Chapter IV

Tales of Mystery and the Supernatural

India has always appeared to the West as a land of mysteries, of secret cults, of dark underworlds, and unfathomable riddles. It would have been surprising if this aspect of the land had escaped Kipling’s notice. There are many Kipling stories which deal with the eerie, the mysterious and the supernatural in Indian life. Kipling was drawn from time to time to this genre of ghost, supernatural and horror tales. He spent a great deal of early life in India at a time when mysticism was almost a way of life in India. A significant number of stories have an India background which enhances the strangeness of these stories. The richness and the alien qualities of this locale allied to the unusual occurrences in Kipling’s plots give the stories an extra unsettling quality which increases their power to disturb and intrigue the readers. These things highly bewitched and puzzled white people.

In this chapter, the researcher will study a group of ten stories that Kipling wrote at various intervals during this early period which dealt with themes of the marvelous, of ghosts, the supernatural and psychic experiences. These stories are a special facet of Kipling's created world. Almost all of these tales of the supernatural are narrated within the framework of a created realistic world, that is, a world which is closer to the everyday world that we know in actual life.

It was believed that the illiterate Indians had firm belief in the powers of certain people to produce supernatural effects by means beyond the formers comprehension, but the credulity is deeply seated in the mind of all the races. The Indian juggler has attained a very high degree of conjuring skill, and there is no doubt that sleight of hand plays a part in the stock-in-trade of the Indian magician. In the story “The House of Sudhoo” Kipling tells a powerful tale with sham sorcery as its theme. It is not given to many foreigners to witness what Kipling saw, and he confesses for the moment at least. “I felt the hair lift at the back of my head and my heart thump like a thermantidote
paddle” (Kipling, *Mark of Beast* 80) Sudhoo's son at Peshawar was attacked by pleurisy. The seal-cutter in the story heard of Sudhoo's anxiety and decided to make some money out of it. He got a friend in Peshawar to telegraph daily accounts of the son's health and himself took on the role of the magician for imparting it to Sudhoo. The scene in the darkened room is enough to fill anyone with terror “It was the face of the man” says Kipling that turned me cold. It was blue gray in the first place. In the second, the eyes were rolled back till you could only see whites of them; and in the third, the face was the face of a demon-a ghoul”. There was a basin in the centre of the room, and in it “bobbing in water, the dried shrivelled, black head of a native baby-open eyes .open mouth, and shaved scalp.” The thing was enough to hypnotize Sudhoo, but Kipling was able to see through the magic and know “that the whole thing was a careful reproduction of the Egyptian Teraphin that one reads about sometimes ;and the voice was as clever and appalling a piece of ventriloquism as one would wish to hear” (*Mark of Beast* 79, 81).

Possibly it was some king of Voodoo, the West Indian and African Magic, which deals with charms, conjuring, snake worship and witchcraft. The voodoo doctor or priest, like Kipling's seal-cutter, is a conjuror supposed to have power or skill in such practices .The worship is always at night, in secret, and characterized by prayer to the snake, who is exhibited during the right, by hysterical manifestations by the priest, something like what happens in Kipling's story.

Kipling opens the story of “My Own True Ghost Story” in the same manner that is typical of the other tales of this group first published under the title The Phantom Rickshaw. “This story deals entirely with ghosts in minute detail,” as the narrator announces in the very first sentence before he proceeds to inform the reader about the wide variety and practices of Indian ghosts. While others might be superstitious, he is clearly not one to be taken in by all this nonsense: "No native ghost has yet been authentically reported to have frightened an Englishman; but many English ghosts have scared the life out of both white and black” (*Mark of Beast* 122).

However, very soon his tone of sceptic irony appears in phrases such as, “There are said to be two at Simla,” or “Dalhousie says that one of her house 'repeats' on autumn
evenings all the incidents of a horrible horse-and-precipice accident.” (*Mark of Beast* 122). At the end of this tale he does, of course, find his ghost. He is so convinced that it is a “true ghost” that he is about to write an article on it for the Society for Psychical Research. He discovers that there actually is a rational explanation for his hallucinations and that they are, as a matter of fact, part of the fraud that the servants of the dak bungalow in which he has been staying have perpetrated on him. This they do in the hope that he would pack up and leave them to their other illegitimate activities. The story ends with a return to the opening tone of irony: “I felt that I had ruined my one genuine ghost story. Had I only ceased investigating at the proper time I could have made anything out of it. That was the bitterest thought of all!” (*Mark of Beast* 130).

The commitment here refers more to the telling of the story, to the delight of a good tale, than to the actual truth; Kipling begins and ends with a tone of detachment; once he launches into the actual telling of it, and the question of whether it be true or a ghost story makes little difference. The actual tale, once we are well into it, has a totally different quality; the author is caught up in the rapture of the narrator's art; and in the build-up of the suspense, the reader comes to feel that there is only a fine, thin line to be drawn between the real and the unreal, or the true and the untrue. In the final analysis it hardly seems to matter whether the ghost is empirically disproved or not. Something of the supernatural has been conjured up in the very telling of the tale, enough to convince one that the existence of a ghost is a possibility not to be lightly denied. This was probably not Kipling's actual intention, but in both the irony and in the techniques, the ambiguity is present. “The Bisara of Pooree” has some of the same elements as it deals with the world of the occult. It is an anecdote about a magic love-charm which in order to work properly “must be stolen with bloodshed, if possible but honestly stolen!” (*Mark of Beast* 130).

The scene is laid in Simla and it tells of a man called Pack who dishonestly steals the charm in order to gain the affections of a young lady Miss. Hollis. The charm works to begin with, and an engagement is announced, until the original owner steals the charm back from Pack who within a week is summarily dismissed by Miss. Hollis. The tale opens with Kipling's familiar dense plurality of detail, plunging the reader immediately
into the Indian scene of magic and superstitions surrounding the Bisara of Pooree. The tone is sustained throughout in this case, and the narrator is continuously trying to impress on the reader the fact that he is not one to be taken in by all this magic. He anticipates all our objections: “You will believe this much,” or “What you will not believe is what follows,” so that the reader is very soon ready to entrust all his credulities to the narrator who has by now established his credentials for rationality, even to the extent that when the story does take an unexpected turn towards the improbable, the reader is almost ready to swallow it whole. “What has happened through all the turns and twists of the rhetoric as it swings backwards and forwards in a kind of irony, is that our notions of truth and falsity have been eroded or, at least, undermined, and our confidence in the absoluteness of facts has been subtly shaken” (Krishna, *Kipling* 94). Vaguely the reader becomes aware that behind the screen of the anecdote, he is being taken in and being manipulated in directions he cannot quite understand. While at the literal level the rationality is being appealed to, at another level it is being parodied. And here we come to the fundamental difference between “The Bisara of Pooree” and “My Own True Ghost Story”; the latter is framed in a realistic mode with the actual tale itself being narrated in the style of a ghost story; even though it is given a rational explanation, it nevertheless functions as a real ghost story. We undergo the state of suspense and mystery that the narrator supposedly experiences before he learns the “truth,” so that in the artistic sense, an alternate world of psychic experience is created, produced and fictionally worked out for the reader. In ”The Bisara of Pooree,” the whole tale is sustained in the realistic framework; there is no change of style or technique and therefore, no alternative world is actually created or presented. Instead, magic or the occult is an assumed world underlying the irony. The ambiguity lies in the way in which words such as "true" and "false" are used. The narrator's own confessions of the difficulty of belief, and the way he himself, in spite of his pretense or protestations of rationality, seems to be fascinated by the notion of psychic experience as we see in the way he is continuously on the defensive:

If the Bisara be not stolen, but given or bought or found, it turns against its owner in three years, and leads to ruin or death. This is another fact which you may explain when you have time. Meanwhile, you can laugh, at it. At present the Bisara is safe on a hack-pony's neck, inside the blue bead-
necklace that keeps off the Evil Eye. If the pony-driver ever finds it, and wears it or gives it to his wife, I am sorry for him.” (Mark of Beast 85)

Kipling was pointing his irony in many directions, a factor which highlighted the aspect of ambiguity.

In "By Word of Mouth" there is no created world of fantasy. It deals again with the realm of psychic experience. The tone is unambiguous and the narrator unequivocally and forthrightly presents his point of view in the first paragraph: “This tale may be explained by those who know how souls are made, and where the bounds of the possible art put down. I have lived long enough in this India to know that it is best to know nothing, and can only write the story as it happened.” (Mark of Beast 95).

The tale is related in the realistic mode; there is no irony, nothing is being spoofed, but it does border on the 'improbable'. One supernatural event occurs off-stage and it is reported to civil Surgeon Dumoise by the bearer, Ram Dass, who relates his having seen the ghost of Mrs. Dumoise. The civil surgeon’s wife had succumbed to typhoid some months ago. His bearer Ram Dass remembers that she will meet his master at Nuddea in the coming month (her ghost has told him so) And truly the surgeon is transferred to Nuddea and dies in eleven days. There is touch of amusement in this tale but Kipling is nowhere skeptical.

Moreover, there are none of the heightened effects as we shall find in “The Phantom Rickshaw,” one of Kipling’s earliest pieces and earliest excursions into the supernatural. As Cornell points out, "where the earlier ("The Phantom Rickshaw") is grotesque, the latter ("By Word of Mouth") is prosaic; where the one is feverish and exaggerated, the other is subtle and understated" (128). Whether the prophecy of the ghost comes true or whether the resultant events are merely coincidental, the reader has to draw his own conclusions; the burden of credulity is placed on him.

In 1891, Kipling published “Life's Handicap” containing several stories dealing with mysterious experiences or the supernatural. Two of them, "The Mark of the Beast"
and "The Return of Imray," might be treated together as they both contain the character of Strickland, a Police Officer (he earlier appears in Plain Tales in "Miss Youghal's Sais" and "The Bronckhorst Divorce Case") who is fond of donning disguises, often as a Pathan, in order to "pass" as a native. He "knows natives of India as much as is good for any man," the narrator pronounces in "The Mark of the Beast." He is much the alter ego of Kipling himself who, if not literally, at least figuratively, did much of the same thing in actual life. Strickland's knowledge of the esoteric lore of India led him, if not to believe in it, to have a healthy respect for the inexplicable.

"The Mark of the Beast" is about a man called Fleete who came out to India as he owned a little money and some land in the Himalayas, near a place called Dharamsala, Both properties had been left him by an uncle, and he came out to finance them. He was a big, heavy, genial, and inoffensive man. His knowledge of natives was, of course, limited, and he complained of the difficulties of the language.

The suggestion is that he is using Dharamsala, a Hindu religious centre, for commercial purposes. One night after a riotous New Year's celebration, when he is roaring drunk, he staggers through the Indian bazaar in the company of the narrator and Strickland, a police officer. Suddenly he steps into a Hindu temple and grinds "the ashes of his cigar-butt into the forehead of the red stone image," insulting Hanuman, the Monkey-god. Immediately there is a furore and out of the temple emerges a Silver Man who snatches Fleete "round the body and dropped his head on Fleet's breast before we could wrench him away." Fleete then undergoes a gradual physical transformation into a leopard-like beast and is only saved when Strickland captures the Silver Man and forces him to remove the spell he has put on Fleete.

In "The Mark of the Beast" Kipling creates an ambiguity by treating the events obliquely rather than realistically, leaving the reader in doubt as to his or the narrator's own point of view. He further compounds the confusion in the reader's mind by relating how during the New Year's party before the temple incident takes place, "Half a dozen planters had come from the South and were talking 'horse' to the Biggest Liar in Asia, who was trying to cap all their stories at once." Kipling is playing with several
possibilities and several points of view, never withdrawing himself, as in "By Word of Mouth" where the reader is straightforwardly given all the facts and left to draw his own conclusions. For example, in the first frame he says: “East of Suez, some hold, the direct control of Providence ceases. Man being there handed over to the power of the Gods and Devils of Asia, and the Church of England Providence only exercising an occasional and modified supervision in the case of Englishmen” (Mark of Beast 224)
own biases. But Strickland is the only person who is capable of dealing with the situation. The white man's medicine that of Dumoise, seems to be ineffective.

The narrator then proceeds to build up the horror aspects of the case the gradual dehumanization of Fleete into a beast: “The human spirit must have been giving way all day and have died out with the twilight. We were dealing with a beast that had once been Fleete.” (*Mark of Beast*231)

Then, when Strickland pronounces “It’s no good. This isn’t any doctor’s work,” the narrator also admits, “I, also, knew that he spoke the truth.” Only magic can cure magic; both operate at the same level. But what is Strickland’s magic? He gives the Silver Man a taste of his own medicine; by means of torture he forces him to withdraw the spell he has cast over Fleete. On the one hand this seems to suggest that the magic of the Silver Man is bogus and on the other, it has had actual effects; there is the physical degradation of Fleete, the black rosette mark on his left breast and then, the transformation back to human form: “We watched the face of the beast, and saw the soul of Fleete coming back into the eyes. Then a sweat broke out on the forehead and the eyes—they were human eyes—closed.”(*Mark of Beast*235)

So that even if what has occurred is a “delusion,” Kipling or the narrator seems to be saying that the actual effects of it are simultaneously real, both to Fleete and the Silver Man. The frame of the story closes in the last paragraph with a return to the suggestion that is made in the opening: “It is well known to every right-minded man that the gods of the heathen are stone and brass, and any attempt to deal with them otherwise is justly condemned.”(*Mark of Beast*237). But the gods are not of stone and brass, as Fleete comes to discover and they have a power of their own equal to the gods of any Christian religion. The point of the story, then, seems to be less about magic than it is an object lesson for those who hold that theirs is the only true faith.

“The Return of Imray” is somewhat in the same vein in the sense that a seemingly inexplicable event turns out to have non-supernatural causes. In this story the belief in the Evil Eye leads to a grim tragedy. The story illustrates a familiar theme of Kipling’s: the
mistakes that an outsider can make when he is unfamiliar with the customs and beliefs of the local people. Imray is murdered by the bearer, Bahadur Khan, simply because he has praised Bahadur Khan's child who later dies. Convinced that Imray has put the evil eye on his son, Bahadur Khan has murdered him in revenge, although the murder of Imray does not have any of the mayhem or violence that we usually associate with homicide.

When questioned by Strickland about the murder of Imray, Bahadur Khan replies calmly as if nothing unusual has happened; walking among us, his servants, he cast his eyes upon my child, who was four years old. Him he bewitched and in ten days he died of the fever - my child... he said he was a handsome child and patted him on the head; wherefore my child died. wherefore I killed Imray sahib in the twilight, when he had come back from the office and was sleeping. wherefore I dragged him up into the roof-beams and made all fast behind him” (Life's Handicap143).

Kipling points out that such things happen “simply and solely through not knowing the nature of the Oriental” (Life’s Handicap145).

The story has a number of elements of mystery and suspense and is at the same time another vehicle for the unorthodox methods of Strickland of the Police. In fact, after such a build up, the ending can only be seen as an anticlimax, for we reach the point at which a plausible explanation seems quite inadequate and even impossible and we only feel prepared to accept a non-rational or a supernatural answer. It is similar to what Kipling pulled off in "My Own True Ghost Story," though here the style is less inflated and is steeped in realistic detail.

Two of Kipling's tales “The Phantom Rickshaw” and "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes" are among the first of his early tales dealing with psychic experiences and the supernatural. Critics, including Cornell (105-106) and Carrington (541) have referred, in their discussion of these two stories, to Poe's "The Tell Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat," noting how Kipling has improved upon these two models; and "The Phantom Rickshaw," instead of being set in the vaguely gothic world of the conventional nineteenth century tale of terror, is firmly based in Anglo-Indian Simla. “Just as Jukes' matter-
of-fact engineer's mind makes vivid his nightmare, so the Simla milieu and the conventions of an Anglo-Indian flirtation give substance to this tale of a blackguard and his pathetic demon-lover,"(Cornell 105-106)

“The Phantom Rickshaw” is about Theobold Jack Pansay who had an affair on board ship with Agnes Keith-Wessington, “wife of an officer on the Bombay side,” while returning from England on long leave. The following summer they meet at Simla, but by August Pansay discovers he is “sick of her presence, tired of her company, and weary of the sound of her voice,” and tells her as much. They meet again each year, in 1883 and in 1884, and each year Pansay reiterates his feelings to her tearful recriminations. There is a final scene on a windswept hill in Simla and Pansay firmly turns away from her to canter off with his new love, Miss Kitty Mannering. A week later Mrs. Wessington dies and Pansay, unaffected, pursues his romance with Kitty. It is only after he measures her for an engagement ring that he begins to have a series of hallucinations in which he sees the ghost of Mrs. Wessington sitting in her rickshaw with her four jhampanis dressed in their well-known black and white livery; this apparition appears to Pansay wherever he goes. The upshot of all this is that Kitty breaks off the engagement and Simla society becomes convinced that he is a victim of fits and insanity. This leads in the end to the breakdown of his health and finally to his death. Kipling frames the tale with two lines from the "Evening Hymn": “May no ill dreams disturb my rest, Nor Powers of Darkness molest” (Mark of Beast20).

The phrase "Powers of Darkness" appears often in Kipling's work and it does not necessarily refer to a religious source of evil or darkness, but rather to a sense of what Tompkins has chosen to call "the abyss". "It is, what it is to all of us, the whole mystery of the state of man; and since to Kipling man, and especially European man, and more especially the Englishman of the professional classes, is the creature who works, it is in connection with the work of man that the abyss opens its gulf on the rim or in the middle of his tales" (Art of Rudyard Kipling109).

This definition covers a range of experiences for Tompkins, including that of Findlayson in "The Bridge Builders" as well as "the stoked horrors of “At the End of the
Whereas the first example is a more felicitous one, the second certainly turns on the darker moods of psychic experience, reminiscent, in a sense, of the way the demons and gargoyles and fabulous creatures of the soul's nightmares that are found in the corners and crevices of gothic churches and cathedrals were juxtaposed to the higher realms of the spirit. "Darkness," as Tompkins goes on to say, "is the implied background to his (Kipling's) shaped work, or an element in the design of it, or a sliding speck on the rim of his vision. 'A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye' (109) And so it is in "The Phantom Rickshaw," where Pansay is virtually "molested" by the power of his own subconscious:-- The horror he experiences is a reflection of the guilt in Pansay's soul for the wrong he has done to a woman. The story does not focus on the moral issue of Pansay's having been indirectly responsible for the death of Mrs. Wessington. Early in the narration he concedes that "she was much to blame"; though Pansay, himself, admits "sometimes in the black-fever-stricken night watches, I have begun to think that I might have been a little kinder to her. But that really is a 'delusion.' I could not have continued pretending to love her when I didn't; could I? It would have been unfair to us both."(Mark of Beast24). Though this rationalization is unsatisfactory, the callousness of Pansay and the question of Mrs. Wessington's own morality are not issues which are raised in the tale. It is only in the final paragraph that Pansay refers to his "penance" and confesses: "For surely as ever woman was killed by man, I killed Mrs. Wessington. And the last portion of my punishment is even now."(Mark of Beast42). What the tale mainly focuses on are the psychological manifestations of guilt and the disintegrating states of Pansay's mind.

In the second frame, the narrator refers to the pet peeve of Kipling, "the globe-trotter," what he calls the "great Knowability" of people who come to India, whether they are intermittent visitors or Englishmen of twenty years' residence who think they have nothing new to learn. But this is really by way of aside and he proceeds to discuss the other commentator and observer of the events that take place in the story, Dr Heatherleigh, who attributed everything that happened to Pansay to the Indian climate and overwork, advising the narrator to "write him off to 'the System that uses one man to do the work of two and a half men." Like Dr Dumoise in “The Mark of the Beast,” he is a scientific rationalist for whom every sort of human experience has to be seen in terms of
natural explanation. But the narrator offers a different explanation, an explanation that comes closer to the intuitive notion of the "Powers of Darkness," when he suggests "there was a crack in Pansay's head and a little bit of the dark world came through and pressed him to death." He had seen the man on his death bed and had encouraged him to pour out "the whole affair from beginning to end, knowing that ink might assist him to ease his mind". It is therefore Pansay's version of the story that we have in the tale. Although Tompkins has suggested that "the haunting of Pansay is suspended between the credulity of the "I" and the skepticism of Dr. Heatherleigh, who ascribes Pansay's ailment merely to a 'Stomach cum Brain cum Eye illusion',"(Mark of Beast42) Kipling manages to make us forget Dr. Heatherleigh before we are very far into the story. Whether illusory or real, the ghost has very positive effects on Pansay, as the worlds of psychic experience or the supernatural usually demonstrate and this is what the story focuses on.

Pansay goes through several stages in his descent into unreality. The first stage begins with his early visions of the phantom rickshaw in the middle of Simla's Mall Road where he experiences "irritation and disgust," a reminder that has appeared to "spoil the day's happiness." But though the vision of the horse and rider which "passed through men and carriage as if they had been thin air," appears real to him, they have no effect on Kitty who denies seeing them at all. The next day the apparition reappears and Pansay begins to realize that he is indeed seeing ghosts. This is confirmed when he overhears a conversation of two men on the road from whom he learns that after Mrs. Wessington's death the four rickshaw coolies - all brothers—had died of cholera "on the way to Hardwar" and that the rickshaw had been destroyed by the man from whom Mrs. Wessington had hired them. No longer having any doubt that he is seeing ghosts, Pansay then wrestles with the thought that he has gone mad and he refers to the apparition as an "Infernal thing," an agent perhaps of the Powers of Darkness. One night as he returns from a dinner at Kitty's with Dr Heatherleigh, Pansay again sees the phantom rickshaw on the road before him and in desperation confesses his story to the sceptical doctor who proposes a cure under his own treatment. Suddenly in the midst of their conversation there is a landslide on the road before them and they realize that had they not been stopped by the apparition of the ghost rickshaw, they would have both "gone forward"; Dr. Heatherleigh admits that "we would have been ten feet deep in our graves by now."
Nevertheless, Pansay undergoes Dr. Heatherleigh's treatment for a week and his mental cure is certified.

The second stage follows the treatment when Pansay discovers that he is worse than ever. In order to test the cure, he takes Kitty out for a ride, but no sooner are they again on the old Reservoir than he sees the familiar "black-white liveries" and the ghost of Mrs. Keith-Wessington. Pansay, almost collapsing, drags the horrified Kitty up the road, implores her to speak to the apparition, at the same time blurting out the whole story of his relationship with Mrs. Wessington. He loses Kitty forever and returns to Heatherleigh in a state of collapse.

In the final stage, the visions persist and now he totally surrenders himself to them; they haunt him continuously as he wanders about Simla at the side of Mrs. Wessington’s phantom rickshaw:

The second and most tormenting of my moods of sickness had suddenly laid hold upon me, and, like the Prince in Tennyson's poem, 'I seemed to move among a world of ghosts.' There had been a garden-party at the Commander-in-Chief's, and we two joined the crowd of homeward-bound folk. As I saw them it seemed that they were the shadows—impalpable fantastic shadows—that divided for Mrs. Wessington's rickshaw to pass through (*Mark of Beast*40).

Thus, a transformation is made; Pansay has crossed over to another reality, having lost the capacity to distinguish the "real" from the "illusory." The two worlds are interchangeable to the extent that the world of delusion or illusion now appears more real than the actual world. Mrs. Wessington has succeeded in making him feel the pull and the compulsion of her world. Much as he wants to be "among the actualities of life," he says, at the same time I felt vaguely unhappy when I had been separated too long from my ghostly companions."

The story closes somewhat abruptly and we are not returned to the world of the narrator of the opening frame but are left at the end of Pansay's account and his
confession as he draws his own conclusions as to why he has "been done to death by the Powers of Darkness." Neither the doctor's cure nor his own confession of guilt proves enough to assuage the "Powers" and he succumbs to world of eternal damnation.

One of the most interesting of Kipling's earliest pieces is "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes," written in 1885 about the same time as "The Phantom Rickshaw." It opens as follows:

There is no invention about this tale. Jukes by accident stumbled upon a village well known to exist, though he is the only Englishman who has been there. A somewhat similar institution used to flourish on the outskirts of Calcutta, and there is a story that if you go into the heart of Bikanir, which is in the heart of the Great Indian Desert, you shall come across, not a village but a town where the Dead who did not die, but may not live, have established their headquarters. And, since it is perfectly true that in the same Desert is a wonderful city where all the rich money-lenders retreat after they have made their fortunes (fortune so vast that the owners cannot trust even the strong hand of the Government to protect them, but take refuge in the waterless sands), and drive sumptuous barouches, and buy beautiful girls, and decorate their palaces with gold and ivory and Minton tiles and mother-o'-pearl, I do not see why Jukes' tale should not be true. He is a Civil Engineer, with a head for plans and distances and things of that kind, and he certainly would not take the trouble to invent imaginary traps. He could earn more by doing his legitimate work. He never varies the tale in the telling, and grows very hot and indignant when he thinks of the disrespectful treatment he received. He wrote this quite straightforwardly but he has touched it up in places and introduced Moral Reflections: thus-(Mark of Beast43).

From the very beginning the narrator appears to be bending over backwards to convince the reader that all the events in the story are absolutely true. But the more he does this the more he manages to throw doubts on the veracity of Jukes. This is, of course, an ancient device used by fantasists as Richard Gerber has already pointed out.
This sophisticated self-consciousness is clearly demonstrated by the writer's protestations of truth, which are meant to ensure a superficial verisimilitude as well as a deeper ironical effect. The writer confesses that he has to relate a most extraordinary tale, but that the events nevertheless really did happen (84).

All the while that he is protesting the truth, the narrator is employing a counter technique, what Gerber calls the "evasive method," meant to lead "the reader away from the well-known into the regions of uncertainly"(94). The story of Jukes, as it stands alone, smacks too much of the "wonderful"; the frame, then, draws the world of improbability closer to the world of possibility. Firstly, the fact that the narrator, who we have to trust on faith as a reasonably sensible person as he has already managed to establish the fact that he is not over-credulous, believes that what we are about to hear has most likely taken place. He seems to have all the facts and details on hand which gives to the story an air of convincing authenticity and verisimilitude. He is, moreover, not completely taken in by Jukes' version and discriminates between the areas where Jukes has "touched up" his tale and where he is likely to be telling the truth.

“In the beginning,” as Jukes opens his account of the events, "it all arose from a slight attack of fever." There we have before us the device or mode of transition, the illness which leads to a semi-delirious condition. In this condition the real does not become unreal as it does in the case of "The Strange Ride," but there is rather a slight distortion in which the significance of some event is inflated and that of others deflated. Jukes is a Civil Engineer, a man of technology, not ordinarily given to "imaginary trap" except that he has fallen ill and his state of weakness has made him irritable to the extent that the continual baying of some dogs under the full moon of the December night render sleep impossible.

The light-heartedness which accompanies fever acts differently on different men. My irritation gave way, after a short time, to a fixed determination to slaughter one huge black-and-white beast who had been foremost in song and first in flight throughout the evening. Thanks to a shaking hand and a giddy head I had already missed him twice with both barrels of my shotgun, when it struck me that my best plan would be to ride him
down in the open and finish him off with a hog-spear. This, of course, was merely the semi-delirious notion of a fever-patient: but I remember that it struck me at the time as being eminently practical and feasible (Mark of Beast43).

Juke then mounts his horse, and in the middle of the cold winter night chases out over the sandy desert until “we had passed the wretched dog, and I had almost forgotten why it was that I had taken horse and hog spear.” Then, the “delirium of fever and the excitement of rapid motion must have taken away the remnant of my senses,” and Jukes has a “faint recollection of standing upright in my stirrups, and of brandishing my hog-spear at the great white moon that looked down so calmly on my mad gallop; and of shouting challenges to the camel thorn bushes as they whizzed past,” (Mark of Beast36).

With these few paragraphs, we cross with ease into the world of the unfamiliar and when in the next paragraph, Jukes regains consciousness without airy trace of fever, and says, "with the exception of a slight dizziness in the head, I felt no bad effects from the fall overnight," there is no difficulty in accepting a the new state of consciousness or the new condition of the strange situation. It is not, of course, a totally, new world of fantasy; only the place is new to Jukes as well as the codes and behavior of the inhabitants.

The description which follows of the horse-shoe crater in which Jukes awakens is realistically described in minute detail; the 65 degree slope, the dimensions of the amphitheatre, the “sickening stench,” “the empty boat,” all of which create a sense of disorientation in Jukes as well as the desperate realization that he cannot get out. No human soul is in sight; except for a bullet which is fired at him from out of nowhere which he recognizes as a familiar "regulation Martini Henry 'picket,'" is there any indication that there is anyone around. Retreating, he finds that a menacing crowd of spectators has gathered the inhabitants of the badger-like holes he had earlier noticed around the rim of the amphitheatre. “The ragged crew actually laughed at me—such laughter I hope I may never hear again. They cackled, yelled, whistled, and howled as I walked into their midst; some of them literally throwing themselves down on the ground in convulsions of unholy mirth” (Mark of Beast45)
The inexplicable and unexpected grotesque laughter serves to disorientate Jukes even more and he loses his temper in irritation and, striking out, begins to beat them unmercifully. Then, from out of the crowd sets Ganga Dass, a former telegraph-master, whom Jukes had known four years earlier, now almost unrecognizable: "a withered skeleton, turban less, and almost naked." At first Jukes is thankful to see "an English-speaking native who might at least tell me the meaning of all that I had gone through that day." In the world of the unfamiliar, one clutches at the straws of the few familiar things which relate one back to the ordinary world; But as Ganga Dass begins to carry out the gruesome-operation of roasting a crow to eat, Jukes is reduced to observe, "I derived much consolation from the fact that he lit them with an ordinary sulphur match." Slowly, then, "the nature of the reeking village" becomes plain to Jukes and it is clearly more "grotesque and horrible" than anything he had ever known or read of. The days and nights that he spends in the amphitheatre of the dead are a kind of living hell in which he learns the depth of depravity to which a human being can sink before his, almost miraculous, rescue by his dog-boy who has tracked his footprints "fourteen miles across the sand to the crater."

Stephen Prickett in his study Victorian Fantasy (84) has pointed out that in the tradition of the gothic novel there is a "preponderance of image over plot"; the same is true here. Moreover, the action is less important than the psychological state of mind; what is interesting is not the facts in themselves, but the way they are used by Jukes to analyse his own emotional state, his sense of disorientation as well as the ways in which he orientates himself and makes adjustments to the new scene and environment. Some of the norms of the everyday world have been reversed, as in his relationship to the other inhabitants who laugh and deride Jukes. Familiar elements become unfamiliar and distorted and Ganga Dass whom he had known as a "jovial, full stomached portly Government servant with a capacity for making bad puns in English" is now utterly different:

Here was a Sahib, a representative of the dominant race, helpless as a child and completely at the mercy of his native neighbours. In a deliberate lazy way he set himself to torture me as a schoolboy would devote a rapturous half-hour ' to watching the agonies of an impaled beetle or as a ferret in a
blind burrow might glue himself comfortable to the neck of a rabbit. The burden of his conversation was that there was no escape 'of no kind whatever,' and that I should stay here till I died and was 'thrown on to the sand.' If it were possible to forejudge the conversation of the Damned on the advent of a new soul in their abode, I should say that they would speak as Ganga Dass did to me throughout that long afternoon. I was powerless to protest or answer; all my energies being devoted to protest of answer the inexplicable terror that threatened to overwhelm me again and again. I can compare that feeling to nothing except the struggles of a man against the overpowering nausea of the Channel passage—only my agony was of the spirit and infinitely more terrible (*Mark of Beast*53).

The metaphor used for the sense of "nameless terror" that he undergoes is of the "Channel passage," another variation of a state of transition, of disorientation. This is the turning point for Jukes; he has almost lost complete contact with the old world of the familiar as he collapses half-fainting. This time when he awakens, he has gone through the mirror, so to speak, somewhat in the way that Pansay does in "The Phantom Rickshaw." The unfamiliar now becomes the familiar and vice-versa. Kipling, of course, does not order his alternative world as closely as Carroll does in Alice through the Looking Glass, where according to Prickett "we pass from our world into its mirror-reflection. Where before the laws of nature was the same and it was merely the situation that was altered; now the familiar laws of our existence are completely inverted as well (135). In the strange world that Jukes encounters, the response or behavior of the inhabitants is reversed. For now, instead of the derisive laughter, there is a chilling indifference. "An hour later I was eating one of the crows; and, as Ganga Dass had said, thanking my God that I had a crow to eat."

The most powerful images of the strange world are those of death and a living hell: "My den was nearly as narrow as a coffin"; "it seemed that the entire amphitheatre was filled with legions of unclear devils that, trooping up from the shoals below, mocked the unfortunates in their lairs." The human inhabitants live in "dens" and "lairs," like beasts, moreover they eat crow and kill Pornic, Juke’s horse, for meat.
Yes, we were a Republic indeed! A Republic of wild beasts penned at the bottom of a pit, to eat and fight and sleep till we died. I attempted no protest of any kind, but sat down and stared at the hideous sight in front of me. In less time almost than it takes me to write this, Pornic's body was divided, in some unclean way or other; the men and women had dragged the fragments on to the platform and were preparing their morning meal. *(Mark of Beast)*

Not only does Jukes record the degradation of the other inhabitants, but he has to come to terms with the possibility of his own dehumanization. "Morality is blunted by consorting with the Dead who are alive," he says. He, too, learns that he can kill birds and eat animals which he would never do under "normal" circumstances; even further, he comes to realize that the impulses to kill and murder also exist within himself.

The major weakness of the tale is its end. The rescue from this "hideous Village of the Dead," by the narrator's dog-boy is too improbable, even given the strangeness of the tale. Though it does serve as a device to return Jukes to the normal world so that he can live to tell the tale, it is too abrupt and unsatisfactory, particularly considering the care with which Kipling constructs the transition into the world of the strange.

The story falls somewhat between the old-fashioned type of horror story that can be found in Poe and a Kafkaesque presentation. Poe in his tales is never interested in sociological or philosophical questions such as why a particular situation exists; he is mainly interested in effects and in creating an atmosphere of suspense and terror. In Kafkaesque fiction the issue is raised as to who or what are the powers which lie behind a seemingly inexplicable situation or where does the ultimate responsibility lie. In this story something of both is present; and Kipling exerts all his ingenuity to emphasize the grotesque and the "sensation of nameless terror" that Jukes experiences. But in Poe the sources of the terror are known, Jukes is unable to learn who the mysterious "They" are who have created the land of the living dead. The country-boat from which volleys of bullets prevent the inhabitants from escaping by the river contains no visible human being, so that the situation has much the same kind of inexplicability as the literature of
the absurd. Moreover, in the case of Poe, as Joseph Wood Krutch points out, his "stories would be described as morbid' and 'neurotic' because they represent a desperate flight from all reality," (78). A world into which the author himself escapes. Whereas in Kafka the world that is presented is only a distortion of the "real" one, a caricature, of reality. It is certainly a world in which we would not wish to escape into, but rather a world we would prefer to escape from. Kipling's glimpses into the areas of horror and the grotesqueness of human life were only a part of his vision, not the whole of it.

Sometimes the world of the strange is less overt, more difficult to discern or to separate from the normal everyday experience. Nevertheless, its actuality is felt and to some extent shakes one's belief in the absoluteness of rationality. It is not necessarily a separate, ordered, independent world, but a mere shadow of the created world, fleeting in and out of our normal existence. Kipling creates something of this in "Bubbling Well Road," for example; in length it is a "turnover," but more sophisticated than earlier short tales. The narrator is advised by some villagers that he might try his luck in a hunting expedition in a particular area of jungle grass:

I took a gun and went into the hot, close patch, believing that it would be an easy thing to unearth one pig in ten square miles of jungle. Mr. Wardle, the terrier, went with me because he believed that I was incapable of existing for an hour without his advice and countenance. He managed to slip in and out between the grass clumps, but I had to force my way, and in twenty -minutes was as completely lost as though I had been in the heart of Central Africa.(Mark of Beast 88).

After stumbling and pushing about for some time, he misses his dog but when he calls for him, he hears a strange echo and "a deep voice repeated, 'Where has the little beast gone?' To appreciate an unseen voice thoroughly you should hear it when you are lost in stifling jungle grass." "I thought I heard a man laughing in a peculiarly offensive manner. The heat made me sweat, but the laughter made me shake. There is no earthly need for laughter in high grass" (Mark of Beast 90).
Pushing his way forward with a rifle, he comes upon a "black gap in the ground," which he discovers to be a deep well. The description evokes something of the horror.

There were things in the water-black things,—and the water was as black as pitch with blue scum atop. The laughing sound came from the noise of a little spring, spouting halfway down from one side of the well. Sometimes as the black things circled round, the trickle from the spring fell upon their tightly-stretched skins, and then the laughter changed into a sputter of mirth. One thing turned over on its back, as I watched, and drifted round and round the circle of the mossy brickwork with a hand and half an arm held clear of the water in a stiff and horrible flourish, as though it were a very wearied, guide paid to exhibit the beauties of the place.46

The tone in Kipling's description is oddly detached and it is not until he almost collapses in relief at the priest's hut after finding his way out that the effect of the suspended horror is actualized. Then the tale drifts away and in the last paragraph the narrator seems to be trying to minimize the whole, experience that the tale has built up:

Before I left I did my best to set the patch alight, but the grass was too green. Some fine summer day, however, if the wind is favourable, a file of old newspapers and a box of matches will make clear the mystery of Bubbling Well Road (Mark of Beast111).

The irony is implicit and it is the irony which prevents the total letting go of oneself into the world of Great Darkness. The irony is the toehold one keeps on the normal, balanced world of common sense and rational experience. Once the narrator establishes his credentials for sanity, he is free to do almost anything he wishes in the realm of the supernatural or the fantastic.

Another device for establishing the narrator's veracity and sanity is the use of what might be called "fictional facts," by providing details of evidence or accounts of other eye-witnesses which are meant to prove and confirm the narrator's version. These "fictional facts" may be used to establish a reality of which the narrator and readers are a part and which is contrasted with the world of fantasy or supernatural that the author
wishes to present, making the improbable, world seem possible. In this case, the author assumes that the reader will not accept a story which is "stranger than fiction" as having actually occurred and will require a few "facts" before he is willing to swallow it whole.

Time and again he holds back from a whole-hearted acceptance of the supernatural as in "The Sending of Dana Da" or in "The Bubbling Well Road," where it is assumed that a rational explanation will be provided for "psychic" experience; if it is not available now, it will be available at some later time. Thus we so often find the early Kipling hovering between two realms, fragmenting both; it is only in his later work that the comic, the tragic, the horrible and the grotesque assume an organic part of his vision. All of them are not always operative simultaneously in a single work, but wherever they are present, we are able to see how Kipling; ultimately shapes them into an integrated and artistic whole.

"At the End of the Passage" was published in the collection *Life's Handicap* in 1891, a work which borders on the supernatural, though never quite crosses over into it. The basic plane at which Kipling works the story is realistic; though the realism is somewhat heightened, it is not quite what would be called distorted or grotesque. The opening effect of the description of the Indian summer is as Tompkins suggests; as if "we are shut round by thick heat"(118). Almost all the elements of the tale are present in the opening frame:

‘The sky is lead and our faces are red,
And the gates of Hell are opened and riven,
And the winds of Hell are loosened and driven,
And the dust flies up in the face of Heaven,
And the clouds come down in a fiery sheet,
Heavy to raise and hard to be borne.
And the soul of man is turned from his meat,
Turned from the trifles for which he has striven
Sick in his body, and heavy hearted,
And his soul flies up like the dust in the sheet
Breaks from his flesh and is gone and departed
As the blasts they blow on the cholera-horn (Mark of Beast238).

Immediately we are into the scene. There is no "I" this time to raise the complaint that Tompkins made of intruding too far into the story and disturbing "the focus of our attention (66) The third person narrative is more sophisticated, the details are not mere collections of "fictional facts" to fill the reader in, but more carefully selected and presented organically as images. We at once feel the kind -of desperation that brings four men together to play whist at a temperature of one hundred and four degrees of heat. There is the enclosed, darkened room, "the very white faces of the players," the punkah "puddling the hot air and whining dreadfully at each stroke," while outside, in "the gloom" there is the "brown purple haze of heat," "as though the earth were dying of apoplexy," around the "one squat four-roomed bungalow that belonged to the assistant engineer in charge of a section of the Gaudhari State line"(239).

Then the images of the opening frame and the introductory description melt into the actualities of the four men who have come together: Mottram of the Indian Survey, Lowndes of the Civil Service, Spurston, the doctor, and finally then- host, Hummil, the assistant engineer. Their game of whist is not one of pleasure, but to kill their boredom and to save themselves from the terrible kinds of desperation and loneliness.

The players were not conscious of any special regard for each other. -They squabbled whenever they met; but they ardently desired to meet, as men without water desire to drink. They were lonely folk who understood the dread meaning of loneliness. They were all under thirty years of age,—which is too soon for any man to possess that knowledge.

Moreover, their weekly appearance at Hummil's has an even more vital importance: "When one of them would fail to appear, he (Hummil) would send a telegram to his last address, in order that he might know whether the defaulter were dead or alive." Each one has come from "out there," from their remote area and have faced situations which would send an ordinary man over the brink: Spurstow, from an epidemic of black cholera; Lowndes, from an exasperating and corrupt native king; Mottram, from the effort
of making "a sub-surveyor understand that an error of five degrees in an angle isn't quite so small as it looks." As the afternoon passes and the dust-storm rages madly outside, each one registers the degree to which he has reached the end of his tether in the out-of-the-way place where they are in service of the empire. The end of the passage is not only significant in place and time but in spirit as well. There is no sign of rain or respite, or hope of either physical or mental release. Hummil confesses to Spurstow of the sacrifice he is making; by remaining on duty he enables his colleague, Burkett, to be with his ailing and delicate wife. Moreover the extremity of the situation is compounded by Hummil's revelation that Jevin, a Sub-contractor, has committed suicide, though they have managed to suppress the actual manner of his death. As Hummil prophetically tells the others: “A man hasn't many privileges in this country, but he might at least be allowed to mishandle his one rifle. Besides, some day I may need a man to smother up an accident to myself. Live and let live. Die and let die” *(Mark of Beast)* 244).

From then on the mood alternates between outbursts of nostalgia and desperate irritation until at the end of the day, Lowndes and Mottram return to their posts.

There is a lull while Hummil and Spurstow sit in the bungalow, "each narrowly watching the other," while outside the heat seems to be stoking itself furiously until Hummil bursts out with a frantic confession of his inability to sleep. The source of his insomnia is some deep-seated trauma which sweeps him "back into terrified childhood" and it is only when Spurstow administers morphia that he has a short respite in sleep. But even in sleep as Spurstow watches over him he is once again thrown into his own private Hell, by the "Power of Darkness," the same abyss that the narrator faces in "The Bubbling Well Road," where he is "ridden by the nightmare with a vengeance." When Hummil returns the next day to his bungalow after seeing Spurstow off, the first thing he sees standing in the verandah is the apparition of himself as Hummil approaches:

It slid through the house and dissolved into swimming specks within the eyeball as soon as it reached the burning light of the garden. Hummil went about his business till even. When he came in to dinner he found himself sitting at the table. The vision rose and
walked out hastily. Except that it cast no shadow it was in all respects real (*Mark of Beast*).

It might be assumed up to this point in the tale that Hummil's vision is a product of his own diseased mind, that what Kipling is depicting here is the psychological process by which a man comes to a parapsychic state. But the story takes another turn when after Hummil's death, the doctor photographs Hummil's face in which "in the staring eyes was written terror beyond the expression of any pen." The assumption then that we have to make is that Hummil's vision had an external cause; a cause brought about no doubt because of his agitated state of mind, but created by powers external to Hummil. So that here, the psychic experience or the supernatural is not treated as an internal, psychological manifestation, but as something which is external to the person who experiences it. Oddly enough in this tale, when Mottram sits down to play some tunes on the piano to relieve the boredom of the afternoon, he plays the "Evening Hymn" which is the opening verse frame of "The Phantom Rickshaw," another story, in which a character undergoes a psychic experience where the delusion becomes an independent world, a reality more powerful for Pansay than the actual one.

Thus, the supernatural in Kipling is not always reducible to the illusory except as in some of the tales already discussed where the supernatural or magic has obviously been faked generally with the object of duping someone. These tales present a study of fear and present states of human mind under the impact of black magic and other terrifying experiences.
Works Sited


