

# Colonial Trauma and Its Existential Shattering Impact on Colonizing Subjects in Kipling's *Kim*: A Postcolonial Perspective\*

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**Abstract**—This study reads colonial trauma in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* from a postcolonial perspective. It employs Edward Said's colonial discourse theory to trace how the English novel represented colonial trauma during the modern colonial era. This research visualises Kim as a traumatised and existentially shattered colonising subject upon witnessing a traumatic event during his teenage years at the hands of colonial masters in British India. Therefore, Kim's identity crisis is studied here as a post-traumatic consequence of colonial trauma on his existence. In addition, this article delineates the hidden obstacles to reaching a compromise on Kim's crisis, ascribing it to his oscillating will to align with colonial power. The study concludes that Kim's inability to transcend his trauma embodied in his identity conflict is because his newly grown will to power is disturbed by bifurcated loyalties: willingly nurtured commitment towards the Indian culture and people, and unwillingly undertaken loyalty towards the Empire, imposed on him in the name of patriotism. Thus what hinders and complicates the healing of Kim's colonial trauma seems to be the simultaneous loyalty to binary polar powers that keep clashing within him.

**Index Terms**—trauma, existential shattering, identity, Kim

## I. INTRODUCTION

Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) tells the story of an adventurous boy called Kimball O'Hara, descended from an Irish father during the British Raj. It traces the development and transformation of Kim, who is raised in Lahore as a poor orphan. Kim integrates into Indian society and interacts with the native Indians as if he genetically belonged to them; he dresses like a Hindu because he finds it more accessible to slip into Indian garb than into European clothes (Kipling, 2010, p. 3). He also speaks the Indian vernacular by a sheer "preference", and even his skin is "burned black as any native" (Kipling, 2010, p. 1). In addition, during his early boyhood, he enjoys eating with Indians and participating in festivals (Kipling, 2010, pp. 3-4). Moreover, his extraordinary ability to associate himself with people of different ethnicities grants him the title "The Friend of all the World" (Kipling, 2010, p. 5). Kim is delighted with the environment where he grows up because he knows its "people" (Kipling, 2010, p. 13).

Led by a curious and energetic nature, Kim accompanies an old Buddhist Tibetan guru called Teshoo Lama, with whom Kim builds a strong teacher-disciple or even a father-son relationship since the lama used to describe Kim as "Son of my Soul" (Kipling, 2010, p. 296). By becoming a Lama's chela or disciple, Kim can investigate different regions and acquire new knowledge and experiences. In addition, he witnesses the details of the Lama's spiritual voyage: the Lama's search for "The River of the Arrow", where he can obtain ultimate wisdom and freedom (Kipling, 2010, p. 10). A great point to be accentuated is that, at this stage of his life, Kim lives in social tranquillity and a considerable psychological balance; no predicaments intervene.

Notwithstanding, the transitional point which formulates the catalyst of Kim's trauma and at which Kim's life turns upside down takes place when Kim is coercively drawn from the Lama by a British regiment, locked and watched so that to be sent to a school to "be turned into a Sahib [a term for white Europeans in colonial India]" or in Kim's direct speech, to "Make me a Sahib—so they think" (Kipling, 2010, pp. 92-94). The phrase 'to be turned into' or 'to be made' is essential for this study; it indicates an inflicted radical change into his being regardless of his will, and "so they think" denotes his objection to this colonial industry. Although Kim expects a critical event to occur in his life that will "raise him to honour" according to his father's prophecy, whose main symbol is a Red Bull which he hopes to seek via his long journey with the lama, he cannot endure the meaning of this prophecy when it comes true (Kipling, 2010, p. 46). According to the prophecy, "the Bull shall help" orphan Kim (Kipling, 2010, p. 88). However, contrary to Kim's expectations, the prophecy entails attending a colonial school and thus becoming cut off and alienated from the Indian

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environment where he is brought up (Kipling, 2010, p. 95). Commenting on this pivotal incident, Almomani (2020) mentions, in passing, that Kim's experience with the white man's reality forms initially "a traumatic ordeal which he opposes energetically" because he does not want to be a Sahib (p. 5). In effect, Kim overtly declares that he does not "want to be a Sahib" because he wants to "be with [his] lama again" (Kipling, 2010, p. 109). Thus, compelling Kim to adopt a new identity creates a severe conflict.

While introducing the novel, Said (1987) remarks briefly that central to Kim's predicaments is "the problem of identity—what to be, where to go, what to do" (p. 38). Yildiz (2013) visualises that the cause of Kim's identity conflict, staggering between the two civilisations, is the confusion in his sense of belonging, which becomes a problematising and irritating issue once met by the colonial regiment. Additionally, Yildiz (2013) considers becoming a Sahib as a new "social role" that "strikes Kim profoundly for the first time" (p. 716). For White (2010), Kim is a reflection of Kipling's psychological dilemma in his identification with his split self as a hybrid Anglo-Indian who has suffered from the "trauma of separation from [his] childhood motherland" (p. 3). Baker (2009) contends that Kim's identity crisis is a consequence of hybridism which "creates monstrous products suffering from an inferiority complex" (p. 102). Thus, Kim is incapable of escaping his white blood or relinquishing the absorbed Indian culture. However, articles that focus on Kim's identity crisis do not consider Kim as a traumatised case or his identity crisis as an existential repercussion of a traumatic experience that this research paper endeavours to cover.

Drawing on Said's colonial discourse theory, trauma theory and existential philosophy, this study presents a new perspective on Kim's identity crisis. This study visualises Kim as a traumatised colonising subject whose trauma generates from a shocking event at the hands of colonial masters in British India, creating an existentially shattered boy. It also attaches Kim's inability to transcend his trauma or to overcome the resulted identity crisis to a newly grown will to power that is disturbed by bifurcated loyalties: willingly nurtured commitment towards the Indian culture and people and unwillingly undertaken loyalty towards the Empire, imposed on him in the name of patriotism. Aside from tracing the trigger of Kim's trauma and his traumatic responses, this study ascribes the severity of Kim's traumatic symptoms and the potential of recovery to Kim's readiness or willingness to align with the colonial power, believing that what hinders and complicates the healing of Kim's colonial trauma perhaps is the simultaneous loyalty to binary polar forces that keep clashing within him.

In this article, the issue of will to power shapes an essential element in forming or complicating the trauma of imperialists, whether this 'will' is encouraging or discouraging. Will to power aggravates Kim's psychological dilemma and governs the orientation of the novel itself in that the events proceed in favour of the imperial agenda by facilitating the process of making a colonial Kim. In this respect, Said (1979), within his adopted Foucauldian discourse on knowledge, suggests that the power of Western writings lies in its ability to represent the self and the other so that to maintain "European superiority" (p. 7). Consequently, the will to truth in the colonial discourse is driven by the will to power; that is, the former is subdued to serve imperial hegemony. This intertwining between the will to truth and the will to power is manifestly apparent through rendering all the elements of Kipling's story active in the making of the colonial Kim, who appears primarily as unwilling to become a coloniser. In addition to delineating how the composing elements of Kipling's *Kim* collaborate to transform the protagonist into a colonial servant, this study aims to demonstrate how Kim's unwilling dedication to imperial recruitment complicates his psychological crisis, connotatively implying the necessity of prioritising the Empire over other concerns, lest personal problems remain unresolved. Theoretically speaking, postcolonialism, in Ashcroft et al.'s (2000) words, is established as a critique of "the discursive operations of empire" (p. 169). Said (1993) draws particular attention to the strong correlation between the English novel and the historical context, as Kipling's book includes "the ideology of overseas expansion" or the ideology of empire (p. 67). Consequently, the will to power is the drive of narrative and the drive of colonial practices.

As a colonial European lacking will to power, Kim contradicts the whole system upon which the empire stands. Thereby, his deviation from the colonial norm entails punishment with a persistent internal crisis. Kim's unsettled self-identification is attributed here to the rules of colonial discourse, which control "which statements can be made or not within a discourse" (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 63). Kim has not been given the privilege of free choice in his life. He is colonially made and is imperatively dictated what to do since the power of colonial discourse, as Ashcroft et al. (2000) put it, constructs not only the colonised subjects but also the colonising subjects, and the individuals who make contradictory statements to that discourse expose themselves to "incurring punishment" where they appear "eccentric and abnormal" (p. 37). Accordingly, this study examines how a traumatised colonial agent like Kim, who lacks the will to power, is represented in an English novel. Besides, this study pays a considerable attention to the existential damage that is produced by colonial trauma since, as Hoffman et al. (2013) say, "Although trauma, by its nature, is inherently existential, the existential dimensions are often ignored..." (p. 2).

Furthermore, this interdisciplinary study utilises the second wave of trauma theory. Because of the ability to pinpoint the event that produces the traumatic experience, this theoretical wave advocates language's capability to represent traumatic experiences, unlike the Caruthian trauma theory, which supports the impossibility of narration or the incapability of words to express dissociated traumatic memory. Within the second wave then traumatic memory is reachable, locatable, and spoken, rather than permanently absent and lost (Balaev, 2014, p. 6). Moreover, this recent model is pluralistic because it encourages the appropriation of various theoretical approaches for studying trauma (Balaev, 2014, p. 3). This pluralistic feature paves the way for employing a postcolonial approach and existential

philosophy in the present analysis. Therefore, this study endeavours to determine the nexus between trauma and will to power. It tends to reveal how an incomplete or unripe colonial will to power hinders reaching a resolution to the coloniser's identity crisis. In addition, it will showcase how textual representation of trauma is politically manipulated; it will question the correlation between the colonial discourse and the cautious, circumspect, and contradictory textual display of the colonising subject's trauma.

## II. DISCUSSION

### A. *Kim's Fight-Flight-Freeze Traumatic Initial Response*

Kim's unwillingness to become a Sahib, namely, his refusal to succumb to the imperial authorities through joining imperial institutions or aligning with colonial powers, is demonstrated in multiple positions in the novel. It is mentioned overtly in the first pages that Kim learns "to avoid missionaries and white men of serious aspect who asked who he was, and what he did" by reaching the years of indiscretion because he is assured deep inside that "the missionaries and secretaries of charitable societies could not see the beauty of [India]" (Kipling, 2010, p. 3). He frequently reveals his repugnance at attending school or being caught or interrogated by English officers, not to mention getting captured by English soldiers (Kipling, 2010, pp. 3, 90). When caught by the British army, the poor boy distressfully communicates to the lama his regret for his search; thus, "I wish I did not come here to find the Red Bull and all that sort of thing; I do not want it" (Kipling, 2010, p. 93). Despite Kim's "Search" for the Bull, he resents how his search is accomplished (Kipling, 2010, p. 46). Kim expresses his bitter feelings to the lama; in that, he is disappointed about the meaning of his horoscope, which brings him to "this business", to colonial schooling (Kipling, 2010, p. 93).

Captivated by imperial hands in preparation for serving the British Empire, Kim responds to the traumatic situation using the instinct of "a wild animal" by resolving to fight the threatening situation (Kipling, 2010, pp. 98, 105). In "Trauma Theory", Bloom (2018) divides traumatic reactions into physical and emotional. Bloom (2018) refers to the biological response to danger as the "fight-flight-freeze response," in which the nervous system stimulates the body to take action (p. 4). Driven by an exuberant spirit of a thirteen-year boy, Kim reacts to the traumatic situation first through instant plotting to cope with the danger that can seize his freedom. Kim's plot vacillates between entreating colonial masters to give him his papers and let him free for the sake of the poor lama and reassuring the lama several times that he will flee in a few days. Such reassuring statements are like "Now I make pretence of agreement.... Then I will slip away", "I will run back to thee" and "I will run away this night," (Kipling, 2010, pp. 92, 95, 100). These bold claims represent Kim's readiness to resist the traumatic colonial conditions.

When Kim's resistance proves useless, recognising that he is closely watched to prevent his escape, he loses confidence in fleeing plans. Becoming a challenging situation for Kim, indeed "very hard on a wild animal", in Father Victor's words, traumatised Kim moves to the second primary survival response, the flight response (Kipling, 2010, p. 105). He contacts by means of letters "a name of power" and a friend of his, Mahbub Ali the horse dealer, to take him away. However, his Asian friend apologises for declining Kim's request because there would be perilous consequences on his reputation and person if he helped him run off (Kipling, 2010, p. 109).

According to Bloom (2018), when there is no chance for survival or for evading the traumatic situation by either fight or flight, "the freeze response may automatically occur" (p. 6). The freeze response is a "phenomenon of uncontrollability," which occurs when humans cannot control the trauma they are experiencing (p. 7). The freeze response creates mental dissociation that stimulates the liability of traumatised people to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Bloom, 2018). One of the most profound psychoanalytic dissociative post-traumatic responses is denial or emotional numbing. Concerning the DSM-III description of PTSD, denial or numbing is made "basic to the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress" (Leys, 2000, p. 233). Thus, denial represents a defence mechanism (Leys, 2000, p. 264). In Kim's case, negating the traumatic situation stands as a final resort to avoiding the consequent emotional pain. First, he tries to controvert the probability of being taken from the lama, asserting twice that "it has happened before" but he manages to slip away (Kipling, 2010, p. 90). Kim confirms his rejection of the traumatic event by addressing the lama in various locations in the novel as follows, "I will run away and return to thee," "...for at the worst it will be but a few meals eaten away from thee," "For a day and a night and a day," and "The day after tomorrow I return" (Kipling, 2010, pp. 90, 93, 94). However, since capability for escape sounds zero, he becomes less optimistic about his plans, almost hopeless and senseless. Kim communicates to Mahbub Ali how he feels straightforwardly, "I was senseless; for I was but newly caught" (Kipling, 2010, p. 137). By the previous quoted words, Kim stresses the occurrence of traumatising at the moment of being captured by the colonial regiment. The enforceable separation from the lama to whom orphan Kim's heart "is drawn" shapes the first experienced colonial trauma that inserts him in a swirling vortex of emotions (Kipling, 2010, p. 146). His numbed emotions are embodied by his distracting sense of loneliness and heavy-heartedness. Besides, Kim's feeling of isolation magnifies when comparing his accustomed sensation of the "indifference of native crowds" to the "strong loneliness among white men" that "preyed on him" (Kipling, 2010, p. 105). As a thirteen-year boy, nothing can lift his spirit and mitigate his sense of depression except his guru, the lama, who convinces him to seek knowledge and "go up the Gates of Learning" (Kipling, 2010, p. 125). In this respect, Bloom (2018) illustrates the vital role of adults in soothing frightened children and how this is essential to their development because children "cannot soothe themselves until they have been soothed by adults" (p. 14).

### B. Identity Conflict as an Existential Predicament of Kim's Trauma

Apart from Kim's initial physical and emotional traumatic responses, colonial trauma causes him further existential complications demonstrated mainly in his identity crisis. In *Trauma Question*, Luckurst (2008) notes that trauma disrupts memory and identity in several peculiar ways (p. 1). In this study, Kim's traumatic experience is attributed to the sudden and coercive separation from the Indian environment. Kim's identity crisis, therefore, results from becoming contactless with the culture where he is brought up. According to Erikson (1968), an adolescent firm and individual identity "depends on the support which the young individual receives from the collective sense of identity characterising the social groups significant to him: his class, his nation, his culture" (p. 89). Uprooting Kim from Indian culture and compulsorily initiating him into the realm of Sahibs or the imperial community perplexes his initial sense of identity, proving contextually traumatic and existentially shattering. According to Hoffman et al. (2013), existential shattering is "most often triggered by trauma" (p. 3). In "Existential Issues in Trauma," Hoffman et al. (2013) present the features of existential shattering, clarifying that "a defining factor of existential shattering is that the event was sudden, irreversible, and unexpected" (p. 4). When the prophecy comes true, its fulfilment appears agitating because getting suddenly captured by the colonial army, whom Kim always evades, is out of his expectations. Besides, the decision made about sending Kim to an imperial school sounds irreversible despite his pleas for the colonial ministers to set him free and allow him to "go back" to his "old man" (Kipling, 2010, p. 100).

Another defining feature of existential shattering is that "the event forced confrontation with one or more of the givens of existence," which are death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness (Hoffman et al., 2013, p. 4). Depriving Kim of making his own decision, whether to join the lama or the regiment, violates his free will. Kim's sense of disempowerment manifest itself clearly in his words while addressing the lama, "My heart was in that letter I sent thee...I have no friend save thee, Holy One" (Kipling, 2010, p. 124). Moreover, preventing Kim from escaping or meeting Indians and forcing him into English military schooling, which he abhors the most, mean death to Kim. Kim confides to Mahbub Ali that "... to the madrissah [school], I will go. At the madrissah, I will learn... But when the madrissah is shut, then must I be free and go among my people. Otherwise, I die" (Kipling, 2010, p. 138). Kim's existential crisis, in particular, his fear for his threatened freedom, is reflected in several weird behaviours and impulsive actions, such as the multiple attempts to escape clutches of colonial masters or to flee from colonial institutions. When Kim, for instance, explicitly heralds that he will not be a soldier, the reply of the imperialist Mr Bennett confuses Kim and assures his latent sense of danger, "You will be what you're told to be" (Kipling, 2010, p. 95). Thus, Kim's undertaken response to the encountered existential threat, that is, his plans to escape the traumatic situation where his freedom is restricted and controlled, seems psychologically natural. It is best accounted for as follows,

Should a young person feel that the environment tries to deprive him too radically of all the forms of expression which permit him to develop and integrate the next step, he may resist with the wild strength encountered in animals who are suddenly forced to defend their lives (Erikson, 1968, p. 130).

Thus, Bloom's aforementioned traumatic "flight-fight-freeze" reaction appears through Erikson's detailed account as an existential instinctive response for confiscated freedom.

Furthermore, in Kim's case, colonial trauma triggers infinite existential inquiries about identity. The imposed colonial conditions transform Kim into an existentially shattered creature suffering from an identity crisis or, as Hoffman et al. (2013) remark, "this can leave the person feeling groundless" (p. 4). Hoffman et al. (2013) clarify that "[t]rauma, by its nature, is existential through its impact on how the individual experiences the world, their self-understanding, and their sense of place in the world" (p. 1). One of the most persistent and prolonged existential post-traumatic symptoms, which crystallises the moment Kim is drawn from his lama and alienated from the Indian environment and is complicated by Kim's initiation into the colonial Great Game (British Intelligence Service), culminates in Kim's questioning his identity at several positions in the novel. Erickson (1968) defines an identity crisis as "a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another" (Erikson, 1968, p. 16). Kim's estrangement from his lama and Indian culture marks a watershed in his life, creating an identity conflict. Because identity is one of the principal existential realities, identity crisis is an existential crisis. The psychiatrist Erikson (1968) asserts that identity will "decisively determine" one's later life and that "in the social jungle of human existence there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity (pp. 91, 130). The reason why identity contemplation and self-meditation first assails Kim when arrested is that his joyful childish view of the world begins to change. In this position, Erikson (1995) remarks that,

Traumatised people calculate life's chances differently. They look out around the world using various lenses. In that sense, they can be said to have experienced not only a changed sense of self and a changing way of relating to others but a changed worldview (p. 194).

Consequently, Kim's existential dilemma commences when he is denied his enjoyed freedom and forced to obey certain strict instructions. He feels helpless, or as Erikson (1995) puts it, "vulnerable" because he has lost an essential "measure of control over the circumstances" of his own life (p. 194).

By initiating Kim into the colonial community first and then to the reality of espionage, Kim grows up with an alteration in his worldview and a different understanding of the self. Kim inquires about his identity in brief scattered monologues, "...I am only Kim. Who is Kim?", "Who is Kim—Kim—Kim?" and "I am Kim. I am Kim. And what is

Kim?" (Kipling, 2010, pp. 120, 190, 289). The status of Kim's psychic dissociation appears simultaneously in questioning his identity and in his answer that he is "a Seeker"; "though Allah alone knoweth what I seek" (Kipling, 2010, p. 190). The salient demonstration of Kim's identity conflict appears in his frequent contradictory statements about being and not being a Sahib and through his ambivalent oscillation between playing the role of an Indian and an English character. For instance, Kim asserts his being a Sahib and a son of Sahib in six different places in the novel. Nonetheless, he contradicts this fact or denies being a Sahib only in the presence of the Tibetan lama and the Afghani Mahbub Ali. This kind of uncertainty about his identity is best explained by what Reynolds (2006) says in *Understanding Existentialism* that "Rather than our identity being determined by our biological or social status, existentialism insists that our identity must be continually created, and there is a resultant emphasis on our freedom" (p. 3). Indeed, Kim's journey of creating his own identity is interrupted; his identity crisis only emerges when a new identification with the self as a colonial European intervenes and when his freedom is kept under surveillance. Consequently, what urges Kim later to resume the search with the lama, looking for the sacred river, is his hope "to seek freedom together" to bridge the resulting psychic traumatic gap (Kipling, 2010, p. 196). By reuniting with the lama, Kim can obtain "Freedom" as a promised reward for his commitment and obedience during the spiritual journey (Kipling, 2010, p. 276).

Notwithstanding, Kim's reunion with the lama neither quenches his soul's emptiness nor restores his spiritual stability and balance. Getting coercively manipulated to be an imperial spy hinders the amendment of his split self. Evidently, what aggravates Kim's spiritual struggle is the launch of the Great Game with its assigned spying missions, functioning as a cog in the imperialist wheel. Kim's following words demonstrate or deflect the complications of his identity crisis upon his involvement in the spying business, "I have wrestled with my soul till I am strengthless" (Kipling, 2010, p. 270). His restlessness results from his discomfort with the growing responsibility for the Queen's Empire. Kim's spiritual devastation is also evident when he "held out the keys impatiently" to give the documents and maps he steals from the Russian spies to Babu, another spy, "for the present need of his soul was to get rid of the loot" (Kipling, 2010, p. 285). Said (1987) presents an explanation for the pressure that dissociates Kim's character. He states that although accomplishing the commissions of the Great Game is conditioned by setting Kim free, this superficial freedom is forged with "more exacting" demands and "precise discipline" which he is intrigued to give in to "willingly" (p.13). Kim is exploited for fulfilling the imperial agenda with his own consent through the help of Mahbub Ali who reveals to Colonel Creighton, the spymaster, the primary clue to unlock Kim's personality by which Kim can be controlled, tamed, or even subdued to carry out colonial business; the clue is illusory freedom.

Indeed, Kim's existential turmoil appears resistant to pacification despite restoring temporarily his position as the lama's disciple "at his choice" and under a contract between himself and the colonial masters (Kipling, 2010, p. 178). Kim's ability to freely choose the companionship of the lama is unreal and superficial as his choice is conditioned on practical training as a spy for six months and encompassed by thorough imperial surveillance. Upon realising this fact, Kim's struggle with his soul and identity persists since he exists between two divergent realms: the worldly of tricks and intrigues (the Great Game/British Empire) and the divine of honesty and innocence (the spiritual search/Tibetan lama). Consequently, Kim's identity conflict is existential because of his inability to choose what to be, as Sartre asserts that "to cease to choose is to cease to be" (qt. in Flynn, 2006, p. 33). Kim's intelligence service is crucial to maintaining colonial power, and his opting to re-accompany the lama is essential for the lama to find The River of the Arrow and for him to meet the promised freedom. Yet, he is lost between political goals and spiritual search. From an existential perspective, the ability to make a choice is "self-constituting" and "liberating" (Flynn, 2006, p. 32). Flynn (2006) delineates that a human being's identity "is either imposed from outside ...or is sustained by our ongoing, self-defining existential project, our fundamental 'Choice'" (p. 69). Thus, Flynn (2006) affirms that choice creates a difference in one's existence, producing either a free-spirited or machine-like person. Kim's colonial identity takes shape after the shocking arrest by the marching regiment and subsequent recruitment in the Imperial Intelligence Service. Therefore, He becomes bereft of will or the power of free choice, implementing what is inculcated from above.

The previous discussion locates and traces what triggers the colonial traumatic experience that inflicts Kim, the European adolescent, and proves that his trauma is textually representable and linguistically narratable in contrast to the Caruthian traumatic paradigm, which depicts traumatic events as unspeakable or resistant to narration. Trauma in this respect is no longer a fragmentary pathological dissociation in the psyche; instead, a "reorientation of consciousness": it is conceptualised as an event that "alters perception and identity" accompanied by the formation of new knowledge about "the self and the external world" (Balaev, 2018, p. 366).

### III. A POSTCOLONIAL READING OF KIM'S COLONIAL TRAUMA

Said's postcolonial theory pays a considerable attention to the historical and political contexts of colonial discourse. To skim over the historical context of Kipling's Kim, the novel projects a real personal identity crisis that the Anglo-Indian Kipling, who was born in 1865, was exposed to when he left Bombai, his birthplace, to continue his education in England at the age of six. It was reported that Kipling "evidently had a crisis of self-confidence and suffered a nervous breakdown" (Kim, 2010, p. v). Accordingly, Kim portrays India during the British Raj, depicting the adventures of an inquisitive and energetic boy born in Lahore and considered native by those around him. The novel reflects how colonial administration deals with European children. The matter of inculcating an imperialist ideology within special

imperial schools proves profound and intrinsic to the interest and prolonged survival of the British Empire. By making a Sahib of Kim, the colonial discourse is fed into his young mind; that is, he is frequently reminded of being European and belonging to the imperial power structure and that he is there to rule India. In this position, Said (1987) opines that Kim is “a master work of imperialism” (p. 45). It endeavours to accentuate the empire’s political supremacy.

The structure of Kipling’s *Kim* undoubtedly goes with the flow of the Empire; that is, many factors collaborate to transform Kim from a little traumatised European, unwilling to align with colonial authorities to a grown Sahib willing to participate in espionage. For example, Kim’s close Oriental friends, Mahbub Ali and the Lama, who belong to figures of significant power in the Indian community, contribute to the creation of coloniser Kim. To elaborate on this point, the lama or the Buddhist guru whose power is derived from his sacred exalted status empowers Kim’s position in the diverse Indian society since “by following holy men their disciples attain that power” (Kipling, 2010, p. 35). The lama is exploited for fulfilling Kim’s father’s prophecy; the lama embodies the tool utilised to hand Kim over to the British colonialists. Moreover, the lama does not only advise Kim persuasively to follow the gates of knowledge in the imperial school but also volunteers to pay him high learning fees to guarantee the best education. Therefore, the lama principally participates in the making of a little coloniser or, more particularly, a colonial spy. By the same token, Mahbub Ali, whose name is “a name of power”, is portrayed within the progress of events as an imperial spy (Kipling, 2010, p. 109). He serves the imperial agenda by preventing Kim from escaping the school via informing the spymaster Colonel Creighton about Kim’s intentions and the required conditions to facilitate Kim’s involvement in spying training. In addition, Mahbub Ali supervises the progress of Kim’s training himself. Consequently, Kim’s solo Indian close friends are exploited for serving the Queen’s Empire by contributing to the creation of spy Kim. They help transform a traumatised, rebelling boy who is unwilling to be recruited into imperial institutions and entirely satisfied with his Indian life into a little man who is willing to play the Great Game. Other vital factors evident to serve the imperial agenda by making a willing coloniser of the wild, rebellious, culturally-Indian Kim are tempting Kim with money by Lurgan Sahib as “the reward that would follow obedience” and promising him free wandering for “[a] half-year” in the company of the lama (Kipling, 2010, pp. 164, 180). However, prevailing upon Kim to perform colonial commissions or even transforming him into real colonialist results in an existentially shattered boy with a chronic identity crisis that he cannot work through or overcome.

Colonising subjects who show unwillingness about involvement in the colonial business and then are coerced to fulfil specific imperial goals are torn between their personal beliefs and patriotism. In this respect, Memmi (2003) categorises imperial Europeans into three types: colonial, coloniser, and colonialist (p. 54). Memmi (2003) defines the colonial as,

[A] European living in a colony but with no privileges, whose living conditions are not higher than those of a colonised person of equivalent economic and social status. By temperament or ethical conviction, a colonial is a benevolent European who does not have the coloniser’s attitude towards the colonised (p. 54).

The colonial, as Memmi (2003) clarifies, is neither a coloniser nor a colonised but can be from “the nationals of other powers” who are inclined to found relationships or even “long-lasting friendships” of “the colonizer-colonized nature” (pp.58-59). Kim falls under the colonial type because, as an originally Irish boy, he amalgamates with Indian society to the degree that he cannot be distinguished from them in terms of his complexion or his behaviour. He is called ‘the friend of all the world’ repeatedly throughout the novel. Nonetheless, Memmi (2003) points out that,

The colonial does not exist, because it is not up to the European in the colonies to remain a colonial, even if he had so intended....From the time he lands or is born, he finds himself in a factual position common to all Europeans living in a colony, a position which turns him into a coloniser (p. 61).

Memmi’s description of the colonial who will sooner or later become a coloniser on his own will or upon the colonial administrators’ desire explains the situation of Kim precisely. In effect, Kim’s identity crisis, which this project views as a traumatic symptom, has its genesis in the days he is forced to study in an imperial school to become a Sahib. His association with the colonial community splits his sense of self. He seems in great turmoil when countered with the fact that he is a Sahib, inquiring within himself about his entity as follows, “...and I am a Sahib.... No I am Kim.... Who is Kim?” (Kipling, 2010, p.120). In this respect, Pine (2018) argues, “Even though he Know his parentage, Kim insists ‘I am not a Sahib’”; therefore, “The central dilemma is that Kim does not want to be a Sahib, but he cannot escape it” (p.126). Likewise, Mehta (2003) assures that,

Kim’s pained progress in Englishness, his schooling in being a Sahib, never stabilises him; he vacillates ambivalently from one scene to the next—‘I am a Sahib,’ ‘I am not a Sahib’.... His progress as a Sahib and his triumph as an intelligent agent propel him toward the novel’s end into a mental breakdown and physical collapse (p. 209).

Accordingly, these previous quotations conclude that Kim’s psychic dissociation, or inability to reach self-identification, initiates and grows the moment he contacts the colonial community. In other words, the moment Kim aligns with emblems of imperial power appears evidently traumatic, generating his identity dilemma.

This study advocates that what hinders Kim’s psychological healing and complicates his identity crisis is the newly stemmed bud of a will to power, a will to play a vital role in the intelligence service. Kim has the chance to reject the service after finishing school. Nonetheless, he intentionally submits to the colonial scheme, provided he is left to rejoin the lama. His ability to decline the service is accentuated when Mahbub Ali tells Colonel Creighton that “If permission be refused to go and come as [Kim] chooses, he will make light of the refusal. Then who is to catch him” (Kipling,

2010, p. 170). However, the question that can be raised in this position is what transforms Kim's unwillingness to serve the empire into eager willingness? In an attempt to connect the dots, the time that takes Kim to be turned into a Sahib seems equally necessary for the seeds of his imperial will, the will to dominate, to grow and ripen. This time spent in the making of Kim the Sahib is consumed mainly and basically in instilling the ideology of empire into his young mind. Consequently, there seem to be two Kims: Kim, the natural, the unaffected Indian-like person, and Kim, the colonially manufactured in imperial institutions. The suggestion here for Kim's identity crisis is not merely a traumatic event that turns him into an existentially shattered youth; rather, what complicates his psychological dilemma appears to be his grown will to align with colonial power and his fervent hope to play the Great Game. This reading for Kim's crisis can be strengthened by the fact that by the onset of dispatch in six-month training as an imperial spy, Kim's conflict is complicated more and more until his soul becomes "strengthless"; that is, once a practical and real alignment with colonial power takes place, Kim's spiritual gap deepens and the sense of insecurity is aggravated due to an increased alienation from his old self (Kipling, 2010, p. 270). Said (1987) identifies Kim as a creature "with a flamboyant will" (p. 37). However, the will to dominate is, as Said (2005) defines it, a "kind of negative...or insalubrious, devastating thing" (p. 188).

Although Said (1987) comments that "Kim's search for an identity that he can be comfortable with by the end of the novel is successful", Kim's identity conflict persists because he cannot resist his newly grown will to power, a will to serve the Empire (p. 39). In this respect, and contrary to Said (1987), who suggests that Kim's psychic healing is achieved when, after questioning his identity, he "slowly begins to feel at one with himself and with the world" (p. 19), Lane (1995) believes that "Kipling seems to obscure Kim's self-examination by shielding him from the question not only who he is but also, more urgently and radically, of what it is that he wants" (p. 41). Similarly, Jed and Esty (2012) underscore the fact that there is no clear final answer to the running question, "Who is Kim?" indicating that the end of the novel is misdirected due to the absence of a fixed destiny for Kim and due to a shift from Kim's fate to the lama's vision (p. 8). Indeed, Kim's quest for identity remains a riddle: will he be destined to adopt a stable political or religious position? Will he serve as an imperial spy like Colonel Creighton or remain the lama's chela? Whether he is politically or religiously affiliated is not determined.

Being culturally Indian and racially European, "Kim shifts between the coloniser who accepts his role and the one who refuses it" (Baker, 2009, p. 96). Baker (2009) clarifies that Kim's "loyalties and self-autonomy clash with one another" (p. 100). The contradiction between Kim's ability and inability to adapt to this newly born will to power is almost what complicates his identity crisis. This opposition in his inclinations (to pursue or decline colonial power) leaves him perplexed about what to be and who he is: Does he desire to affiliate himself with the Tibetan Lama's religious quest or with the English Colonel Creighton's political business? When Kim is in the presence of spies and colonial masters, he emphasises his identity as a Sahib. Still, when he is with the Tibetan Lama or the Afghani Mahbub Ali, he denies being a Sahib. Uncertainty about his identity reflects his hesitation to align with the colonial power and the end of the novel sharply projects this paradox and uncertainty.

Moreover, his identity crisis is complicated only when the features of a Sahib dictated by colonialists and absorbed by Kim begin to crystallise by revealing his hope "to play the Great Game", and by commencing in reality to perform the role of a spy (Kipling, 2010, p. 226). Undoubtedly, Kim appears to be in a realm of contradictions. First, whereas the lama intends to free his soul and that of his disciple from the wheel of things, or from attachment to worldly desires, Kim is irresistibly attracted to that wheel and possessed by the pursuit of power. And secondly, despite being initially willing to play the role of a colonial spy, Kim insists on returning to his lama to obtain the promised freedom, namely salvation and liberation from spiritual struggles. Yet ironically, the promised "Reward" from the lama, which is freedom or ultimate "Salvation," is exclusively attained after Kim achieves his duties towards the Queen's Empire and completes the spying mission (Kipling, 2010, pp. 294, 296). Nonetheless, this reached salvation sounds nonsensical since Kim does not seem to reconcile with himself or solve his internal problem.

On the other hand, the novel's closure receives the same degree of criticism as that oriented towards Kim's identity conflict. In this respect, Said (1987) states that Kipling presents an "obfuscatory end", yet "he not truly succeeds in this obfuscation" (p. 45). As for Walsh (2016), she ascribes the obscurity of the ending to the veneration of empire; in that, if *Kim* is to represent the empire itself, then "*Kim* represents a deferral of the end of childhood" because "imperialism's adolescence is its end" (p. 48). The obfuscation or obscurity of *Kim*'s ending is just as contradictory, paradoxical, and indeterminate as Kim's identity, character, and ideology. Critically speaking, Kipling's *Kim* is governed by the rules of inclusion and exclusion of statements that advocate and do not contradict the colonial discourse. The apparent obscurity in Kim's ending proves strictly compliant with these rules lest the Western writer becomes exposed to "incurring punishment" or is made appear "eccentric and abnormal" (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 37). The rules of colonial discourse, as Ashcroft (2000) elaborates, operate on the assumption of the coloniser's superiority in all fields. Thus, presenting the true reality of the psychologically dissociated Kim and the dark side of his transformed life upon joining the colonial enterprise jeopardises the coloniser's status and shakes the system of truths by which the dominant group exerts power over the dominated one.

Furthermore, the ending of Kipling's novel is just as ambiguous as the protagonist's uncertain willingness to power. After fulfilling the assigned spying commission and gaining secret documents from the Russian spies, his orientation, whether to align with the colonial authorities and become a spymaster (political orientation) or to align with the lama

and stay by his side as his disciple (spiritual orientation), is blurred. His will to power typically is obfuscated as the ending itself. This obscurity in the choice and conclusion explains why Kim's identity crisis remains unresolved. Inability to adopt a particular orientation whether to align with the imperial English material or Indian spiritual power prolongs his existential dilemma. Subsequently, Kim's ending is open and uncertain, like the orientation of his will to power. Because of the ambivalent direction in life, or more specifically, because of being torn between bipolar power structures (the British imperial game and the lama's spiritual search), Kim appears unable to work through his colonial trauma and the engendered psychological perplexity. In other words, Kim's oscillation about solely siding with colonial power impedes his reconciliation with his identity conflict. The colonial discourse, in Kim's case, emanates a possible connotative message that loyalty to the empire must not be stained with other commitments. Priority must be given to serving the imperial agenda. The ending is just as obscure as Kim's future intention.

Kim's trauma is scrutinised through the lens of the second theoretical wave of trauma, which advocates plurality of readings and the ability to implement interdisciplinary approaches, asserting the possibility of narration and the potential for integrating the pieces that constitute the traumatic memory and accentuating the possibility of working through trauma and healing. However, within Kipling's story, Kim's trauma does not seem to heal, although, as realist fiction, it is well known for what J. M. S. Tompkins called "the theme of healing" (qt. in Said, 1987, p. 16). The obstacles that detain Kim's healing from a postcolonial perspective are surmised in this study to be Kim's undesirable involvement in spying activities and his irresoluteness or hesitancy about future alignment with colonial authorities. It seems that Western writers during the colonial era have been earnest about serving the empire since overcoming the outcomes of Kim's colonial trauma is correlated with sheer willingness to support colonialism, holistic loyalty, and manifest pure patriotism. The open ending symbolises the vacuum that wraps Kim upon his indecision and vacillation between serving the oriental (represented by the lama) and the occidental (exemplified by the colonial spying masters). Consequently, Kim's thorough healing seems to be conditioned by adopting one path or pure loyal will—the will to reinforce the colonial rule.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Despite the success *Kim* accomplishes on many levels: "having helped the lama achieve his dream of redemption, the British to foil a serious plot, the Indians to continue enjoying prosperity under Britain," his identity crisis remains hanging without a salient resolution (Said, 1987, p. 38). Said (1987) wonders about the meaning or the target behind "so codified and organised a structure as the late nineteenth-century realistic novel" (p. 36). Probably, what Kipling is trying to hide or codify is the psychological damage inflicted on this energetic hybrid boy or even the grown will to power as a colonial contagion that infects the pure soul of the little boy, who has been firmly unwilling to become a Sahib. Yet, he later becomes an intelligence agent willing to serve the British Empire.

In short, the presence of the Empire connotes the scarcity of options before colonial subjects or the absence of free choice, as Noble (2004) argues that serving the Empire and "maintaining the status quo of British colonial rule" is a "job without a question" (p. 1). Even psychological issues and emotional predicaments such as trauma are represented as unmanageable and irrecoverable when the adopted decision is not to exclusively support imperialism and facilitate its enterprise. Regardless of Kim's initial disagreement to engage in colonial operations, he is subdued and oriented coercively to riding the colonial wave, implementing colonial agenda. The unwilling colonizing subject to serve the imperial project is eventually made willing within the colonial discourse. There seems no place in the colonial discursive system for disloyal colonials who go against the colonial grain.

Concerning the relationship between how a traumatized colonizer is represented in the colonial discourse (will to truth) and the protagonist's will to power, the one who does not display willing obedience and complete fidelity about serving the empire cannot cope with or recover from their psychological dilemma, as is the case with Kim. Because he cannot undertake a firm decision about a holistic alignment with the colonial power and cannot terminate the spiritual connexion between him and the lama, his agony is prolonged. He appears unable to find an egress for post-traumatic symptoms represented in a shattered identity. This study therefore assumes that, in colonial discourse, personal and psychological issues are politically associated. To Said (1979), Western colonial culture eschews drawing images or presenting characteristics different from the stereotypes perceived in the colonial mindset about Orientals and Occidentals because this would compromise the power of the Empire (p. 3). In the colonial discourse then unwillingness to bolster the imperial side is almost treated seriously by complicating the protagonist's psychological conflict, proving that the indispensable solution for traumatic repercussion is in offering willing service to the Queen's Empire and displaying sheer unilateral loyalty.

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