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# Spatial, Temporal and Linguistic Displacement in Kipling's and Maugham's Colonial Short Stories: The Disrupting Power of the "Colonial" in Modern Short Fiction

Jaine Chemmachery

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- 1 While Kipling was considered as an anti-modern writer from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 1980s,<sup>1</sup> Maugham has been labelled "middlebrow" since the 1920s; both were seen as anti-modernist even if the dates of their published works fit with the period traditionally called modernist, i.e. 1880-1920. Both authors depicted two political and cultural configurations of the British Empire, but the colonial dimension of their short stories is less contextual than critical. It triggers questions as regards colonialism being the ghostly shadow of modernity<sup>2</sup> and makes it possible for (modernist) disruption, to emerge.
- 2 Using Peter Nicholls's famous statement about the plurality of modernisms and later works on high and low modernisms,<sup>3</sup> I want to suggest that Kipling and Maugham may be seen as proto- and para-modernists. Both experimented, at different levels, with early forms of "stream of consciousness" or narrative instability in their short stories, a genre that is well-suited to formal experimentation. From their ex-centric positions—Kipling stood outside the English literary scene, since his first stories were published in India, and Maugham was external to the high literary scene<sup>4</sup>—the authors also experienced literal and figurative exile, while their colonial short stories precisely tackled exile. The latter may as such be linked to modernist short stories in which exile is also central—both as a trope and a narrative strategy—but they can also be read through Frank O'Connor's concept of the short story being the "lonely voice," the genre of exiles. Colonial temporality, as is performed in Kipling's short fiction—and Maugham's to a lesser degree,

upsets the nation's temporality or what the American critic Jed Esty calls "the progressive time of the nation" (17). Modernism is often said to be a critical response to modernity. I would add that it was a response to the multiple temporalities that existed outside the modern temporality of the nation and that colonial short fictions simply made visible. My contention, all in all, is that the writing of modernist short stories is intrinsically connected to English colonial short story writing.

## Kipling's proto-modernism versus Maugham's para-modernism

- 3 The short stories of both authors are characterised by features traditionally seen as modernist, even though critics tend to overlook this aspect when they refer to Kipling's and Maugham's stories. For instance, the modernist touch of Kipling's novel *Kim* (1901) has been commented upon.<sup>5</sup> As the text recalls a fragmented self, the eponymous character's self-interrogation about his identity reads: "I am Kim. And what is Kim? His soul repeated it again and again" (167). The statement immediately followed by its literal questioning suggests that any stable identity is impossible while the reduplication of the signifier "Kim" and the chasm between "I am Kim" and "what is Kim" stresses the division of the self into two and potentially more facets—a question which certainly preoccupied modernist writers.
- 4 The few critical studies on Kipling and modernism focused on later short stories, such as "Mrs Bathurst" (1904). In 1999, Harry Ricketts, one of Kipling's contemporary biographers, wrote: "It was, in effect, the first modernist text in English. Deliberate obliqueness, formal fragmentation, the absence of a privileged authorial point of view, intense literary self-consciousness, lack of closure—all the defining qualities of modernism were present and correct" (288). But earlier Kiplingian Anglo-Indian short stories dating back to the 1880s and 1890s already displayed proto-modernist features. "The Conversion of Aurelian McGoggin" (1887; 1888) tells the story of a young man who wants to impose his positivist theories on the members of his club in India:
 

McGoggin [...] had read some books written by a man called Comte [...] and he came out to India with a rarefied religion over and above his work [...]. It only proved that men had no souls, and there was no God and no hereafter, and that you must worry somehow for the good of humanity. (*Plain Tales* 81)
- 5 Yet one day, McGoggin is suddenly struck with aphasia and is only able to utter a list of words: "Perfectly conceivable—dictionary—red oak—amenable—cause—retaining—shuttlecock—alone" (*Plain Tales* 84). While the sentence mimics an automatic process of speech, the dashes and the paratactic mode convey the fragmentation of Aurelian's self and that of the English Verb too. The passage underlines the loss of the English power of speech in the colony as it is displaced from its original site of authority. Homi Bhabha famously underlined in *The Location of Culture* (1994) that, as the authority of colonial discourse was stated, the necessity to reassert it constantly decentred its very authoritative power. Such authority is indeed subjected to hybridity as it cohabits with other cultures in the colony and is consequently dissociated from its initial power position. The authority of the positivist discourse that Aurelian wants to impose on the members of the club is thus progressively disconnected from its original location of power as the speech is uttered in the colonial context.

- 6 “In the Pride of his Youth” (1887; 1888) depicts an English civil servant in India whose wife and child remained in England. As the man struggles to support his family financially, his wife writes him a letter which reads:

She was not going to wait for ever and the baby was dead and Dicky was only a boy and he would never set eyes on her again and why hadn't he waved his handkerchief to her when he left Gravesend and God was her judge she was a wicked woman but Dicky was worse enjoying himself in India and this other man loved the ground she trod on and would Dicky ever forgive her for she would never forgive Dicky. (*Plain Tales* 160)

- 7 The absence of punctuation mimics the wife's agitated state of mind while the polysyndeton creates the effect of an uncontrollable flow of speech in the short story. The genre itself is often associated with pressurised writing. Pierre Tibi highlighted this when he quoted Geneviève Serreau who said about her short stories that they “were born out of the need to freeze some vertigo governed by a sense of urgency—as if death were imminent” (50-51).<sup>6</sup> In the passage above, no free indirect speech is perceptible as the presence of inverted commas indicates. The use of the third person pronoun yet signals a mediating instance in what “should” have been direct speech because of the very presence of inverted commas. So this is neither direct speech, nor indirect speech, not even free indirect speech, but some hybrid experimental speech that may announce, to a certain extent of course, Woolfian stream of consciousness:

Ah yes, she did of course; what a nuisance; and felt very sisterly and oddly conscious at the same time of her hat. Not the right hat for the early morning, was that it? For Hugh always made her feel, as he bustled on, raising his hat extravagantly and assuring her that she might be a girl of eighteen, and of course he was coming to her party tonight, Evelyn absolutely insisted, only a little late he might be after the party at the Palace to which he had to take one of Jim's boys. (*Mrs Dalloway* 9)

- 8 This passage highlights Woolf's poetic hypothesis about the flow of human thought, which is underlined by the use of free indirect speech and the absence of strong punctuation. The writing suggests a non-mediatised transposition of a never-ending internal utterance and mimics the way thoughts can follow each other in the mind. This echoes Woolf's explanation of the stream of consciousness in “Modern Fiction”:

The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and [...] if [the writer] could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style. (160)

- 9 Polyphonic narration is also a common element between Kipling's and Maugham's stories on the one hand, and modernist short stories on the other hand. In Maugham's short fiction, the narrator often delegates the power of narration to an intra-diegetic narrator. When there is no such embedded structure, narrative authority in Maugham's stories is often upset as modes of focalization abruptly change. “The Outstation” (1924) begins with external focalization: “The new assistant arrived in the afternoon” (*More Far Eastern Tales* 52). But the voice of this external narrator is progressively mixed with expressions of viewpoints which bring the voices of specific characters to the surface of the text. A passage such as “They went in to dinner” is quickly followed by “He [Mr. Warburton] began to think he was unfair to Cooper. Of course he was not a gentleman [...] And he was certainly good at his work” (*More Far Eastern Tales* 65). There is a move from external focalization to internal focalization and free indirect speech. As the third person pronoun

initially refers to Warburton, the pronoun “he” in the second sentence refers to Cooper while the adverb “of course” is a direct expression of Warburton’s point of view. Some disturbance is created thanks to a blurring use of pronouns even though the effect is less troubling than in “high modernist” texts, as the overarching narrative structure remains omnipresent in Maugham’s fiction.

- 10 Even if Maugham’s writing style mainly draws on a traditional conception of the short story as plot-based, his short fiction domesticates modernist preoccupations by thematizing them. As Freudian theories circulated widely within Europe in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and many modernist writers were interested in them,<sup>7</sup> some of Maugham’s short stories seem to offer an accelerated course on psychoanalysis. His stories particularly stage the liberation of unconscious drives as can be seen in “Rain” (1921) which evokes a sailing journey back to the metropolis. On the boat are a Reverend and his wife, both English, and an American couple. The Reverend’s wife once tells the American man, who is a doctor, that her husband dreamt of the Nebraska mountains on the previous night. The narration then focuses on the doctor’s thoughts through internal focalization: “He remembered seeing them from the windows of the train when he crossed America. They were like huge mole-hills, rounded and smooth, and they rose from the plain abruptly” (*East and West* 34). Any contemporary reader, familiar with Freudian theories, could easily perceive the erotic nature of the dream thanks to the focus on the doctor’s thoughts. Yet the narrator adds: “Dr. Macphail remembered how it struck him that they were like a woman’s breasts” (*East and West* 34) as if it were necessary to confirm the previous intuition.
- 11 Sometimes an ironic distance towards Freudian theories is perceptible, as in “The Vessel of Wrath” (1931), where repression and neurosis are tackled. Martha Jones is forced to spend a night on an island with natives and a disreputable British man. Ted Ginger is not only violent; he is also a drunkard and a womaniser. The succeeding jaunty propositions in a paratactic rhythm mimic Martha’s tense state of mind:
- Perhaps after he had his will of her he would pass her on to the others. How could she go back to her brother when such a thing had happened to her? Of course he would be sympathetic, but would he ever feel quite the same to her again? It would break his heart. And perhaps he would think that she ought to have resisted more. For his sake perhaps it would be better if she said nothing about it. [...] But then supposing she had a baby. (*More Far Eastern Tales* 115)
- 12 Apart from slight experimentation with free indirect speech, an interesting phenomenon occurs. Exhausted, Martha finally falls asleep and wakes up on the following morning, unharmed. When Ted and Martha meet, the narrative voice explains: “She could not look at him, but she felt herself as red as a turkey cock” (*More Far Eastern Tales* 117). The use of “cock” is far from being innocent, especially when the next question Ted asks Martha is: “Have a banana?” Maugham seems to be writing tongue-in-cheek while the text provides us with an accelerated course in Freudian psychoanalysis about repression and the feminine desire for the penis. Maugham’s short fiction thus relies on both a popular reappropriation of modernist themes and an ironic perspective on the modernist interests of the time.
- 13 Major modernist themes such as cultural degeneration or the end of empire are also at the heart of Maugham’s short stories. As some modernist writers wondered about the future of the novel,<sup>8</sup> Maugham’s short stories raise questions about culture as his texts, infused by Spenglerian theories about *The Decline of the West* (1921), represent the English

colonies as a cultural no man's land, even a dystopia. "Flotsam and Jetsam" (1940) describes the evolution in the heroine's apprehension of the colonial landscape through time: "then, everything delighted her. She was amused by the river life and the life of the jungle, the teeming growth of the forest, the birds with their gay plumage and the brilliant butterflies" (*More Far Eastern Tales* 158). A happy colonial past is hinted at by the use of "then" and of the past tense but the colony progressively turns into hell, as the repetition of "hate" in the present tense signals: "How I hate this country. I hate that river. I hate this house. I hate that damned rubber" (*More Far Eastern Tales* 154). This is all the more significant because the short story's last word is "hell": "'To hell with life!' she shouted" (*More Far Eastern Tales* 165). Decline and degradation are visibly inscribed in the text, recalling decadent works and the fin-de-siècle movement, but the stories also highlight the exhaustion of a modern European culture by reappropriating modernist concerns from a popular perspective.

- 14 Yet, other types of displacement—spatial and temporal—operate in both authors' colonial short fiction and destabilise the time and space of the English nation and the stability of its historical narrative. The notion of a spatial displacement appears particularly through exile which is as central to the works studied here as it is essential to modernist short stories.

## Spatial and linguistic displacement in colonial short fiction: making way for the modernist short story

- 15 Exile is present as a trope in Kipling and Maugham's colonial short stories insofar as they depict colonisers and planters who feel they no longer belong to any nation. In "The Madness of Private Ortheris" (1888), the eponymous soldier cries out his despair as he feels his mother country and the Queen herself have forsaken their sons of the colonies:

Now I'm sick to go 'Ome-go 'Ome-go 'Ome! ... I'm sick for London again; sick for the sounds of 'er, an' the sights of 'er, and the stinks of 'er ... An' I lef' all that for to serve the Widder beyond the seas ... There's the Widder sittin' at 'Ome with a gold crownd on 'er 'ead; and 'ere am Hi, Stanley Orth'ris, the Widder's property, a rottin' FOOL! (*Plain Tales* 210-211)

- 16 Exile is epitomised in the theme of nostalgia expressed through the signifier "Home" and the opposition between "here" and "there," even though the desire for the colonisers to be part of the nation is still present. Colonisers and civil servants are indeed linked to the mother country even if it is impossible for them to reintegrate it completely. Kaori Nagai and Ben Grant highlighted that "Home" was an absent presence which Kipling's characters could only love from a far-away location: "Were they truly to return there, the nation would, in this sense, cease to exist [...]. So it is only by expatriating themselves that these Anglo-Indian ex-patriots can truly love England, however painful that love may be" (192). Maugham's planters also suffer from what Nagai and Grant called "expatriotism" to refer to Kipling's Englishmen even if their relation to England is utterly broken. The planters of English ascendancy in Maugham's fiction do not belong anywhere, as one of them recalls in "Flotsam and Jetsam" (1940): "I'm a stranger in England. I don't like their ways over there and I don't understand the things they talk about. And yet I'm a stranger here too" (*More Far Eastern Tales* 151).
- 17 The treatment of exile in Kipling's and Maugham's stories can be articulated with Frank O' Connor's old, but still critically valid, contention that "the novel can still adhere to the

classical concept of civilized society, of man as an animal who lives in a community [...] but the short story remains by its very nature remote from the community" (O'Connor 20). The short story, according to O'Connor, is the genre in which the odd voice may be heard, but it is the genre of exiles themselves.

- 18 Precisely, as exile is mostly thematized in Maugham's short stories, it literally infiltrates Kipling's writing:

Ye black limb, there's a sahib comin' for this ekka. He wants to go jildi to the Padsahi Jhil'-twas about tu moiles away-to shoot s nipe-chirria. You dhrive Jehannum ke marfik, mallum-like Hell! 'Tis no manner av use bukkin' to the Sahib, bekaze he doesn't samjao your talk. Av he bolos anything, just you choop and chel. Dekker? Go arsty for the first arder-mile fron cantonmints. Thin chel, Shaitan ke marfik; an' the chooper you choops an' the jildier you chels the better kooshy will that Sahib be; an' here's a rupee for ye! (*Plain Tales* 55)

- 19 Kipling's "soldier speech" has displacing effects on standard English. Visual and audible defamiliarisation provides English readers with an experience of disorientation as if they were themselves estranged from their own language, though one should remember that Kipling originally wrote for Anglo-Indians in India.

- 20 But even if Kipling's poetics can be linked to modernist experimentations with language and the notion of exile, it still keeps a strong connection to Victorian ideology. Unfamiliar "Englishes" in Kipling's short fiction are mainly Orientalised English or Irish English. So power relations are more than often perceptible in such speech occurrences. For instance, in "A Sahib's War" (1901; 1904) the narrator presents the speech of a Sikh soldier:

What orders? The young Lieutenant-Sahib will not detain me? Good! I go down to Eshtellenbosch by the next terain? Good! I go with the Heaven-born? Good! Then for this day I am the Heaven-born's servant. Will the Heaven-born bring the honour of his presence to a seat? Here is an empty truck; I will spread my blanket over one corner thus-for the sun is hot, though not so hot as our Punjab in May. I will prop it up thus, and I will arrange this hay thus, so the Presence can sit at ease till God sends us a terain for Eshtellenbosch... (*Traffics and Discoveries* 87)

- 21 The word "terain" is the Indianised version of the English term "train." An effect of spontaneity is also produced by the sentences in which the character describes his slightest actions by resorting to frequent uses of the first person pronoun: "I will prop it up thus, and I will arrange this hay thus." Sophisticated expressions such as "Will the Heaven-born bring the honour of his presence to a seat?" express the respect due by natives to Englishmen as they recall the structure of Indian sentences. The fact that a 19th-century English work should stage Indian characters speaking an English language visibly made to sound other can be interpreted in different ways. Stressing the spoken dimension of the Sikh man's words refers to what Edward Said called the narrator's "strategic position."<sup>9</sup> What may be seen as a narrative display of condescending superiority towards the natives is related to the racism that was inherent in the colonial system at the time. So even if the text makes it possible for the reader to hear, see and read alternative English languages, one cannot help wondering whether what is at stake is the desire to make the other's language visible or the mere exposure of the power relations that exist within the English language. Kipling's Irish language is indeed often caught within a more general reflection about nationalism and colonialism, about England and Ireland, about race and class.

- 22 A sense of unfamiliarity still emerges in Kipling's short stories as voices decentring the dominant masculine/ colonial/ English voice can be perceived. In "A Sahib's War," the narrator evokes an event that occurred during the Boer War in which his captain, Corbyn Sahib, was involved. The native transforms the captain's surname into "Kurban Sahib." Such a transformation does not only account for the Indianisation of the native's English language. It also represents a new enunciative possibility and conveys the alienation of the English subject in the colonies, its very exile, as it is estranged from his name which granted him stable identity and origin.
- 23 Robert Dixon offers an interesting analysis of a similar patronymic deformation in R. L. Stevenson's short story "The Beach of Falesá." The name of the narrator, John Wiltshire, is modified as the natives call him "Welsher" which associates him with a single British region rather than with Great(er) Britain. According to Dixon, "the native tendency to garble his name turns it into a hybrid, unsettling the point of its origin, alienating the British subject [...] and leaving him in the paranoid space between cultures" (181-182). Against the colonisers' power of nomination, Kipling's text stages the native reappropriation of such power through Indian re-enunciation of English names.
- 24 It is then no coincidence that such destabilising voices should often appear in the literal margins of Kipling's short stories, i.e. in the epigraphs. In the epigraph of "The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney" (1891) one can read:
- Wohl auf, my bully cavaliers  
We ride to church to-day,  
The man that hasn't got a horse  
Must steal one straight away.  
Be reverent, men, remember  
This is a Gottes haus.  
Du, Conrad, cut along der aisle,  
And schenck der whiskey aus.  
(*Life's Handicap* 11)
- 25 Displacement of the English language and of English narrative authority emerges from the intermingling of English and German within one single text, even within single sentences like in "Du, Conrad, cut along der aisle." It is troubling to see the term "Conrad" emerge poetically in the writing while this signifier makes the figure of Kipling's rival author, Joseph Conrad, appear in the text. It is all the more significant because Joseph Conrad may precisely be seen as the epitome of displacement as he was a Polish author exiled from the former Russian empire who wrote in English.
- 26 As regards the intrusion of voices "othering" the narrator's voice, in "Beyond the Pale" (1888), one can read the following incipit: "A man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race and breed. Let the White go to the White and the Black to the Black" (*Plain Tales* 127). Yet, the epigraph before the story is: "love heeds not caste nor sleep a broken bed." This supposedly Hindu proverb contradicts the English narrative voice and suggests that other voices—voices whose origin is hard to delineate—may decentre the authority of the former. This is precisely where colonial short stories are interesting to study alongside modernist short fiction. The fact that moments of disturbance of the dominant narrative voice—as can often be found in modernist short stories—and *other* "Englishes" should appear in Kipling's stories, precisely in textual fragments located at the threshold of short stories, is a "mise en abyme" of the troubling potential of short fiction.
- 27 The fact that many modernist short story writers wrote from the margins is no accident either. When one analyses the conditions of emergence of hallmarks of modernist



writing, these margins appear blatantly. Some short story writers wrote from the physical margins of England—Joyce from Ireland, Mansfield from New Zealand—but some also wrote from other marginal locations. D. H. Lawrence, for instance, belonged to the English working class and Woolf certainly wrote, as a woman, from outside the predominantly masculine literary scene. This is what led Joseph Flora to write: “The modern British short story is often the product of ‘refugees’ in exotic places and situations, exiles of culture, of class, of sexuality” (37). Clare Hanson defended a similar argument in 1989: “The short story has offered itself to losers and loners, exiles, women, blacks—writers who for one reason or another have not been part of the ruling ‘narrative’ or epistemological/experiential framework of their society” (xx). It is as if writing modern short stories implied some form of authorial exile while the works themselves seem not to be able to escape it. Mansfield, who spoke about her feelings as an exile in England in her journals, wrote for instance pieces that were literally haunted by it;<sup>10</sup> so did Joyce in *Dubliners*.

- 28 The representation and poeticisation of exile in Kipling’s and Maugham’s short stories on empire, combined with the authors’ marginal positions—respectively an Anglo-Indian writer trying to enter the English literary scene and a middlebrow author standing outside the Bloomsbury scene, make them interesting figures to study in a reflection about modernism and the short story. The question of colonialism in relation to modernity now remains to be addressed in this discussion about the link between modern colonial short stories and modernist short fiction. Temporality is precisely the site where these notions can be articulated in Kipling’s and Maugham’s colonial short fiction.

## Multiple temporalities

- 29 This is the specific perspective colonial short fiction brings to the analysis of modernist short story writing. Kipling’s Anglo-Indian short stories were produced at a time of colonial expansion, between 1880 and 1910—what Allen J. Greenberger called the “era of confidence.”<sup>11</sup> Maugham’s stories focused more on British and Dutch modes of colonisation in the Pacific and South-East Asia and were published in the interwar period, at a time when British colonisation started to be criticised by the Liberals and British power was already on the wane. The tendency of literary criticism to read these stories as ethnographic or exotic studies at the time and even nowadays accounts for the bias through which this type of fiction is perceived while the stories actually played with the conventions of exotic writing.
- 30 On the contrary, these short stories question the relation between modernity and colonisation through temporality and as such, can be related to modernist writing. While modernity and colonisation tend to be considered as simultaneous phenomena by postcolonial thinkers and imperial historians like Nicholas Dirks,<sup>12</sup> these short stories show that colonial modernity is always behind metropolitan modernity; it is always belated compared to the time of London, compared to national temporality. Maugham’s story “The Outstation” (1924) stages a colonial who insists on reading the newspaper every day in the chronological order though he receives the London press with a six-week delay: “During the war the suspense sometimes had been intolerable, and when he read one day that a push was begun he had undergone agonies of suspense which he might have saved himself by the simple expedient of opening a later paper” (*More Far Eastern Tales* 71-72).

- 31 This echoes what Jed Esty calls “the never-quite modernised periphery” and can be articulated with Dipesh Chakrabarty’s concept of the “not yet” of imperial history and of Western historicism. Chakrabarty underlined how India has been likened to an antechamber of history, “that which already is but is present only as the ‘not yet’ of the actual” (250). There is no single temporal frame of modernity, but a series of modern temporalities which never intersect and such variety is stressed by colonial short stories. The perception of the many modern temporalities in colonial short fiction also echoes Esty’s comment that “the colonial thematics of backwardness, anachronism, and uneven development thus become the basis for a non-teleological model of subject-formation—a late Victorian model of social delay and narrative distension that will, in the hands of Joyce and Woolf, become a hallmark of modernist style” (416). Such a crisis—the discrepancy between the “progressive imperial ethos of global modernization” and the facts of “uneven or under-development in the colonial periphery”—explains how late Victorian-early modernist fiction is linked both to the emergent modernist form and the apex of European imperialism (Esty 423).
- 32 In Kipling’s short stories, Sara Suleri also notes the omnipresence of young Englishmen whose lives are threatened in the colonial space. This may be interpreted as a reflection on the empire’s atrophy, the fact that the empire must confront “the necessary perpetuation of its adolescence in relation to its history” (111). The effect of conflicting times produced by Kiplingian poetics is further echoed by Suleri:
- “Imperial time” demands to be interpreted less as a recognizable chronology of historic events than as a contiguous chain of surprise effects: even as empire seeks to occupy a monolithic historic space, its temporality is more accurately characterized as a disruptive sequence of a present tense perpetually surprised, allowing for neither the precedent of the past nor the anticipation of a future. (113)
- 33 Colonial short stories anticipate the reflection on temporalities developed in many modernist short stories, for example in Mansfield’s “The Wind Blows” (1920) in which a dilution of past and present temporalities occurs. The narrative moves from the evocation of the time of the past event, the windy day on which the children went to the sea, to that of another time, the time of adulthood when the heroine remembers that day:
- Bogey’s voice is breaking. When he speaks he rushes up and down the scale [...]. The wind carries their voices [...]. It is getting very dark. In the harbour the coal hulks show two lights—one high on a mast, and one from the stern. “Look, Bogey. Look over there.”
- A big black steamer with a long loop of smoke streaming, with the portholes lighted, with lights everywhere, is putting out to sea [...]. “Look, Bogey, there’s the town. Doesn’t it look small? There’s the post office clock chiming for the last time. There’s the esplanade where we walked that windy day. Do you remember?” (77)
- 34 A blurring of temporalities is all the more visible in this short story as the present tense is used in the sister’s speech even though she speaks about two different moments. While the repetition of “Look, Bogey” contributes to the blurring of temporal boundaries, other clues such as the use of the past tense in “we walked,” the reference to the wind with the use of “that” and the evocation of young Bogey’s high-pitched voice enable us to spot the time variations.
- 35 Contrary to Mansfield’s short stories, Kipling and Maugham’s stories do not solve the temporal disjunction in some final dilution of temporal boundaries. The depiction of colonisation in these short stories cannot be separated from the evocation of a disjunction which is characterised by effects of temporal acceleration or slowing-down.

According to several Kiplingian narrators, young Englishmen experience premature rites of passage when they take part in the imperial effort. The narrator of "In the Pride of His Youth" keeps mentioning the contrast between the protagonist's young age and the ordeals he experiences through colonisation: "There was the strain of his office work, and the strain of his remittances, and the knowledge of his son's death which touched the boy more, perhaps, than it would have touched a man; and beyond all, the enduring strain of his daily life" (*Plain Tales* 159). The opposition between "boy" and "man" emphasises the notion of a temporal gap which cannot be reduced. Time is either accelerated or slowed down in colonial short fiction, always jarring with the present.

- 36 In Kipling's stories, many male characters are also considered as children by Anglo-Indian narrators who often call them "boys." At the beginning of "Thrown Away," the main character—who is referred to as "the Boy" throughout the whole story—is presented as the son of his parents: "There was a Boy once who had been brought up under the "sheltered life" theory [...]. He stayed with his people all his days, from the hour he was born till the hour he went into Sandhurst [...] and carried the extra weight of never having given his parents an hour's anxiety in his life" (*Plain Tales* 16). The centrality of time is made obvious through the repetition of the term "hour" as the signifier "boy," opposed to "parents," enables the narrator to grant the hero the status of a child. When the coloniser is not his parents' child, he appears to be his wife's. Many English women in Kipling's stories indeed call their husbands "boy."<sup>13</sup> Marital tenderness gets transformed into maternal love as husbands are turned into men-children in Kipling's colonial short fiction.
- 37 Similarly, many of Maugham's planters are depicted as children, even babies, as in "The Four Dutchmen" (1928): "They were all big, with large round bare red faces, with large fat arms and large fat legs and large fat bellies" (*More Far Eastern Tales* 44-45). The three occurrences of "large fat" do not only tell about the characters' stoutness but they conjure up the vision of "chubby" babies—which goes along with the idea of an empire that is to remain in its infant stage.
- 38 The fact that young men feel too old or that mature men become children again in the colonies echoes Esty's contention that English colonial fictions of the modernist period—seen here as the time period between 1880 and 1920—cast doubt on the modern ideology of progress through the figure of stunted or endless adolescence. This also shows how colonial short fiction questions modern teleology and the notion of homogeneous time. The short story itself, as it recalls a fragment, formally conveys disjunction and signals the impossibility for modern time to be thought of as homogeneous or teleological; a preoccupation that is certainly predominant in modernist short story writing. What Kipling's and Maugham's fictions suggest is that there are multiple temporalities though the stories do not perform their melting into one another.<sup>14</sup>
- 39 Not only is the temporality of modernity multiple but it is also more complex, at a time when globalisation affects the discourse around the nation and its borders. The representation of ghosts and doubles in Kipling's colonial short fiction appears as a literalisation of modernity's complexity. Colonial short stories make entangled duplicities visible as they are necessarily related to domestic short fiction or depict the figures of colonisers who were expected to be "more English than the English," or even the time of the colonies as being belated compared to national time. But the many ghostly manifestations in Kipling's short fiction, and more generally in colonial short fiction, echo the comparatist John Jervis's suggestion about the uncanny dimension of modernity.

Jervis wonders, as the uncanny is a state of disorientation, whether it could be a distinctively modern experience. To him, “Th[e] modern self, carrier of civilization and Enlightenment, thus emerges simultaneously as somehow shadowy, spectral” (4). In his book, Jervis recalls that Kant defines Enlightenment as “the freeing of the individual from his fears of shadows” (40). But he adds:

But perhaps enlightenment is productive of shadows in the first place: to reveal, to cast light is to constitute the background as dark. In this respect, the Enlightenment would embody the paradox inherent in the Freudian uncanny, the twifold process whereby hidden becomes unhidden as familiar becomes unfamiliar. (40)

- 40 The notion of modernity’s structural ambivalence can be used to read Kipling’s Gothic imperial stories “The Mark of the Beast” or “At the End of the Passage” (1891) which stage the white man’s incapacity to simply make sense of his colonial surroundings. Such helplessness is conveyed through the mention of ghosts or holes—both literal and metaphorical—that threaten the white man in the colonies and stand for the many cracks in the colonial ideology of modernity. Kipling’s presentation of colonial modernity as always spectral may certainly be connected to modernist forms of haunting and read in the light of Jervis’s statement about the uncanny being typically modern.

- 41 Such texts that operated outside the parameters of “modernist aesthetics” were devalued by literary criticism even though they engaged, at their own level, with formal experimentation or shared thematic and poetic preoccupations with modernist writers. Modernist short story writing cannot be separated from the production of more popular texts, particularly when the latter also experimented with the possibilities of the genre. Kipling’s and Maugham’s experimentations with the short story have many connections with modernist short story writing even if they remained ideologically linked to Victorianism or simply more formally conservative. Some major connections between the authors’ colonial short fiction and modernist short stories are the linguistic, temporal and spatial displacements which made short stories of the time—be they proto-modernist, para-modernist or modernist—particularly attuned to modernity and history. The study of the colonial dimension of these short stories throws light on the modernist preoccupation with spatial and temporal disjunction. Colonial short fiction, by suggesting that colonialism is the hidden side of modernity, presents the latter as a complex phenomenon to which modernists responded through their short stories in particular.

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## NOTES

1. See E. M. Forster's account of *Letters of Travel* in which he calls Kipling "The Boy Who Never Grew Up" and explains: "Eternal Youth may be beautiful in theory, but it is most depressing in practice. The world, perforce, grows older, and we must grow old with it, or lose touch. Kipling has preferred to lose touch. He has clung to crudity and silliness as if they were the Gifts of God instead of the accidents of boyhood. He has never re-examined the catchwords of school. He continues whooping, and blustering, and tomahawking, and sniggering, and throwing up his cap for the Chosen Race; and in consequence he cuts a curious figure against the shambles of Amritsar" (7).
2. I am referring here to Dipesh Chakrabarty's definition of the concept in *Provincializing Europe*, i.e. the historical moment when ideologies such as modern democracy, but also the promotion of progress, reason and civilisation were formulated in relation to modern European colonialism.
3. See Maria DiBattista and Lucy McDiarmid: "the division between the aestheticist high moderns and the materialist low moderns was not as marked, nor even as secure, as literary culture then (and has since) presumed" (4).
4. Maugham's short stories were really popular among the general public but not well-considered by literary criticism. Many of his stories were published at the same time as works that became hallmarks of modernist short fiction. Joyce's *Dubliners* was published in 1914 and Woolf's *A Haunted House and Other Stories* in 1921.
5. cf. for instance the article by Frédéric Regard: "Réalisme, fragmentation et roman de formation: l'épiphanie du sens chez Rudyard Kipling" (1996).
6. My translation: "[ces nouvelles] sont nées du besoin de fixer un vertige, lui-même commandé par un sentiment d'urgence—avec la mort aux trousses."

7. The reflection on the psyche in Woolf's works or on primitivism in Lawrence's highlights the appeal such theories had on modernist authors.
8. See D. H. Lawrence, "Surgery for the Novel—or a Bomb": "Is the novel on his death-bed, old sinner? Or is he just toddling round his cradle, sweet little thing?" (5). See Katherine Mansfield as well: "What is it about the novel? [...] the more I read the more I feel these novels will not do. [...] It's not in the least a question of material or style or plot. I can only think in terms like 'a change of heart'. I can't imagine how after the war these men can pick up the old threads as though it had never been" (Murry, *Letters of Katherine Mansfield* 255).
9. See Edward Said: "a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about" (20).
10. In "Je Ne Parle Pas Français" (1923), Raoul Duquette, the hero, explains: "About my family—it really doesn't matter. I have no family; I don't want any. I never think about my childhood. I've forgotten it" (Mansfield 146).
11. The 1880s was indeed a time of increased colonisation as many European nations decided to share the African continent between them all, what remains known in history as the "scramble for Africa" (Greenberger 32).
12. See Nicholas Dirks: "[Nation as a modern creation] also had its origins in empire. As the nation imagined itself through texts, maps, and consuming desires both for foreign adventures and distant goods, the colonial era began" (15).
13. In "The Head of the District" (1890; 1891) Orde's wife refers to her husband as "her boy and her darling" (*Life's Handicap* 95).
14. In that respect, Maugham's and Kipling's works are certainly closer to Jean Rhys's. Nicole Flynn indicates about Rhys: "While most modernist authors reject the homogenizing force of clock time and fragment their narrative in order to portray an individualized experience of private time, Rhys embraces both these modes" (41). Yet, as Flynn adds, Rhys "is able to harness the new symbolic power of the clock and combine it with modernist techniques in order to present a simultaneously intimate and distant portrait of the modern subject" (42). On the contrary, Kipling and Maugham's short stories present temporalities—the imperial/official time and the individual experience of time—as irreconcilable.

## ABSTRACTS

L'article propose de réévaluer les propositions de Kipling et de Maugham autour de la nouvelle afin de montrer dans quelle mesure les nouvelles de ces deux auteurs s'articulent au modernisme, de manière respectivement proto- et para-moderniste. Tandis que les *tales* de Kipling mettent en œuvre des hypothèses stylistiques et poétiques qui ne sont pas sans rappeler les désormais clichés de l'esthétique moderniste – pratique de l'ellipse, de la fragmentation, instabilité de l'instance narrative, etc. – les nouvelles de Maugham s'apparentent davantage à la domestication de thèmes prisés des auteurs traditionnellement étiquetés « modernistes » : les pulsions de l'inconscient, le déclin de l'Occident, l'instabilité sexuelle et identitaire, etc. En revanche, c'est véritablement la représentation de l'exil dans une écriture elle-même déplacée de son lieu d'origine, par le fait colonial, qui conduit à la production de nouvelles représentations de l'espace et du temps, symptomatiques de la valence coloniale qui sous-tend la modernité européenne, à laquelle les modernistes auront à cœur de répondre. En d'autres termes, la duplicité de la modernité, sa spectralité, mais aussi sa diffraction en de multiples lieux et

temporalités, auxquelles l'esthétique moderniste s'arrime, ne sont pas moins présentes dans les nouvelles coloniales, ce qui permet de faire de celles-ci un jalon essentiel dans le moment de transition entre ère victorienne et ère moderniste. Le colonial s'apparente en somme à une clé de compréhension de ce moment culturel complexe qui mène à l'écriture moderniste telle qu'on la pense aujourd'hui.

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