyre calls them (147), that Duncan describes in her fiction. This is the domestic world of women and Duncan delineates its little details and sensations with the vigorousness of a woman novelist correcting a wrong impression.

It is hardly surprising, then, that her demystification of 'Kipling's India' is predominantly an attack on the myth of womanhood, which Kipling and other men writers of Victorian Anglo-India propagated in their fiction. In many ways, *The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib* is an open rejection of Kipling's portraits of Anglo-Indian women, for there are a number of direct references to his work in this novel. When Mr. Batcham, the travelling Member of Parliament, arrives in Calcutta, he fully expects to find a model of Kipling's Anglo-India, replete with dangerous women and scandalous liaisons. Mrs. Macintyre describes his "search of Truth" with more than a hint of sarcasm in her voice:

He kept a sharp eye open for invitations to light and foolish behaviour on the part of possible Mrs. Hawksbees and Mrs. Mallows whom he met at Government House, and he saw a great many.

(194)

Mrs. Hawksbee and Mrs. Mallows, echoes of notorious ladies in Kipling's short stories, are examples of a character type which has only a minor existence in Duncan's Anglo-India. They are "occasional" figures, figurines in fact, who "float . . . on the surface of Anglo-Indian society . . ." (308), but they are not characteristic of its femininity.

Duncan is particularly revolutionary in her representation of Indian womanhood, for in this area she must cross the bounds of both patriarchy and imperialism. It is through the character of Janaki in *The Burnt Offering* that she subtly reveals the patriarchal assumptions on which British imperialism is based. Janaki stands as an exception in Duncan's fiction. In the four Indian novels which she wrote prior to *The Burnt Offering*, there is an absence of any in-depth or detailed characterization of an Indian woman. Janaki represents, therefore, Duncan's one thorough attempt to come to terms with the formidable and highly complex issue of native femininity. Indeed, the depiction of Janaki is perhaps the novel's greatest achievement, for, as Thomas E. Tausky

has observed, "Sara Jeannette Duncan has given to an Indian character the moral uncertainties and sensitive if not always successful responses to difficult situations that in previous works she had reserved for her most cherished English ladies" (255). Janaki is one of the few Indian characters in all of Duncan's prose whose motivations she sincerely tries to understand. And although the narrator does admit to some uncertainty concerning the feelings of this woman, such a statement seems in keeping with the tentative nature and tone of the novel itself.

A notable feature of Duncan's delineation of Janaki is her refusal to ascribe to her the seductive sexuality and dark mystery of Kipling's Indian women. Janaki is attractive, but her 'Indianness' does not invest her with any innate desirability, as, does, for instance, Lalun's in Kipling's "On the City Wall." Moreover, the mysteriousness of Indian femininity is shown, in *The Burnt Offering*, to be the product of the barriers between the white and native races in India. Anglo-Indian society, especially its masculine element, is indeed intrigued by Janaki Mukerji: "Often, at a party she would draw their eyes and their half-fascinated, half-unwilling attention from the women of their own race" (44). But the source of their fascination with her lies in their own ignorance of Indian life. The narrator describes the world of white Calcutta as being "uncomfortable as ever in its social relations with 'natives'" (43), and when Janaki, therefore, moves into this world, she appears mysterious to its inhabitants. Still, the narrator never allows us to assume that this is somehow inherent in either her own nature or in the general nature of Indian womanhood.

Because she is a self-possessed and proud woman, Janaki does not permit her secret love for John Game, a British official in India, to dictate her political beliefs. We learn at the end of the novel that she has, throughout, been conspiring against the British government by supporting the Indian nationalist party. Many of her previous remarks are clarified in light of this new knowledge, and we begin to understand that Janaki's seemingly tolerant attitude towards the British in India is marked by a measure of contempt. She does finally renounce her nationalist convictions, in an attempt to save the lives of her father and John, but the novel never entirely undermines Janaki's ideal of Indian independence. Duncan's sym-

pathetic and respectful treatment of this ideal — and of the Indian characters who cherish it, Janaki, Thakore, and Dey — tempers her eventual repudiation of it.

As an Indian woman in an imperialist society, she is twice-removed from the dominant power group, for she is neither white nor male. That Duncan was, if not entirely aware of, at least sensitive to the doubly subordinate position of the native woman in British India is evident not only in her compassionate portrait of Janaki but also in her characterization of John, who is in many respects the embodiment of a benevolent British imperialism. Towards the close of the novel John adopts a new perspective on Janaki. While he had formerly regarded her as only a friend — John's abhorrence of interracial marriage prohibits him from seeing her as a potential lover — when he receives her letter, in which she divulges her prior acts of sedition and informs him of a planned attempt on the Viceroy's life, Janaki is transformed in his eyes:

He felt a fresh tenderness for her; perhaps she stood to him for India as he thought of her — the India of his old dreams, the bride of his country, the enchantress of his race. India then could be kind to those who served and loved her. (303)

John's identification of Janaki with "the India of his old dreams, the bride of his country" is typical of his romantic paternalism throughout the novel. Indeed, the final epithet mentioned above, "the enchantress of his race," clearly links John with the Kipling-esque view of India and with the misogynist notions inherent in that view. This is an attitude, however, that Duncan can neither wholeheartedly condone nor wholeheartedly condemn. Because John's character functions in the novel as the heroic representative of an imperialism that Duncan ultimately supports, she is forced into the dubious position of having to advocate a political stance the masculine bias of which is, in fact, objectionable to her. Consequently, the novel appears to approve of John's actions at the same time that it disapproves of his attitudes. But although Duncan herself, or her narrator, does not explicitly denounce John's subtle autocracy, which finds its expression in many of his blanket conclusions about India, she does allow one of her other characters to do so.

Joan, the enthusiastic defender of India's rights, receives almost

as much of the narrator's criticism as her father, Vulcan Mills, the globe-trotting Member of Parliament, whose type Duncan obviously despises. And yet Duncan frequently uses Joan to expose John's, and by extension Anglo-India's, masculine pretensions. When John proposes to Joan, making it clear that after their marriage she will be expected to embrace his political ideas, her answer takes the form of a rebuttal to both his imperialist politics and his patriarchal assumptions:

You seem to think that by marrying me . . . you would obtain some sort of influence over me, and even over my father — that you would be able to dictate our private beliefs and our public actions. That may be a natural official expectation, but . . . it is a very great mistake. (230)

Joan's indignant anger and her rejection of his perception of married life seem altogether justified under the circumstances. What she is challenging here is John's treatment of her as a subject race. His imperialist philosophy prevents him from recognizing any distinction between the separate concepts of woman and India and, additionally, between the emotion of love and the state of subjugation. Furthermore, Duncan's ambiguous treatment of John, her oscillating approval and disapproval, suggests that she too is suspicious of this moral flaw in imperialist doctrine.⁴

But while she is critical of the theoretical and practical abuses implicit in British imperialism, she also upholds, in *The Burnt Offering*, its policy of control, and it is this latter allegiance that leads her to appropriate Kipling's metaphor of marriage in order to vindicate the British presence in India. Yadava, the spiritual guru in the household of Kristodas, actually articulates this metaphor, but Duncan gives us little cause to doubt or question his opinion, since, according to her representation of his character, he is virtually beyond reproach. Admirable, wise, and courageous, with a spirituality that allows him to transcend the mundane world of politics, Yadava delivers an astute analysis of the imperialist situation in India, which culminates in an image of marriage:

England is the husband of India. We talk of the Mother as if we had one parent. . . . But we are the children of England also. . . . There are those . . . who would make their mother a widow. I am not of them. (165)

Yadava goes on to describe the relationship between Britain and India in terms of the Hindu caste system. The English, he declares, are the "white Kshatriyas," the warrior caste in India, whose function is to defend and protect the land, thereby permitting the Brahmins, the priestly caste, to "sit and rule and tell their tale of God" (166). Thus Duncan's defence of British imperialism employs Indian custom and an Indian orator as a means of justification.

Although Duncan is never quite so romantic or mythic as Kipling in her presentation of the marriage metaphor, that she uses this metaphor at all suggests her strong attraction to the fundamental tenet of imperialism in India — the right of the British to govern the Indians. Kipling could incorporate this metaphor into his fiction without compromising either his sincere appreciation of Indian life or his acceptance of Britain's imperialism, for he genuinely believed in the myth of patriarchy, the myth which both idealizes women and emphasizes their dependence on men. His adherence to certain imperialist doctrines, therefore, does not undercut his affirmation of India's charms. For Kipling, then, the metaphor of Britain's love affair with India resolves the paradox inherent in his Anglo-Indian 'Orientalism.' But the marriage metaphor does not work to this end in Duncan's novel. Because it is grounded in the patriarchal supposition that women occupy a subordinate position in any relationship with a man, and, further, that women exist only in moral extremes, and since Duncan herself repeatedly finds fault with these ideas, the metaphor cannot reconcile the contradictions in her imperialist philosophy. Indeed, by using this metaphor, she succeeds in creating more contradictions. If, for example, Britain is India's husband and he has the right to govern her, why then does the same rule not unquestionably apply to the relationship between Joan and John or between Janaki and John? Why is John's patriarchal paternalism consistently challenged by Joan, Janaki, and sometimes even the narrator herself?

However, Duncan's accomplishment in her Indian fiction should not be underestimated; it should be applauded in spite of such flaws. It is to her credit that she grappled with two most indomitable Victorian institutions, imperialism and patriarchy and in

doing so managed to produce a vision of British life on the sub-continent that truly stands as an alternative to 'Kipling's India.'

NOTES

- 1 It was at this time that he assumed the mantle of the Empire's apologist and produced such obviously racist writing as the poem "The White Man's Burden" and the short story "The Tomb of His Ancestors," both of which seek to justify white colonialism.
- 2 Duncan is a little less strident on the issue, although she too in *The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib* quite openly debunks the nationalist cause.
- 3 Mrs. Hauksbee, for instance, a character who appears repeatedly in his stories about the British in India, not only controls the social world of Anglo-India — sometimes creating trouble for others, as in "Three and — an Extra" — but the political one as well. One young man, who has benefited from her influence comments: "If Mrs Hauksbee were twenty years younger, and I her husband, I should be Viceroy of India in fifteen years" (*Plain Tales* 116). Mrs. Hauksbee epitomizes the moral extremes that are characteristic of Kipling's Victorian conception of womanhood.
- 4 I would, however, add that the character of Joan Mills is much more problematic than I have suggested. Her depiction in the novel is predominantly negative, though she is granted moments of real insight into India and its British rulers. She perhaps represents a form of female radicalism that Duncan both admired and distrusted.

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