1. INTRODUCTION

Rudyard Kipling's experience of India witnessed a cross-cultural encounter, one of the most important cultural confrontations in the history of the European empires, namely the confrontation between Britain and India. Kipling internalized both the perspective of the colonizing Self and that of the colonized Other and this enabled him to represent the two elements in a mutual mirroring process out of which he emerged as an irreconcilably divided Self.

The meeting of the two worlds is a self-revealing experience as Kipling's poem, "We and They" so beautifully suggests: *All good people agree,/And all good people say,/All nice people, like Us, are We/And every one else is They:/But if you cross over the sea,/Instead of over the way,/You may end by (think of it!) looking on We/As only a sort of They!* [1]Thus, the cross-cultural encounter between two worlds, West and East, multiplies into several other binary elements: Us and They, the Self and the Other, the colonizer and the colonized, the British and the Indians. This binary system constitutes the pattern of the colonial discourse, which is sustained by the clear-cut distinction between the two elements. Yet, as these verses suggest, when the two elements engage in the process of identity formation they reveal their interdependence. To define ourselves we need 'them' and, in the process of differentiation, we may even 'end by looking on We as only a sort of They!'

[1] Rudyard Kipling, *The Complete Verse*, Kyle Cathie, London, 2002, p. 187.

This mutual mirroring process of identity formation is the source of the ambivalent perspective assumed by Rudyard Kipling in his relation to the world of British India. This ambivalence permeates most of his writings and comes to question his representativeness as an imperial standard-bearer. A re-evaluation of Kipling's work following the author's in-between perspective indicates to what extent his creations followed the pattern of the colonial discourse, how much they absorbed or departed the imperial ideology of his time, and how deep they got into the world of the Other.

When in India Kipling found himself between two worlds: he was rapidly integrated into the British community because by birth he was the member of the ruling race but, at the same time, he was constantly attracted into the world of the natives, lured by "the voices of the night-winds through palm and banana leaves" that got so deeply in his mind in the first years of his childhood and were never to leave him. This dividedness is reflected into and gives originality to his writings and his vision of India. In his approach to India Kipling found himself in a self-revealing process: as he was making his story of India, this country also took its share in shaping the writer's identity. What he gained from this experience, as he suggests in his poem *The Two-Sided Man*, were "two sides to (his) head"[2] which endowed him with both an Oriental and a Western perspective.

As the following chapter, *Approaching Kipling's Works,* presents, the ambivalence that permeates the author's writings can be better grasped if we analyze them against the background of historical and biographical data, as well as in relation to other texts that belong to the tradition of colonial literature. The critical approaches that support this framing belong to Hew Historicism and Postcolonial Criticism, respectively. Both agree that literature can function as a means of mediating power and that literary texts can have the capacity of political acts or even historical events, the conclusion being that (as it was valid for the case of Kipling, too) texts cannot escape history, they are products of social and political forces and include ideologies of their time. It is true that Kipling's texts incorporated the ideology of the empire and followed to a

[2] Rudyard Kipling, *The Complete Verse*, p. 478.

certain extent what E. Said called the colonial tradition of 'representations of representations', yet it is equally true that Kipling dismissed the excesses of the imperial project, revealed its flaws, and at the same time, the tensions, ambivalences, and contradictions within his texts, the use of stereotypes, the moments of hybridity and liminality complicate the binary system of the colonial discourse that doesn't support the hegemonic power/ knowledge structure anymore. The writer's ambivalences result from a cross-cultural identification that aims at comprising all perspectives. The contextualization of Kipling's discourse renders us a writer that doesn't follow the monolithic structure of the colonial discourse but a poly-vocal author that produces multiple discourses each as a reaction to specific socio-economic-historical situations.

The third chapter, *Early Representations of India and Journalistic Work*, presents Kipling's period of experiments in the art of writing, an inspiring period given his re-encounter with India. Kipling approached the world of India in a series of grotesque and fantastic tales that remind of Poe's writing. The gothic character of these early experiments undermines the sense of rationality that Kipling wants to create by assuming a neutral position and this deepens more the writer's ambivalence in approaching the world of British India. The descent into the world of the Other makes Kipling see the gap between the two worlds, the fragility of the assumed hegemonic position of the ruling class and the raw and true humanity of the Other. This chapter also refers to Kipling's journalistic activity performed while he was serving for the *Civil and Military Gazette* in Lahore and the *Pioneer* in Allahabad. This experience initiated the writer in the art of précis writing and made him turn from the early experiments in the grotesque and fantastic tales to a mode of narration based more on direct observation. If in the journalistic work Kipling promoted his official view given the fact that the reading public was mainly represented by the ruling class, in his early experiments in the world of fiction the writer promoted a more personal and humane consideration, a perspective that prompted him to transcend the colonizer's stance. The early experiences of India, the people he met, the socio-economic-historical situation deepened more Kipling's ambivalence, yet multiplied his perspectives and opened him inspiring paths to follow.

The following two chapters, *The Colonizers-The Illusion of Homeland* and *The Colonized-The Homeland of Illusions* refer to the two elements of the colonial binary, the Self and the Other, the British and the Indian, and the way Kipling chose to represent them together with their worlds. The magnets that attracted the two opposing elements were those hill stations, the pinnacles of power that the British built out of their desire to perpetuate and support the imperial project. These sites of escape defined their identity on the mold of their builders and their aloofness was to stand as a symbol of the hegemonic position of the colonizers. However, the irony was that to support their project the British depended on the natives. The trick of aloofness worked to a certain extent yet as history progressed it revealed the artificiality of the dividing line that the British had tried so hard to maintain between them and the natives. Kipling's *Plain Tales from the Hills* display various instances when the two worlds acknowledge their proximity or are even faced with instances of amalgamation out of which liminal identities emerge. For the British hill stations played a major role in promoting the idea of empire. They created there a self-sustaining community with relatively equal numbers of women, men, and children, they marked these places with landmarks that fed their nostalgia for Home, they supported their collective identity with relentless rounds of feasts and picnics and dinners; in a nutshell, they created a replica of the community that they left at Home. Kipling painted memorable pictures of the scandals and intrigues of the British society living in the hills. Although regarded by some as offensive they were also popular with the majority of Britons who enjoyed reading about themselves. However, the fissures of the British fantasies were soon to surface. One of the fissures was that these hill stations came to symbolize the British presence in India by departing from India and the British transferred the physical aloofness of their quarters to the relationship between them and the world of the natives. On the other hand, to promote their project, they needed the natives; their reaction to their presence was either to qualify them as noble savages, as guardians of their pinnacles of power or to manifest racial attitudes translated into fears of disease, decay, or miscegenation. Kipling draws upon such fears yet his

explorations into the world of the Other infused his texts with ambivalences that subvert the balance of the colonial binary. One of his themes was the failure of those in higher positions to understand the views and the needs of the ordinary Indians, people with whom he rubbed shoulders in the bazaars as his characters do. Kipling himself chose to go deeper than skin into the world beyond the pale, he experienced opium smoking, he had amorous dalliances with female natives, so he explored the underbelly of life in India and these experiences translated into stories gave him a deeper sense of the strangeness of the world of India. As these two chapters present, Kipling's main focus was on the very rich and the very poor classes of the natives, which betrays a somehow partial vision of the world of India. This also reveals the uneasiness that he and his contemporaries felt towards the new emerging middle class of Indians whose training justified their claims of having access to the rulers' quarters. The Western-educated middle-class Indians, associated with the national movement and the nascent Indian National Congress (founded in 1885), were perceived as threats to British authority in India. As a journalist, Kipling had to follow the official line, yet in his fiction, particularly in the novel *Kim*, this perception is complicated by the figure of Hurree Babu. Although placed in a subordinate position to Kim where Kim is the privileged signifier, the 'Self' and Hurree the signified 'Other', this character mediates knowledge to Kim. This is a subversive position as the colonial pattern faces a reversal where knowledge, equated to power, belongs to the subject class. Moreover, by caricaturing this figure Kipling betrays Hurree Babu's liminality as he is not the exact copy of the model provided by the colonizer, therefore his identity incorporates both Western and Indian discourses, an identity that complicates Edward Said's monolithic colonial discourse. Such instances of liminality or hybridity were the natural outcome of the proximity of the two cultures that engaged in a mutual defining which challenged the colonizers' pretense as the only interpreters and holders of knowledge. Hill stations underwent a similar process as the aloofness of their inhabitants was soon challenged by the proximity and the intrusion of the Other. They followed inevitably the course of history as they mirrored both the rise and the fall of the

Empire, flourishing but also absorbing altering elements that brought about the decline of the imperial machinery.

The final chapter, *Between Two Worlds: The Quest for Identity*, explores the same confrontation between the two worlds and the writer's ambivalent position that renders him irreconcilably as a liminal figure. The world of fiction is for Kipling the means of achieving an awareness of his Self and works like *Plain Tales from the Hills*, *The Jungle Books,* and *Kim* are journeys of self-discovery. The writer's effort to comprehend both worlds is evident in his 'Plain' Tales where he assumes the identity of the narrator, departs from him, identifies with his characters, or takes the position of the implied author in a play that multiplies his perspectives, the purpose being to get a better image of the writer's Self in relation to the world of India. The outcome is a poly-vocal author, whose liminality enables him to pass beyond the colonial pattern and explore the moments when the encounter between the two worlds gives birth to instances of hybridity. In *The Jungle Books*, however, the feral child cannot assimilate the difference between the opposing worlds. Mowgli feels excluded from both the world of the jungle and from that of the native village and his anxiety echoes the Orientalist vision of an archaic India that opposes the progress brought by the colonizers. His use of violence to attain control of both worlds re-enacts the counter-insurgency following the 1857 Indian Mutiny and renders the jungle story as a post-mutiny allegory. However, his upbringing in both worlds renders him as a hybrid imperial hero who discovers in his liminality the path to power. The vision of India that Kipling presents in *Kim* is different from that of the jungle stories. Kim is the new type of Sahib, close to the Spirit of India, living in a pacified colonial space. His travels with the Lama, his disciplined training for the Great Game place him in the position of mediator between the two worlds. Kim seems to be for Kipling the promise of overcoming his ambivalences through the reconciliation of the two worlds. Yet Kipling cannot solve the riddle of Kim's liminality and the absence of an answer regarding Kim's identity voices the anxiety of the writer who cannot occupy the two worlds at once. Kipling is left on the threshold that separates, yet joins the two worlds.

This in-between position, permanently generating that inner conflict of Kipling's personality, part a bazaar boy, part a Sahib, is actually a privileged one. It multiplies his perspectives and implicitly his discourses of India that no longer follow the monolithic structure of the colonial discourse but complicate it with sites of contradictions and ambivalences. The perspective proposed by Kipling doesn't belong exclusively to the colonizing Self nor the colonized Other. It internalizes both elements of the colonial binary and the ambivalence that they generate requires a re-examination of the relation between the writer and the imperial project.