

# ENCOUNTER OF THE TWAIN: RUDYARD KIPLING'S 'THE CITY OF BRASS'<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This essay by and large revises the historically acknowledged notion that Kipling is an Indian-influenced author as postcolonial reassessments of Kipling's oeuvre have tended to focus primarily on Kipling's relationship with the British Empire and India. In drawing on Intertextuality, Historicism, Said's *Orientalism*, and Bhabha's ambivalence, the essay analyzes Kipling's poem in terms of its historical context, textual relationships with an Arabic narrative, and Kipling's Orientalism. On the whole, this essay examines Kipling's appropriation of a narrative from *The Arabian Nights*. The essay sheds light on Kipling's preoccupation with an Arabic text— a preoccupation that can be interpreted as symptomatic of Kipling's textual, ambivalent Orientalism. The Arabic narrative of the City of Brass, which enriches Kipling's poem lexically and thematically, seems to be Kipling's palimpsest upon which he writes his poem. Kipling's drawing on the Arabic story by copying the title and the epigraph uncovers an unnoticed (not merely textual) relationship between Edward Lane (whose Orientalism is typical of Kipling's "The White Man's Burden") and Kipling. This textual mixture between a postcolonial poem and a colonized narrative offers deep insights into Kipling's ambivalence toward his White Men, who have been responsible for making Great Britain similar to the City of Brass in the original narrative.

**Keywords:** Orientalism, Ambivalence, Palimpsest, Liberalism, Intertextuality.

**Título en español:** "El encuentro de dos mitades: 'The City of Brass' de Rudyard Kipling

**Resumen:** El presente ensayo revisa la idea históricamente asumida de Kipling como autor influenciado por India teniendo en cuenta que las revisiones postcoloniales de la obra de Kipling se han centrado primordialmente en la relación del autor con el Imperio Británico e India. Enmarcado en la intertextualidad, el historicismo, la obra *Orientalism* de Said y la ambivalencia de Bhabha, este artículo analiza el poema de Kipling en términos de su contexto histórico, las relaciones textuales con la narrativa árabe y el Orientalismo de Kipling. Por otro lado, examina la apropiación de Kipling de una narración de *The Arabian Nights*. Este ensayo explica la preocupación de Kipling hacia el texto árabe-un hecho sintomático del Orientalismo ambivalente y textual de Kipling. La narrativa árabe 'The City of Brass', que enriquece el poema de Kipling tanto léxica como temáticamente,

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parece ser el palimpsesto sobre el que Kipling escribe su poema. La deuda de Kipling hacia la historia árabe, a través de la copia del título y el epígrafe, desvela la relación escondida (no meramente textual entre Edward Lane (cuyo orientalismo es típico en "The White Man's Burden" de Kipling) y Kipling. Esta mezcla textual entre un poema postcolonial y una narración colonizada ofrece interpretaciones profundas de la ambivalencia de Kipling hacia sus 'Hombres Blancos', quienes habían sido responsables de convertir a Gran Bretaña en algo similar a la 'City of Brass' de la narración original.

**Palabras clave:** Orientalismo, Ambivalencia, Palimpsesto, Liberalismo, Intertextualidad.

## I

This essay by and large revises the historically acknowledged notion that Kipling is an Indian-influenced author as postcolonial reassessments of Kipling's oeuvre have tended to focus primarily on Kipling's relationship with the British Empire and India (Hanley 1994; Singh 1995; Grekowitz 1996; Park 2003; Strack 2005; Nagai 2006; Simmons 2007). In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said (1993: 162), for instance, argues that *Kim* is typical of Kipling's Orientalism, which deals merely with India. Said explains how Kipling stereotypes India as unchanging and Indians as inferior (1993: 162). Williams (1994: 487) suggests that *Kim* shows off his sympathy for the Indians who *inter alia* lack "a proper sense of time." Williams (1994: 487) emphasizes that Kipling's White Men provide the Indians with the "proper explanations of their history, religion, [and] language." McLeod (2000) makes a postcolonial reading of Kipling's "The Overland Mail" using Homi Bhabha's insights and Said's *Orientalism*. He analyzes the way Kipling represents the Indian landscape and characters as the negations of Britain and White Men. In deviating from Said's Oriental analysis of Kipling, Moore-Gilbert (1986) examines Kipling's engagement with India as typical of Anglo-Indian Orientalism. He classifies Orientalism into metropolitan Orientalism, which gloomily portrays the Indians, and Anglo-Indian Orientalism, which displays sympathy for the Indians. In reorienting Said's Orientalism framework, Scott (2011) examines Kipling's representation(s) of the Orient. He (2011: 305) argues that Kipling's prose and poetry show that Kipling is concerned not only with India, as several critics think, but also with Burma, China, Japan, and Tibet. Nevertheless, he (2011: 305) emphasizes that the Middle East is not the focus of Kipling's Orient. He concludes that Kipling does not fit Said's Orientalism paradigm for he attacks some aspects of Western culture, and he benignly portrays some elements of Oriental cultures.

One may wonder why Kipling scholars have left out of account his preoccupation with the Arabs and Arabic literature although the corpus of Kipling's verse and prose is awash with references to some Arab figures such as Haroun Al-Rashid, Hatim Al-Tai and Ahmad Urabi, Arabic landscapes, and *The Quran* and *The Arabian Nights*. In a letter sent to H. A. Gwynne in 1911, he mentions the general railway strike to be proclaimed soon, and asks him to re-read "The City of Brass" in order to see how that poem succeeds in foretelling the crises that befall Britain because it is "a careful outline of the state to which socialism reduces a nation» (Pinney 1999: 544). Lycett (2000: 761) mentions that this poem is a

“pre-war blast against democracy and pacifism.” Similarly, Keating (1994: 159) argues that Kipling’s poem severely attacks the policy of the British Liberals as it “was written during the long acrimonious debate on Lloyd George’s proposals to increase income tax and to introduce a new land tax in his people’s budget.” Keating (1994: 160) iterates,

There could be no stronger indication of just how far Kipling was out of touch with the reformist spirit of the age than “The City of Brass” which includes, in its damning comprehensive sweep, many of the very people whose spokesman he had previously been [...] Indeed, some years later he would proudly instance “The City of Brass” as a justification of his prophetic gifts. But he never wrote another poem in quite the same vein.

Shepperson (1964: 136) emphasizes that this poem, linked with James Thomson’s “The City of Dreadful Night,” illustrates Kipling’s *fin de siècle* symbolism of the crowded, dull city. He (1964: 136) further argues,

The equivalent of Thomson’s poem in the corpus of Kipling’s verse is, in many ways, “The City of Brass,” a bitter, apocalyptic denunciation of national degeneration through urban corruption, which, if it lacks the elaboration of Thomson’s stanza, has something of the jingle of his rhyme- a brassy ring, in fact, which accords well with the title.

In the same vein, Smith (1972) conducts an interesting study about Kipling’s prophetic qualities, therein he elaborates on “The City of Brass” as typical of his prophetic inclinations without making reference to its nexus with *The Arabian Nights*. Moore (1999: 17-20), in a very remarkable, yet short, essay, explains the relationship between this poem and *The Arabian Nights*. However, Moore’s essay is problematic for some reasons. It is ahistorical, and is not placed within a specific framework such as New Historicism which might offer deep insights into Kipling’s dislike of liberalism and socialism in his country, or Bhabha’s notions of ambivalence. Moore quotes some translated lines from an unidentified version. It is better to refer to Edward Lane’s translation, which is the source from which Kipling quotes his epigraph.

In drawing on intertextuality, Historicism, Said’s *Orientalism*, and Bhabha’s ambivalence (2004), the essay analyzes Kipling’s poem in terms of its historical context, textual relationship with an Arabic narrative, and Kipling’s Orientalism. On the whole, this essay sheds light on Kipling’s preoccupation with an Arabic text – a preoccupation that can be interpreted as symptomatic of Kipling’s textual, ambivalent Orientalism. In particular, this essay argues that Kipling’s poem is unique within his *oeuvre* for some important reasons. First, this poem *intertexts* (so to speak) with a colonized narrative from *The Arabian Nights*, which his aunt kept reading when he was a child as he remembered later (Pinney 1991: 9). Second, “The Ballad of East and West” underlines the impossibility of West/East encounter: “OH, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet” (Kipling 1897: 3, 12). However, this prophetic poem, first published in the *Morning Post* on June 28th, 1909, on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1931, and included in *The Years Between* in 1919, brings to the fore the possibility of a textual encounter that bridges the gap between the West and the East (Livingston 1927: 303). Third, this poem offers deep insights into the poet’s ambivalent attitudes towards the Liberal politicians in Britain who become new versions of Kipling’s White Men, whom he

proudly celebrates in "The White Man's Burden." Finally, this poem reveals an Oriental, yet surprisingly still unnoticed, affiliation between Kipling and Edward William Lane.

## II

Before shifting to the poem, it is important to draw readers' attention to the significance of the Arabic narrative of the City of Brass (Arabic: *Madinat Al-nuhas*). Pinault (1992) regards the story as part of the corpus of Islamic homiletic literature. Hamori (1971) considers the story as an allegory of spiritual famine with esoteric connotations, whose coherence is achieved by the references to the Solomonic material, the homiletic verses, and the themes of delusion and deceit. The Arabic story of the City of Brass, which is the most interesting story in *The Arabian Nights*, is included in the first standard Arabic editions of Bulaq in Cairo (Bulaq) in 1835, and the editions of Calcutta (I and II) in 1839-1842, and of Breslau (1825-1843). This tale extends from the 566<sup>th</sup> to the 578<sup>th</sup> evening in the standard printed edition. The allure of this story justifies its inclusion by many Islamic, Persian, and Turkish chroniclers, poets, and some English translators. It is mentioned in Al-Tabari's *Tarikh Al-Umam wa Al-Muluk* (English: *Chronicle of Nations and Kings*), Al-Masudi's *Morooj Al-Dhahab* (English: *Meadows of Gold*), Ibn Al-Athir's *Al-Kamil fi Al-Tarikh* (English: *The Perfect History*), Ibn Kathir's *Al-Bidayah wa Al-Nihaya fi Al-Tarikh* (English: *The Beginning and End in History*), Al-Hafiz Al-Dhahabi's *Siyar A'alam Al-Nubala'* (English: *Biographies of Nobles*), Al-Hafiz Ibn A'sakir's *Tarikh Dimashq* (English: *History of Damascus*), and Abu Hamid Al-Gharnati's *Tuhfat Al-Albab wa Nukhbat Al-I'jab* (English: *The Masterpiece of Minds and the Elite of Admiration*). Ibn Khaldun, in *Muqaddimah* (English: *Introduction*), denies the existence of this tale. This story is included in the English translations of *The Arabian Nights*, pre-dating the publication of Kipling's "The City of Brass," which are by Antoine Galland (1745), Jonathan Scott (1811), Henry Torrens (1838), Edward William Lane (1865), John Payne (1884), Richard F. Burton (1897), and Andrew Lang (1898).

This tale has unsurprisingly been the focus of critics because it spawns appropriations, imitations, and tributes from novelists, short-story writers, playwrights, and poets. Barry explores how the narrative of the City of Brass from *The Arabian Nights* is similar to or different from other Arabic and Islamic versions of the same story. Barry (1983) reviews and assesses Western and Arabic scholarship on this story; he summarizes different manuscript readings of this story. Barry moreover explains some similar links in the story of the City of Brass and other Islamic narratives. Peiprzak (2007), for instance, explains the intertextual links between Abdelkrim Jouiti's "*Medina Al-Nuhas*" and the Arabic narrative of the City of Brass. The Moroccan writer retells many stories of the City of Brass in a specific way in order to attack industrialization and modernity and to prognosticate a new future. Fudge (2006) examines the different functions the *Quranic* references such as the Islamic story of Solomon perform in the Arabic narrative of the City of Brass. He argues that the Arabic narrative stresses the transience of existence and the vanity of worldly gain. He concludes that the *Quranic* allusions and motifs turn the story to a homiletic purpose. Tuczay (2005) examines the common motifs in *The Arabian Nights* and Medieval European romances. He (2005) explains in detail seven motifs: the magnetic mountain, the congealed sea, flying

griffins, automata and genies, the mysterious walled city, the living island, and the underground river. Tuczay (2005) argues that the mysterious walled city and death caused by glancing over the wall is a common motif that recurs in European medieval romances. He mentions that this (originally Indian) motif is major in the narrative of the City of Brass. He furthermore mentions that, according to some Arabic legends, the city was built by Solomon or by the Egyptian King Sah. He finally emphasizes that the mad laughter, enchantment, artifice, and the references to Solomon are symbolic of the vanity of the world.

### III

To articulate some striking affinities between Kipling's poem and the Arabic narrative as a colonized text, it is necessary to first and last suggest that the latter is the palimpsest on which Kipling writes the former in an attempt to attack the Liberals in Great Britain. Notable among those Liberals are Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Herbert Henry Asquith, and David Lloyd George. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who was the leader of the Liberal Party from 1899 to 1908, served afterwards as the first Liberal Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1905 to 1908. He led the Liberal Party a landslide victory at the 1906 general election. The Liberal Government endeavoured to ensure trade unions, introduced free school meals for all children, and enhanced purchasing agricultural land from private landlords. Herbert Henry Asquith succeeded him as the Liberal Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1908 to 1916. David Lloyd George, who served as a Cabinet Minister from 1906 to 1916 and as Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1908 to 1915, served as the last Liberal Prime Minister from 1918 to 1922. He is identified with "the People's Budget" 1909. These three Liberal prime ministers supported social reforms, free trade, and Irish Home Rule (Dangerfield 1935).

To begin with, it is of paramount importance to highlight that Kipling's copying the title in verbatim ('The City of Brass') is crucial on two counts. First, there is an allusion (both titular and toponymic) to an Oriental story. This puzzling allusion (for readers who have not read the Arabic narrative) results in a metonymic gap which cannot be bridged without summarizing the Arabic story and analyzing its intertextual relationship with Kipling's poem.<sup>2</sup> In other words, English readers of this poem are unaware of the symbol-

<sup>2</sup> A synopsis of the colonized story may be rehearsed here in order to bridge the metonymic gap. It begins in Damascus at the court of Abd-el-Melik ibn Marwan, where the attendants started discussing stories of past nations such as the story of Solomon's dominion and the authority God bestowed upon him over mankind, jinns, birds, beasts, among other creatures. Talib ibn Sahl narrated that Solomon sealed refractory jinns and other evil spirits in copper cucurbits by his signet ring and then cast them into the sea. The Caliph asked his brother, the Viceroy of Egypt, and Musa ibn Nuseyr, his viceroy in North-Western Africa, to bring him some jars. In Cairo, Musa ibn Nuseyr, Talib ibn Sahl, Shyekh 'Abd-Es-Samad ibn 'Abd-el-Kuddus El-Masmudi and 200 men undertook an almost two-year journey to that legendary city. After they crossed the lands of Darius, they entered the palace, which was devoid of inhabitants. It was there that they found verses engraved on tablets, highlighting the vicissitudes, transience and insignificance of life. Then, the Arab travelers found a horseman, wearing a lance and pointing to the City of Brass "if thou know not the way that leadeth to the City of Brass, rub the hand of the horseman, and he will turn, and then will stop, and in whatsoever direction he stoppeth, thither proceed, without fear and without difficulty; for it will lead thee to the City of Brass" (Lane 1865: 119.). On their way to the city, they saw a jinni, with two human arms, two lion's paws, two wings and a third eye in the forehead. The jinni, imprisoned by Solomon because he was converted to Islam, told them the way to the sea of Karkar, where

ism and evocations of the City of Brass from an Arabic perspective. Second, the reference to an unknown city, known for its exoticism, wealth, beauty, and impregnability, creates a strong sense of suspense, menace, and impending danger of that city, and it establishes a relationship between Britain and the mythical city of the Arabic narrative on many levels as will be explained below.

Kipling's drawing on colonized text goes beyond copying its title. He similarly prefaces his poem with the following two-verse motto: "(Here was a people whom after their works thou shalt see wept over for their lost dominion: and in this palace is the last information respecting lords collected in the dust." – *The Arabian Nights*)" (Kipling 1919: 144). This quoted epigraph directs readers' attention to *The Arabian Nights*, on which Kipling draws. As there is no philological evidence proving Kipling's knowledge of Arabic, any claim regarding his reading of any Arabic version should be ruled out. Instead, it can be confirmed that Kipling's epigraph is excerpted from Edward Lane's translation (1865: 115),

Here was a people whom, after their works, thou shalt see wept over for their lost dominion;  
And in this palace is the last information respecting lords collected in the dust.  
Death hath destroyed them and disunited them, and in the dust they have lost  
what they amassed;  
As though they had only put down their loads to rest a while;  
quickly have they departed!<sup>3</sup>

This affiliation between Kipling and Lane is in tune with Said's argument regarding the significance of Lane from whom other writers such as Kipling descends. In this sense, Said (1978: 224) emphasizes that Kipling provides "imaginative perspectives" to Orientalists "who also followed directly in the line of descent from Lane." Said's point here is

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they could meet strange people. After they left him, they saw a great black object which was the City of Brass, whose wall and towers were made of black stones, and brass. It was lofty, strongly fortified, and impenetrable; its walls were high, and its twenty five gates were inaccessible. The ten men who scaled the wall were killed. Shyekh Abd-Es-Samad climbed the wall, saw ten beautiful damsels, recited some verses from *The Quran*, and eventually opened the gate from the inside. They entered the city, which was full of riches. In the palace, they found a young woman on a couch flanked by two copper statues of slaves. Before the throne, a tablet informed that this city was once ruled by Kush ibn Shaddad ibn Ad. The wealth of a prosperous, happy empire could not save the people from famine that suddenly struck it. She told them that anyone was allowed to take the riches, but warned them against taking the jewelry of the queen's attire. Ignoring that warning, Talib was beheaded by the copper statue. Musa and his men took much of the treasures and went back home. In the end, they reached a tribe of black people, who were living in the caves and were converted to Islam by Al-Khadir. After giving the Caliph one of the vessels, Musa decided to become a pious ascetic in Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> Burton (1897: 7) translates the verses as follows:

The signs that here their mighty works portray \* Warn us that all  
must tread the self-same way:  
O thou who standest in this stead to hear \* Tidings of folk whose  
power hath passed for aye,  
Enter this palace-gate and ask the news \* Of greatness fallen into dust  
and clay:  
Death has destroyed them and dispersed their might \* And in the dust  
they lost their rich display;  
As had they only set their burdens down \* To rest awhile, and then  
had rode away.

that Orientalists, such as Kipling, deal statically with the Orient for they draw on specific authorities such as Edward William Lane.

Collating Kipling's epigraph and Lane's translated verses illustrates that Kipling appropriates those translated lines by using some typographical conventions: inserting his epigraph inside parentheses, deleting the commas surrounding 'after their work,' using the small (a) instead of the capital 'A' in 'and', and therewith substituting the colon for the semicolon after 'dominion.' Those conventions do not play any significant role, but the term ('dominion'), which becomes a *leitwort* in his *oeuvre*, offers deep insights into his imperialism and Orientalism.

On a thematic level, this quoted epigraph highlights the influence of the Arabic story on the poem on the one hand, and the structural significance of the palace in which the epigraph is, on the other hand, found in the pretext. The inscription in the original text, written in ancient Greek, is engraved on the first slab, found over the entrance of the palace. That epigraph can furthermore be interpreted as an implicit allusion to the palace in the precursor (colonized) text – an allusion that apparently debunks Gerhardt's thesis (1963) regarding the redundancy and insignificance of the palace in the Arabic narrative. Gerhardt (1963) suggests that the Arabic narrative of the City of Brass consists of three main components, the third of which is the palace, and the inscribed slabs on which verses are written. She (1963) considers the palace as a prefiguration of the City of Brass, and this episode serves no other purpose than introducing the homilies. In paraphrasing Gerhardt, Barry (1983) suggests that the verses engraved on the seven tablets belong to homiletic genre.

One might, however, argue that the palace, in the original text, symbolizes the worldly victories of the King of Alexandria, Darius the Greek, who along with those ephemerally imperial gains have gone with the wind. Only Sheykh Abd-Es-Samad ibn Abd-el-Qudus El-Samudi, who was a very knowledgeable man and was acquainted with the lands and the seas, was able to read and interpret the inscription written in ancient Greek. He explains that the verses narrate the story of nameless people, striving hard to collect their riches, which they did not enjoy by virtue of inescapable death. This story represents how death makes life ephemeral. In lieu of plunging into the fleeting pleasures of this meaningless life, one is in great need of a strong faith in God. More specifically, all the verses incorporated in the Arabic narrative can be classified as *zuhd* (English: ascetic) poetry because the main purpose of those verses is to highlight ethical, religious codes.

By choosing this inscription, found over the entrance of the palace, as an epigraph for his poem, Kipling, who mimics Sheykh Abd-Es-Samad, is able to analyze the political scene in Britain and to prognosticate the disasters and the loss of the imperial gains of Britain as inevitable results of the policies of the Liberals. The lesson, which Emir Musa ibn Nusair, unlike the Liberals in Britain, understands, is the importance of, what is called in Arabic, *zuhd* (English: asceticism), which is the thematic axis around which the whole Arabic narrative revolves. Note that Musa's "There is no deity but God, the Living, the Enduring without failure!" highlights the oneness and sempiternity of God in contrast with the vanity and immortality of life (Lane 1865: 11). Based on a possible analogy between Musa's response to these verses and Kipling's poem, it can be suggested that Kipling is identified with Musa and his poem with Musa's response. In this sense, the poem acts as a lesson to English liberals whom he hates as will be examined below. *Zuhd* belittles the

value of life and places instead more emphasis on a strong faith in God. According to *zuhd*, indulging in the pleasures of life is a taboo for life itself deludes, misleads people from strong faith in God, and drives them to the abyss of evil. Similarly, envy, hatred, sloth, poverty, anger, and anarchy—all of these ills account for corruption (both material and spiritual). *Zuhd*, nonetheless, refers to having control over life, helping people, defending the nation, and protecting its mores and traditions. This philosophy of *zuhd* is at the thematic core of Kipling's (to say *zuhd*) poem, whose epigraph, as a prefiguration of the whole poem, places emphasis on the inevitability of death, the transience of life, and God's infinite strength, and which in its entirety portrays the Liberals as unable to defend the nation, to achieve justice, and to help people. Kipling might have been exposed to this philosophy of *zuhd* during his sojourn in India from 1882 to 1889.

Up to this point, it is evident that Kipling's copying of the title and epigraph (without any significant erasure) as paratextual elements is unquestionably explicit. As the poem progresses, one might realize that there are some implicit inscriptions of the colonized narrative which cannot utterly be erased. Those inscriptions of Lane's translation are about one hundred and sixty lexicons<sup>4</sup>, twenty three *leitworts*<sup>5</sup>, and three sentences<sup>6</sup> – all these play a crucial role in the poem.

The opening lines of the poem acrimoniously turn the table on the Liberals in Britain:

*IN a land that the sand overlays – the ways to her gates  
are untrod –  
A multitude ended their days whose gates were made  
splendid by God,  
Till they grew drunk and were smitten with madness  
and went to their fall,  
And of these is a story written: but Allah Alone*

<sup>4</sup> These lexicons include heart, bosom, rose, kings, things, decree, earth, sorrow, prepare, today, tomorrow, prophet, understanding, men, see, done, commanding, tribe, describe, justice, pull, wall, father, made, old, pleasure, entry, rest, walk, need, pay, replied, fears, enemy, laugh, saying, peace, fashioned, God, save, ascribe, dominion, man, given, number, name, soul, neighbor, let, arise, man, said, eaten, destroy, employ, let, spoiled, given, full, proof, law, remove, aid, set, judgment, slain, nation, earth, make sure, blood, brethren, order, rule, aid, obey, fell, set, praise, world, thought, dominion, evil, Rage, gains, age, forefather, ran, haste, lay, waste, strengths, faith, dig, exposed, purpose, worth, restraint, ceased, God, things, heart, beast, place, man, given, Fullest, sea, rose, sign, saw, heard, knew, hide, prepared, destruction, abide, came, trial, home, time, driven, , thought, given, need, steed, lance, pursue, decreed, deed, ripe, laugh, trust, removed, keeping, men, fled, taught, state, brought, passed, nation.

<sup>5</sup> They are "God, Allah, dominion, rebel, wine, say, men, man, heart, labour, decree, crowd, things, fashion, wisdom, fathers, destroy, hate, state, need, earth, aid, swift."

<sup>6</sup> These sentences are (1) "In a land that the sand overlays-the ways to her gates are untrod," with its allusion to "Then the Emir Musa said, Knowest thou if any one of the Kings have trodden this land before us?"; (2) "And it passed from the roll of the Nations in headlong surrender!" with its allusion to Death, the disuniter of mankind, came to me, and I was removed from grandeur to the mansion of contempt; (3) "There was no need of a steed nor a lance to pursue them," with its allusion to "They then came to a high hill, at which they looked, and, lo, upon it was a horseman of brass, on the top of whose spear was a wide and glistening head that almost deprived the beholder of sight;" and finally (4) "Out of the sea rose a sign – out of Heaven a terror" with its allusion to "And the fisherman came forth and broke it; whereupon there proceeded from it a blue smoke, which united with the clouds of heaven; and they heard a horrible voice, saying, Repentance! repentance! O Prophet of God!"

*knoweth all!* (Kipling 1919:144).

Those italicized opening lines are the Arabic narrative of the City of Brass in miniature. In so doing, Kipling appropriates the whole Arabic story, and he focuses mainly on the attempts to enter the city. In the Arabic narrative, when they reached the city, they were astonished by the height of its walls, its two brass towers, and its twenty-five gates. Thirteen men, who ascended the ladder in order to contrive means of descending into the city and to discover how to open the gate, reached the top of the ladder, gazed inside the city, clapped their hands, and jumped inside the city causing their death because ten beautiful women asked them to do so. Once again, only Sheykh Abd-es-Samad was able to protect himself from the women's artifice and enchantment by reciting verses of safety (Lane 1865: 126-129). Lexically, Kipling borrows from Lane "Allah," "fates," "gates," "multitude," "untrod," "God," "drunk," "fall," and "knoweth" in order to meticulously create the dominant tension in the whole poem: the vanity of life versus the boundless power of God – a tension around which the circles of the two texts revolve. Furthermore, those lexicons establish a tripartite relation between Allah, travelers, and the city. Allah ultimately punishes the travelers who are stunned by the gates, walls, riches, and women of the City of Brass.

Kipling's italicized opening stanza, which acts as a prelude to the whole poem, narrates the story of nameless people, who travel to a mysterious, impregnable city and who are destroyed by their overindulgence in the pleasures of life. Note that Kipling describes them by means of their actions and behaviors without using any adjectives. In so doing, Kipling imitates the narrator of the Arabic story who describes the characters in that way as suggested by Pinault (1992). More interestingly, Kipling makes an implicitly symbolic relationship between the city in the Arabic narrative and Britain, between the thirteen dead men and the Liberals, between the ten beautiful women and the social reforms in Britain, and finally between Sheykh Abd-es-Samad and Kipling himself. According to Kipling, the Liberals, like the thirteen men, have proposed specific liberal welfare reforms after their landslide victory in the general election in 1906. They argue that those reforms aim to improve education, health, social security, and employment. Like the thirteen men, who did not succeed in opening the gate of the city and in protecting themselves from the temptation of the young, yet not real, women, the Liberals are deceived by those reforms. Like those women, who tempted the thirteen men, the social reforms will not make Britain better, and, thus, the Liberals will not politically and socially succeed in Britain. What they have in common is their deadly fate.

Like Sheykh Abd-es-Samad, who was able to open the gate after he succeeded in protecting himself from the temptation of those beautiful women, Kipling, as "a Tory imperialist" to use Said's phrase (1993: 161), attacks all democratic, fiscal reforms and anti-imperialist attitudes among the social circles and the Liberal government, Kipling stresses the contradictory pull between destructive liberalism and redeeming *zuhd*, and his poem ultimately foreshadows the material, moral destruction of the Liberals in Great Britain at the end of the poem and the impending self-inflicted disaster for which Britain is headed.

When the wine stirred in their heart their bosoms

dilated.  
 They rose to suppose themselves kings over all  
 things created –  
 To decree a new earth at a birth without labour or  
 sorrow –  
 To declare: “We prepare it to-day and inherit  
 to-morrow.”  
 They chose themselves prophets and priests of  
 minute understanding,  
 Men swift to see done, and outrun, their extremest  
 commanding –  
 Of the tribe which describe with a jibe the per-  
 versions of Justice –  
 Panders avowed to the crowd whatsoever its lust is (Kipling 1919:144-145).

One might realize that Kipling in those lines mocks the Liberals as a new version of his White Men, and their proposals as the Liberals' Burden which surprisingly replaces the White Man's Burden which Kipling proudly expresses in “The White Man's Burden,” published in 1899. In so doing, Kipling's ambivalence surfaces in his attitude towards the White Man's Burden. Said (1978: 3) argues that Western superiority always legitimizes and gives full rein to Western involvement in the Orient. Said (1978: 226), in particular, instances Kipling as a paragon of English Orientalism and argues that Kipling is a racist writer because Western superiority is identified with whiteness. Kipling's White Man, who appears as “an idea, a persona, [and] a style of being,” is distinct biologically and culturally from an Indian, African, or Arab on the basis of chromatism (Said 1978: 226). Said quotes “A Song of White Men” (1899) in order to emphasize how Kipling describes his White Man as a representative of Western responsibility towards uncivilized nations. The White Man's Burden is to enlighten and to civilize the colonized. In failing to fulfill his mission of “cleaning a land” and to achieve freedom, the White Man becomes ready and willing to go to wars in order to steal, destroy, and kill. Said (1978: 227) emphasizes,

Being a White Man was therefore an idea and a reality. It involved a reasoned position towards both the white and the non-white worlds. It meant—in the colonies—speaking in a certain way, behaving according to a code of regulations, and even feeling certain things and not others. It meant specific judgments, evaluations, gestures. It was a form of authority before which non-whites, and even whites themselves, were expected to bend [...] Being a White Man, in short, was a very concrete manner of being-in-the world, a way of taking hold of reality, language, and thought.

The Liberals are unaware of the dangers of their political mission and social reforms. By forming the Liberal Government in Great Britain after winning the general election in 1906, they consider themselves kings who rule all British people, prophets, and priests who preach their new liberal mission represented by their social reforms. Their mission aims to “decree a new earth at a birth without labour and sorrow,” and they “prepare [this new earth] to-day and inherent to-morrow.” Great Britain is that new earth where its British inhabitants will be more relaxed, happier, and richer. One might suggest that Kipling,

in particular, mocks "The People's Budget," which was introduced by Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George on 29 April 1909. Lloyd George defends "The People's Budget" which raises taxes in order to establish a welfare state as follows,

'This,' he said, 'is a war Budget.' It is for raising money to wage implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness. I cannot help hoping and believing that before this generation has passed away, we shall have advanced a great step towards that good time, when poverty, and the wretchedness and human degradation which always follows in its camp, will be as remote to the people of this country as the wolves which once infested its forests (Raymond 1922: 114-115).

As the poem progresses, Kipling explicitly attacks the Liberals' anti-imperialist attitudes and their denouncement of British traditions. They sign their own death warrant because they set their faces against the traditional values of the British Culture and Empire:

Swiftly these pulled down the walls that their  
 fathers had made them –  
 The impregnable ramparts of old, they razed and  
 relaid them  
 As playgrounds of pleasure and leisure, with limit-  
 less entries,  
 And havens of rest for the wastrels where once  
 walked the sentries;  
 And because there was need of more pay for the  
 shouters and marchers,  
 They disbanded in face of their foemen their bow-  
 men and archers.  
 They replied to their well-wishers' fears – to their  
 enemies laughter,  
 Saying: "Peace! We have fashioned a God Which  
 shall save us hereafter.  
 We ascribe all dominion to man in his factions  
 conferring,  
 And have given to numbers the Name of the  
 Wisdom unerring" (Kipling 1919:145-146).

Kipling uses the impregnable walls of England as symbolic of Britain's old defenses, the traditional mores, ethics, and conservative practices which have laid the foundations of a conservative, strong society. However, in renouncing all those conservative ideals and restructuring the social fabric of the British society, the Liberals, who become the new version of the White Men, are responsible for the lechery, corruption, weakness of Great Britain, and, above all, the decline of Kipling's White Men, portrayed as civilizers and enlighteners of poor and uncivilized nations. They have, instead, replaced the ethics of their fathers by their immoral (to say decolonial) desire, destroyed their defenses, and therewith replaced them with "playgrounds of pleasure and leisure" and "havens of rest for the wastrels" (Kipling 1919:145). In accomplishing all those liberal tasks, they need more money to establish their so-called welfare state and to fund "their shouters and marchers" in order to gain their support. In so doing, they express two types of desire: financial and

decolonial. The first desire is fulfilled through increasing taxes by proposing the People's Budget, the second through supporting the independence of colonies.

At this point, it is feasible to suggest that Kipling, in attacking the Liberals in those lines quoted above, draws once again on the Arabic story. Kipling's portrayal of the devastated walls which are relaid "as playgrounds of pleasure and leisure" conspicuously evokes the impregnable walls of the Arabic City of Brass, and the treasures found in the fabulous city. It is apparent that Kipling intends to establish remarkable affinities between the Liberals and the thirteen dead Arabs, lured by the enchantment of the beautiful women in the City of Brass. As suggested above, Kipling's walls, symbolizing Britain's defenses, act as social barriers between death and life, between sexuality and morality, and between liberalism and *zuhd*. Those devastated walls refer to defenseless, vulnerable England as is not the case with the wall surrounding the City of Brass. Only Sheykh Abd-Es-Samad, reciting some verses from *The Quran*, scaled the wall and ultimately opened the gate. Unlike Abd-Es-samad, who protected himself by verses of safety, which underline that faith in God always saves believers, those men succumb to the temptation of the beautiful women inside the city. Kipling's possible point is that the Liberals should do what Sheykh Abd-es-Samad does in order to protect Britain instead of being lured by proposals which bring out their destruction and the weakness of Great Britain.

In the following lines, Kipling lampoons the liberal, socialist agendas:

They said: 'Who has hate in his soul? Who has  
envied his neighbour?

Let him arise and control both that man and his  
labour.'

They said: 'Who is eaten by sloth? Whose un-  
thrift has destroyed him?

He shall levy a tribute from all because none have  
employed him.'

They said: 'Who hath toiled, who hath striven,  
and gathered possession?

Let him be spoiled. He hath given full proof of  
transgression' (Kipling 1919:146-147).

Lycett (2000: 534) explains that Kipling in this stanza attacks the Liberals' proposals concerning the unemployment benefit system. Kipling expresses his repudiation of "the Labour movement and the class conflict which the Government was encouraging" and of Lloyd George's proposals (Gilmour 2003: 217-218).

Added to this, Kipling draws a gloomy picture of the Liberal version of his White Men for spoiling Britain's reputation in colonies as a culturally superior nation, whose burden is to civilize and enlighten the inferior nations based on its cultural superiority:

As for their kinsmen far off, on the skirts of the  
nation,

They harried all earth to make sure none escaped  
reprobation.

They awakened unrest for a jest in their newly-

won borders,  
 And jeered at the blood of their brethren betrayed  
 by their orders.  
 They instructed the ruled to rebel, their rulers to  
 aid them;  
 And, since such as obeyed them not fell, their  
 Viceroys obeyed them.  
 When the riotous set them at naught they said:  
 'Praise the upheaval!  
 For the show and the world and the thought of  
 Dominion is evil!  
 They unwound and flung from them with rage, as a  
 rag that defied them,  
 The imperial gains of the age which their fore-  
 fathers piled them (Kipling 1919:147-148).

In the stanza quoted above, Kipling attacks the Liberals' anti-imperialist vision and decolonial desire. Instead of civilizing and helping non-whites such as Indians, Arabs and Africans, the liberals "harried all earth to make sure none escaped reprobation," "awakened unrest for a jest in their newly-won borders" and "instructed the ruled to rebel, their rulers to aid them" (Kipling 1919:147). According to Kipling, the Liberals will fling away the imperial gains that their forefathers have piled in New Zealand, Australia, India, Egypt, Sudan, Southern Africa, Ireland, among many other British colonies in the world.<sup>7</sup> The Liberals consider such imperial gains and the imperial mission which Kipling celebrates as the White Man's Burden as evil. Kipling expects that such a policy will lead to the break-up of the British Empire. In this sense, Said (1993: 163) argues that the "British intellectuals, political figures, and historians [...] believe that giving up the empire- whose symbols were Suez, Aden, and India- was bad for Britain and bad for 'the natives', who both have declined in all sorts of ways ever since." Kipling's "they instructed the ruled to rebel, their rulers to aid them" attacks the Liberals' vehement opposition to the Boer Wars, especially the Second Boer War (1899-1902) and their support of the Independence of Ireland which will lead to the break-up of the British Empire. In 1902 Britain occupied both the Transvaal and the Orange River colonies. The self-government within the British Empire granted by Campbell-Bannerman's government brought out the Union of South Africa in 1910. Lloyd George attacked the Second Boer War (because of its aims and cost), and supported instead social reforms. The Liberals campaigned for Irish Home Rule after Ireland had been united with Britain into the United Kingdom of Great Britain. As a price of Irish support in 1910, Asquith delivered in legislation the Third Irish Home Rule Bill (Raymond 1922). In order to express his indictment of the Liberals' attitudes towards the British Empire, Kipling borrows some lexical inscriptions, which highlight, what might be phrased, decolonial heralding. Those lexicons include "nation," "earth," "make sure," "blood," "brethren," "order," "rule," "aid," "obey," "fell," "set," "praise," "world," "thought," "dominion," "evil," "far off," "distant," "harried" and "escaped."

<sup>7</sup> In "The Dykes," Kipling expresses a similar attitude.

When the poem approaches its closure, Kipling darkly portrays the tragic outcomes of the liberal policies:

They ran panting in haste to lay waste and em-  
bitter for ever  
The wellsprings of Wisdom and Strengths which are  
Faith and Endeavour.  
They nosed out and digged up and dragged forth  
and exposed to derision  
All doctrine of purpose and worth and restraint and  
prevision:  
And it ceased, and God granted them all things  
for which they had striven,  
And the heart of a beast in the place of a man's  
heart was given (Kipling 1919:148-149).

In the lines quoted above, Kipling ostensibly ascribes the decline of the imperial grandeur to Liberals' weaknesses, faithlessness, lack of wisdom, and their denouncement of the White Man's Burden. The Liberal White Men, whose liberal agendas are devoid of logic, betray the British Empire by destroying all its sources of power. In this sense, Cauley (1938: 71-72) suggests that Kipling "showed the lack of logic in the policy which was being pursued in England at that time." The inevitable outcome of such a policy is the break-up of the Empire and the destruction of the social fabric of the British society – an outcome that Kipling, in playing the role of a prophet, warns his country against such a fate as Parry (1992: 122) mentions.

Kipling attacks the Liberals' unawareness of the increasing power of Germany as Britain's strongest enemy and predicts the breaking out of the First World War 1914-1918:

When they were fullest of wine and most flagrant  
in error,  
Out of the sea rose a sign – out of Heaven a  
terror.  
Then they saw, then they heard, then they knew –  
for none troubled to hide it,  
A host had prepared their destruction, but still  
they denied it.  
They denied what they dared not abide if it came  
to the trial,  
But the Sword that was forged while they lied did  
not heed their denial.  
It drove home, and no time was allowed to the  
crowd that was driven.  
The preposterous-minded were cowed – they thought  
time would be given (Kipling 1919:149).

In the lines quoted above Kipling implicitly warns Britain against German Naval and Air Forces as represented by Kipling's references to the sea, heaven, and the sword. Kipling mentions that an English newspaper in 1911 pictorially mocked "Out of the sea became a sign, out of Heaven a terror in the shape of a sea full of submarines and a sky full of aeroplanes" (Pinney 1999: 544). The Anglo-German armament, particularly naval arms race was serious between 1900 and 1914, and is considered as one of the causes of World War I. It intensified when Britain launched the Dreadnought in 1906. Germany was building up a modern fleet under Tirpitz' laws. Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, Secretary of State of the German Imperial Naval Office planned to expand the German High Seas Fleet through introducing four Fleet Acts between 1898 and 1912. Four *Kolberg*-class cruisers were produced between 1907 and 1911. Germany introduced the *Nassau* class, the first German battle cruiser—SMS *Von der Tann*, and the *Helgoland* class in 1907, 1908, and 1909 respectively. Kipling's "Out of the sea rose a sign" is a possible reference to the *Helgoland* which was introduced in 1909. Germany had built ten modern capital ships in 1909; four battleships of the *Helgoland* class were laid down in 1909–1910. Kipling might be aware that in 1908 and 1909, Germany had launched four and three dreadnoughts, whereas Britain had only two (Parkinson 2015; McLean 2001; Trueland 2004; Hermann 1996; "Flight 1903-1914").

Kipling warns similarly against the superiority of German Air Forces when he says "out of Heaven a/ terror." Germany's Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin flew the first airship in 1900. The first successful airplane flight was in Germany in 1908. In the same year, Germany established the Air Fleet League to promote German military aviation. In October 1908 Rudolf Martin encouraged the Germany Army to build a Zeppelin fleet to invade Britain. In 1909 the British Committee for Imperial Defense aircraft subcommittee did not pay attention to the German plans, and instead recommended minimal funding for airship development and none for airplanes. On 12, April, 1909, Lord Montagu, however, stressed Britain's defenselessness against an air attack. Four days after the publication of Kipling's poem, the German Army received its first Zeppelin (Castle 2011: 4; "Flight 1903-1914").

It is of paramount importance at this final stage to suggest that other nations' denouncement of the British Empire, because of the liberal white men, is what Kipling comes down hard on at the end of the poem:

There was no need of a steed nor a lance to pursue  
them;  
It was decreed their own deed, and not chance,  
should undo them.  
The tares they had laughingly sown were ripe  
to the reaping.  
The trust they had leagued to disown was removed  
from their keeping.  
The eaters of other men's bread, the exempted  
from hardship,  
The excusers of impotence fled, abdicating their  
wardship,  
For the hate they had taught through the State  
brought the State no defender,

And it passed from the roll of the Nations in head-  
long surrender (Kipling 1919:150).

In the lines quoted above, Kipling accounts for the ultimate fate of Britain, whose liberal leaders have followed specific doctrines which are by all odds the main reasons for their destruction. Kipling in this poem plays the role of the horseman of brass, whose spear instructs travellers to rub the hand of the horseman which shows them how to get to the City of Brass. Kipling thinks that he does not need to rub his hand, and to have a spear in order to portray Britain, which is under the guidance of the Liberals easily known and accessible. Britain and the Arabic City of Brass are populated with petrified (and stoic) people, who do not act at all. Unlike the Arabic City of Brass, whose rivers are running, trees are fruitful, and gardens bear ripe produce, Britain, nevertheless, is full of tares, which are useless and unwanted. Note that Kipling establishes an organic relationship between the liberal social reforms, especially "the People's Budget," and tares which become ripe in Britain. Their ineffective social reforms grow like tares which are unwanted by farmers. One might, nevertheless, contemplate this resemblance ironic because the process of sowing, growing, and harvesting is a token of productivity, whereas their tares (symbolic of their reforms) are signs of their infertility, impotence, and loss of popularity. Because of those unsuccessful policies regarding unemployment among others, nobody will trust and support them.

Kipling drives home the tragic resolution of the poem: Britain will be hated and washed away from the honorable record of nations. This last stanza, which foreshadows the tragic end of the British Empire, evokes the tragic end of Kush bin Shaddad bin A'ad:

But the Deity would nought save the execution of his purpose; and thus I became  
separated from my brethren.  
Death, the disuniter of mankind, came to me, and I was removed from grandeur to the mansion  
of contempt;  
And I found [the recompense of] all my past actions, for which I am pledged:  
for I was sinful (Lane 1865: 118).

What Kush and Kipling's Liberals share is inevitable death. Strength, wealth, and fame cannot immortalize people and states.

By way of concluding, it can be iterated that reading Kipling's poem from the perspectives of Intertextuality, Historicism, Said's *Orientalism*, and Bhabha's ambivalence offers deep insights into Kipling's Orientalism. This reading, in terms of a cluster of critical approaches, revises the historically acknowledged notion that Kipling is an Indian-influenced author as postcolonial reassessments of Kipling's oeuvre have tended to focus primarily on Kipling's relationship with the British Empire and India. The Arabic narrative of the City of Brass, which enriches Kipling's poem lexically and thematically, seems to be Kipling's palimpsest upon which he writes his poem. Kipling's drawing on the Arabic story by copying the title and the epigraph uncovers an unnoticed (not merely textual) relationship between Edward Lane (whose Orientalism is typical of Kipling's *The White Man's Burden*) and Kipling. This textual relationship between a postcolonial poem and a colonized narrative offers deep insights into Kipling's ambivalence toward his White Men, who have been

responsible for making Britain similar to the City of Brass in the original narrative. As argued above, the Arabic narrative of the City of Brass is the palimpsest on which Kipling writes his poem in an attempt to attack the Liberals in Great Britain. In so doing Kipling succeeds in stressing the contradictory pull between destructive liberalism and redeeming *zuhd*, and his poem ultimately foreshadows the material, moral destruction of the Liberals in Great Britain at the end of the poem and the impending self-inflicted disaster for which Britain is headed.

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