

## Rudyard Kipling and the Norman Conquest

Deanne Williams

In his introduction to *A Choice of Kipling's Verse* (1941), T. S. Eliot describes Rudyard Kipling's positive attitude towards British imperialism:

He believed the British Empire to be a good thing [...] he wished to set before his readers an idea of what it should be [...] He believed that the British have a greater aptitude for ruling than other people, and that they include a greater number of kindly, incorruptible and un-self-seeking men capable of administration. (29–30)

In his day, Kipling's work won the Nobel Prize and earned him a place in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey. Yet his support for imperialism makes him unpopular with readers today. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for example, decries his regard for "the conquest of India [...] as a historically appropriate event" (*Critique* 157). Kipling, however, was neither blind nor insensitive to the horrors of the British presence in India. George Orwell, who calls him a "jingo-imperialist" (271), and describes his work as "morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting," nevertheless concedes "few people who have criticized England from the inside have said bitterer things about her than this gutter patriot" (275). For example, Kipling's famous poem, "The White Man's Burden" (1899), coins the phrase that to this day codifies a colonial mentality. At the same time, however, his famous lines, "the blame of those ye better,/ The hate of those ye guard" (*Rudyard Kipling's Verse* 321), can be taken as an implicit critique of colonialism, as the poem articulates a cankered, cranky perspective on the now-proverbial "silent, sullen" natives, "half-devil and half-child." Representing the view of someone who would consider insurgency a form of ingratitude, and revealing this view unvarnished, in the manner of Robert Browning, Kipling leaves the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

Kipling's treatment of the Norman Conquest, a subject to which he returns throughout his career, reveals the hidden depths of anxiety and irony in his attitude to empire. The Norman Conquest provided England with a model of cultural imperialism.

It was celebrated, retrospectively, as a cultural boon, with the Normans bequeathing their rich literary and artistic heritage to the English. Kipling regarded the Norman Conquest as a major event in the history of *translatio imperii et studii*: where once the English were conquered, now they conquer; where once the English were educated, now they educate. Yet even as it constitutes a historical precedent for English colonial imaginings, the Norman Conquest undermines the legitimacy of English imperial self-fashioning. Recalling a time when the English were themselves conquered, the Norman Conquest complicates and limits English claims to racial superiority and cultural purity. Moreover, from the seventeenth century on, the idea of resisting the legacy of the Norman Conquest was a key element of English national identity. The longstanding English fantasy of rejecting the "Norman Yoke" produces the image of plain-speaking, plain-dealing English pluck and courage that contests the effete tyranny of the Normans.<sup>1</sup> Within the setting of colonial India, Kipling's stories lionize the stereotypically English virtues that were originally established in dialogue with the persistent presence of Frenchness in England: as Kingsley Amis puts it, "there is one type, usually a subaltern, who keeps coming up in the stories: brave, modest and artless" (53).

As a mouthpiece for British imperialism, Kipling identifies with the Norman Conquerors. At the same time, however, he pursues the Whig historical myth of Anglo-Saxon masculinity that was formulated as a means of opposing this legacy. The profound English ambivalence towards the Norman presence, sometimes eulogized, and at other times lamented, ensured that Kipling's attitudes toward colonialism were far from straightforward, even contradictory. In his early two-part short story, "William the Conqueror," published in *The Day's Work* (1898), Kipling demonstrates how looking to the Norman Conquest as a model for colonialism comes at the expense of the ideals of Englishness that underpin its initiatives. Simultaneously illustrating and undoing his

own ideals of colonialism as a benevolent historical process, “William the Conqueror” shows Kipling in search of a historical place and justification for British imperialism while, at the same time, intensely aware of its impossible pretensions.

### I. Resembling One Another

Like Tolstoy’s happy families, all colonizers resemble one another. The Norman Conquest produced a cultural and linguistic situation in England that many have compared to more recent colonial experiences in India and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> The medieval English chronicler, Orderic Vitalis, describes the deathbed confession of William the Conqueror: “I’ve persecuted the natives of England beyond all reason, whether gentle or simple. I have cruelly oppressed them and unjustly disinherited them, killed innumerable multitudes by famine or the sword and become the barbarous murderer of many thousands both young and old of that fine race of people” (288). The Norman Conquest made French the language of England’s royal and legal courts, as well as the vernacular of choice in institutions such as the church and the universities, for more than three hundred years. The seventeenth-century antiquarian William Camden describes a process of cultural assimilation that resembles more recent accounts of the British imperial education system: “as a monument of their Conquest, [they] [...] yoked the English under their tongue, as they did under their command, by compelling them to teach their children in schooles nothing but French” (31).

In his oft-quoted “Minute on Indian Education” (1853), Thomas Babington Macaulay describes the ideals of the colonial education system in terms of refining and enriching the Indians through the imposition of English:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it *to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western no-*

menclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (249; emphasis added)

As a colonial educator, Macaulay wanted to create a population divided against itself, with “blood and colour” keeping the Indians apart from their English rulers, while English “opinions” make them governable British subjects. As a literary scholar and English historian, Macaulay borrows his rhetoric of vernacular enrichment from the medieval past. “To refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects”: these are the key terms of the reception of Chaucer, the “father of English poetry,” credited for refining the English language and culture by enriching it with French.

In his “Ballade” to the “Grant translateur, noble Geoffroy Chaucier,” the French poet Eustache Deschamps lauds acts of translation and interpretation that postcolonial scholars today associate with the figure of the “native informant.”<sup>3</sup> Deschamps imagines Chaucer, translating Old French *Roman de la rose*, as a gardener, cultivating the wilderness of Albion with the flowers of French poetry: “qu’i as/ Semé les fleurs et planté le rosier,/ Aux ignorans de la langue *Pandras*” [he has sown flowers and planted roses, illuminating those who are ignorant of the French language] (Deschamps 269). The Old French verb *pandre* or *epandre*, which means to spread light or illuminate, dovetails with Chaucer’s reputation for expanding and extending the cultural legacy of the Norman Conquest.<sup>4</sup> Deschamps’s regard for Chaucer’s enrichment of English became a familiar *topos*: the fifteenth-century poet John Lydgate praises Chaucer for improving the English tongue. Once “rude and boistous [...] ful fer from al perfeccioun,/ And but of litel reputacioun,” English was improved when Chaucer “gan oure tonge first to magnifie/ And adourne it with his elloquence” (4237–43). England’s first printer, William Caxton, calls him the “first founder 7 enbelissher of ornate eloquence in our englissh” (37). Macaulay’s nod to Chaucer illustrates the extent to which the history of the Norman Conquest provided a model for English colonial pedagogy. To invoke this history that shaped the articulation of colonial ideals, however, is to acknowledge that the English

themselves were the ideal, original, colonial subjects. This works against the ideology of the Norman Yoke, which transformed the benevolent Normans into vilified occupiers, with the once-pliable Saxons resolutely declaring their independence. Macaulay thus uses the legacy of the Norman Conquest at his own risk.

Medievalism was second nature to Kipling, who was raised in a Victorian England that was captivated by its medieval past. Kipling had a family connection to the Pre-Raphaelite painters through his aunt (his mother's sister) who married Edward Burne-Jones. During his childhood years in England, Kipling spent his holidays at his aunt's home, where his Burne-Jones cousins and their friends, the children of William Morris, offered a welcome and imaginative respite from his own miserable home. He revered England's medieval history throughout his life. A letter written shortly after his purchase of Bateman's, the Jacobean house in Sussex of which he was so proud, illustrates Kipling's personal attraction to the Middle Ages: the author crows, "Yes, it's all our own including a mill which was paying taxes in 1296!" (qtd. in Amis 90).

For Kipling, the medieval history of the Norman Conquest is a foundational example of the impressive scope of English history and the depth of its traditions. In "An Error in the Fourth Dimension," published in *The Day's Work* (1898), the Norman Conquest represents English values as well as its ongoing, lived sense of history. A bumptious American heir to a railway fortune offends British sensibilities. When he attempts to flag down an express train running through his property that was not scheduled to stop. It is pointed out to him that the train has been running on time for decades. The American replies, "I know! Since William the Conqueror came over, or King Charles hid in her smoke-stack. You're as bad as the rest of these Britishers" (307). Here, William the Conqueror signals British respect for its own history, and even serves as an emblem for an "English" desire to retain its traditions, at the expense of an "American" sense of individual entitlement.

Kipling also uses the idea of the yoke to express an essential quality of British identity that serves both as a privilege and as a (now-proverbial) burden. In "The Fabulists" (1914–18), Kipling describes the sacrifice made by low-ranking functionaries in the First World War, and their

lives of subaltern enthrallment: “This was the lock that lay upon our lips,/ This was the yoke that we have undergone,/ Denying us all pleasant fellowships/ As in our time and generation” (*Complete Verse* 445–6). Kipling also uses the image of the yoke to signal the grave duties of Queen Victoria in “The Bells and Queen Victoria” (1911): “The very marrow of Youth’s dream, and still/ Yoke-mate of wisest Age that worked her will!” (*Complete Verse* 622). In “The Children’s Song” from *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906: the year before Kipling won the Nobel Prize) the young speakers entreat, “teach us to bear the yoke in youth” (305). *Puck of Pook’s Hill* uses the past to cultivate in its young readers a strong sense of patriotic identity, or, as Eliot describes it, “to give at once a sense of the antiquity of England, of the number of generations and peoples who have laboured the soil and in turn been buried beneath it, and of the contemporaneity of the past” (*Choice* 32).

With Kipling as with Macaulay, the history of the Norman Conquest gives with one hand and takes away with the other. Kipling uses the Conquest to transform its young audience into proud and willing imperial subjects. This history, however, requires him to acknowledge the historical contingency of empire, with the conquered eventually conquering. As they act out scenes from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the young Dan and Una conjure Puck, who introduces them to a series of historical figures. An “old, white-haired man dressed in a loose glimmery gown of chain-mail” (36) emerges out of the water, reminding Una of the Pre-Raphaelite painting, “Sir Isumbras at the Ford,” by John Everett Millais. Una’s connection reveals her viability as an imperial subject: medieval history—and, more importantly, an idealized past mediated through Pre-Raphaelite painting—is foremost in her mind. The man is introduced by Puck as “Sir Richard Dalyngridge, a very old friend of mine. He came over with William the Conqueror” (37). As Sir Richard recounts his experience with his fellow Normans, the military exercise of conquest turns rapidly into a deeper emotional connection: “I did not then know that England would conquer me” (39).

For Kipling, conquest brings along with it the emotional, as well as erotic, experience of being taken over. As *Puck of Pook’s Hill* proceeds, a complex guest/host relationship develops between the Normans and the

Saxons. Many Anglo-Saxons resist conquest, but Hugh the Novice, who knows Sir Richard from their days at a French monastery, recognizes that collaboration is the best way to ensure peace. Sir Richard relates:

“Better the devil we know than the devil we know not, till we can pack you Normans home.” And so, too, said his Saxons; and they laughed as we drove the pigs downhill. But I think some of them, even then, began not to hate me. (49)

The Norman Richard offers the Anglo-Saxons protection from a fate that, he claims, is worse than his own control. Kipling symbolizes the Anglo-Saxon embracing of the Normans when Lady Aeluva falls in love with Sir Richard. As the Norman knight recalls, the Lady once “cried that I was a Norman thief, who came with false, sweet words, having intended from the first to turn her out in the fields to beg her bread” (47).<sup>5</sup> Here we have a love story mixed in with the history of conquest. In *Puck of Pook’s Hill*, the Norman Yoke becomes a burden carried willingly, bringing with it promises of erotic love and good fellowship, as well as future marriage.

Safe in the knowledge that Norman control over England is impermanent, it becomes possible for Kipling to romanticize the Norman Conquest. For Kipling, the Conquest brings out what is best in the English. The experience of conquering slides into the experience of being conquered by love; the experience of being conquered brings with it the promise of future, shared conquests. *Puck of Pook’s Hill* illustrates the ongoing process of shifting identities, from conquered to conqueror, that takes place alongside the inexorable rise and fall of empire through history. For Kipling, this process produced the British Empire. The Norman Yoke thus provided the English not only with a model of resistance, but also with the opportunity to reformulate the painful and humiliating aspects of their own history. Rewriting history is, after all, the nature of the “Great Game.”

## II. Benevolent Imperialism

Orwell believed that Kipling was oblivious to the fact that “the same motives which brought the Empire into existence would end by de-

stroying it" (273). However, Kipling's intense awareness of the temporal unfolding of empire is an issue in some of the best critical writing on *Kim* (1901). Dubbing *Kim* "a masterwork of imperialism" (63), Edward Said argues that the Great Game of Empire resists the linear temporality of history in favour of the static space of a playing field. Kim's game thus codifies the critical blindness and aporia that ultimately limited the British Empire's hold on India: "a territory dominated by Britain for three hundred years, but beginning at that time to exhibit the increasing unrest which would culminate in decolonization and independence" (Said 29). As a result, he claims, we cannot but read *Kim* "in the light of decolonization."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, for Sara Suleri, *Kim* reveals how "the story of empire learns how to atrophy in its own prematurity" (111). She explains, "imperial narratives consistently demonstrate their discomfort with the temporal negotiation that allows stories to represent their situatedness within a chronology that roughly approximates a history." According to Suleri, *Kim* represents less "imperial ideology" than a "brilliant literalization of the colonial moment." *Kim* thus supplies not a celebration of colonial education, nor even a simple chronicle, but, however un-self-consciously, a blueprint for its downfall.

Said and Suleri highlight the problem Kipling faced by using the Norman Conquest, by seeking a place and a justification for Empire within a linear historical framework. As the history of the Conquest demonstrates, eventually, empire fails, for the lesson of history is that all empires fail. Whereas *Kim* handles this problem by trying to escape history altogether, Kipling's "William the Conqueror" uses the history of the Norman Conquest as a template, situating the British Empire within a larger historical process. The title, however, is the only explicit reference to the Norman Conquest in the story, and Kipling requires the reader to place the medieval figure that gives his story its title in conversation with his narrative of colonial India (much as Sir Richard appears to chat with Dan and Una in *Puck of Pook's Hill*). Kipling thus participates in what Ananya Jahanara Kabir calls "imperial medievalism." As Kabir observes, "the Middle Ages offered the British in India a way out of the ontological shock generated by the colonial encounter" (184). An *Ivanhoe* party held in eighteenth-century Calcutta; philological compar-



isons between the hybridity of Hindi and of English, with its Saxon and Norman components; historical comparisons of the Muslim expansion to the Norman invasion: all illustrate the variety of imperial analogies that draw upon the Middle Ages to make sense of experiences in India. Nonetheless, as Kabir points out, these meanings shifted over time and according to context: Normans could be wise rulers or false usurpers; the Saxons barbaric embarrassments or strong, righteous citizens.

Kipling's "William the Conqueror" illustrates the fluidity and porousness of historical roles in imperial medievalism. His title character is not a Norman duke, but an English tomboy heroine named William. With closely-cropped hair, a passion for horses, and a distinctive scar on her forehead, she is a heroine of the type that might have been played, in a film version of the story, by the young Katherine Hepburn. William falls in love quite unexpectedly with her brother's friend, Scott. For Spivak, this love story is nothing more than "Victorian kitsch." Scott successfully provides relief for the famine-stricken in South India, constituting a highly-sentimentalized example of Kipling's doctrine of what Spivak calls "benevolent imperialism" (*Critique* 160).

Kipling's title invokes the historical figure of William the Conqueror in order to establish an analogy between the Norman Conquest and the British colonial enterprise, but "William the Conqueror" does not offer a series of easy one-to-one correlations. The title implies that the hierarchies of conquest reproduce themselves: in other words, the process of *translatio studii et imperii*, so admired by Macaulay, that occurred in England in 1066 was simply continued in India. The story proceeds, however, to show that colonialism, despite Kipling's famous formulation, "East is east, and west is west," produces a relentless jumbling of categories: male/female; personal/political; conquered/conqueror; north/south; even east/west. This confusion of power relations demands consistent and ongoing reformulation to maintain its ideological grip.

On the surface, "William the Conqueror" is a classic example of the "White Man's Burden." Spivak describes it tartly, but precisely, as a story about "the exasperated yet heroic British tending the incompetent, unreasonable and childish South Indians" (*Critique* 160). This is not the Kipling of the refined sentiments of *Kim*, nor even of the philosophical

gray areas of *The Jungle Book*. We have, instead, the much less charming, early Kipling, whose stories held a mirror up to the nature of the Anglo-Indian community that was his audience. A sample from the story's opening lines sets up the scene as well as the mentality of his immediate audience: "from the Club verandah you could hear the native Police band hammering stale waltzes—or on the polo-ground, or in the high-walled fives-court, hotter than a Dutch oven. Half a dozen grooms, squatted at the heads of their ponies, waited their masters' return" (*Day's Work* 171).

Kipling's title prompts the reader to regard the amatory history of his heroine, William, through the lens of the Norman Conquest. A feisty woman (and one of the very few female protagonists in Kipling), she enjoys a series of successes throughout the story. William, her brother, Martyn, a Superintendent of Police, and Scott, a mid-rank official in the Irrigation Department, are passing a relatively untroubled summer in the Punjab, although they dream of a posting in the cooler foothills of the Himalayas. Ordered to help control a famine in Madras, they head south. William insists on joining them despite frequent reminders that, as Scott points out, "a famine's no place for a woman" (181). In Madras, they discover that the northern grains they have brought along with them—wheat, millet and barley—are rejected by the starving Madrasis, who will eat only rice. Cleverly, Scott feeds the grain to their goats, using the milk the goats produce to feed the starving children. When Scott and a fleet of healthy children arrive at the camp where William is working, his unexpected and dramatic entrance makes William fall head over heels in love. Critics either applaud or deride the literary qualities of Kipling's description of this moment: "one waiting at the tent door beheld, with new eyes, a young man, beautiful as Paris, a god in a halo of golden dust, walking slowly at the head of his flocks, while at his knee ran small naked Cupids" (193).<sup>7</sup> Scott departs suddenly the next morning, after having taught William how to milk the goats and feed the children. Thoughtfully he leaves a few of his goats behind.

Kipling establishes a series of binary oppositions throughout "William the Conqueror." He sets up British rationalism against Indian irrationality, and contrasts the malleability of the northerners, and their receptivity to British influence (represented by the squatting grooms in the

passage) with the southerners, who are presented as superstitious and intransigent. Kipling writes: "Scott understood dimly that many people in the India of the South ate rice, as a rule, but he had spent his service in a grain Province, had seldom seen rice in the blade or the ear, and least of all would have believed that, in time of deadly need, men would die at arms' length of plenty, sooner than touch food they did not know. In vain the interpreters interpreted; in vain his two policemen showed in vigorous pantomime what should be done. The starving crept away to their bark and weeds, grubs, leaves, and clay, and left the open sacks untouched" (190). Kipling here emphasizes the failure of translation: even if the flailing gestures of the policemen are read correctly by the starving Madrasis, they are not understood, as they refer to grains they do not recognize as food.

By contrast, the Madrasis are an open book to the British: beads wound around the wrists and necks of the recovering babies by their relieved mothers are read confidently by an interpreter, whose baroque phrasing and unorthodox pronunciation reflect the effort taken to express himself in English: "that [...] signifies that their mothers hope in eventual contingency to resume them offeentially" (192). Even his words themselves are otiose, and Kipling writes archly, "as though Scott did not know." The interpreter's words imply his uncomfortable inability to distinguish what requires interpretation from what can speak for itself. To place this within the terms of the medieval analogy, Chaucer represents a good colonial subject: he understands the French poems, and knows what to do with them, which is to till the fields of the English vernacular. By contrast, Kipling's Madrasis, who reject the grain, could starve due to a failure to comprehend the intentions and will, even the apparent benevolence, of their occupiers.

Kipling also opposes the Hindu south to the Muslim north, identifying the north with the British, and constructing the southerners as uncomprehending brutes. Like Shakespeare's Miranda, William-in-love possesses romantic dreams that dovetail with racist prejudice: having witnessed Scott's stunning entrance, she has a dream "of the god in the golden dust" that keeps her going, and awakens "refreshed to feed loathsome black children, scores of them, wastrels picked up by the wayside,

their bones almost breaking their skin, terrible and covered with sores” (203). William is thrilled when she finally gets to return to the north: “the South of pagodas and palm-trees, the over-populated Hindu South, was done with. Here was the land she knew and loved, and before her lay the good life she understood, among folk of her own caste and mind” (212). Does “folk of her own caste and mind” refer to the British or to the North Indians? Northern place names, described by Kipling as “large and open,” are music to William’s ear: “Umballa, Ludianah, Phillour, Jullundur.” Whereas the south is loathed and imperfectly dominated through awkward acts of translation, the northern places possess their singular identities because they are so well known to the British. Moreover, the north is celebrated for its English qualities: “penetrating chill [...] the layers of wood-smoke, the dusty grey-blue of the tamarisks, the domes of ruined tombs.” These details of weather (which, as Bhabha points out, are “at once the most changeable and immanent signs of national difference” 170), along with the fetishization of its history, endow the north with prestige, making it a cousin of Shakespeare’s “scepter’d isle” (or Kipling’s *Pook’s Hill*).

This colonial identification with the north is also expressed in the classification of British functionaries as “Punjabis” or “Bengalis,” according to where they have been stationed. William happily sports the glamorous northern *poshteen* (“a silk-embroidered sheepskin jacket trimmed with rough astrakhan”). It works both ways, too, as Scott’s manservant, Faiz Ullah, protects English interests with fierce loyalty. This identification illustrates as well as complicates the analogy that was often drawn between the Normans and the Muslims as foreign “invaders” but also civilizers of the Anglo-Saxons or the Hindus. The British identification with northern, and, given the large role of Faiz Ullah, with Muslim India, places them on the side of the Normans, as conquerors. Yet where, then, does the ideology of the Norman Yoke come in? And doesn’t the Saxon rejection of it extend, ultimately, to an Indian rejection of England?

Throughout “William the Conqueror,” Kipling ventriloquizes the classic imperialist mentality according to which things have a particular and reliable meaning: the north is the north, the south the south; the British, the Punjabis, the Madrasis, each has a particular, fixed, signification. He

then proceeds, however, to upset the binaries and disrupt the system, as the singular William is eventually overcome, conquered, by love for the story's unlikely, feminized, hero: Scott. On the one hand, William is a representative of British colonialism, representative of an all-powerful England that has, nevertheless, also been conquered. On the other, and, more importantly, William is a Norman, identified with the former rulers of England. Kipling personifies his conundrum by characterizing William in terms of the interplay between power and capitulation. She is a mannish woman, a member of the "weaker" sex who is nevertheless able to produce a reasonable facsimile of masculinity. His description of her boyishly demotic speech, "heavy with the flowers of the vernacular" (175) ironically recalls the key terms of Chaucerian reception, as the good colonial subject who enriches the soil of the English vernacular. Here Kipling recalls the formative French influence in English culture, as well as Macaulay's reverence for his own vernacular, but he undermines these associations by using term "vernacular" metaphorically, in order to emphasize William's brash identity as a "real guy."

William is described, initially, in the terms of a classic warrior hero, miraculously escaping death: "Twice she had been nearly drowned while fording a river, once she had been run away with on a camel [...] never set foot to the ground if a horse were within hail" (175). By the end of the story this independent girl has learned, through the efforts of Scott, both to nurture and to cry. On that fateful night, William rises early so Scott can teach her how to milk the goats and feed the starving children; tears ultimately replacing milk when William learns to cry. The final lines of the story? "This time it was William that wiped her eyes" (214). The brash William, who has turned down so many proposals of marriage, is, herself, conquered by love: her capitulation is couched in terms of maternal fecundity represented by the goats' milk. At the same time, however, it could be argued that she has finally learned to conquer: her rapid engagement to the handsome and promising Scott, who attracts the attention of his superior, (named, strikingly, Lord Jim), for "having personally conducted the entire famine" (211) is as much of a triumph as any Victorian young lady could wish for.<sup>8</sup> Scott, moreover, conquers William not through military strength but through maternal behaviour

that focuses upon milk and feedings. His colleagues tease him for adopting this female role in order to save the children from famine: they try to embarrass him by calling him “Bakri Scott” (199–200). “Bakri,” Kipling informs us, “in the northern vernacular, means a goat” (200). Yet does this female role redound to Scott or to William? Does teaching the masculine William to be more of a woman make the feminine Scott more of a man, or less? The goat epithet, with its traditional associations with lust, would suggest the former. Either way, Scott’s role in saving the children from famine lends a kind of power to the lower position in the hierarchies of courtship and conquest just as William’s capitulation undermines the pretenses of the conqueror.

Scott’s story, similarly, works at a variety of levels. While he is not presented as actually Scottish, he earns his name through his stereotypical pragmatism and common sense. It is also a reminder of the vexed status of Scotland as an early “colony” of England. Kipling’s description of “Scott” as “beautiful as Paris” recalls the “auld alliance” between France and Scotland against England; however, it also aligns him with the Trojan rapist, whose erotic passion for Helen led ultimately to the founding of Rome. In the terms of European as well as classical history, then, Scott’s name makes him a “beautiful loser.” Most importantly, of course, his name alludes to Sir Walter Scott’s fictional rendering of the ideology of the Norman Yoke, *Ivanhoe*, the novel which inspired that party in long-ago Calcutta, and which fashions English national identity through the vilification of the Normans and its valorization of the Saxon underdog.<sup>9</sup> In these respects, then, Kipling is using Scott to reverse the gendered dynamics of colonialism, and to transform its attendant pedagogical rhetoric from paternalistic enrichment to maternal sustenance, from progress and improvement to benevolence, to the giving of life itself. Moreover, whereas William sees the world in the strict binaries of colonizer and colonized (it is through her eyes that we get the rhetoric of north and south), Scott by contrast possesses untroubled humility: as a subaltern, he is merely performing, and mastering, his duties in a world he does not attempt to understand.

“I like men who do things” (176) Kipling’s William confesses to one of her unsuccessful suitors, a poetic one who teaches “the sons of cloth-

merchants and dyers the beauty of Wordsworth.” I have examined here the effect of the “men who do things” on authors such as Chaucer and Kipling, as well as the impact of literary narratives and historical paradigms on the actions of those “who do things.” Like so many of the binary oppositions that appear in this story, from the Saxons and the Normans to the Madrasis and Punjabis, this distinction is undermined, the boundaries blurred, as we have a boyish girl and a feminized hero, and the south becomes the place of decisive action, and the north a place for retreat. Even if Kipling is presenting, to use Spivak’s words, “the conquest of India [...] as a historically appropriate event,” he is highlighting the complications presented by England’s medieval history. Certainly, Kipling’s story preserves much unsavory Victorian sentimentality: the heartless girl who discovers she possesses the soul of the woman, the sensitive hero, the tears on Christmas Eve. And, as always, it is the woman who needs educating by the man. Scott, for all his Christlike qualities, presents an unreconstructed understanding of the White Man’s Burden: from his pastoral moment among the goats and the children, to the Christmas carol, “Good King Wenceslas,” with its moral, “ye who now will bless the poor/ Shall yourselves find blessing” that the happy couple hear being sung just before William starts to tear up. Yet the story’s female protagonist (a rarity in Kipling) and its decidedly anti-martial, benevolent hero, together reveal the difference that having-been-conquered makes.

### Notes

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- 1 See Christopher Hill’s seminal article, “The Norman Yoke;” Clare Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest: History and Myth in Nineteenth Century British Literature*, and Deanne Williams, *The French Fetish from Chaucer to Shakespeare*.
- 2 See Ruth Evans, “Historicizing Postcolonial Criticism: Cultural Difference and the Vernacular” and *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages*, eds. Kabir and Williams.
- 3 Spivak’s term, discussed in a variety of contexts in *In Other Worlds* and *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*.
- 4 It is also a pun on the character of Pandarus. Recalling the sexual services performed by Pandarus in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, Deschamps’s *pandras*

connects Chaucer with the foundational Trojan narrative, and, hence, with the project of *translatio imperii et studii*. According to Deschamps, the English are “ceuls de Bruth,” a name that refers to the British move to trace its lineage to the Trojan hero, Brutus, as well as reinforces the idea of the native English as culturally-backward, or *brutes*.

- 5 The French are often associated with persuasive, seductive speech in Middle English texts such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. See Williams, *The French Fetish*, 11.
- 6 In his introduction to the Penguin edition of *Kim*, Said describes it as “an aesthetic milestone along the way to midnight, 15 August 1947, a moment whose children have done so much to revise our sense of the past’s richness and its enduring problems” (46).
- 7 Spivak hates it; Amis likes it.
- 8 Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim* was first published in 1900. While Conrad’s knowledge of and debt to Kipling in *Heart of Darkness* is well-known, the possibility that Kipling is invoking Conrad demands further consideration.
- 9 In *The Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie recalls *Ivanhoe* when Rosa Diamond longs, in almost pornographic terms, for the Norman ships to reappear, like Sir Walter Scott’s Ulrica, the Anglo-Saxon madwoman, whom the Normans take as a concubine in *Ivanhoe*: “Come on, you Norman ships, she begged: let’s have you, Willie-the-Conk” (134). The conflation of erotic and military conquest, which Rushdie renders as Rosa Diamond’s longing to be conquered, to be captured, to be caught, reinscribes the history of French cultural domination in England in a novel which celebrates disrupted histories and jumbled genealogies in defiance of religious and colonial orthodoxies.

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## Rudyard Kipling and the Norman Conquest

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