

Popular Fiction and the British Empire

My grandmother died in 1974 at her home in Exmouth, U.K., and as my father was her only child, the contents of her household were shipped to Australia. They included a collection of adventure novels, all published between 1850 and 1920, written by the most popular children's authors of that time: G.A. Henty, R.L. Stevenson, Percy Westerman, R.M. Ballantrae, Captain Maryat, Rudyard Kipling and, inevitably, Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School-Days*. It was a veritable primer on imperial attitudes, as befitted our family history.¹ These books championed manly virtues, stiff upper lip, British superiority and the inevitability of progress, reinforcing much that Niall Ferguson has presented as the positive benefits of the British Empire: the blessings of the English language, English law, British banking, Protestantism, sport, government, and 'the idea of liberty'.² He regards it as self-evident that Britain pioneered the path to modernity in a way that no other empire or state could have, a path not without blemish but an Empire that, ultimately, was sacrificed to 'stop the Germans, Japanese and Italians from keeping theirs.'³ Yet coercion and violence were central to the formation and operation of the British Empire.⁴ This paper does not attempt to adjudicate the merits of the Empire; rather, it demonstrates the extent to which liberal imperialism's racial and ethnic superiority, xenophobia and religious superiority, were expressed in some popular and literary fiction.⁵

¹ My great-grandfather and his fathers before him served in the King's Own Scottish Borderers (a strange choice for a Devon family), usually signing on at 14-years old; hence I have relatives born from Bombay to Belfast and the garrison towns in-between.

² Niall. Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, London, 2003, p.xxii.

³ *Ibid.* p.355.

⁴ Jane. Burbank, and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History Power and the Politics of Difference*, Apple Books edn, Princeton, 2010, p.12.

⁵ It will be obvious that, for reasons of space, it has not been possible to examine many other popular media in which imperial ideologies were transmitted: music hall songs, cartoons and family periodicals. Adventure stories for girls have also been neglected for the same reasons of space, but recent scholarship suggests that, in authors like Bessie Marchant, girls of the Empire found an adventurous role as 'civilizers, agents of social justice, and mothers of the British race; see Michelle J. Smith, *Empire in British Girls' Literature and Culture : Imperial Girls, 1880-1915*, Basingstoke, 2011, pp3-6.

Ferguson's *Empire* stands accused of not adequately addressing the role of conflict and violence in creating and sustaining the Empire.⁶ Carol Elkins explores 'British imperialism's entanglement of liberalism, violence, the law, and historical claim making', suggesting that its impact was far more toxic, both internationally and domestically.⁷ Rather than military conquest, Britain's imperial expansion, founded on the forced subjugation and dispossession of indigenous populations, was often closely followed by settlement, a form of imperialism developed over protracted campaigns in Ireland and reproduced from Virginia to New South Wales.⁸ Rather more subtle was Britain's ability to convert networks of economic influence into political control, as she did in both India and in Africa, either through a corporate proxy like the East India Company, or through direct action as in the campaigns against the Zulu nation, Māori *iwi* and the Boers. Britain's economic success came from its role as redistribution centre for European trade, the mobilisation of capital through joint-stock companies, and the effective use of the empire to benefit the domestic trading economy.⁹ But the importance of colonial conquest and empire building lies also in their impact on language, culture, religion and social structures: we live in a world shaped by the encounters forced by conquest, colonisation and slavery, and as Britain was remarkable in its geographical and cultural impact, much of the modern world is shaped by the legacy of the British Empire.¹⁰

The English Civil War generated ideologies that supported stable institutions and justified their imposition on subject peoples, both slave and free. Elkins outlines the development of liberal imperialism, from Hobbes's social contract that allowed the individual to escape the violence of the 'State of Nature', to Locke's

⁶ For a potent example of criticism directed at Ferguson, see Pankaj Mishra, 'Watch this man', *London Review of Books*, vol. 33, no. 21, 2011.

⁷ Caroline Elkins, *Legacy of Violence: a History of the British Empire*, Kindle edn., London, 2022, p.8.

⁸ John Gillingham, 'Images of Ireland 1170-1600 – The origins of English imperialism', *History Today*, vol. 37, 1987, p.22.

⁹ Burbank, and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 2010 p.158.

¹⁰ Tony Ballantyne, and Antoinette M. Burton, 'Introduction: Bodies, Empires, and World Histories,' in *Bodies in contact: rethinking colonial encounters in world history*, ed. Tony Ballantyne, and Antoinette M. Burton, Durham, N.C., 2005., pp.1-2.

‘commonwealth’, where individual rights were displaced into the state, which administered laws to preserve peace and liberty.¹¹ While Locke defended the right of the oppressed to resist tyranny¹² and rejected the right of conquest as the basis for government¹³, he justified the subjugation of native Americans as the ‘Indians’ remained in a state of nature and did not exercised *dominium*, or ownership, over their land; hence, the colonists were justified in taking aggressive action against indigenous peoples who refused to cede their lands. Locke developed a basis for the acquisition of land because the imperial conqueror would use it more productively, and the ability to hold rights rests on autonomy which required a political maturity that the colonised and invaded were held not to possess: progress trumps all else.¹⁴

Liberal imperialism formed the basis of the justification of Britain’s imperial expansion. Elkins described it as —

... a universalist project whereby individuals and societies could be reformed and transformed through such measures as free trade, education, and law. [...] When looked at historically, imperialist expansion, as witnessed in the vast empire under Queen Victoria’s domain, was inherent to liberalism’s ideology of universalistic notions of progress, the extension of capitalism, and moral claims.¹⁵

John Stuart Mill’s argued that despotism towards the ‘lesser’ subjects of Empire was based on Britain’s civilizing mission, according to a narrative of progressive human development, where the use of implicit and explicit violence as part of the Empire’s tutelage of the childish races, a ‘government of leading strings’; was a virtuous

¹¹ Elkins, *Legacy of Violence*, 2022 p.10.

¹² ‘The end of government is the good of mankind: and which is best for mankind, that the people should be always exposed to the boundless will of tyranny; or that the rulers should be sometimes liable to be opposed, when they grow exorbitant in the use of their power, and employ it for the destruction, and not the preservation of the properties of their people?’ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Peter Laslett (ed.), Cambridge, 1988-10-28, at Para. 229

¹³ ‘But conquest is as far from setting up any government, as demolishing an house is from building a new one in the place.’ *Ibid.* Para.175.

¹⁴ Duncan Ivison, ‘Locke, liberalism and empire,’ in *The Philosophy of John Locke: New Perspectives*, ed. Peter R. Anstey, London, 2004, *passim* and pp.99-100. It’s worth noting, as Ivison does, that demolishing Locke’s arguments about *dominium* and *imperium* were essential in Brennan CJ’s leading judgement in the *Mabo* case (*Mabo and others v. Queensland (no.2)* (1992) CLR 1.

¹⁵ Elkins, *Legacy of Violence*, 2022 pp. 49-50.

method for bringing barbarians to civilisation.¹⁶ Mill was confident in the moral and intellectual capacity of the British colonial officers to administer the Empire for the benefit of its subjects as much as for its domestic wealth.¹⁷ On the other hand, Thomas Macauley's lionising of Clive and Hastings provided a potent justification for violence and repression that could be presented as benevolent, civilising, Christian and profitable: the 'end justifying the means'.¹⁸ The anatomist Robert Knox (1791–1862) noted: 'Look all over the globe, it is always the same; the dark races stand still, the fair progress' — and justified slavery, forced labour and whiter rule by reference to the intellectual and physical inferiority of 'the dark races', for the 'Saxon' has 'a perfect horror for his darker brethren'.¹⁹ Hence liberal imperialism forms a discourse, which David Russell Foster describes as:

...a belief, an imagination, a state of mind – a discourse – adopted by those who believe they have the right, responsibility, authority, legitimacy and destiny to exercise sovereign, universal, unopposed rule.²⁰

This juxtaposition of imperial mission with racial superiority, cultural intolerance, economic exploitation and xenophobia was generally ignored by Britain's domestic audience; indeed, imperialism was more associated in the Victorian mind with an enthusiasm for the expansion of British influence than with conquest and force; and adult and juvenile fiction about the empire found a ready market.²¹

As a discourse, the British Empire entered popular culture from a very early stage, probably as early as *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).²² The fiction of the Victorian and Edwardian eras contains both 'energising myths' of Empire and indications of the

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.51.

¹⁷ Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*, Princeton, N.J.: Oxford, 2005, p.150.

¹⁸ Elkins, *Legacy of Violence*, 2022 p.42.

¹⁹ Robert Knox, *The Races of Men: a Fragment*, London, 1850, p.151, p.153. Knox then refers to the 'clearing of Van Diemen's Land' and suggests that 'Australia, of course, follows, and New Zealand next', and insists that the extension of equal rights to all colours is out of the question.

²⁰ Russell David Foster, 'The Concept of Empire,' in *The SAGE handbook of*, ed. William Outhwaite, and Stephen P. Turner, London, 2018.

²¹ Stephen Howe, *Empire: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2002, p.24.

²² Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, Ithaca; London, 1988, p.14.

pervasive influence of the Empire over domestic life. Adventure stories charged the imagination of boys and men to go out into the world to explore, to conquer and subdue, while romances and realistic novels used the Empire as an important thematic device. The Empire becomes 'a shadowy realm of escape, renewal, banishment, or return'.²³ Colonel Brandon, in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), serves in India, Pip's fortunes *Great Expectations* (1861) are founded on Magwitch's exile in Botany Bay, the children of James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911) are transformed by growing up in India, Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900) and Kipling's *Kim* (1901) are tales of redemption and purpose in the Empire. Hobson recognised this in *Imperialism*, where he argued:

Thus are the "cultured" or semi-cultured classes indoctrinated with the intellectual and moral grandeur of Imperialism. For the masses there is a cruder appeal to hero-worship and sensational glory, adventure and the sporting spirit: current history falsified in coarse flaring colours, for the direct stimulation of the combative instincts.²⁴

Robert MacDonald demonstrates that even R.L. Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885) contains the ideology of imperialism:

Home from the Indies, and home from the ocean
Heroes and soldiers we shall all come home.²⁵

He argues that these fictional images of empire divide the world into 'us' and 'them', creating a patriotic history around the Empire that is overwhelmingly masculine, racially defined, paternalistic and appropriating tropes from Victorian religious traditions: sacrifice, selflessness and chivalry.²⁶ The first of the great adventure novels, R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1857), shows how the real world is transformed and intensified by the journey to the 'Frontier' of the Empire: the three boys are charged with a desire to see the world and demonstrate appropriate

²³ *Ibid.* p.12.

²⁴ J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, London, 1902, p.222.

²⁵ Quoted in Robert H. MacDonald, *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880-1918*, Manchester, 1994, p.9.

²⁶ *Ibid.* pp.20-22.

imperial values.²⁷ Yet imperial fiction has darker elements which the cheerful and morally positive adventures of Ballantyne's novels and that of his contemporaries can't disguise.

Empire and race are central elements in the novels of two of the Brontë sisters, bound up with madness, violence and illicit relationships. In *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Heathcliff is discovered on the streets of Liverpool, a port connected with the slave-trade²⁸. He is a 'little lascar' (p.69), as 'dark as if it came from the devil' (p.43). In Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* (1847), set around 1820, Bertha Rochester and her brother Richard Mason are the children of a Creole mother from Jamaica.²⁹ Bertha's role as Jane's black 'double' ('tall, dark and majestic' p. 305) suggests a corruption of race in the tropics, in contact with non-whites and the legacy of slavery. Edward Fairfax excoriates her in unmistakably racist tones, contrasting her intemperance with his restraint:

her character ripened and developed with frightful rapidity; her vices sprang up fast and rank: they were so strong, only cruelty could check them; and I would not use cruelty. What a pigmy intellect she had— and what giant propensities!³⁰

Bertha's death —dancing madly amidst the flames of Thornfield — symbolically destroys the taint of the plantation and liberates St John Rivers to pursue his imperial mission in India:

Firm, faithful, and devoted; full of energy, and zeal, and truth, he labours for his race: he clears their painful way to improvement: he hews down like a giant the prejudices of creed and caste that encumber it.³¹

²⁷ M. Daphne Kutzer, *Empire's Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books*, New York, 2000, pp.2–4.

²⁸ Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, London, 2016.

²⁹ '...she came of a mad family;— idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mother, the Creole, was both a mad woman and a drunkard!' Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, London, 1991, p.303.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p.310.

³¹ *Ibid.* p.462. See Jenny. Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, Minneapolis; London, 1993, p. 38. It's worth noting the remainder of the passage describing St. John Rivers as the paragon of the imperial evangelist: 'He may be stern; he may be exacting; he may be ambitious yet; but his is the sternness of the warrior Greatheart, who guards his pilgrim convoy from the onslaught of Apollyon. His is the exaction of the apostle, who speaks but for Christ, when he

Rivers is the representation of Evangelical Protestantism, which assumed a key role in the Empire from the abolition of slavery to the missions from India to Africa. Dr Arnold's Broad Churchmanship may well have been more important, as his disciple Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School-Days* (1857) inspired the school story, from Billy Bunter to Harry Potter, and espoused 'muscular Christianity'. Influenced by Arnold's concept of 'moral earnestness' and a love of boxing, he espoused a Christianity that was a faith for fighters and was essential to the ethos of the modern public school, which became the cradle of imperialism.³² The moral development of the trio of 'Scud' East, Brown, and the deeply religious Arthur form the narrative arc of the story. Tom's defence of Arthur in Part II Chapter 5 ('The Fight') ends with Hughes' sage words of advice for the British schoolboy preparing for service in the Empire:

As to fighting, keep out of it if you can, by all means. When the time comes, if it ever should, that you have to say "Yes" or "No" to a challenge to fight, say "No" if you can—only take care you make it clear to yourselves why you say "No." It's a proof of the highest courage, if done from true Christian motives. ... And if you do fight, fight it out; and don't give in while you can stand and see.³³

'Scud' East, of course, ends up in India and, according to George MacDonald Fraser, dies during the Indian Mutiny.³⁴ In a similar vein, Henry Newbolt's (1862–1938) connection of sport and imperial adventure is notable for the paralleling of a cricket match with an episode in the Sudan Campaign of 1885 in 'Vitae Lampada':

The river of death has brimmed his banks,
And England's far, and Honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
"Play up! play up! and play the game!"³⁵

says— 'Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' His is the ambition of the high masterspirit, which aims to fill a place in the first rank of those who are redeemed from the earth— who stand without fault before the throne of God; who share the last mighty victories of the Lamb; who are called, and chosen, and faithful.'

³² William E. Winn, 'Tom Brown's Schooldays and the Development of "Muscular Christianity"', *Church History*, vol. 29, No. 1, no. Mar., 1960, p.70.

³³ Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's School Days*, New York, 1911, p.201.

³⁴ See George MacDonald Fraser, *Flashman in the Great Game: A Novel*, Harmondsworth, 1989,.

³⁵ Henry John Newbolt, *Poems: New and Old.*, London, 1917, p.78.

But the imperial and martial theme is even stronger in Clifton Chapel, where the voice of the persona enjoins the student to 'speak with noble ghosts' of the 'vows of war'; to

... count the life of battle good,
And dear the land that gave you birth,
And dearer year the brotherhood
That binds the brave of all the earth.³⁶

God and the military forces of the Empire were bound together in the minds of the public schoolboy, who formed both the officer class and the corps of colonial civil servants.

Much domestic attention was focused on India as the jewel of the Empire.³⁷ Administrators of the Honourable East India Company seem to have had some insight into and acceptance of Indian culture and mores, but by mid-century, missionary efforts to convert native peoples were radicalising attitudes in Northern India³⁸. For British readers, the 'Indian Mutiny' or 'Sepoy Rebellion' of 1857 quickly became embedded in the imperial myth as both a political and sexual violation, and as such continued to resound in the imagination well into the twentieth century.³⁹ Prejudicial reporting at the time contributed to an appallingly violent response on the part of British troops, who were convinced that 'the atrocities committed by the sepoys against their women and children absolved them of any need to treat the

³⁶ *Ibid.* p.76, 'Clifton Chapel'.

It's impossible to pass Henry Newbolt by without noting 'The Ballad of John Nicholson' (*ibid.*, p.61), a celebration of the hero of the Mutiny who William Dalrymple describes as a 'great imperial psychopath' who 'decapitated a local robber chieftain, then kept the man's head on his desk.': William. Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal : the Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857*, London, 2007, p.17. R.F. Delderfield, himself the product of West Buckland School in Devon, calls the houses of his invented Bamfylde School after Mutiny heroes: Nicholson, Havelock, and Outram (R. F. Delderfield, *To Serve Them All My Days*, London, 1972,...

³⁷ It's interesting that Australia and New Zealand don't figure strongly in the tales of Empire; while Dickens' son migrated to Australia, only Anthony Trollop of the great Victorian novelists actually came to the colonies, spending a year visiting his son who was farming near Grenfell, and writing a serialized novel set in NSW.

³⁸ Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal : the Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857*, 2007 pp.45–47.

³⁹ The contested title (from Mutiny, to Great Rebellion, to Indian Insurrection, to First War of Independence) is indicative of the problems of untangling the history from the myth. It was far more than a rebellion, but confined as it was to Northern India and centred around the revived Mughal empire, it's difficult to regard it as the dawn of a national resistance. *Ibid.* p.27.

rebels as human beings'.⁴⁰ While mass rape is generally discounted by historians, the eroticised propaganda of sexual violation characterised Indian men as sadists and sex-fiends, and became the justification for the reimposition and recasting of imperial authority to subordinate the whole sub-continent.⁴¹ Brantlinger notes that Dicken's portrayal of the French Revolution in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) as bloodthirsty and treacherous, may have been provoked by early reports of the Mutiny, and he quotes from fictional representations like that in James Grant's *First Love and Last Love: A Tale of the Indian Mutiny* (1868) to illustrate the way in which sex, religion and race contribute to a violently xenophobic reaction;

..."women were outraged again and again, ere they were slaughtered, riddled with musket balls, or gashed by bayonets; and every indignity that the singularly fiendish invention of the Oriental mind could suggest, was offered to the dying and the dead".⁴²

G.A. Henty introduces his young readership to the well at Cawnpore:

The floor was deep in blood, the walls were sprinkled thickly with it. ... Horror-struck and sickened, the officers returned into the courtyard, to find that another discovery had been made; namely, that the great well near the house was choked to the brim with the bodies of women and children. Not one had escaped.⁴³

The soldiers go into subsequent battles crying 'Remember the ladies!'. The legends of rape and massacre and a violent assault on the missionary Marcella Sherwood in Amritsar in 1919 turned the attempts of the colonial troops and administrators to suppress Ghandi's campaigns in support of the Indian Congress into a massacre. Brigadier-General Dyer justified his actions as preventative of Mutiny-like outrages and reprisals, but the Hunter committee of investigation found that he had treated the local population as if they were at war with the British.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p.131.

⁴¹ Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire*, 1993 p.66; C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, Cambridge, 1990, p.200.

⁴² Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness : British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, Ithaca; London, 1988, p.209.

⁴³ George Alfred Henty, *In Times of Peril*, London, 1881, p.169.

⁴⁴ Timothy Parsons, *The Second British Empire: In the Crucible of the Twentieth Century*, Blue Ridge Summit, 2014, pp.59-60.

Among the collective punishments meted out by Dyer after the massacre was a 'flogging lane' at the site of Miss Sherwood's assault, to ritually humiliate local people, as a Victorian parent might beat a recalcitrant child.⁴⁵ The theme of rape and sexual predation must have had a powerful effect on the colonial imagination, and it remains embedded in later novels, such as E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), where Miss Quested's deluded accusation of rape humiliates a young Muslim physician, Dr Aziz; and in Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown* (1966), this colonial discourse of violation becomes a metaphor for the imperial relationship:

...the affair [...] ended with the spectacle of two nations in violent opposition, not for the first time nor as yet for the last because they were then still locked in an imperial embrace of such long standing and subtlety it was not longer possible for them to know whether they hated or loved one another...⁴⁶

Kipling portrayed British India as an isolated world where Europeans were dislocated from the norms of European behaviour while the Indian Civil Service strove to bring the peoples of India the benefits of the West.⁴⁷ As a journalist in Lahore, he strongly, and sometime notoriously, advocated on behalf of the British imperial mission in India, condemning any attempts at providing a more liberal approach to self-government and Indian rights.⁴⁸ In 'On the City Wall', he provides a potent justification for British rule:

⁴⁵ Elkins, *Legacy of Violence*, 2022 p.132.

⁴⁶ Paul Scott, *The Jewel in the Crown: A Novel*, London, 1967, p.9.

⁴⁷ David Gilmour, *The Long Recessional: the Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling*, Kindle edn, London, 2019, p.49.

⁴⁸ His condemnation of the Ripon reforms in 1886 (when he was a new reporter of 17) were riven with his hatred of the educated Bengalis who were to form the core of independence movement, the 'babus':

There I sketched my swart Utopia, nourishing the Babu's pride
On the fairy-tales of justice – with a leaning to his side.

Rudyard Kipling 'Lord Ripon's Reverie', The Kipling Society, 1884,
https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_ripon_reverie.htm, accessed 24 September 2022,
His words, both in journals and in fiction, surely encouraged a paranoia amongst Europeans that more rights for Indians could lead to a repeat of the Mutiny. Yet he was remarkably knowledgeable about castes and creeds and was deeply sympathetic towards the Islamic cultures of the Lahore district, although he regarded the treatment of women in both Islam and Hinduism as outrageous and as an obstacle to further political and social maturity. Gilmour, *The Long Recessional*, 2019 p. 24 and 57.

Year by year England sends out fresh drafts for the first fighting-line which is officially called the Indian Civil Service. These die, or kill themselves by overwork, or are worried to death or broken in health and hope in order that the land may be protected from death and sickness, famine and war, and may eventually become capable of standing alone. It will never stand alone, but the idea is a pretty one and men are willing to die for it, and yearly the work of pushing and coaxing and scolding and petting the country into good living goes forward.⁴⁹

Daniel Dravot and Peachy Carnehan, in 'The Man who would be King', embody the ambitions of the British in India; the two characters' pacification of the warring factions of Kafiristan transforms the natives:

'I won't make a nation,' says he. 'I'll make an Empire! These men aren't niggers: they're English! Look at their eyes—look at their mouths. Look at the way they stand up. They sit on chairs in their own houses. They're the Lost Tribes or something like it, and they've grown to be English.'⁵⁰

For Kipling, it was the Law (the English Law) that drove Empire, and the *Jungle Books* are constructed around the Jungle Law, which Baloo teaches Mowgli for his own protection, with corporal punishment if necessary. It is a law that has peculiar echoes of school rules:

Wash daily from nose-tip to tail-tip, drink deeply, but never too deep;

And remember the night is for hunting, and forget not the day is for sleep.⁵¹

but it is the same law that propels the Empire and will ultimately lead native people to freedom and self-government, even if it must be enforced harshly in the present. Kipling has nothing but contempt for those who subvert the law for their own purposes. The Monkey People, the *Bandur Log*, 'have no memory but boast of their

⁴⁹ 'On the city wall' in Rudyard Kipling, *Soldiers Three; the Story of the Gadsbys; in Black and White*, London, 1895, p.299.

⁵⁰ Rudyard Kipling, 'The man who would be King,' in *The Phantom Rickshaw, and other Tales*, Allahabad, 1889, p.9.

⁵¹ 'The Law of the Jungle' in Rudyard Kipling, *The Second Jungle Book*, London, 1895, p.23.

greatness all the time, and are great talkers who accomplish nothing...' and it is hard not to see them as a racially distorted portrayal of the 'babus'.⁵² Baloo tells Mowgli:

I have taught thee all the Law of the Jungle for all of the peoples of the jungle—except the Monkey-Folk who live in the trees. They have no law. They are outcaste. They have no speech of their own, but use the stolen words which they overhear when they listen, and peep, and wait up above in the branches. Their way is not our way. They are without leaders.⁵³

Contemporaneously, the British government was implementing a policy of 'concentration' against the Boers, characterising the families of *commandos* as effectively non-European and outside the law, the Empire effectively absolved itself from the conventions of humane treatment, a process that bears marked similarity to Britain's action during the Mau Mau rebellion.⁵⁴

Much of Kipling's imperialist fiction dates from after he left India for good, and more positive aspects of the Anglo-Indian experience are present in what are, after all, children's books; but even a personal favourite like 'The miracle of Purun Bhagat' subtly conveys the superiority of European culture even while admiring the holy man's turn from politics to asceticism, for when the crisis comes, he leaves his shrine, and:

He was no longer a holy man, but Sir Purun Dass, K.C.I.E., Prime Minister of no small State, a man accustomed to command, going out to save life.⁵⁵

Kim, the white boy surviving on the streets of Lahore, explores the conflict between his Indian and British identities while engaging in the 'Great Game' of espionage; an orphan, one can see India as his symbolic mother and British rule as his father-surrogate. Yet at the novel's end, Kim is still asking his true identity, suggesting that it is not possible to reconcile India and Britain:

⁵² Supriya. Goswami, *Colonial India in Children's Literature*, London, 2012, p.121.

⁵³ Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book*, London, 1894, p.34.

⁵⁴ Elkins, *Legacy of Violence*, 2022 pp.82, 560.

⁵⁵ 'The miracle of Purun Bhagat' in Kipling, *The Second Jungle Book*, 1895 p.43.

'I am Kim. I am Kim; and what is Kim?' His soul repeated it again and again.⁵⁶

If Kipling's 'Recessional' preached the inevitability of the Empire's decline, many in the British reading public after 1890 encountered an imperial fight against evil, both natural, supernatural and extra-terrestrial. Most assumed that civilisation started on the Dover side of the English Channel:

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgement Seat;⁵⁷

The boys' adventure novel became a staple part of the imperial discourse, particularly after *The Boys' Own Paper* began publication in 1879. Published by the Religious Tract Society, the heroes of the *BOP* followed in Thomas Hughes' worthy footsteps and 'vented their energies by expanding the Queen's realms or by defending her possessions overseas'.⁵⁸ The *BOP* was a vehicle for G.A. Henty's (1832–1902) imperial adventures, where young men not only take up arms for the empire, but have careers in mining, rubber planting and exploration; and the peak of popularity before the war coincided with the founding of the Scouting Movement, the Boys' Empire League, and the expansion of the Boys' Brigade.⁵⁹

While many of the best-known boys' adventure novels were published after the turn of the century,⁶⁰ the Nineties were more dominated by fear of the supernaturally exotic which came to symbolise the threat from the East. Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) introduces the 'Imperial Gothic', which 'describes dangerous encounters between Englishman and colonised subjects'.⁶¹ Brantlinger

⁵⁶ Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*, Toronto, 1921, p.452.

⁵⁷ Rudyard Kipling, *Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses*, London, 1893, 'The Ballad of East and West'.

⁵⁸ Patrick A. Dunne, 'Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 24, No. 1, 1980, p.108.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p.110

⁶⁰ For instance, most of Percy F. Westerman's output was post-war and Biggles is very much a creature of the interwar period. Dennis Butts, 'Shaping boyhood: British Empire builders and adventurers,' in *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, ed. Peter Hunt, New York, 2004, p.348

⁶¹ Kelly Hurley, 'British Gothic fiction, 1885–1930,' in *The Cambridge companion to gothic fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge, 2002, p.194

suggests that imperialism had become a partial substitute for waning religious faith, and that works like *Dracula* (1897), Rider Haggard's *She* (1887) and H.G. Wells's 'The Truth About Pyecraft' (1903) suggest a concern with three themes:

individual regression or going native; an invasion of civilisation by the forces of barbarism or demonism; and the diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world.⁶²

The Count, in *Dracula* proclaims that he, too, has imperial pretensions that are older and more powerful than Britain's:

We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship. ... Fool, fools! What devil or what witch was ever so great as Attila, whose blood is in these veins? ... Is it a wonder that we were a conquering race?⁶³

The supernatural or paranormal manifests itself even in the centre of the Empire, and these Gothic fictions recognise that the Empire is under threat, transient and doomed.⁶⁴ In the *War of the Worlds* (1898), where the heart of the Empire is destroyed by an alien invasion, Wells himself acknowledged that 'I simply brought the fetish stuff up to date, and made it as near actual theory as possible.'⁶⁵

If the First World War did not deal the imperial novel its death blow, it certainly wounded it. While the *BOP*, Westerman and Johns remained popular, a critique of empire was found in more serious works of fiction, like *A Passage to India*, Somerset Maugham's *The Painted Veil* (1925) or George Orwell's *Burmese Days* (1934). Perhaps, like Kipling, British readers felt betrayed by the Empire as they mourned, with him, their dead ('If any question why we died, / Tell them, because our fathers

⁶² Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness : British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, 1988 p.130

⁶³ Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, London, 2013, p.

⁶⁴ 'The Gothic is rightly, if partially, understood as a cyclical genre that reemerges in times of cultural stress in order to negotiate anxieties for its readership by working through them in displaced (sometimes supernaturalised) form. For instance, critics have linked the resurgence of the Gothic in the late-Victorian period to anxieties about modern urban culture, or about Britain's status as the dominant modern imperial power'. Hurley, 'British Gothic fiction, 1885-1930', 2002, p.194. This anxiety was noted by John Seely as long ago as 1883: Ailise Bulfin, *Gothic Invasions: Imperialism, War and Fin-De-siècle Popular Fiction*, Cardiff, 2018, p.5.

⁶⁵ Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness : British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, 1988 p.236

lied'); Kipling's stories became charged with symbols of mourning and regret, of which 'The Gardener' is a powerful example.⁶⁶ But empire maintained a hold on the imagination reinforced by Hollywood's obsession with imperial adventure.⁶⁷ One need only recall Arthur Ransom's *Swallows and Amazons*⁶⁸ to realise how pervasive the language of Empire remained in the thirties and forties, the children of the novels re-enact the feats of the explorers, from voyages of exploration to mountaineering to polar adventures; they map and survey the unknown, and they people their re-imagined world with adults who are described variously as natives (the Swallows' mother is 'the best of natives'), savages (the charcoal burners!) and, in the case of Uncle Jim, pirates (Captain Flint!). Even C.S. Lewis's fantasy world has the Calormen Empire, a country like India with its monstrous bird-god that remains a threat to Narnia. Such images surely perpetuated deep divisions in British society towards the former Empire, and with those people of the Empire who emigrated to Britain. The attitudes and ideology of Empire remain ineradicably embedded in these poems, novels and short stories.

The death of the late Queen throws the failure of successive British governments, and the monarchy itself, to acknowledge its history, and the extent to which the wealth of nation and monarchy was founded on slavery and expropriation.⁶⁹ No part of Britain is free from the influence of the Empire, from Guinea street in Bristol, to hundreds of stately homes; yet there has been little formal recognition of where that wealth originated. Contemporary Britain copes with a legacy of racism and exploitation. As Parsons comments:

the empire produced new identities and cultures that were the unplanned result of multiple and overlapping informal interactions between Britons and their subjects. These exchanges

⁶⁶ Gilmour, *The Long Recessional*, 2019 p.251

⁶⁷ Jeffrey Richards, 'Boy's own Empire: feature films and imperialism in the 1930s,' in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John M. MacKenzie, Manchester, 1986, p.149

⁶⁸ Arthur Ransome, *Swallows and Amazons; Illustrated By the Author With Help From Miss Nancy Blackett*, London, 1931,; when Mother wasn't a native she was Queen Elizabeth, and as befits a family of the Empire, she is Australian and Captain Walker's destroyer is based in the Far East.

⁶⁹ Tharoor, Sashi. 'Queen Elizabeth: A symbol of everything British.' *Mathrubhumi.com*, <https://english.mathrubhumi.com/columns/i-mean-what-i-say/queen-elizabeth-a-symbol-of-everything-british-shashi-tharoor-1.7858274>, accessed 24 September 2022

were never unidirectional, and Britain itself was changed by the imperial experience of ruling such a diverse range of peoples.⁷⁰

Calls for restitution, reparations and apologies are a reminder that the British Empire might have fallen, but the aftermath continues and remains, in Shashi Tharoor's phrase, 'dangerously stalemated'.⁷¹ It is easy to underestimate the impact of the imperialism on the literature of Britain and its overseas possessions during the height-day of empire, just as it is easy to overlook the role of literature in transmitting the attitudes of imperialism to readers across the globe. If we agree with Elkins that 'liberal imperialism continues to hold sway',⁷² then it remains important to read the fiction of empire with an informed historical perspective, if we are not to continue the myth of a benevolent empire.

⁷⁰ Parsons, *Second British Empire*, 2014 p.201

⁷¹ Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India*, Brunswick, Victoria, 2017,

⁷² Elkins, *Legacy of Violence*, 2022 p.677

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Brontë, Charlotte, *Jane Eyre*, London, Harper Press, 1991,
https://archive.org/details/isbn_9780007350803, Accessed, 11 September 2022.
- Brontë, Emily, *Wuthering Heights*, London, Vintage Books, 2016,
https://archive.org/details/wutheringheights0000bron_a1a6/page/n5/mode/2up,
Accessed, 12 September 2022.
- Delderfield, R. F., *To Serve Them All My Days*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1972.
- Hughes, Thomas, *Tom Brown's School Days*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1911,
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1480>, Accessed, 12 September 2022.
- Henty, George Alfred, *In Times of Peril*, London, Griffith and Farran, 1881,
<https://archive.org/details/intimesperilata00hentgoog/page/n10/mode/2up>,
Accessed, 21 September 2022.
- Kipling, Rudyard 'The man who would be King,' In *The Phantom Rickshaw, and other Tales*, Allahabad, A.H. Wheeler and Son, 1889.
<https://archive.org/details/phantomrickshawo00kiplrich/page/n1/mode/2up>,
accessed 12 September 2022,
- Kipling, Rudyard, *Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses*, London, Methuen, 1893.
- Kipling, Rudyard, *The Jungle Book*, London, Macmillan, 1894,
<https://archive.org/details/junglebook01kiplgoog/page/n9/mode/2up>, Accessed,
24 September 2022.
- Kipling, Rudyard, *Soldiers Three; the Story of the Gadsbys; in Black and White*,
London, Macmillan, 1895, Accessed,
- Kipling, Rudyard, *The Second Jungle Book*, London, Macmillan, 1895,
<https://archive.org/details/secondjunglebook00kipliala/page/n7/mode/2up>,
Accessed, 22 August 2022.
- Kipling, Rudyard, *Kim*, Toronto, Doubleday, 1921,
<https://archive.org/details/kimkipl00kipl/page/n5/mode/2up>, Accessed, 24
September 2022.
- Kipling, Rudyard 'Lord Ripon's Reverie', The Kipling Society, 1884,
https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_ripon_reverie.htm, accessed 24
September 2022.
- Newbolt, Henry John, *Poems: New and Old.*, London, John Murray, 1917,
<https://archive.org/details/poemsnewold0000newb/mode/2up>, Accessed, 12
September 2022.
- Ransome, Arthur, *Swallows and Amazons; Illustrated By the Author With Help From Miss Nancy Blackett*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1931.

Scott, Paul, *The Jewel in the Crown: A Novel*, London, Heinemann, 1967,
https://archive.org/details/jewelincrownove0000scot_p5k7/page/n5/mode/2up,
Accessed, 21 September 2022.

Stoker, Bram, *Dracula*, London, Vintage Books, 2013.

Newspapers

Mathrubhumi.com

Secondary Sources

Ballantyne, Tony, and Antoinette M. Burton 'Introduction: Bodies, Empires, and World Histories,' In *Bodies in contact : rethinking colonial encounters in world history*, edited by Tony Ballantyne, and Antoinette M. Burton, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 2005.
<https://login.proxy.lib.duke.edu/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/9780822386452>, p. xii, 445.

Bayly, C. A., *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, <https://hdl-handle-net.ezproxy.une.edu.au/2027/heb02420.0001.001>, Accessed, 12 September 2022.

Brantlinger, Patrick, *Rule of Darkness : British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, Ithaca; London, Cornell University Press, 1988, <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.une.edu.au/stable/10.7591/j.ctt24hgbf>, Accessed, 12 September 2022.

Bulfin, Ailise, *Gothic Invasions: Imperialism, War and Fin-De-siècle Popular Fiction*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2018,
http://books.google.com.au/books?id=neyVDwAAQBAJ&hl=&source=gbs_api, Accessed,

Burbank, Jane., and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History Power and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010, Apple Books edn, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.30977>, Accessed, 3 July 2022.

Butts, Dennis 'Shaping boyhood: British Empire builders and adventurers,' In *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, edited by Peter Hunt, New York, Routledge, 2004.
<http://staffnew.uny.ac.id/upload/132299491/pendidikan/encyclopedia-childrens-literature.pdf#page=365>, accessed 10 September 2022,

Dalrymple, William., *The Last Mughal : the Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857*, London, Bloomsbury, 2007, Accessed,

Dunae, Patrick A. 'Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914', *Victorian Studies* vol. 24, No. 1, 1980, pp. 105–21. doi:10.2307/3826881,

Elkins, Caroline, *Legacy of Violence : a History of the British Empire*, London, Random House, 2022, Kindle edn.,
https://read.amazon.com.au/?asin=B017DIJ31I&ref_=kwl_kr_iv_rec_1&language=en-AU, Accessed, 21 August 2022.

- Ferguson, Niall., *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, London, Allen Lane an imprint of Penguin Books, 2003.
- Foster, Russell David 'The Concept of Empire,' In *The SAGE handbook of*, edited by William Outhwaite, and Stephen P. Turner, London, SAGE Publications, 2018.
- Fraser, George MacDonald, *Flashman in the Great Game: A Novel*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1989.
- Gillingham, John 'Images of Ireland 1170-1600 – The origins of English imperialism', *History Today* vol. 37, 1987, pp. 16–22.
- Gilmour, David, *The Long Recessional: the Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling*, London, Penguin Random House, 2019, Kindle edn, https://read.amazon.com.au/?asin=B07PGDRRNT&ref_=kwl_kr_iv_rec_2&language=en-AU, Accessed, 21 August 2022.
- Goswami, Supriya., *Colonial India in Children's Literature*, London, Taylor & Francis Group, 2012, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/lib/une/reader.action?docID=987990&ppg=136>, Accessed, 10 September 2022.
- Hobson, J. A., *Imperialism: A Study*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1902.
- Howe, Stephen, *Empire: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Hurley, Kelly 'British Gothic fiction, 1885–1930,' In *The Cambridge companion to gothic fiction*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Iverson, Duncan 'Locke, liberalism and empire,' In *The Philosophy of John Locke: New Perspectives*, edited by Peter R. Anstey, London, Routledge, 2004. pp. 86-105.
- Knox, Robert, *The Races of Men: a Fragment*, London, H. Renshaw, 1850.
- Kutzer, M. Daphne, *Empire's Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books*, New York, Garland Publishing, 2000.
- Locke, John, *Two Treatises of Government*, Peter Laslett (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- MacDonald, Robert H., *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880-1918*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1994, <https://archive.org/details/languageofempire0000macd>, Accessed, 13 September 2022.
- Mishra, Pankaj 'Watch this man', *London Review of Books* vol. 33, no. 21, 2011, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v33/n21/pankaj-mishra/watch-this-man>, accessed 17 September 2022.
- Parsons, Timothy, *The Second British Empire: In the Crucible of the Twentieth Century*, Blue Ridge Summit, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/lib/une/reader.action?docID=1767199&ppg=231>, Accessed, 9 September 2022.

- Pitts, Jennifer, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*, Princeton, N.J.: Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Richards, Jeffrey 'Boy's own Empire: feature films and imperialism in the 1930s,' In *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, edited by John M. MacKenzie, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1986.
- Sharpe, Jenny., *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, Minneapolis; London, University of Minnesota Press, 1993,
<https://archive.org/details/allegoriesofempi0000shar/mode/2up>, Accessed, 19 September 2022.
- Smith, Michelle J., *Empire in British Girls' Literature and Culture : Imperial Girls, 1880-1915*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, [ttps://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/lib/une/detail.action?docID=741955](https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/lib/une/detail.action?docID=741955), Accessed, 20 September 2022.
- Tharoor, Shashi, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India*, Brunswick, Victoria, SCribe, 2017.
- Winn, William E. 'Tom Brown's Schooldays and the Development of "Muscular Christianity"', *Church History* vol. 29, No. 1, no. Mar., 1960, pp. 64–73. doi:10.2307/3161617,