Geopoetics and Geopolitics: Landscape, Empire, and the Literary Imagination in the Great Game

By

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Abstract

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Geopoetics and Geopolitics: Landscape, Empire, and the Literary Imagination in the Great Game, is a study of the imaginative literature which arose from Russia and Britain's nineteenth-century contest for influence in Central Asia—a period which became popularly known in the Anglophone world as the Great Game. The dissertation offers a literary historiography of Central Asia during this time, tracking the region's shifting meanings in Russia and England alongside evolving local responses to new imperial interests. I argue that the resulting literary archive worked in service of imperial strategic interests while also maintaining an autonomous aesthetic function: it in fact gave rise to an imaginative space independent of, or even in contradistinction to, the trappings of geopolitical power.

Geopoetics and Geopolitics interrogates the Russian and English texts about Central Asia which purported to discover, but in fact helped to produce, the region. In doing so, it reveals how imperial ideologies "placed" Central Asia in a global system: an insistence on the region's remoteness and peripherality paralleled its instrumental function as a buffer between empires. I furthermore historicize the appearance of a peripheral, interimperial buffer zone in the literature of the Great Game, arguing that at the moment when the entire globe had been fully mapped and accounted for by a system of imperial governance, the notion of a free space beyond empire's bounds became an increasingly important aspect of the imaginative literature produced by each of the cultures invested in Great-Game era Central Asia. The multilingual, multigeneric literary construction of Central Asia's emptiness, and the multivalent significances of that emptiness, constitute the region's geopoetics.

The first chapter of the dissertation "The Great Game Travelogue: Fred Burnaby's *A Ride to Khiva* and Colonel Grodekov's *Across Afghanistan*" examines Russian and British travelers to the buffer zone. This chapter is a case study of the relationship between Central Asia's literary function and its role in an emerging global political order—I show how European travelers learned to see the region's flat, arid landscapes as a *tabula rasa*, allowing them to naturalize the "emptiness" required of a geopolitical buffer zone to the physical territory of Central Asia. This chapter establishes the relationship between political ideology, literary form, and landscape which the final two chapters examine in detail in relation to two of the best-known Great Game texts.

These remaining two chapters form a pair, focused on Great Game novels. In Chapter Two, "Steppe Realism: Nikolai Karazin's *Dvunogii volk (The Two-Legged Wolf)*" I discuss a Russian novel, widely read in the late nineteenth century, which fictionalizes the Russian conquest and subsequent colonial settlement of Central Asia. In this chapter I argue that Karazin produces an "empty" and infinitely malleable Central Asian landscape meant to symbolize the new social

mobility acquired by Russia's popular classes after the abolition of serfdom, and a new Russian Empire in which every social class could feel ownership. The third and final chapter, "Cartographic Idealism: Central Asia in Kipling's *Kim*," analyzes Rudyard Kipling's quintessential Great Game novel. Here I read *Kim* as an exemplar of Central Asia's role in the British cultural imagination. At once a Bildungsroman and a picaresque novel, *Kim* produces a space which is both central and peripheral, charted and unknowable.

I conclude the dissertation by arguing that this impossible space sustained a fantasy regarding Central Asia which persists to this day, of a space that resists assimilation even as the central and peripheral territories of the world become ever more tightly knit. The dissertation ultimately assembles and analyzes a corpus of Great Game literature which, when read in comparative perspective, reveals the Great Game to be less a series of political events than a literary and discursive reaction to those events—a multigeneric, multilingual attempt to account for a newly interconnected world, and the loss of autonomy which European imperialism's expansion entailed.

for Isaac, my compass

Acknowledgments

I prepared the final pages of this dissertation as I was also packing up my belongings for a cross-country move and I found among my things a handwritten note that reads "Diss. ideas from Harsha—Great Game; Afghanistan." Needless to say, Harsha Ram has shepherded this document through every stage of development, from the earliest brainstorms to the final proofs. I'm grateful as well to Eric Naiman for reading and providing exceptionally thoughtful comments on multiple drafts of this project. Conversations with Grace Lavery deepened my thinking about the stakes of this work, and academic work in general, and always left me feeling braver. I'm particularly grateful to her for her encouragement on the *Kim* chapter. Shahwali Ahmadi introduced me in my first years of graduate school to the world of classical Persian poetry, and our conversations and readings over the years were fundamental to my conception of this project. I owe him particular thanks for his painstaking help in reading the *Jangnameh* of Ghulami with me this past year—work I'll take with me to my next endeavor.

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I've been lucky to have been part of several writing groups over the years. My nomads, Joe Albernaz, Alex Bush, and Isobel Palmer, saw the first words I ever wrote toward this dissertation, and years later they saw the last. I would never have even started without their support and insight. I finished writing at home during a pandemic with the unfailing support of a new writing group—Kathryn Crim, Jocelyn Saidenberg, and Diana Thow. I am grateful and proud to have read their work, and honored to have gone through all of graduate school with them. An ongoing group, under the guidance of Christopher Baker, has made it possible for me to consider myself a Central Asianist at all. I owe special thanks to Naomi Caffee, Christopher Fort, Samuel Hodgkin, and Nicholas Walmsley for excellent guidance on some of the earliest writing I produced about Central Asia. This year, difficult though it has been, has had the silver lining of some new online friendships. I am grateful to have connected with Colleen McQuillen and Zarena Aslami in the webs of academic Twitter.

I can also now reveal my secret writing spot, with gratitude to the staff of India Flavors Express—I wrote some of my favorite parts of this document with the aid of their chai and spicy wraps. I'm also indebted to the kindness of the many families who have housed me during research in Russia and Tajikistan, especially Zhenya Kuznetsova, Natalia Pomelova, and Matluba Shirova.

My parents, David Laskin and Kate O'Neill, have been more supportive than I deserve or can repay of my extremely prolonged and somewhat quixotic education. My sisters, Sarah and Alice, have been my lifelong greatest boosters, an honor I surely don't deserve but lucked into by

dint of being older than they are. All of my grandparents, each in their own way, taught me curiosity and tolerance. I researched and wrote much of this project with the memory of my grandfather Meyer Laskin, especially, on my mind—I first knew of Central Asia from his stories of his travels. Schirley, Tali, and Ben Zisman have been my California family since before this project was begun and throughout its long duration. I'm especially grateful to Schirley for many sustaining dinners and to Tali for improving my Arabic pronunciation. My dog, RB, reminded me to take walks, during which I had many good ideas. And finally, my partner Isaac unflaggingly reminded me to eat, to watch movies, to read for joy, and to talk about my work—the dissertation continues a conversation we began years ago while walking the dog.

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Preface

The subject of this dissertation is the concept—the *problem*—of empty space in the literature of Eurasia, and its focus is the literary corpus which emerged in English and Russian from the Russo-British imperial contest for influence in Central Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century, popularly known as the Great Game. That body of literature helped to construct an "interimperial space" out of Central Asia with certain very durable cultural associations.[1] As British explorer Fred Burnaby put it in his popular 1873 travelogue *A Ride to Khiva*, the flat, arid landscape of the approach to Khiva was "a large dining table covered with naught but a blank cloth."[2] For Burnaby Central Asia's blankness signified both utter inscrutability and a space of possibility—a literal *tabula rasa*. Sixty two years later, Soviet Russian writer Andrei Platonov would echo the sentiment when he wrote, of a similar region's "пустые места пустоты [empty places of emptiness]."[3] For Platonov, Central Asia's emptiness connoted both the privations of life without Soviet socialism, and the *tabula rasa*-like possibilities of building socialism in an "empty" land. This dissertation asks: How is it that Russian and British writers converged on this notion across historical eras and political ideologies? And whom or what did Central Asia's "emptiness" serve?

This convergence is bound up with the historical dynamics of the Great Game. At its core, the Great Game was about two things: first, the possibility of an overland route, with, crucially, enough water and passable terrain to support an army, between Russia and British India; and second, the delimitation and definition of the territories between Russia's southern and India's northern frontiers. The significance of the potential overland route arose as follows. By the early 19th century Russia had firmly established a military presence in the Caucasus and was beginning its overland expansion southward toward Persia and eastward through the various khanates, emirates, and tribal regions of Central Asia. Over the course of the 19th century this expansionist trajectory would place Russian imperial troops ever closer to the northern frontier of British India. Britain's growing anxiety regarding Russian encroachment, and the ensuing efforts, via diplomacy, espionage, and sabotage to halt Russia's advance constitute the simplest formulation of the driving forces behind the Great Game as a series of political events. These events also spurred considerable advances in European knowledge about the geography and culture of Central Asia. In the early 19th century, the topographically varied regions of Central Asia—encompassing steppes, marshland, desert, and high alpine environments—were still largely uncharted, whether by the Russian or British military or by attendant academic institutions. This "blank space" on imperial maps was crucial from the standpoint of political strategy as well as culture, because it initiated the production of knowledge about the region as a form of political capital.

It also generated a constellation of tropes and associations which the imaginative literature of the Great Game produced and attached to the landscape of Central Asia. These regions acquired rich symbolic significance because they were interimperial spaces, a fact which writers of the Great Game sought to understand in relation to topography. The method I use here

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[1] See Laura Doyle, "Notes Toward a Dialectical Method: Modernities, Modernisms, and the Crossings of Empire," *Literature Compass* 7, no. 3 (2010): 195-213.

[2] Fred Burnaby, *A Ride to Khiva: Travels and adventures in Central Asia*, (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1887), 134.

[3] Andrei Platonov, *Dzhan* in *Sobranie: Andrei Platonov*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Vremia, 2010), 159.

to read those representations of interimperial space, to elucidate how and why these landscapes acquired a symbolic charge in this particular historical moment, I call *geopoetics*.

The term "geopoetics" was coined in 1978 by the poet and scholar Kenneth White, who conceives of a "theory-practice" designed to elucidate the "landscape-mindscape" of human individual and cultural encounters with the material places of the world.[4] My own use of the term echoes, in addition, Edward Said's "imaginative geography" and Chenxi Tang's "geographic imagination." Both Said and Tang account for the relationship between knowledge and geography; and both offer explanations for how, and why, European culture's engagement with geography, to quote Said, so often exceeds, "what appears to be merely positive knowledge." For Said, this excess is the scholarly, literary, and cultural apparatus of Orientalism—in other words, the production of the "East" as a concept in contradistinction to Europe. For Tang, Europe's "geographic imagination" refers instead to the concept of the nation-state and to the nation-state's "discursive authority" as an organizing principle. The suturing of the concepts of "nation" and "territorial sovereignty" is first an act of geographic imagination—one with powerful and far-reaching political consequences from the nineteenth century onwards.[5]

While the present work focuses on the geopoetics of a historically and territorially bounded situation—Central Asia in the late nineteenth century—it is worth noting as well that the term geopoetics itself tends toward global, or planetary, connotations. The centuries of European travel, discovery, and colonization of other parts of the world would also produce the notion of the world and the planet as analogous formations—what Mary Louise Pratt calls "planetary consciousness."[6] Scholars of geopolitics, a term whose association with geopoetics goes beyond just a phonic resemblance, have also noticed the coincidence. Says geographer John Agnew, "*World* politics was invented only when it became possible to see the world (in the imagination) as a whole."[7] And returning now to Kenneth White: "Geopoetics is concerned, fundamentally, with a relationship to the earth and with the opening of a world."[8] All of these examples, which link the physical territory of the earth with the conceptual space of culture, or politics, constitute geopoetics.

And finally, what of the earth as physical territory, topography, and ecology? The material specificity of the earth's physical places is always, in some ways, in tension with the tendency of geopolitics to conceptualize and abstract. On the other hand, like the troubled and dependent relationship between nature and culture more broadly, the distinction between specific physical place and abstract, symbolic space is far from clear cut. As Simon Schama observes, "so many of our modern concerns—empire, nation, freedom, enterprise, and dictatorship—have invoked topography to give their ruling ideas a natural form."[9] Great Game-era Central Asia provides a case study in the relationship between "ruling ideas" and "natural form," as European

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[4] Kenneth White, "Rediscover the Earth, open a world," The International Institute of Geopoetics, accessed 28 July 2021, https://www.institut-geopoetique.org/en/2-non-categorise/43-rediscover-the-earth-open-a-world; and ibid., "The Atlantic Shore—A letter on the origins of geopoetics," https://www.institut-geopoetique.org/en/founding-texts/110-the-atlantic-shore-a-letter-on-the-origins-of-geopoetics.

[5] Edward Said, *Orientalism,* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 55; Chenxi Tang, *The Geographic Imagination of Modernity: Geography, Literature, and Philosophy in German Romanticism* (Stanford UP, 2008), 15.

[6] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation,* 2nd ed., (New York: Routledge, 2007), 15.

[7] John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics*, 2nd ed., (London: Routledge, 2004), 5.

[8] White, "An Outline of Geopoetics," The International Institute of Geopoetics, accessed 2 August 2021, https://www.institut-geopoetique.org/en/articles-en/37-an-outline-of-geopoetics.

[9] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 17.

and "local" representations of Central Asian landscape took on both symbolic and ideological significance.

As for *interimperiality*, I borrow the term and its definition from Laura Doyle, for whom the term implies a consideration of the *longue durée* of culture exchange between European and non-European regions and political entities. Doyle has written that "we have yet to fathom…the depth at which the apparently 'native' esthetic forms of Anglo-European cultures originate elsewhere, carrying their own travelling histories that predate European contact."[10] Doyle's formulation is certainly true of European-Central Asian literary encounters—one ready example would be Matthew Arnold's 1853 poem *Sohrab and Rustum*, which retells an episode of the medieval Persian epic, Ferdowsi's *Book of Kings* in blank verse. Still, while this sense of the term *interimperiality*—as an expanded view of empire and the direction of cultural exchange—informs my understanding of literary Central Asia, my own work takes the term in a more literal—we might say a more geopoetic—sense. That is, Central Asia's interimperiality in the nineteenth century was also a function of its real spatial orientation between British India to the south; Romanov Russia to the north; as well as the Qing Dynasty in China to the east and Qajar Iran to the west.

These, then, are the geopoetics of Central Asia in the context of the Great Game. The region's instrumental potential as an overland route between empires corresponds to the flourishing of literary genres related to mobility: travelogue, picaresque, adventure tale, and epic. The fact that much of the territory of Central Asia is the traditional domain of nomadic populations likely heightened its association with literatures of travel and mobility. At the same time, the region's Great Game-era political function as a buffer between empires corresponds to a powerfully durable idea of Central Asia as "empty space." The literature of the Great Game at its core expresses a tension between unbounded space and politically circumscribed space; between the unknown and the known worlds; and between the expansive mobility which sustained empire and the cartographic fixity which European empires required as they reached the physical limits of territorial growth. These tensions resulted in a literary project, shared across political and linguistic lines, of figuring Central Asia as a space outside of European imperial modernity. This project explores the ways in which, during the historical moment that was the Great Game, when the last outlying parts of the Old World came under the sway of a new global order, the geopoetics of those outlying regions, that is, Central Asia, moved outward from literature to define the very terms—like periphery, boundary, frontier—of empire itself.

[10] Doyle, 195.

Chapter 1
The Great Game Travelogue: Fred Burnaby's *A Ride to Khiva* and Colonel Grodekov's *Across Afghanistan*

Figure 1. "Wyld's Map of Khiva and Surrounding Countries."
(Fred Burnaby carried a copy of this map with him on his journey)

i. Planetary Consciousness and the Problem of Central Asia

The imperial rivalry between Russia and Britain entered the popular consciousness of both countries through newspapers and through the accounts of travellers to the contested territories in Central Asia. New trips through the region, and new publications about such trips, were in themselves newsworthy events, especially in Britain. In addition, much of the information which newspapers published about the region and the two empires' movements within originated in travelers' reports. Newspapers relied by necessity on travelogues written by the relatively few explorers equipped to travel to Central Asia—the region was remote from urban centers in Russia, to say nothing of its distance from Great Britain, and its terrain, large stretches of arid desert surrounding chains of rugged, glaciated high mountains, made it difficult to access even from relatively proximate British India.

That geographical proximity of India to Central Asia—much of which was annexed by the Russian Empire over the course of the nineteenth century—lay at the heart Britain's political interest in the region, as well as being an important, though not the sole, motivation for Russia's expansion.[1] The region posed a geopolitical problem for the two empires, each of which sought

[1] See Evgeny Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2014), esp. Chapter 1 "The Prologue of the Great Game," pp. 23-63.

to expand its sphere of influence and protect its imperial territory without provoking an armed conflict, which would surely entail massive human and capital investment, with the other. This geopolitical problem is, furthermore, the lens through which most scholarship to date has viewed the Great Game. By contrast, this chapter seeks to view the Great Game, the two empires caught up in it, and the territories contested by it through the lens of geopoetics, which links, as one Great Game-era English commentator put it, "the imaginative faculty…with physical geography."[2] In the travelogues on which I focus, Fred Burnaby's *A Ride to Khiva* (1876) and Nikolai Grodekov's *Cherez Afganistan* [*Across Afghanistan*] (1880), Central Asia poses not only political, but also epistemological, discursive, and interpretive problems for the two empires. From the middle of the nineteenth century, when it became clear that the two imperial frontiers would meet somewhere in the region, Central Asia's geographic position and topography took on, in the travel reports and, later, fiction about the region, symbolic qualities which both reflected and helped to produce its political role as an interimperial buffer. Futhermore, as I will argue, the region became something like a discursive blank slate, on which Burnaby and Grodekov, like the many other travel writers whose accounts of Central Asia emerged in the same period, could work out questions about the meaning and nature not only of Central Asia, but of European empires as well.

As English and Russian travelers and writers formed a discourse around Central Asia's discovery by European empires (a discourse which later parts of this chapter will challenge), geographers formulated theories about the deep-rooted and far-reaching centrality of Central Asia. The latter was most fully realized in 1904, toward the end of the era in which Central Asia occupied a truly central role in global politics, with the development of Halford Mackinder's "heartland theory."[3] Mackinder, a British geographer and a founder of the field of geopolitics, sought to understand historical and political developments as causal outcomes of physical geography, using Central Asia as his core example. In a paper he presented to the Royal Geographical Society, titled "The Geographical Pivot of History," Mackinder advanced a theory of geographical determinism, arguing that the relative ideological unity and political organization which Europe had achieved by the end of the nineteenth century was the inevitable outcome of the invasions, throughout the medieval period, carried out by the nomads of Central Asia. The heartland theory holds that, because steppe environments made steppe populations adept at traveling great distances quickly, the nomads of Central Asia gained the ability to make contact with and ultimately dominate the sedentary populations on the steppe's periphery—first Slavs, and later other groups within Europe. In response to the nomads' superior mobility and territorial aggression, the sedentary, agricultural populations of what would become Europe developed defensive social structures and newly cohesive cultural formations. Europe itself, Mackinder argues, emerged as a rough political and cultural unit as a result of a "secular struggle against Asiatic invasion."[4] While Russia produced no exact counterpart to Mackinder's theory, Russian historiography also generated deterministic ideas about Eurasian geography, as early historiographers, most notably Vasilii Kliuchevskii, located the origins of the Russian nation in the cultural confrontations and exchanges between sedentary Slavs and neighboring nomadic populations, attributing the long period of contact to the openness of the Eurasian steppe, and to

[2] Douglass Freshfield, remarks on St. George Littledale, "A Journey Across the Pamir from North to South" in *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, New Monthly Series 14, no. 1 (Jan. 1892), 29.

[3] See H. J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904): 421-3.

[4] Ibid., 423.

its lack of physical geographic frontiers.[5] By the turn of the twentieth century, around the time when Mackinder published his frontier hypothesis, Russian scholars of empire and the East—known as Orientologists—had transformed Kliuchevskii's hypothesis about the steppe as an ancient cultural crossroads into the idea that, unlike European culture, "Russian culture [represented] a space where the 'East' and the 'West' met" and that Central Asia was a space "in the path of expansion of various civilizations: nomadic Turko-Mongolian, ancient Iranian, and the civilization of Islam."[6] Both conceptions of Central Asia's fundamental significance to the development of European—and Russian, to the extent that it differed—culture and politics rest on a geopoetic idea about the meaning of the region's flat, open expanses, an issue with which both Burnaby and Grodekov will engage. Additionally, both the heartland theory and Russian Orientologists focus on Central Asia as a culturally generative space is in tension with its actual political role in the Great Game era, when its remoteness and double peripherality, standing as it did between two imperial frontiers, were the very traits which gave it geopolitical importance.

The Great Game in effect provoked a recapitulation of the civilization-building process which Mackinder identifies in the heartland theory, with European empires this time learning to consolidate not defensive power against invading Mongols, but a powerful unified idea about empires as world-constituting political space. By the early nineteenth century, Central Asia's geopolitical significance had receded compared to its height during the middle ages, and the region was, from the perspective of the metropolitan centers of Europe, on empire's farthest periphery, subject to the same political and academic processes which would result in the exploration, mapping, and ultimately colonization of the Near East, South Asia, Africa, and the Americas. However in the mid- to late nineteenth century Central Asia again took on political and cultural importance as it became the last part of the Old World to be "discovered." Its incorporation into the Russian Empire—and hence into the European political order which then dominated the globe—was one more piece in the series of political and territorial acquisitions which allowed Europeans to develop what Mary Louise Pratt terms "planetary consciousness."[7] Furthermore if, as John Agnew argues in *Geopolitics*, contemporary political thought has "actively spatialized, divided up, labelled, sorted out [the world] into a hierarchy of places of greater or lesser 'importance,'" then the explorers of the Great Game era who mapped Central Asia put in place the final piece in the puzzle of the "actively spatialized" world.[8] Mackinder's characterization of the "ruthless and idealess horsemen sweeping over the unimpeded plain—a blow, as it were, from the great Asiatic hammer striking freely through the vacant space," both reinforces Great Game-era mythology about Central Asia, and elucidates the region's conceptual meaning in the period: it had once again become "vacant space."[9] In this latter capacity, Mackinder's theory goes beyond the exigencies of interimperial rivalry and reveals instead the basis of an imperial cooperative project of sorts. As the last part of the Old World to be incorporated into Europe's dominant political order—and one of the last parts of the entire globe

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[5] See Vasilii Kliuchevskii, *Sochineniia v deviatikh tomakh*, vol. 1, *Kurs russkoi istorii* (Moscow: Mysl', 1987) and Sergei Soloviev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: Mysl', 1988). Both texts are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

[6] Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford UP, 2011), 11; and Yuri Bregel, "Barthold and Modern Oriental Studies," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12, no. 3 (Nov. 1980): 386.

[7] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed., (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[8] John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics*, 2nd ed., (London: Routledge, 2003), 3.

[9] Mackinder, 427.

to be thoroughly mapped—Central Asia allowed European geographers, historians, and political thinkers to correlate for the first time "larger geographical and…larger historical generalizations."[10] The region's incorporation into European empires as well as European scientific discourse allowed for a consideration of the globe as one unit, and for an understanding of certain political forces as global. The pressures which, according to Mackinder, had forced Europeans to unite had emerged from the middle of the Eurasian landmass, making Central Asia truly central to global history, situating Europe and Central Asia at opposite ends of a civilizational spectrum, but troubling any sense of clarity around which region was powerful, generative, and central, and which decadent, backward, and peripheral.

Travel writers contributed in fundamental ways to the spatialization of the world. To do so, though, they had to learn to interpret the particular places which they encountered as abstract, politicized space. As Mary Louise Pratt elucidates in *Imperial Eyes*, the narratable—even the simply writeable—aspects of European travel narratives evolved as European empires spread their lines of influence across the globe. She foregrounds the shift from the survival narratives associated with high seas navigation to "interior exploration" of continents that was driven by a new European interest in natural history, and focused on collection and classification of botanical samples.[11] Soon that classificatory impulse spread to the observation and description of local culture—anthropology and botany becoming analagous, albeit distinct modes for European observers to interact with foreign human and natural realms. A second development, related to the shift from personal survival to observation and classification, was the addition of a tendency for travel writers to seek causality and interpret the meaning of their observations. Pratt is emphatic that, when the business of cataloguing and interpreting became narratable content, the narratives themselves became "a sequence of sights or settings" that "do everything possible to minimize the human presence."[12] The minimization of human presence had two crucial effects: first, it divided the landscape categorically from the human; and second, it relegated, in the textual landscape, the narrative of human presence, interaction, development to what Pratt calls "descriptive digression," thus reinforcing a conceptual divide between the spatialized—that is, abstract and passive—landscape, which often includes indigenous populations, and the individual—that is, European—personalities who act on it. This dynamic was not unique to travel writing about Central Asia—indeed, Pratt has nothing to say on the region. But the dynamic was particularly visible in Great Game era Central Asian travelogues, because the region's vast expanses and relatively small human populations proved particularly well suited to a geopoetics that emphasized abstract space, solidifying "vacant space" as the region's political and aesthetic function in European travel narratives.

A final, and crucial, aspect of Great Game-era travelogues concerns the poetics of the genre as a whole, and the place of Great Game travelogues as a piece within the long-standing and far-reaching corpus of European travel writing, a genre which has always been closely linked to scientific exploration, trade, and, eventually, imperial expansion. Critical histories and analyses of the genre seem compelled to begin with the difficulty of defining it.[13] However most

[10] Ibid., 422.

[11] Pratt, 15.

[12] Ibid., 58.

[13] A small selection: "No discussion of travel writing seems complete without critics remarking on the difficulty of determining their object of study." Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1. "The term 'travel writing' encompasses a bewildering diversity of forms, modes and itineraries…." Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), 1-2. "Our volume offers only a tentative

critics also agree on the centrality of the genre to modern European literary discourses. As Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, likely literary studies' contemporary authorities on the poetics of travel writing, put it, "writing became an essential part of traveling; documentation an integral aspect of the activity."[14] That very act of documentation, however, produces a certain tension which is, Hulme and Youngs argue, inherent to the genre. Because the documented journey is undertaken, and the subsequent account produced, by an individual subject, the travelogue is self-reflexive and particular, even as it usually also claims to offer truth, fact, and objectivity. The result, as many scholars including, famously, Edward Said in *Orientalism*, have observed, is that accounts of "foreign" places tend to redound onto the writing self, revealing as much about the culture which produced the traveler as about the cultures the traveler encountered.

Futhermore, travelogues tend to trouble, and therefore emphasize, the line between factual, "useful" information and pleasurable narrative reading: a traveler, an observing subject, in becoming a travel writer, produces an account which claims facticity and authenticity, but the value of which also rests on its singularity. Travel texts which are closely aligned with adventure narrative assert their singularity by describing locales which are inaccessible to tourism or other forms of mass travel; travel texts which assert, instead, their literariness may describe commonly seen places, but emphasize the singularity of the author's perception and literary style. In either case (and, indeed, these drives are often mixed within individual travel texts), the very truth claims on which travel writing's generic status rests are unverifiable. The travelogue's object of study, therefore, only seems to be the journey itself. Instead it is the seeing self, which presents itself as "attentive to observed experience," but which ultimately turns inward to generate meaning.[15] On the other hand, we should not discount the knowledge about the world beyond Europe's borders, as well as within them, that travel accounts in fact produced.[16] This dilemma registers as a formal issue—travel writing typically foregrounds the authenticity and credibility of the observing and writing self, but the position is always contentious, as the very subjectivity necessary to the production of eye-witness observation undermines the objective truth to which the account aspires (or pretends). It is possible, then, that a perceptible tension between "a focus on the centrality of the self [and] a concern with empirical detail" is a defining feature of travel writing, the genre whose creators gaze simultaneously inward and outward.[17]

Beginning in the 1980s, literary and cultural critics noticed this constellation of issues in travel writing, transforming scholarly conceptions of the significance of travel and its documentation: as Mary Blaine Campbell puts it, "A text that generically proffers itself as 'true', as a representation of unaltered 'reality', makes a perfect test case for analytical work that tries to posit or explain the fundamental fictionality of all representation."[18] For this reason Campbell calls travel writing, recalling the mode of reading developed in part to negotiate the ambiguities

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map of a vast, little-explored area." Peter Hulme and Tim Young, introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing,* eds. Hulme and Youngs (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1. "Travel writing is notoriously difficult to define as a genre…." Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst, "Introduction," *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1.

[14] Hulme and Youngs, 2-3.

[15] Ibid., 3.

[16] For a thorough account of travel writing's contributions to European knowledge about the wider world see Percy Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 61 and 77.

[17] Hulme and Youngs, 6.

[18] Mary Baine Campbell, "Travel writing and its theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing,* Hulme and Youngs, eds., (Cambridge UP, 2002), 263.

of genre, "notably suspicious."[19] Postcolonial theory took up a rhetorical line of inquiry, asking whether travel accounts reveal more about the "foreign" world, or about the discourse of alterity itself. Said's *Orientalism* pioneered the argument that European travelers imagined and constructed themselves alongside and through their representations of their Oriental counterparts. For Said, Europe's encounter with the Orient expressed itself with an "imaginative geography" that, while connected to observation and relaying of empirical facts, also both relates and relies upon "*more* than what appears to be merely positive knowledge."[20] Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*, which extends some of *Orientalism*'s rhetorical framework to Europe's encounter with the New World, takes up the question of "positive knowledge" specifically in connection to narrative. Pratt articulates the excess ("*more* than positive knowledge") to which Said's "imaginative geography" alludes as an idea, born of the development of systems of classification in the natural sciences, and expressed via Europe's encounter with the New World, of the globe as one meaningful unit. The tension between the individual, fallible writing subject and a travel accounts' claims to objectivity and authenticity was of a piece with the European empires' simultaneous interests in the discovery of new places and the homogenization of political space. As Pratt has shown, travel writing on the New World brought the issue of objectivity and global space together by allowing for "the construction of global-scale meaning through the descriptive apparatuses of natural history," at once producing and reproducing the apparent difference between travelers and those whom Pratt calls "travelees," and imagining the globe's peoples and geography as constituent parts of one planetary system.[21] The idea that the seeing self and the seen—or imagined—other are in dialectical relation, arises from Said's and Pratt's assertions that first Europe as a unit, and then the globe as a unit, emerge as concepts from imperial and colonial encounters and their attendant written representations.

Russian and English travelers in late-nineteenth century Central Asia encountered multiple "others" within the same space: the people of territories in the process of becoming, or on the cusp of becoming, colonies of major European empires; the presence, real or imagined, of the other empire; and a conceptual vision of nomadic Central Asia as the inverse of European agricultural civilization. The physical topography of Central Asia became, as the rest of this chapter will show, a symbolic repository for the characteristics of each of these "others." Historians of the Great Game have observed this interested perspective, in European literature about Central Asia, on land and landscape: in his treatment of Russo-British political and cultural rivalries in the region, Evgeny Sergeev notes that travelogues in both languages betray the perception that "even the local environment corresponded with decadent social structures in Asia."[22] In part this idea was inherited from generations of Orientalists, academics, novelists, and painters, who, as Said revealed, imagined Europe's antithesis in both the landscape and the culture of the East. It was not only recycled Orientalism, however, that led to the Great Game travelogue's preoccupation with the meaning of Central Asia's land. Because the Great Game was one of the final episodes of European imperial expansion, and because the two states' expansionist interests were so present, even foregrounded, in travel accounts of the region, territorial boundaries and state interests provided both the scale and the impetus for the acquisition of positive knowledge about the region. They similarly drove European imaginative geographies of Central Asia, so that the representation and interpretation of land and landscape

[19] Ibid., 262.
[20] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 55.
[21] Pratt, 16.
[22] Sergeev, 32.

became the main mechanism through which Great Game-era travel writing accounts worked out their encounters with alterity.

ii. Central Asia as a novel frontier

The Great Game sneaked into English popular consciousness—and into the popular imagination—in a manner reminiscent of the shadowy and unsanctioned quality of European penetration into Central Asia. Russia's expansionist behavior in the region was much in the news at the end of the nineteenth century, and it developed into an intricate discourse in the British press. From the 1850s on, consternation at Russia's encroachments on Central Asia—and perplexity at Britain's apparent disregard of the problem—surfaced periodically in the British press. Early reports often underestimated Russia's abilities. In 1855 political opinion weekly *The Leader* ran an extensive analysis of Russia's behavior at its southern frontiers from the late-eighteenth century, spanning two issues and reassuring readers that, despite Russia's "brutal insolence," "many a long year and age must elapse before Russia shall be able to make good her footing so far [as Khiva] into the centre of Asia."[23] Russia, however, conquered Khiva and solidified its control of Transcaspia not two decades later. Another flurry of press attention began in the 1870s, following the sack of Khiva. During this period, while some called Russia a threat to Europe itself, which should be "trampled in the dust," many commentators saw "civilization" and "progress" as worthy goals, regardless of their provenance, which would protect general European interests in the region. An 1878 editorial in the liberal *Labour League Examiner* argued that "no fair-minded person doubts that the progress of Russia in Central Asia has, on the whole, been favorable to civilisation. She has abolished slavery everywhere. She has introduced something like order, where nothing but anarchy and violence prevailed before."[24] Other, more conservative voices, advocated a proactive approach, warning that "it is pretty certain that the Russian and British frontiers will one day meet. Where they will meet depends upon ourselves."[25] Yet another camp favored above all a balanced global order, urged caution in Central Asian affairs, and occasionally reasoned that having a "civilized" neighbor on India's northern frontier would be beneficial.[26] One thread, however, runs across the many political camps and responses to Russia's presence in Central Asia: everyone always seems surprised at Russia's persistence. In 1854 *The Leader* complains that "everyone appears to wonder how [the Russians] could have got there so quietly….[yet] on reference to your files of the last two years

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[23] "Progress of Russian Policy in Central Asia," *The Leader* (London, United Kingdom), Aug. 4, 1855, Vol. VI, Issue 280, http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/6yQhmX; and Ibid., Aug. 11, 1855, Vol. VI, Issue 281, http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/6yQsU6.

[24] "Russia in Central Asia," *Labour League Examiner* (Boston, United Kingdom), Dec. 14, 1878, Vol. VIII, Issue 205, http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/6yK6T1.

[25] D. Mackenzie Wallace, *Russia* (New York: Henry Holt, 1881), 596.

[26] Evgeny Sergeev, in his treatment of the Russo-British political rivalry in Central Asia, frames this debate as a question of the perceived costs and benefits of imposing European societal norms on Central Asia. He notes that the Russians felt they had the ultimate moral upper hand in the project of civilizing Asia, and that England, though apprehensive from the start at Russia's expansion, also viewed Russia as a European ally in this mission: "the majority of British ruling elites cherished a so-called Peter Pan theory, regarding the autochthonic populations of Oriental countries as adolescents who would never become adults. They needed, therefore, permanent patronage and guidance from progressive nations, including the Russians…" Sergeev, 31-5.

you will find reports on the progress of the expedition in every stage."[27] The whole affair was a well-documented but evidently easily forgotten, persistently mystifying set of events. And so the Great Game and its playing field in Central Asia took on qualities both of the known world and the unknown—the familiar, if unpredictable, realm of imperial statecraft, and the unknowable frontier of empire, beyond which global order that included both Russian and British empires broke down.

Central Asia sustained a number of other contradictions in English politics, as well as in the English imperial imaginary, in the late nineteenth century. For one, the region gained geopolitical prominence, occupying a central position in military and political discourse in both England and Russia, even as English visitors to Central Asia insisted on its remoteness, foreignness, and peripherality. Great Game-era travel writing from England partook in and reproduced many of the same contradictions which came to constitute the region in the English imagination.[28] Travelogues parsed both the novelty and the centrality of Central Asia. These texts argued for the region's political relevance—and the social and literary relevance of the authors' accounts—claiming both to reveal a crucial but hidden aspect of Britain's geopolitical situation, and to recount life in one of the planet's last completely "uncivilized" regions. In contrast, where England's relationship with Central Asia in the nineteenth century was chiefly interpretive, Russia's textual encounter with Central Asia in the nineteenth century, mirroring the empire's military conquest of vast swaths of the region, was acquisitive and assimilative. English writers speculated on Russia's position in the region and debated the relative dangers and merits of her movements there. Russian papers focused on geopolitics but centered Russia's own experience in the region, filling columns with trip reports, findings from scientific missions, and updates on military and diplomatic advances on Russia's southern frontiers. In an analysis of Russian writing on the conquest of Central Asia, historian Alexander Morrison shows that in the Russian context, military writing on Central Asia "far outweighed" other types, including literary-artistic prose and popular reportage. Military writing was, however, itself a large category, including "campaign memoirs, reminiscences, scholarly articles, travelogues, biographies, topographies, manuals of tactics, official and unofficial histories, short fiction."[29] Because military structures

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[27] "Russian Encroachments Still Further East," *Leader* (London, United Kingdom), Dec. 2, 1854, http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/3s5NLX.

[28] The travel writing genre was a popular one. Some idea of the volume and type of published writing on Central Asia in English in the second half of the nineteenth century may be gleaned from Charles Marvin, *Reconnoitring Central Asia: Pioneering Adventures in the Region Lying Between Russia and India* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, LeBas & Lowry, 1886), which provides detailed summaries and analyses of no fewer than fifteen book-length accounts to have been published in England in the preceding fifteen years. Marvin, a contemporary of all and personal acquaintance of many of the explorers described in *Reconnoitring Central Asia*, was an important interpreter of political developments in Central Asia. He translated a number of Russian accounts, including N. I. Grodekov's (Nikolai Grodekov, *Colonel Grodekoff's Ride from Samarcand to Herat, through Balkh and the Uzbek States of Afghan Turkestan; with his own map of the march-route from Oxus to Herat*, trans. Charles Marvin (London: WM. H. Allen & co, 1880)), and wrote several of his own analyses of the region. Of particular interest to the present study is the expansive treatment of England's geopolitical interests, rivalry with Russia, and potential for collaboration with Russia on a civilizing mission to nomadic Central Asia furnished by Charles Marvin, *Merv, Queen of the World* (London: W. H. Allen & co, 1881).

[29] Alexander Morrison, "Writing the Russian Conquest of Central Asia" (unpublished paper, New College, Oxford, 2018), 6. Russia produced quite a vast discourse concerning Central Asia, including a rich academic culture of *vostokovedenie* (academic Orientalism), as well more popular publications. Most of this latter category arose, as Morrison points out, from military expeditions and related papers. Morrison has in the past decade produced a

were both the source and focus of the majority of Russian imperial writing on Central Asia, the state's professed interests occupy a more visible position than in English accounts of the region. This is true of Colonel Nikolai Ivanovich Grodekov's travelogue, *Cherez Afganistan* [*Across Afghanistan*] (1880), in which the desirability and possibility of Russian annexation of northern Afghanistan are the chief objects of inquiry.

Although the late nineteenth century saw a new popular interest in Central Asia, as well as the region's expanded role in geopolitics, the Great Game hardly constituted Europe and Central Asia's first encounter. An exhaustive historiography of travel literature lists, among several other Europeans who explored Persia, India, and the regions between, a Spanish monk who recorded travels along the Caspian and as far as Samarkand in 1403;[30] and Lodovico di Varthema, an Italian with a great facility for languages and disguises, who traversed much of Central Asia and published an account replete with "adventures that caused his book (1510) to go through countless editions throughout Europe."[31] Even after the advent of sea-based commerce, its proximity to older empires in Persia and South Asia kept Central Asia relatively full of foreign travelers.[32] In the era of inter-imperial rivalry in the region, too, Europeans traveled to and documented their journeys in Central Asia before the Great Game's specific rivalry got underway in earnest. As early as 1816 explorer and writer Henry Pottinger published *Travels in Beloochistan and Sinde*, insisting—typically, as we shall see—that his account revealed "…countries utterly unknown to Europeans, of whose people, governments and customs no records are extant since the time of Alexander the Great."[33] Pottinger's *Travels* is divided into two parts—the first aims to provide a narrative account of his trip, including entertaining anecdotes, while the second provides reports, including charts and maps, of the geography of the regions between Persia and India. He found this separation difficult to negotiate, noting in his own preface to the account that "the line has, however, been difficult to draw."[34] The drawing of this line, like the insistence that Central Asia was "utterly unknown," would become a feature of European travel writing on the region—though many later accounts were less forthright than Pottinger about its existence.

That tension between the production of positive knowledge and the reproduction of quixotic personal experience characterizes English travelogues about Central Asia, reaching a highly visible peak in Fred Burnaby's *A Ride to Khiva* (1876). The book was so important in part because it documented conditions in Russian Central Asia shortly after the Russian conquest of Khiva—a campaign during which Russia significantly expanded its territory and influence in the region. The book follows Pottinger's general form, though Burnaby's narrative section is more robust and longer than the charts and maps which follow it. The latter section includes a list of Russia's military districts and the number of men stationed there, and a corrected map of the route to Khiva from southern Russia. As in Pottinger's *Travels*, the line between information and entertainment is, indeed, difficult to draw in Burnaby's *Ride.* What emerges from Burnaby, who,

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number of thorough analyses of his archival work on the Russian conquest of Central Asia, and has compiled a bibliography of over 200 books and "thick journals" on Russian campaigns in Central Asia in the late-nineteenth century, as well as some 500 articles from daily newspapers (Ibid., 7). See also the first exhaustive history of the Russian colonial expansion into Central Asia, by the same author: Alexander Morrison, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia: A Study in Imperial Expansion, 1814-1914* (Cambridge UP, 2020).

[30] Adams, 49.

[31] Ibid., 41.

[32] See Nile Green, ed. *Writing Travel in Central Asia* (Indiana UP, 2014).

[33] Henry Pottinger, *Travels in Beloochistan and Sinde*, (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1976), xxvi.

[34] Ibid., xxv.

in the words of his contemporary Charles Marvin, an indefatigable scholar of Russia and Central Asia, "acquired a wider renown as a dashing explorer than any other traveller of modern times," is something in excess of either the positive knowledge or the enticing narrative it produced.[35] Burnaby's account was indeed timely, as Russia's annexation of Khiva edged the Russian Empire closer to British India and put Central Asia once again in the news. Burnaby, who was himself frequently in the news after the publication of *A Ride to Khiva*, became a trusted source on the region.[36] However, its cultural influence reached farther than just a reflection of contemporary political concerns: the book also, perhaps uniquely among its class of experience-based adventure narrative, took its place in the ranks of literary fiction. In the semi-autobiographical story "Youth" (1898), incidentally also the debut of Conrad's narrator Marlow, the latter reads Burnaby while waiting for a ship: "meantime I read for the first time *Sartor Resartus* and Burnaby's *Ride to Khiva*. I didn't understand much of the first then; but I remember I preferred the soldier to the philosopher at the time."[37] Marlow's preference for the soldier's tale (Burnaby was an officer, though he traveled to Khiva in an unofficial capacity) is indicative of Burnaby's place in the world of adventure literature—memorable and compelling, it privileges the author's subjective experience of Central Asia, while also observing and interpreting the region's geopolitical meaning.

Burnaby, like many travelers to Central Asia, claimed that his route had never before been undertaken by an Englishman, although he allows that several travelers before him had reached Khiva from other directions. Charles Marvin, in a summary and comparison of Russian and British Great Game travelogues, quibbles with this point, though he admits that Burnaby's decision to travel in December and January made for a novel account.[38] The persistent novelty of Central Asia, which took shape in 19th century British and other European travelogues, was an important aspect of the mythology of the region and of the Great Game itself. The idea that Central Asia was undiscovered was strong in the middle of the nineteenth century, and it took shape again and again in the period's travel writing. The implications of this imagined newness cut a few ways. On one hand, it perhaps worked in concert with a general uncertainty about Russia's actions in the region and intentions toward British India—Central Asia became, in an imaginative sense, a convenient receptacle for the real uncertainty of contemporary geopolitical affairs. In the literary world, the region's receptive quality developed into a related trope: Central Asia as perpetually and intrinsically empty space, rather than a set of developed places. On the other hand, in the realm of global politics the region assumed the status of the "final frontier" of European empires, a great continental interior that Europeans could "open" via observation and description—a region waiting to be uncovered, rather than filled. These two visions of Central Asia—empty and available, or untouched and closed—stand in not-quite opposition to each other. They have common origins in a European vision of the region's meaning and value for

[35] Marvin, *Reconnoitring Central Asia,* 178.

[36] One example of how trusted a source Burnaby had become: an 1877 review of David Mackenzie Wallace's *Russia*, a seminal two-volume analysis of Russian politics and society, opens with a comparison to Burnaby's *Ride*. "Captain Burnaby's 'Ride to Khiva' gave the world some fresh insight into Russian doings in Asia, and now Mr. D. Mackenzie Wallace, in his work on 'Russia,' supplies a large body of original information with regard to the condition of the Muscovite in Europe." *The Labour League Examiner*, 27 Jan. 1877.

[37] Joseph Conrad, "Youth: A narrative," in *Youth: A narrative and two other stories*, (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1903), 8.

[38] Marvin, *Reconnoitring Central Asia*, 182.

Eurocentric global affairs. The travelogues discussed below in this chapter represent Great Game-era Central Asia according to both the "empty" and "closed" paradigms.

An anxiety about novelty exists also in the literary traditions which produced Great Game travel writing. As Youngs has shown in his study of the travelogue's generic development, a kind of brinkmanship emerged in European travel writing over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which authors of travel accounts sought not only farther-flung exploits, but also greater credibility and authority as writers and interpreters of foreign regions.[39] In travel writing devoted to nineteenth-century Central Asia, which was particularly circumscribed by imperial politics, the traveling, interpreting self often ramifies into the state and its interests. On the other hand, the same corpus of work, including Burnaby, is not divorced from the literary traditions which informed the development of travel writing up to the mid-nineteenth century. Romanticism is of central importance to the development of the traveling self, through its focus on individual perspective and the excavation of inner emotional states, and Burnaby and the other Central Asian travelers partake in this tradition as well, particularly in their responses to the more "foreign" aspects of Central Asia's landscape. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, in travel writing about more frequented parts of the world, the Romantic influence on travel writing produced a "dilemma of belatedness," in which individual travelogues' "sense of having been preceded reached crisis proportions."[40] This crisis did not exist for Central Asia, which was still almost entirely inaccessible to tourism, and whose geostrategic role was far from settled. In fact the opposite is more true: British travelers to Central Asia really had been preceded, but their own trip reports registered as novel rather than routine. Great Game travelogues focus on novelty, in other words, in part because the genre required it, but also because, as I will argue in the remainder of the chapter, the Great Game played a crucial role in Europe's bid to clarify and solidify empire as a global system of governance, and Central Asia had a crucial role in that process. It was not "new" in the sense of never having been visited by Europeans, though the trope of "undiscovered" land remained powerful in travelogues. But an inter-imperial territory, which functioned both to keep imperial frontiers apart and to reify their dominance over the entirety of Eurasia, was indeed a novel concept.

iii. *Imagining Khiva: Burnaby's literary heritage*

By the time Fred Burnaby arrived in Central Asia in the winter of 1875-6, there had already been a half dozen well-known accounts of the region published in England in the preceding fifty years.[41] And, though Burnaby gives a nod to his literary predecessors James Abbott, J. A.

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[39] See Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, esp. chpts. 3 and 4, for a discussion of the shifting dominance of externally-oriented description (landscape, etc.) and autobiographical impulses in modern European travel writing. In his account, the progression from an observational mode to a more interpretive one is not as smooth as, for example, Pratt would argue. He notes that in the 18th century certain types of travelogue, especially accounts of Grand Tours from England to Rome, actually privileged autobiography and interpretations of the self more than 19th century imperially- or politically-oriented works.

[40] Ibid., 55.

[41] In addition to the accounts of Abbott, MacGahan, and Vambery, which Burnaby references and which are discussed in some detail in this chapter, there were Pottinger's *Travels in Beloochistan and Sinde* (1816); James B. Fraser, *Narrative of a Journey into Khorassan in the Years 1821 and 1822*, (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1984); and Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*: *Being the Account of a Journey from India to Cabool, Tartary and Persia, 1831-1833, Also, Narrative of a Voyage on the Indus, from the Sea to Lahore* (London: John Murray, 1834).

MacGahan, and Armin Vambery in the first paragraph of *A Ride to Khiva* he also presents his journey as unique and the region as little known and largely inscrutable. At the time of his travels, Khiva was the southernmost settlement within Russian-controlled Central Asia. Russia had annexed the territory just the previous year, after two failed attempts earlier in the 19th century. The territory's ruler, the Khan of Khiva, was left nominally in charge of his own land, but required to pay heavy tribute to the Russians. Surrounding the settlement of Khiva, itself an oasis city, were, to the west, hundreds of miles of temperate grassland known as the steppe, and on all other sides a harsh desert, the Kyzyl Kum, or Red Sands. Both the steppe and the Kyzyl Kum were the domain of Central Asia's Turkic nomads, who were variously at odds with the Khanate or subject to it. These tribes were not distributed territorially in ways that Europeans recognized as politically meaningful demarcations of space. The Khanate of Khiva, by contrast, was a centuries-old state, whose physical location had kept it somewhat isolated from greater Central Asia and protected it, until relatively late in the nineteenth century, from European encroachment.

Burnaby travelled with a local guide and with the permission of the Russian Ministry of War, but he organized the trip and his provisions himself and went at his own expense and without any official affiliation with the British government or military: though a career military officer who had served extensively in Britain's colonies, he made his trip to Khiva on his leave from service in Central Africa. Burnaby, who spoke Russian well and evidently had a long-standing interest in the country, had considered traveling to Khiva via Persia a few years earlier as the Russians were staging their invasion, in order to "if possible, be with the Khivans at the time of the Russian attack."[42] When Burnaby read the year after the invasion that the Russian Empire had closed off "Russian Asia" to foreigners and had denied another Englishman entry into the regions around Khiva, he perversely decided to try to make the same trip himself. This time he would approach Khiva not through Persia, but from the north—he went first from London to St. Petersburg, by rail through Moscow and through the Urals to the end of the line at Sizeran, and after that by horse-drawn sleigh over the frozen steppes.[43] In his insistence on going alone, in an unofficial capacity, where he knew others like him had been turned back, Burnaby signals from the first pages of his published account a paradox similar to the one that turned up in news reports of Russia's expansion in Central Asia: he traveled a known route, but traveled as if his journey were singular.

Burnaby furthermore obscures his own relationship, as writer and narrator, to his textual predecessors. "I eagerly read every book that could be found, and which seemed likely to give any information," he writes, describing his very first preparations for the trip, without making reference to any of these works again.[44] When Burnaby presents his own experiences in Central Asia, the narrative therefore appears as if unmediated by prior texts, and Burnaby's observations appear as if unfiltered by previously held knowledge or prejudices. Of course his narrative is not really so purely his own in either content or form. For reasons that range from his self-professed familiarity with earlier similar accounts to the "library or archive of information commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held" by European culture in general pertaining to "the

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[42] Fred Burnaby, *A Ride to Khiva: Travels and adventures in Central Asia*, (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1887), 4.

[43] This railway line eventually terminated at Orenburg, near the modern-day border of Kazakhstan. See George Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo-Russian Question*, (London: Longmans, Green & co, 1989) for a discussion of the development of railway lines in the region.

[44] Burnaby, 8.

East," Burnaby draws on a bank of unacknowledged source material for his account.[45] On the other hand, *A Ride to Khiva* does stand out in certain other respects—the narrator's sarcastic and humorous tone, for instance, differs from the highly stylized narrative voice of his immediate predecessor, Vambery.[46] If Burnaby's account was novel, however, it was not so because his trip was unprecedented, or because he was the first point of contact between native Central Asians and Europeans.[47] The significance and novelty of the book lies, instead, in its ability to bridge political discourses that understood Central Asia chiefly for its material advantages, and an Orientalist strain in European culture that informed Burnaby's and others' more imaginative interpretations of the region. *A Ride to Khiva*, I will argue below, locates both material and imaginative meaning in the landscape of the steppe and desert around Khiva. A multifaceted engagement with Central Asia's physical and imagined geographies produces, in Burnaby's work, a fuller accounting of the region's significance for the British Empire than previous English travel narratives devoted to the region.

Within the broader scope of travelogues that touch on Central Asia, a category which encompasses everything from reports on the Persian Empire in the west to accounts of the Himalaya, the Tibetan Plateau, and the deserts of Chinese Xinjiang in the Far East, Burnaby singled out for his research three accounts which mentioned Khiva specifically. This section of the chapter offers readings of each of these three texts, with an eye toward how Burnaby borrowed and combined their structures and themes in his own account. All four works, Burnaby's included, are concerned with the relationship between interpretation and narrative. In other words, each works out a method for collating the circumstantial experiences of a long trip, and for narrating those experiences in a mode that seems more or less directed toward political revelations. In each case the ruling Khan of Khiva—although the travelogues actually span the reigns of two distinct khans—serves as these travelogues' narrative telos and interpretive fulcrum. In earlier accounts, the khan had been a stereotyped character, functioning merely as a cipher or foil the narrators' ideas about the significance of Central Asia. In Vambery's and Burnaby's later accounts the narrators' focus shifts from the "real" material value of Central Asia to its symbolic aspect. The khan, in turn, becomes closely associated with the land that his territory comprises. Vambery and Burnaby find parallels between the character of the steppe landscape and the character of the khan, while also seeking to reconcile the khanate's geographical isolation with its new geopolitical importance.

Of the three other accounts that Burnaby names, James Abbott's *Narrative of a Journey from Heraut to Khiva, Moscow, and St. Petersburgh* (1843) is the earliest. Burnaby owes much to its boisterous tone and focus on anecdotes gleaned in conversations with locals. Abbott, a generation older than Burnaby and a British army officer and administrator in colonial India, went to Khiva on an official diplomatic mission in 1840. He sought to manage tensions in the region after a failed Russian invasion of Khiva a few months earlier. The Russians had been

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[45] Said, 41.

[46] Take, for example, Burnaby's definition of a Russian verst as a distance "calculated to call forth the wrath of the traveller" (62); or his describing cases of bullets to a customs officer as "little things which contain some lead" (35).

[47] It should be noted that Vambery traveled in apparently convincing disguise as a Turkish religious pilgrim. Moreover, Burnaby approached Khiva from the north whereas most other contemporary British travelers had come through Persia and Afghanistan, to the south and west. Burnaby probably encountered local *individuals* who had had no previous contact with Europeans. On the other hand, given that Khiva had been subject to three Russian military invasions in as many decades, it seems unlikely that Europeans were completely unknown to most residents of the region.

turned by back a harsh winter, but the pretext for their invasion—an exchange of prisoners that each side claimed had gone wrong—remained unresolved. Abbott repeatedly emphasizes Khiva's general dislocation from global politics. His initial assessment makes the khanate seem not only uncivilized, but outside of even the typical metrics of civilization, as gauged by the conventions of toponymics: "a country so cut off from the rest of the world by wide steppes, whose rare inhabitants are plunderers and slave-dealers by profession, was too little known to be correctly designated; accordingly, Khaurism[48] is a title with which few are familiar…."[49] Abbott's role as narrator of his travel account seems chiefly to be setting the record straight about Khiva's "correct designations" both in the region and in terms of its broader geopolitical significance. The text's main narrative tension centers on Abbott's diplomatic role. Abbott was frequently misunderstood by Khivans, who suspect that he is a Russian spy and were, to Abbott's mind, unable to grasp England's interest in the region. His narrative often presents pedantic elucidations of global politics as explanations given to naive and misinformed locals, as when he presents Sayyid Muhammad Khan of Khiva with a map of the world and tries to explain why England and Russia are suddenly competing for his territory:

> I read, at the Khaun's [sic] desire, the sketch I had drawn up of the political divisions of Europe, with which I deemed it important he should be acquainted—showed him how a nation, politically allied to us in Europe, had, in Asia, interests separate from ours….showed him how important to the interests of our Indian empire was the integrity of Khaurism and Persia, yet how useless to us would be the lands of those states, too poor to pay the expense of occupation, and a stronger barrier to India in their independence than they could be in our hands.[50]

Abbott actually presents a fairly complex strategic argument here, claiming that the Khanate of Khiva and Persia would be useless to England as colonies or occupied territories, but useful as allied—or perhaps subservient—independent states. In other words, these regions' political and economic value lay not in the material or labor Britain could extract from them, but in their ability to buffer India against Russia. This is an argument of the sort that appeared frequently in the British press in the mid-nineteenth century and, as such, is clearly addressed to Abbott's readers rather than to the khan. However, because Abbott incorporates this information directly into his narrative, representing it as it was delivered to the khan, rather than presenting it directly to readers in an aside, he seems to suggest that it was either already well known or obvious to the English reading public. Abbott's motives for both traveling and writing were explicitly political. Nevertheless, in passages like these he troubles the line between "purely" expository, informative writing and entertaining narrative. This distinction, furthermore, is not only stylistic—it also has the effect of naturalizing the text's political stance, making Abbott's political position seem inevitable or given. Other Great Game travelogues, including Burnaby's, would adopt this

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[48] A note on names: Khiva, since the 16th century, has been the main city and at times the political capital of a larger oasis region at the south of the Aral Sea. The region, in Persian خوارزم (Khvarazm), has been variously known in English as Chorasmia, Khwarezm, Khoresm, etc., with many alternative spellings and transliterations for each name (and not to be confused with the neighboring region of Khorassan). Sometimes, especially in the mid-nineteenth century, Khiva has stood in as the popular name for the entire region.

[49] James Abbott, *Narrative of a Journey from Heraut to Khiva, Moscow, and St. Petersburgh, During that Late Russian Invasion of Khiva*, 3rd ed., vol. 2, (London: W. H. Allen & Co, 1884), xxxi.

[50] Ibid., 107.

mechanism for negotiating the related but not always aligned realms of politics and subjective experience.

Next on Burnaby's bibliography came Januarius Aloysius MacGahan's *Campaigning on the Oxus, and the Fall of Khiva* (1874). An American war correspondent with the *New York Herald*, MacGahan was embedded with the Russians during their successful 1873 siege of Khiva. His report is basically sympathetic to the Russians, whom he viewed as a useful counterbalance to British ambitions in Central Asia. In adopting a neutral stance, and by structuring his account as short bursts of reportage rather than as an apparently continuous narrative, MacGahan differed significantly from Burnaby as well as from Abbott and Vambery. However, like Burnaby, MacGahan approached Khiva alone from the north, and traveled only two years prior to Burnaby's trip. So the first part of *Campaigning on the Oxus*, which details his trip from Russia proper to the outskirts of Khiva, was likely of great practical value to Burnaby, despite its fleeting appearance within the pages of *A Ride to Khiva*.

MacGahan shares with all three other accounts an interest in the Khan of Khiva as a personality or type—even though he encounters a new khan, Muhammad Rahim Bahadur Khan, who had succeeded Sayyid Muhammad Khan in 1864. In particular he, like Abbott before him, was interested in the khan's abilities to grasp the geopolitical importance of his territory. On his defeat by the Russian army, the khan holds meetings with MacGahan as well as with various members of the Russian army. One Russian officer, the astronomer Serovatsky, explains that he can use his scientific tools to locate his position without any prior knowledge of his surroundings. As in Abbott's account of Sayyid Muhammad Khan, Bahadur Khan seems unaware of modern—that is, Western—ways of reckoning with the world: "The Khan…seemed to regard the astronomer from this moment, as a magician or a sorcerer. At the same time he must have inwardly cursed Serovatsky as the dog of an unbeliever, who had, by his devilish arts, shown the Russians the way to his city of Khiva, which everybody had told him was inaccessible."[51] If Abbott's Khan is an empty receptacle for the author's argument about Khiva's geostrategic importance, MacGahan's Khan is merely superstitious and illogical (some of the oldest Orientalist tropes), apparently incapable of making a judgment even of his own land ("everybody had told him [it] was inaccessible"). While MacGahan's stereotyped account therefore reveals nothing of great interest about the khan as a man, it does betray his investment, which he shares with Abbott, in the role Khiva will play in global affairs. In dramatizing the khan's ignorance and limited grasp of the geographical position of his own state, MacGahan simultaneously dramatizes the complexity of the region's geopolitical significance. On the other hand, MacGahan is at times unabashed in also providing his own interpretations of the situation in Central Asia, without the mediation of the khan. "The Russians," MacGahan claims while discussing the extreme lengths to which the Russian General von Kauffman went to take Khiva, "only maintain their authority in Central Asia by convincing the people that they are invincible and infallible. One mistake, one defeat, and this illusion would be destroyed; for the people finding the Russians could be beaten would rise."[52] In statements like these he is a news reporter, who is able to invest his own narratorial persona with the judgment and sense to arrive at and present such ideas directly. The tension between unmediated presentations of information, which often appear as narrative breaks, and an unbroken narrative arc, is another characteristic feature of the Great Game travelogue. For the other, more "literary," chroniclers of Khiva, interpretive

[51] J.A. MacGahan, *Campaigning on the Oxus and the Fall of Khiva*, (London: Samson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1974), 284.
[52] Ibid., 167.

meaning is often projected metaphorically, onto figures such as the khan, or onto the landscape itself, and it therefore often presents itself in at least partial disguise.

Burnaby's final, and closest, literary antecedent is Armin Vambery's *Travels in Central Asia* (1865). Vambery was a Hungarian philologist who went to Central Asia, in a semi-official academic capacity and in apparently successful disguise, to study the linguistic relationship between his native Hungarian and the Turkic languages of Russian Turkestan. His account, lyrical and eclectic, is most similar to Burnaby's in tone and form. On the perennially fascinating topic of the personality of the khan (Sayyid Muhhamad Khan again) he is straightforwardly disdainful, saying, on meeting him and gaining free passage through Khiva "the khan, who in appearance was so fearfully dissolute, and who presents in every feature of his countenance the real picture of an enervated, imbecile, and savage tyrant, had behaved to me in a manner…unexceptionable."[53] His thoughts on the geopolitical significance of this figure are harder to discern. For Vambery, Central Asia has a symbolic value beyond Khiva's geopolitical role or geographical location as a strategic void. Rather its symbolic value resides in the land itself. Vambery repeatedly complains about the unpleasantness of the land surrounding Khiva, referring variously to "a great sterile plain"[54] and the "eternal sadness of plain [sic], from which every trace of life is banished."[55] At some point the desert overwhelms his capacities for both comparison and judgment:

> I had before been of opinion that the desert can only impress the mind with an idea of sublimity where both fancy and enthusiasm concur to give coloring and definiteness to the picture. But I was wrong. I have seen in the lowlands of my own beloved country a miniature picture of the desert; a sketch of it, too, on a larger scale, later, when I traversed, in Persia, a part of the salt desert (Deschti Kuvir); but how different the feelings which I here experienced! No, it is not the imagination, as men falsely suppose; it is nature itself that lights the torch of inspiration. I often tried to brighten the dark hues of the wilderness by picturing, in its immediate vicinity, cities and stirring life, but in vain; the interminable hills of sand, the dreadful stillness of death, the yellowish-red hue of the sun at rising and setting—yes, every thing tells us that we are here in a great, perhaps in the greatest, desert on the surface of our globe![56] (134)

Vambery's experience of the desert that surrounded and protected Khiva overrides "both fancy and enthusiasm," as if the desert impressed itself on him at some level more fundamental than the emotional. It overrides also his capacity for imagination, making a kind of unmediated space which is empty of all familiar spatial markers ("cities and stirring life"). However, in linking the desert landscape and "the torch of inspiration," Vambery makes the landscape the most fundamental aspect of Central Asia. This is true in a literal sense—Khiva was, for decades, actually inaccessible to foreigners. And it is even more true in a symbolic sense: *the* experience of Central Asia, for Vambery, is this dissociative experience of an empty and "interminable" desert, from which the region's most fundamental meaning derives.

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[53] Arminius Vambery, *Travels in Central Asia*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 160.
[54] Ibid., 122.
[55] Ibid., 130.
[56] Ibid., 134.

iv. *Desert landscape and the problem of emptiness*

Landscape held a symbolic charge for Burnaby as well, all the more so given the destabilizing and disorienting force Central Asia seemed to exert. One might argue that the symbolic charge of the steppe is the clearest topos Burnaby would inherit from Vambery. In *A Ride to Khiva* the steppe's destablizing quality asserts itself suddenly, unexpectedly. At some point after the railway line has ended, as Burnaby is traveling south-east by sleigh, he crosses a boundary. It happens shortly after he leaves what is known as European Russia for the steppes which had historically been inhabited by Turkic nomadic tribes. The crossing, however, is less the transgression of a political boundary, or indeed of any kind of physical demarcation, than the psychological or spiritual consequence of contemplating what initially appears to be an unchanging landscape. This shift, registered in the landscape, compels Burnaby to focus on monotony as a visual-aesthetic concern, and singularity as a philosophical concern:

> A large dining-table covered with naught but its white cloth is not a cheery sight. To describe the country for the next one hundred miles from Orsk, I need only extend the table cover. For here, there, and everywhere was a dazzling, glaring sheet of white, as seen under the influence of a midday sun; then, gradually softening down as the god of light sank into the west, it faded into a vast and melancholy-looking colourless ocean. This was shrouded in some places from view by filmy clouds of mist and vapour. They rose in the evening air and shaded the wilderness around. A picture of desolation which wearied, by its utter loneliness, and at the same time appalled by its immensity; a circle of which the centre was everywhere, and the circumference nowhere.[57]

Usually unflappable, self-possessed, and fulfilling to the utmost his role as a savvy traveler, Burnaby is suddenly unmoored. His metaphors spin rapidly from the first one, moving quickly away from the domestic interior toward impossible geometric abstraction. A vast white cloth covering one hundred miles and devoid of any sign of dinner—bare tables and missed meals are frequent enough issues during Burnaby's journey while he's still in Russia that his forebodings along those lines naturally increase as he makes his way into the contested borderlands—presents the nomads' steppe in accordance with one set of imperial ideologies and values, closely aligned with British apprehension at Russia's expansion into Central Asia. Perhaps Burnaby feared the disruption of English propriety by Russian "habits and way of thought inherited from a barbarous ancestry."[58] But Burnaby's domestic metaphor reveals a second set of imperial values—one shared by the Russians and English alike. Russian thought at the time encouraged a *noblesse oblige* approach to Central Asia and its nomadic inhabitants, painting the region as one deprived and badly in need of civilizing forces. Great Game historian Evgeny Sergeev characterizes the whole contest as essentially a period "in which the two imperial powers struggled to impose their different visions for modernization on the preindustrial, decadent Oriental states."[59] Burnaby's writing at times reflects this sentiment. Shortly after his description

[57] Burnaby, 134-5.
[58] Ibid., 82.
[59] Sergeev, 32.

of the steppe as a large dining-table, for example, he laments the local Kirghiz suspicion of vaccination. But he is also invested in a countervailing interpretation of the steppes to Russia's south, portraying the region as desolate, uninhabitable in any permanent sense, and non-arable: in other words, not worth a civilizing mission. This set of sentiments Burnaby clearly inherits from the earlier Khivan travel accounts, most directly from Vambery's horror at the desert; but also from Abbott's and MacGahan's suspicions about the Khan's interpretive abilities.

On the other hand, though a large table with nothing but a white cloth produces no hope of real physical sustenance, what better physical setting for projections of the mind or the imagination, for those impossible geometric abstractions that the steppe becomes? In this more abstract realm, apparently divorced from the day's real geopolitical concerns, Burnaby asserts himself as a voice not only in contemporary debates about the meaning of Central Asia, but in the whole history of Western thought. At the end of the quoted passage, he moves from a literal *tabula rasa* to an early Christian definition of God. A circle or sphere "whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere" is thought to originate with an anonymous definition of God given in the medieval Latin booklet *Liber XXIV Philosophorum* [*The Book of the Twenty-Four Philosophers*].[60] The phrase, which has a history of its own in European religious and philosophical thought, makes its most celebrated appearance in Pascal's *Pensees*, where he writes: "We have puffed up our conceptions beyond imaginable space, we have only given birth to atoms compared with the reality of things. It is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere, whose circumference nowhere."[61] Burnaby potentially quotes both sources in his description of the steppe. Both Burnaby's "vast melancholy-looking colourless ocean" and Pascal's "conceptions beyond imaginable space" also seem to share something of a concern with Milton's Satan, when he flies through Chaos in *Paradise Lost*: "…a dark / Illimitable Ocean without bound, / Without dimension where length, breadth, & highth / And time and place are lost…."[62] Central Asia too, in Burnaby's realm, is a blank, flat, empty stage—a dimensionless, irrational infinity. Hard to say, in these terms, whether the place is unworthy of a civilizing mission, or rather inherently antithetical to one. A *tabula rasa* is a fundamentally mutable thing; God or Chaos fundamentally immutable. Central Asia's wintry steppe manages to be both things not only within the same narrative but in the very same paragraph.

This early encounter with Central Asia's landscape establishes the problem which will require the rest of *A Ride to Khiva* to resolve, as Burnaby struggles to find an interpretive framework which can accommodate the region. His initial disorientation resembles the philosophical problem of the negative sublime which Thomas Weiskel elucidates in *The Romantic Sublime*. Weiskel's conception of the negative sublime emerges from his reading, heavily informed by psycholanalytical theory, of Kant's mathemetical sublime, and he describes it as "the feeling…of *on and on*, of being lost." The experiences of the negative sublime is furthermore characterized by signifiers which "overwhelm the possibility of meaning in a massive underdetermination that melts all oppositions or distinctions," and "the imagery appropriate to this variety of the sublime is characterized by featureless (meaningless)

[60] A reproduction of the original Latin alongside English translations can be found at "The Book of the Twenty-Four Philosophers, Liber XXIV philosophorum, Editio Minima," The Matheson Trust for the Study of Comparative Religion, accessed July 14, 2021, https://www.thematheson trust.org/papers/metaphysics/XXIV-A4.pdf.

[61] Blaise Pascal, "Disproportion of man," in *The Thoughts of Blaise Pascal*, ed. M. Auguste Molinier, trans. C. Kegan Paul, (London: Keegan Paul, Trench & co, 1885), 19.

[62] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, (New York: Penguin Classics, 2000), Book II, l. 892-4

horizontality or extension: the wasteland."[63] The physical topography of the steppe as a meaningless wasteland is self-evident and, in Burnaby's telling, its vast whiteness is precisely both overwhelming and underdetermined. The same formulation which describes Burnaby's psychological state might apply to the significance of Central Asia for geopolitics in this moment: its as-yet unassimilated vastness stymied imperial desires to know what it meant. Weiskel ultimately argues that the reemergence of reason leads to the resolution of encounters with the negative sublime, bringing various aspects of mental activity back into harmonious relation: "comprehension is…the imagination's application of the timeless idea of reason, but its putative collapse does not render apparent the role reason has been playing. Instead the imagination feels a defeat, and reason appears, freshly and finally, as its savior."[64] Burnaby's disorientation on the steppe crystalizes and expands upon the transitional moment between Weiskel's sentences: he has suffered the loss of reason without, yet, grasping the role it had previously fulfilled in his understanding of Central Asia; nor has reason yet freshly reappeared to resurrect Burnaby's imaginative faculty. The remainder of *A Ride to Khiva* will dramatize that resurrection, as Burnaby tests out different interpretive frames. Crucially, though, it is also in this second half of Burnaby's narrative when his status as a "seeing subject" begins to most closely align with the interests of the British empire, so that self and state begin to merge and the negative sublime of the snowy steppe resolves not by the reinstatement of Burnaby's reason, but by the development of something like imperial reason—a fixed place for Central Asia within imperial discourse.

When Burnaby loses his bearings in the dimensionless steppes south of Orsk, he is not so much lost in a geographical sense as he is "at sea" regarding his ability to interpret his surroundings with the conceptual frameworks he had at his disposal. The steppe produces a crisis of signification in Burnaby's imagination and outlook, parallel to but more overwhelming than the uncertainty which Central Asia produced at the time in British politics. Burnaby's crisis on the steppe represents the nadir of his interpretive ability, a low from which the rest of the narrative must extract itself by finding interpretive frameworks into which Central Asia will fit. When Burnaby lapses into musings on chaos from the Western literary canon, he falls back on reliable connections he could use to root his own text in world of common meaning—meaning that the landscape he observed did not immediately provide. It takes him the bulk of his narrative to work out how his experiences squared with wider systems for making meaning, such as geography and cartography. These were important to European imperial politics in an immediate and practical sense. As noted above, explorers and their travel accounts contributed invaluable information about the geography and population of Central Asia.

[63] Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Johns Hopkins UP, 1976), 26.
[64] Ibid., 40.

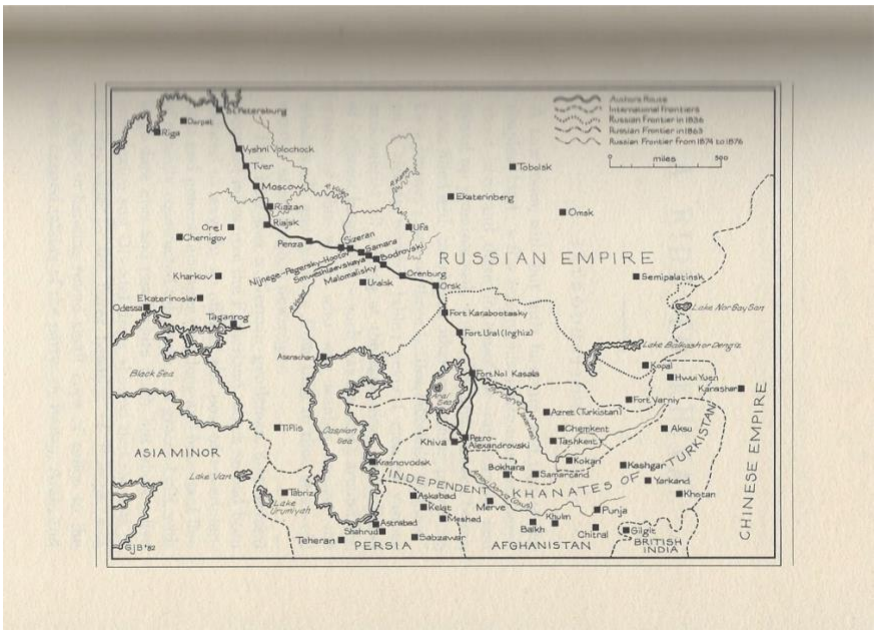

Figure 2. Burnaby's own map of his route from St. Petersburg to Khiva, with major Russian and independent cities marked throughout the region.

Maps and mapping are, for all of these reasons, major figures in *A Ride to Khiva*. Burnaby has an English map, "Wyld's Map of Khiva and Surrounding Countries," (image 1, at the opening of the chapter) which proves mostly accurate, although near Khiva Burnaby and his guides find a route which is either new or not marked on Wyld's map.[65] The map, published in 1873, just several years before Burnaby's trip, was part of a small flurry of maps of Central Asia produced in the 1870s in both England and Russia.[66] Burnaby himself grapples with mapping and orientation in a number of ways throughout the text. In fact, it's one of the only areas in which he gives full credence to local knowledge. Of his Kyrgyz guide he says: "His knowledge of locality was…very remarkable. Sometimes when no track could be seen, he would get off his horse and search for flowers or grass. If he could find any, he would then be able to judge by their appearance as to the district in which we were."[67] This is a rare presentation of local knowledge and judgment without an attempt at absorbing, naturalizing, or codifying its processes or content—though Burnaby does immediately attempt to put his guide's abilities into more recognizable form, adding that "The Book of Nature was as familiar to this semi-savage Kirghiz as the Koran to his moullah." This scene marks a major difference in Burnaby and his guide's perception of the steppe landscape—for the guide, it is a place, local and knowable in its particularities, whereas Burnaby encounters the steppe as abstract space, to be understood through larger systems of meaning, such as geography and cartography, and in relation to other, similar spaces.

[65] Wyld's map is available: https://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/28614?view=print
See Burnaby, 196 for discussion of the "new track" which he and his guide discovered along Wyld's route.
[66] This flurry of maps even generated its own small discourse. For an intriguing set of reviews of Central Asian Maps see: "Maps of Khiva and Central Asia" in *Ocean Highways: The Geographical Review*, ed. Clements R. Markham, vol. 1, (1874): 119-20.
[67] Burnaby, 245.

On the topic of abstract space, Burnaby includes a detail which echoes Abbott's account. Just as Abbott had presented Sayyid Muhammad Khan with a European map of the world—so Burnaby, like Vambery, meets his successor Muhammad Rahim Bahadur Khan with a European map. As in Abbbott's portrayal, the khan seems at first geographically illiterate and ignorant of his own territory's geopolitical importance. He is perplexed by the facts of European geography: "The first question he asked was how far England is from Russia, and whether Englishmen and Germans are of the same nation?"[68] More importantly, Burnaby shows the khan to be unfamiliar with the conceptual systems by which he would acquire European geographical knowledge. "He was seated facing the south, and could not understand that it was necessary to read the map to the reverse hand."[69] However—and here is where Burnaby's account starts to diverge from his predecessors—he notes that the Khan "instantly recognised the use" of a compass, and, after turning himself around so that he and the map are both pointing north is able to grasp the spatial metaphor the map presents. Most strikingly, despite being geographically illiterate, the Khan proves himself well aware of the general mechanism of empire, and familiar with the idea that territories all over the globe could belong to one nation, as well as of the current state of politics. "He was under the impression that Afghanistan belonged to England," says Burnaby—an impression that was technically incorrect according to the series of arcane agreements drawn up between England and Russia on the topic, but not, in practice, all that far from the truth.[70] And he later exhibits a basic grasp of global trade and of railroads. Burnaby admits that "Perhaps in no part of the world is India more talked about than in the Central Asian khanates. The stories of our wealth and power which have reached Khiva through Afghan and Bokharan sources have grown like a snowball in its onward course."[71] This frank admission is notable for a few reasons. First, unlike most of his predecessors and certainly unlike Abbott, Burnaby allows for the possibility that locals would have some understanding of global politics. Second, in the snowball metaphor, landscape accrues meaning surreptitiously: the physical course from India through Afghanistan and Bokhara into Khiva was indeed over glaciated mountains and down snowy north-facing slopes, and it was also the direction in which news from British India would travel to Central Asia. The gathering snowball, whether Burnaby intended it or not, is an apt image, allowing Burnaby to connect the Khivan landscape once again to the European imperial world. In his encounter with the Khan, Burnaby thus begins to work through the crisis which befell him on the steppe, asserting some control, via meaning-making, over the Khan and, by extension, over his domains. If the snowy steppe stymied interpretation, leading Burnaby to relinquish his grasp on the systems of knowledge which would allow him to incorporate Central Asia into his understanding of the global order, the snowball begins to reinstate that ability.

Burnaby finds the Khan "a cheery sort of fellow" to Vambery's "fearfully dissolute" character.[72] Charles Marvin credibly attributes the change to the fact that the Khan, after the conquest of Khiva, had become used to Europeans and, evidently, to the idea of their political dominance.[73] It is also possible that Burnaby's relatively rosy view of Central Asians is politically motivated by his general distaste for Russian behavior in the region. This idea, too, inscribes itself on the land, but it takes the form of a marked formal and generic break in

[68] Ibid., 309.
[69] Ibid., 309-10.
[70] Ibid., 310.
[71] Ibid., 306.
[72] Ibid., 308.
[73] Marvin, *Reconnoitring Central Asia*, 189-91.

Burnaby's typical landscape descriptions. As Burnaby and his retinue approach the Aral Sea from the north, the steppe starts giving way to a more varied landscape: a small mountain range emerges on the horizon, and on the other side of it lies another "vast plain," but this one, unlike the wild steppe, is striped with irrigation canals through which locals drew water for irrigating summer crops. Burnaby, having spent nearly two weeks in the exclusive territory and company of nomads, is quick to note that the shelters on this plain "were evidently constructed as a permanency."[74] Back on the more familiar turf of settled and farmed plains, Burnaby immediately departs from the standard structure of his travel narrative, which till now had been governed by the group's continual but slow and arduous southward progress. Instead of his usual attentive engagement with the appearance of the land, he now turns to an unprecedented twenty-five-page indictment of Russian aggression and duplicity toward the government and inhabitants of the Khanate of Khiva. He gives a brief history of Russian-Khivan relations leading up to the Russian Empire's 1873 conquest of the Khanate, claiming that, among other things, Russian propaganda maligned the Khivans as depraved aggressors when in fact a Russian attack on the city of Khiva constituted the two sides' first encounter; that Russian forces in Central Asian manufactured conflict between the settled Khivans and nearby nomadic Kirghiz tribes; that Russian troops stupidly botched four successive attacks on Khiva and used their failures to craft a fictional and highly dangerous foe while heaping honors and medals on undeserving soldiers and generals; and that in the decade leading up to the final conquest the Russian Empire had been transparently seeking a *casus belli* for war against Khiva. "And this," Burnaby concludes "the Russians would have us believe, was done to further Christianity and civilization….Would [Great Britain] like this kind of civilization next our Indian frontier?"[75]

Here, finally, Burnaby makes his orientation plain both in terms of the content of his critique of Russia, and in the structure of his text. Pratt's "descriptive digression," which functions to enforce a separation between human action and the landscape on which it happens, is precisely the type of structure that Burnaby employs to air his views on Russia in Central Asia. It mirrors, too, the dynamic in European travel writing from the seventeenth century onwards which Carl Thompson described as a "means by which…epiphanic insights into the self might be achieved."[76] I would argue that Burnaby's narrative, like those which Thompson says lead to epiphanic insights, "becomes a record not just of a literal journey, but also of a metaphorical interior 'voyage' that represents an important existential change in the traveller."[77] The difference is that Burnaby reaches not an emotional epiphany but a political one about the true threat Russia poses in Central Asia. Still, the structure of his narrative links the external landscape and an abstract internal, if not solely emotional, state in a way similar to the way in which a material journey could become a metaphor for personal development.

For Burnaby, the revelation ensconced within the narrative structure of *A Ride to Khiva* is both personal and political. Indeed, his affective disorientation when he is lost on the steppe is resolved finally by the articulation of a political position in which Burnaby's interests align perfectly with those of the British Empire. The distinction between Burnaby's position as a seeing, observing subject and a political agent remains troubled, however, by his initial interpretive crisis, which remains unresolved on its own, affective terms, leaving open the possibility that Burnaby has not achieved full mastery over his object of study. Russian accounts

[74] Burnaby, 247.
[75] Ibid., 260.
[76] Thompson, 115.
[77] Ibid., 114.

of Central Asia present a different case, in which the seeing subject and the state are in more complete congruence, and the narrative telos tends not toward mastery but toward assimilation of the object. Alexander Morrison argues that Russian writing on Central Asia was "the narrative of conquest, the story of 'how Central Asia became Russian,' something which…had been retrospectively smoothed out into an unbroken teleology of triumph."[78] As an example, let us turn to the travel account of Colonel Nikolai Grodekov, a Russian officer and one of the main chroniclers of Russia's conquest.

v. Colonel Grodekov's *Across Afghanistan*

Grodekov would go on to publish the comprehensive *Voina v Turkmenii (War in Turkmenia)* in 1884, but first he, like Burnaby, proposed to travel through Russia's southern borderlands on leave from military service, a journey which resulted in the publication of *Cherez Afganistan* (*Across Afghanistan*), published in English translation (*Colonel Grodekov's Ride from Samarcand to Herat*) in 1880. News of Grodekov's trip was received with astonishment in Russia and England, and indeed his account was translated and published, by Charles Marvin, in the same year that it appeared in print in Russia.[79] The uproar was due in part to the material and political circumstances of the trip. The colonel set out with only two grooms and a translator, made no effort to disguise himself or his motives, and traversed regions which, under neither Russian nor British protection, posed grave risks for a small party without affiliations to local rulers. He also crossed several high alpine passes in the winter. On his return to St. Petersburg Grodekov was awarded the Order of St. Vladimir for his bravery and received a private audience with the tsar, who furthermore prevented him from returning to Tashkent, keeping him for a period of consultation in the capital.

In Britain, perhaps even more than in Russia, Grodekov's journey entered the cultural universe of the Great Game. His translator, Charles Marvin, titled the English version (*Colonel Grodekov's Ride from Samarcand to Herat*) so that it resembled Burnaby's *A Ride to Khiva*. Marvin makes the comparison explicit in his introduction, arguing both that Burnaby and other English travelers deserved the special treatment in their own country that Grodekov received in Russia; and that, had Grodekov had more time to write and polish his account it would have rivaled Burnaby's for popularity in England.[80] In the retrospective *Reconnoitring Central Asia*, Marvin again praises Grodekov for his "unswerving and unquenchable heroism," comparing his journey favorably to Burnaby's in light of Grodekov's "frail form" and "quiet demeanor" and Burnaby's "gigantic proportions."[81] A few generations later, an explorer of Soviet Central Asia Fitzroy Maclean would remember Grodekov's "private plan for getting [into Afghanistan] on his own" after the official Russian invasion was called off, signaling that by the 1950s Grodekov had, at least in the British cultural imagination, entered the ranks of Great Game "players."[82]

Above insistences aside, though, Russian travelogues of Central Asia, and Grodekov's among them, differed in form, content, and style from their more swashbuckling British counterparts. As previously discussed, Alexander Morrison attributes the differences to the dominant role played by the army and military life, and the relatively lesser importance of

[78] Morrison, "Writing the Russian Conquest," 7.
[79] Charles Marvin, introduction to Grodekov, *Ride from Samarcand to Herat*.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Marvin, *Reconnoitring Central Asia*, 268-9.
[82] Fitzroy Maclean, *A Person from England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 236.

civilian settlement or tourism, in Central Asia: for Morrison, the "dry and factual military texts" were nonetheless central to "the Russian imagining of Central Asia."[83] This is not to say that dryness and factuality were the chief features of Russian writing on Central Asia—they were, rather, the entrenchment and obvious presence of state interests even in personal accounts. Sara Dickinson, writing on the broader context of Russian travel writing, argues that, as Russians developed their own tradition of travel writing, in an effort to distinguish themselves from the Europeans on whom they relied for stylistic models, they learned to look inward, ultimately developing the "attachment to national spaces" which nineteenth century Russian fiction also displayed.[84] Dickinson's argument echoes those of postcolonial theorists, who strive to show that travel writing's attention to an external Other often redounds onto the self, but for Dickinson, the inward gaze of Russian travel writing occurs simultaneously on personal and national levels. This proves true of Grodekov, as well, whose *Cherez Afganistan* favors material realizations over aesthetic ones.

Here, for example, is Grodekov depicting a Central Asian landscape and then analyzing its meaning, during a part of his trip when he's surveying lands that Afghans have recently captured from Turkmen tribes:

> За селением Фургане-Теке мягкие очертания горр, обрамляющих ущелье, переходят в отвесные скалистые. Вход в скалистую часть ущелья замыкается небольшим укреплением из местного камня. Укрепление это состоит из стенки поперек ущелья. Стенка имеет полторы сажени вышины; кладка сухая; бойницы. Стенка эта было устроена войсками Маймене против афганцев.[85]
>
> [Beyond the village of Foorgan Teke the mountains enclosing the defile, hitherto soft in their outline, become rocky and precipitous. The entry into the rocky part of the defile is commanded by a small stone fortification. This consists of walls nine feet high, running athwart the defile, and pierced with loop-holes for musketry fire. It was constructed by the troops of the Khanate of Maimene, to defend the defile against the Afghan army.][86]

The passage starts with close attention to detail. Absent the interpretation that soon follows, the first two sentences excerpted above read almost like the previous generation's Romantic prose about the Caucasus. However, when Grodekov expands his initial observations to interpret the meaning of his observations, his focus turns to a recitation of relevant facts and figures, elucidating the military value of the land and its material history. The "meaning" of the rocky part of the defile is that it provided a good defensive position for the Khanate of Maimene against the Afghans. Grodekov's landscape description does not represent so much as simply present the land's significance. This is in contrast to British travelogues as well as, importantly, to Russian Romantic engagements with the Caucusus, in which the landscape not only acquires but even produces aesthetic meaning, allowing Burnaby, or Pushkin, or Lermontov to inscribe Russia's borderlands in the world of literature in addition to the world of geopolitics. Grodekov's

[83] Morrison, "Writing the Russian Conquest," 7.
[84] Sara Dickinson, *Breaking Ground*: *Travel and National Culture in Russia from Peter I to the Era of Pushkin*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 24.
[85] Nikolai Grodekov, *Cherez Afganistan: Putevyie zapiski* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie knizhnogo magazina "Hovago vremeni," 1880), 69.
[86] Grodekov, trans. Marvin, 99.

landscapes evince a more direct relationship between the land and the state, unmediated by the subjectivity of the observer.

This has less to do with the appearance of the landscape than with a shift in its cultural and political significance. The Caucasus featured alpine landscapes, which provided a convenient outlet for Russian writers to adopt the styles and concerns European Romanticism. Central Asia had its own dramatic alpine landscapes, though, some of which Grodekov traversed. Compare, for example, Grodekov's description of the gorges and ravines of a high mountain pass in the Hindu Kush to Lermontov describing similar landscape in *A Hero of Our Time*. Here is Lermontov description of ascending the pass: "Направо и налево чернели мрачные, таинственные пропрасти, и туманы, клубясь и извиваясь, как змеи, сползали туда по морщинам соседних скал, будто чувствуя и пугаясь приближения дня." ["To right and left of us were gloomy, mysterious chasms, into which the mists crept down, billowing and writing like serpents, along the folds of the neighboring cliffs, as though feeling and fearing the approach of day."][87] In Grodekov's description of a similar landscape, all of the affective charge of Lermontov's landscape is replaced by information on its practical, material value:

> По спуске с перевала начинается узкое, с высокими боками, скалистое ущелье. Бока до того высоки и ущелье так узко, что солнечные лучи до дна его не достигают. От этого, не смотря на то, что ущелье лежит по крайне мере на версту ниже перевала, лужи совсем померзли, так что лошадь, ступая на них, не проваливалась. В одном месте верхние края боков ущелья сошлись так близко, что можно перешагнуть с одного бока на другой.[88]
>
> [The descent passes through a narrow defile, with extremely rocky, precipitous sides. The cliffs are situated so close together that the rays of the sun never penetrate to the bottom of the gorge. On this account, although the defile is a mile lower down than the track across the summit of the mountain, vegetation is frozen hard in November, and our horses found it impossible to feed on the grass. At one part of the gorge the cliffs are so close to one another, that it would be easy to jump across the abyss.][89]

My point is not to minimize Grodekov's literary abilities—in fact, his landscape descriptions are not unlike Lermontov's in their clarity and attention to visual drama. One might even argue that ravine walls "situated so close together that the rays of sun never penetrate to the bottom of the gorge" is a richer pictorial description than "gloomy, mysterious chasms." The more important difference lies in how Grodekov assigns meaning to Central Asia's mountain landscapes. For him, the significance of the alpine pass is not in its emotional valence, but in its instrumental uses—whether horses could feed on it, how an Afghan or a Russian army might move across it.

And yet, in another, structural sense, Grodekov's travelogue aligns with Burnaby's and the other Western European accounts of Central Asia: Grodekov, too, constructs his narrative so as to dramatize his own "epiphanic insight." The progress of Grodekov's narrative is, in general,

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[87] Mikhail Lermontov, *Geroi nashego vremeni* in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 5 tomakh* , vol. 5 (Leningrad: Akademia, 1935-7), 205; and Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time*, trans. Nicholas Pasternak Slater, (Oxford World's Classics, 2013), 25.

[88] Grodekov, 70-1.

[89] Grodekov, trans. Marvin, 101.

halting, maintaining a mimetic relationship to the progress of his actual journey, which was constantly interrupted by hostile local khans. However, in his penultimate chapter, he suddenly announces the major discovery made on his journey:

> Я шел по дороге из Мерва в Герат. Для передвижения сколько-нибудь значительного отряда этот путь невозможен. Отсюда я позволяю себе, вопреки мнением Раулинсона и других авторитетов по Средней Азии, высказать, что Мерв не есть ключ к Герату. Если бы англичане заняли Герат, что мы уже не в каком случае не займем Мерва, ибо это нисколько не уравновесить наше положение с английским.[90]
>
> [I rode along the road from Merv to Herat. To conduct an expeditionary force of any strength along that route would be an impossibility. On this account, I venture to contest the opinion of Rawlinson and other authorities on Central Asia, and make the assertion that Merv is not the key of Herat. If the English occupied Herat we should not, on that account, be bound to take Merv; because the annexation of that place would not in the slightest re-establish our equipoise with the English.][91]

In this short passage, whose impact is heightened by the delays built into the narrative, Grodekov finds a way to interpret Central Asia's significance in a global strategic sense. The idea that Merv was of little strategic value caused a minor uproar at the time of publication—Grodekov's translator quibbles with him in an afterward to the English edition, revealing his suspicions of artful Russian duplicity in disguising their own military intentions.[92] From an aesthetic standpoint, this sudden revelation brings Grodekov's texts into a more literary fold in at least two ways: his reference to Rawlinson, another English traveler and writer of Central Asia, displays his knowledge not only of the political but of the cultural field of the Great Game; and the deferred gratification of this one central moment makes the curt, dry interpretations referenced above seem to be stylistic elements designed to build suspense. Grodekov heightens this element of suspense by noting inscrutably a few pages later "Мерв имеет другое значение, но никак не по отношению к Герату."[93] ["Merv possesses another significance, but in nowise does it concern Herat."][94] Nowhere in the remaining narrative does he elaborate.

The Great Game, in addition to being a geostrategic rivalry between two of the world's powerful empires, was a complex set of conceptions and fantasies projected onto Central Asia and parsed in European writing on the region. In both strategic and imaginative realms, the British and Russian Empires collaborated as much as they competed, to map Central Asia, to assert the authority of their political and ideological systems, and to bring the region into the shared context of imperial power and expansion. Great Game-era travelogues, as eyewitness accounts of the region at this crucial point in its, and in Europe's, history, helped to create the discourse out of which Great Game mythology itself developed. These travelogues grappled with the geographical remoteness of Central Asia in relation to its newfound political centrality; they furthermore allowed readers to consider the global system, which European imperial power was

[90] Grodekov, 113.
[91] Grodekov, trans. Marvin, 162.
[92] Marvin, appendix to Grodekov.
[93] Grodekov, 114.
[94] Grodekov, trans. Marvin, 164.

then becoming, as such. In the slippage between personal affective experience and state political interest, vested in travelers, the Great Game travelogue identified and began to resolve the political, conceptual, and ideological problems that Central Asia posed for the Russian and British empires. As parties who, in at least certain regards, identified with state interests, both Grodekov and Burnaby make major strides in solving the political problem of Central Asia, via the digressions and narrative suspense that allow them to dramatize the acquisition and dissemination of politically useful facts. Military and governmental organs in Russia, England, and British India no doubt made use of what each of them learned. As to the conceptual and ideological problems Central Asia posed, about its significance to the two competing empires as well as to the very notion of empire, both Burnaby and Grodekov go some way towards imagining the region's place in an increasingly unified global system. That imaginative work would be taken up in earnest, though, by the Great Game's novelists who, as we will see in the following two chapters, used the region to envision what empire meant and what it might become even as the empires from which they wrote threatened to dissolve.

Chapter 2
Steppe Realism: Nikolai Karazin's *Two-Legged Wolf*

i. Introduction: Nikolai Karazin, *Turkestanets*, and his readers

Popular, well-connected, and omnipresent in his day, Nikolai Nikolaevich Karazin, born 1842 in Kharkov, was a jack-of-all Turkestan trades, a *Turkestanets*, as the class of career military men and Orientalists who made their professional lives in Central Asia were known. He served in the so-called Turkestan campaigns of the 1860s and, after retiring from military service in 1871, began almost immediately to publish essays, fiction, and sketches based on his experiences in the region. During the 1870s and 1880s Karazin made a name for himself as a novelist while advancing his multifaceted career as a servant of Russian imperial expansion. In the early 1870s he worked as a military correspondent on the Russian-Ottoman frontier, then returned to Central Asia in 1874 as a sketch artist attached to the Russian Geographical Society's mission to study the nature, culture, climate, and geology of the Amu Darya river delta. In 1877 he took part in another Geographical Society study, this time on the feasibility of laying a railroad through the Amu Darya basin. In 1888 he traveled once again to the region to attend the railway line's opening.[95] He published novels, most of them originally serialized in popular literary magazines, until the turn of the century, establishing himself as an entertaining writer and a trusted source of information on Central Asia. A front-page profile in the journal *Niva* [*Grainfield*], for which Karazin was also an occasional correspondent from Turkestan, lauds his productivity and range, citing an impressive publication record of two long novels, multiple stories and essays, and over 200 small paintings over the course of three years. The profile also presents Karazin as the ideal medium for information about Turkestan, asserting that he unites "the powers of observation of an ethnographer with the talents of a writer and painter, and [is] an Orientalist thanks to his

[95] "*Russkie pisateli 1800-1917, biograficheskii slovar'*, vol. 2, ed. P.A. Nikolaev (Moscow: Nauchnoe izdatel'stvo "Bol'shaia Rosiiskaia Entsiklopedia," 1992), s.v. "Karazin, Nikolai Nikolaevich."

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Николай Николаевичъ Каразинъ.

Ученая экспедиція по теченію Аму-Дарьи, снаряженная весною нынѣшняго года съ цѣлію ближайшаго изслѣдованія недавно-пріобрѣтенныхъ Россіею странъ и народностей, занимаетъ въ настоящее время умы всей читающей публики. Дѣятельное участіе, которое принималъ въ этой экспедиціи даровитый сотрудникъ «Нивы», Николай Николаевичъ Каразинъ, обѣщая много интересныхъ очерковъ и рисунковъ нашему журналу, въ то же время придаетъ новый и такъ сказать общественный интересъ его личности. Пользуемся этимъ случаемъ, чтобы познакомить нашихъ читателей съ жизнью и дѣятельностью художника, давно уже извѣстнаго имъ со стороны его литературнаго и художественнаго таланта.

Каразинъ родился въ 1842 году, и получивъ воспитаніе во 2-мъ московскомъ кадетскомъ корпусѣ, вступилъ на военное поприще. Вся долговременная служба его представляетъ непрерывный рядъ боевыхъ походовъ, что дало ему возможность ближе изучать и въ совершенствѣ усвоить себѣ тревожное житье-бытье русскаго солдата. Сопряженная съ лагерной жизнью постоянная перемѣна мѣстъ, а также частыя поѣздки по Россіи и Азіи помогли ему приглядѣться и къ народному быту посѣщенныхъ имъ странъ. Въ то время Каразинъ еще не думалъ о карьерѣ художника и безъ всякой опредѣленной цѣли набрасывалъ въ своемъ альбомѣ эскизы подорожныхъ мѣстностей и типы различныхъ народностей — единственно въ силу своей артистической натуры, безсознательно пробуждавшагося таланта и врожденной наблюдательности. Такъ совершилъ онъ польскій походъ 1863—1864 годовъ, принимая участіе въ болѣе значительныхъ стычкахъ съ польскими бандами при Джарахъ, Заболотцахъ, Порицкѣ, Волчьемъ постѣ и Грушевѣ, — а затѣмъ и туркестанскій 1865—1871 годовъ, въ теченіи котораго онъ участвовалъ

Николай Николаевичъ Каразинъ, Рис. Тегаццо, грав. Пуцъ.

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Figure 3. A front-page profile of Nikolai Nikolaevich Karazin in the journal *Niva*, August 1874.

service in Central Asia."[96] Given his facility with multiple popular creative genres and his familiarity with Russian Turkestan, Karazin became a popular authority on the territories that the Russian Empire was assimilating in the late nineteenth century.[97]

As this chapter will argue, Karazin's considerable achievement was to have reconciled Russian literature's engagement, especially in the latter years of the nineteenth century, with the Russian people [*narod*] and its interest in Russia's imperial peripheries. Karazin's Central Asian fiction in particular sutures multiple competing modalities of Russian identity, which it

[96] "Nikolai Nikolaevich Karazin," *Niva* 5, no. 36 (31 Aug. 1874), accessed 11 May 2018, https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/45538237. See Figure 3, above.

[97] Elena Andreeva's recent monograph, the first full-length study of Karazin and his work in English or Russian, provides a biographical sketch of Karazin's time in Russian Central Asia and a comprehensive overview of the fiction, painting, reportage, and memoir he produced there. My understanding of the course of Karazin's life has been greatly enhanced by Andreeva's work. See Elena Andreeva, *Russian Central Asia in the Works of Nikolai Karazin, 1842-1908: Ambivalent Triumph* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

represents as arising from both the imperial state *and* the people—that is from both the political and military elites and the common soldiers and laborers who carry out their orders. His literary output about Central Asia thus reveals a certain idealizing tendency in Karazin's thinking, which attempts to make the entirety of the empire accessible and comprehensible to the everyman. This utopian project works on multiple literary-historical and formal levels, allowing Karazin's Central Asian writing to both represent and resolve certain tensions and contradictions within Russian literature and historiographical thought.

First, because it represents the striking difference of the Russian peripheries from Russia proper while also focusing on the lives of non-nobles, Karazin's large and varied oeuvre forms an important link between Russian romanticism, oriented towards the alpine exoticism of the Caucasus mountains, and Russian realism, with its self-reflexive focus on Russia's peasantry and urban poor. Second, Karazin's clear and direct prose style, his use of his own illustrations in his literary fiction, and his publication in widely-circulating periodicals all made his work accessible to a wide audience, which included both the educated intelligentsia and readers from Russia's newly developing middle classes. Third, just as Karazin's artistic oeuvre includes multiple literary and visual media, his literary fiction includes and blends multiple popular genres—a line of inquiry which has gone almost entirely unexamined in existing scholarship on Karazin. His Central Asian novels combine the unpredictability of the adventure tale with the standardized cycles of the family idyll, bringing together idealized visions of the freedom of life on the frontiers, on the one hand, and the respectability and safety of life in Russian families and Russian towns, on the other. Finally, Karazin represents the Central Asian steppe in rich detail and with a keen eye for the specifics of topography, landscape, flora, and fauna. In doing so, he shows that the natural world of Central Asia is both related to and distinct from the vast spaces of Russia proper. This duality, which reconciles realism with Caucasian romanticism's exoticism on the level of symbolic geography, also brings Karazin's work into dialogue with long-standing tensions between state-sponsored imperial expansion and the centuries-long largely uncontrolled dynamic of Russian settlement that expanded Russia's southern frontiers. Karazin's fiction ultimately dramatizes the Russian domestication of Central Asia while developing an expansive vision of Russian imperialism, which represents an empire largely built by the common man and imagines the empire's wealth and power as being made available to him.

Central Asia provided Karazin with "free" space with which to invest his imperial vision. In addition to numerous essays, reportage, short stories for adults and children, and a collection of essays on Central Asia called *Ot Orenburga do Tashkenta* [*From Orenburg to Tashkent*, 1871], Karazin published four novels set in the region, all of which explore the conversion of Central Asian territory into Russian colonies, in the final three decades of the nineteenth century. The first, *Na dalekikh okrainakh* [*On the Distant Outskirts*] (1872), takes a critical view of the debauched lifestyles of petty officers in colonial Tashkent, as does *Pogonia za nazhivoi* [*The Pursuit of Profit*], which appeared the following year, in 1873. *Dvunogii volk* [*The Two-Legged Wolf*] (1874), on which this chapter will focus, treats the Russian annexation of the Khanate of Khiva, focusing on the hardships endured by the Russian soldiers who served in the operation. A final novel on colonial themes, *Nal'* (1891), relates the strange tale of a young man, the son of an English governess and a Russian officer in Petersburg who discovers that his biological father is Indian royalty and must then negotiate the forces of competing empires as they manifest in his genetic and cultural inheritances.[98] In all of his Turkestan novels Karazin addresssed the Russian

[98] I have provided the dates in which these novels first appeared in print according to "Karazin, Nikolai Nikolaevich" in *Russkie pisateli, 1800-1917*. Many of Karazin's novels were initially serialized, in which case the

transformation of Central Asia as well as the changes Russia itself was experiencing as it conquered and settled the region, especially as these issues concerned Russians who were migrating there.

Change was afoot at this time amongst Russians, and not only those who participated in the expansion of the imperial frontier in Turkestan. Karazin's novels entered a literary and social sphere transformed by the dramatic expansion of the Russian reading public. As Jeffrey Brooks has shown in his study of lower- and middle-class Russian literacy, *When Russia Learned to Read*, new strata of upwardly mobile former serfs, emancipated by the Great Reforms of 1861 and whose ranks continued to swell during the remainder of the nineteenth century, began to demand literary forms reflecting "the changing world of the common reader."[99] In earlier eras, the staple genre of the common reader had been the *lubok*: woodblock illustrations accompanied by short texts, *lubki* were easily reproducible and small and cheap enough to be sold by peddlers. By the time Karazin began to publish novels in the 1870s, at least some of Russia's common readers had moved on to more complex fiction and news that arrived in inexpensive weekly periodicals, sometimes called "*thin* journals." While the monthly "thick journals" [*tolstyie zhurnaly*] , which emerged in the mid-eighteenth century and published chiefly literary and philosophical works, catered to Russia's relatively small and Europeanized intelligentsia,[100] the new "thin journals" were, instead, "a source of light reading, serious fiction, and news for a diverse group of readers."[101] Falling somewhere between the *lubki* and thick journals, these publications, whose circulation only accelerated following the Great Reforms, catered to middle class, urban audiences who were more sophisticated and cosmopolitan than peasants and rural readers, as well as to well-educated members of the upper classes.[102]

The journal *Niva* [*Grainfield*], founded in 1870, was the first and most successful of the "thin" periodicals. Karazin's first major work, *Ot Orenburga do Tashkenta* [*From Orenburg to Tashken*] appeared in an early issue of the journal, as did the novel *Dvunogii volk* [*The Two-Legged Wolf*], and several of his shorter fictional works, reportage and sketches. *Niva* and Karazin rose to prominence on the Russian literary scene in tandem. As the thin journals existed generically somewhere between the short, accessible publications intended for Russia's newest readers and the thick journals pitched to the country's highly literate and often politically radical intelligentsia, so too did *Niva* blur class boundaries with respect to its readership. Brooks notes that the publication quickly "became an ambitious vehicle for the dissemination of good literature and news in the provinces," with an audience that encompassed rural priests, teachers, the urban middle classes and the gentry.[103] *Niva* was a massively successful publication, quickly breaking all circulation records.[104] There were several consequences to this success. The first came to bear on the generic landscape of Russian fiction: *Niva*'s large print runs and circulation required a regular readership. The magazine therefore relied on the adventure story, with its serialized plot and weekly cliffhangers, and did much to popularize the genre among Russian

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dates shown above correspond to the publication date in literary journals. All were later published as books, and Karazin's collected works appeared in 1904-5 in Nikolai Nikolaevich Karazin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenie v 20 tomakh* (St. Petersburg: P. Soikina), 1904-5.

[99] Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read* (Princeton UP, 1985), xiii.

[100] Gary Marker, "The Creation of Journals and the Profession of Letters in the Eighteenth Century" in *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, ed. Deborah A. Martinsen (Cambridge UP, 1997), 11-34.

[101] Brooks, 111.

[102] Ibid., 109.

[103] Ibid., 112.

[104] Ibid.

audiences. Furthermore, its visibility and popularity across classes helped to usher in "a more unified literary culture" in which interests in current events and popular literary preferences crossed class lines for the first time.[105] Finally, it began to run stories set on the empire's frontiers, to appeal to "a curiosity about place that increased with the geographic mobility of lower-class readers."[106] Karazin, whose fiction combines readily serialized adventure narratives with detailed descriptions of far-flung locales, would prove an ideal match for *Niva*'s curious and newly mobile readers.

In addition to new reading publics, new classes of writers emerged around the same period and they, too, had to negotiate the shifting and sometimes collapsing distinctions between the intelligentsia and popular culture. As Olga Maiorova shows in her book on the development of the Russian nation as a concept in the Russian nineteenth-century popular imagination, the Great Reforms of the 1860s, alongside the accelerating expansion of Russia's imperial borders, "set in motion a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion" by which intellectuals, including writers and artists, sought to establish the boundaries and distinctive attributes of the Russian nation.[107] Many scholars have shown how engagements with peripheral elements in Russian society—from distinct cultures existing on imperial frontiers to urban underclasses in the capitals and inhabitants of rural regions—have helped the dominant Russian culture in turn shape its own identity.[108] Writing at the end of the period of reforms, Karazin turned his attention to both the empire's geographical frontiers and its newly expanding social boundaries, depicting new character types such as working women as well as Central Asians assimilating to Russian rule, alongside more familiar ones like Cossacks, peasants, noble officers, and corrupt local officials. His Central Asian work, in particular, was intended to be both for and about the new Russian society he saw—or hoped to see—coming into existence.

Central Asian space in Karazin's work is also closely aligned with the history of Russian colonization of the flat, arid steppes on its southern frontiers. His Turkestan novels, in reflect the tension between the centuries-old and largely uncontrolled dynamic of Russian settlement of neighboring territories previously inhabited by nomadic peoples—a dynamic popularly known in Russian as "spontaneous" [*stikhiinaia*] colonization—and the phenomenon of state-sponsored imperial expansion pursued since the eighteenth century. In this chapter, I will argue that in reflecting the rise of realist prose and in applying its precepts to the representation of Russian Turkestan for a popular audience, Karazin's work must confront the gap between these two

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[105] Ibid., 109.

[106] Ibid., 216

[107] Olga Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire: Defining the Russian Nation through Cultural Mythology, 1855-1870* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 8.

[108] The literature on this topic is extensive. For the purposes of the present work, historiographies of the dynamics of Russian colonization as well as literary studies of Russia's interaction with the Caucasus, are most relevant. In the former category see Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011); Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Cornell UP, 1994); Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire of the Russian Steppe* (Cornell UP, 2004) and Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient*. In the latter see Katya Hokanson, *Writing at Russia's Border* (University of Toronto Press, 2008; Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire* (Cambridge UP, 1994); and Harsha Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (The University of Wisconson Press, 2003). For an introduction to Russian literature's interest in and representation of urban underclasses see Thomas Gaiton Marullo, "Introduction" to *Petersburg: Physiology of a City*, ed. Nikolai Nekrasov, trans. Marullo (Northwestern UP, 2009), xix-xci. A specifically literary investigation of the significance of Russia's provinces can be found in Anne Lounsbery, *Life is Elsewhere: Symbolic Geography in the Russian Provinces, 1800-1917* (Northern Illinois UP, 2019).

forms of Russian expansion and their attendant modes of Russian self-definition. Furthermore, Karazin attempts to resolve the differences between a Russia defined by its common people [*narod*] and one defined by the state by narrating the Russian domestication of Central Asia, in which service to the state can lead characters to a productive *personal* stake in the empire. I term this attempt to resolve the interests of the state and those of the common people "vernacular imperialism."

ii. Vernacular imperialism: expanding empire and expanding readership

Scholarly and critical literature on Karazin flourished during the decade or so in which he published frequently, but by Soviet times, only a handful of references to his literary work can be found. Current treatment of Karazin is similarly sparse, though the past several years have seen a small gathering of interest around his work.[109] The critical reception of Karazin's fiction, from his contemporaries in the late nineteenth century down to the occasional scholarship which appeared about him during the Soviet period and in the present day, has been remarkably consistent in its estimation of the purpose and value of the work.[110] While some accounts, especially by Karazin's contemporaries, have critiqued the stylistic and philosophical simplicity of his writing (a contemporary critic wrote that Karazin's novels "act on the reader externally, not requiring him to think or to sympathize profoundly with the inner life of their heroes,")[111] most have agreed that it fulfills a different, didactic function. His fiction, reportage, sketches, and watercolors have been taken as an accurate and true portrayal of life as it was for both Russian soldiers and local populations in 1870s and 1880s Turkestan. Karazin wrote, one said, "like a

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[109] In the past several years Russian scholar Eleonora Shafranskaia has published in Russian several articles on Karazin's literary construction of Central Asia as well as the monograph *Turkestanskii tekst v russkoi kul'ture: Kolonial'naia proza Nikolaia Karazina* (Self-published, St. Petersburg, 2016). In that work Shafranskaia notes that Karazin's extensive collected works were so neglected in the Soviet period that none of his fiction ever appeared in the the modernized orthography of the post-revolutionary period (28). Elena Andreeva's recently published monograph on Karazin is the first and, to my knowledge only, scholarly work in English on Karazin, aside from the present document.

[110] In addition to the profile in *Niva* extracted above, see a thorough summary of the critical reception of Karazin's literary work by his contemporaries in Kal'sim Shakirovna Kereeva-Kanafieva, *Russko-Kazakhskie literaturnye otnosheniia* (Almaty: Izdatel'stvo "Kazakhstan," 1975), 136-40. An additional source from the Soviet period provides a summary of Karazin's oeuvre and some discussion of his critical reception: V. Shumkov, "Zhizn', trudy i stranstviia Nikolaia Karazina, pisatelia, khudozhnika, puteshestvennika," *Zvezda vostoka*, no. 6 (1975), *Russkii Turkestan. Istoriia, liudi, nravy*, accessed 21 July 2019, https://rus-turk.livejournal.com/146485.html. In recent years, Karazin's work has garnered some attention from Russian researchers interested in Russian colonialism and orientalism in Central Asia: Eleonora Shafranskaia, *Turkestanskii tekst* and "Fazy kolonial'nogo diskursa v russkoi proze o Turkestane," *Filologia i kul'tura*, no. 2 (48), 2017: 218-24; Aleksandra Kazimirchuk, "Podpis' k risunku kak osobennyi zhanr orientalistskoi poetiki N. N. Karazina," *Mediinye protsessy v sovremennom gumanitarnom prostranstve: podkhody k izucheniu, evoliutsiia, perspektivy* (MPGU, Moscow, 2016), 81-9 and *Orientalistskaia proza N. N. Karazina: osobennosti poetiki*, (PhD diss., Moskovskii Gorodskoi Pedagogicheskii Universitet, 2015); and E. K. Dubtsova "Zhanrvoe svoeobrazie proizvedeniia N. N. Karazina 'S severa na iug," (materials from the conference Liki traditsionnoi kul'tury: proshloe, nastoiashchee, budushchee, Cheliabinsk Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 15-17 May 2008).

[111] This quote and others pertaining to the reception of Karazin's work, especially his watercolors and sketches, in the 1870s can be found in Shumkov, "Zhizn', trudy i stranstviiya Nikolaia Karazina." The original reads: "[романы Каразина] действуют на читателя внешне, не заставляя его думать или серьезно уходить своим сочувствием в душевную жизнь героев."

picture [картинно], just as he paints," while another observed that "a poetic feeling sometimes appears" in his watercolors.[112] Another critic observed that he wrote "like a painter," providing only "broad outlines of characters."[113] A laudatory obituary in *Niva* observed that Karazin's novels were "not read but looked at. And looked at with interest and pleasure."[114] But even his more strident critics, some of whom harbored serious stylistic reservations about his work, acknowledge the authentic quality of the content of his fiction.[115] Kal'sim Kereeva-Kanafieva, a Soviet scholar of Russian-Central Asian literary relations who treats Karazin's novels at some length in the 1975 study *Russko-kazakhskie literaturnye otnosheniia*, praises Karazin's fiction not only for its faithful representation of life for common people in Russian Turkestan, but also for its role in making the region accessible to the common reader: Karazin belongs, she writes, "to the ranks of authors whose work made possible the formation of the reading public's interest in the distinctive sides of life of the peoples…of Central Asia."[116] It is undoubtedly true that Karazin's fiction informed the Russian reading public about a region which most Russians would never visit personally. However, perhaps because Karazin was neglected during the Soviet period, he was overlooked during the late twentieth century, when scholars of Russian literature and empire (and, indeed, following Edward Said's *Orientalism*, literature and empire more broadly) began to understand the two terms as coconstitutive, and to examine the ways in which Russian literature not only represented but helped to produce the imperial experience.

Karazin's oeuvre has only very recently been subject to scholarly literary analysis. In her 2016 monograph, *Turkestanskii tekst v russkoi kul'ture: Kolonial'naia proza Nikolaia Karazina* [*The Turkestan Text in Russian Culture: the Colonial Prose of Nikolai Karazin*], Eleonora Shafranskaia provides a Saidian reading of Russian Central Asia, arguing that the literary tropes and ethnographic details which became common in Russian representations of Central Asia—in genres as wide-ranging as fiction, journalism, scientific and military reports, and film—form a retrospectively visible "colonial canon," which continued productively into the Soviet period with such works as Andrei Platonov's novella *Soul* [*Dzhan*] and Vladimir Motyl's film *White Sun of the Desert* [*Beloe solntse pustyni*].[117] Those works' interest in the settlement and irrigation of Central Asia appear as regional permutations of Soviet ideologies and aesthetics but, as Shafranskaia shows, Russian cultural interest in making Central Asia a populous and agriculturally productive land date back to the Russian imperial conquest of that territory, and much of the language used to describe such goals is remarkably consistent across military, political, and literary documents, and seems to have its origins in Karazin's Turkestan fiction. Whether or not texts like *Dvunogii volk* served as intertexts for later Russian explorers and writers, including Platonov, Shafranskaia argues persuasively that Karazin did more than any

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[112] These quotes are from unnamed sources qtd. in Shumkov.

[113] Qtd in Kereeva-Kanafieva, 137.

[114] *Niva* no. 52 (1908), accessed 20 August 2019, http://zerrspiegel.orientphil.uni-halle.de/t1127.html.

[115] Another of Karazin's contemporaries, Garshin, quipped that he wrote for "нетребовательным читателям" ["undemanding readers"]. And the Soviet critic K. Sh. Kereeva-Kanafieva notes in Karazin's work "недостатки (отсутсвие глубокой психологической характеристики героев; любовь автора к нагромождению событий и усложнению ситуаций с целью вызвать острые ощущения у читателя, и т. д.)" ["shortcomings (a lack of deep psychological characterization of the heroes; the author's love of accumulating events and complicating situations with the goal of thrilling the reader, etc."]. See Kereeva-Kanafieva pgs. 136-40 for these quotes and a thorough summary of the critical reception of Karazin's literary work by his contemporaries.

[116] Kereeva-Kanafieva, 138.

[117] Shafranskaia, *Turkenstanskii tekst*, 21-5. See *Beloe solntse pustyni*, dir. Vladimir Motyl (Moscow: Mosfil'm, 1970) and Andrei Platonov, *Dzhan* in *Sobranie: Andrei Platonov*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Vremia, 2010).

other single figure to generate the elements that went into circulation as the hallmarks of the Turkestan text. These core traits Shafranskaia describes as the presence of:

> a traveler-narrator, an observer, a commentator; a combination of adventure, sociological, and historical plots; the position of an individual [частного человека] within historical events; a preference for the construction not of personality [характер] but typological characters [типологический персонаж]…the existence of detective motifs; an ethnographic component. In sum, [the Turkestan text] realizes one of the main functions of artistic literature—an introductory [ознакомительная] function.[118]

That introductory function, based on the construction of generalized and portable fictional character types against the backdrop of real historical events, allows Karazin to imagine and ultimately "build a model of the future" in Russian Central Asia.[119] And, though they wouldn't have called it a Turkestan text, Karazin's contemporaries did locate his work's aesthetic merit in its combination of ethnographic detail, generalized character types who nonetheless lend specificity to historical events, and an orientation toward an imagined, but apparently imminent, future.

The question of the aesthetic merit of Karazin's work is, furthermore, inextricable from questions of social class in nineteenth-century Russia. The rapid consensus regarding Karazin's alleged fidelity to late imperial life "as it was" in the peripheries, and his aesthetic consistency across visual and literary media, suggest a critical reception that easily identified Karazin's audience as the popular classes which, while literate and upwardly mobile, held interests and tastes which differed significantly from those of the intelligentsia. His work presented his contemporaries with the possibility of reading a novel *as if* looking at a picture, and his own talents as a draftsman only strengthened the association, blurring the distinction between literacy and visuality, like the *lubki* which had appealed to the Russian masses in the early nineteenth century, but for a more advanced reading public. This inter- and transmediality meant Karazin's work was therefore not only thematically concerned with the *narod* but also culturally and aesthetically accessible to the broad and growing class of readers which could be included neither in the intelligentsia nor in the peasantry. The critics who found Karazin's Turkestan novels affectively simplistic but praised his work's verisimilitude replicated a class-based analysis about what Russia's readers enjoyed and required from literary fiction: as Brooks notes in *When Russia Learned to Read*, the upper classes regarded the popular weekly literary journals, and in particular *Niva* where Karazin most frequently published, as "a useful vehicle for spreading enlightenment."[120] With regard to his Central Asian writings in particular, the source of the value of Karazin's work was perceived to lie in its didactic, rather than in its aesthetic, qualities—which were, in turn, closely connected to Karazin's evidently faithful representations of everyday life in Russian Turkestan.

[118] Shafranskaia, *Turkestanskii tekst*, 30-1.
[119] Ibid., 21.
[120] Brooks, 112.

Figure 4. Karazin's sketch "Caravan," which appeared in *Niva* in 1892.

However, Karazin's Turkestan novels suggest an aesthetic as well—one realized in Karazin's case across a large and varied corpus—which favored verisimilitude over picturesque beauty, sentimentalism over irony, and straightforward description over associative or symbolic language. Karazin's position within each of these aesthetic binaries bore some relation to social class in late imperial Russia: though he enjoyed a popularity that probably extended beyond the relatively new readers of Russia's middle classes, his accessible prose and recognizable narrative devices made his natural audience literate, upwardly mobile Russians who were not members of the intelligentsia. The novel setting of his Turkestan fiction combined with its somewhat predictable generic orientations would further his reputation as an educator of Russia's middle class readers. As Elena Andreeva puts it, Karazin "played a mediating role between Central Asia and its public perception—providing a prism through which the reading Russian public looked at its new frontier society."[121]

In the Turkestan novels, Karazin's heroes tend to be a typologically idealized version of his core readership—self-sufficient and independent but not noble, educated but not intelligentsia, often marked by past misfortune but nonetheless curious about and receptive to the world beyond the borders of Russia proper. So Natalia Martynovna, the heroine of *The Two-Legged Wolf*, after bearing an illegitimate son and suffering the death of both of her parents, resolves to work as a field nurse for the Russian army in Central Asia, where her competence, intelligence, and compassion make her an integral part of the Cossack detachment with whom she travels. Golovin, her heroic counterpart and eventual love interest, is old and lame after long years of service to the empire, but his honesty, forbearance, and wisdom set him apart from the novel's other characters, particularly those of high military rank or noble extraction. The depiction of the struggles and eventual triumphs of common people reveals another aspect of Karazin's literary ideology—his Turkestan novels are not merely didactic but aspirational, aimed

[121] Andreeva, 6.

at empowering an expanding reading public to imagine life on the empire's expanding frontiers. The life that Karazin's work proposes is new in its popular accessibility—he envisions land ownership and peaceful prosperity for common soldiers, peasants, women, and former serfs. At the same time he remains invested in a concept of Russia and Russianness which developed over the course of the nineteenth century out of multiple strands of literary and philosophical thought—Russia's encounter with its imperial frontiers; long-standing and evolving comparisons between Russian and European society; and an interest in fostering a Russian national consciousness and the corresponding discovery of the Russian *narod*. The following section will argue that Karazin's fiction bears the clear influence of each of these three categories, helping him to bridge the literary romanticism which typified texts devoted to the conquest of the Caucasus and the literary realism of the post-Reforms period, as well as elucidate the qualities of authentic Russianness as they appear in his Turkestan fiction.

iii. Bridging Russia and the periphery, romanticism and realism: Karazin's literary heritage

Karazin's fiction reflects a period in which Russian identity was particularly indeterminate. Often described, in the late nineteenth century and down to the present day, as a dialectical contest between the influences of East and West, or center and periphery, the Russian identity with which Karazin grapples is multifaceted, comprised of shifting, interrelated discourses on the core aspects of Russian identity: the state, the gentry, and the nation. The historical context of Karazin's time, with the Russian state rapidly expanding its imperial territory, made the tension between these discursive strands particularly acute. As Maiorova argues, during the nineteenth century more than at previous times "the edges of Russia's core were undefined, the boundaries between the center and periphery were porous, and the state's outward growth seemed unstoppable."[122] In this period, Maiorova notes, Russian imperial identity and Russian national identity, categories which were historically related but imperfectly aligned, were frequently at odds with each other. Karazin's Turkestan novels reflect an attempt to resolve that tension—and in doing so produce the vernacular imperialism which defines his literary fiction—by knitting together a Russian identity that was formed primarily in contrast to non-Russian "others" on the imperial periphery, and a more recent conception of national identity, based on the nineteenth-century assertion of Russian *narodnost'*, or internally generated national character.

The history of Russian identity's formation in contrast to "others" beyond its borders is long. During the Muscovite period, identity was conceived primarily in religious terms, and the identity of the Muscovite state rested on Orthodoxy in opposition to Catholic Europe and to the Tatar populations on the edges of Slavic territories, with whom western Slavic peoples had cohabited, peaceably or otherwise, for centuries.[123] The Petrine revolution of the early eighteenth century, however, weakened the contrast between Russia and Western Europe, as the Russian state and then Russian thinkers and writers sought to absorb and emulate western Enlightenment

[122] Maiorova, 5-6.

[123] The following section will discuss the cultural significance of Russian-Tatar relations in somewhat greater detail. For the history of that relationship and of Russia's imperial expansion before the nineteenth century see, in addition to Sunderland, Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Indiana UP, 2002); George V. Lantzeff and Richard A. Pierce, *Eastward to Empire: Exploration and Conquest on the Russian Open Frontier, to 1750* (McGill-Queen's UP, 1973).

ideals.[124] The effects of the diminished sense of Europe as the location of Russia's primary oppositional, and therefore definitional, cultural locus are evident in the work of Nikolai Karamzin, traveler, belletrist, and popularizer of European Enlightenment ideas. On the one hand, Russian thinkers and writers actively compared themselves to their contemporaries abroad. Beginning in the final decades of the eighteenth century, Karamzin, along with his senior contemporaries Derzhavin and Radishchev, looked toward Russia's western peripheries and saw "new scientific and philosophical ideas [of the European Enlightenment] as a particular set of challenges that needed to be domesticated."[125] On the other hand, Western Europe was no longer an adequate "other" against which Russia could define itself, a loss which set Russian thinkers and writers gaze inward, to Russia itself. Andreas Schonle frames Russia's eighteenth-century encounter with Europe this way: "Western European countries had all constructed an 'other' that helped them stabilize their identity: England had France, France had the Orient, and Germany had Italy. Russia had nothing, except, perhaps, its own past, a fact that created intense soul-searching."[126] Andrew Kahn argues that Karamzin's groundbreaking *Letters of a Russian Traveller* (1797), in which a Russian narrator turns a literary and philosophical gaze on Western Europe for the first time, had to adapt for the Russian public "a sense of national identity [which] was a function of mental (and even imaginary) geographies in which their own cultures and civilisations could be compared to other countries."[127] This particular function was "long understood" by European writers, whereas Russian writers had to simultaneously produce both a sense of national identity and knowledge of other nations to which Russia could be compared. At the same time, because Russian ruling elites had begun to channel state power into the form of an expanding overland empire, a new configuration of Russian national identity had to be constructed in opposition to recently conquered populations on the imperial periphery. Hence, a duality emerged between Russian-ness as a primarily contrastive identity, on the one hand, and a burgeoning sense of Russian *narodnost'*, or internally-generated national identity, on the other. Reflecting this duality, Russia's literary gaze by the beginning of the nineteenth century vacillated between "Russia proper" and the world at and beyond its borders, helping to establish the complex relationship between Russian national and Russian imperial identity.

Russian literature's encounter with the Caucasus, which began with the generation following Karamzin, was fundamental in establishing the parameters of both national and imperial identity, though it also generated certain ambiguities regarding the cultural significance of the peripheries of the Russian empire. In some senses, the "literary Caucasus," as Susan Layton calls the encounter in her foundational study of the period, returned Russians' ability, obscured during the Petrine revolution, to define themselves in contradistinction to Europe: the Caucasus "assumed [cultural and psychological functions] as a clarifier of the semi-Europeanized Russian self."[128] For Layton, the Caucasus provided a region in which Russian writers could work through this state of semi-Europeanness by staking out for Russia an identity which lay somewhere between European and "Asiatic." A middle ground, Layton argues, gave

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[124] A recent history of the Petrine period with a focus on discursive shifts in Russia's encounter with and apprehension of European Enlightenment values can be found in James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture* (Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2004).

[125] Andrew Kahn, Introduction to *Nikolai Karamzin: Letters of a Russian Traveller* trans. Kahn (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2003), 3.

[126] Andreas Schönle, *Authenticity and Fiction in the Russian Literary Journey, 1790-1840* (Harvard UP, 2000), 13.

[127] Kahn, "Nikolai Karamzin's discourses of Englightenment" in *Nikolai Karamzin: Letters of a Russian Traveller*, 459.

[128] Layton, 288.

Russian writers the ability to appropriate desirable cultural traits and displace undesirable ones, casting themselves as European where they perceived Europeans to be civilizers, and non-European when they perceived European influence to be corrupting. Similarly, they identified with the "Eastern" traits, which the literature of the Caucasus itself helped to produce, when those traits connoted liberty, purity, and moral rectitude; and distanced themselves from the East when it connoted decadence and brutality. However, the Russian writers who depicted the Caucasus also had to confront and account for the violent reality of imperial conquest and the imperatives of an imperial government which endangered the very cultures which helped produce an early-nineteenth century sense of Russianness. Thus, as Harsha Ram argues, the Russian romantics who generated the Caucasian theme in Russian literature themselves "became an ambiguous third element in the otherwise binary conflict between colonizer and colonized," identifying ultimately with both positions.[129] Through its encounter with the Caucasus, Russian literature saw a definition of *narodnost'*, a complex term whose nineteenth-century usage is comparable to Western Europe's "nationality," begin to coalesce around certain idealized "folk" characteristics.[130] *Narodnost'*, when it was used to define Russianness, posed Russian authenticity in contrast to a Europeanized Russian ruling elite; applied instead to non-Russian populations on the edges of the Russian empire, it implied a sort of categorical equivalence between Russians and their Caucasian counterparts, while reinforcing the cultural contrast between these groups in possession of authentic national characteristics, and the urbanized gentry.

Authenticity in regards to Russian identity was never a question merely of culture or locality, but also one of class. The Caucasian encounter produced some early literary representations of Russian *narodnost'*, in the form of characters like Lermontov's Maksim Maksimych from *Geroi nashego vremeni* [*A Hero of Our Time*, 1840], who stand in contrast to the Europeanized gentry, while also occupying a transitional space between urban Russians from the imperial core and the non-Russian Caucasians on the periphery. In the first pages of Lermontov's novel, for example, Maksim Maksimych is introduced in "an officer's tunic with no epaulettes and a Circassian fur hat," ["На нём был офицерский сюртук без эполет и черкесская мохнатая шапка"] signaling even in the most immediately evident aspects of his appearance that he serves the empire but does not wish to stand out for his service, and that he has adapted and partially assimilated to the customs of the non-Russian imperial periphery, whose incorporation into the empire was at that time ongoing.[131] In other words, Maksim Maksimych's dress simplifies the issue of Russian class—his tunic marks him as an officer without revealing anything else about his rank or status—even as it complicates the issue of nationality via his Circassian hat.

That vision of *narodnost'* as a reflection of both nationality and class identity finds full expression in Tolstoy's *Kazaki* [*The Cossacks*, 1863]. In this short novel, set in the Caucasus but

[129] Ram, 11.

[130] The first use of the word "*narodnost'*" is usually attributed to Prince P. A. Viazemskii, Ostaf'evskii arkhiv kniazei Viazemskikh (St. Petersburg, 1899), 1:357. For a discussion of the term and accompanying concept as it was applied and its definition honed on the peripheries of the Russian Empire, see Katya Hokanson, "Literary Imperialism, Narodnost', and Pushkin's Invention of the Caucasus," *The Russian Review* 53, no. 3 (July 1994): 336-52. For a discussion of the historical development of the term see Alexey Miller, "Natsiia, Narod, Narodnost' in Russia in the Nineteenth Century: Some Introductory Remarks to the History of Concepts," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Neue Folge 56, 3 (2008): 379-90.

[131] Mikhail Lermontov, *Geroi nashego vremeni*, 187. English translation from: *A Hero of Our Time* trans. Slater, 7.

written well after the heyday of romanticism, Tolstoy sought to demystify the romantic representation of Caucasus and, simultaneously, establish the parameters of the *narod* which, he believed, Caucasian romanticism had misrepresented by its emphasis on "poetic feeling" rather than attempting the "faithful transmission of reality."[132] In *Kazaki*, Tolstoy situates Russian folk authenticity among the Cossacks of the Terek River in the North Caucasus, who, like Maksim Maksimych, serve as a contrast to the Europeanized, urban elites of Moscow and Petersburg. The latter category is represented by Dmitrii Andreevich Olenin, a young nobleman who, becoming disenchanted with Moscow society, enlists to serve in the Caucasus, seeking freedom from the excesses of his youth. As Olenin travels south from Moscow, he discovers southern Russia and the Caucasus populated by "Cossacks, coachmen, and station masters [who] seemed to him simple folk with whom he could just joke and converse simply, without having to consider to what class they belonged." ["Все казаки, ямщики, смотрителя казались ему простыми существами, с которыми ему можно было просто шутить, беседовать, не соображая, кто к какому разряду принадлежит."][133] As Olenin takes up residence in a Terek Cossack village and seeks to adapt to its customs and people, he comes to greatly appreciate and love the "simple beings" who tolerate, without fully accepting, his presence. Olenin's indelible status as an outsider, and the Cossacks' ultimate rejection of his apparent desire to join them, reinforce a sense of Cossack authenticity and a corresponding sense of a deficit in Olenin—he is not precisely duplicitous, but neither is he able to live as straightforwardly as he perceives the Cossacks to be doing. He gains some measure of acceptance in the village by demonstrating the very simplicity he so admires, though Olenin's simplicity is often depicted, and perceived by the Cossacks, ironically. When he befriends the village elder Uncle Eroskha, the definition of simplicity shifts to align with Eroshka's immediate desires: "*Простота* Оленина очень понравилась ему (простота в том смысле, что ему не жалели вина)." ["Olenin's 'simplicity' (simplicity in the sense of not grudging him a drink) pleased him…."][134] Later, as he develops a relationship with his young friend and rival, Lukashka, Olenin gives the Cossack a horse, puzzling the villagers, who "were perplexed and began to be on their guard against the cadet. But despite their fears his action aroused in them a great respect for his simplicity and wealth." ["[Казаки] пришли в недоумение и стали опасаться юнкера. Несмотря на такие опасения, поступок этот возбудил в них большое уважение к *простоте* и богатству Оленина."][135]

Yet for all Tolstoy's emphasis on simplicity as the defining characteristic of, and the criterion for acceptance into, Cossack society, the Cossacks in his novel have a quite complex relationship to Russianness, to Olenin, and to the state power he represents. They are just as frequently described as "carefree and reckless" ["беззаботные, удалые"] as "simple," and a current of violence and lawlessness runs through their society and stands in contrast to the loving generosity Olenin tries to cultivate in himself. Lukashka, in particular, is reckless, prone to theft, murder, and drunkenness, and jealous of Maryanka. His demise, and Maryanka's wavering and ultimate refusal of Olenin's advances, complicate even further the distinction, in which Olenin invests so much meaning, between Cossack "simplicity" and Russian society. This, then, is the

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[132] Lev Tolstoy, "Zapiski o Kavkaze. Poezdka v Mamakai-Iurt'," 1852, accessed 4 April 2020, http://tolstoy-lit.ru/tolstoy/chernoviki/zapiski-o-kavkaze.htm.

[133] Lev Tolstoy, *Kazaki (Kavkazskaia povest' 1852)* in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 100 tomakh*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Nauka, 2000), 16. English translation from Tolstoy, "The Cossacks" in *Great Short Works of Leo Tolstoy* trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004), 95.

[134] Tolstoy, *Kazaki*, 56; Maude trans., 145.

[135] Maude trans., 175; Tolstoy, *Kazaki*, 78.

configuration of *narod* which Karazin inherited from Tolstoy a decade later, and which he applied to Central Asia, the new locus of Russian imperial expansion. For Karazin, too, Cossacks function as transitional figures between the urbanized Russian gentry and the non-Russian "Asiatic" peoples on the periphery. And, like Tolstoy's Cossacks, Karazin's are primarily defined in contradistinction to Russian society, which is represented in *Dvunogii volk*, as it is in *Kazaki*, primarily by one noble officer—in the case of *Dvunogii volk*, the antihero Rovich. However, Karazin simplifies one of the most complex aspects of Tolstoy's Cossacks—the issue of state power. His Cossacks are not Tolstoy's "carefree and reckless" braves but good-natured, straight-forward, and honest to the point of self-effacement. In fact, the noble Rovich is the only "carefree and reckless" character in *Dvunogii volk*, and those qualities take on, in Karazin's writing, not the positive qualities of freedom and self-determination that they have in Tolstoy, but of carelessness and selfish disregard for the welfare of the group. Where Olenin leaves Moscow forswearing romantic entanglements and denouncing the falseness of infatuation, Karazin has Rovich return to Moscow bragging of his fabricated "дон-жуановские похождения" ("Don Juanish adventures") in Khiva.[136] Karazin inherited Tolstoy's aesthetic project: he, too, sought to demystify life on the imperial periphery, to present it as it was without the romanticism that, Tolstoy feared, could produce a "poetic feeling" but untrue perception. But the shifting meaning of freedom, from carefreeness to carelessness, marks a serious ideological difference between them. Where Tolstoy's Cossacks are somewhat skeptical about—and their lifestyle somewhat immune to the intrusions of—state power, represented, for all of his own ambivalence about it, by Olenin, for Karazin the military power of the empire and the social power of the state reside precisely with the Cossacks, not the gentry. The noble Rovich in *Dvunogii volk* is little more than an impediment to the success of the novel's two main plots: the Russian conquest of Khiva, and the successful marriage of the narrative's two most morally upright characters.

This shift allows Karazin to both address and resolve a difficult tension between his aesthetic and ideological projects. Shafranskaia frames the issue as an internal ambivalence about the expansion of the Russian empire into Turkestan:

> Karazin, being a Russian officer, sworn to the emperor, subscribed to the ideology of the Turkestan project, and this is reflected in many aspects of his painting and literary work—on the one hand. On the other, as a realist and an ethnographic writer he could not skirt the bloody and violent character of that project.[137]

In order to acknowledge the "bloody and violent character" of the conquest while also retaining his vision of the common man—the representative of the *narod*—as the hero, not the victim, of the imperial project, Karazin develops a utopian ideal of Russian imperial identity produced by and for an archetypal, idealized folk nation. This is Karazin's major, and overlooked, contribution to nineteenth-Russian narratives of empire—what I call vernacular imperialism, which seeks to align the culturally potent characteristics of the Russian nation with those of the

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[136] Nikolai Karazin, *Dvunogii volk* in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii N. N. Karazina*, vol. 12 (St. Petersburg: Izdanie P. P. Soikina, 1905), 251. I have provided my own translations, unless otherwise noted. An English translation of the novel was published in 1894: N. N. Karazin, *The Two-Legged Wolf: A Romance* trans. Boris Lanin (Chicago: Rand McNally & co, 1894).

[137] Shafranskaia, *Turkestanskii tekst*. 23.

Russian empire. The Turkestan novels' vantage point at the very limits of the Russian empire's outward growth, at an undeniable remove from the metropole, allows for the suturing of the two kinds of identity, while at the same time allowing Karazin to largely discount the influence of elite, Europeanized Russians on the imperial project. In the following section, I will explore how this fusion of core and periphery, involving the imaginative domestication of the imperial peripheries, is reflected not only in Karazin's characterological and narrative developments, but also in his treatment of the landscape of Turkestan.

iv. The steppe: landscape, topography, and symbolic geography

Just as Karazin sought to reconcile the imperial interests of the Russian ruling classes with those of the subaltern and emerging middle class, he sought to resolve a tension between supposedly discrete forms of Russian colonialism—state-sponsored conquest and settlement, on one hand, and the more diffuse processes of popular colonization of the periphery of Slavic territories, on the other. The relationship between these two modes of Russian expansion into the non-Slavic territories on its southern and eastern frontiers is complex, and debates were active during the nineteenth century, as they are among today's historians, as to how distinct the two modes of colonization really were.

In the late ninenteenth century, when Karazin was publishing his Turkestan fiction, the prevailing view among historians was that popular and state-sponsored colonization were in fact aspects of the same process. Among the most famous of nineteenth-century historians, Sergei Soloviev and his student, Vasilii Kliuchevskii, saw colonization as the defining *national* characteristic of Russia from ancient times, as well as the mechanism by which the modern empire extended its borders.[138] As Alexander Etkind has shown, Soloviev's famous formulation that "ancient Russian history is the history of a country that colonizes itself [*koloniziruetsia*]"[139] was transformed by Kliuchevskii in the late nineteenth century into a unifying formulation of Russian history and the consolidation of the Russian state from the earliest identifiable period down to Kliuchevskii's own present day:

> [The ancient] Eastern Slavs found themselves stranded upon a boundless and inhospitable plain [east of the Carpathians], the inhabitants of which had neither civilisation nor memorials to bequeath. Debarred from close settlement by the geographical features of the country, the Eastern Slavs were forced for centuries to maintain a nomad life, as well as to engage in ceaseless warfare with their neighbors. It was this peculiar conjunction of circumstances which caused the history of Russia to become the history of a country ever undergoing colonisation—a movement continued up to, and given fresh impetus by, the emancipation of the serfs, and remaining in progress to the present day.[140]

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[138] See Kliuchevskii, *Kurs russkoi istorii* and Soloviev, *Istoriia Rossii*. For contemporary discussions of the history of Russian colonization of its borderlands, and of the concept of colonization, see, in addition to Etkind, Seymore Becker, "The Muslim east in nineteenth-century Russian popular historiography," *Central Asian Survey* 5, no. 3/4 (1896): 25-47; and Alberto Masoero, "Territorial Colonization in Late Imperial Russia: Stages in the Development of a Concept," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 59-91. A useful summary discussion is also provided in Sunderland, 5.

[139] Soloviev, vol. 2, 631; a thorough discussion of the history of the term "koloniziruetsia" is found in Etkind, 62-8.

[140] Kliuchevskii, *Kurs russkoi istorii*, vol. 1, 48. English translation from V. O. Kluchevsky, *A History of Russia*, trans. C. J. Hogarth (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1911), 2.

In this vision of Russian history, Kliuchevskii evinces a geographical determinism which in essence asserts that the ancient proto-Russians had no choice but to battle and, when victorious, civilize their neighbors—a slow process, imposed by the environmental conditions of the "boundless and inhospitable plain" of the Russian steppe, which he calls colonization. For Kliuchevskii, the Russian Empire and its military conquests of neighboring lands was merely the modern version of this process, which was almost a function of nature. I will return to the significance of nature later, that is, the "boundless and inhospitable plain" and simply note, for now, that Karazin echoes many of the tenets of Russianness which Kliuchevskii establishes: for Karazin, too, Russians were defined by being settled people, not nomads, who were nonetheless compelled by the vast territories and uncivilized populations on their periphery to stay in motion and in conflict with non-Russians, assimilating and domesticating new territory as they expanded their frontier. While it is unclear whether Karazin was familiar with Kliuchevskii (whose lectures on Russian history were delivered in the 1880s and collected and published in the early twentieth century) before he wrote *Dvunogii volk* (1876), the novel nevertheless exhibits a similar interest in the colonization of Turkestan as part of a "a centuries-long movement," rather than a unique course of events, an extension of the process, begun in ancient Rus', of Russia's inexorable spread into the plains on its southern and eastern frontiers.

At the same time, *Dvunogii volk* is also quite obviously invested in state-sponsored colonization, distinguishable from the centuries-old and uncoordinated process described by Kliuchevskii. In describing Kliuchevskii's formulation of Russian history, Alexander Etkind argues that the school of thought which sees Russia as a country that colonizes itself as part of a natural or spontaenous process, sees "no point in differentiating between the subject and the object of Russia's colonization."[141] Willard Sunderland, in the definitive contemporary history of the colonization of the Russian steppe, argues, to similar effect, that the plains and grasslands, assimilated into Russia in the centuries-long process described by Kliuchevskii, became "central to notions of Russianness."[142] Sunderland notes that the conquest of Central Asia differed structurally and economically from the longer, earlier process of colonizing the southern steppes: in Turkestan, colonization was carried out in a coordinated fashion by Cossack border guards rather than by quasi-independent Russian settlers, and unlike the colonization of the steppe, which was characterized by the transformation of grassland into ploughed cropland, the expansion into Central Asia had no agricultural component.[143] And Alberto Maseoro argues that, while the territories acquired during the Russian Empire's final expansionary push—the south Caucasus and most of Central Asia—"were largely an extension of an autochthonous expansionistic pattern," their cultural valence differed from that of the Russian steppe because their annexation "made it plausible to compare these new tsarist possessions to European colonies," therefore providing some incentive for the Caucasus and Central Asia to remain non-

[141] Etkind, 63.

[142] Sunderland, 208.

[143] Sunderland, 158. It is interesting to note that, by the early Soviet period, Central Asia's incorporation into Soviet life was viewed in largely agricultural terms. See Andrei Platonov, *Dzhan*, as well as "Zhizn do kontsa" in *Sobranie*, vol. 8, Kornienko and Antonovna, eds., (Moscow: Vremia, 2011), 609-13; and "Takyr" in Ibid., vol. 4, 289-310. This view was not wholly utopian, as the transformation of much of the territory of Uzbekistan into cotton fields shows: Uzbekistan's cotton crop came at the expense of the draining and devastation of the Aral Sea. On this latter point see Maya Peterson, *Pipe Dreams: Water and Empire in Central Asia's Aral Sea Basin* (Cambridge UP, 2019).

Russian, and explicitly foreign, in the imperial imagination.[144] Masoero's observation that the Caucasus and Central Asia made a comparison of Russia to Europe plausible also explains the apparent connection between the two regions, in many ways so different from each other, as itself a function of Russia's adoption of European Orientalism over the course of the nineteenth century.

Let us return to Kliuchevskii's characterization of the steppe as a "boundless and inhospitable plain," a phrase which has special significance for Turkestan, differentiating it in the Russian imagination, and linking it to Russia in ways unavailable to the Caucasus. Russian writers and historians have long noticed, and theorized, Russia's vast size—an issue which is closely connected to the flat, expansive, unforested landscape of the steppe. Harsha Ram notes an awareness in the eighteenth century of a physical "boundlessness that became a source of pride as well as anxiety in Russian cultural consciousness."[145] That idea crystalized in the early nineteenth century, with the philosopher Peter Chaadaev's thesis that Russia's apparent lack of historical development was connected to its vast territorial expanses. Chaadaev wrote in the 1830s that "everything departs, everything flows away, leaving no traces," so that Russians even in their largest settlements are "more nomadic than the herdsmen who let their animals graze on our steppes, for they are more bound to their deserts than we to our cities."[146] As the empire developed and expanded, Russia's territory became not only a challenge to political administration but a discursive problem. As Katya Hokanson shows, during the same period in which Chaadaev wrote, just as the Russian Empire was beginning to resemble European empires—with colonies more or less differentiated from the center by economic function and the racialization of indigenous populations—it was also contending with the notion, propagated in travelogues about Russia and by the nation's own burgeoning intelligentsia, that "its spaces were vast, empty, and undifferentiated, embodying a frightening lacuna of meaning, culture, and history."[147] In other words, Russia's vast spaces seemed to mirror, or even to explain, the curious fact that it seemed not to accrue historical developments.

It was not only Russia's open expanses but the quality of its native landscape that posed a discursive problem for eighteenth and nineteenth century writers who sought to stabilize Russia's cultural position, particularly with respect to Europe. Sara Dickinson observes in her study of Russian travel writing that, in taking their aesthetic cues from Western European travel literature, early Russian practitioners of the genre were initially troubled by the fact that "the Russian Empire contained vast expanses of space, but much of it was topographically dissimilar to the fashionable landscapes of Western Europe."[148] Some of the earliest innovations in travel writing—and in Russian artistic prose in general—arose out of Russian writers' need to articulate the literary or imaginative meaning of local landscapes which themselves had no precedent in European letters. Dickinson focuses on the late eighteenth century and the generations of Russian writers—Fonvizin and Karamzin—who most self-consciously looked west for their aesthetic cues. But the problem persisted into the nineteenth century, and the valence of certain landscapes changed as Russian territory expanded. Hokanson, for example, argues that the Caucasus became

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[144] Masoero, 165.
[145] Ram, 22.
[146] Peter Chaadaev, "First Philosophical Letter" in *The Major Works of Peter Chaadaev* trans. Raymond McNally (University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 28.
[147] *Writing at Russia's Border*, 4.
[148] Dickinson, 16.

important to *literary* Russia in part because they gave Russia both a topographically distinct borderland and a set of aesthetically fashionable landscapes of its own.[149]

In the next generation, however, as the Russian Empire expanded into Turkestan, the problem of vast, open, flat territory returned. Now, in place of dramatic alpine landscapes, Russian soldiers encountered the deserts east of the Caspian Sea. Tellingly, explorers and writers, including Karazin, called these landscapes the steppe. Though more arid than the steppe further north and west, vast expanses of flat, topographically monotonous land were essentially Russia's native landscape in an important cultural and imaginative sense—even though, as Sunderland points out, the territories and ecosystems known as the steppe "were, in fact, so diverse in so many ways that one might legitimately wonder whether they constituted a coherent region at all," the concept of "the steppe" nevertheless contained a curious tension within Russian identity, functioning as both the core of Russian power and at a remove from the "center" of Russia in Moscow and Petersburg.[150] Moreover, it was precisely the steppeland which had provoked Chaadaev to ask whether Russia possessed a history at all. As much as he inherited the Janus-faced Orientalism of the Caucasian encounter, Karazin inherited this constellation of deep-rooted cultural valences concerning the steppe when he set about describing the Russian acquisition of Central Asia. This posed a problem for a writer of imperial and military, albeit middle class, valor because, as Sunderland puts it, "the steppe and its peoples were simply too well-known to appear exotic."[151] In order to resolve the problem of Turkestan's foreignness, Karazin uses the landscape of Turkestan to both differentiate Russia from Central Asia from a cultural standpoint, and assimilate it to Russia in terms of nature and essence.

While the literary Caucasus had helped Russia internalize new European discursive modes, Karazin's Turkestan *externalized* some of the traits found to be undesirable, by Europeans and Russians themselves, in native Russia. From its first pages, *Dvunogii volk* transposes the standard tropes which foreigners used to describe Russia onto Turkestan. The steppe is, as we might expect, "endless," with "no foreseeable end or beginning" [не предвидится ни конца, ни начала].[152] In fact, Karazin's descriptions strikingly parallel his contemporary Burnaby's, despite the fact that the two men were writing from opposite sides of the Great Game and operating with very different ideological assumptions. The first of the novel's evocative descriptions of Turkestan's landscape also features its first instance of heavy-handed foreshadowing of the bloodshed to come:

> К западу склонялось жгучее солнце. Багровые сумерки расползались понизу; чуть-чуть потянуло прохладою. Пожарным заревом вспыхнул горизонт, и, словно политые свежей кровью заалелись вершины бугров и наносов, вершины отдельных, разбросанных по степи камней, отбрасывая от себя бесконечно-длинные, расползающие тени….[153]
>
> [The burning sun sank to the west. Crimson twilight crept over the earth; little by little it cooled off. A fiery glow lit up the horizon and reddened the tops of knolls and dry stream beds as if they'd been smeared with fresh blood, and the tops of the more prominent

[149] Hokanson, 3-22.
[150] Sunderland, 207.
[151] Sunderland, 19.
[152] Karazin, *Dvunogii volk*, 3.
[153] Ibid., 6

stones scattered over the step cast endlessly long shadows, which dissolved into darkness.]

Even as it employs precise description, providing a sense of place and specificity beyond undifferentiated "endlessness," this passage underscores the horizontal expanse that the novel dramatizes. Multiple instances of the verbal prefix "raz-", here indicating dispersal or spreading, and the association with horizontal motion of nearly every verb, establish the prominence of the horizontal plane for this novel. Its characters will contend with Turkestan's vast distances and difficult terrain, as Karazin reckons with the natural and political valences of the novel's horizontal motion—the flat distances of the southern steppe, contiguous with Russia, but punishing in their breadth; and the Russian Empire's colonial expansion into those territories.

However, the landscape of Turkestan does more than merely receive and contain negative stereotypes about Russia itself. *The Two-legged Wolf* covers a wide expanse of Central Asia as its plot follows the Russians' sack of Khiva, and Karazin takes care to imbue certain narratively important places with specificity and detail, removing them from the category of "undifferentiated expanse" and making them candidates for discrete places with the potential to accrue history and meaning. And so, in addition to desert and steppe, he describes the agricultural landscape around the oasis city of Khiva as well as the alluvial ecosystems of the Amu Darya river. Vivid landscape descriptions often set the scene for a chapter's action. For example, a chapter in which soldiers are encamped near the Amu Darya opens this way:

> Крутой, обрывистый берег Аму-Дарьи спускался почти отвесно. В розлив вода подходит в плотную к этому берегу, поднимается и подмывает его снизу, образуя длинные параллельные борозды, в глубине которых остается осадочный ил, и разная водяная растительность; затем вода спадает, отходит от этой обрывистой, подрытой стены и образует плоские, сырые отмели, тянущиеся у подножья обрыва. Эти отмели—второй ярус берегов, они на туземном языке зовутся—"тугаи", любимое местопребывание чаек-рыболовов, куличков, пчелоедов и прочей водяной птицы…[154]
>
> [The steep, precipitous banks of the Amu Darya descended almost vertically. During spring floods the water approaches the level of these banks, rises up and washes them under, forming long parallel furrows, in whose depths sedimentary silt and various river vegetation remain; then the water recedes from these steep, carved walls and reveals level, gray sandbars stretching along the foot of the cliff. These sandbars—the second level banks, in the local language they're called "tugas," are the favored spot for fishing gulls, sandpipers, bee-eaters and other aquatic birds…]

Karazin's turn here from the vicissitudes of the novel's plot to ethnographic information about the region are evident in this paragraph's verb tenses. The paragraph's first sentence marks the troops' experience of the river's appearance in the past tense, in which all of the novel's action takes place ("the banks…descended" ["берег…спускался"]). The rest of the paragraph marks its departure from the novel's characters and plot with the appearance of the present tense in "water…approaches, rises up…then the water recedes" ["вода подходит…поднимается…затем вода спадает"] and a description of the river's flora and fauna, also in the present tense and

[154] Ibid., 111.

conveying a general sense of location and scene, rather than advancing plot or character development. The shift into the present tense recalls Chaadaev's vision of Russia's timeless, ahistorical expanses, as well as Anne Lounsbery's more recent assertion that the literature of the Russian provinces, in contrast to the metropolitan center, "evokes stasis, immutability, a permanent "backwardness" that is *not* in the process of being transformed into something else."[155] The remainder of this chapter will examine how Karazin's *Dvunogii volk* begins with a Turkestan that is timeless, changeless, and non-Russian, but ultimately envisions a "transformation into something else" that would make Turkestan into Russia, while simultaneously rescuing Russia from meaningless spatial expanse, giving it the specificity and history of place.

Much of the novel's narrative drama arises from an episode in which the troops reach the desert wells in Adam Krilgan only to find them almost dry, with far too little brackish water for all of the men and animals who have arrived. A native Central Asian who is loyal to the Russians saves the entire group when he reveals his knowledge of different wells slightly farther on. The second motor of narrative tension in the novel is the plight of Natalia Martynovna, a "Sister of Mercy" who travels with the Cossacks, and the mother in the passage quoted above. She is, as we learn early in the novel, herself native to Central Asia, born to a veteran of the previous generation's campaigns who had settled in the region.

Figure 5. Karazin's Painting, "The Khiva Campaign of 1873. Turkestan troops crossing the dead sands to the wells at Adam-Krilgan."

She is a competent, independent woman, who acts as both nurse and morale booster in camp, content with the military life along with her young son, Petia. The child is the result of an affair with Rovich, carried out several years earlier around Tashkent. Rovich subsequently abandoned Natalia Martynovna, but the company of Cossacks are openhearted and accepting: not bound by the norms of polite society, they don't hold the indiscretion against her. The rest of the novel follows two interwoven plot lines, concerning two characters, either of whom could be the titular

[155] Lounsbery, 13.

two-legged wolf. The first revolves around Atam Kul, a local Central Asian leader and prisoner in the Cossack camp who escapes during a sandstorm and kidnaps Natalia's son. The next day, she sneaks away to find her child, and her rescue becomes as important to the soldiers as their official task of sacking Khiva. The second plot concerns Rovich, the Russian officer from a prominent Petersburg family who is the father of Natasha's son. Rovich joins the campaign toward the end of the novel and learns that Natasha will soon be rescued and plans a melodramatic reunion with her, which she coolly and summarily rebuffs. Finally, Natasha marries one of her Cossack admirers, and together the two make a pleasant, Russian-style homestead in Turkestan.

After the episode at the wells, the troops reach the banks of the Amu Darya and hear some news of Natasha's whereabouts, the novel begins the process of envisioning and representing change. This registers first in the alluvial landscape, presented, as I note above, in a timeless present, but soon coming to represent the ways in which *Dvunogii volk* becomes both specific and historical. When the narrative's standard past tense reappears and the novel's plot resumes, we learn that circumstances have had a beneficial effect on everyone in camp:

> Общая бодрость и веселье, по достижении цели похода, отразились на всех здоровых; это веселье не могло не отразиться и на больных:—лазаретные носилки, с каждым днём все пустели и пустели…Докторам работы с каждым часом становилось все менее и менее.[156]
>
> [A general vigor and happiness at the success of the campaign spread over all those who were healthy; and that happiness couldn't help but affect the sick as well—stretchers emptied out day by day…And doctors' labor lessened with each passing hour.]

The narrative attributes this new festive mood to Russia's military victory, and both the causes and effects of the change are strictly contained within the bounds of Russian soldiers' experience. In other words, the joy in camp, and even the soldiers' revivification after crossing the punishing and arid desert, is detached from the actual land of Central Asia. Despite the clear role of the river itself, the Amu Darya, in returning essential hydration and high spirits to the troops, in the narrative structure of the novel it is separate from this emotional development—cordoned off from the events of military victory and celebration by the ahistorical present tense, relegated to a different kind of fact, the banks of the Amu Darya become timeless, changeless even in their persistent, seasonal movements, and available therefore as empirical information. This formal separation of landscape from human action disguises a correspondence, even an affiliation, however, between the land of Central Asia and the mood of the Russian invaders. In presenting the Amu Dayra banks as a stage on which Russian soldiers enact the experience of relief, joy and healing, Karazin partakes in the Orientalist trope of the oasis, naturalizing Russian affective responses to landscape in a way that would not just help Russian readers incorporate new knowledge about Central Asia's real physical landscape, but aid, too, in generating a discursive understanding of the region as familiarly foreign, rather than wholly alien.

[156] Karazin, 112-3.

v. Domesticating Turkestan: Natasha and the family novel

In this paradoxically familiar foreignness, which presents Turkestan as simultaneously unknown territory (subject to the ethnographic gaze of the conquering Russian) and native (a natural extension of the Russian nation), Karazin's Turkestan novels are a bridge between the Western-facing literary Caucasus and the inward gaze of Russia's urban realism, an amalgamation of the exoticism of the Caucasian theme and the self-examination of positivism. *Dvunogii volk* expresses that tension most fully in a chapter, near the end of the book, in which Natasha and her son, having been rescued, receive the kind attentions of every soldier in camp while Rovich, her pursuer from the upper classes, sulks and fantasizes about proposing marriage to Natasha in a sentimental and self-aggrandizing manner. Karazin clearly privileges the Cossacks' active selflessness over Rovich's self-involved and ineffectual emotional life, updating Russian literature's long-running examination of the superfluous man versus the man of action by bringing it to Turkestan. Karazin's talent for rich detail and descriptive precision is here applied to the Cossacks themselves, as they carefully attend to Natasha and Petia, riding in a cart alongside the marching column:

> Корявый, угреватый сотник Попругин изобрел какую-то особенную развеску боковых ковров [арбы Наташи], "чтобы—как он выражался—и солнцем-то не пекло, и значит, насчет ветру чтобы было свободно, продувало бы этак, легонько"…Эсаул Маслобойников, не брезгавший лично для себя водою из самого соленого, затхлого степного колодца, завел для "*матушки Натальи Мартыновны*" такую баклагу, тыкву-горлянку, где мутная, глинистая вода арыков отстаивалась, даже на ходу, фильтровалась и предлагалась для чайников путешественницы в самом чистом, наипрозрачнейшем виде… Лысый сотник Машкин, Козьма Федосеевич, и юный хорунжий Колобков—те даже в сторону отлучились верст за пять, и с опасностью жизни (потому все-таки сторона враждебная, в некотором роде неприятельская) достали где-то еще несозревшего свежего урюку (абрикосов) и несколько кистей совершенно зеленого, невозможно к употреблению винограда.
>
> —Так-то нельзя кушать,—объяснил сотник Машкин,—а ежели положить в чай, заместо лимона!—пожалуйте, я вам нажму в чашечку![157]
>
> [The clumsy, pimply *sotnik* Poprugin invented some kind of special draping of the side covers [of Natasha's cart], "so that," as he put it, "the sun won't bake you, and as for the wind, so that it will be free and blow through easily…." *Esaul* Masloboinikov, who had never turned up his own nose at water from the saltiest, mustiest of steppe wells, worked up a flask out of a gourd "*for the little mother Natalia Martynovna,"* where the murky, muddy water drawn from irrigation ditches would settle as they marched, filtering and offering for the travelers' teacups clean, pellucid water…The bald *sotnik* Mashkin, Koz'ma Fedoseevich, and the junior ensign Kolobkov—they went about five versts off the road, putting their lives at risk (because off the road was enemy territory after all, hostile to a certain extent) and somewhere obtained unripe apricots and a few bunches of grapes, completely green and impossible to use. "You can't eat them like that," explained

[157] Ibid., 225-6.

the *sotnik* Mashkin, "but you can put them in your tea in place of lemon! If you please, I'll mash them in a cup!"]

The empiricism that Karazin employs in early chapters to establish Central Asia's landscape as both the setting and a major narrative force in the novel appears again, this time applied to its Russian characters. While the novel features hundreds of Russian soldiers, it rarely individuates them, apart from the several main characters. The Cossack camps typically function more like the novel's landscapes—the passage set on the banks of the Amu Darya and quoted above practically elides the collective mood and health of the camp with the river banks that host it—as backdrop for the vicissitudes of the novel's plot. Here, though, multiple Cossacks, unimportant to the novel's narrative action, emerge not only in rich detail, but with names.

This long episode—it goes on for pages—is initially remarkable in its break from the typical pace and focus of *Dvunogii volk*. Dialogue in the novel is usually brief or absent, with the exception of episodes in which Karazin uses conversations and debates between characters to provide political context or to reveal the machinations of local Central Asian leaders. And, crucially, until this section of the novel, no Cossack other than the kind-hearted and lame Golovin, Natasha's love interest, is ever named. The break is not so stark as it seems, however, when we consider this passage as marking the beginning of Karazin's second didactic project. Where the first half of *The Two-Legged Wolf* is full of potentially useful information about Central Asia's climate and natural environs, as well as more dubious information about the norms and customs of the region's native inhabitants, the second turns inward to Russians and Russia. It is here, in the novel's final five chapters (the passage above is taken from chapter 49 of 52), that Karazin makes a full switch from the swashbuckling adventure narrative of military conquest and Natasha's rescue, to a new kind of narrative—the family drama.

The introduction of this family aspect allows the novel to explore, and ultimately embrace, a new kind of domestication: Karazin dramatizes not just the assimilation of Khivan territory to the Russian Empire's system of governance, but also the process by which Russian domesticity might be imported to the region. And so, in addition to looking both east and west, both outward to Central Asia and inward to Russia itself, the novel is Janus-faced in yet another way—it looks both backward into the (recent) past and forward to the future. While the adventure plot of *The Two-Legged Wolf* is, essentially, historical fiction, the marriage and domestication plots which close the book envision a future for Russian life in Turkestan. Before he presents that image, however, Karazin has to do some further scene-setting, and so he does not fully abandon either the outward orientation of his gaze on Central Asia, or his didactic tone in reporting what he sees. In the passage above we learn not only what grows in Central Asia, but which types of produce might be of use to the Russian hoping to make a home there: gourds, apricots, grapes. In the paragraph immediately following the one in which Mashkin offers to mash sour grapes in place of a lemon, the ensign Kolobkov presents Natasha with an entire basket of roses which, much like the grapes, are useless—they were so crammed together that they have become a solid mass and "smell terribly of tar."[158] This level of descriptive detail is familiar already as one of the novel's main stylistic devices, but it is here employed to a different end. Where lush descriptions of the Amu Darya's banks, for example, became timeless, allowing Karazin to *present* what he sees and disguise any ideological drive behind his descriptions, the Cossack's gifts to Natasha are firmly rooted in the specific temporality of the novel and of the region. This is true down to the unripe fruit: Khiva was captured in early spring, before summer

[158] Ibid., 226.

crops like stone fruits and grapes would be ready. This historical and temporal specificity, in turn, throws light on Karazin's ideological project. Khivan territory might not be ready to provide all the comforts of home yet, but it has potential.[159]

The emphasis on potential is in contrast to the novel's more martial sections, in which, rather than examining the life-giving qualities of Central Asia, Karazin dwells on the massive cost of Russia's military campaign. The desert of Adam-Krilgan, pictured above, is the main correlative in the landscape to this punishing quality of life in Central Asia. In one passage, focalized through a local band of pirates searching for booty in the wake of the Russian invasion, the Cossack column's path through the desert is visible long after they have passed, marked by the carcasses of fallen camels and horses, still alive, but "ready from minute to minute to sink into the hot sand, never to rise again."[160] The narrator claims that this chapter, devoted entirely to describing the wreckage the soldiers left behind in the desert, will paint a "picture of human suffering and endurance" ["картина человеческих страданий и выносливости"], but in fact the suffering Karazin's typical detailed, realistic descriptions depict is that of the horses "whose eyes had already lost their living luster."[161] In emphasizing the plight of the faultless animals, worked to death and cast aside for the needs of Russian expansion, Karazin betrays some misgivings about the brutality of Russia's expansion into Central Asia, and perhaps even ambivalence about the value of the mission. In another, later passage, after the Russians have caught up to and subdued the local bands who opposed them outside of Khiva, this ambivalence, or at least sympathy for those who stood to benefit least from the events, appears again: "Что это, горит степь?—Нет, это горят только поля туркменские, ярко пылает кем-то зажженная пшеница по полю, и пламя пожара, расходясь с необыкновенною быстротой, подбирается уже к сложным стогам, зимнему запасу наказанных кочевников…"[162] ["What's this, is the steppe on fire? No, it's the Turkmen's fields burning, the wheat, set ablaze by someone, glowing brightly, and the flames spreading with unusual speed, had already reached the stacks laid away, the winter stores of the punished nomads…"]. The participle "punished" emphasizes action with no designated subject, leaving open the possibilities that these steppe natives have been punished by the Russians, that they have foolishly punished themselves, or that the general situation is punishment, with many victims but no clear perpetrators.

Those two overarching tendencies, to glorify the conquest of Turkestan on the one hand and express ambivalence about its violence on the other, crop up in *Dvunogii volk* even where the

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[159] It is interesting to compare the potential Karazin finds in the region around Khiva with the lush picture he paints, in his first Turkestan novel, of the already settled regions around Tashkent. In the yard of a Russian-Jewish merchant "huge, hundred-year-old elms spread their thick limbs….No rays of the sun were able to find themselves a path through this mass of dark green…Wherever the sun was able to break through, wooden trellises could be seen bending under the weight of the grapevines attached to them, beautifully sculpted foliage blending with the bluish purple of the ripening grapes" (Karazin, *Na dalekikh okrainakh* in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii N. N. Karazina*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg: Izdanie P. P. Soikina, 1905), 9-10). The old elms and dark foliage are clearly in contrast to the harsh, blank brightness of the steppe in *Dvunogii volk*, but they serve a similar purpose of presenting the region as one with great potential for settlement. Here in Tashkent, with its relatively large and established Russian population, the possibilities are so rich that the Jewish merchant has even managed to make a European-cum-Near Eastern fantasy on his homestead just outside of town. Khiva, which resisted Russian assimilation much longer, is clearly a stage or two behind Tashkent in Karazin's estimation of the progression of Russian settlement—its grapes are not yet ripe, but they are at least growing.

[160] Karazin, *Dvunogii volk*, 96.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Ibid., 220.

novel seems less ambivalent about Russians and their projects in Central Asia. Both are frequently visible in the passages concerning Natasha, around whom the novel's swashbuckling and domestic plots ultimately coalesce. As we saw above, Karazin begins to "gaze inward" to Russia—in this case, to the Russians in Turkestan—as the novel's martial plot comes to a close. Natasha is another major locus of this inward attention, and in describing its heroine the novel also breaks its typically literary form, straying from purely mimetic representation to imaginative explorations of her interiority. These passages, in which the narrator demonstrates new levels of access to a character's mind, might remind us of the descriptive digressions deployed by travelogues to disguise ideological interventions and subjective, interpretive moves as natural, inherent, or inevitable parts of the travel narrative. In *Dvunogii volk*, digressions, or breaks from realistic description, crop up in the novel's second part, initially focusing on Natasha herself. After her son is kidnapped in the second half of the novel, Natasha is unable to fulfill the idealized role she played in the first half. Her behavior becomes unpredictable, and her grief obvious—this change motivates the novel's exploration of Natasha's individual consciousness and the emotional bases of her alienation from her surroundings. As she detaches herself from the society of camp, the narrator detaches from her, taking a new, omniscient approach:

> Она почувствовала себя совершенно чужою в этом лагере: словно лопнуло, прорвалось всё, что до сих пор её с ним связывало.
>
> Она пережила уже самую тяжёлую минуту—и после этой минуты ничего уже не было для неё страшного, никакой шаг не было для неё невозможен.[163]
>
> [She felt completely foreign in this camp, as though everything which had tied her to it until then broke and ruptured. She had passed through the most terrible moments—after that nothing frightened her, and no step was impossible for her to take.]

This musing on Natasha's internal state of alienation breaks the flow of the narrative, interrupting both the business of the Cossack camp preparing its attack on Khiva, and the machinations of the local warlords who have captured her son. It also provides one of the novel's only clear descriptions of transformation, despite the fact that the it deals, in the largest sense, with the transformation of Central Asia in the 1870s: Natasha becomes a measure of ideology, politics, and history in the novel.

First, the narrator's access to Natasha follows directly her emotional separation from camp life: the point at which she becomes foreign is the point at which the narrator can treat her as information. After the original observations that Natasha "felt like a stranger in the camp," the narrative reiterates her foreignness and separation, not just from camp but from her previous role as the emotionally perceptive figure of motherhood, and even "natural" humanity. As she's secreted out of camp during the night, "Наташа…шла не как живое существо, а как машина" ["Natasha…walked not like a living being, but like a machine"].[164] And in the next chapter, as she languishes "half-alive" ["в каком-то полубытье"] on the road, she "protects herself mechanically" ["машинально защищалась"] when her captors disguise her in Central Asian men's clothing.[165] Her mechanical movements and speech during her flight from camp

[163] Ibid., 127.
[164] Ibid., 129.
[165] Ibid., 132.

demarcate her from her former self, but also from the Persian who escorts her from the Russians to Atam Kul's camp. Like many of the novel's other native Central Asian characters, the Persian is often compared to an animal. While waiting for nightfall to secret Natasha out of camp, he sits "trembling slightly, like a wolf in the trap."[166] Later, having delivered Natasha, shocked and moving mechanically, to Atam Kul's camp, he brings her inside a tent to sleep and recover from the journey and "[lays] himself down at her feet like a dog."[167] The Persian's own domestication—from captured wolf to protective dog—perhaps foreshadows a dynamic that the novel will, by its close, dramatize repeatedly: the taming of Central Asia. But Natasha's anguish, too, is a kind of hopeful foreshadowing, not dissimilar from the potential Mashkin sees in his sour grapes. Despite her emotional isolation and eventual physical escape from the Cossack camp, Turkestan has not robbed Natasha of her most stereotyped and most fundamental property, her motherhood. The loss of her son torments her here, in the punishing steppe, just as it would back home. After *Dvunogii volk* stages the taming of Central Asia on a grand, military scale, it can turn to the second domestication project: the creation of a space appropriate for Russian settlement and the reproduction of Russian culture.

The location of Natasha's maternal distress—and, eventually, when Petia is returned to her and the marriage plot is concluded, the full expression of her maternal character—in Turkestan helps Karazin with this second project, by showing that Natasha and the full range of her "natural" emotional life has a place in this far-flung imperial periphery. Furthermore, situating Natasha's *specific* story in Central Asia gives the region, as far as it is depicted in the novel, the historicity it lacks in earlier chapters, where its landscape exists in the eternal present. In a sense, it is Natasha's personal domestication plot, rather than the military plot of the rest of the Russians as a collective unit, that allows Karazin to bring Central Asia into the spheres of Russian culture, history, and literature at once. Finally, through Natasha—as helpful a character for Karazin as she is for the Cossacks—the novel begins to resolve the tension between the brutality that realism about Central Asia can't help but express and Karazin's loyalty to the imperial project.

Karazin accomplishes this by way of a class distinction, assigning more admirable traits—generosity, honesty, emotional insight and especially Natasha's "maternal love for humanity" ("материнская любовь к человеству,")—to the Russian characters of lower social standing, and a few of the native characters who have gone over to the Russians.[168] The cruel and foolhardy aspects of the human character reside chiefly in Rovich, as he is portrayed during his occassional appearances in Turkestan from Petersburg. The novel is merciless in its depiction of Rovich as a ridiculous, self-involved coward and liar. Though Rovich's role is limited to a few chapters near the novel's conclusion, his actions becomes the object of the narrator's gaze and clear moral judgment. Against the backdrop of the steppe landscape and the roving Cossack camp, which the novel has already established as its appropriate and "natural" setting, Rovich

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[166] Ibid., 172.

[167] Ibid., 180. The novel is rife, in fact, with passages comparing Central Asians to animals, especially to dogs and wolves. The Turkmen war parties sounded "monotonous chant resembling a continuous whine. It reminded one of the howling of a pack of wolves who are looking at some coveted prey inaccessible to them." These lines provide one of the clearest examples of how the novel reinforces the idea that Central Asians, especially the nomadic groups, are predatory (183). Karazin has the natives embrace this comparison, as well. "Those are our people," says one character of the war chants. But a local ruler's references to "double-tongued dogs among us" and "cowards [who] ran away into the steppe like hares and wolves" also show that wolves and dogs have a negative valence for natives as well, who evidently share Russian pejorative terminology (190).

[168] Ibid., 31

appears as the clear foreigner, placed in opposition to every aspect of the world the novel has thus far developed as its own. The Cossacks distrust him and constantly interfere any time he tries to approach Natasha, but their more generous nature would have, we learn, inclined them toward forgiveness were Rovich himself not so base:

> …его поверхностная натура не могла догадаться, не могла понять, что если бы откровенно, хотя бы в тяжелые минуты своего раскаяния, явился бы в этот кружок "друзей Натали Мартыновны",—если бы у него хватило силы и способности высказаться перед ними, предстать хотя таким, каким он был на самом деле, в эти тяжелые, бессонные ночи… он бы потушил разом эту ненависть в их сердцах,—и, очень может быть, что, если бы они увидели вновь пробудившиеся у Наташи чувства нежности к отцу своего ребенка, они бы первые искренно, дружески, протянули ему руку…
>
> Но это естественное и прямое отношение к делу было не по силам Сергея Николаевича [Ровича]…[169]
>
> […his superficial nature could not guess, nor comprehend, that if he would openly, during one of his periods of shame, reveal himself to this circle of Natalia Martinovna's friends—if he had had the strength and ability to confess before them, to present himself as he was during those hard, sleepless nights…he would have extinguished the hatred in their hearts at once—and, very likely, had they seen feelings of tenderness toward the father of her child arise again in Natasha, they would have been the first to extend him a friendly hand….But this natural and straightforward relationship to the matter was not within the power of Sergei Nikolaevich Rovich.]

Karazin's explicit mention of the "natural and straightforward" manner recalls Tolstoy's Cossacks—the very trait which Rovich (like Olenin) cannot muster, is the way in which the Cossacks (and Natasha) always approach life. Rovich is alienated from the wholesome lives and clear consciences of the Cossacks, as well as from his own desires—he seems, at times, to feel real shame and remorse over Natasha but, as we have seen, proves unable to overcome his pride and actually approach her. Insofar as it comments on Russia and Russian society, *Dvunogii volk* suggests that this is one of the problems from which the honest and straightforward middle classes might escape by settling in Central Asia, a territory for them, in which Rovich and his ilk are unable to thrive.

The novel ends with Rovich, back in Petersburg, telling a completely fabricated story about his "дон-жуановские похождения" ("Don Juanish adventures") in Khiva.[170] Paragraphs before this final mocking critique, though, Karazin finally concludes the novel's marriage plot, revealing that Golovin and Natasha have settled down in Natasha's childhood home, where Golovin is raising her son as his own, and the family has turned their small patch of parched and dusty Turkestan into a Russian homestead:

> Густые массы вьющейся зелени заплели все стены снаружи домика, и сквозь эту вырезную, изумрудную листву сверкали оконные стекла и чистые белые занавески.

[169] Ibid., 211.
[170] Ibid., 251.

> Палисадник пестрел яркими цветами и зеленью, по усыпанному песком, чисто-выметенному дворику прогуливались куры с своим важным петухом-супругом…[171] (250).
>
> ["A dense mass of climbing vines covered the outer walls of the little house, and between the sculpted emerald leaves sparkled bright windows with clean white curtains. The little garden shone with bright flowers and greenery; over the scattered sand of the clean swept yard promenaded hens, escorted by their self-important rooster-husband…"]

This final scene resolves another of the novel's tensions: between Turkestan's landscape and the vision of domesticity which the novel repeatedly puts forward. Here the sandy steppe is confined to a neatly swept yard, the house, itself a vision of orderly and upright living, is concealed and protected from the harsher environments of Central Asia by its lush vegetation, and even the domesticated birds have settled down into a conjugal relationship. Crucially, too, the endless horizontal expanses which open the novel have acquired a vertical aspect: the house and its mass of climbing vines. In other words, Karazin's vision of domestication—of Central Asia and the Russians in it—is complete. The narrative drama which so enticed Russian readers of the 1870s was neither the love story nor the military victory—or not only those—but the imaginative transformation of Turkestan from a place of dangerous and obscure meaning to one available, appropriate for settlement, and easily assimilable to Russian cultural and aesthetic norms.

[171] Ibid., 250.

Chapter 3
Cartographic Idealism: Reading Central Asia into Kipling's *Kim*

i. Introduction

Rudyard Kipling's fiction and especially the novel *Kim* (1901) marks Central Asia's entrance into English popular fiction, much as Karazin's novels ushered Central Asia into the Russian literary sphere.[172] However, while Karazin and Kipling have some elements in common—an investment in an enduring vision of empire, and an orientation toward the popular classes in their respective metropoles and colonies—their treatments of Central Asia share little. While Karazin's fiction is set in Central Asia and represents the region in rich, at times ethnographic detail, *Kim* mentions the region only rarely and never represents it as a diegetic space. Nonetheless, as I will argue in this chapter, Central Asia is indeed central to the novel's aesthetic and political concerns. Central Asia's importance in the novel can be understood by taking "Central Asia" and "the Great Game" as coterminous—to the extent that the Great Game had a physical location, it was in Central Asia, and both terms share certain symbolic and affective valences. *Kim* popularized the term "the Great Game" and lent it much of its currency as a signifier of imperial swashbuckling and narrative excitement, a sort of inland version of the high seas adventure tale that accompanied the oceanic expansion of earlier phases of the British Empire.[173] But beyond a relationship of equivalence between "the Great Game" and "Central Asia," *Kim* relies on the vision of Central Asia that the novel itself produces, a vision that imagines the region as both an instrumental and a utopian space, and that furthermore tries to suture these two symbolic functions. In reconfiguring the geostrategic conflict between Russia

[172] The only other fictional work by Kipling to explore Central Asia in any detail is "The Man Who Would Be King," which unlike *Kim* is set in the region (in Kafiristan, now known as Nuristan, in Afghanistan), and represents it in rich detail. See Kipling, *The Man Who Would be King: Selected Stories* ed. Jan Montefiore (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 98-126. However, the Great Game is absent from "The Man Who Would Be King," and Central Asia in this story functions nearly exclusively as a space outside of and free from the restrictive social conditions—class, in particular—prevalent in imperial territory. In the few other stories in which Kipling names Central Asia, the region is little more than a symbol of anarchy beyond the frontiers of the British Empire. The story "To Be Filed for Reference" from Kipling's first collection, *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888) opens with the drunkard and loafer and Oxford boy turned dissolute South Asian, McIntosh, stumbling around "the Serai where the horse-traders and best of the blackguards from Central Asia live." The phrasing recalls the only mention of Central Asia in *Kim*: "the Kashmir Serai…where the camel and horse-caravans put up on their return from Central Asia." McIntosh Jellaludin, like Kim, is an impossible imperial hybrid, at once English and native, though his hybridity is monstrous and dissolute in comparison to Kim's beauty and innocence—Kim's serai, too, has lost some of the treachery of McIntosh Jellaludin's. See Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills* ed. Kaori Nagai (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 242-9; and Kipling, *Kim* (Oxford UP, 1987), 17. Central Asia retains a fearsome character in *The Jungle Book* (1894) in the form of the Amir of Afghanistan's bodyguard of "eight hundred men and horses who had never seen a camp or a locomotive before in their lives—savage men and savage horses from somewhere at the back of Central Asia." See Kipling, "Her Majesty's Servants" in *The Jungle Book* (New York: The Century Co, 1920), 265-303. A final mention of the region appears in the late story "The Man Who Was" (1907), regarding the Russian Dirkovitch, who "arrived in India from nowhere in particular" and "had done rough work in Central Asia." See Kipling, *The Man Who Was and Other Stories* (New York: The Happy Hour Library, 19--), 7-28. Though Kipling's references to Central Asia are relatively thin, they are consistent: the region is associated with both lawlessness and mobility—two serious threats to the stability of society, economy, and politics in British India.

[173] See Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*, esp. chap. 2, "Travel Literature before 1800—Its History, Its Types, Its Influence."

and Britain for a popular audience in the metropole, *Kim* produces an evacuated, impenetrable space which stands in relatively simple symbolic relation to the interimperial buffer zone which the Russian and British empires sought to maintain in Central Asia. However, in reifying an imaginative vision of Central Asia as eternally beyond empire's reach, *Kim* simultaneously produces a utopian space in which the conflicts inherent in empire—between East and West, ruling and working classes, expansion and stability—can be permanently resolved. This chapter seeks to read Central Asia back into *Kim*, to try to understand how the region is both conspicuously absent and enduringly present in the novel's geographic imaginary, and to examine how that absent presence is reflected structurally, generically, and geopoetically in *Kim*.

Whereas Karazin's fiction envisioned the domestication and settlement of Russian Turkestan, imagining a free and available space in Central Asia while downplaying its dangers and lawlessness, Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) does almost the opposite to the British conception of Central Asia. In *Kim* the maintenance of imperial control of India depends on the presence of a wild, anarchic, and inscrutable space on the periphery, a Central Asia that remains always beyond the reach of the hero, of the novel's action and, by extension, of the systems of knowledge-production and governance required by the British Empire.[174] The tension between these competing visions—an unreachable and indescribable Central Asia and an accessible and richly represented India—is expressed both in the novel's imaginary geography and in its hero, Kim himself.

Born in India but originally of Irish extraction, Kim has a fluid identity in many aspects, including parentage and nationality. Orphaned at a young age, he is "a poor white of the very poorest," who at the novel's opening has all but disappeared from the purview of the white ruling classes, into the underbelly of Lahore where "he lived in a life wild as that of the Arabian nights."[175] Possessed of a remarkable talent for languages and disguises, the young Kim takes advantage of his unclear origins and lack of firm membership in any single group to become familiar with all facets of Lahore society, earning him the title of "Little Friend of all the World." Even the one immutable thing about Kim—his whiteness—is easily hidden, making Kim an ideal yet impossible imperial subject, both white and native, with access to both worlds. Before he is granted full access into the world of white Englishmen, however, Kim needs to be discovered. He is discovered first by Teshoo Lama, a Tibetan Buddhist monk who has come to Lahore seeking a river which, according to the lama's mythology, sprang from an arrow shot by Gautama Buddha and is unmarked on any maps of the territory. Proving knowledgable of his surroundings and willing to guide the lama first into the Lahore Museum and then toward food and shelter, Kim is quickly adopted by the lama as his *chela*, or disciple. This first discovery then sets in motion a convoluted series of other adoptions, in which Kim comes under the protection and service of a number of other characters, most notably Mahbub Ali, an Afghan horse trader and a spy for the British Empire, and Colonel Creighton, a powerful spymaster and Great Game player who poses as an amateur ethnographer in order to justify his keen interest in the details of Indian life and society. Over the course of the novel, Kim matures in the capacity of the lama's

[174] Here I draw on J. B. Harley's formulations of the "discourse of cartography" as a sign system that helped European empires understand physical territory as first a homogenous expanse, then as a commodity, and finally as property. See Harley, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power" in *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 51-82. Another useful framework for understanding imperial peripheries as places that were wild by design can be found in Benjamin D. Hopkins, *Ruling the Savage Periphery: Frontier Governance and the Making of the Modern State* (Harvard UP, 2020).

[175] Kipling, *Kim*, 1-3.

chela and as a British schoolboy being prepared for colonial service. Even at the novel's end, Kim continues to contend with competing, or at least imperfectly aligned, drives—the lama's quest for the river, the Great Game as orchestrated by Creighton, and his own desire for freedom and aimless mobility. Though Kim never reaches it, Central Asia has much to do with the framing and potential resolution of these conflicting drives. Central Asian space in *Kim* is represented by what are arguably two distinct regions: the lama's homeland in Tibet, beyond the Himalaya; and Mahbub Ali's in or near Afghanistan, beyond the Hindu Kush. Both Central Asias, like Teshoo Lama and Mahbub Ali, draw Kim toward themselves, but neither proves accessible or representable. In fact, it is important that Kim move toward but never fully *into* Central Asia.

The comprehension, representation, and governance of life in India and its borderlands are some of *Kim*'s chief concerns: in this context the displacement of the unknowable and the anarchic onto Central Asia is significant, as is the fact that this displacement, the imaginative separation of hills from plains, is never complete. Kim begins as an anarchic boy, at ease with every facet of native Indian society without easily resolving into any stable identity, and with his own amusement and survival his life's only apparent motivating forces. In the novel's early chapters he is nearly a force of nature, so perfectly suited is he to his surroundings, but as Kim matures his natural abilities for disguise and mimicry are channeled into the empire's service as he learns the culture of the English ruling class in India as well as the codes and skills of Great Game spycraft. Kim's transformation into a servant of empire centers on giving purpose to his innate abilities: this purpose is, in the broadest sense, to ensure the security of the empire's borders against Russian incursion and to produce knowledge of the politically contested or topographically inaccessible territories north of India. Kim's specific tasks center on taming both of the novel's Central Asias. He apprehends would-be Russian invaders in the Himalayan foothills and delivers to the plains the maps, charts, and other documents he has removed from the Russians regarding events in and around Afghanistan. However, Kim never physically enters either mountainous region, nor does he grasp the full content or import of the information he bears back to the plains. The novel's *telos*, which pairs Kim's development into an imperial subject with the subjugation of unruly Russians and local tribes on India's northern borders, is therefore thwarted by the very thing toward which it drives. This chapter posits that the space of Central Asia in *Kim* functions as a motivating force which is itself unknowable and impenetrable, thus putting the novel's concern with the acquisition and organization of knowledge in conflict with its own narrative structure.[176] For this reason the novel's structure must always skirt the void of Central Asia which nonetheless remains at the center of its concerns. Furthermore, the construction of Central Asia as a space of central narrative and political importance, toward which the novel's protagonist travels but which he will never reach, allows, and in fact requires, Kipling to defer the resolution of that tension.

Kim poses a problem, then: both its hero and its narrative action progress toward a territory which can never be reached, as the novel attempts to represent both a utopian vision of empire

[176] While Kim himself functions to dramatize the acquisition of imperial knowledge, a lack of knowledge of the topography and human geography of Tibet and Afghanistan—and occasional wild speculation about the regions—was and continues to be a more general problem for the Great Game commentators, including Kipling. A fascinating account of how Kipling, in "The Man Who Would Be King," borrows a real location (Kafiristan, in the northeast corner of Afghanistan) for a setting but makes it both "fictional" and "hypothetical," as well as how critics recapitulate the "loss" of the real places on which Kipling's fictional narratives depend can be found in Edward Marx, "How We Lost Kafiristan," *Representations*, no. 67 (Summer, 1999): 44-66.

and the realities of its quotidian maintenance. Most critical assessments of *Kim* have found that tension or outright conflict inheres in the novel, though there has been little agreement about the nature of that conflict and the effects which it produces in the text. Some situate the novel's fundamental conflict within its hero, Kim, and his hybrid identities.[177] Others see the novel as primarily an expression of a structural tension between East and West, of irreconcilable differences in the Indian and English experiences of empire and colonization.[178] Yet a third group sees both Kim the boy and the India of *Kim* the novel as a utopian, or nearly utopian, projection, in which the coexistence and even mutual understanding of typically antagonistic forces might be realized.[179] Most critical accounts, however, neglect the Central Asian Great Game as a central point of conflict in *Kim*: the endlessly forestalled war on India's frontiers entailed a conflict between martial aggression and calculated passivity, which also characterizes many of the East-West conflicts appearing in the novel and its hero, as if the colonial Indian context and the global strategic conflict of the novel allegorize each other. The issue in *Kim* is not, then, that "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," as Kipling himself put it.[180] Rather, it is that the stage for the meeting between East and West and, crucially, the stage for a potential resolution between them is not India, but a Central Asia that is forever out of reach.[181]

Critical accounts of *Kim* have nonetheless identified numerous conflictual elements in the novel. For those assessments which see Kim himself as the locus of the novel's contradictions Kim's age acquires a singular symbolic significance. Alongside whiteness one of the few irreducible aspects of the hero's identity, Kim's youth points to other ways in which his identity remains hybrid and fluid. No longer still a child nor yet a man, Kim's life-stage evinces a mutability which Suvir Kaul has read as "a supple way of being in the colonial world" in which Kim has full access to the otherwise incompatible experiences of both colonizer and

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[177] See Jed Esty, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (Oxford UP, 2012), esp. "Introduction: Scattered Souls—the Bildungsroman and Colonial Modernity," 1-38; Suvir Kaul, "*Kim*, or How to Be Young, Male, and British in Kipling's India" in Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* ed. Zohreh T. Sullivan (New York: Norton, 2002), 426-35; Don Randall, *Kipling's Imperial Boy: Adolescence and Cultural Hybridity* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), esp. chap. 5 "*Kim*: Ethnography and the Hybrid Boy," 137-59; and Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), esp. chap. 5 "The Adolescence of *Kim,*" 111-31.

[178] See Edward Said, introduction to Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 1-46; Zohreh T. Sullivan, *Narratives of Empire: The Fictions of Rudyard Kipling* (Cambridge UP, 1993), esp. chapter six "*Kim*: empire of the beloved," 145-80; Edmund Wilson, "The Kipling that Nobdy Read," in *Kipling's Mind and Art*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), 17-69.

[179] See Bruce Avery, "The Subject of Imperial Geography" in *Prosthetic Territories*, ed. Brahm and Driscoll (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 55-70; and Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "Vision in Kipling's Novels" in *Kipling's Mind and Art*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), 197-234.

[180] Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West" in *Departmental Ditties and Ballads and Barrack Room Ballads* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page and co., 1925), 201.

[181] Here I agree to some extent with Edward Said's assertion that "there is no resolution to the conflict between Kim's colonial service and loyalty to his Indian companions not because Kipling could not face it, but because for Kipling *there was no conflict*." (Said, introduction to Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*, 23). *Kim*, in other words, does represent *difference* in multiple ways but does not necessarily insist that difference entails antagonism or *conflict*. However, Harish Trivedi's rebuttal of Said is also instructive: Said, he argues, elides the difference between Kipling's aestheticized utopian project and the real political situation out of which the novel arose. (Harish Trivedi, "'Arguing with the Himalayas'? Edward Said on Rudyard Kipling" in Rooney and Nagai, eds. *Kipling and Beyond: Patriotism, Globalisation and Postcolonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 126.)

colonized.[182] Kim's adolescence proves a useful metaphor not only for his fluid and liminal identities, but also for empire as an historical apparatus and conceptual framework. Sara Suleri find that Kim's position between childhood and mature adulthood parallels *Kim*'s narrative structure both in the novel's "adolescent energy" and in "the immanence of tragic loss, of an obsessively impelled discourse that lacks any direction in which to go."[183] And Kaul sees Kim as the embodiment of an imperial desire for a state of suspended animation, a "man-child who would inherit the empire without boundaries, and live in a time without end."[184] The fact that Kim continues to grow over the course of the novel without ever reaching adult maturity thus makes him a fitting hero for a tale of the Great Game. Kim's incomplete development comes to serve as a synecdoche for empire and its attendant anxieties—the adulthood which Kim never achieves would mean the final geographical and geopolitical delimitation of British India.

The larger conflict between East and West is, as Edward Said has characterized it, a tension between the longstanding Orientalist trope of an India that is "a timeless, unchanging, and 'essential' locale" and a country that is "actual in geographic concreteness."[185] But it is not only "essential" India that Kipling wishes to represent as timeless and unchanging, as if it could be separated from the realities of imperialism. If Kim's perpetual adolescence symbolizes Kipling's desire for an empire frozen in time, then the novel's white, British India, too, stands outside of the realities of imperialism, challenging an investment in the West as a progressive force on the subcontinent. Perhaps the most surprising conflictual aspect of *Kim* is its simultaneous engagement with the stereotype of the East as permanent, static, and without history and its challenge to the corollary notion of the West as adaptive, progressive, and historical. This desire for fixity and stasis plays out repeatedly in the novel, as Kim's work toward one goal or another is thwarted by the requirements of another character or plot line. Kim is quickly ensnared in the machinations of imperial policy, becoming an agent of imperial expansion, but is never afforded an exhaustive understanding of his own actions in the empire's service: as Suleri observes, once he is fully trained in the imperial idiom his role in the text changes from that of a skilled interpreter to merely a bearer of messages, the content of which is all too often lost on him.[186] At the same time, the novel never resolves Kim's relation to the lama, and it remains unclear whether the boy's Western education has disabused him of any inclination toward the lama's "Eastern" modes of apprehending and interpreting the world, or whether Kim has, in fact, had two parallel educations between which he cannot, and perhaps need not, choose.

As Kim's suspended adolescence becomes a metaphor for the desire for an eternally expanding "empire without boundaries," one which, in other words, has no final geographical or territorial state, his competing educations, too, are metaphorically projected onto the geography of the Subcontinent as an inherent conflict between western cartography and its eastern counterparts, embodied by the nomadism of Kim's childhood and the lama's "spiritual geography."[187] Mark Kinkead-Weekes finds the English desire to know India both reflected in and stymied by the novel's geography. Kim as a child in the plains and bustling cities of India

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[182] Kaul, 433.

[183] Suleri, 113.

[184] Kaul, 436.

[185] Said, introduction to Kipling, *Kim*, 9-10.

[186] Suleri, 122.

[187] On Kim's nomadism and the threat it poses to Western modes of knowledge production, especially cartography and anthropology, see Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton UP, 1999), 93-9. The novel's "spiritual geography" is discussed in Sullivan, 170-80.

"embodies…the urge not merely to see and know from the outside, but to *become* the 'other'" and in the first part of the novel, on his home turf, he succeeds.[188] Kim's natural way of encountering and becoming "other" than his white self is already in contrast to the English mode: "Confronted by a city, Kim's instincts would be to plunge into its human heart, Creighton wants a map and a report…Where he is not bleakly utilitarian he is coldly scientific."[189] However both ways of apprehending and interpreting the world are ultimately stymied by the Himalayan landscape which "make[s] manifest a vision of the world as inhuman, incredible, unintelligible."[190] This then is the novel's geopoetics: a symbolically charged landscape in which the plains are contrasted with the mountains, just as the imperial fantasy of total access is juxtaposed with an anxious suspicion that comprehension is ultimately impossible. Colonel Creighton's demand for "a map and a report" is an attempt to mediate between those two possibilities. The lama's Wheel of Life, an illustrated allegory of reincarnation and a representation of the geography of the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual landscape, is another kind of spatial mediation between comphension and ignorance. The novel leaves unresolved the tension between those two maps or their attendant interpretive modes.

Edmund Wilson suggests that *Kim* stages a meeting of East and West but then indefinitely staves off a confrontation between them. Wilson sees this deferred confrontation as *Kim*'s major flaw: its lack of "antagonistic impulses of the human spirit, struggling with one another" prevent the novel from seeming like either a jingoistic apology or a critique of empire. Instead, "both sides," that is, East and West, the lama and the Great Game, India itself and English India, "are sympathetically presented, [and] the battle is not allowed to occur."[191] For Wilson, Kipling is too even-handed about British India, failing to either make the British morally questionable, or to make the lama or other aspects of "native" India viable courses for Kim's life. Scores of critical responses to *Kim* and to the rest of Kipling's *oeuvre* have interrogated the ethics of his representations of the British Empire and of India.[192] Most have found that, while Kipling's personal politics are remote from any contemporary consensus regarding empire, his fiction nonetheless merits attention for its revelations about the dominant imperial psyche, or because it comprises some of the best artistic prose produced in English about India. I wish to suggest that this conflict, the tension between East and West, the question of where Kipling's sympathies lay, and where he expected his readers' sympathies to lie, is by no means a problem which *Kim* fails to resolve. On the contrary, it is the very essence of the novel, a trait which appears embodied in its hero, as well as in its geopoetics, its generic form, and in its utopian thematics.

The remainder of the chapter comprises three sections. The first focuses on *Kim*'s geopoetics—that is, it analyzes the way the novel represents landscape symbolically and deploys it rhetorically to demarcate Central Asia as essentially different from, and in many ways opposed

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[188] Kinkead-Weekes, in *Kipling's Mind and Art*, ed. Rutherford, 217.

[189] Ibid., 223.

[190] Ibid., 228. Kinkead-Weekes observes here that "Kipling makes the Himalayas serve the same function Forster wanted from his Marabar Caves." The function is the same but the location and geographical difference is notable. The caves are in the plains, in the heart of British India proper, and the alienation and epistemological crises they produce are precisely what Kipling displaces into the geopolitically contested territory of the Himalaya.

[191] Wilson, in *Kipling's Mind and Art*, Rutherford, ed., 32.

[192] See, in addition to Wilson, quoted above, and Said's introduction to *Kim*, Benita Parry, "The Content and Discontent of Kipling's Imperialism," in *Space and Place: Theories of Empire and Location*, Carter, Donald, and Squires, eds., (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993), 221-40; Patrick Williams, "*Kim* and Orientalism" in Phillip Mallett, ed., *Kipling Considered* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 33-55; Bart Moore-Gilbert, "Kipling and postcolonial literature" in Howard J. Booth, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling* (Cambridge UP, 2011), 155-68.

to, British India. In this section, I suggest that cartography is the novel's governing metaphor, and that Kipling imagines a meeting between East and West by placing British efforts to map the physical geography of Central Asia on equal, or at least comparable, footing with the lama's conceptualization and representation of Tibet and India as holy spaces. The second section discusses *Kim*'s hybrid generic form, outlining the multiple established genres which Kipling deploys in the novel. In this section, I argue that *Kim* provides an aestheticized rehearsal of a major contemporaneous geopolitical debate about whether, and how, to maintain an "empty" buffer zone in Central Asia. *Kim* reflects this debate in its combination of teleological genres, such as the quest romance and the Bildungsroman, and non-teleological ones like the picaresque and the road novel. The final section presents a reading of Central Asia as it exists in *Kim*, and suggests that the border regions of Afghanistan and, especially, Tibet provide Kipling with material locations on which to project the utopian fantasies which ultimately prove the only possibility for the resolution of *Kim*'s many thematic and formal conflicts.

ii. Geopoetics

Edward Said wrote in his introduction to *Kim* that "Kipling could no more have questioned…the right of the white European to rule, than he would have argued with the Himalayas," asserting that for Kipling colonial rule was as evident as the most iconic feature of the region's landscape, as immutable as a force of nature.[193] Kipling may not have argued with the Himalayas, but he did employ them as a symbol of India's frontier: in this symbolic capacity, the mountains guard the subcontinent from the Russians who would have to cross them to reach India, but they also serve as the gateway to a utopian space which Kipling imagines beyond the empire's frontiers. In fact, *Kim*'s geography and the symbolic weight borne by its various regions and topographies are closely related to the novel's complexities and contradictory drives. The fundamental geographic distinction in the novel is between hill and plain, and it allows Kipling to set the specificity and particularity of India proper apart from the largely imaginative, symbolic significance of Central Asia.[194] Save one protracted episode in the hills, during which Kim encounters the novel's only Russians and the novel's only physical maps, the narrative action takes place entirely on the plains of northern India. Over the course of the novel, and as his secular, religious, and specialized instruction progresses, Kim traverses these plains, albeit with several sidetracks and backtracks, beginning in the northwest and moving generally east. In many ways hill and plain are in binary opposition: the hills appear empty while the plains teem with life; the hills are inaccessible because of challenging climate and terrain, in contrast to Kim's uncanny ability to enter any physical place or social situation in the plains. Similarly, Kim grasps the internal logic of life in the plains, but says of the hills "This is not my country."[195] In short, the various locations which Kim visits in the plains have all the specificity of place while the hills exist

[193] Said, introduction to Kipling, *Kim*, 10.

[194] The distinction between hill and plain is a through-line in Kipling's literary career. His first book was called *Plain Tales from the Hills* in part because many of the stories are set in Simla, the higher-elevation summer capital of the British Raj, where officials moved to escape the heat of the more southerly plains. The title is also, of course, a pun on "plain" as the opposite of "hill," which also associates the hills with complexity, the other opposite of plainness. Kipling would flesh out and complicate this association in *Kim*, where the plains feature the richer and more complex life, but the hills are freighted with symbolically complex, often conflicting, meanings.

[195] Kipling, *Kim*, 233.

largely as abstract space—a concept or an imaginative projection.[196] The topographic binarism of hill and plain masks another important aspect of the novel's geography. *Kim* treats not two but three geopolitical and cultural regions: British India proper, which the novel associates with the plains; the border territories of Afghanistan and Russian Turkestan, beyond the Hindu Kush; and Tibet, beyond the Himalaya, which, like Afghanistan, is hill country. Afghanistan, Turkestan, and Tibet bore different symbolic valences in the British imperial imagination, and *Kim* reflects but also elides a number of those differences.[197] In part because of these inherited imperial imaginaries and in part because the novel generally associates the hills with abstract space, both Afghanistan and Tibet in *Kim* become spaces of fantasy, in contradistinction to the realism of India. Both also stand in for a region that, though it was crucial to the geopolitical world of *Kim* and to the narrative itself, is absent in the novel: Central Asia.

The play in *Kim* between absence and presence, between conceptual or abstract space and material place, exemplifies an essential link between the period's geopolitics and the novel's geopoetics. The geostrategic incentive for keeping Central Asia remote and inaccessible lay in its role as a buffer zone between imperial frontiers: in the novel this is reflected as a sharp contrast between a Central Asia that is ill-defined and unplaceable and an India that is both visible and knowable in its diversity. At the same time, Russia and Britain shared a strategic incentive to attempt to penetrate and map the regions between their imperial frontiers, a framework which was in direct conflict with the desire to preserve Central Asia as an untouched buffer zone.[198] This second impulse is heavily reflected in *Kim*'s thematic concerns with cartography as well as in its narrative structure, in which the capture of a Russian map in contested hill territory and its conveyance to the safety of India proper is the novel's only real denouement. *Kim* therefore must represent the peripheries of empire as agents of narrative motion and, simultaneously, as static receptacles for familiar myths of the Orient, the wild lands beyond imperial frontiers. The conflicting functions and mythologies which Central Asia bears point both inward, to the novel's poetics and the ways that its narrative both requires and resists movement toward the frontier, and outward to the geopolitics of the late nineteenth century, in which Central Asia's strategic role, to say nothing of its significance in the European imaginary, was ambiguous. *Kim*'s treatment of Central Asia reflects the region's shifting significance in the imperial imaginary—a long process that would first produce the imperial borderlands as empty or, better still, evacuated spaces and then invest those spaces with cultural meaning appropriate to their geostrategic roles. Both *Kim* and the empire it represents, in other words, require the surety of stasis and the uncertainty of mobility. The remainder of this section will consider how *Kim* produces Indian

[196] Here I draw on Kate Brown's distinction between discourses of "empty" or "vacant" space and the historical processes which "emptied" and "vacated" places in "Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana are Nearly the Same Place," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 1 (Feb. 2001): 17-48, esp. pg. 33. Another useful construction is Bruce Avery's description of how a vacated, abstracted space is reinvested with meaning via "the kind of vision engendered by geography and imperialism, where the landscape lies passively awaiting the surveyor's signifying gaze." Avery, 67.

[197] On perceptions of Russian Turkestan, see chap. 1 of this dissertation; on Afghanistan, see Robert D. Crews, *Afghan Modern: The History of a Global Nation* (Cambridge UP, 2015) esp. chap. 2 "Forging an Afghan Empire," 42-68; on Tibet see Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (New York: Verso, 1993), esp. chap. 1 "Archive and Utopia," 11-44.

[198] As Ian Baucom puts it, "the empire has founded itself on a bordered epistemology and confronts the limit of colonial knowledge," a fact which makes us "aware of the existence of the unmapped and the unmappable within the cartography of imperialism" (97).

and, especially, Central Asia landscapes which thematically reinforce that dichotomy, while the following section will examine how the same problem appears as a formal issue in the novel.

Although the toponym Central Asia appears only once in *Kim*, it is fitting that the novel popularized Arthur Connolly's older term "the Great Game," making the geographical region synonymous with all that the Great Game connotes: spycraft, intrigue, remote and dangerous landscapes, and the infiltration of empire into even the last and least accessible frontiers. It is appropriate, too, that in *Kim* the phrase "the Great Game" is most often uttered by Mahbub Ali, the Afghan horse trader and British spy, the novel's key to Central Asia beyond the Hindu Kush. "When he comes to the Great Game he must go alone—alone, and at the peril of his head," Mahbub Ali says to Creighton, discussing Kim's propensity for unaccompanied wandering, reassuring the colonel that Kim has a natural gift for the Game, while also making clear the danger the boy will face as an operative.[199] He uses the phrase again to Kim himself, as he deposits Kim in Simla to learn the advanced arts of spycraft from Lurgan Sahib: "Go up the hill and ask. Here begins the Great Game."[200] Simla, colonial India's summer capital, is indeed in the hills—the foothills of the Himalaya. The fact that Mahbub Ali, a hillman from another mountain region, has the authority to first invoke the Game in *Kim*, and that he then sends Kim uphill toward the Game, has a rich symbolic significance. Though Mahbub Ali's instruction to "go up the hill" refers literally to the approach to Lurgan Sahib's house, where Kim will learn the emotional fortitude his service will require, we might also read it as Mahbub Ali's invitation to Kim to enter the field of the Great Game, where Afghanistan and Tibet, the Hindu Kush and the Himalaya, are all part of the novel's imagined hill space.

Central Asia in *Kim*, then, is both Afghanistan and Tibet. Both border regions function as symbols of emptiness, illegibility, and danger. At the same time the novel's two Central Asias are at times so fundamenally distinct that, when more closely examined, they almost constitute another binary pair. To the extent that it ever had a physical location, the Great Game had begun in Afghanistan: it was through Afghanistan that Russians hoped to find an overland route to India, and it was the pacification of Afghanistan in the form of Anglo-Russian agreement on the nation's borders through the establishment of the Durand Line, and the installation of a compliant Afghan monarch, which finally brought about inter-imperial detente in Central Asia.[201] Even before Kipling takes up the cartographic fixing of Afghanistan—maps of the region are the valuable assets Kim acquires from Russian spies in the north—he points to its symbolic role as "that mysterious land beyond the Passes of the North."[202] Through the token Afghan Mahbub Ali, Kipling associates the region with stereotypes of both the East and the road. When Kim finds Mahbub Ali at the Kashmir Serai, the Afghan horse-trader is "lying on a pair of silk carpet saddle-bags, pulling lazily at an immense silver hookah," the very picture of Oriental decadence.[203] The scene at the Serai underscores the sense that Afghanistan and Central Asia beyond it are spaces in constant motion, the domain of nomads who funnel their goods and information and, perhaps, their new Russian masters, into India. The Kashmir Serai furnishes the first and only mention of Central Asia in Kim ("where camel and horse-caravans put up on their return from Central Asia") and it is rich with symbols of mobility and transit: "Here were all

[199] Kipling, *Kim*, 129.
[200] Ibid., 147.
[201] Crews, 70-1; and Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (Oxford UP, 1990) esp. chap. 36 "The Beginning of the End," 502-12.
[202] Kipling, *Kim*, 18.
[203] Ibid.

manner of Northern folk, tending tethered ponies and kneeling camels; loading and unloading bales and bundles…piling grass before the shrieking, wild-eyed stallions; cuffing the surly caravan dogs…."[204] Moreover, the Serai abuts the train station and the two spaces, separated by the definite yet permeable boundary of a tall cloister, represent the cultural and political interface between an orderly colonial India and the chaotic elements on its peripheries. Mahbub Ali is an interpreter between these two worlds: he lives, when he is at the Serai, on the edge nearest the train station, facilitating his connections with people and information coming up from India on the train; but he wears a "Bokhariot belt," marking his access to and affiliation with the people of Bukhara—in Kim's time a protectorate of the Russian Empire.[205] Mahbub Ali's cover as a horse-trader is as richly metaphorical as it is convenient: as he breaks wild steppe horses for proper polo, he translates the inscrutable events of Russian-indigenous encounters in Central Asia for the British in India.

If Kashmir and the lands of Afghanistan and Central Asia beyond it are characterized by chaotic, irrepressible motion, intrigue, commerce, and worldly, material concerns, Tibet and the Central Asia *it* signifies is static, immutable, timeless, utopian, spiritual. Like Afghanistan, Tibet is a symbol rather than a setting—though Kim and the lama walk in the hills on India's northeastern frontier, "these are but the lower hills," as the lama puts it, the approach to the Himalayas, in and beyond which lies Tibet itself.[206] Nonetheless, they are in view of "the true Hills," which Kim, chastened by cold and altitude, calls "no place for men," and of which the lama commands "look, and know illusion, *chela*!"[207] The hills challenge the mobility to which Kim is accustomed, a challenge due only in part to their vast distances and difficult terrain: "Here one day's march carried them no farther, it seemed, than a dreamer's clogged pace bears him in a nightmare."[208] The comparison to the temporality of dreams—the contrast between the realism of Kipling's Indian plains and the surrealism, unreality, or fantasy of the hills lurks here too—indicates not just the slow and arduous pace of travel in the hills, but the sense that in Kipling's Himalayas time literally does not pass. The highest peaks are mystical and suprahistorical, "changeless since the world's beginning, but changing to every mood of sun and cloud," blanketed in "the eternal snow," and so offer, as does the lama, an alternative to the entire dialectic of order and chaos presented by the tension between the train station and the serai, colonial order and native chaos.[209] The fact that the novel's action never reaches Tibet is thus not only appropriate but crucial to the region's role in Kipling's imperial imaginary: if Afghanistan poses a challenge to the colonial logic of organization, comprehension, and control, Tibet offers an alternative to that logic, a utopian space set apart from the strategic anxiety and anarchic volatility of Afghanistan.

But Tibet as utopia is, it turns out, structurally similar to Tibet as geopolitical buffer. In response to the competition for knowledge and access to all of the territories to India's north, Tibet, the last holdout against the incursions of the Great Game players, was codified into international law as a utopian "space apart" by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. The convention barred any scientific expeditions to the Tibetan territory, with the goal of also putting a halt to Russian and English information gathering and espionage there. As Thomas Richards

[204] Ibid., 17.
[205] Ibid., 18.
[206] Ibid., 231.
[207] Ibid., 235.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid.

astutely points out, with the Anglo-Russian detente Tibet, having already been surveyed and mapped in the last years of the nineteenth century, "had been formally relegated to the horizon of knowledge, 'lost' by fiat…[and] transformed into an international reservation for potential knowledge…."[210] In other words, Tibet became what Richards terms an "archive-state." If Afghanistan was the Central Asia where the Great Game began and its function as a buffer was to keep the frontiers of Russia and British India physically separate, then Tibet was the Central Asia where the Great Game ended, with the final establishment of a buffer zone that not only separated imperial frontiers but cordoned off an important site of imperial knowledge production, stymying the very process which fueled the Great Game, while also producing a *terra nullius* and enforcing its inaccessibility—in other words, preserving the structure on which the Anglo-Russian rivalry depended.

The structure and the process of the Great Game were therefore in constant contradiction: structurally, the entire era depended on the preservation of "empty" space between imperial holdings; but procedurally, for both Russia and England, colonial administration required the expansion of knowledge about Turkestan, India, and all the territories in between. That requirement tended to entail territorial incursions which in turned threatened the interimperial buffer status of said region: this is why the physical location of the buffer often shifted or became in some sense immaterial. The Great Game's incursions into Central Asia were thus largely about knowledge and knowability, and about modalities of cataloguing and transmitting information. *Kim* reflects and challenges these processes by taking up cartography as a major thematic concern, and by making cartography a multivalent and diverse enterprise which includes British and Russian military maps, the lama's Wheel of Life, the main subject of Kim's British education, and the Buddhist maps collected in the Wonder House of the novel's opening scenes.

What would it mean to call each of these things cartography? The dichotomy staged in the novel between hill and plain, and the slipperiness of the location and meaning of Central Asia in the novel, all point to the importance of symbolic geography in *Kim*. Anarchy and utopia; treachery and security; scientific knowledge and spiritual fulfillment—these are the symbolic meanings with which *Kim*'s marginal landscapes are invested, especially the hills, the high mountains beyond them, and the ill-defined space of Central Asia beyond the mountains. The various maps that are presented, made, and destroyed in the novel are another kind of symbolic geography, functioning not only, as all maps do, to offer an encoded spatial representation of a set of places, but also to reveal *Kim*'s aesthetic and ideological orientations toward the spaces they represent. Following the arc of cartography in the novel, we shall see how the lama's map, the Russians' map, and Kim's dual modes of education are constituent parts of the same broader processes of map-making and spatializing the world.

For it is not just the presence of multiple modes of cartography that makes maps such a crucial narrative element in *Kim*, but the collisions of these modes which make cartography the novel's governing metaphor. In the novel's very opening pages local ways of knowing are already imbricated with European knowledge production. Having wandered into the Lahore Museum (the Wonder House), the lama pores over "a mighty map" showing the sites important to the history and practice of Buddhism, aligning this spatial representation with his own knowledge of the Buddha's life. "For the first time he heard of the labours of European scholars, who by the help of these and a hundred other documents have identified the Holy Places of

[210] This quote and the interpretation of the utopian nature of the 1907 Anglo-Russian convention immediately preceding are found in Richards, 31.

Buddhism."[211] In return for this aid, the lama promises to bring the museum's curator "a written picture" of the Wheel of Life, a symbolic representation of the continuous cycle of rebirth to which Buddhists believe all life is subject.[212] The lama clearly understands himself as like the curator, and not only because he sees a Wheel of Life as a suitable exchange for access to the maps in the curator's collection: "we be craftsmen together, thou and I," he says taking his leave from the curator. The curator, for his part, recognizes the lama as a rare find and also as the producer of a familiar craft, a "half written and half drawn" text, in other words, a map.[213] "Local" and European cartographic modalities coincide again, though in a different way, in Kim himself. When Kim learns the trade of surveying—of charting and representing previously unmapped landscapes, a skill which will be both his cover as he enters the world of espionage and a form of espionage itself—his "native" knowledge of the lay of land will prove his most useful asset. The European method of surveying which he learns is, in some senses, secondary in importance to his innate abilities. The first map Kim makes, of the "mysterious city of Bikaneer," is produced in hybrid fashion. He is able to access the city only as a "native," travelling with Mahbub Ali's caravan, disguised as a "Mohammedan horse-boy and pipe-tender," and using a beaded rosary rather than typical survey instruments to measure his paces, and a compass only under cover of darkness.[214] In a later instance, when Kim preserves the Russians' captured map but destroys their surveying tools, he neuters them as effective imperial knowledge producers; but he also takes revenge for their destruction of the lama's map, in some sense replacing the lama's torn map with the stolen Russian one.

The lama's Wheel, however, maps not physical territory but the course of a life, arranging space allegorically where western maps are mimetic. And fittingly the lama, seeing that the Russians have left only a finger's width section untorn, interprets the torn map as a symbol of his own death: "So much, then, is the span of my life in this body." Kim's own interpretation, when he surveys the damaged Wheel, aligns with the lama's: "From left to right diagonally the rent ran—from the Eleventh House where Desire gives birth to the Child….across the human and animal worlds, to the Fifth House—the empty House of the Senses. The logic was unanswerable."[215] From the perspective of a colonial map, the journey from Shamlegh, where the map was torn, to Saharunpore, where the novel ends, traverses from left to right diagonally, like the tear in the lama's Wheel—and this shorter journey is an echo of another left-to-right diagonal trip, from Lahore to Benares, during which Kim and the lama first become acquainted.[216] And the lama doesn't die in the hills, but finds his river near Saharunpore where Kim, meanwhile, recovers from the journey and divests himself of the bootied Russian map—again it is as if, in the ecosystem of the novel, the stolen Russian map has replaced the Wheel, finally freeing the lama from reliance on his treasured possession. In sum, it is possible to call the lama's Wheel,

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[211] Kipling, *Kim*, 8.

[212] See Edward A. Irons, ed., *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (New York: Facts on File, 2008), s.v. "Wheel of Life." Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (Oxford UP, 1987), 12.

[213] Kipling, *Kim*, 12.

[214] Kipling, *Kim*, 169-70. One of the early explorers of Central Asia famously used a compass only under cover of darkness, and sketched maps of the territory he passed through, but never publicly revealed how he had done it. See Hopkirk, *Great Game*, 44-6 and Pottinger, *Travels*.

[215] Kipling, *Kim*, 261-2.

[216] I make an educated guess, based on Kim's itinerary into the hills, about the location of the village of Shamlegh, sometimes referred to in the novel as Shamlegh-under-the-snow. Peter Hopkirk, who traced Kim's journey in person and in archival materials from colonial India, believes that Kipling invented the village. See Hopkirk, *Quest for Kim: In Search of Kipling's Great Game* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 253.

and the Russians' maps, and Kim and Creighton's spycraft, together, cartography precisely because Kipling makes them interdependent processes.

Associating the lama's Wheel with British and Russian maps of Central Asia is a possible sleight of hand on Kipling's part, an association invoked to mask the power dynamics inherent in colonialism. As many scholars have pointed out, the Western science of cartography went hand in hand with both structures of oppression and violence in the non-Western world. As an extension of the processes by which Europeans represented themselves as seeing subjects in relation to the native objects of their gaze, cartography objectified landscapes and ignored local geographical and spatial knowledge in favor of the system of representation which most clearly aligned with European modes of territorial governance.[217] So important was cartography to conceptions of governance and governability that some have argued that the modern idea of political sovereignty emerged from maps, not the other way around: as Jordan Branch observes, in early modern Europe "authority structures not depicted on maps were ignored or actively renounced in favor of those that could be shown."[218] The Great Game in *Kim* is a race for territorial influence transposed onto a race for more, and more accurate, maps, aligning with Branch's proposition that whoever could represent territory would control it. Pratt further argues that cartography's standardization of space is part of the "totalizing embrace" of Western sciences, in which "the planet's life forms were to be drawn out of the tangled threads of their life surroundings and rewoven into European-based patterns of global unity and order."[219] Western cartography exists in *Kim* as scientific praxis, ethos, and mode of knowledge production. It is embodied by Colonel Creighton and manifested in the institution of the Survey. Ian Baucom assigns such importance to the Survey of India that he calls the Great Game the colloquial term for the "immense, protracted, and varied task" of mapping the Subcontinent.[220] For Baucom, Creighton manages a process whose object is "not the production of knowledge in a pure, disinterested state but the production of an ordered, demarcated, and fixed terrain."[221] The Survey and its Russian counterpart, then, come to occupy the term "cartography" in a way that the lama's map never can: the Survey becomes an abstracted space of its own, dependent on but seeking ultimate mastery over the territory it charts, and in which Kim and the other agents effect a conceptual distance from the places they pass through. In part because the lama ultimately becomes free of the Wheel, but also because the Wheel is a "native" form of spatialized and archived information, it does not serve the purposes of the "seeing-man" in the same way as a Western map.[222]

Because they function according to their own internally consistent spatial and temporal parameters, both the Survey and the lama's pilgrimage quest may be regarded as chronotopes. To this list I would add the chronotope of the road, which helps to characterize much of the narrative structure of *Kim* the novel and many aspects of Kim the hero's function. These three chronotopes are also important aspects of the novel's engagements with and representations of space. We might say, in fact, that *Kim*'s geopoetics arise at the intersection of three Eurasian

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[217] As Mary Louise Pratt puts it "empires create in the imperial center of power an obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself. It becomes dependent on others to know itself." *Imperial Eyes*, 4.

[218] Jordan Branch, *The Cartographic State: Maps, Territory, and the Origins of Sovereignty* (Cambridge UP, 2014), 3.

[219] Pratt, 30-1.

[220] Baucom, 93.

[221] Ibid., 94.

[222] Pratt, 9.

geographic zones—India proper, the high mountains of the Hindu Kush and Afghanistan, and the high plateau of Tibet—and three chronotopes—the road, the survey, and the quest. These two categories, geography and chronotope, the novel's physical settings and its literary-spatial discourses, are closely related but not perfectly aligned. For example, the road is Kim's chronotope and is therefore linked to India, which is Kim's place of origin, and it is expressed most clearly as Kim traverses northern India on the Grand Trunk Road; but it is also Mahbub Ali's chronotope, and in his case the road is associated with the far-ranging nomads of Central Asia beyond the Hindu Kush and with Afghanistan, the territory which England most feared would foment rebellion in or transmit Russian invaders to India. The road therefore represents both the known world of India, and the impenetrable, inscrutable world of Afghanistan and Central Asia. The novel's second Central Asian space, Tibet, is closely associated with the quest, both because it is the lama's homeland and because it is the territory about which Russian and British agents sought information. But it is also a primary sight of the Survey.

The lama's quest and Creighton's survey have in common a drive toward a specific, and yet universalizing, end: for Creighton, complete knowledge—a fully accurate map—of Indian and Central Asian territories; for the lama, the location of the River of the Arrow and the attainment of enlightenment. Both might be described by Bakhtin's "adventure time," a narrative mode characterized by "the intrusion of nonhuman forces—fate, gods, villains—and it is precisely these forces, and not the heroes, who in adventure-time take all the initiative."[223] The lama's quest is clearly governed by spiritual, non-human forces, namely the spiritual geography illustrated by his Wheel, and his knowledge of the geography of the Buddha's life. The nonhuman forces that act on Creighton (and Kim, Mahbub Ali, the other Great Game players like Hurree Babu and Lurgan Sahib, and, indeed, the lama himself) are neither divine, nor villainous, nor exactly fate. They are, instead, the British government, imperial ideology, and the constellation of ideas, projections, suspicions, and policies that was the Great Game. The exigencies of these forces are difficult for any character to understand in full, though they are inescapable. The spatial abstraction which the survey produces is also characteristic of adventure time, which depends additionally upon an alien setting: "if one were to depict one's own native world, the indigenous reality surrounding one…specificity and concretization would be absolutely unavoidable."[224] The lama's quest, too, depends upon an alien environment, and his longing for his native hills occasionally stands in the way of the quest: "The Arrow fell in the Plains…but I yielded to Desire," he tells Kim, chastising himself for the encounter with the Russians.[225] Nearly the opposite is true of Kim's chronotope, the road, which is characterized not by fate, divinity, or any larger governing structure, but by chance encounter. Crucially, "the road [novel] is always one that passes through *familiar territory*, and not through some exotic *alien world*."[226] This fact accounts for the "specificity and concretization" of Kim's experience of the Indian planes, where he encounters—by chance—the woman who will heal him at the end of the novel and where, moreover, he sees the country not as a series of topographical features to be translated onto paper, but "the world in real truth."[227] And yet Kim cannot remain in his familiar world forever—the lama's hills are an exotic alien world to Kim, and as he leaves the plains for

[223] M. M. Bakhtin, " Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 95.
[224] Ibid, 100.
[225] Kipling, *Kim*, 262.
[226] Bakhtin, 245.
[227] Kipling, *Kim*, 73.

the hills, he also leaves the chance encounters of the road for the ideologically ordained requirements of the survey, and of his own quest to join the ranks of Great Game players. That these three chronotopes begin to diverge in the Tibetan foothills—on the way to one of the novel's two Central Asias—points toward the imaginative function of that region in the novel, as a space which could contain the many contradictions in *Kim*, and in the geopolitical situation it allegorizes.

Kipling wrote and published *Kim* during the decade preceding the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention, a period in which the race for Tibet would come to embody the last stand of the interimperial rivalry that was the Great Game.[228] There is therefore a nostalgic quality to Kipling's Tibetan foothills, "changeless since the world's beginning," and the Russian encounter that takes place within them.[229] What appears in *Kim* to be a preservation of an empty, timeless, uncharted and unchartable—in other words, utopian—Central Asian space is, on slightly closer inspection, not the preservation but the *production* of space. Kipling's Tibet, therefore, represents a utopian space which seemed to predate British India and to exist untouched at its margins but which was, in fact, constructed by the same forces which made the plains of India full of "happy Asiatic disorder" and the hills of Afghanistan a "mysterious land beyond the Passes of the North."[230] This representation of Central Asia calls to mind Henri Lefebvre's critique of the ideology which posits space as empty prior to its enrichment and transformation by social life. This ideology, he writes, "depends on [a] hypothetical initial 'purity', identified as 'nature' and as a sort of ground zero of human reality."[231] Kipling's insistence on the timelessness and placelessness of Tibet, on its spiritual and conceptual significance and its simultaneous immateriality, marks the Tibet of *Kim* as "natural" and "pure" in the sense that Lefebvre uses the words: it is a space constructed to appear as if devoid of the transformations wrought by human social life, the "visible temptations" of life in India as well as the realities of imperial expansion. It is envisaged, furthermore, as a space destined to synthesize or at least contain the tensions and conflicts arising within the novel. The following section will examine those tensions and conflicts as they appear formally in *Kim*.

iii. Genre

As *Kim* contains many chronotopes, so too does it draw upon a variety of narrative genres. The novel requires different genres and different narrative styles to express a contradiction which lies at its heart. This fundamental conflict is, as Hannah Arendt herself once put it, between, the "purposelessness [which] is the very charm of Kim's existence" and "imperialist notions like expansion for expansion's or power for power's sake."[232] It is a reflection of the same conflict that, in geopolitical terms, would have Central Asia both cordoned off as a permanently non-

[228] The last stand, a British full scale military invasion of Tibet, launched on questionable and somewhat obscure grounds, was an almost perfect encapsulation of the paranoid jitteriness and ruling-class decadence that the Great Game had become, and that Kipling takes pains to avoid describing in *Kim*. Hopkirk provides a moving description of the wanton violence of this episode, which involved 20,000 native men and beasts bearing British baggage and accoutrements, "including champagne for the officers." The army these bearers supported would slaughter in less than four minutes the "nearly 700 ill-armed and ragged Tibetans" who met them. *The Great Game,* 509-10.
[229] Kipling, *Kim*, 235.
[230] Ibid., 64, 18.
[231] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 190.
[232] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1958), 217.

imperial buffer zone and viewed as a region to be intimately explored, mapped, and subjected to the full force of imperialist control. In the novel, this same conflict appears chiefly as a tension between the picareseque novel and the Bildungsroman. More precisely, the picaresque novel's episodic purposelessness and the Bildungsroman's teleological drive toward maturation and its attendant wisdom appear in the novel as the apparently antithetical ends toward which the novel mobilizes and employs Central Asia as a space outside of history.

Many critical accounts have noticed *Kim*'s generic complexity. Zohreh Sullivan calls the novel "at once a spy thriller, a picareseque adventure story, a maturation story, and a quest romance."[233] Suleri finds in the novel echos of journalism as well as "nineteenth-century adventure and detective fiction."[234] And A. Michael Matin finds the influence of invasion-scare literature, a popular fiction genre closely associated with conservative political positions in England and Europe's other empires.[235] The generic terms most commonly associated with the novel, however, are the picaresque, based on Kim's nomadism, a lifestyle which is both in his nature and, perhaps, encouraged by his association with the lama, and the Bildungsroman, based on the narrative of Kim's western education and induction into the world of imperial spycraft. Most often, however, the "picaresque" and the "Bildungsroman" are invoked only in passing—as with Suvir Kaul who notes in parentheses "(and this novel is a *bildungsroman*)"; or John McClure who states briefly that the novel is "picaresque in its organization."[236] Other accounts have discussed in greater detail the conflict or tension that inheres in *Kim* on the level of form. Sullivan, for example, notes that in Kim's early years he embarks on an "inner quest, the search for an identity [which] suggests the possibility of self-discovery and integration of his many selves….But this search collides with his outer quest, the journey and the insistent pursuit for a definition in search of a father…."[237] Sullivan correctly identifies the inherent tension between Kim's movement toward an externally defined goal (for her, this is defined by his missing father, though arguably the lama's river, or the imperial frontier, or a finally comprehensive map of the empire could serve equally well) and another kind of movement, harder to define but which is, in any case, neither teleological nor measurable by external standards. Patrick Williams finds a similar categorical conflict, noting that: "In *Kim* there is the contradiction between the movement of the picaresque form and the stasis of dehistoricized vision of an India free of internal conflict and about which the classic Orientalist generalisations can be uttered."[238] Williams, like Sullivan, comes close to identifying this "contradiction" as one inherent in the novel's generic multiplicity, but neither frames the issue in purely formal terms. I would argue that the novel's genre, like its hero, is hybrid: it is *both* a picaresque novel *and* a Bildungsroman and is therefore at once, and in its very form, both aimlessly nomadic and seeking narrative resolution. This contradiction can reveal much about the ways in which *Kim* both stages and refuses conflict. Indeed, the novel's form provides a unique way of rendering the conflicting desires of the imperial subject with regard to India, and to the imperial rivalry of the Great Game.

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[233] Sullivan, 148.

[234] Suleri, 111.

[235] A. Michael Matin, "'The Hun Is at the Gate!': Historicizing Kipling's Militaristic Rhetoric, from the Imperial Periphery to the National Center," *Studies in the Novel* 31, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 317-56.

[236] Kaul, 427. John A. McClure, *Kipling and Conrad: The Colonial Fiction* (Harvard UP, 1981), 71.

[237] Sullivan, 148.

[238] Williams, 424.

Kipling himself called *Kim* "a nakedly picaresque and plotless" story.[239] The remark indicates Kipling's awareness of the quality which has preoccupied critics of the novel since its publication in 1901. Some have called the novel admirably open, while others have found it frustratingly unresolved. Not a shortcoming, perhaps, but certainly one of the novel's defining features, *Kim*'s many loose ends have generated an equally large number of questions about its ideological and aesthetic orientations. As discussed in the previous section, for all Kim's wanderings and all the lessons acquired and relationships developed along the way, it remains unclear to what end, if any, he travels. The present section will take up the question of *Kim*'s literary orientation—of what kind of novel it is—through an examination of its generic traits.

When Kipling called *Kim* "nakedly picaresque" he probably had in mind its episodic narrative structure, which is the formal feature with which the genre has become most closely associated since the twentieth century. However, for scholars of early modern Spain, where the genre arose, the episodic plot is rarely considered a defining feature of the genre, and when it is, it is only as a trait that arises incidentally from more important generic features, namely the presence of the *pícaro*, the lowly hero, and the social critique which a picaresque novel necessarily advances. Form, in other words, follows from content. In the strictest historical definition, the picaresque genre is limited to those works, beginning with the anonymously authored *La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* (c. 1554), which appeared in Spain in the middle of the sixteenth century and faded by the middle of the eighteenth. The core canon of picaresque works are autobiographical narratives (though occasionally biographical narratives in the third person are included in this corpus) which follow the exploits of a main character, a *pícaro*, or rogue, as he moves from town to town, profession to profession, and crisis to crisis. Born in the lower ranks of society, often of uncertain parentage, the *pícaro*'s poverty and lack of social standing cause him to reject the norms of polite society—he is classically a trickster and a petty criminal who gets by on his wits and whose crime is driven by self-preservation rather than malice. His lowly origins are also responsible for the instability of his situation and livelihood: he continually tries new ways to improve his lot in life.[240] As he attempts to trick and thieve his way into favorable social and economic situations, the *pícaro* quickly "exhaust[s] his welcome in all but the largest towns.[241] These, then, are the circumstances which correspond to the *pícaro*'s itinerancy and the picaresque's episodic narrative structure.

There are two broad schools of thought on the nature of the picaresque: one espouses a historical-sociological approach to the origins and significance of the genre; the other a primarily formal approach. The first school generally sees the main function and defining feature of the picaresque to be social critique: the genre is a response to the specific social and economic conditions of Spain in the mid-sixteenth century. The second takes the episodic narrative as its fundamental concern, finding the picaresque to be an important and prolonged moment in a longer history of structurally similar adventure tales. Those accounts which privilege the

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[239] Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself: For My Friends Known and Unknown* (London: MacMillan, 1937), 228.
[240] These historical generalizations come from the first and still standard study in English of the picaresque novel, Chandler's 1907 *The Literature of Roguery* (Frank Wadleigh Chandler, *The Literature of Roguery*, vol. 1 (New York: Burt Franklin Reprints, 1958)); and from J. A. Garrido Ardila, "Origins and definition of the picaresque genre" in Ardila, ed., *The Picaresque Novel in Western Literature* (Cambridge UP, 2015), 1-23. See also Robert Alter, *Rogue's Progress: Studies in the Picaresque Novel* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1964); Stuart Miller, *The Picaresque Novel* (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1967); Frederick Monteser, *The Picaresque Element in Western Literature* (The University of Alabama Press, 1975); and Ulrich Wicks, *Picaresque Narrative, Picaresque Fictions: A Theory and Research Guide* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989).
[241] Monsteser, 3.

picaresque's function as social commentary tend to see it, as Chandler does, as the reflection of "a literary recoil" against the hero of the chivalric romance as "reality everywhere discredited the ideals of chivalry."[242] Like the picaresque's initial function in society—a critique of the insufficiency of the then-dominant literary mode of the romance to the representation of contemporary life, and a corrective to that mode—the genre's literary composition has, for this school of thought, mostly to do with the relationship between the *pícaro* and the society in which he must survive. Ulrich Wicks calls this feature "the picaro-landscape relationship," a formulation meant to elucidate the typified and consistent ways in which the picaro interacts with his social and spatial surroundings. The picaro-landscape relationship sees the picaresque form as arising from the picaro's inherently unstable position: the picaresque's "external rhythm," the structure governing an entire picaresque novel is "the Sisyphus Rhythm [which] demands an eternal 'falling afresh' to the task of survival in the landscape of the discontinuous, paralleled narratively by a continuously dis-continuous (episodic) fictional form."[243] The "internal rhythm" of a picaresque work governs each discrete episode and comprises the *pícaro*'s entanglement in some difficult or scrape and his subsequent extraction from the difficult situation.[244] Other scholars of the picaresque have similarly focused on the relationship between the picaro and his world: Stuart Miller writes that "It is the world that is picarsque; the picaro only typifies that world in his dramatic change from innocent to trickster;"[245] and Frederick Monteser asserts that "Any tale of the picaro inevitably reflects unfavorably upon the environment in which it is placed, resulting in a satire on specific social conditions…."[246]

Kim resembles a picaresque not only because it is episodic, an issue to which I shall return, but because Kim himself may be understood as a classic rogue in certain other respects: his low-life origins (as the progeny of an Irish sergeant who "fell to drink and loafing" and, for most of his young childhood, the charge o a "half-caste woman" who "smoked opium" and "told the missionaries" that she was Kim's aunt,[247] Kim is subaltern in every sense of the word except, crucially, in terms of race), and the innate instability of his position (an orphan who is unclassifiable by race, caste, or national origins), his openness and flexibility ("There is no part the picaro will not play").[248] But the clearest resemblance to the *pícaro* as he originated in sixteenth-century Spain is Kim's familiarity with and inextricability from the "Asiatic disorder" of his native environment. Kipling's phrasing—"*Asiatic* disorder"—is marked, displacing disorder from the natural state of society, as the picaresque would typically have it, onto an environment that is foreign to someone—author, reader, or Colonel Creighton—even as so much of the novel emphasizes Kim's native-ness.

This foreignness points not to the picaresque but to a related form, the adventure tale, which takes place explicitly outside of the hero's native society and in which the episodic style of narration developed beginning in antiquity. An emphasis on a formal link to the adventure tale, then, characterizes the second broad school of thought on the nature of the picaresque, and it is into this school that many critics of *Kim* itself fall, including Kipling himself. The adventure plot is, as Northrop Frye puts it, "naturally a sequential and processional form…in which a central

[242] Chandler, 7.
[243] Ulrich Wicks, "The Nature of Picaresque Narrative: A Modal Approach," *PMLA* 89, no. 2 (March 1974), 244.
[244] Ibid., 245.
[245] S. Miller, 56.
[246] Monsteser, 6.
[247] Kipling, *Kim,* 1.
[248] Miller, 70.

character who never develops or ages goes through one adventure after another until the author himself collapses."[249] Bakhtin characterizes the adventure tale as an episodic marked by "the *reversibility* of moments in a temporal sequence, and by their *interchangeability* in space."[250] While at first glance this formulation is in contradiction to Frye's "sequential and processional form," both accounts make the distinction between the narrative of each individual episode and the absence of progressive linear development, either temporal or spatial, in the larger narrative arc of the adventure tale.

An episodic structure is indeed fundamental to *Kim*, which follows its itinerant protagonist. Kim, in fact, insists on periods of freedom from his training and on the liberty to wander alone and without any governing mission or goal beyond life on the road. His insistence is an instance of willfulness that paradoxically preserves his openness to circumstance, his freedom to relinquish will and give himself over to what the world presents. Kim's tendency to wander is asserted at the same moment that Mahbub Ali begins to reveal Kim's potential utility to Creighton. "'He'll run back to his dinner. Where has he to run to?' asks Creighton when he first encounters Kim, mistaking him for a typical boy. "'He was born in the land," answers Mahbub Ali, "He has friends. He goes where he chooses.'"[251] Mahbub Ali's assertion, it might be argued, defines Kim (and *Kim*'s narrative structure) even after the boy comes under the control and, sometimes, protection of headquarters. Kim will wander outside of the bounds of Creighton's plans for his training and eventual official work. This Kim himself asserts three times: once in writing to Mahbub Ali after his first year at school ("*The Friend of all the World takes leave to go his own places*."); once in person to Mahbub Ali, after a scolding for his first disappearance ("To the *madrissah* I will go. At the *madrissah* I will learn. In the *madrissah* I will be a Sahib. But when the *madrissah* is shut, then must I be free and go among my people. Otherwise I die!"); and a third time, after his second year of school, while negotiating the terms of his employment ("I have said that my holidays are my own. I do not go to school twice over. That is one part of my bond.")[252] After the first assertion, Creighton grudgingly agrees that freedom might benefit the boy, "but it is great insolence on his part."[253]

Reading *Kim* as, at least in part, an adventure tale then accounts both for the apparent aimlessness of its episodic structure and for the fact that Kim exists in an extended adolescence in which he, like the *pícaro*, must "fall afresh" to an endless series of new tasks, experiences, locations, and identities. This picaresque-adventure mode might be the generic framework most suited to the novel's representation of the Great Game as a series of encounters whose ultimate goal is obscure and, finally, not the point for a novel interested, as *Kim* is, in a fantasy of the quotidian and personal, rather than historical and global, experience of empire. This framework, however, does not adequately account for two other major aspects of Kim's life: his discovery of his own racial origins and his coming to white *sahib* consciousness on the one hand, and his evolution as the Teshoo Lama's *chela* or disciple on the other. As Jed Esty observes, the "ideal of self-possession" at the core of the white Great Game player's identity is irreconcilable with the

[249] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton UP, 1957), 186.
[250] Bakhtin, 100.
[251] Kipling, 108.
[252] Ibid., 128, 135, 147.
[253] Kipling, *Kim*, 129. Incidentally this episode features the novel's first instance of the phrase "the Great Game." Mahbub Ali, defending Kim in his desire for freedom, tells Creighton "When he comes to the Great Game he must go alone—alone, and at peril of his own head."

Buddhist self-abnegation the lama teaches.[254] Both ideals, however, are bound up with teleological development, with the pursuit of definite ends, in ways not accounted for either by the adventure tale or by the picaresque. The Bildungsroman, which is the other major generic category frequently invoked in scholarship on *Kim*, then, can provide a framework for narrative elements which other than the episodic.

The Bildungsroman, like the picaresque, has both a historically specific definition and a more diffuse modern application. Generally considered to have been born with the publication of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* in 1795, the Bildungsroman details the young hero's simultaneous personal maturation and socialization into the environment in which he must live and work as an adult.[255] While a strict generic definition has proved elusive, a number of scholars have seen the Bildungsroman's developmental narrative as an allegory for the socio-political or geo-political environment out of which the genre emerged. Tobias Boes ties the genre to modern nationalism, finding that novels of Bildung represent the development of national consciousness through the development of their protagonists.[256] Franco Moretti sees youth as "modernity's 'essence'" and the Bildungsroman as modernity "symbolic form," an attempt to attach narrative development and meaning to modernity itself by use of a hero who embodies the longed-for harmony and purpose which Europe lost with the rise of the modern world.[257] Finally, Esty reads *Kim* in particular as a "metabildungsroman" of imperial time, in which "Kim's promise of endless motion thwarts the logic of closure" and "neither the hero nor the nation emerges into history as a self-possessed entity." Rather, Kipling produces "a distended plot of adolescence, frozen at the moment of Raj ascendancy."[258] It seems clear that the major generic tension in *Kim* revolves around whether the novel presents a narrative of progressive development and whether its narrative drives toward any form of closure or is at core suspended in an unstable, open state.

The question of narrative development in *Kim* is really the question of the maturation, education, and socialization of its young hero, a question inextricable from a consideration of the larger historical and political forces that act on Kim despite his remarkable self-sufficiency and freedom of mobility. The novel's generic hybridity, then, can be seen as nothing other than the formal expression of the relationship between Kim's restless subjectivity and the constraining imperatives of empire and the Great Game. While some, such as Patrick Brantlinger, have read *Kim* as primarily a novel of the road, a narrative which is at core about the character of its protagonist who moves "from scene to scene in episodes that don't lead anywhere in particular, except to the next episode,"[259] others reject the notion that Kim is free and aimless, finding instead that the novel addresses the competing structural forces at work on him. In an insightful analysis of the relationship between fiction and imperial governance in British India, Thomas

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[254] Esty, 11.

[255] Most accounts agree at least on these basic points, though they vary widely in their views of the breadth and historical durability of the genre, as well as its ideological orientations and narratological features. See Georg Lukács, *Theory of the Novel* trans. Anna Bostock (MIT Press, 1971); Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (Harvard UP, 1974); Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, trans. Albert Sbragia (London: Verso, 2000); Tobias Boes, *Formative Fictions: Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Bildungsroman* (Cornell UP, 2012).

[256] Boes, 3.

[257] Moretti, 5.

[258] Esty, 9.

[259] Patrick Brantlinger, "Kim" in Howard J. Booth, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling* (Cambridge UP, 2011), 128.

Richards allows that *Kim* is structured episodically, but calls its episodes "random and accidental in name only, because, no matter how far they may seem to veer from the presence of a plan, they always take place in exact accordance with the dictates of headquarters."[260] My contention in this chapter is that both major elements—aimless freedom and developmental focus—obtain in the novel and that, moreover, it is precisely their simultaneous presence in *Kim* which reveals the Great Game's central dilemma—empire's inevitable confrontation with its own limits—and Kipling's solution—a utopian, supraimperial space, for which Central Asia comes to stand.

Let us consider the characters who stand in as paternal figures or mentors for Kim and the places in the novel with which they are most closely associated. The list is surprisingly long—Kim's late biological father O'Hara, Teshoo lama, Mahbub Ali the horse trader, Father Bennet who sends Kim to school, Colonel Creighton, Hurree Babu the erudite Bengali, and Lurgan Sahib the spymaster.[261] For the purposes of a generic analysis, however, the lama, Mahbub Ali, and Creighton are Kim's three crucial mentors and father figures. Mahbub Ali is most closely associated with the picaresque and he fosters the *pícaro* in Kim: It is Mahbub Ali who teaches Kim the *pícaro*'s trick of social climbing by trading masters, delivering him to Creighton and persuading him to accept a white boy's education. It is also Mahbub Ali who eventually argues for Kim's liberation from school, saying to Kim "Son, I am wearied of that *madrissah*, where they take the best years of a man to teach him what he can only learn upon the Road,"[262] The Road (capitalized to emphasize its identity-defining importance) is Mahbub Ali's chronotope and, by extension, one of Kim's. Creighton is most closely associated with Kim's Bildung—in his few appearances in the narrative, he frets over Kim's preparation in spycraft. "But he is so young, Mahbub" he worries before sending Kim out as a spy, "Besides, he knows no Turki."[263] Mahbub Ali prevails, aiding Kim's ascent to employment by his final master, the British Empire, telling Creighton "The pony is made—finished….Drop the rein on his back and let go."[264] The Afghan horse trader's confidence in Kim arises from his own native familiarity with the culture in which Kim operates—he trusts that Kim has the *pícaro*'s wits and ease with the whole breadth of life in India. Creighton, on the other hand, worries about Kim's acquisition of the requisite surveying skills and his socialization into the bureaucratic and official cultures of the imperial service. His chronotope is the office, the museum, the archive—any place that strives for an orderly and panoramic view of the Subcontinent. The lama, Kim's third paternal figure and incidentally the one who is with him for the entirety of the narrative, cannot be closely associated with either the episodic picaresque or the development Bildungsroman. Abiding by spiritual rather than worldly time, associated with the impenetrable and inscrutable Central Asian region of Tibet, the lama's movements and concerns are governed neither by the aimlessness of the road nor by the imperatives of the survey, but by the symbolically charged universe depicted on the circular Wheel of Life. On the other hand, the lama's movements do have the linear telos of a quest: he travels in search of his holy river and, in contrast to Kim's perennially incomplete Bildung and permanent adolescence, he finds it.

When the three figures come into conflict it causes Kim to "consider his own identity, a thing he had never done before, till his head swam."[265] The crisis that Kim confronts when these three

[260] Richards, 22.
[261] As listed in Esty, 11.
[262] Kipling, *Kim*, 171.
[263] Ibid., 172-3.
[264] Ibid., 172.
[265] Ibid., 118.

paternal influences collide has its roots in multiple aspects of the novel's imperial reality. For one, Mahbub Ali, Teshoo Lama, and Creighton represent places that, though they exert great influence on Kim's life, Kim himself can never go—Afghanistan, Tibet, and England, respectively. Second, Kim struggles to assimilate the competing ideological influences wrought on him by the requirements of the Great Game and the lama's spiritual education. As Jed Esty puts it in his work on fictions of development in the context of nineteenth-century colonialism, "Kim never reconciles the competing logic of commerce and culture; he cannot achieve the fundamental synthesis of action (espionage) and contemplation (Buddhism) that was the hallmark of the bourgeois hero."[266] Kim himself seems to attempt a resolution, or at least a conjunction, of these two modes when he thinks, for example, "How can a man follow the Way or the Great Game when he is eternally pestered by women," setting his two modes of education—and his two modes of employment—against the leisure and fun of his boyhood.[267] Kim's remark, finally, points to his age. Maturing over the course of the novel from a child to an adolescent, Kim is only in a position to contemplate pestering women at a point when his romantic life has already been circumscribed by the Way and the Great Game. As with Kim's cultural origins and his ideological orientations, his adolescence is a state of irresolution: it is unclear whether he progresses toward a final mature state in which he will synthesize all of his identities, or whether he will remain in a state of unresolved multiplicity. The novel's complex generic landscape reflects these competing, and perhaps incompatible, forces as they act on Kim and on his imperial world.

iv. *Kim*'s Central Asia

And yet *Kim*'s contradictions are also part of a utopian vision, a vernacular imperialism that could contain East and West, the movement characterized by the lama's pilgrimage and that of the Survey, the episodic structure of the picaresque and the progression of the Bildungsroman. For this feat of synthesis, Kipling requires a utopian space, empty or evacuated, that stands apart from the real, material conditions in colonial India as he knew it. Central Asia fulfills that role in *Kim* precisely because it is marginal or absent in the way that the plains of India are not. The fact that the novel's narrative drives toward Central Asia—even encountering characters who have come from there—but never reaches it is of a piece with the many other kinds of contradictions it sustains. *Kim*'s relationship to Central Asia is, furthermore, emblematic of the novel's geopoetics, the way that, in its orientation toward the territories it describes, it both mimics and exceeds the geopolitics of the era. *Kim* is invested in preserving Central Asia as an evacuated place, one that is perhaps structurally similar to a buffer zone but which, I would argue, reveals imaginative and affective concerns which go beyond a merely strategic desire to prevent a meeting of imperial frontiers. An empty Central Asia means something specific to *Kim* and to the period in which the novel appeared that is related to but cannot be reduced to an interimperial buffer.

The fundamental contradiction in the novel can thus be described as a conflict between a teleological drive toward Central Asia, the final edge of empire, and an "antidevelopmental temporality" that would keep the world in which Kim finds himself in a state of suspension, despite the apparently productive, developmental survey work in which he himself

[266] Esty, 11.
[267] Kipling, *Kim*, 257.

participates.[268] This fundamental tension can account for the role of Kim's multiple identities, the presence of conflicting genre categories within the novel, and the competing valences of travel and exploration in the narrative. Kim is adamant for much of the narrative that his personal mobility will not be fully constrained by the requirements of Creighton and the Great Game. In addition to his insistence, discussed earlier in the chapter, that his summers should be his own to wander, Kim comes into himself first, and perhaps most fully, when he and the lama start their journey on the Grand Trunk Road. Ostensibly on the move in search of the lama's river, it is the road itself which delights Kim, who "dropped into…that indescribable gait of the long-distance tramp the world over."[269] Kim is immediately at home on the road, and happily unconflicted in a way that his further encounters, especially with the Great Game and his Western education, will challenge: "This was seeing the world in real truth; this was life as he would have it…."[270] These early examples of Kim's natural inclinations and desires make clear that the novel is, at its core, a road novel—one which will ramify into the lama's quest and the Great Game's Survey, both modes of travel toward an ultimate end point. But for Kim the original point is merely to be in motion and to see, in a more or less disinterested way, what he can of his world.

Gradually, Kim's natural inclinations are appropriated by the forces of empire. Mahbub Ali, the figure who does the most to orchestrate and further Kim's induction into imperial logics of travel and mobility, understands that Kim's "native" traits will make him a useful asset to the empire, but also that he and Creighton must proceed with caution in turning this young wanderer into a surveyor and spy. As Mahbub Ali puts it, "when a colt is born to be a polo-pony, closely following the ball without teaching—when such a colt knows the game by divination—then I say it is a great wrong to break a colt to that heavy cart."[271] Mahbub Ali himself is uniquely positioned to understand how best to appropriate Kim's talents and "break" them to "that heavy cart" of imperial service. As an Afghan and a horse trader, Mahbub Ali himself has transformed native modes of travel and transportation into mobility in service of the Great Game. We might say that he has broken the ways and practices of nomadism, a native Central Asian form of mobility and travel, to the cart of the British Survey, the Great Game, and the imperial confrontation with its final physical frontier.

Many scholars have read the novel as a confrontation between nomadism as an apparently free and disinterested form of mobility, on the one hand, and more politically circumscribed patterns of motion, on the other. Richards in *The Imperial Archive* sees the novel as structurally mimicking the assimilative and totalizing forces of empire, and as an instantiation of the archive whose ultimate objective was to collect and organize every element of colonial life in the Subcontinent: "The novel performs a work of assimilation: it codifies the wanderings of the many nomadic forces it contains, allowing them extraordinary latitude even as it adjusts them to accord with the implied decrees of the high command."[272] Other scholars, however, find *Kim* less than totalizing in its representation of nomadism and alternative mobilities. First, the appropriation of a nomadic style of movement to the ends of Great Game does not necessarily resolve the problem of whether *Kim* itself works toward any resolution. As Esty argues, "Kim's promise of endless motion thwarts the logic of closure."[273] Kim's endless motion is the one

[268] Esty, 3.
[269] Kipling, *Kim*, 61.
[270] Ibid., 73.
[271] Ibid., 113.
[272] Richards, 22.
[273] Esty, 9.

constant in his life, whomever he serves—it seems possible, therefore, that the very trait that allows for Kim's induction into the narrative of the Great Game also, inevitably, stymies the Game's ostensible end goal of victory for Britain. Baucom articulates this conflict most directly, writing that "maps adore boundaries, and the argument of the boundary is the argument of territorial fixity…The wanderings, displacements, and spatial uncertainties of nomadism…articulate a direct threat to the spatial and temporal permanencies of cartography…."[274] This is the problem of motion: the novel depends on it, as the Great Game did, but motion itself always threatens to undermine the fixity and stability which imperialism sought. For this reason, Kim's eternal adolescence resembles structurally the conflict between the mobility of nomadism and the fixity of the survey: a liminal state that promises arrival at full maturity, Kim's adolescence is prolonged because to reach the end of his story of development would imply the end of Great Game, a meeting of the imperial frontiers, a cartographic collision. Kim's suspended adolescence, like the evacuated buffer zone of Central Asia, became the less frightening prospect. It is this void that Kipling works to preserve, though it makes only one appearance in *Kim*. After Kim steals the Russians' luggage, he separates their maps and documents from their surveying tools, throwing the latter out of the window of a local hut and into a deep, inaccessible chasm in the hills:

> The wheeling basket vomited its contents as it dropped. The theodolite hit a jutting cliff-ledge and exploded like a shell; the books, inkstands, paint-boxes, compasses, and rulers showed for a few seconds like a swarm of bees. Then they vanished; and, though Kim, hanging half out of [the] window, strained his young ears, never a sound came up from the gulf.[275]

Having enacted the metaphorical transformation of Russian instruments of the survey into a weapon (a shell) and elements of nature (a swarm of bees), Kim watches them vanish without a trace, witnessing as literal a representation as the novel can provide of the Central Asian void, the "gulf" which, as it swallows the mapping instruments, always exceeds in its unknowable emptiness the knowledge the West can produce about it. The gulf is not only a threat, however. Only the continued existence of the Central Asian void could ensure the continuation of imperial India: it, and not Kim, Hurree Babu, Creighton or any of the other Great Game players neutralizes the Russian threat by destroying their ability to gather information. That it is a presumably indiscriminate void, and could have consumed Kim's survey instruments just as effectively as the Russians', is exactly the quality that can guarantee a static, stable empire, frozen, like Kim in his enduring adolescence, at the historical moment just preceding the confrontation with its own final frontier.

Yet it must be acknowledged that the lama's own quest falls outside of the mobility-stasis dialectic on which so much of Kim's identity is formed. "So thus the Search is ended….Certain is our deliverance. Come!" the lama says to Kim at the novel's end.[276] The very picture of closure and reconciliation, the lama represents a real alternative to both the aimless mobility of Kim's youth and the driving demands of imperial reconnaissance and statecraft. The thing left unresolved at the novel's close, then, is the question of Kim's affiliation: the lama has the final word, and Kim's response to his own and his master's deliverance is unknown. The only solution

[274] Baucom, 94.
[275] Kipling, *Kim*, 254.
[276] Ibid., 289.

to this set of problems—the question of *Kim*'s telos and of whether it even has one, the impossibility of endless imperial expansion and the relation of expansion to other forms of mobility, the question of *Kim*'s genre and whether Kim's story is one of maturation or merely one of ever more circumscribed wandering—is the creation of a utopian space which could contain, without reconciling, Kim's hybrid identity, his multiple mentors the lama, Creighton, and Mahbub Ali, and all the antagonisms and contradictions of colonial India. This, then, is the function of Central Asia in *Kim*. An impenetrable void, it parallels and ultimately exceeds Central Asia's contemporaneous geopolitical function as a buffer, guaranteeing not only the physical safety of the imperial frontier, but also the imaginative possibility of empire in perpetuity. As Mahbub Ali advises Kim when Kim is just learning to draw maps and make reports, "It must hold everything that thou has seen or touched or considered."[277] The impossible space which can hold all of the contradictions that Kim embodies and encounters is, finally, the object of the Great Game in the imperial imaginary—Central Asia revealed in its full conceptual and symbolic significance.

[277] Kipling, *Kim*, 170.

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